Starting and Strengthening
National Mission Movements

WEF†

WORLD EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP

Missions Commission

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New Zealand

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New Zealand has long had a strong commitment to global mission, and for some years it has had one of the highest Protestant missionaries-per-capita ratios in the world. Currently, with a population of just over 3.5 million people, New Zealand has approximately 1,700 missionaries (close to 1 missionary per 2,000 people).[29]

History of New Zealand Involvement in World Mission

New Zealand is a comparatively new country in missionary terms, because we are a "young" country. The first missionary was probably Rosalie McGeorge, a single woman who went as a Baptist missionary to India in 1887. The Open Brethren also had several missionaries about that time. During the next 100 years, there was a gradual and constant increase in missionary ministry. One major focus during more recent times (1960–1990) was Papua New Guinea, with its proximity to New Zealand and the challenge of its 700 language groups. However, there have been "Kiwi" missionaries in a very large number of countries throughout the world during this century, and the current missionary force of about 1,700 has been sent out by approximately 60 missionary sending agencies. Most of these have been interdenominational societies.

Past History of National Missions Movement

The beginnings of significant cooperation among some agencies occurred in the late 1960s. A group of mission societies based in the city of Auckland established the Auckland Missionary Association. It wasn't long before the potential of the concept was recognised, and steps were then taken by several leading agencies to establish a wider fellowship. This fellowship embraced both global and local mission-oriented groups and churches and had its own formal structure and membership. So it was that the Evangelical Alliance was inaugurated in 1972. One of the significant early developments was the birth of its aid agency, The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund (TEAR Fund), based on the British model. This development brought a timely focus on holistic ministry, in addition to the strictly evangelistic purpose espoused by most of the other members of NZEA. TEAR Fund's ministry grew steadily, and in time the organisation became structurally independent.

As with the beginnings of many new ventures, though, there were some internal difficulties with the fledgling EA. Concerned with its fragile nature, some individual members were keen to protect and develop the cross-cultural missionary focus. For this purpose, the New Zealand Evangelical Missionary Alliance (NZEMA) was formed several years later. Significant participants were Directors of several interdenominational mission agencies, notably OMF, SIM, BMMF, and APCM. The Evangelical Alliance itself was later phased out, to be replaced by the Evangelical Fellowship of New Zealand (EFNZ). However, it has been said that "the child gave birth to the parent," and the NZEMA was always the stronger of the two organisations. EFNZ has, in fact, recently gone into what is virtually an "unofficial recess," in favour of the new movement among Evangelical churches known as Vision New Zealand, which has a greater popular following.

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[29] See the statistical table in *Partners in Mission*, No. 71, based on information in *Operation World*.

Soon after this introductory period, one of the most significant factors in the role of EMA in New Zealand occurred. A decision was made to establish a Resettlement Fund for the benefit of retiring missionaries. Insurance schemes for medical needs and travel were also set up. The missions community very favourably received these initiatives, and during a comparatively brief period, most of the major mission agencies became members of NZEMA. This included denominational agencies, such as CMS and NZBMS, and some large, national, non-missionary agencies, such as Scripture Union. A number of the member agencies contributed to the Resettlement Fund, and this service provided by NZEMA became a strategic catalyst in the growth of its image and membership.

Many smaller missions were keen to be associated with EMA because it was able to provide services through the size of its combined membership, which small agencies could not manage on their own. There were, however, several notable exceptions. World Vision and the Leprosy Mission did not initially join EMA. Their main concern was that since much of the funding for their aid work came from secular or liberal Christian sources, they felt it was not in their best interest to be seen as members of an intentionally evangelistic body. However, in recent years both of these organisations have had a change of heart and have joined the EMA, which now comprises virtually all mission agencies in New Zealand.

Unfortunately, the administration of the Resettlement Fund ran into difficulties in the late 1980s. With hindsight, it can be said that the main reason was that investments were made in too narrow a portfolio—notably, commercial property. With the New Zealand property market crash of 1987, the Fund got into serious difficulty. For some time, the situation was critical, with threats from some members to pull out. Such action would have forced the Fund into an insolvent situation. Fortunately, the loyalty of depositors was secured, and over a period of some years the Fund was able to trade its way carefully to a position of being able to pay off depositors, and it wound up debt free. So the Resettlement Fund, which had played such an important role in the early history of EMA, was forced to dissolve. However, other services that were provided sustained the purpose and focus of the organisation, as well as its membership.

Recent History

In 1993, another significant period began. Because of the unfortunate heritage of the Resettlement Fund problems, and also because changing times were seen to demand new structures, image, and strategies, the New Zealand Evangelical Missionary Alliance felt it should change its name. "Mission Internet (NZ)" was chosen. The organisation also appointed a new National Director. The new image, personnel, and strategies have combined to revitalise this association of agencies.

EMA/Mission Internet has also enjoyed a strong and long-standing relationship with the Bible College of New Zealand (BCNZ). Council members, Chairpersons, and Executives have always had close links with BCNZ, and these associations have enhanced the organisation's ministry. The Mission Internet Director is a member of the current Bible College Board and occasionally lectures at the College, and faculty members of BCNZ have played their part over the years as Mission Internet Council members. From time to time, ministries are run in partnership, such as the annual Missionary Reorientation and Refresher Course for missionaries on home assignment or retiring from service.

Another significant player in the world of missions in New Zealand is the Centre for Mission Direction (CMD), based in Christchurch in the South Island. Initially, when CMD was first established, it did not enjoy a good relationship with EMA. However, over the years the situation has improved, and now CMD and Mission Internet NZ work in close partnership.

CMD's focus is to educate and mobilise people into missions through providing resources such as video study courses (e.g., "Perspectives"), mission books and directories, and missions information via the Internet. Mission Internet's role is summed up in its motto, "Networking Agencies … Serving Churches … For World Mission." Its work is outlined in detail below. The Directors of Mission Internet and CMD now serve on each other's Councils and work in partnership to provide events such as the national MissionsFest, which is held every two years.[30]

Mission Internet NZ

Structure and Membership

With the change of name and image in 1993, a move was made to create the ethos of a *network* rather than an *organisation*; a *fellowship of partners in mission* rather than an *institution*. This has been achieved to some degree—mainly by attitudes demonstrated rather than by constitutional decree. For example, Mission Internet serves all agencies and churches wherever it can, regardless of whether or not they are formal members of the network. However, Mission Internet does have a constitution, and there is a formal membership. Some aspects of the old EMA constitution have been simplified (to ensure that the constitution is not "the means by which the dead control the living"!). Also, the requirements for membership have been relaxed to some degree; for example, Financial Accountability Regulations are applied on an optional rather than an obligatory basis. (Those agencies that so choose can qualify for Mission Internet recognition of their accounting procedures and can be certified accordingly.) There is a Statement of Faith which members are required to sign. Full Membership is open to mission agencies, training agencies, churches, and church missions committees. Associate Membership is available to individuals. Members elect annually a Council of approximately 16 representatives of Full Members. The Council elects its own Chairperson, Executive, and Officers. Mission Internet has established a small group of offices tenanted in partnership with other mission agencies. Equipment, common areas, receptionist services, etc., are shared on a "user pays" basis. This has proved to be a good model of agencies working together in genuine partnership.

Key Players and Relationships

Virtually all established mission agencies in the country are currently members of Mission Internet, although there are a few small and newer groups who have not yet formally joined. The number of churches and individuals who are members declined during a period when some felt there was little tangible return for their membership subscription. It is hoped that this will change with the introduction of new services for churches—notably, an e-mail network for the purpose of providing resources for church missions committees. There are currently approximately 100 mission agencies (global and local), 20 training agencies (including regional branches), 50 churches and church missions committees, and about 300 individuals who are formal members, totaling about 470.

The strongest supporters of Mission Internet are the interdenominational mission agencies, and among the training agencies, the Bible College of New Zealand. Mission Internet has had a strong link with EFNZ throughout, and recently this relationship has continued with its counterpart, Vision New Zealand. Mission Internet has the responsibility for coordinating the Missions Track of the Vision NZ network. Through its Director particularly, there is also a strong

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[30] For further background information, refer to the paper *Mission Mobilisation Summit—Mobilising for Missions: A View From Mission Internet* by David Jenkins, National Director.

commitment to the Evangelical Fellowship of the South Pacific and its programme of Prayer Assemblies and plans for the Deep Sea Canoe Mission.

Purpose and Objectives[31]

Mission Internet is the national association which gives a united "corporate face" to the wealth of New Zealand missionary endeavour being undertaken throughout the world in the name of Christ. Its mission statement is, "Networking Agencies … Serving Churches … For World Mission." The predominant focus is missionary sending agencies, although there is a growing role in resourcing churches for their part in global mission also.

For **mission agencies and training agencies**, the emphasis is on:

- Encouraging fellowship, cooperation, unity, and networking.

- Facilitating the mission of individual mission agencies and training agencies by providing generic resources. Mission Internet provides services that many agencies could not manage on their own.

- Eliminating competitive attitudes from the past and reducing duplication.

For **churches and church missionary committees**, the focus is:

- Providing missionary motivation and education for their people.

- Equipping those in positions of church mission responsibility for their roles, by assisting with the formation of church missions committees and mission action groups, and formulation of church missions policies, etc.

- Offering ideas and resources for mission mobilisation and support in the churches.

Strategies and Programmes

Services Provided for Mission and Training Agencies

1. Acting as facilitator of communication between individual agencies and between agencies, training providers, and churches.

2. Providing a consultancy role for churches in ways that enhance the profile of agencies, via seminars and sessions with church missions personnel.

3. Hosting monthly agency leaders' forums to consider issues of common interest.

4. Initiating special events for agency leaders, with visiting and specialist presenters, e.g., Church on Brady visit and consultation.

5. Holding Agency Administrators' Meetings and Annual Conferences to inform, advise, and assist agencies in handling the growing volume of practical and administrative matters they face.

6. Coordinating functions, roles, and events initiated by agencies, and advertising relevant programmes of individual agencies for the benefit of all, e.g., Michael Griffiths visit.

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[31] Refer to the Mission Internet brochure for more detail.

7. Participating in planning for national events such as MissionsFest and Vision New Zealand Congress on behalf of agencies.

8. Serving as liaison with training providers regarding missionary training course programmes and curricula.

9. Participating in agency home council/board meetings and retreats at their invitation, to provide specialist input.

10. Initiating one-off forums for agency home councils to help inform and equip their members.

11. Hosting an annual Reorientation and Refresher Course for missionaries on home assignment.

12. Holding specialised Missionary Enrichment Retreats for the personal and spiritual development of missionaries during their home assignment (two six-day retreats per year).

13. Participating in national and international forums, such as AD 2000 and Beyond, World Evangelical Fellowship, Evangelical Fellowship of the South Pacific, EFNZ, and Vision NZ, and reporting back to agencies for their information and updating.

14. Publishing the semiannual *Prayer Notes*, in which agencies that so choose advertise their prayer requests and contact information (about 30 agencies participate).

15. Publishing the quarterly bulletin *Partners in Mission*, including news and resource articles for the benefit of agencies.

16. Publishing articles promoting mission in ways that have value for agencies, e.g., *Challenge Weekly*, *Reality* magazine, and *New Vision NZ* books.

17. Preparing and circulating the monthly *Agency Leaders' Update*, which informs and advertises events relevant to agencies.

18. Publishing the occasional *Directory of Missions and Training Agencies in New Zealand*.

19. Establishing M.I.-net, the e-mail network of agencies, used to more readily disseminate relevant information.

20. Providing the M.I. Resource File, a depot of information and resources relating particularly to administrative matters.

21. Acting as a contact point and clearinghouse on behalf of agencies, forwarding inquiries and requests for missions information of various kinds, as appropriate.

22. Providing health assurance and life assurance schemes for members.

23. Providing a Financial Accountability audit for member agencies, who can then use the Financial Accountability logo in their publicity to demonstrate financial integrity.

24. Operating the M.I. Trust, for forwarding donations to mission agencies.

25. Distributing missions periodicals, such as *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* and *Pulse*.

Services Provided for Churches

1. Assisting churches in setting up their church missions committees, upon request.

2. Helping churches to formulate their own mission vision and to establish church mission policies.

3. Conducting Vision for Mission church equipping programmes.

4. Facilitating communication and partnerships between churches and agencies.

5. Promoting the cause of mission in church services, small groups, and special missions focus events.

6. Conducting training seminars for church leaders and missions committee members.

7. Assisting with preparation, briefing, and de-briefing of church teams involved in short-term missions field trips.

8. Planning and leading regional and combined churches' missions conventions.

9. Participating in regional and national youth rallies and camps.

10. Producing resource publications such as *Partners in Mission*, *Prayer Calendar*, and *Directory of Mission and Training Agencies*.

11. Responding to requests for information and advice, providing resources as appropriate, and recommending additional sources of assistance.

Current Challenges and Strategies to Address Them

1. The need to draw in one or two of the larger, more "self-sufficient" mission agencies, e.g., YWAM, to encourage more participation and contribution from them.

    Strategies:

    - Develop personal contact and fellowship relationships with their leaders.

    - Invite influential leaders to contribute formally in leaders' forums on topics of their specialty.

    - Increase the provision of relevant information and resources through "low-participation" media such as the new M.I.-net e-mail network. Offer this network to disseminate their occasional relevant announcements to the wider loop of agencies.

2. Securing Mission Internet's financial viability in a climate where some historical sources of funding are shrinking. (This has been a significant difficulty following the collapse of the Resettlement Fund, as existing invested funds were diverted to handle that crisis.)

    Strategies:

    - The Director reduced his income and hours to enable a tentmaking approach to personal support.

- Several other strategies have been implemented to date, but with limited success. At this stage, we are looking to the renewed Mission Internet image to attract new members and subscriptions.

3. Encouraging more mission-minded churches to join Mission Internet as members.

   Strategies:

   - Increase the resources offered to church missions committees through a new approach to the Network of Church Missions Reps, namely, the NCMR-net e-mail network of representatives from church missions committees and missions action groups.

   - Increase the profile of coming national missions events (MissionsFest and the Vision New Zealand Congress) and offer in-depth training and sources in the programmes of these events to target members of church missions committees.