

**Where to Next?**  
**Address to CMS Victoria Annual General Meeting**  
**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2005**  
**State Director Rev Paul Arnott**

Tonight I reflect on three questions related to the future of CMS in Victoria.

How is CMS in Victoria Mobilising for Mission?

What are the key things that we need to do over the next five years to mobilise for mission?

What are some of the major changes in cross-cultural mission around the world in 2005?

Let me begin by addressing the big picture first.

**World Mission**

You don't need to be told that we live in a world that is rapidly changing. In fact you're probably tired of being told it. The emergence of a global terrorism that has spewed forth the carnage of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 and the Bali, Madrid and London bombings is something with which we are still trying to come to terms in the west. As a nation we are bracing ourselves against what we are told is the inevitability of a terrorist attack on Australian soil. However, until we begin to exegete the root causes of terrorism we will never fully understand it, let alone find a solution. Writing in the Melbourne Age in July this year Haydn Bland defined terrorism as "group violence fed by shame." He's not far from the mark. There is a great deal of evidence that the causes of terror are injustice, poverty, the oppression of two-thirds world nations and widespread grievances resulting from western militaristic power.

One of the most significant changes missiologically in our world has been the shift in the center of gravity of the Christian church away from the west to that of the two-thirds world. More Anglicans worship each Sunday in Nigeria than there are people in Australia. The power base of Christianity now lies in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This was demonstrated recently by the African bishops'

censure of the Canadian and US Anglican churches over their acceptance of homosexual bishops and priests. Philip Jenkins has predicted in his influential book, *The Next Christendom*, that “By the year 2050 only one Christian in five will be non-Latino and white, and the centre of gravity of the Christian world will have shifted firmly to the Southern Hemisphere.”<sup>1</sup> Increasingly Christianity around the world will be associated with poverty, rather than wealth and privilege. A typical Christian will be a poor person, often extremely poor by western standards not a white fat-cat living in the United States or Western Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Another change that will impact missionary societies, indeed all of us, in the next five years, will be world fossil fuel crisis. Increases in the world oil price have driven up the cost of petrol over the past 6 months. This upward trend will continue and the cost of travel by land and air will keep going up. Already businesses associated with the motor industry around Australia report that drivers are cutting back in their use of vehicles. A number of businesses are struggling to survive; some have already been forced to close. The impact of oil shortages and resultant higher oil prices will not only see more people riding bikes or catching public transport but also far more expensive air fares. This will almost certainly mean that missionary societies will need to significantly revise the way they operate.

There is a great deal that we can learn as western Christians from our brothers and sisters in the two-thirds world. Rosanne and I were struck on our recent pastoral visit to CMS missionaries in Tanzania by the joy and depth of faith of Christians there. Despite the fact that African Christians have so little they're far more content than we are in Australia. Jesus' gospel encounter with the rich young ruler underscored the danger of putting money and possessions in a place of greater importance in our lives than a relationship with him. (Matthew 19.16-24) The more we have the more we want and the less content we are. It's an irony that often we accuse two-thirds world Christians of being syncretistic, of mixing tribal beliefs with their Christian faith. However, western Christians can be just as syncretistic by mixing materialism with their faith in Christ. On the morning we said goodbye to Helen Hoskins at Bunda at the end of our visit with her we were deeply touched by the beautiful prayer of her house-help Regina. She prayed, “Lord, we thank you that you

have brought us together...” It reminded me again of the truth that as we keep our eyes on Jesus and live the whole of our lives for him we can trust that everything that happens comes to us through the hands of a loving Father, something we can tend to forget in the hurly burly of daily life with all its stresses and strains. God really is in control.

Philip Jenkins also shows that the majority of missionaries in the world are now non-western. Recently, my wife Rosanne entertained two South Korean missionaries in our lounge room. South Koreans are in Australia to share the gospel with pagan Australians. The traditional mission-sending countries of the west have now become mission fields in our own right.

We can also learn from the way the African church plants new churches. When they want to begin a church in a new area they send an evangelist, someone with the spiritual gift of evangelism, to do the job. Usually the evangelist goes from house to house doing one-on-one evangelism. Once he has led a group of people to the Lord he meets with them for bible study and then a pastor comes to take over the church and build it up. This is a far more biblical model than the way we begin churches in the west. When we plant churches, which sadly happens far less often than it should, we tend to send someone with a pastoral rather than evangelistic gift. Where the African church falls down is that it then leaves the evangelist in the church he has planted, rather than sending him on to plant more churches. This often results in an ongoing tension between the evangelist who began the church and the pastor who maintains it.

Another thing Rosanne and I noticed is that the focus in African life is on relationship before anything else. When we met new people we were introduced, they told us how happy they were that we'd come, we signed the visitors book, we exchanged news of our families, we talked about how we were, we had something to eat and drink, and finally we got around to talking business. Just the opposite of the way we do things in Australia. We learned quickly the Kiswahili saying "Haraka, haraka, haina, baraka," the literal translation of which is "Rush, rush, no blessing." We also learned Wazungu, the Swahili word for foreigner, which derives from a word that means "to go round and round in circles", which is what Africans saw western people doing when they first came into contact with them.

## **The Financial Challenge**

One of the greatest challenges we face in CMS Victoria over the next few years is to achieve full funding of all of our branch missionaries. At present we don't fully cover all the cost of our missionaries. This year we have committed ourselves to contribute \$1,106,000 to the Federal Budget. However, the full cost of CMS Vic missionaries is \$1,457,000. This means that we are subsidised by other branches to the tune of \$351,000. We will implement a number of strategies over the next nine months to enable us to do our very best to meet that budget. Please join us in believing that together we will succeed in achieving that goal. If you are not a member of CMS let me encourage you to express your commitment to world mission by becoming one tonight.

## **Mobilising for Mission**

Two years ago we adopted ***Mobilising For Mission*** as a strategy to help us achieve the CMS-Australia Vision of **Proclaiming the Gospel and serving God's people around the world to see lives transformed by Christ**. A crucial part of achieving our vision is having the right people in the right jobs. Recently 25 year old Karen Trouw began as our new Media and Communications Officer. Karen has a Graphic Design and Marketing background and already has begun to have an impact in the branch. Shannon Harmer, who is 22, took over as Youth Ministry Coordinator, from Elise McKenry when she left to have her first child. Shannon has a vision for where the work needs to go and is tackling it with great energy and creativity.

Another factor in achieving our vision is to pass the baton of a passion for mission on to the younger generations, in the same way that earlier generations passed it on to us. For this reason earlier this year I appointed Sam McGeown as a Young Adults Worker. Sam has been a missionary in Japan and has a burning passion to see young people not only come to faith in Jesus Christ but to engage in fulltime cross-cultural mission. Sam was to have been one of our speakers tonight but his passion for mission has taken him back to Japan instead for a short visit. Sam is spending his time with the branch visiting young adults in churches and at theological colleges to do his best to turn them into missionaries.

For some time I have felt that we need to provide young people who want to explore full-time mission with input, teaching and an experience of mission to both equip them for mission and help them to test the waters for the future. We are currently exploring how best to achieve this. In her work as Mission Education Officer, Sue Bazzana, is talking to the Rev John Sugars from St Jude's, Carlton, about the possibility of adapting the Equip Training course to incorporate world mission.

As I have travelled around over the past two years I have discerned a need to provide people in churches with skills to help them understand those who belong to other religions and to equip them to share their faith in Christ with them. People in the pews are often unsure of how to best connect with people who belong to other world faiths and to share the gospel with them. We are talking to Steve Abbott who runs an *Everyday Evangelism Training Course* about the possibility of running a Cross-Cultural version of the course. Steve works for EFAC and Ridley College. At this point it seems likely that the focus will be on equipping people to share the gospel with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and New- Age devotees. This will help equip the local church for mission here but also will hopefully raise up some missionaries in full connection. We hope to have the course up and running in the second half of 2006 or early in 2007.

I have no illusions about the size of the task facing us. We live in an age which is antagonistic to Christian mission, indeed antagonistic to anyone who believes that Jesus Christ is the only path to salvation. Even some inside the church question whether or not a missionary society like CMS has the right to take the gospel to people in other countries. However, Jesus has never revoked his command that we make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28.16-20) or that when his Spirit comes upon us we will be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.8). If we are to remain faithful to him we need to continue to engage in the task of world mission with all we have and all we are until he returns.

## Notes

1. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
2. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, pp. 215-216.