

Mission Overseas: TAKE 2

Snapshots of our work

Proclaiming Christ and His Universal Reign Partnering in mission around the world

The Board of Mission Overseas (BMO) has a vision: To serve a mission-hearted Church, in step with the God of mission, reawakened to the missionary nature of God's Word, placing mission at the heart of all it is and all it does, from the end of the pew to the ends of the earth.

Cloudy or bright?



Rev Uel Marrs
Overseas Secretary

Airborne after an eight-hour delay due to volcanic ash, my thoughts ran ahead to my destination, Ukraine. I recalled the toxic cloud that once rose from the Chernobyl nuclear power-station; and the dark cloud of Communism that brought great grief to Ukraine for more than 50 years.

Meeting Bishop Sandor of Kárpátaljai Református Egyház (KRE), the Hungarian-speaking Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, which is in western Ukraine, I was shown a memorial to ministers martyred and imprisoned during the Communist era.

During this time the only church meetings permitted were Sunday services and funerals, with youth meetings being run as 'birthday parties'. In almost every village, church-run schools were confiscated or destroyed. Church-goers were threatened with the loss of their job or their child's place in school. The Church also suffered from the impact of Stalin sending 30,000 ethnic Hungarians to

Siberia supposedly to help with post-WWII reconstruction, few of whom ever returned home.

Through the dark days of Communism, KRE's ministers and people persevered in faithful prayer, penetrating the dark clouds of oppression and providing the foundation for brighter days to come but with the fall of the Berlin Wall, 1991 saw the clouds of Communism blown away. Soon afterwards, KRE experienced a spiritual awakening, with a new generation taking up the mantle of leadership and many coming to faith.

Today, KRE has 80 ministers, 109 congregations and a membership of 54,000 adults and 6,000 young people. These people have faith: not cloudy but clear, not superficial but substantial. All are firmly focused on the One who walked with them through a period when they experienced great darkness.

As my return flight took off right on time, my thoughts ran ahead of me, to the day when we will see clearly the Lord Jesus Christ coming again on clouds of glory. While together with our brothers and sisters in Transcarpathia we wait patiently for that day, may we like them be so committed to prayer that we keenly perceive our missionary calling, and have a mission outlook that is not cloudy but bright!



"Ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus... I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers."

Ephesians 1:15–16

Guiding Principle: Church-based

PCI is one small part of the universal Church, with gifts to give and receive within the global Body of Christ, historically emphasising the importance of establishing and encouraging church-to-church partnerships through which resources are pooled and opportunities discerned; endeavouring to build up missionary partnerships for mutual trust, encouragement, respect, challenge and accountability. This kind of partnership is in itself an effective witness to a fragmented world.

Reaching the Unreached

BMO's Outreach Ministries Committee (OMC) continues to keep prayerfully under review the following areas of outreach, as engaged in by our Church together with its overseas partners:

Evangelism and church planting

Scripture translation, distribution and literacy work

Hospital and community based healthcare mission

Schools and other educational establishments

Sustainable development and crisis intervention



People of Vision

The story of Makata Church in N'dirande Township, Blantyre, Southern Malawi



Almost 70 years ago, in 1941, when Europe and much of the rest of the world was at war, and Malawi was still known as Nyasaland, a gentleman from Blantyre approached a chief in his community to ask for a piece of ground to build a church.

The ground was generously gifted and a small, grass-roofed building eventually appeared in what is now a township in Blantyre called N'dirande. The building was the shape of a cross, and housed some 500 people every Sunday. Like most Presbyterian Churches at that time, a school was often built alongside it and so it was at Makata in N'dirande. The Sunday school met in the Primary school and flourished.

But let's fast forward – the war is over, some of the troops have returned and the church at N'dirande starts to grow. But because of its position on the side of the mountain and the dreadful condition of the roads, it soon becomes a community people know about, yet seldom visit.

However, in the years that have passed since Malawi gained independence in 1964, N'dirande has grown, though the roads are no better. Some years ago the Makata community made the decision to rebuild their church, raising the funds themselves. The church now has a beautiful new roof, and Irish Presbyterians from Dundonald, Stormont, Adelaide Road Dublin, Greyabbey, Knock, Lucan and Hamilton Road Bangor

have all visited and supported their brothers and sisters in Makata congregation – funding a new floor, painting the sanctuary, providing a sound system and donating pews. Makata is a lively, growing church fellowship with 300 elders, 12 choirs and some 7,000 people attending various services. It also has a very active M'vano women's group, who work alongside one minister.

The vision continues through the work of Makata's Session Clerk, Mr Kenneth Nsona, a businessman with tremendous commitment to 'His Church', which he continually seeks to encourage. Additional ground was purchased recently, so that a shower block and toilets can be installed. They would also like to improve their kitchen facilities, and build a security wall around the church.

In an area where there is 70% unemployment, one asks, "How this can be achieved?" Makata's bank loans have been repaid by committed, visionary people, who depend on their Heavenly Father to help make things happen.

The story of Makata is not over yet! We wait to see how God's vision for these people further unfolds.

Maurice and Helen Kennedy



Equipping Christian Leaders for Ministry and Mission

BMO's Leadership Development Committee (LDC) seeks to implement a leadership development agenda with a strong missional thrust and focus in the global context. Its desire is that PCI may give to and receive from the worldwide Church committed, mission-minded leaders, whose maturity in following Jesus Christ inspires discipleship in others and thus enables the Church to testify with integrity to the transforming power of the goodness and love of God in Jesus Christ.



Speech & Language Therapist, Sarah Eves, who is a member of PCI and served as a CCD volunteer in 2008/09, seen here with a child from CCD's Rainbow House.

Christian Care Foundation for Children with Disability (CCD)

CCD's aim is to demonstrate Jesus' love by helping to develop disabled children to their highest potential through a holistic approach and to ensure that disabled children have equal rights, opportunities and a good quality of life in Thailand.

CCD welcomes international and local volunteers (both professional and non-professional) to work alongside CCD staff. For more information, go to:

www.ccdthailand.org

Tarn's Story

In September 2009, Tarn Saenwian came to the University of Ulster at Jordanstown to study for an MSc in Management and Corporate Governance. She shares how BMO, through its Leadership Development Committee, came to support her and what this has meant as she trains for a future leadership role in a caring, Christian ministry to disabled children in Thailand.

"Back home in Thailand, my family work with disabled children through an organisation called the Christian Care Foundation for Children with Disability, or CCD for short.

My studies here are a preparation for a management role in CCD and are helping me understand how organisations work and think. I'm also learning to appreciate the culture from which many of our volunteer helpers come.

When I first arrived in Belfast, I stayed with Lila Steele, who has adopted two children from CCD's Rainbow House Project. She very kindly helped me to find my way around. One day, as we walked around the Jordanstown campus trying to find the Course Director, we ended up in what turned out to be the chaplaincy.

There we met, Cheryl Meban, the Presbyterian Chaplain, who did her best to find the help we needed.

Cheryl, knowing I was having problems finding some of the money needed to pay my course fees, which had proved to be much greater than I had expected, passed this information on to BMO's Leadership Development Committee (LDC).

Within a few weeks, the news came back that LDC had agreed to allocate a grant to cover the balance of my fees. This was a huge answer to prayer, and a big relief for me and my family.

My family and I thank God for the help given by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) that has enabled me to study here for this year, and for all that I'm learning in preparation for my future role in CCD. Through this, I have learnt that God works in wonderful and unexpected way!"

Tarn Saenwian



Mobilising the Church for mission

“To prepare God’s people for works of service,
so that the body of Christ may be built up”

Ephesians 4:12



We place a premium on educating, enthusing and enabling members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), at all levels, to own the vision for mission in the overseas context and to engage in direct, ‘hands-on’ service in mission, so that our whole Church may have the purpose of ‘proclaiming Christ and His universal reign’. Within BMO, it is the Mission Involvement Committee (MIC) that seeks to take the lead in encouraging and enabling this ‘mission engagement’.

Help & Advice

It is hugely encouraging to see more and more individuals and congregations within PCI wanting to be or already directly involved in mission overseas, and to have many of them turning to us for help and advice. In particular, we try to provide answers to the many questions we are being asked and, in the words of Ephesians 4:12, to help equip and ‘prepare God’s people for works of service’. Here are just some of the many questions we are being asked with increasing frequency and how we are seeking to provide answers.

I would love to see more people in my congregation excited about mission!

We in BMO would love that too! Often the best way to get folk excited about mission is to tell them a story because there’s nothing quite like a good story, well told, to excite, envision and mobilise people for mission.

Sometimes it’s possible to find people locally who have a story to share, for instance, someone in your congregation or Presbytery who has been on a mission trip. Where that’s not possible, BMO is working at developing a pool of Mission Mobilisers to meet this need – folk such as missionaries on home assignment, those who’ve served on a short-term team or visited mission personnel or a project overseas, and people who work behind the scenes enabling others to ‘Go & Serve’.

What they will all have in common, is a passion for mission, a story to tell and a desire to excite, envision and mobilise each and every one of us to be Christ’s witnesses ‘from the end of the pew to the ends of the earth.’

An important ingredient for the building of mission ‘excitement’ is the realisation that we’re part of something bigger.

A great way to experience ‘the big picture’ is to attend one of our Celebrations of Global Mission, to hear about what God is doing in His world today and celebrate that work as part of the larger PCI family. Plan to attend and plan to get excited!

Do you have some information on...?

The answer is almost definitely, ‘Yes!’ BMO recognises that the need for good quality, up-to-date information on what God is doing in his world and how we can be involved is just as important today as it has ever been.

We continue to strive, therefore, to keep PCI members up to date with the latest news on BMO’s work, and its personnel and partners, through, for example: Personnel and Country Profiles, Posters, PCI’s Points for Prayer annual handbook and the weekly Prayerline bulletin.

The launch in the past year of the BMO website (see back cover) is a significant additional resource for those seeking information on PCI’s involvement in mission overseas.



For more details on BMO’s Celebrations of Global Mission or how you can book a Mission Mobiliser for a mission event, contact the Mission Overseas Office or visit our website:

www.pcimissionoverseas.org

Serving through teams



A Team Leader reflects on Overseas Team Training

For most of us, going on an Overseas Team is a 'leap of faith', travelling to a land and people unknown, to a culture and lifestyle quite different to our own.

Overseas Team Training (OTT) is invaluable for teams preparing to engage in mission overseas, providing specialist input on issues such as understanding and coping with cultural differences, physical and emotional health, spiritual well-being, security and building your team.

I found it a helpful and interesting day which has allowed us to plan and prepare more thoroughly. We should now be able to stay healthy, happy and safe yet, no doubt, clinging on to God for every step. Of course, this truly is the safest place to be!

Sharon Creighton, Leader, Malawi Teachers' Team 2010

My congregation wants to send a team overseas. Where do we start?

When Christ sent his first 'short-term mission teams' out (Luke 9 & 10), he prepared them by explaining what the work would involve and what they should expect to encounter. As increasing numbers of congregations send out their own teams and individuals to serve overseas – whether short or longer-term – BMO would encourage Church Leaders to take that same responsible approach.

It can be difficult, however, for congregations to access all the expert help and advice that might be needed to successfully establish an overseas partnership, to send out a team or individual, and to receive them back again.

Through annual training events, such as Briefing for Senders, Debriefing for Senders and the Overseas Teams Training (OTT) Day, BMO seeks to equip and prepare individuals, congregational teams and those that send them, for the practicalities of mission involvement overseas.

I think God's calling me to serve overseas this summer. Is there a team I can join?

For many, the answer will be, 'Join your congregational team'. However, not every congregation is in a position to send its own team overseas. Equally, it may not be possible for a single congregation to fulfil a request for a 'specialist' team. For these reasons, BMO and PCI's Board of Youth & Children's Ministry (YAC) have both provided centrally organised PCI mission teams over a number of years, sending them to a variety of locations overseas. From 2011, the organisation of these PCI teams will, for the first time, come under the oversight of a single BMO/YAC 'Overseas Opportunities' group.

While the organisational structures, team destinations and tasks may change, it remains the desire of both BMO & YAC that our Church should be able to send teams in response to invitations from our overseas personnel or mission partners. Our aims are that these teams would provide encouragement to those who host them; and that team members would grow in their personal faith and understanding of Global Mission, returning with an infectious enthusiasm that stimulates further mission interest and involvement in their own lives and in the life of the congregations that have sent them.

How this desire works itself out in practice is demonstrated perfectly by the two Malawi Teams going out from PCI in the summer of 2010:

- One, a joint BMO-YAC 'Teachers Team', will be going to Northern Malawi to work with Diane Cusick and Fiona Innes, meeting the vital need for training of early years' teachers. Its membership reflects the diversity of age, gender and geographic spread within PCI.
- The other, a BMO team, which is going to Southern Malawi, has a very different purpose, offering its members the opportunity to 'Go-See', to listen and learn, rather than do a particular 'task'. Our hope is that members of this team will be envisioned for mission so that they, in turn, can encourage their respective congregations to catch the vision for mission overseas and become directly 'involved'.

Is God prompting you to serve Him overseas in 2011? Then check out the BMO and YAC websites for details on future teams, as well as for longer-term mission opportunities.

Seeking justice, showing compassion

When the poor are able to access very modest financial support through micro-credit schemes and 'start-up' grants, they can transform their lives in a sustainable way. Recognising this reality, the 2009/10 World Development Appeal – 'Credit Where Credit's Due' – has raised £610,000 (€716,000) in support of micro-finance projects in Ethiopia, India, Cambodia and Mali, underlining how we, as an integral part of our Christian calling, can be of real help to those suffering most from the effects of the worldwide 'credit crunch'.



Chali: Man of Vision

In August 2009, Moderator of General Assembly, Dr Stafford Carson, and his wife visited projects in Ethiopia supported by the 2009/10 World Development Appeal. This is the story of one individual they met.

In the highlands of Northern Ethiopia we met a remarkable man called Chali. He lives on a hillside overlooking a beautiful valley. In his garden, Chali grows many different kinds of vegetables, including cabbages, onions and beetroot. What makes Chali so remarkable is that he is totally blind.

Chali lost his sight in a freak accident in 1981. He later got a job at a community shower-house, where he collected money from those who used the facilities. Walking home each evening, he carried a jug of water from the shower house, which he used to water 10 little pepper seeds someone had given him. The pepper plants grew, producing a small crop which he sold for a modest profit. "If I can make that small amount from 10 plants," thought Chali, "what would happen if I grew 100 plants?" It got Chali started in growing fruit and vegetables.

Standing with him in his cabbage field, he told us his story. With the help of the local

church, he was able to borrow seed from their seed bank. Any farmer can borrow up to 20kg of seed but must pay it back with interest at the end of the season. Chali's success at growing vegetables, and especially cabbages, has enabled him to sell them in a local village and make a living for himself and his family.

As well as providing him with seed, the local church's facilitators taught Chali about composting, terracing, and basic hygiene. As a result, Chali's business has grown, allowing him to build a new house for his family.

Even though he's physically blind, Chali is a man of vision. He would like to expand his business to sell vegetables in another village nearby, but as he says, "they haven't got a vision for vegetables yet!"

Chali praises God for the help he has received and the difference that has come about in his life through the support of the local church. He hasn't allowed his poverty or disability to hold him back, but with appropriate and wise help, he has used his gifts and resources to make a difference for his family and for his community.

HAITI EARTHQUAKE APPEAL



Presbyterians' response to the Moderator's Appeal for Haiti was amazingly generous, raising £822,000 (€965,000) up to 28 May 2010. This has been distributed equally between Christian Aid and Tearfund partners in Haiti. Alexia Haywood, a Christian Aid staff member from Dublin, has been in Haiti, working with the team on the ground to ensure funds are used as effectively as possible.

Speaking of one victim, Alexia says: "The Haiti earthquake forced many of Marie-Yolene Tomas' closest relatives to seek refuge in her humble home. Today, 11 people live there, including a five-month-old baby who, days after birth, was left outside the office of POZ, a Christian Aid partner in Haiti. POZ provides healthcare and specialist support to people who, like Marie-Yolene, are living with and affected by HIV/AIDS."

Alexia goes on, "I've been impressed and inspired by the many Haitians I've met, by our partners and people from the affected communities who are benefiting from the funds and partners' help. All are working hard, eager to gain control of their lives again."

A \$130-a-month cash distribution is allowing people to buy what they need most and purchasing materials locally helps stimulate the badly damaged economy. Marie-Yolene is using the money to repair her badly damaged home, and keep the rains and thieves out.

These community-based cash distributions not only ensure that those who most need help receive it, but transportation costs and fees charges by money transfer offices or banks are also avoided. Cash distributions will end when people are ready to start longer-term income generation activities, such as revolving loans and cooperatives.

"It is an incredible privilege to be here," says Alexia, "supporting Christian Aid partners reaching out to thousands of earthquake-affected people. To be able to ensure that the generosity of PCI members and others is not only helping survivors directly, but is also enabling communities to get back on their feet and be even stronger than before the quake."

Supporting mission

Making it possible
through project funding

BMO regularly provides guidance to PCI congregations which, having met their United Appeal target for the year, wish to go the 'extra mile' in giving, by supporting an overseas project. Information on projects suitable for support by congregations or individuals is available from the Mission Overseas website. Alternatively, details of current projects may be obtained from the Mission Overseas Office.

Consultation is also available to PCI's other mission boards and related organisations as they seek advice on the selection and support of projects with PCI's overseas partners.

We want to express appreciation to those people, and those other boards and organisations which, in the past year, have organised and contributed to the projects named opposite, as well as the congregations and individuals who have helped to fund the work of Mission Overseas in any way.

The Presbyterian Women's Birthday Fund (2008/09)

A total of £69,834 was raised, half of which (£34,942) went 'overseas' to the Christian Evangelical Church in Timor (GMIT), one of our partner churches in Indonesia. This enabled GMIT to purchase a truck to serve isolated village communities and assist in getting people and their produce to market. GMIT has also been using some of the funds to support an empowerment programme for women of the Church, encompassing education, counselling and training.

The Youth and Children's 'Treasure Box' Project (2008/09)

£90,834 was raised in support of the work of Sunday School teacher training carried out by the Youth & Children's Department of the Livingstonia Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Malawi.

The Junior Boys' Brigade 'Trees Please' Appeal (2008/09)

£10,500 was raised, split equally between three tree-planting projects located in Jamaica, in Northern Kenya and around Bethlehem, with a further £4,000 going to promote the work of the Boys' Brigade in the Caribbean.

The Haiti Earthquake Special Moderator Supported Appeal

Launched in January 2010, the Appeal raised £822,000 (€965,000) up to 28 May 2010! In a year when most are finding money is tight and many are struggling to make ends meet, this was a truly magnificent response. Through our Christian Aid and Tearfund relief and development partners and their partners on the ground, these funds have helped meet the immediate needs in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and, longer-term, are helping Haitians rebuild their lives, businesses and communities.

Thank you
for your
generous support

Serving in mission in 12 countries on four continents

One of our guiding principles in mission is to be people-focused:

God's mission is focused on people, serving the whole person – physical, emotional, intellectual as well as spiritual needs.

God reaches people (mostly) through people, direct personal missional encounter is vital.

God requires the highest standard of training, support and care for people sent out in Christ's Name, for the treasure of His gospel is placed in jars of clay.

With 40 adults (and 25 children) currently overseas, we are thrilled that their number will shortly be augmented as those shown below begin service in Africa and Europe.

Volker & JinHyeog Glissmann



The Glissmanns are a truly cross-cultural family: Volker is German; JinHyeog, South Korean; while N Ireland is 'home' for the children. In 2002, Volker began a period of study at Belfast Bible College, which culminated, in 2010, with his being awarded a PhD in Old Testament Studies.

Since 2007, the Glissmanns have been active members of Harmony Hill Presbyterian Church near Lisburn, where JinHyeog has been Musical Director. In Malawi, Volker is to be Executive Director of TEEM (Theological Education by Extension Malawi), based in Zomba; this will allow him to combine his abilities and experience in administration with his passion for theological education.

Volker is keen to reach out to villages with lay-leadership training in theology, while JinHyeog's desire is to explore African melodies and contribute to music ministry in a rural church setting. Together with their children – Lina (8), Micha (4) and Lukas (nearly 2) – they leave for Malawi in July 2010.

Aimée Campbell



Aimée, who is currently studying Education with Spanish and Portuguese at Churchill College in Cambridge, England. She is due to spend her 'year abroad' in Northern Spain.

Going under BMO's 'Ignite' programme, she will be based in Bilbao, where she will be part of a Grupos Biblicos Unidos (GBU) team working alongside Derek and Jane French. The main aim of this team is to help students grow in their faith and to equip them to share and serve God in all areas of their lives. Aimée is due to set-off at the end of September 2010 and expects to be in Spain for around nine months.



Mission Overseas Website

Launched on 1 September 2009, the Mission Overseas website exists primarily as a resource for members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI):

To help inform them about the nature and scope of our Church's involvement in mission overseas; and to enthuse, envision and equip individuals of all ages, as well as groups, congregations and presbyteries, for active engagement in God's mission to the world.

If it's up-to-date points for prayer, a profile for a particular mission partner, project or country, a list of current opportunities for service overseas, or access to mission resources that you require, then the BMO website should be your first 'port of call'.

If you haven't seen the site yet – have a look. If you're already using it, please encourage others to see what it has to offer.

www.pcimissionoverseas.org

"This is a great website – you have done a power of work! I have been looking at some of the different pages and found it informative, easy to follow, as well as being colourful and attractive. Well done!"

"We love the site, it is so modern, easy to navigate, informative and up to date! Excellent job! Great to have all this information in one place, we will be passing this on to others and recommending it! We've already learnt stuff we didn't know!"