



A review of global mission strategy

TN42 Training Notes series: Planning

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These notes take the form of a case study of how one church undertook a review of a specific area of its ministry. The area in question was the congregation's involvement in and support for global mission.

Use the case study either to see the need to rethink this particular topic for your own church or to study one possible template for how to carry out a review of any aspect of church life.

Being a case study, the notes explain what happened. This does not mean that this is a recommendation of a pattern that other churches should copy, but there may well be ideas to follow, to adapt or even to avoid.

The starting point

The church had two Sunday congregations totalling about 150 plus related activities for children and teens. There were a number of outreach activities such as a 10-week enquirers' group each term, a weekly club for children and young teens run by a paid Youth and Community Worker, and projects in schools and homes on the local estate.

By contrast, interest in 'missionary work' (as it was known) both in the UK and abroad had waned. The church maintained links with a number of societies, usually through a mission worker. Young church members on gap years with mission agencies were well supported. The church allocated 10% of each year's income to external mission. But personal interest, prayer and giving were not what they had been. Those still enthusiastic were mostly over 50, and the youngest committee members were late 50s, whereas the church's membership covered the whole age spectrum.

The review

The Church Council set up a group of four people, all keen to see the subject higher up the church agenda. One was the existing Missionary Co-ordinator. The group was given a clear brief (summarised here):

- how to engage the congregation's enthusiasm and commitment;
- how to support those from the church going on both short and long-term service;
- how many and which agencies to support;
- how financial giving should be organised;
- who should oversee this aspect of church life;
- what kind of teaching was needed to support this ministry.

The group had six months (including the summer period) to undertake the review and present their report.

The process

- 1 The Review Group met four times and communicated by email between each meeting.
- 2 They prepared a draft report at about the half-way point and shared this with all the existing Missionary Committee and reps.
- 3 They edited this a number of times in the light of comments received and their own further thinking.
- 4 They met with the Minister to discuss the final draft, which then went to the Church Council.
- 5 The Council discussed what was a radical, far-reaching and even controversial report, and agreed to implement it in its entirety.
- 6 The Review Group then met one more time to put in motion a process of implementation. The group then disbanded, its job done.

The first meeting

The Review Group researched:

- those in the congregation actively involved in external mission activity;
- former members of the church now employed in Christian service;
- financial giving, allocation and societies supported.

At the first meeting they surveyed the position regarding people going out for service elsewhere. They looked at the terms being used ('missionary' seemed dated, 'mission' was confusing, so 'global mission' was selected, a new phrase for the church). A wide-ranging discussion started to focus in on identifiable principles:

- the church needed fewer but stronger external links;
- there could be value in one-off projects as well as year-by-year support;
- all ages should get involved, not just adults;
- there was value in encouraging a mix of short-term workers (both gap year and early retirement) and those going to training for longer-term service;

- it would be better to give significant financial sums to a few rather than small sums to many.

Above all, they felt that the church needed to ensure its links had personal meaning, ideally with a current or former member of the church, rather than on-going support for specific societies where there was no real relationship. Without this, global mission would never have the charisma that other forms of evangelism generated within the church.

One member of the group circulated detailed notes of the discussion and other members emailed their reactions to this and their further thoughts.

A coherent strategy

At the second meeting the main principles came together and the shape for proposals arising out of these started to form:

- to provide the necessary challenge to encourage a global perspective;
- to create meaningful links with mission projects;
- to offer realistic financial support.

One member wrote this up in the form of detailed minutes, but in a coherent order. Another then rewrote this in report format, adding in further ideas where these seemed to flow from the discussion, asking the others for their comments on these. This meant that by the start of the third meeting, the group had a major document (the final version including appendices was just under 5,000 words) which resembled a proper report.

Looking back on the process, it was important to have reached this stage by now because there was still a great deal of work to be done to fine-tune this draft and to work out the implications and the detail.

The third meeting then worked through this draft, paragraph by paragraph. A revised draft was prepared and circulated and one member prepared a detailed financial appendix to illustrate how the proposals might work out in practice (the aim was to triple financial giving from the church). There was further email correspondence and a third draft was prepared. Different members of the Review Group then showed this to the existing mission committee and reps to gauge their reaction (as their roles no longer existed in the new plan).

The final stages

When these views had been received a fourth draft was prepared ready for discussion at the Review Group's final planning meeting. At this only minor amendments were made and the report was then ready to discuss with the Minister who had played no part in the process until now. He subsequently suggested one alteration which was agreed. The report then went to the Church Council with his enthusiastic backing.

Implementation depended on a new appointment of what the Review Group had called the 'Champion' for global mission within the church. Without such an enthusiast with authority to lead the church in this ministry, other far-reaching recommendations stood little chance of being actioned.

There was one member of the Review Group who, the other three members agreed, was the obvious choice. She was young and had just had her first child, an extravert who had great enthusiasm for global mission. She was well known within the church and had worked abroad before she was married. She agreed to consider the post, but felt she could only take it on

some months later after completing an existing church commitment. The others felt it better to wait for the right person than rush to immediate action.

When the Church Council pointed out that the report stood or fell on finding such a person, the Review Group were able to say that one person was keen to take up the post should the report be accepted. On this basis the report was agreed in its entirety, even though it was recommending a completely new approach.

The Church Council asked the Review Group to initiate the implementation stage. They therefore met one more time to select a new Global Mission Group who would work with the Champion. They considered names and made personal approaches to these people. As a result a group of four was formed, significantly younger than the previous committee and with a very different brief.

The report

The report consisted of seven sides of A4 plus four sides of appendices, well laid out for easy reading and understanding. Its headings were as follows (with no. of recommendations in brackets):

- 1 Terms of reference and structure of this report
- 2 Background and present position
- 3 Recommended principles for global mission (7)
- 4 Practical recommendations for providing necessary challenge (8)
- 5 Practical recommendations for creating meaningful links (8)
- 6 Practical recommendations for offering realistic finance (5)
- 7 Conclusion
- App1 The church vision statement and values (showing the proposed emphasis on global mission was entirely in line with this)
- App2 Former members ordained or employed in Christian service
- App3 Detailed budget and notes showing the financial impact of the new recommendations

What was being proposed was a completely new approach to this area of church life. To explain the reasoning behind this and provide a detailed plan required a significant report.

Lessons learnt

Here are ten positive principles for review, learnt through the process that was followed.

- 1 Clarity for the group: clear and detailed brief, specific timetable (but long enough for a thorough job).
- 2 Good use of time with a balance of meetings and continuous email communication in between.
- 3 Highly motivated members: one was the nominal leader but another drafted the report and everyone trusted each other to take initiative and get on with the job.
- 4 Permission to think outside the box: working from key principles to radical proposals.
- 5 Getting to a draft report early in the process, to give sufficient time to fine-tune it, discuss it carefully with stakeholders, and see its implications.

- 6 The importance of language: 'global mission' instead of 'missionary', a 'champion' with 'support group' rather than a 'committee' with a 'chairman', etc.
- 7 Bringing the Minister on board once the report was ready, so that it went to the Council with his full endorsement.
- 8 Format of report: explanations, principles to work to, followed by sets of practical recommendations clearly argued and supported by appendices.
- 9 A clear idea of process for implementation, with the key person to champion this ministry ready for a formal approach once the report had been accepted.
- 10 The decision that it was then better to delay full implementation until the leader was available, rather than rushing ahead.

And the results?

The new group formed and the implementation process began two months after these notes were first published. Progress was slow in the first year (for external reasons) but since then the global mission profile has been significantly raised within the church. The 'champion' appointment had a marked impact. Some aspects of the original report were amended as experience was gained. The group launched a major financial project in Zambia which included church members travelling out to help with building work for a Christian school. This has since been followed up with other appropriate projects. The person appointed as 'champion' has moved on to other responsibilities and been replaced.

These training notes are designed to illustrate a review process rather than to promote a church global mission strategy. But an outline of each paragraph in the report is available at Training Notes **TN42a** in the Resources section of the website.

These notes are available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index> and then TN42. For a more thorough review of all church life, see HC4 & 5, *The Church Health Review* in the Health-checks pages of the Resources section and Article A35, *Mapping your church*. Training Notes TN103, *How to encourage creative thinking*, and TN116, *Global mission giving*, are also relevant.

John's resources are marked for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication and Administration. File TN42 under Planning.

John Truscott, 24 High Grove, St Albans, AL3 5SU
Tel: 01727 568325 Email: john@john-truscott.co.uk Web: <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk>.