FIVE QUESTIONS WE'D RATHER NOT ANSWER

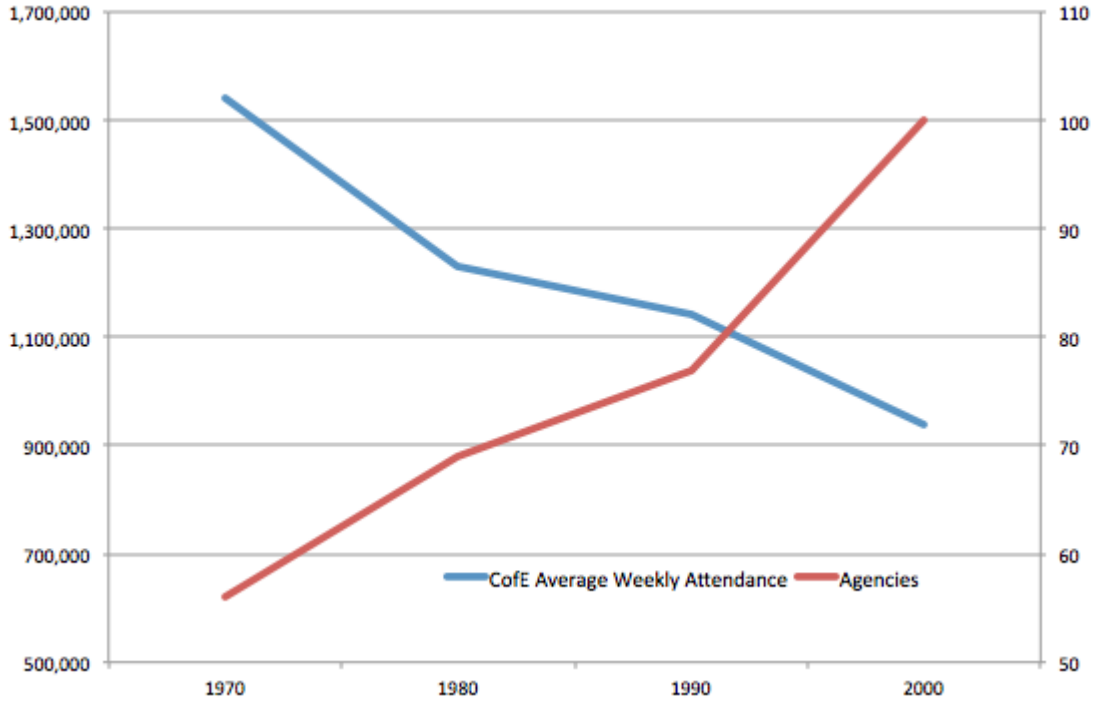
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Five questions about the future of mission in the UK that we'd rather not answer - or perhaps just don't know how to answer.
Category: Mission

There are some amazing, creative, exciting and encouraging things happening in the British missionary movement. However, I would argue, that overall, things are far from rosy. We are in the middle of a period of massive change for the church in the UK and worldwide, and we are not keeping up with what is happening; our structures and practices, all too often, do not reflect the realities of the world we live in today - much less the world of tomorrow.

These five (rather leading) questions all raise issues that I believe are key to our future. I have opinions on most of them - which are reflected, as often as not, in the way I poseÂ them - but no definite answers. I would suggest that these questions (or others like them) should be on the agenda of every mission agency board and church mission committee.

Do We Have Too Many Mission Agencies?Â No one knows how many mission agencies there are in the UK. The Global Connections website lists around 150, but not all agencies are members of GC. What we do know is that many agencies overlap in their areas of interest and geographical base and that they are all struggling to raise support from a shrinking constituency. This graph illustrates the problem.



Of course, the supporters of every agency can give good reasons why their favourite needs to continue, but we need some sort of joined up thinking across the board to address this issue.

What Happened To Proclamation?Â I've blogged on this a number of times (including this recent post), so I won't go into detail here. Basically, my observation of the British scene is that proclamation of the Gospel is no longer a priority in world mission work. I'm not knocking those who advocate the

relief of poverty, the search for justice and such like; these things are important. However, when proclamation gets squeezed out, something is seriously wrong.

Why East Africa?Â I've lost count of the number of church leaders who have told me that their church has a link with a church or diocese somewhere in East Africa, but I meet very few who have similar links in, say, Central African Republic, Turkmenistan or Mongolia.Â We put a massive amount of effort into the old British Colonies, where the church is often thriving, but much less into uncomfortable and dangerous places where people don't know Jesus.

Why Overseas Mission? Let's face it, things are tough for the church in the UK, we have massive needs in our own country, so why should we expend energy outside of our borders when there is so much need here. Increasingly, the word 'mission' is being used to describe what we do in our home towns and has nothing to do with the rest of the world; is this the way forward?

How Do We Change?Â There is nothing new in this blog post, I've written about them and raised the same questions in churches, conferences and gatherings of mission leaders. We know that there are issues but we seem unable to get to grips with them.