

# **International Training Consultation**

## **- Dubuque II Follow-up - ITC @ IBCM 5**

**International Brethren Conference on Mission IBCM 5 in Strasbourg 16 June 2011**

### **Objectives**

- ↳ To build on the good amount of relationship-building and networking that took place at Dubuque II, by providing a time to dialogue and deepen the networking.
- ↳ To inform others who were not at ITC Dubuque I or II about steps taken to promote a greater connectedness and support for training among the brethren Movement worldwide.
- ↳ To allow training personnel and church leaders interested in training and providers of other training resources from or within specific key regions/areas to meet and deepen their understanding and awareness of each other and how to work better in the future together.

### **Programme**

David Clarkson welcomed the group and opened in prayer. David then invited Mark Davies to take us into the agenda

#### **1 A summary report from Dubuque II and questions/feedback from delegates:**

Mark indicated that two training consultations had previously been held in Dubuque, Iowa (2005 and 2010). On a show of hands it emerged that about half of the people present had not been at the Dubuque consultations so it was encouraging to welcome new people. Mark explained that the aim of the present Consultation is to link together as wide a range of training centres as possible. Mark did a further survey which showed that around a third of people present were involved in church based training and two thirds were involved in a college based or some more central organization of Brethren based training.

Mark highlighted some of the issues which had been raised in previous consultations. These included:

- a) The tension sometimes between church based and college based training.
- b) The issue of whether training should be Brethren based or be Interdenominational.
- c) Personal, spiritual development – how we could do it better.
- d) The need to connect training systems with actual leadership in local churches. How can colleges best serve their constituency?

#### **2. Developing a better connectedness in training specifically for needs within the Brethren Movement:**

Mark spoke to the objectives (see above). In open discussion a number of people expressed appreciation of the networking process and highlighted some issues which might be followed up. They valued the possibility of staff exchanges, utilisation of materials and even for the sense of belonging to a wider and larger group.

A data base list was issued to people who were asked to update their own details on it and to add any others we might not be aware of. An updated version of this will be uploaded onto the BEN website

The point was made that the training needs to be linked with what church leaders are asking for. There was a need make sure that colleges listen very carefully to the demands and needs of church leaders.

The danger is that colleges can become so academic that we lose sight of the real needs of churches, that is of helping church leaders to produce quality disciples.

The question was asked how many people who had been at Dubuque 1 and Dubuque 2 reported back to their church leaders to demonstrate the importance of training. The point is that we do need make sure that issues of training are conveyed to church leaders.

### **3. Plenary discussion on steps to be taken to move forward cooperation in training (including Ning site, BEN website, etc).**

David Clarkson spoke about the Ben and the Ning website. They had not been particularly well used in recent years and there was a need to make some changes for the future. Neil Summerton spoke about some of the technical difficulties and general discussion followed.

The point was made that general sites often don't attract interest. It is better to focus more narrowly on specific issues or specific groups. This point was highlighted by referring to the lively interactive site run by the brethren history group.. Simon Marshall indicated that there was a need to have a critical mass of involved people. This would require a good number of people who were committed to producing material and ideas that are relevant and helpful – people need to see the need of this. In addition, there needs to be a commitment on behalf of users to genuinely make use of the sites. Training matters can be promoted very well on the internet and supplemented by coming to consultations like IBCM5 etc.

### **4. Regional and/or linguistic based training groups for specific discussions on needs within those areas.**

It was noted and affirmed that key interest areas are more likely to interact than more broadly based groups. This would be true both for web-based communication like Ning as well as for actual grass-roots working together on projects. It has been evident from ITC at Dubuque I and II that significant progress is being made within areas of mutual concern. The following regional groupings are emerging and need to be fostered and encouraged:-

- a. French-speaking embracing France/Switzerland and Franco-phone Africa
- b. Spanish-speaking embracing Spain & Latin America
- c. Portuguese-speaking countries embracing Portugal, Brazil, Angola & Mozambique, etc
- d. Africa - English speaking
- e. Training in restricted access/ church persecution contexts (N Africa, Middle-East, Pakistan, etc)
- f. India sub-continent
- g. Europe Context

There was insufficient time to break-up into small groups, but it was affirmed that there should be more interaction and meeting together in these sub-regions/groups. Both the Spanish-speaking and the Portuguese- speaking regions have met as church leaders to liaise better on general church growth and mission issues. The intension is to continue to include the issues relating to training as a specific matter for improved networking within these language groups.

Felix reported back from Africa indicating that all of the training centres in Sub-Sahara Africa had brought their information together so that they had some kind of data base of the range of courses available.

Other geographical/interest groups were suggested:

An Eastern Europe/ Balkan area or Pacific Rim group.

Higher education providers i.e. degree, masters and above

Groups of people involved in curriculum development

It was pointed out that many people across the world would complete maybe 50 or 60 Emmaus courses. It would be very helpful if there were other courses they could move onto. This emphasised the need for proper articulation.

## 5. Ways forward/future issues.

- (a) **Brethren based Training Systems Database:** The updates obtained from today would be compiled into the database of training systems, and an update version made available.
- (b) **International Training Consultation ITC meetings:** Future meetings could be connected to already existing international meetings. This could reduce travel costs, visa issues etc. There was general recognition of the reasons for and value of this suggestion. Mark expressed thanks for the provision of the facilities at Emmaus Bible College Dubuque and acknowledged that they have expressed an open invitation for future consultations to be held there.

*(Post-meeting comments at the end of the IBCM: a number of delegates noted how tired we all felt and pointed out that trying to add a further 2-3 days of an International Training Consultation may not be as easy as we have indicated. Holding the Training Consultation before the main conference would be necessary, rather than after it! Others pointed out that holding it on its own has the value of giving total focus to training issues with a fresh mind)*

- (c) **Expanding the training liaison group.** There is a need to incorporate other people. This would be people who have a passion for networking in training and a willingness to keep this going. The present active steering group consist of Stephen McQuoid, David Clarkson, Ken Daughters, Mark Davies, Ian Burness. Neil Summerton. An invitation to join was extended to IBCM delegates.
- (d) **The production of a booklet summarising international training issues.** It was agreed that such a booklet would be very valuable to have on hand. It would be tied into information available on any BEN web site, and obviously the web-site could be updated regularly, whereas the booklet would reflect the situation at the point of printing. However having a hard copy would be useful.
- (e) **Resource exchange.** There is a need to have a list of teachers/resources which may be available for exchange worldwide. It would also be helpful to know where individuals had a particular expertise. If this information were available such people could be used in a variety of contexts.

In the discussion which followed there was an emphasis on the need for resource rich communities to share with others who may just be beginning to develop training facilities.

There is a need also to have materials from very basic through to almost degree level. A team from New Zealand had gone out to Myanmar to help a number of colleges there with issues around accreditation etc.

It is important to find out and understand what countries already have and not just provide training for what we think they need. We must not be paternalistic. We must not think that our solutions will be solutions which work for other people.

## **AOB**

- DVD of all the Dubuque II International training Consultation is available on request (contact the Steering group)
- Mark indicated that there was no intention to centralise in terms of organisation of training. The ITC's are not an exercise in empire building but it is all about networking.
- It was felt this had been a useful meeting and these matters would be borne in mind for future planning.

## Some Specific Actions for Steering group

1. Reactivate and expand the BEN site on a technical basis that allows for easier management of material uploading, etc.
2. Revise the list of institutions using the information given at IBCM5
3. Put together a booklet summarising Training systems and resources available within the Brethren Movement worldwide.
4. Draw up a list of visiting teachers which can be used as a basis for colleges and church groups to invite teachers to help with teaching specific courses or workshops.
5. Catalyse, encourage and enable specific interest training groupings to network together, whether with regional, linguistic or specialised ministries focus. This should complement but not replace the current progress in International Training Consultation.
6. Clarify and strengthen the Liaison/Steering group
7. Explore possibilities of a follow up International Training Consultation in 3 or so years time, whether in conjunction with a future IBCM or Regional Missions Conference or as a stand alone (balancing cost effectiveness in travel with the needs of a training focused consultation)

