

February 2005

Crosslinks Members' Spring Letter

Dear fellow Crosslinks Member,

My main reason for writing at this stage is to encourage you to consider nominations for the elections to General Council for this year. It also provides me with the opportunity to update you on recent events and developments, which I hope will inspire us all to praise and prayer, as well as being of interest.

Elections

Last year there were a considerable number of people elected on a regional basis (7) at the same time as a change to the Constitution was accepted that will make the General Council smaller and more manageable (8 elected members and up to 4 co-opted members, plus the Trinity College Bristol representative and one non-voting General Synod representative). That change will take several years to bring about fully the desired effect. This is the first year of the programme when 2 places are open for nominations and election. At the same time the following are due to stand down or seek re-election having completed their terms:

- Paddy Benson
- Matthew Payne
- Esther Clift
- Gordon Fyles

May I take this opportunity to thank these folk on behalf of us all for the very considerable load they have carried in their term just finishing. We are very dependent on the good will of our General Council members and we have had that in abundance from this group. Thank you!

Our Constitution states that elected and appointed members “may serve for two consecutive terms of three years but thereafter may not stand for re-election or be re-appointed until one year has passed”. That means that Gordon Fyles and Paddy Benson will be taking an enforced and well-earned break from General Council whilst both Esther Clift and Matthew Payne are open for re-election if they wish to stand and are nominated.

In case you wish to re-nominate Esther and/or Matthew or nominate anyone else then please contact Suzy Wakefield on 020 8691 6111 or e-mail your request to swakefield@crosslinks.org. The nominees must confirm in writing their desire to stand, must be members of Crosslinks, sign again the Basis of the Society and the Statement of Faith and have the written backing of 5 other members. Completed nominations should be with me eight weeks before the Annual Meeting of Members. This year that takes place on Wednesday 8 June so nominations must be with me by 13 April.

In the event that there are two or less candidates then they will be deemed elected automatically. If there are more than two there will be an election by postal ballot. Please be prayerful in this important process and mark 8 June in your diaries for the Annual Meeting. Bishop Larry Robertson, a Regional Bishop of the Arctic will be

visiting the General Council that day and will give us some thoughts on the Lord's work in that area where BCMS began its non-European work

Finances

Much work still remains to be done to finalise the accounts for 2004 but the rough figures are as follows: Income £2,165,000, Expenditure £2,318,000, giving a deficit of £153,000. However after the valuation of properties and investments, and a recalculation of the pension liability, the deficit figure might reduce to £63,000. We are still waiting for important figures to come in but this is an indication of how things might be. To compare, in 2003 we had a surplus of £46,000, which increased to £323,000 following the property, investment and pension adjustments.

Marriages and Ordinations

There has been a glut of these or announcements recently with Paul Hunter being ordained in Tanzania, Dan Button in Uganda and Darren McCartney in the Arctic. The following Mission Partners have announced their engagements, Ida Glaser to Dr David Coffey, Nicky Darby to Desmond Thuambe, Timothy Mazimpaka to Rachel Rukundo, Sam Owen to Martha Terry and member of staff Karen Scutt to Andrew Jefferys.

Deaths

In the last month we have heard of the deaths of Crosslinks Vice President, Rev Wilfred Moss and former India mission partner Winifred Goode. Whilst we rejoice that they have entered their reward we acknowledge the bereavement of their families.

Staff

In my December letter I mentioned our need for some accounting assistance alongside Martin Brown and Janet Horsman. We have appointed John Boase in this part-time role; John has, with Thelma, been in Thailand until recently as a mission partner working in an AIDS orphanage. Thelma has also been giving considerable help in the Mission Personnel Team.

I also asked for prayer for the changes to the Regional Team (which will become the Church Partnerships Team from March). I would continue to request your prayers in this difficult transition, for the outgoing team, the remaining staff and the new people.

Travels

This is a good opportunity to update you on some of the most recent travels by staff members although there has been relatively few carried out since my last letter in December.

In December itself Mary Higginson visited Kenya on holiday but also managed to squeeze in a huge number of work commitments with mission partners and others. Alan Purser, taking advantage of a free ticket, made a visit to South Africa and Kenya in January.

I spent 2 weeks in Myanmar (Burma) in January, this time taking a small team from local London churches. We visited the far North of the country and the Diocese of Myitkyina. It was moving to visit the places and the people from this area where so many BCMS missionaries had served. One assistant bishop had been asked by a lady

of 105 years to apologise for the poor treatment meted out to such as Effie Berry and Canon AT Houghton as she was too old to come in person. I was able to get updated on the continuing standoff between the Anglican Diocese and Emmanuel Divinity School; Crosslinks has been asked to help in trying to seek some form of reconciliation in this damaging dispute. Please pray for this.

Following the trip to the North we were privileged to visit the town of Sittwe on the coast of the Bay of Bengal, up towards the Bangladesh border, for the consecration of Assistant Bishop Francis Sein Aung. His consecration is part of a conscious process of leadership transition in the Anglican Province as all but one of the diocesan bishops is due to retire in the next 5 years.

Many people have asked me about the Tsunami and its effects on Myanmar. The earthquake was widely felt but the country was comparatively spared from the kind of damage and destruction seen elsewhere. The government has, as normal, kept as a closely guarded secret the effects of the Tsunami but accepts that just under a hundred died, mainly fishermen from the South. Sittwe is said to have lost 12 fishermen. The toll in Myanmar citizens is known only to God as many live and work illegally in Thailand. What is known though is that Myanmar remains a country beset with economic, political and social problems, and Sittwe had only recently recovered from a 2004 cyclone. HIV/AIDS is a growing issue with the amount of drug trafficking and usage in the country (China's biggest HIV problem is in the border region adjacent to Myanmar). If you wish to be informed in prayer for Myanmar there is an excellent publication that we can send you for a month of prayer in March, although it will serve far beyond that month. Please contact the Crosslinks office to ask for a copy (a small donation of £2 to cover the cost is asked for).

After Sittwe we travelled back to Yangon where we met up with Crosslinks President, Chris Wright, for the beginning of the second School of Biblical Training. Just under a hundred students from all over the country attended sponsored by Crosslinks and Langham Partnerships International. About half formed a new Level 1 tackling the basics of biblical exposition and the other half (with the final-year students from Holy Cross Theological College), who had been present last year, went on to a more advanced level 2 with Chris Wright. After a slow start the seminar ended on a positive note with plans in train for next year. There are all kinds of possibilities opening up but we must keep praying for the establishment of a national movement for faithful, Biblical exposition that does not depend on our visits. Once again it has been a huge privilege to engage with people from all over the Province and to receive the Archbishop's warm endorsement.

Prayer Tape

I hope to put together a photograph presentation on the trip and also do a talk for the prayer tape. This provides a good opportunity to advertise the prayer tape, which is produced quarterly and features interviews with mission partners and church leaders as fuel for our prayers. If you would like to receive these tapes and, more importantly, to pray for the work, please get in touch with Lynda Blake on 020 8691 6111 or e-mail her at lblake@crosslinks.org

Whilst on the subject of prayer may I ask for your prayers for a few particular items:

- Shortly after the Myanmar trip Rev Mark Maung Doe, Principal of Holy Cross Theological College in Yangon and a key person in the preaching seminars, reported that his wife and some friends had been involved in a serious road accident leaving one dead and the others seriously injured.

- I am told also that the team of workers, working amongst those of other faiths in Britain, would also value special prayer support at this time so please pray for Pam and Afri Chandra, Marjolyn Duff, Norman and Denise Critchell, Wilson and Rebecca Gill, Gilbert and Uzma David and Ida Glaser.

Trinity College Bristol

Many of you will know of the strong historical links we have with Trinity College Bristol. We have just heard that their Principal, Dr Francis Bridger, has stepped down and they would covet your prayers for the selection of the next Principal (we have two members of their Council). In the meantime Howard Peskett (of lengthy Crosslinks connections) has stepped in as Acting Principal.

Recruitment

We need to keep praying that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into the harvest field. There are many opportunities for service both short and long term, for young and old and for people of different gifts to offer. We would dearly like to do more. Please pray for more labourers and pray that some would consider long-term service.

Well, that is some news to update you. Please join with us in praise of our great God and prayer for His great work in His world.

Love from

Andy Lines