THE BRITISH CHURCH AND THE CHALLENGES FOR WYCLIFFE

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Category: Church: UK



This is a piece I wrote for my colleagues in Wycliffe Bible Translators this month:

Itâ€™s a long way from High Wycombe to Minehead, especially when you drive the return journey three times in ten days. Still, it was a real privilege to be able to go over to Spring Harvest and to share about what God is doing â€˜Reaching the Unreachedâ€™. Over the three sessions, almost a hundred people came along, listened, asked questions and shared their experiences; it was a good time. But, and here is the challenge for Wycliffe in the years to come, 100 people is less than 1% of those who were at Minehead during that time.

OK, there were reasons why people didnâ€™t come to the seminar. Letâ€™s face it, Iâ€™m hardly a household name (even in my own house!) and my charisma was never going to draw in the punters. On one of the days it was sunny and there were other seminars by better known speakers running at the same time. I can understand why numbers werenâ€™t highâ€¦ but less than 1%?

Reaching the Unreached is an essential topic for todayâ€™s church. The future of the church in the UK depends on us reaching outside of the ever-shrinking boundaries of the church into a scary world where people donâ€™t understand our language and traditions, and there is an amazing amount of encouragement in hearing about what God is doing in other parts of the world. But less than 1% of people at Spring Harvest saw it as important.

At this point, Wycliffe members normally tell me that their church is really motivated for mission. Well, yes, thatâ€™s why they support you and perhaps they were among the 1% who came to my seminar. But thatâ€™s not the point. The vast majority of churches in the UK have a shrinking interest in overseas mission and very often such interest as there is is restricted to social aid projects.

Partner organisations around the world are asking for Wycliffe UK to send more workers and to fund more projects. We can only do this as more churches get on board with what we are doing, but the reality is that we are swimming against the ecclesiastic tide in the UK. This is the biggest challenge that my successor will face. All of the internal discussions in Wycliffe and SIL are interesting and important, but they are not the main issue.