

# The new face of **World Mission**

There has been a shift in Christian mission and churches in Britain and Europe will need to shift from the privilege of sending to the the grace of receiving mission. But a new agency called Kairos is responding to the changing face of mission

**George Kovoov** writes



**T**he shift in the demographic map of Christendom in the late twentieth century to the two thirds world is one of the greatest realities of the contemporary Christian landscape. These younger growing Churches in Africa, South America and Asia are taking on the challenges of world mission.

The largest and fastest growing Christian congregations in the UK are West African churches in London. Black and other minority ethnic churches are springing up and burgeoning in most cosmopolitan cities in Europe. Most of these churches have been planted by church planters from the young growing Churches of the Global South. Initially this was to meet the needs of these ethnocentric Christian faith communities who have migrated to Europe. As these new churches have settled and matured they have been welcoming members from the host communities to join them and become part of God's fresh expressions of church.

## **New churches have faith and vitality**

These large churches have deep Christian faith, vitality, enthusiasm, financial and skilled human resources. They have a strong commitment to mission and believe that in Jesus there are solutions and resources

to the dilemmas of Europe. They are not intimidated by the presence of other faiths but see religious pluralism as a context for confident Christian witness.

**The Church in the West no longer enjoys the traditional role in society that it once did.**

As a result the historic partnerships between Western mission agencies and two thirds world partner Churches have needed to evolve from dependency to more collaborative ways of relating to each other. Traditional Western mission

agencies recognise that for the past three hundred years their historic mission trajectory has been to the peoples of South America, Africa and Asia. This has had to evolve as they engage with the new realities confronting the Church in the West which no longer enjoys the traditional role in society that it once did. It is a very small minority within European society that goes to church or is a part of it. Most Europeans do not look to the Church for its intellectual, moral or ethical energy. The Church is largely dismissed to the margins and is seen as a fringe group. Young people and men are conspicuous by their absence in most church gatherings.

## **Illusions of peace and stability**

The 1990's presented us with a changing landscape in Europe with the demise of Communism as the principal political force in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The nations of Western Europe have been evolving into post-Christian and post-modern societies seeking to enable their people to enjoy a materially prosperous way of life. This prosperity and emphasis on the welfare state have created an illusion of peace, stability and economic prosperity. This has meant that peoples flock from contexts of natural disasters, economic deprivation, political upheavals



and military adventurism to Europe and the United Kingdom. In some ways it is a case of the empire striking back. Britain herself has not been unaffected, with a growing immigrant and refugee community. Multi-ethnic and multi-religious issues confront society in general and the Church in particular. This has meant that historic Churches and agencies have had to engage with the realities of our context and relate to a growing mission field right here at our doorstep. One no longer needs to go overseas to engage with multi-ethnic communities; they are part of the demographic tapestry of European society today.



'Peace my Children' by Tim Steward

**It is interesting that God, in the Biblical narrative, has consistently used the outsider to challenge the status quo.**

### Church is seen as irrelevant

The challenge of materialism, ethnic diversity, prejudice, urbanisation, Islam, religious pluralism, youth, children's issues, sexuality and a growing interest in the spiritual i.e. new age, occult, tarot cards, astrology and eastern religious practices like meditation etc means that society is increasingly dismissing the traditional role of the church in society to the margins. Youth culture dismiss the church as irrelevant. It is in such a context that the Churches of the West will need to increasingly learn to shift from the privilege of sending to the grace of receiving mission by the poor i.e. personnel from the growing Churches of the South who might be able to offer experience, knowledge and the gifts of imagination and boldness to respond to these and other issues. It is interesting that God in the Biblical narrative has consistently used the outsider to challenge the status quo. They become the Gospel bearer and they serve as the catalyst to initiate change, renewal and revival.

### KAIROS responds to new realities

In order to respond to these new global mission realities a new agency called KAIROS Educational, Management and Mission Consultancy was established in 2004. Its distinctive is that it is led and governed by disciples of Jesus from the Asian, South American and the African continent. Its focus is mission in the global North i.e. Britain, Europe, Australia and the USA. Organisationally it has been set up as a company limited by guarantee and not a charity. This is in order to develop patterns of functioning

that will enable it to be financially viable and sustainable in the future.

### Mission is being radically redefined

Our logo was developed after much thought and prayer. This is our explanation of what we want it to express in the light of our conviction that the energy and imagination of the Church and her mission is emerging from the growing churches of the global South. Theology, its scope, focus and methodology, is forged on the

**The word Kairos . . . it is a word of hope. An opportune time for God to get involved. The God time! The NOW!**

anvil of human struggle as these growing churches respond to the Biblical revelation in Christ Jesus and the movement of His Spirit. Mission is being radically redefined from the context of God's active presence and participation within the confessional body of those who identify themselves with the Jesus of history and as they seek to bear witness to Jesus in the context of their existence. The wind of the Holy Spirit seems to be blowing in new ways and from a new direction. It is exciting and suggests new



opportunities for those who are sensitive to God's Holy Spirit.

The word Kairos in Greek is a qualitative perspective on time that is not reduced to a linear understanding of time as chronology or sequence, but has within it a sense of things coming together in such an extraordinary way that it is 'a pregnant moment', a moment of grace. It is a word of HOPE! An opportune time for God, to get involved. The God time! The NOW! This is the time for the Church to respond and act decisively. Failure to obey would result in a loss!

The hourglass expresses a note of urgency the sense that time is running out. This was the apostolic experience of living in momentous times and we are called to a life of faith. We are not called to frenetic activity but rather to a purposeful life characterised by obedience, faithfulness and being responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit of God.

### Time is running out

The arrow is pointing to the hourglass. Time is running out! The direction of the arrow is surprising! One would normally expect the arrow to be pointing forward. This is deliberate because it seeks to express the reality of reversal as a motif of the kingdom of God. We sense that in God's mission today there is a dramatic reversal. For the first time since the second century the Church of Jesus Christ in the main is materially and politically poor. The focus of KAIROS is to facilitate this reversal i.e. to promote and facilitate a new evangelisation of the affluent Christian nations of the North by the Church of the poor. This is a significant shift in Christian mission. This movement of God is a gathering of the poor and those on the margins to co-work with Him in His mission. Kairos will co-work with the host church in creative ways to encourage and strengthen its mission and ministry to the world. ➡

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*Our Purpose:* To share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the peoples of Britain and Europe in simple and imaginative ways that are attractive to ordinary people. To gather all who respond by faith into the fellowship of Christ's Church, in order to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Ephesians 4:12).

*Our Vision:* A new evangelisation of the West. The promotion of the Christian faith, the extension of the Kingdom of God, the formation of Christian discipleship, the nurture of a missional spirituality that travels light and the development of apostolic missional faith movements and communities.


*Our Mission:* To develop a Global Apostolic Christian Inter-mission Agency which will facilitate a movement of people in mission from the South to the North who are committed to being faithful to Christian

scriptures. Responsive and obedient to the Holy Spirit. Cruciform in its spirituality and Evangelistic in its orientation.

*Our Strategy:* To use diverse ways including the setting up of business as expressions of mission to mobilise & equip Asian, South American and African disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, many of whom are already living in the West as professionals, business entrepreneurs, students, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The challenge is to harness their faith, enthusiasm and energy in order to respond to the mission challenges and opportunities found in the post modern and post Christian societies of the Global North.

### Our purpose is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the peoples of Britain and Europe in imaginative ways that are attractive to ordinary people

*Our Rationale:* We believe that our particular offering is to share our spirituality of mission and our experience of the Bible lived out. We testify to the presence, activity and power of the Holy Spirit in our communities and families. We seek to offer our gifts of knowledge, experience and skills developed in the context of faithful

discipleship, Christian unity, witness and service in predominantly multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious societies. These nuggets and innovations have been forged on the anvil of suffering, poverty, lack of formal training and scant financial & material resources. We acknowledge that our enthusiasm, passion and dependence on God are gifts of grace and must be humbly offered to our brothers and sisters in the nations of the global North. 

For more information about **KAIROS** contact Canon George Kovoor, Principal Trinity College Stoke Hill, Bristol BS9 1JP Email: gikovoor@yahoo.co.uk

#### about the writer

**Canon George Kovoor** is Principal of Trinity College, Bristol and before that was Principal of Crowther Hall and CMS UK Director of Mission Education. His spiritual and ethnic roots are in the ancient Orthodox Church of St Thomas in



India. He was ordained in the Church of North India which is a member of the Anglican Communion in which he is active. He has travelled extensively encouraging Christians to be faithful to Scripture and passionate about mission. George is married to Chitra and they have three children. His hobbies include cooking and sailing and he has represented India in the World Sailing Championship



## Pictures that reach up to heaven

### More about the art in this issue

**A**rt lovers at last year's Greenbelt and New Wine festivals found themselves moved to tears by the paintings of a group of Christian artists. The exhibition was put on by Veritasse, an Oxford based publisher and arts society, who have kindly supplied us with some of their artists' work for this issue.

Veritasse was founded seven years ago to promote Christian creativity through the fine arts. Initially they exhibited only at Christian conferences but now their pictures can be seen in Christian bookshops. There is also an online gallery and their range has been extended to include sculpture, jewellery, greeting cards and a Christian arts magazine. Founder, of Veritasse, Aidan Meller, said: 'It is humbling to hear how the artwork speaks personally to so many. It encourages us to keep on using our talents for Him.'

Among the artists represented in this issue is John Reilly whose painting: 'The Miraculous Draught of Fishes' appears on our cover and wonderfully captures our theme of mission in the

power of the Holy Spirit. His paintings also appear on pages 5, 13 and on the back page. James Martin's 'Calvary' appears on page 18 and 'Calling Out' (left) is by Oliver Pengilly.

The story of Tim Steward whose work appears on pages 4 and 11 is of particular interest. Tim, who is 31, was born in London, but grew up in Chesham, in Buckinghamshire. Like all the Veritasse artists, Tim is a committed Christian. He says he was converted 'overnight' while still a student. He had been commuting to London for work experience and having panic attacks on the tube. Finding a Christian booklet in his room, he read it. 'When I woke up the following morning I was in a complete zone of peace,' he says.

Tim, now a member of St Aldate's, Oxford, says that his distinctive style of colourful and elongated abstract figures was inspired by the worship there: 'I sit at the side of the church and watch this amazing sea of people reaching up to worship. That is what I have tried to capture in my work. People seem to be reaching up to heaven.'