The Highest Goal...

a vision for the future
In 2009 we began working on a statement of our vision for the coming years. The document For God... was the result. It highlighted six themes that would shape our work going forward. Those six areas of commitment remain our focus today.

In this second document we want to report on what we have been able to achieve in recent years and indicate where we believe God would have us go next.

You will see many changes anticipated in this document therefore, as we see our work developing. What will not change are our core convictions concerning the mission of God.

In so many places in the world, the impact of the gospel is visibly changing lives. That gives us confidence to see no person as beyond hope, no community beyond transformation and no nation beyond redemption. There are no exceptions and we need to believe that.

So, how far have we been able to realise the vision? First, we need to report on the last four years. Then, in the second half of the book, we look with faith to the future as we devote ourselves to achieving 'the highest goal'.

Thank you as always for your prayerful support expressed in so many ways.

David Kerrigan
General Director
Our relationship with God, both personally and corporately, is key to being fruitful in mission today. BMS World Mission is a community of God’s people across the UK and across the world and our motivation and strength come from him. We will never reach the point where our dependence on God is fully expressed, but we are always striving towards that goal.

Our journey so far has taken us to the point where:

- We have developed our annual Day of Prayer and, through initiatives such as Project Cyrus, which is focused on North Korea, we highlight the need for concerted prayer as we look for breakthroughs in some of the toughest places in the world.

- Our commitment to theological and missiological development has pushed us to develop a stronger voice for Mission Catalyst magazine. Sometimes controversial, always challenging, we believe that the mission of the Church demands an engagement between faith and culture.
Witnessing to world faiths

The heart of all we do is bear witness to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, to express the love of God for all peoples, and to give expression to the justice of God in every place. We do so in the context of today’s world faiths — some ancient, others relatively new.

In recent years we have:

- Begun to speak of ‘the highest goal’ more prominently as a concept and in this document we develop the implications of taking this further.
- Sought to encourage Isa-believer movements within Islam (Isa is the name for Jesus in the Qur’an), and learn from them, not least in relation to mission within the UK.
- Worked to make the Common Word® initiative relevant, although this has not developed globally as quickly as we had expected. It may do so in coming years, partly through our encouragement within the Baptist World Alliance for it to be presented in a more user-friendly way.

* www.acommonword.com
There are many places where we must develop creative access strategies to enable us to work in a country or amongst a particular people group. In doing so we will always work with integrity, never pretending to do one thing with a view to doing something else.

Three out of the last four years have seen good levels of mission recruitment, with ten to 15 new mission workers joining us long-term, and many more for shorter periods; 2013, however, was a lower intake than we wanted.

Our hope of developing further ‘business as mission’ initiatives has been difficult as the world recession has meant keeping our current business afloat has cost more than we had anticipated. We have, though, learned much in this area and can see further business opportunities in the coming years.

Our support of indigenous missionary movements has grown significantly, notably including Big Life Ministries in India where thousands of cell churches have been planted.

We have focused our efforts in a number of key ways:

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The world Church is strong and growing in many places and we need to listen to the voices that God is using to help his Church grow. We need the humility to learn as well as teach, to see our faith through the eyes of Christians who are experiencing God in different ways to us.

We are encouraged by developments so far, as we have:

- Appointed our first non-British Trustee, Nabil Costa, from Lebanon.
- Appointed Roshan Mendis, from Sri Lanka, to be Regional Team Leader for Central and South Asia.
- Appointed Benjamin Francis, from India, as Associate India Team Leader.
- Appointed Annet Ttendo, from Uganda, to lead a major new legal rights project in Mozambique.
- Established our support for more than 200 non-British national workers.
- Reached the point where almost one in five of our UK mission workers are now from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds (Jan 14).
- Created a Paralympics resource *Undefeated* representing a further global voice, that of the 15 per cent of people in the world who are disabled*.

*www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011*
We will be producing resources to help churches develop their own mission strategies and are thinking how best to take this further.

Our new BMS Church Partners programme, launched in 2013, has enabled multi-faceted direct links to our work to be made much more easily than in the past.

Our links with the three UK Baptist unions, 13 Baptist Union of Great Britain associations and our Baptist colleges have encouraged us to appoint a UK Field Leader to help further develop our UK relationships. We also now have two co-funded mission posts, with the Baptist Union of Scotland and the Baptist Union of Wales.

Engaging with local realities

In 2009 we started to speak of our conviction that the ‘local realities’ of the UK demanded a missionary encounter as much as elsewhere. Where BMS has a role to play, it will be in distilling lessons learned from fruitful mission work in other parts of the world, and contextualising these for use in UK cultures.

We have made good progress on several fronts:

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Resourcing with sacrificial giving

All mission work, whether local or global, needs resourcing. We must never be reticent in asking God’s people to fund the mission of the Church. Funding such work was undertaken by wealthy women during the ministry of Jesus and offerings were taken in the life of the New Testament Church. The challenge is always to be good stewards of that which is entrusted to us.

In spite of the deepest recession in living memory, our churches have continued to support us generously. Our balance sheet is in good health and we have been able to develop our work by careful stewardship of what we receive.

We have gradually reduced UK staff posts by 22 per cent in the last four years.

- 24/7 Partners income, from individuals who give directly to BMS each month, has grown from just over £100,000 in 2009 to almost £300,000 in 2013.
- We launched a sister charity, Cyan International, to access new streams of income from trusts and foundations and so far have raised more than £200,000 to the end of 2013.

This area has seen some important developments:

The Tithe Barn
So the last four years have been good ones for all who are linked to EMS. But what does it mean to speak of the highest goal? Is it just a cliché, or does it really have substance?

If we mean what we say, then our interlinked six areas of commitment, retained but in some cases refined, will express the aspirations to take each to the highest level we can.
We will continue to prioritise our relationship with God, both corporately and individually. We will approach prayer and theological reflection as an adventure in knowing God, not limited to personal devotion but characteristic of our daily approach to every aspect of our work, in the UK and around the world.

We will look for and expect to find God revealing himself in ever surprising ways. In discovering God afresh, we will constantly renew our faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and we be drawn deeper into the missionary heart of God.

As we look to the future:

- We will explore creative ways of encouraging regular prayer to unite all who are committed to the work of God through BMS.
- We will remain courageous in our theological exploration, always ready to address the challenges of a fallen world with the gospel of transforming grace.
- We will develop our annual day conferences Catalyst Live as a way of engaging with faith and culture in order to equip the Church for mission.
- We will aim to set faith-stretching goals wherever appropriate, locating ourselves increasingly in a place of reliance upon God and not solely upon our own abilities.

Looking to God in all things
A speck of dust in the cosmos, yet this world and its people are the focus of God's love and purposes for his creation. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 is uncompromising in its clarity. It flows from the all-encompassing authority of Jesus. It tells us to go to all nations. It tells us to baptise and teach all that Jesus taught us. It tells us that Christ is always with us, even to the end of the age.

The Great Commission is also a wonderful example of the integral mission that BMS is committed to expressing. It is unashamedly evangelistic but, if we are to adhere to all that Jesus taught us, our mission will also give expression to the hopes of the Kingdom of God (Matt 6:33; Mark 1:14; Luke 6:46; John 3:3) characterised by the presence of justice and righteousness. These things taken together are surely 'the highest goal' of all we do.

As we look to the future

- Whilst every country we work in has real mission needs, we will re-evaluate our mix of work to ensure that we are intentionally applying ourselves to areas least evangelised and most marginalised. In other words where the Kingdom of God is least conspicuous. We anticipate drawing to a close some existing commitments so that fresh work in new countries can happen.

- We will increase our support of evangelistic initiatives, focusing on telling the story of Jesus and sharing the Scriptures.

- We will continue to encourage movements of those who have come to faith from a different religious background and who seek to express 'church' in culturally appropriate ways.

- Whether in Latin America or Europe, Africa or Asia, we will work in partnership with others, adding our resources to theirs, sharing and learning as we walk together.
Increasingly, in today's world, there are technical solutions to real needs. For example, our growing use of solar-powered audio-Bibles helps us give Scriptures to people who cannot read or where importing Scriptures can be difficult.

Today there are hundreds of mission businesses active around the world. If we are to add to that number we need to challenge men and women to use their skills in new areas of the world.

As we look to the future:

- We will, as quickly as possible, send people to work in North Korea to help us develop our presence there.
- We will build our capacity to support 'business as mission' initiatives and look to begin additional business ventures.
- With major partners in Christian satellite broadcasting across the Middle East and North Africa, we will share in the task of reaching millions.

Amongst the least evangelised and most marginalised countries are those where traditional mission work is hard to do. This demands an imaginative approach that respects local laws and culture, but allows us to work in areas of greatest need.

In a technology-driven age, we need to think creatively how best to address age-old problems of getting the good news of Jesus into people's hands, and otherwise affecting the good their quality of life. This can be as simple as distributing Bibles, showing the Jesus film, or printing a message on thousands of bus tickets with the good news that "God so loved the world that he gave his only son".
Having taken steps to internationalise our leadership, we will look for further opportunities to take this commitment further.

We will directly support a greater number of non-UK workers who join our mission teams.

We will specifically engage with issues of gender based violence in its many forms, strengthening our existing commitment to justice for women expressed through many of our projects.

As we look to the future:

- There was a time when mission was 'from the West to the rest'. Those days are long gone. Our work is increasingly shaped by voices that have been silenced or marginalised. Amongst them are the voices of the global South, the voices of women and those who live with disability. By addressing the margins we send a powerful message of inclusion in God’s family, just as Jesus did in his ministry.

- When marginalised voices come centre-stage, and join with ours, the game changes. A new song will be sung, not just the old song with extra voices. This is the adventure of mission.

Shaped by global voices
Engaged in UK mission

BMS work has always been principally beyond the British Isles and will remain so. But in these days our own irreligious culture requires a strong missionary approach no different to other parts of the world. We believe our contribution can be in harness insights from mission in other countries and share them, contextually, here at home.

Through the provision of resources to reach people of other faiths, the stimulation of theological thinking and a desire to play a part in the formation of the next generation of UK mission leaders, we believe there is a role for BMS within the UK.

As we look to the future:

- Recalling the rallying cry of the early European Baptist Johann Gerhard Oncken, “every Baptist a missionary”, we will look to support a growing commitment to pioneering outreach.
- We will explore the creation of a vocational strand of missionary training for those whose vocation is to remain living and working within the UK, and see our Baptist colleges as potential partners in this.
- We are already supporting financially a number of outreach initiatives in the UK and plan to develop a new resource for churches to reach their neighbours of different faiths.
- We recognise the rise of the ‘new atheism’ as a faith like other faiths and see this as a particular challenge not just in our Western setting but in many fast-developing countries where we work. With partners such as Ravi Zacharias International Ministries we will share resources with churches to equip Christians to engage with atheist perspectives.

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Legacy income has held up remarkably well over the last ten years and we will continue to prompt people to remember the work of BMS in their will.

We will continue to invest time and resources into the securing of grants from trusts and foundations, enhancing our ability to grow our work in new areas of the world.

We will deepen our relationship with supporting churches to the very best of our ability, building upon the BMS Church Partners initiative launched in 2013.

Having reached £300,000 per annum from our 24.7 Partners in less than four years we will set a faith target of an additional £200,000 per annum from individuals by the end of 2016. This will cover a major gifts strategy as well as regular monthly income.

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Direct giving from individuals and income from trusts has increased in recent years and we believe there is further room for expansion.

Having endured harsh economic times for the last five years, we are in lean shape and ready for growth. Our supporting churches have been wonderfully generous and we believe will remain so as long as our work is seen to be focused on areas of greatest need.

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As a Christian mission organisation we aim to share life in all its fullness with the world’s peoples by:

- Enabling them to know Christ
- Alleviating suffering and injustice
- Improving the quality of life

with people as our primary agents of change — motivating, training, sending and resourcing them.

BMS mission statement

To speak of something as ‘the highest goal of all we do…’ sets a real challenge.

It demands that we believe in, and that we are committed to acting upon it. It means aiming for goals that do not parrot the political world, where every year will be better than the last, or the business world where finances measure everything.

Rather, we are committed to discerning the will of God in order that we can play our part in reaching those most in need in today’s world. They can be described in many ways. The Bible speaks of “the least of these” or as those who are naked or hungry, thirsty or in prison.

But they are also those who are blind even though they see, who are deaf even though their ears work perfectly, those who are rich but spiritually impoverished. For all of these, we strive to attain our highest goal.

Your part in this is crucial. Through BMS World Mission many parts of the world have been transformed over two centuries. But BMS means you, the churches and the people who support us generously and faithfully, who pray for us and have served with us, and continue to do so today.

This year to come will, we trust, see God enabling us to build His Kingdom in great measure in parts of the world where the least evangelised and most marginalised people live out their lives. Their circumstances cry out for the grace and justice of God to be made real.

Thank you for being part of this great work. We couldn't do it without you.

Jeff Taylor
Chair of Trustees

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