

DOWN to EARTH

Emmanuel International UK News
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EIUK Annual Conference and AGM 2015



On 21 February 2015, the EI family met together at one of our two annual events. The purpose of the conference is to meet up, catch up and to pray and worship together.

It was lovely to see the nearly 40 adults and children together. It is clear that there is a real family feel amongst the EI supporters. We do share a passion for God's work through Emmanuel International and have gotten to know each other over time, but even the newbies to the EI family participated actively and enjoyed the time together.

There was time to relax over a cup of coffee or tea, to find out the latest news or just share a friendly conversation. We worshipped together, being led very ably by David Varcoe. Yes, he did get us to 'move' to a Swahili song!

We were privileged to have Andrew and Miriam Wingfield, and their children Ben, Sam and Bethany with us. They are on furlough in the UK and were our main speakers on the day. Andrew and Miriam shared what it is like to live in Tanzania (and the children also shared with us a special photograph and their news!), talked about adapting to life back in the UK and also gave feedback on the work in Tanzania (see summary overleaf).

The AGM took place after a tasty lunch and matters were discussed and dealt with efficiently.

This year we held the conference in a venue new to us - the City Temple Conference Centre, conveniently set in central London. We were very warmly welcomed. Our sincerest thanks to the hospitality team.

Date for the EIUK summer get together is 11 July 2015!

Wingfields on Tanzania

Our role as Representatives has changed over the years and we now see the priority of building up and equipping others to do the work as the EI team in Tanzania grows. Reflecting on the stoves project in which groups are trained to make fuel efficient stoves, the process of making useful things out of clay gives a picture of how God works. God is in the business of taking ordinary stuff, like earth and turning it into something valuable, and useful. We see this in creation, and also in the way He works with his people as illustrated in Jeremiah 18. God moulds us, his people, into an instrument fit for his purposes, like a clay pot. The encouragement here is that if the pot goes a bit wrong God doesn't throw that clay away but he keeps working it and reworking it to make it what he wants it to be.

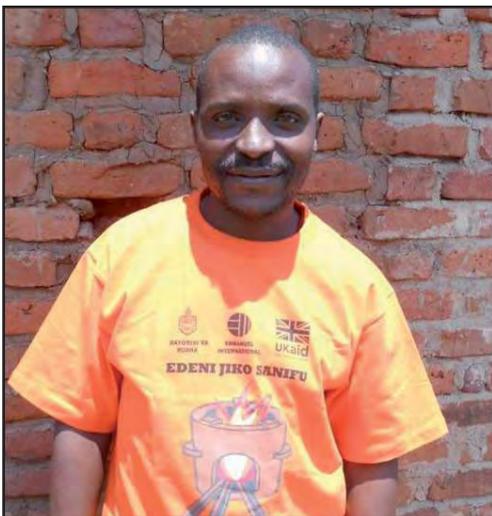
This also gives us a picture to help us understand Christian community development work. It's about taking something that doesn't have a value or a purpose, and making it valuable and useful. We see this transforming clay into stoves, and harvesting rainwater. But it applies to people equally. Many people that we work with have a low sense of their own value, but by showing them that they were created in God's image for a purpose, they realise they can play a valuable role solving problems in their own community.

When we asked one of the new stoves groups in Ibumu village what impact the project had had for them we expected them to share about the kind of tangible outcomes that we report to our donors on, like reduced consumption of firewood, improved health and increased income. What they actually shared as the most important outcome was surprising: the project is building relationships - building



community, bringing people together which is surely a key role for the church in its holistic mission.

The vision to partner with other churches in other parts of Tanzania became a reality last January when Tim and Rachel moved to Mwanza to begin a new partnership with the Tanzania Assemblies of God church.



“the project has helped me build relationships with all different kinds of people” Erasto Tanga, Ibumu



“in this group the young and old respect each other and we have worked well together” Rose Kisitu, Ibumu

They've been building relationships with the churches, listening to them, and they've started projects with several churches doing fuel efficient stoves, and also a conservation agriculture project.

El's Mission is focused on helping churches to help the poor but working with churches can be frustrating. However, God has placed a growing conviction in our hearts that broken and weak as it is, church is absolutely central to Gods plan, he is not going to give up on church so neither should we.

The local church is really important in holistic mission because it has a permanent presence in the community. Organisations like EI might come and go but there is a real sustainability to the local church. And it's the only institution that can serve individuals through all stages of life - from the cradle to the grave. We've found that it's so easy for the local church to get sidelined in that process of doing development, and that's something we've been trying to address in the strategy in Tanzania. The Ithomasa Water project was one where we were able to work very closely with the local pastor. The community now have access to clean water and are being equipped to manage and maintain the new water system themselves.

There's always a danger when you come along as a parachurch agency like Emmanuel International that you're doing stuff on behalf of the church rather than them doing it themselves. So, I (Andrew) am now doing research looking into the unique role of local churches in holistic mission and how churches themselves see their role in the community. I've been doing some participatory workshops and will incorporate the results in my dissertation.

Andrew and Miriam Wingfield, at EIUK Conference

FAR Update

Mark Simmons, previously International Director for FAR Sudan, hoped to join us for the conference, but was not able to join us in London because of travel difficulties. He sent a report instead.

FAR has had a series of setbacks in the last year or so, particularly the impact of the sudden occupation by the South Sudanese army of our office in Melut in January 2014, following the attempted coup in South Sudan. This happened the week before a planned project audit and left us without access to the files that we needed. In Sudan, at the same time, DfID cancelled the grant they'd awarded FAR.

So, FAR is now in a turnaround phase. The situation has improved with the appointment in September of a new Country Director who will hopefully help FAR to grow again and to regain donor confidence. Please keep the new CD Des Clark and his wife Natalie in your prayers.

The reality on the ground is also that the numbers of those killed and displaced in Darfur shows no signs of abating, often in parts of Sudan where the majority of Sudan's few remaining Christians lived. Tens of thousands of these people are now displaced, having watched their families die and their villages burn. They will be unlikely to cultivate their land for the fifth year running this summer, leaving hundreds of thousands of people again without food – and they are already without shelter or livelihood.

The situation in neighbouring South Sudan is no better, with a ground war raging that has forced one in five people in South Sudan to flee their homes. In September 2014 my colleague Richard visited some of these people and met one lady, who seemed representative of the almost 2,200 families who had fled the conflict. She had walked for almost 200 kilometres, and

along the way lost two children to disease and attacks by wild animals. She was now living without shelter on a small patch of land near the Nile, with no sanitation, no drinking water except the river, and no way to feed her family except eating wild berries, fruits, leaves and grasses. She was one of the fortunate ones, as we were able to give her some seeds to plant in a patch of unused ground by the Nile, and we were able to teach her son how to fish.

Sudan and South Sudan are mostly forgotten now as the media attention inevitably follows other crises and other conflicts, but the problems haven't gone away. Please pray for peace, and for the conditions on the ground to change so that peace has a chance to take root. It is hard to see an end to the fighting and death and displacement, but there are pockets of hope and opportunity amidst all the crisis, and we thank God for these.

As for me, I'm now working for a Christian peacebuilding charity called Cord, which is doing some exciting work, and also presenting plenty of interesting and urgent challenges in terms of leadership and management. I enjoy it, for the most part, though I'd welcome your prayers as my task is certainly not easy. The children are thriving, thankfully, and we enjoy watching and participating as Ella (11), Rosie (9), Greg (7) and Lydia (5) grow up to be thoughtful, engaged and inquisitive people.

