MISSIONS' COMMISSION ROUND TABLE

Posted on September 2, 2015 by Eddie

Some thoughts, notes and reflections on a three-day mission roundtable meeting. With some pretty photographs.
Categories: Bible & Mission, Observations

I spent last week at the (to me) oddly named Pure Joy Lodge near Pretoria in South Africa attending a roundtable sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance Missions' Commission.



The location was great; anywhere that has antelopes of some sort wandering around the grounds is alright by me - even if I only saw them once. The setting and wildlife apart, the actual meetings were excellent. The organisers made sure that there were plenty of opportunities for new people, such as myself, to integrate into the wider group and the presentations from the front were of a high standard.

The three mornings were devoted to the question of integrity; personal, ministry and organisational, while the afternoon given over to big topics such as our response to violence and sustainability in mission. You can read the official report from the roundtable here and I've included my own rough notes from one session at the foot of this blog post. However, what I'd like to do here is to look at some of the strengths of the meeting and also at what I perceive to be significant challenges.

Strengths

- It was good to be withÂ such a diverse group of people, discussing important questions. The group was more or less 50:50 split between Westerners and those from the Global South and there was evident mutual respect and a willingness to listen and speak up amongst the participants. This has to be the future of mission gatherings (but, see below).
- The mixture of Bible reading, prayer and session content was handled well. I have a bit of a problem with the way that we so often have a devotional session at the start of each day and then having got the spiritual bit out of the way, we get to work. We have to find a better way to integrate sacred and secular. This roundtable made a valiant attempt to strike a correct balance.

Problems

- If the diversity between West and Global South was excellent, the same can't be said about the gender balance at the meeting. Women were pretty thin on the ground.Â To be fair to the MC, the problem is a deep seated one across the mission world and the participants at this round-table were simply a demonstration of that. It's hard to see how the organisers could have done much different given the nature of the wider movement they were representing.
- Churches! A lot was said about the way in which the delegates were leaders in mission agencies and movements, but very little acknowledgement was made of the fact that we were

also members of churches by whom we are commissioned and to whom we are responsible. We have to work much harder at this aspect of church/agency relationships than we are currently doing.
- So what? To me, this is a significant question. A group of nice people met together and talked about important things. This is great, but unless there is a good mechanism for sharing these insights with the wider world, it risks being nothing more than a talking shop. This is a huge challenge for the Missions' Commission.

If you are intrigued by the bus on the front page picture, take a look at this link.

As promised, here are my notes from a session on organisational integrity led by Kirk Franklin of the Wycliffe Global Alliance. They may make some sort of sense...



Organisational Integrity

- Grounded in the Triune God in Mission
    - Tennent: Mission is God centred and church focussed
- Walls Chrisianity expanded in two ways
    - Conquest expansion
    - Missionary model
- 1910 Edinburgh Conference: confident of reaching the world
    - This all came to nothing with WW1 etc.
- Post 2010 Edinburgh:
    - World chainging; Content, means, contet and attitude of mission has changed (See Wildwood in Regnum series)
- Globalisation
    - Multifaceted - it is a a social process which creates new links
        - creates a new competitive landscape
        - creates tensions
        - We need to adapt swiftly or organisations may not survive
        - Current leadership paradigms are stretched and dont seem to cope with leading in

this new world.
        - Our leadership paradigms are 50 yrs old and based on the industrial era
    - A Global Faith
        - Christianity is an agent and product of globalisation
        - Does the conept of glocalisation help?
            - Global evangelicalism provides a helpful way of viewing globalisation
    - Polycentric voices and centres of influence
        - there are many centres of the Christian faith. It is not simply that once centre has replaced another.
        - Problem for the Western church is that we don't always listen to the rising voices.
- Dysfunction
    - Dysfunctional organisations are often due to dysfunctional leaders
        - This means that we need to look at leadership in community, not heirachy
        - Need to look at the inner transformation of the leader
        - Spirituality is an issue: Living a human life in union with God
            - There is no quick fix with spirituality - mission is multigenerational
            - spirituality is the source of energy for mission
- Power and Authority
    - Power is anything that allows one person to exert authority over another
        - how do we retain privacy in an era of social media
        - leadership can be undermined
    - We are a sent community
        - It is profoundly countercultural for a Christian leader to commit to community because it goes against our notions of independance.
        - We cannot have a dichotomy where one part of the church is community orientated and the other is task orientated.
- Money
    - It is always a tension and can create feelings of inadequacy
        - left unchecked the power of money quickly sets the agenda for mission
        - many movements are unable to be self sustaining because of the flow of western funds
    - We live in a world of scarce resources
        - Since God owns everything, we should be generous
        - Transfer of funds is complex and needs to be worked through appropriately