PARADIGM CHANGE IN PRACTICE

Posted on January 23, 2014 by Eddie

It is tempting for charities and mission agencies to be driven by the best secular techniques in their communications with supporters. However, that simply isn't enough, our communication needs to be biblically and theologically thought through. We recently tried something new at Wycliffe...
Category: Bible & Mission

A few months ago, I wrote a piece about the changes that we need to see if mission agencies are to meet the challenges of the future, in which I wrote:

> ***We Need To Learn to Think Theologically****: mission agencies are great absorbers of management and leadership literature. Effectiveness, impact and speed are terms that crop up all over missionary literature... We need a radical refocus of planning and consultation processes to be more theologically thought through and focussed.*

At Wycliffe, we recently sent out a letter to our supporters, explaining who we are and what we do. However, this letter wasn't a simple introduction to Wycliffe. It was written from deeply held beliefs about the nature and place of mission agencies in God's work. As a result, we said some things that might cause a fund-raising consultant to have palpitations, but we believe that we were honouring to God, his Church and his mission.

The letter isn't perfect, but I believe that it is a small step in the direction that we need to be going.

> *Happy New Year! January is a time for fresh starts and new beginnings. It is a good time for organisationsÂ to make a fresh start, too.*
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> *I want to take the opportunity to let you know what you can expect from Wycliffe Bible Translators. In theÂ enclosed booklet, youâ€™ll see how Wycliffe will communicate with you during the coming year. Some of theseÂ things are new; others are tweaks and changes to what you may be familiar with.*
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> *Before that, I want to share a few thoughts about the vision and character of this organisation. We want ourÂ motivation to be completely clear to you in all that we do and say.*
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> ***Wycliffe Bible Translators exists because we believe that the Bible is the best way for people toÂ come to know and understand who God is. Our vision is that by working with churches,Â organisations and individuals around the world, all people will have access to Godâ€™s word in aÂ language that they truly understand.***
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> *With partners worldwideÂ* ***we aim to see a Bible translation programme begun in all the remainingÂ languages that need one by 2025.***
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> *In the light of these ambitions there are certain characteristics that we believe are fundamental.*
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> ### *Mission is primarily Godâ€™s activity and it is God alone who brings success*
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> *In todayâ€™s climate charities are encouraged to tell you what you can achieve through*

your support. We can beÂ tempted to tell you that,Â â€˜With your donations, prayers, or attendance at this event, you can save thousands!â€™

We do need your support: like other Christian charities, we rely on your prayers, financial contributions andÂ participation to carry on. However, we must be careful never to attribute to human beings the role that belongsÂ to God alone. We pray that God will use your giving and prayers â€“ or our work â€“ to bring individuals to him, butÂ it is God who saves, changes lives and impacts communities. We participate in mission at Godâ€™s invitation and anyÂ success should result in the glory being given to him, not to us or even to you.

Local churches, not mission agencies, are Godâ€™s main strategy for mission

All of Wycliffeâ€™s UK personnel are members of local churches. They are sent by the church, supported by theÂ church, encouraged and blessed by the church. Being part of Wycliffe does not diminish the part that their churchÂ has to play in Godâ€™s mission. Wycliffeâ€™s role as an agency is to support churches in their participation in mission.

Thatâ€™s true, and not only for churches with Wycliffe members as part of their community. All UK churchesÂ should have the opportunity to engage in Godâ€™s mission through Wycliffe and be excited by what he is doingÂ around the world.

Our service, however, is not to UK churches alone. Much of our work involves pioneering where there are few,Â if any, Christians. Even in those circumstances, we always seek to be involved with and responsible to the localÂ church in these communities.

We are sent to others

Wycliffe goes overseas to the communities where Bible translation and language development happens, andÂ those that work with us are sent by their churches to serve. However, here in the UK we have often expectedÂ that others will come to us.

Wycliffe should be going out to the church in the UK just as we are when serving the church overseas. MaybeÂ we wonâ€™t have our linguistic hat on, but we can certainly share the stories of our God at work around theÂ world. If youâ€™d like to talk to us about mission and how we could serve your church, get in touch and maybe weÂ could come to you for coffee.

Mission in the New Testament is holistic

The work that Wycliffe does brings blessings to the whole community, not just the Christians. Through ourÂ work, we see people learn to read, improvements in education, and benefits to health and welfare. Just asÂ Jesus healed the sick and fed the hungry while preaching the gospel, Bible translation has an impact on theÂ whole community. This year we want to tell

you more about this and other blessings that come about throughÂ Bible translation.

Why are we telling you this?

Very simply, we want to make clear to you the kind of organisation we are. We value your support and thinkÂ that you should know not just what we do, but who we are.

There is more information about Wycliffe Bible Translators on our website, wycliffe.org.uk. But you can get inÂ contact with us directly if you have any questions:
E: askus@wycliffe.org.uk
T: 0300 303 1111

Weâ€™ll continue to be in contact during the year. The enclosed leaflet has details about our mailings andÂ publications. It also shows you the details we have on record for you and which of these publications you haveÂ subscribed to. If you want to make changes to this you can either return the form in the enclosed envelope orÂ contact us using the details above.

I want to finish by saying thank you very much for your support. God has used Wycliffe Bible Translators to blessÂ many communities around the world and reveal his love for his creation to many millions who had not heardÂ before â€“ your support has played a part in enabling this to happen.

A mourning widow in Cameroon is just one instance. She was waiting, among a crowd, outside the morgueÂ when the two-week-old Oku New Testament was read aloud. After hearing the words, she said, â€˜Reading thisÂ took away my tears.â€™

Yours sincerely

Eddie Arthur
Executive Director

I'd be interested in your thoughts.