



History

Formerly known as the UK Evangelical Missionary Alliance, Global Connections has a rich heritage

The Early Days

The International Missionary Fellowship (IMF) was formed in 1941 when the need for consultation between mission leaders was urgent due to the war. It was only open to interdenominational missions and was primarily a prayer fellowship. The name was changed to the Fellowship of Interdenominational Missionary Societies (FIMS) in 1946.

In the post war period, the mission movement in Britain had to adjust to many changes across the world including the end of the colonial era. However the FIMS lacked the authority and ability to make recommendations and provide guidance for the British mission movement. In 1958 a new agency, the Evangelical Missionary Alliance (EMA) succeeded the FIMS so that:



There could be a closer relationship with the fast growing Evangelical Alliance

Membership could be open to both interdenominational and denominational mission agencies

A central office with part-time staff could be established

Global Connections

By 2000, the world had become a very different place and the working name was changed to Global Connections. This was not just a cosmetic change of image, rather being about recognising the continuing changes in the mission world, such as:

- the growing size and development of the church outside the West
- the false dichotomy between here and there, and that mission was from everywhere to everywhere
- the UK itself now becoming a mission field with mission partners coming here from other nations
- the changing face of the UK and its ethnic diversity
- the involvement of local churches directly in mission
- the developing understanding of mission and its variety of expressions

As a result, membership was also extended to include agencies whose mission focus was primarily the UK and churches involved in mission.

Key People

Gilbert Kirby was the first part-time General Secretary of the EMA. From its inception the EMA provided opportunities for agencies to meet and engage with issues raised by the changing environment of mission, as well as practical information on matters such as travel and visas. It began a handbook containing the list of agencies and colleges with their names and contact details. From this modest beginning the UK Christian Handbook evolved, now published by Christian Research.

In 1966 Gilbert was succeeded by Ernest Oliver. One of his early achievements was to help the development of appropriate missions courses for member colleges, as well as developing the EMA as a forum in which to debate mission policy and strategy. He was involved in the setting up of Tearfund, to which he gave part of his time in later years. He also encouraged the merger of several missions working in the Middle East.



In 1983 Stanley Davies was appointed as the first full-time General Secretary. The work and membership grew under his leadership, and a number of specialist working groups were set up providing guidance and fellowship for people such as Personnel Officers, Finance Officers and those organising short-term programmes. During this period a stronger financial base enabled other staff to be employed.

Stanley Davies retired in 2004 and was succeeded by Martin Lee. Martin brings 25 years experience as Director of CORD, a member agency. The network is continuing to develop with a growing membership, new initiatives and clear strategy.

Work with Churches

One key change over the years has been the role of churches in world mission and the EMA has always been closely associated with helping church leaders to meet together to share insights about involving churches in world mission. People such as George Baxter through a network of regional volunteers and Barrie Taylor as part of the Evangelical Alliance Church Life Team were key in this. In 1997 a Church Relations section was set up to develop this work further with Barrie as its Director. Bryan Knell succeeded him in 1999 and continues to develop different initiatives to help churches in the UK be more active and effective in world mission.

Strategic Developments

In 1996 Richard Tiplady was appointed as Associate Director with special emphasis on developing short-term and youth forums and relating to student organisations. At the same time he oversaw the change to Global Connections and the development of a new corporate image and literature along with the website. Richard left in 2002 and is now the national Director of the European Christian Mission (ECM).

A True Network

As a network, Global Connections is the sum of all its members and contacts, rather than an organisation in the traditional sense. The involvement of many leaders and other staff from member organisations in running forums, events and conferences has been key in all its achievements, as well as their involvement on the Board and Council.

We look back with gratitude for the progress that has been made in building trust and in working together in partnership. We look forward in hope as we work together with God in fulfilling His mission to bring good news to people of all cultures in our world and to transforming individuals, communities and nations in anticipation of the consummation of all things in Christ.

