

FOREWORD

John Boyes

Dr John Boyes is the executive director of the CBRF/Partnership organisation and an elder in a Hertfordshire assembly. He is actively concerned in promoting the links between mission and evangelism in the nation's churches and in the world church.

The church has always declared herself to be continuously reforming—*ecclesia semper reformanda*—and in today's world of vast changes, she has been accused of 'missing the boat' in a variety of ways. Perhaps one of these is in the foreshortening of understanding of her mission from God, shown in a reluctance to admit to what has actually been happening to world society in the post-war decades.

Since the earliest days, missionary enterprise of the Western churches has always assumed a 'sending' posture towards 'receiving' churches overseas. Little has changed until recently when the indigenous churches of the 'Third World' have shown themselves to be something more than distant outstations of homeland churches established by ex-patriate missionary endeavour. It is this shift in location as to where the church is to be found which calls for serious reflections and reorientation in our concepts of missionary strategy.

Amongst Brethren assemblies, there has been a faithful and considerable testimony—second to none in proportion to membership—yet the patterns have developed little over our 150 years of history. These have served well the understanding and commitment to a 'faith mission' principle, based on aspects of scriptural guidance, until the issues of commendation and responsibility of the local church for its recommendations, the accountability of the Lord's servants, and, in these latter days, relationships with indigenous churches and their leaders, have become more serious and urgent.

We do well to pay heed to the advice offered in clause 8 of the Lausanne Covenant:

'We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world evangelisation and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelise belongs to the whole body of Christ . . . thus a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ's church will be more clearly exhibited. We also thank God for agencies which labour in Bible translation, theological education, the mass media, Christian literature, evangelism, missions, church renewal and other specialist fields. They too should engage in constant self-examination to evaluate their effectiveness as part of the church's mission'.

We are being called today to review and to reorganise the mutual resources which the whole church is capable of mobilizing in mission, wheresoever it may be needed and in whatever partnership form it should take. For instance, it is increasingly clear that the Third World churches are manifestly best in communicating the gospel within their own cultures; expatriate missionaries may well be evangelistically ineffective. How then should Western missionary support be deployed in facilitating 'multiple ministries for multi-dimensional tasks' (Orlando E. Costas in 'Churches in Evangelistic Partnership': Chap VIII of *The New Face of Evangelicalism* ed C Rene Padilla—Hodder & Stoughton 1976)?