



Encourage and Build Each Other Up

Faith2Share Leaders' Retreat and Leadership Consultation

Mariapolis Centre, Juja, Nairobi 29 March – 5 April 2019

Report

This was the 18th Leadership Consultation run by Faith2Share since 2000 and the first one since Mark Oxbrow retired and Jan Wessels became the International Director. This event gathers senior leaders of our 40 mission movements, together with a number of our partners, and is usually held every 18 months. The previous one took place in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in October 2017. Finding the right location for these consultations is becoming increasingly problematic as we require a country with no, or easy, visa requirements and a venue which provides budget accommodation for all of our mission leaders. As the previous two consultations were held in Asia, the decision was made to return to East Africa, as we have a good number of member agencies that are based in Nairobi, Kenya. As



meeting facilities in Nairobi were either too small for our group, or too expensive, we met in Mariapolis Centre "WIM" outside Nairobi. This decision proved to be the right one not only because of the wonderful hospitality we enjoyed there, but also because of deeply spiritual atmosphere that the centre created – which is no surprise as it was founded by the Focolare movement! The theme for the consultation was "Encourage and Build Each Other Up".

Leading in the Storms of Life: Hope for when you stand alone.

Five years ago Faith2Share introduced the concept of having a leaders' retreat before the main consultation which has proven to be really appreciated by our members as a powerful tool in their leadership development. On previous occasions we have invited an outside person to be a retreat leader, but this time we were really blessed to have someone who has been known to Faith2Share for a number of years as both a personal friend and a leader of one of our member agencies. Dennis Tongoi, who has recently finished leading CMS Africa, an indigenous mission movement in Kenya, did a sterling job in the course of three days going deep in Bible expositions but also bringing a lot of personal experience of being an African mission leader. A total of 25 mission leaders attended the retreat and all of them expressed how much they valued these few days spent together under the leadership of Dennis.

In parallel with the Leaders' Retreat Global Teams (one of our member agencies) had a separate meeting for 9 of their leaders, mostly from across Africa, focussing on their work in several African countries, laying down strategies and offering member care. 5 of them then joined the Leadership Consultation when the retreat finished on Monday 1 April and we were really blessed and encouraged by this large contingency from Global Teams.

In total we had 67 participants from 21 countries, most of them attending Leadership consultation – plus several day visitors from Nairobi – with the largest contingencies coming from India and Kenya and it was a really rich and diverse group of mission leaders and practitioners.



Encourage One Another

The theme of the first day of the main Leadership consultation was “Encourage One Another” and provided an opportunity to renew friendships for those who were familiar with Faith2Share or to find out about the format of the event and Faith2Share’s vision to those who were attending for the first time. The Chair of the Board, The Very Revd Bob Wilkes, opened this event and also introduced to the network the new International Director, Rev Jan Wessels. After a time of personal introductions and sharing, Jan presented a key address focussing on 8 Global Issues and corresponding Ten Global Trends for Mission nowadays (his power-point presentation is available to members). After dinner we had a real treat as a music group from a local church led a very inspiring and inspired African style time of worship which continued long into the night – a fitting reminder of meeting on the African soil!

Mission context in East Africa.

Much of our first full day together was given to understanding the challenges and opportunities for mission in East Africa, with a particular focus on the nation of Kenya which played host to this consultation. First, Francis Omondi from The Sheepfold Ministries, mapped the history of Christian mission in Kenya, not avoiding the fact that historically there are still areas which have not been reached, especially along the coast. Francis identified the three main challenges for mission in Kenya which are missional focus; collaboration and resources sharing; and finally, the issue of discipleship. This final challenge was then picked up in more detail by Zac Awino from the National Council of Churches in Kenya, who presented the discipleship training process of local churches through a small groups’ model. Some of the lessons that NCKK has seen from this training include the importance of focussing on building robust relationships, for discipleship to be anchored in the Word of God and the wider issue of local ownership of the process and creating sustainability.

In the afternoon all participants were given an opportunity to see for themselves what mission work in Kenya looks like as well as use this time for further networking. Among the projects visited were the offices of LifeWay Mission International, Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS Kenya), Bible Translation and Literacy Centre and Bethany kids centre in Juja. There was time for debriefing in the evening where experiences were shared and several participants commented on how important it was to go on a mission trip in addition to listening to presentations earlier in the day.

Build Each Other Up.

After the first two days of the consultation were dedicated to “encouraging one another” by renewing friendships, meeting new people and praying for each other and going on a mission trip together, the theme for the next two days was on “building up” – first through “building each other up” through building collaborations across the Faith2Share network followed by “building up God’s Kingdom” – the discernment process of how mission happens in a variety of contexts.



First we started with the whole day looking at the current opportunities and also challenges of building collaborative initiatives within the network. Based on the experience of earlier consultations, much of what was done during the day was sowing the seeds for partnerships and joint projects which is one the strengths of the Faith2Share network.

Just as we saw it in Chiang Mai, one of the most dynamic sessions was on Reaching out Chinese in Africa which was facilitated by the OMF team in Nairobi, including a large delegation from Parkie Guojie Fellowship where bi-lingual services and active outreach to the Chinese is a valid model to consider. The importance of building relationships and sharing the Gospel with the Chinese in Africa was highlighted by statistics that show that out of 50,000 Chinese who are in Kenya alone, less than 100 regularly attend any church (and out of 1 million Chinese who are present in Africa, only 2,000 call themselves Christian and attend church). But this work is far from easy to accomplish due to a widening gap between African Christians and the Chinese population where nearly half of respondents in Nairobi, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in East Africa, reported that their attitude to the Chinese was negative. Although there is no quick and easy solution to this problem, breaking cultural stereotypes and building the culture of dialogue and interactions are key. Although this session mostly focussed on East Africa and Kenya in particular, we also heard a very powerful story how a similar ministry is developing in Nigeria and there was a real desire for those involved in this work in East and West Africa to learn from one another and to share the good practices.

The importance of this very practical session and the consequent discussions around the tables on building collaboration in mission became very clear later in the week when participants were invited to come up with a list of action points from this consultation.

In the afternoon a team from Global Teams helped us consider another important aspect of working together – the cost of collaboration and need for reciprocity and resilience when setting up partnerships and collaborative ventures. Rather than being purely theoretical, their session was based on the previous experience of working together in Kenyan and Central Asian contexts. This session very helpfully pointed the differences between fellowship and being part of a wider network on the one hand and collaboration which seeks more specific outputs of working together.

Lastly, but equally important Bob Wilkes and John Wesley, two of the Faith2Share Trustees present in Nairobi (Lucy Ochieng sadly could not be there for this session) led a session looking at the future vision and strategy for the wider Faith2Share network.

To finish what was a really rich day of discussions and sharing, we had an evening of sharing our stories with one another – imagining that we were sitting together around the fire under the starry African sky. Among some of the stories shared that evening, two stories were the most powerful as they both involved a miraculous element of coming back to life and full health from near-death experiences.

Building Up God's Kingdom.

If we tried to summarise the last full day of the consultation in one word, it would be “packed”! As there so many themes and issues that were suggested to us to discuss at the consultation, we found it almost impossible to give enough time and space for all that had been suggested.

The morning session tackled the issue of doing mission in the context of persecution and we looked at it from South Asian perspective (led by Paul Radhakrishnan) and East African perspective (led by Dr Aila Tasse). Although the two perspectives were naturally very different, both dealt with the fact that there seems to be a lack of theology of persecution, especially when persecution happens in an indirect way or as part of a wider global nationalist movement which sees Christianity as a foreign construct.

Later on, Dr Aiah Foday-Knabeneje led a very thought-provoking session on the African perspective on global mission.

In the afternoon we heard about strategies for mission and evangelism from three different contexts: from Asia (led by NamChen Chan of AsiaCMS), from Africa (led by Moses Bushendich, the new leader of CMS Africa) and from Western Europe (led by Elizabeth Wessels). Each contribution stressed how much contexts shape our strategies and how they differ from region to region or even country to its neighbouring countries.



This session was followed by a session on inter-faith engagement led by Dr Oliver Kisaka from CORAT Africa, especially focussing on relationships between Muslims and Christians in East Africa.

In the evening the session on Mobilisation for Mission was very ably led by Tilaye Daba (from Mekane Yesus IMS, Ethiopia) and Raja Singh from IEM bringing two different perspectives but one thing they had in common was the importance of having the right strategy for mobilisation in order to achieve what seems to be a massive task – whether it is to witness to 30 million

people in Ethiopia in 5 years or to mobilise Indian Christians for mission work to so many unreached people groups within India and even internationally, with the first mission couple from India now working in Ghana with IEM.

Building Up the Future.

Our final day of being together could easily be a day of wrapping up what was such a rich and insightful few days together. Instead, the focus of the final day was very much on the future – both in terms of bringing up the new generation of mission leaders for tomorrow and more practically, seeing what we can do together as a result of being equipped and inspired by this leadership consultation. First, some of the youngest of the participants present (Brian Anderson from India, Prakash Bhat from Nepal and James Wainana from Kenya) took the lead of explaining how the younger generation of mission leaders see the future and what barriers they observe existing for those who are coming up (often created by the older generation of those involved in mission). One stark reminder that a lot needs to be done was a quote that non-Christian globalized world is already producing global leaders but Christian mission enterprise seems to be lagging a few decades behind. Both more established and younger mission leaders should be working together in order to see the

emergence of agents of change to continue the work of cross-cultural Christian witness, staying relevant in a fast-changing world.

As a way of closing our time together, participants were asked to meet in the following regional or country specific groups (India, the rest of Asia, Kenya and the rest of Africa) and work towards some action points that they would commit themselves before the next Faith2Share Leadership consultation in late 2020. To give here just one example, the Indian participants have highlighted the following 2 areas of future work: 1) to collaborate with the Church of North India (CNI) to send a pastor to minister to the Gujaratis living in Nairobi; and 2) exchange small teams from India and Kenya for exposure and training.

Finally, it goes without saying that none of this would have happened without a very dedicated local planning team in Nairobi, especially Timothy Mazimpaka, Faith2Share Regional Coordinator for Africa. After the consultation in Nairobi had finished, Timothy and a number of participants travelled to Kampala, Uganda where a NAMS Africa Summit took place.



And another huge thank-you goes to all of our supporters who either helped us to raise the funds needed for this event, or sustained us by their prayers which were so evident, especially as we had to deal with a number of flight cancellations or delays.

To God be the glory!



Faith2Share 2019 Leadership consultation participants

Appendix 1

Name	Organisation	Country
Egunjobi Adebare	Gate Builders Evangelical Ministry	Nigeria
Bidur Adhikari	Nepal Christian Youth Commission	Nepal
Ishmael Kofi Adjei	Torchbearers Mission	Ghana
Boaz Akoya	Anglican Church of Kenya	Kenya
Brian Anderson	The Light of the World Ministries/ Vision India	India
Bisoke Balikenga	The Province of the Anglican Church of Congo	DR Congo
RC Bernard	Console Evangelical Missionary Movement	India
Prakash Bikram Bhat	Hope's Promise Nepal	Nepal
Moses Bushendich	CMS Africa	Uganda / Kenya
Nam Chen Chan	AsiaCMS	Malaysia
Curtis Chanda	Global Teams	USA
Bishop Johnson Chinyong'ole	Diocese of Shinyanga	Tanzania
Manik Corea	NAMS Network	Thailand
Tilaye Daba	Mekane Yesu IMS	Ethiopia
John Douglas	Indian Evangelical Mission	India
Alfred Edakasi	Berean Safari	Uganda
Stephen Edison	AsiaCMS	India
Jamil Eugene	Society for the Promotion of Education and Awareness	Pakistan
Norato Faustino	The Sheepfold Ministries	Mozambique
Vijay Isaac	Faith2Share / Friends Missionary Prayer Band	India
Geoff Hahn	TEAM	USA
Amos Hembrom	Jharkhand Christian Workers Association	India
Wesley John	Leading Like Jesus / Faith2Share Trustee	India
Wairimu Kamau	Pioneers East Africa	Kenya
Rachel Karanja	CMS Africa	Kenya
P Radha Krishnan	Mahanaim Ministries	India
Margaret Kumapayi	Church of Nigeria Missionary Society	Nigeria
Titus Kumapayi	Church of Nigeria Missionary Society	Nigeria
Isaac Lasky	NAMS	UK / Thailand
Onesphore Manirakiza	Antioch Africa	Burundi
Timothy Mazimpaka	Faith2Share	Kenya
Siseho Minoi	Langham Preaching	Zambia
Judith Murungi	CMS Africa / Reconciled World	Uganda
Rev Dr Mwangi	Church Army Africa	Kenya
Patrick Nabwera	The Sheepfold Ministries	Mozambique/Kenya
Prakash Nayak	Vision India	India
Ngendabanga Dismas	Diocese of Byumba	Rwanda
Bishop Moses Nthukah	Mbeere Diocese	Kenya
Wilfrid Nyamgeroh	Global Teams	Kenya
Livingstone Nyanje	Church Army Africa	Kenya
Lucy Ochieng	CMS Africa	Kenya
Timothy Olonade	El-Rehoboth	Nigeria
Francis Omondi	The Sheepfold Ministries	Kenya

S D Ponraj	Bihar Christian Church (BCC)	India
Anton Ponomarev	Faith2Share	UK
Ian Prescott	OMF International	UK / SE Asia
Arthur Rajwadi	Diocese of Gujarat	India
Babikene Rasi	Community of Baptist Churches	DR Congo
Tek Prasad Rijal	NAMS (Himalalyan Tibetan People Group)	Nepal
Hans Ritter	OMF International	Germany
Canon Rogers	Mbeere Diocese	Kenya
Emmanuel Rugzura	Global Teams	Rwanda
Bryson Sambodja	Global Teams	Kenya
Phil Simpson	Global Teams / Mahabba International Network	UK
Gupreet Singh	MSF	India
Raja Singh	Indian Evangelical Mission	India
Aila Tasse	Lifeway Mission International	Kenya
Sutharshan Thomas	Friends Missionary Prayer Band	India
Dennis Tongoi	Retreat Leader	Kenya
James Wainaina	iServe Africa	Kenya
Esther Wambui	The Sheepfold Ministries	Kenya
Jackson Wanga	One Youth Ministry	Kenya
Peterson Wangombe	Deliverance Church Kahawa Sukari	Kenya
Elizabeth Wessels	Faith2Share	The Netherlands
Jan Wessels	Faith2Share	The Netherlands
Bob Wilkes	Faith2Share	UK
Marcus Younas	Society for the Promotion of Education and Awareness	Pakistan

Feedback from the participants.

Appendix 2

The overall feedback was positive (with participants scoring the retreat and consultation 4 starts out of 5) and in terms of improving the programme, people asked to have even more time for personal sharing which shows the importance of networking and building personal relationships. We only had 7 women participants which is a familiar challenge for us at Faith2Share but this year we managed to do better in terms on bringing younger leaders.

These are some of the examples of the feedback we have received after the event:

- (BA) *I have learned how I can expand my work through different ideas and programs. Need to have more collaboration with different missions so that we can train more youth to be the future leaders.*
- (IL) *I've been reminded that we're a tiny part of a beautiful thing that God is doing around the world.*
- (SM) *I have developed a bigger faith to believe greater things in ministry.*
- (BR) *As a result of this consultation, I am preparing a sharing session with my churches leaders to speak about the ministry orientation and improvement to change their working.*

And what is really encouraging, there are already plans for joint mission projects such as:

- Mission awareness and training to be done in Zanzibar;
- Ebola prevention church resources for work in Eastern Congo;
- Business as Mission training in Mwanza, Tanzania;
- Internships and field exchanges on reaching the Chinese – a collaboration between Nigeria and Kenya;
- Setting up a Gujarati fellowship in Nairobi.

