

Letter to Crosslinks Members – Concerning Governance

Introduction

1. At the Annual Meeting of Members on 18 June I promised to write to all members to explain what was going on with regard to the Governance of Crosslinks prior to carrying out some meetings in different areas of Britain where I will be explaining things in more detail and seeking advice.
2. This is that promised letter! Whether or not you understand what I am communicating here please do feel free to come to one of the Regional events or write to me. All your expressed opinions will be taken into account as we seek to draft some recommended constitutional changes and even then, as members, you will have the final say.

The Background and Process up to now

3. As you will be well aware by now Crosslinks has undergone some massive changes in the last 3 years:
 - a. An independent review has been carried out into the staff and management of Crosslinks (Staff and Management Review). Many of the recommendations have been carried out, new people have been recruited and others have left.
 - b. The way of financing mission partners has been changed though for those who came on board under the old system there was a delay in the implementation until September 2005. There was considerable comment on this at the recent AMM and some of the detail has been clarified. Interestingly some of our sister Anglican agencies are also looking into similar changes.
 - c. As part of the review there was a clear recommendation that we needed to tighten up our stated distinctive contribution to world mission whilst maintaining our original purpose and foundation from 1922. General Council agreed the statement of our distinctive (see Annex A) in September 2002.
 - d. The review had also recommended 2 further reviews:
 - (1) A review of how we relate to churches in mainland Britain (Regional Review). This was carried out and an overhaul of our Regional Team was undertaken resulting in a smaller team with clearer direction.
 - (2) A review of the way that Crosslinks is governed (Governance Review). The results of this are the focus of this letter.
 - e. Most recently a complete overhaul of our communications has been carried out and was re-launched at the recent National Evangelical Anglican Congress in Blackpool
4. I have said this before but it bears repeating: I believe that Crosslinks would not have survived without radical change. Despite many mistakes in all the changes and considerable pain for many people God has been very good to us and we appear to be seeing some improvements in different areas.

The Background, Process and Findings of the Governance Review.

5. **What lead to the Governance Review?** What follows is a summary of some of the points of diagnosis raised in the Staff and Management Review, which precipitated the decision by General Council that further study needed to be made of the way that Crosslinks was governed:
 - a. The framework for all strategic decision-making was not obvious.
 - b. Concern expressed by certain General Council members of the broadening of the Society's theological base.
 - c. No clear strategies in which to fit plans: finance, mission, raising income, etc.
 - d. A General Council unclear as to their proper and distinctive role alongside the staff.
 - e. A General Council where certain skills required for running a Christian charity at the beginning of the 21st Century are under-represented alongside a fairly high age spectrum.
 - f. An inappropriate structure to General Council meetings and the presence of large numbers of staff. Despite this there was adjudged to be a lack of real knowledge and understanding of the staff team.
6. **Recommendations.** Following the above observations that were not thoroughly researched because they were not included in the brief the following recommendations were made with regards to governance structures:
 - a. Governance structures 'need to be looked at in detail' particularly relating to the distinctive roles of General Council, Standing Committee and the staff.
 - b. The need to look closely at the General Council's 'role, its size, its membership basis, its skill spread, and its knowledge and understanding of the staff team'.
7. **The Process of the Governance Review.** John Truscott was asked to look at the way that *"the Crosslinks trustee body, the General Council, is composed and functions. It [he] should also consider the relationship between the general Council, Standing Committee, and members of staff...In essence, this request is so that we take on board recommendations with regard to best practice for charitable governing bodies."* In order to carry out this assignment John went through the following processes, some of them concurrently:
 - a. Reading all minutes and paperwork from a year's worth of General Council, Standing Committee and all other committees.
 - b. Observation of Standing Committee and General Council meetings.
 - c. Personal interviews with the Chairman and members of the staff Leadership Team.
 - d. Analysis of the results of questionnaire responses from Council members and staff attending General Council.
8. **Cost** It is worth noting with gratitude that John undertook this last assignment without making any charge to the Society.
9. **The Findings of the Governance Review.** There were a number of positive elements in the analysis of the current governance structure as well as some areas of dissatisfaction:
 - a. **Positive Elements.**
 - Transparent government through election of members to General Council.
 - Overall structure was considered to be better than some other agencies.
 - The dedication of the Standing Committee.
 - Staff leadership.

- Improved relationships as compared with certain painful times in the past.
 - Visitors to General Council meetings were always hugely appreciated.
 - Staff input at meetings
 - Residential meetings were key to improved relationships.
- b. **Areas of Dissatisfaction.** Whilst recognising that the present structure had served the Society well it was felt that the rapid change in the world and in cross-cultural mission meant that the structure was no longer as appropriate as it had been (*“rather than promoting Crosslinks’ own mission, it is in danger of hindering it”*). There were three particular groupings of responses: Standing Committee members were on the whole the most dissatisfied with current arrangements; younger and newer members were critical of the current system as being outdated; staff members were critical of the lack of good relationships between staff and Council. The following areas that needed to be address were identified:
- The average age of General Council and Standing Committee is too high.
 - The make-up of General Council is too uniform and does not represent the skills needed.
 - The size of General Council is too large and is therefore expensive and unwieldy.
 - Council operates too independently of staff.
 - Disagreement is not dealt with.
 - The venue and meeting times are not ideal with a separation from the location of the Lewisham staff and times that prevent younger lay members from being available.
 - Agendas are too pressurised and so there is a lack of depth on issues.
 - Committees are too large and do not have required skills represented.
 - The Annual Meeting of Members does not provide a representation of the membership and people are uncertain who to vote for in the postal ballot.
- c. **Roles and Responsibilities.** The Review helpfully identified three roles that the current General Council is trying to fulfil:
- Working as the Board of Crosslinks – responsible for strategy, direction, plans/budgets and the appointment of the Chief Executive.
 - Working as Trustees of Crosslinks – guarding the doctrinal position, taking wider soundings and providing credibility in the Christian world.
 - Representing the family of Crosslinks – creating gatherings of Trustees, staff, mission partners and visitors.
- d. **Recommendations.** There are a great number of recommendations, too many to go into here but in essence they could be encapsulated like this:
- Create a smaller General Council and call it a Board.
 - Make sure that there is a better spread of skills and ages represented with more emphasis on leadership than on representation that has been the case up to now.
 - Consider becoming a company limited by guarantee.
 - Set up four Groups from Board members to replace committees and to cover the main staff team areas of Mission Personnel, Ireland, Regions and Mission Resources. Experts could be co-opted onto these groups from time to time.
 - Review the role of Standing Committee.

- Have occasional forums for Board, staff, mission partners and others to consider issues of current interest but without a pressurised agenda.
- e. **What Next?** The General Council meeting of 18 March 2003 looked in detail at the Review, both in small groups and in plenary session. Certain points were then given to a small Constitutional Working Advisory Group (Matthew Payne as Chair, David Mills, Stephen Dunham, Esther Clift, David Mace, Margaret West, Mel Lacy and Andy Lines) and they were asked to report at the September 17 General Council after an update in June and a briefing to the Annual Meeting of Members. The group looked at three main areas:
- Issues that could be addressed by General Council itself to improve its working. These thoughts are now back with the General Council.
 - Consideration of the pros and cons of becoming a company limited by guarantee. This is still being worked on.
 - Issues that will ultimately need constitutional change. These would require a vote by an Annual Meeting of Members or by an Extraordinary Meeting of Members. Proposals are currently being drawn up that will be aired at certain regional meetings to which members will be invited (see below for details at Annex B). General Council will subsequently decide what recommendations to put to the membership
10. **Regional Meetings.** Can I encourage you to come to one of the Regional Consultation Meetings listed below at Annex B. It really will be a chance for you to hear more, ask questions, comment on the recommendations and generally participate in the whole process. I do not know what will come out of the process but I can assure you that comments will be recorded and reported to General Council before they make concrete proposals for constitutional change.

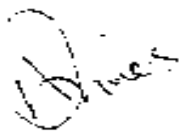
Other News

11. If you are still reading at this point may I congratulate you! I hope that this last section will be less difficult to follow and of interest to you. They come in no particular order:
- **Membership.** The keen-eyed amongst you will realise that the period of your membership of the Society is due to expire at the end of 2003. In view of all the changes General Council decided in its September 2003 meeting to extend the existing membership period until the end of 2005.
 - **New Communications.** Many of you will have received the new-look magazine. We are currently working on other initiatives in the field of publications etc. Quite a few have responded with comments, both positive and not so positive. Please be assured that all comments will be considered carefully but in the end a decision has to be taken. We are however always on the look out for new ways of doing things. All these new elements are designed to reach those who should but for some reason don't choose to work through Crosslinks; it is not change for change's sake but a serious attempt to reach the younger generations and correct an imbalance in those who we work with, without losing our existing fellow-workers.
 - **New Logo.** Part of the new look is the modified logo which emphasizes the cross of Christ and the 3-dimensional globe. The slogan of God's Word to God's World has been retained.
 - **The NEXT Programme.** Crosslinks is seeking to provide opportunities for mission engagement for those over 50 years of age through its NEXT Programme.

The programme exists specifically to recruit individuals with expertise, ability, and God-given skills accumulated through life. There is so much potential within the churches yet to be effectively engaged in service and all the more so with people considering career breaks and early retirement. We currently have 2 people engaged on this programme but there is ample scope for more, both short and medium term, especially in cultures where life experience and godly maturity are more highly valued than in the West. The key activities involved in this programme include teaching, TEFL (Teaching English as a foreign language), theological education, vocational education, administration and professional skills e.g. medicine.

- **New Staff.** With all the upheavals of recent years it has been good to welcome a number of new members of staff in recent months: Alan Purser has joined to head up the Regional Team responsible for relating to churches in Mainland Britain. The other members of the team are John Price with Gina Scotney, Jonathan Leeson with Sue Cowley, Udobata Onunwa helped by Ann Jinks in the North-West, and Lucy Buchanan helping him in the Lewisham office. Hazel Coulter kindly helps Mel Lacy in the Dublin Office and we hope to recruit a new Republic of Ireland youth worker. Jez Wainaina has joined Mary Higginson's Mission Personnel Team to co-ordinate the Smile programme with Abraham Ajayi going part-time. Marlene Forsyth-Gidharry also joins that team to co-ordinate programmes such as the NEXT programme. Graham Sopp and the Mission Resources Team has been joined by Karen Scutt to help focus our attention on individual supporters who may or may not be members of churches currently linked to Crosslinks.
 - **New Engagements.** We continue to see a steady flow of high quality candidates to be mission partners or associate mission partners though finance is still a problem for many. We are looking to expand our grants programme to countries such as Myanmar and are hoping to expand our study partner programme.
 - **Finances.** We are very grateful to God that our financial situation is looking healthier this year. There is still a long way to go but this has come as a real encouragement after 3 really difficult years. Thank you for your gifts. It may be that some of you would find it easier to give on a regular basis using a standing order. If you do not already give in this way and would like to, please consider filling in the enclosed form. Giving in this way also helps us to plan for the future.
 - **Anglican Communion Issues.** You will not be unaware of all that is going on in the Anglican Communion at the moment. This is bound to have an effect on the work of mission and we shall need your prayers for wisdom as we seek to make Christ known in the new context that is unfolding around us.
12. Before I go, I want you to invite you all to our next conference at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, Derbyshire. The date is 7-9 May 2004. It will be a joint conference with SAMS, continuing to work together when we can. You will have received the booking form in your last mailing, but if you want more please contact Suzy at Crosslinks office.

Thank you for all your prayers and support.



Annex A. Crosslinks Distinctive Statement

Crosslinks is an international mission agency with its roots in the Bible and its principal sphere of operations in the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Our prime focus is making Christ known through the proclamation and teaching of God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are enthusiasts for creative worldwide mission: our slogan is God's Word to God's World.

Crosslinks supports workers across cultural and other boundaries. We co-operate with churches and mission and relief agencies, sponsor students and encourage mission links worldwide – all within our prime focus.

Annex B. Regional Consultation Meetings on Proposed Constitutional Changes

These are the meetings which have been arranged so far:

20 November 2003 Brunel Manor, Torquay 3-5pm

The discussion will be open to all those who wish to attend, not just those booked into the Autumn Conference

6 December 2003 St John's Stoke-next-Guildford 10.15-12.30

Bring a packed lunch if you would like to stay on and chat. Drinks will be provided.

28 February 2004 St Oswald's, Newcastle – afternoon - time to be confirmed

6 March 2004 St. Mary's, Wollaton Park - afternoon - time to be confirmed