

Towards 2010: Mission in the 21st Century

Update – July 2006

July 2006 Consultation

Building on the success of the 2005 Consultation which identified “mission themes” which call for attention in the preparation for the Edinburgh 1910 centenary, a further Consultation was held in Edinburgh from 3 to 5 July 2006. It brought together representatives of organisations which are making practical plans in relation to the centenary: Anglican Communion, Church of Scotland, Council for World Mission, Global Mission Network, International Association for Mission Studies, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, Lutheran World Federation, Pentecostal Movement, Roman Catholic Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, Seventh Day Adventists, Southern African Missiological Society, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance (with apologies from representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Latin American Theological Fraternity).

Key Decisions

The Consultation took some key decisions:

- In addition to the events being planned individually by several of the above organisations, they envisage also a shared event to be held in Edinburgh on the exact days of the centenary. This will have a celebratory character, will harvest the fruits of the collaborative study process, and will present a message concerning the meaning of Christian mission for our time.
- A collaborative study process will be launched to address the mission themes which have been identified through recent conversations within World Christianity. There will be flexibility as to the methods of participation in the study process while a central hub will provide coherence for the whole effort.
- A three-level structure of governance was agreed – Council of Reference, General Committee, Executive Committee (see below).
- A coordinating office will be established, with just one full-time member of staff whose work will be supported by part-time secondments and volunteers. The University of Edinburgh will host the office while salary costs of staff and running costs of the office will be met by the General Committee.

Intended Outcomes of a Collaborative Process

The Consultation agreed that the collaborative process will aim to have the following outcomes:

1. The churches will be provided with an opportunity to celebrate what God has done in the growth of the Church worldwide over the past century and to prayerfully commit to God the witness of the churches in the 21st Century.

2. The biblical call to mission will be affirmed and articulated within our contemporary contexts in terms of mission in the world with particular focus on evangelization.
3. A key conversation on mission will be initiated between e.g.
 - Mission leaders from the older mission movements of the North and the new mission movements from the South and East (on dynamics of new mission movements)
 - Church leaders and mission leaders (on who does what?)
 - Representatives of different Christian traditions (on defining mission theology).
4. Guidelines will be developed to help church and mission leaders evaluate for their own situation models of mission which are proving effective elsewhere.
5. Networks will be mobilized and alliances formed so as to develop greater strategic collaboration and greater synergy in fulfilling the mission mandate.
6. Based on a critical assessment of the status of the world, a new vision in terms of God's purposes for creation in Christ and a renewed spirituality and mission ethos will be developed in the life of the churches worldwide.

Mission Themes

In response to comments received in regard to the proposals of the 2005 Consultation, the 2006 Consultation adopted the following as mission themes:

1. Foundations for mission
2. Christian mission among other faiths
3. Mission and postmodernities
4. Mission and power
5. Forms of missionary engagement
6. Theological education and formation
7. Christian communities in contemporary contexts
8. Mission and unity – ecclesiology and mission
9. Mission spirituality and authentic discipleship

Structure of Governance

- The Council of Reference will include all Towards 2010 stakeholders and will have an advisory function. It will not be expected to meet but will be consulted by email and will receive regular update reports.
- The General Committee will have approximately 20 members representing (a) major groups planning 2010 events, (b) global mission organisations, and (c) churches which were not represented at the 1910 conference. Every effort will

be made to ensure that organisations appoint representatives in such a way that a proper balance is achieved in terms of geography, gender and age. It will be the highest governing body, responsible for all major policy decisions. It will hold full meetings in 2007 and 2009, with teleconferences as required between full meetings.

- The Executive Committee of up to 5 members, with representation from at least four continents, will be elected by the General Committee from within its membership. The Executive will have day-to-day responsibility at the policy level and will oversee the staff. It will meet regularly by teleconference and face-to-face when required.

Conclusion: Next Steps

The establishment of the Edinburgh coordinating office is expected to lead to an intensification of networking and communication as the Towards 2010 process gets into gear. Meanwhile appreciation is extended to all who have affirmatively and critically contributed to the early stages of planning for the centenary. We believe that the process has reached a very promising stage and are grateful to all who are committed to share, according to their own particular strengths, in this journey.

General Committee, Towards 2010
July 2006

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