

## **BMS Council: December 2023**

### **Introduction**

The BMS Council met on the 12 December 2023.

Key items included refreshing the vision and mission statement of BMS, reviewing fundraising performance, and new partnerships and mission opportunities in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Europe.

The meeting began and ended in prayer, and encouraging news and stories were shared throughout the gathering. The Council was chaired by Marc Owen, a BMS Trustee, and 36 members attended, along with 15 BMS staff.

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### **Refreshing the BMS Vision and Mission Statement and Website**

“We wanted to emphasise our polycentric way of working, and we wanted emphasise partnership as central to mission,” said Ben Drabble, Director of Communications and Fundraising at BMS.

The Directors and Trustees undertook a review of the BMS vision and mission statement and Ben Drabble shared the results with the Council. The review found that the old vision and mission statement was not always understood and contained language that ‘othered’ people who are not from the West.

The clearer and more inclusive vision and mission statement can now be found on the BMS website and in BMS communications. The website is also being redesigned to improve trust, speed, navigation, simplicity, accessibility, transparency, and security.

### **Church Partners Update**

In the early years of BMS, the mission worker William Ward wrote to the General Director about sending an Indian evangelist to visit congregations in the UK. “The congregations will be electrified, and you will be laden with contributions,” Ward said.

Ben Drabble hopes that the new church partner scheme will recapture Ward’s original vision of BMS being a global catalyst for sending mission workers.

The current scheme is ten years old and connects churches with mission workers sent from the UK. However, the number of mission workers sent from the UK is declining, and the current scheme excludes the many International Mission Workers that BMS now supports.

BMS is planning to partner churches in the UK with International Mission Workers. This will help churches build relationships with Christians in the Global South and encourage Christians to learn from one another. Council members were asked to reflect on both the risks and opportunities of this missiological shift.

### **Fundraising Performance**

Ben shared an update on fundraising performance up to September 2023. Church giving and 24:7 partner giving met or exceeded expectations, whilst one-off gifts and appeals were lower than expected. Overall giving was below target, but it was noted that legacy giving had been strong during 2023.

### **Financial Update**

Caroline Trimble, Director of Finance and Operations, reflected on how God had been generous to BMS throughout 2023. Despite the cost-of-living crisis, supporters of BMS had continued to give sacrificially.

The Finance and Operations department budgets that BMS will receive an income of £6.8 million in 2024, compared to a forecast of £7.6 million in 2023. They aim to keep a flatline budget and minimise costs. The Trustees have approved an anticipated operating deficit of £300,000, drawing on designated reserves. The forecast reserves for 2023 are £4.8 million, which is well within BMS' reserves policy.

The Trustees had confidence in the overall strategy. New approaches that encourage partners to use local resources will enable BMS to continue in its mission.

### **Staff and Trustees Update**

Marc Owen expressed his thanks to BMS Treasurer Robert Ashurst and Ben Drabble, Director of Communications and Fundraising. Robert will be handing over the baton of treasurer to Ruth Elliot, and Ben is moving on from BMS this year.

Lynn Cadman, a BMS Trustee, gave an update on the past year. The Trustees enjoyed spending time reflecting on the topic of mission and empire with the General Director of BMS, Kang-San Tan, and received training on crisis management.

Lynn thanked Liz Bendor Samuel, who has stepped down from being a Trustee. The Trustees also appointed Marion Carson as Vice-Chair to support Marc in his role.

### **Country Updates**

God has given BMS the exciting opportunity to start a Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM) programme in Sierra Leone.

“The goal of CCM is to empower people to transform their situations holistically, using their God-given local resources in a sustainable and holistic manner,” said Arthur Brown, Director for World Mission.

BMS will be partnering with the Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone and New Harvest Ministries Development Office to scale up CCM across the country.

Arthur noted the closure of BMS' work in Guinea for now, as team members move on to new areas of ministry. Yet God continues to open doors for collaboration across West Africa. This includes the development of a training hub for mission workers in Ghana supported by Trinity Baptist Church and the Ghana Evangelical Mission Association.

The hub will be led by pastors and theologians from African countries. The leaders of the new hub envision sending mission workers to Muslim-majority countries in North Africa, where churches are small and there are few Christians.

Arthur also shared about a new and exciting opportunity for mission with the Quest Academy in Europe.

“What we want to do is counter the narrative that refugees are always a problem that need fixing,” he said.

The Quest Academy brings together Arab, Iranian and Afghan followers of Christ to serve near culture migrants in Europe. The academy provides theological training and partners Arab, Iranian and Afghan leaders with local churches across Europe.

### **Governance Review**

The Charity Effectiveness Team from Bayes Business School reviewed the governance of BMS and gave their report to council members in July 2023. The report concluded that BMS' governance was good and listed several recommendations for improvement. Some of these recommendations have now been implemented, such as having more Trustees on the Finance and Audit Advisory Committee and changing the format of board meetings.

### **The Future of Mission**

“I'm deeply grateful for how I've consistently seen God at work in our broken world,” said Kang-San Tan, as he reflected on what had happened in 2023 and closed the meeting in prayer.

He shared about how the story of Mary shows us both the wonder of the Christmas story and what the future of mission might look like.

“The future of mission is not from high-income countries to low-income countries,” Kang-San said. “God is using displaced people in Europe and people from Sub-Saharan Africa. God chose people like Mary who are young. She was part of a despised and occupied nation.”