

From both the presentations and discussions the following matters were highlighted:-

1. What Churches would like from Mission Groups (MG):

Generally

- Less paper more personal contact. Many of the pastors/ministers present commented that unsolicited missions material gets binned more often than read! The rest just sits on piles of publicity and brochures that accumulate on foyer tables.
- Develop the skill of “Focused mailing.” The majority agreed that there is too much wastage in splattering publicity to every local church and supporter (past, present, future). A small minority (1) said that for the sake of the one contact made he would still promote unsolicited mailing but most saw the value in “focused mailing”.
- MG should learn how to handle each church group they are working with. Some denominational structures require that you start with the denominational head, others with a Missions Secretary, with others it is a case of direct to a local congregation. So the lesson to be learnt here is that need to know the church group you are dealing with.
- MG should be more transparent and make clear how much of giving from churches actually gets to the missionary or project in the destination country. It is a healthy exercise to investigate how much gets spent on admin and the layers in between.
- In response to the above, it was noted that in secular employment situations it takes twice as much to provide a doctor the work environment in which to function (hospital, equipment, etc) as to actually pay his salary, same for teachers and most other professions. Churches need to recognise that it is not enough to cover a missionaries salary but provide at least the equivalent amount to equip him (and that partly includes MG administration)
- Greater clarity from MG as to what to do when inviting and receiving a missionary doing deputation in a church. How much expenses should be paid and to whom - is it OK to give the missionary a personal gift or should all be sent to the MG?

Before sending someone to the field:

- MG to meet with church leaders to clarify responsibilities of the church, especially the working of what is a three way partnership between the missionary, the MG and the local church. MG talk often more in theory than practice of three way partnership. MG should make it a more active partnership by involving the church not just in the “letter of recommendation” and the funds, but in all aspects of the sending and supporting process.
- Advice and help in forming an in-church special group (missionary support group) who will be the key contact/liaison between the missionary and his local church. Even to the point of “demanding” the formation of a missionary support committee or secretary, as some church leaders procrastinate or oppose such.
- Better feed back from the MG, especially keeping the church updated on the interview/selection/allocation to a field process. Too often the church leaders are left to hear things via the missionary instead of direct feedback from the MG.
- Give churches specific details on levels of support needed, etc

Whilst on the Field

- Ensure a good flow of information for prayer and pastoral concern, but balance paper/email general stuff with more personal information and use phone contact. Regular phone calls from MG to key church leader from commending church.
- Ensure clarity in lines of pastoral care and transparency of sharing of pastoral concerns with appropriate church leaders.

- Assist with reminders of key events and dates on which contact or follow up would be especially helpful.
- Be clear on what should be discretionary information, so that private or sensitive matters don't get circulated in open church channels.

Upon re-Entry

- Give plenty of practical details and advice to church on how to assist missionary whether on Home assignment or end of service period.
- Diarise the process.
- Talk through the details of a typical de-briefing process.
- Clarify how the MG de-brief should work in with a local church de-brief. Give good list of questions and issues to be discussed and a timeframe, recognising that not all matters should be talked through immediately.

2. What would Mission Groups like churches to do better?

- Keep featuring world mission in main church services. Avoid the sense that world missions is for the specialist few who turn up to mid-week meetings.
- Utilise actual missionaries as much as possible in main church services/ministry, or use regular, recent stories from missionaries you support.
- Think about having a missionary to visit for the weekend, arrange a variety of social-interactive times, so that there is plenty of talk interaction between church members and the missionaries. Get various homes to offer hospitality. Research shows that high percentage (80%) are in missions today because of personal impact of meeting a missionary before developing a sense of personal call.
- Keep broadening the vision of your church, don't let it settle merely on its own local needs.
- Keep funding opportunities in short term missions, as this is the key to envisioning people, especially youth. Set aside part of church budget to fund some youth, some early retirees and church leaders on overseas short term work.
- Have a regular annual programme to send out members on field trips. Get church leaders and key members to go out and see and participate in what you are supporting.
- Absolutely key that ministers in training should spend part of their training in an overseas mission placement. If not during college period then at least early in ministry. This could be retrospectively covered for existing ministers by ensuring every minister gets to visit abroad soon!
- Churches should think to include a missionary couple onto their church away weekends, or a house-group away weekend, or youth weekend. Not necessarily to take public part in the teaching or preaching but to interact and informally share their lives with the church members. It may be a refreshing time for the missionary and certainly help people's understanding of missionaries as ordinary believers in service for the Lord.
- When a missionary is on home assignment in their home church, the church leadership should know the gifting and expertise of their missionary and include them into appropriate levels of leadership and ministry in the church. Allowances need to be made for rest and for travelling around in deputation, but it is valuable for the missionary to be part of the life of the church while at home.
- Even more critically in the case of end of service re-entry, as often the missionary is left for too long with no role, and can suffer severe reactions having come from a situation of high level involvement and significant responsibility to becoming an unused member of a congregation. Church leaders need to be helped to think this through, even in advance of the returning missionary.

3. Small Group Discussions on Mission Group Hot Potatoes

Some of the balancing acts that we often don't get right:-

- Kingdom priorities versus HQ priorities
- Local needs versus global needs
- Work together or protect our own patch.
- Maintain support base or mobilise next generation.
- Who's responsible for the missionary – church or mission agency?

Groups asked to come up with a one sentence “best practice” in the following areas;-

- **Money in mission**
Questions discussed
 - Do missions agencies ask too much / often?
 - Do we just end up redistributing a finite cake?
 - Do we encourage long-term commitment to projects or a quick-fix mentality?Suggested best practice
 - Need to regularly prayerfully discern God’s leading in terms of praying and financially supporting individuals in missions.
- **People in mission**
Questions discussed
 - Do mission agencies steal the best folk?
 - Do we encourage every Christian to be active in mission 24:7?
 - Do we treat local and global mission service with equal honour?Suggested best practice
 - Best practice involves church leaders and individuals being proactive in identifying gifts and call within a church.
 - God’s concern is for the world, our purpose as the Church is to serve the mission of God in the world – both locally and globally.
- **Publicity Overload**
Questions discussed
 - Do we overload churches with information and publicity?
 - Do we seem to be competitively selling our wares?
 - Could mission agencies work better together (and save resources in the process)?Suggested best practice
 - We would prefer information that is readable, relevant and concise (possibly just on one page) rather than very broad glossy magazines that mostly are left unread.
 - We will not send unsolicited mail and endeavour to make personal contact before approaching as first stage in promoting mission.
 - We will endeavour to do more co-operative ventures rather than doing our own thing.
- **Maintain present supporters** (good givers and pray-ers) **or mobilise new people** (especially youth & children)
Questions discussed
 - Is too much activity aimed at maintaining supporters?
 - Is too little effort put into children’s and youth work by mission agencies because it doesn’t bring in much money?
 - How could more effort be made to mobilise the next generation?Suggested best practice
 - Need to maintain in order to mobilise. Suggested that spend 20% of time focussed on mobilisation (especially youth). Mission agencies need to be maximally involved in reaching out to young people and discipling them in a missions worldview.
- **Who’s responsible for the missionary – MG or local church?**
Questions discussed
 - Do mission agencies talk to churches enough about the care of workers?
 - Do churches see workers abroad as part of their pastoral care responsibility?
 - Do mission workers see themselves as accountable to their sending churches?Suggested best practice
 - Mission needs to be a 3-way partnership – sending church, agency and worker – each needing to communicate and be accountable to each other in mutual support, encouragement and responsibility.

Some Resources mentioned

The Journey. An interactive dramatisation of the process of calling, commending, sending and supporting a missionary. Requires a large group (minimum 90 people) to do, but a worth while way to educate churches in the missionary task. Could be sort of thing group of churches could consider getting together to do. For more information contact Nicholas Morris (Nicholas@isscot.org).

Global Connections document on code of best practice for short-term missions
(www.globalconnections.co.uk/findresources/standardsinmissionpractice/CBP/code.htm)

CD recording of Annual Conference available from Stephen Carter
(svcarter@iee.org)