

A year in the life of the World Church Relationships team...



The only way to describe the past 12 months is that it has been a roller coaster year! The first year in any new job

has its joys and challenges but there can be few roles which include the joys of working in such a passionate and dedicated team of staff and with Partners across such a varied section of Methodist and Uniting/United Church family.

My first encounter with World Church Relationships (WCR) was even before I officially started work! I was able to join the Pre-Conference Consultation for 24 hours in Plymouth in 2012. A year on and I am now ensuring that the 2013 Consultation will be just as successful. It is these times, when people from around the world meet, talk, worship and laugh together, that are so difficult to quantify in these days of justifying everything we do with statistics, outputs and numbers. Rather, these occasions form the core of long lasting and robust relationships that underpin other work of grant funding and placing personnel. If we don't know each other, how can we support each other? If we haven't met, how can we have those difficult conversations when we don't see eye to eye?

And so people are key to our work. Sometimes we see and hear about them. The Mission Partners send

us their newsletters and are available to talk about their work when they are on leave in the UK. At times visitors from abroad come to visit us. No one who met them will forget the 42 Nigerian bishops who came in April as they explored their Methodist heritage which is so important to those who have grown out of past missionary endeavours. Nor can we forget the very different visit of Bishop Sundo Kim from one of the largest churches within Korean Methodism. But there are also those that many do not see or hear about in the UK. Over 100 people around the world are supported through the Nationals in Mission Appointments programme where local staff salaries are funded through the World Mission Fund. These are in addition to the Scholarship and Leadership Training grants from the Fund that enable churches to build up the capacity of their workforce so they can then further the mission of their own churches. All of this going on quietly in the background. All of this helping to build up God's kingdom on earth.

There are challenges too. A major question is how we, within WCR, hold as good a relationship with the Methodist churches around Britain as we do around the world? One way to help with this is of course to develop even closer working relationships with MWM and Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) but we also need to draw upon

the wonderful outward looking spirit that is built into the heart of Methodists to help make this a reality. Our aim to grow more work which involves the encounter and exchange of people from across, and around, the globe will hopefully soon start to show some small fruits. These 'acorns' may one day grow and how we continue to resource new programmes with limited staff resources will be another challenge.

October 2013 sees the bicentenary of the first District Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. This was the seed from which much of the missionary work of the 19th and 20th centuries grew. Our heritage is important but it is only of real use if we learn to use it as a tool for mission for the future. The world of the 21st century is a very different place than that of 200 years ago. Our 'world' mission has now come to Britain with so many of those around us having origins abroad. We need to embrace this diversity and share mission and ministry together. As we move through the next 12 months we will be working out how 'One Mission' both in Britain and overseas can draw us to become:

- a world transformed by God's love;
- a confident Church motivated to share God's love;
- a people celebrating being part of a worldwide family.

Another exciting year ahead!

David Friswell