

One Church in London

London Leadership and Structural Change Proposal, 10th January 2010

London History 2003-2010

In 2003 the sectors of the London church became 10 autonomous congregations (later merging into 8 congregations). Cooperation has grown over the years, resulting in first the London Unity Group, and then the London Leadership Group. The purpose of this document is to propose a new leadership for London and a new structure that moves us from being 8 churches that share *some* resources to being 1 church in London that shares *all* resources. In this way we believe we will better honour God in meeting the needs of the disciples, the lost and the needy. The congregations in the New Testament went through many phases of leadership and structure and a new chapter in the history of the London church requires a new approach.

Leadership and Resources

The specific proposals are to completely share all resources of money and staff among all sectors and to commission the senior staff (currently Malcolm Cox, Mike Desouza, Adrian Hill, Mohan Nanjundan and Toks Sowoolu) to replace the London leadership group and to lead the church. The staff will consult with local leadership teams and meet regularly with an Advisory Group. The advantage of these proposals are that all parts of the church will have access to staff, and that the work of the ministry will be energised by a staff that can meet regularly to pray, examine the needs and respond to them flexibly and with all due speed.

Next Steps

The leadership teams of each of the eight current London congregations – the Northwest, the North, the East, the South East, Surrey, the South, the Riverside and the West – are asked to prayerfully put this proposal to their congregations. It is hoped that the process will be concluded by the time of the British Isles leadership conference on 22nd/23rd January 2010.

Other Matters

Many questions have been asked about these proposals. Most are answered in the accompanying document. The London Leadership Group met to discuss these proposals on 5th January 2010 and approves this process of presenting the proposal to the congregations.

Your brother,
Malcolm Cox

Frequently Asked Questions about the London “One Church” Proposal January 10th 2010

The following are offered in the hope they will answer some of the questions that have been asked about the London One Church Plan.

- 1. Who wrote the proposal?** The current version was written by Malcolm. A number of people had a hand in its drafting including staff and people not on staff.
- 2. Will the LLG change?** Yes. The proposal is to commission the senior staff (currently Malcolm Cox, Mike Desouza, Adrian Hill, Mohan Nanjundan and Toks Sowoolu) to replace the LLG (London leadership group).
- 3. Why is this necessary or helpful?** The LLG is a group of great brothers¹, and has met an important need in our recent history, but meeting once a month is the most that can be done given that several of the members have families, demanding secular jobs and significant responsibilities in their local ministries. Many of the meetings have seen one or more of the men absent through no fault of their own. A church like London cannot be led effectively with such restricted meeting, praying and talking time. The staff meet every week, and, if empowered willingly by the London church, can take the church forward more effectively.
- 4. What are the plans to avoid the staff developing “group think”?** An Advisory Group of non-staff people will be formed. They will meet with the staff regularly. The staff will all remain part of their local leadership groups which will provide them with local perspective. It should also be remembered that many of the staff have wives in secular work and/or study situations, and so the impact of church life and decisions on secular members is very real to them.
- 5. What is the purpose of the Advisory Group?** To provide a wider perspective and a non-staff perspective. The senior staff will meet together with the Advisory Group regularly and are expected to actively solicit their views, respect their experience and value their perspective.
- 6. What is the longer-term plan for London’s leadership?** A shepherding training group is being set up. It will start meeting early in 2010. This will provide a body of mature shepherd-type leaders for the church, and elders will come out of it in time. It is envisaged that a future London leadership team will comprise elders and evangelists (not all might necessarily be on staff).
- 7. How long will this take?** We don’t know. Putting pressure on people to become elders is unhealthy. However, the prayer is that we have a functioning eldership within two years or so. In the meantime the current staff and the Advisory Group will contain some people who have shepherds hearts and gifts.
- 8. How will the Advisory Group members be selected?** In consultation between the senior staff and local leaderships. A specific process for this is in development and will

¹ Currently: Charles Elikwu (North), Mike Desouza (East), Barry Lamb (Children’s Ministry and Link), Toks Sowoolu (South East), Phil Miller (Chair of ICCM), Jeremy Messervy (Surrey), Mark Akinlade (South), James Thomas (Riverside), Adrian Hill (Youth and Family ministry), Mohan Nanjundan (West), Malcolm Cox (Northwest).

be published soon. It is envisaged that the people in the group will be mature Christians with a strong faith and mind. In other words the kind of people who can speak clearly and strongly to the staff, and who the staff would be very foolish to ignore.

- 9. How will the ministries without staff be represented in the senior staff group?** The staff will consult with the local leadership teams and agree together with them which of the staff are to be connected with their ministry and represent them at meetings. The staff so agreed would be expected to be in regular touch with those ministries and visit them regularly. The ministries currently without staff will be substantially benefitted from this staff-sharing plan. The staff will be available to speak, teach, study the bible with people, train leaders etc. The desire is that more staff will be hired as soon as possible to serve in the sectors currently without staff.
- 10. Isn't it wrong to say that staff have all the gifts needed to lead London?** It would be if that was what was being said, but it is not what is being said. The staff are supported to spend extra time in prayer and ministry of the Word. The senior staff have a wide variety of gifts, experience and training in church leading and building. Freeing them to lead more dynamically follows the examples of best practice we have seen elsewhere. This is the model that is working in all the churches in our global fellowship that are healthy and of our size. If London is to be truly one church enjoying the benefits of greater coordination and sharing of resources in personnel and finances (instead of our current "federal" model) while retaining the advantages of local decision-making, this is the change that needs to be made.
- 11. To whom will the senior staff be accountable?** Apart from God of course, they are accountable to the Trustees, their peers (including any staff managing them) and their local leadership team (and, thus, their local ministry).
- 12. How will future staffing decisions be made?** Once the ministries have committed themselves to this new model, an assessment of the finances will be made at the end of January 2010. If funds are available then staff will be hired as quickly as possible and as desired by local ministries, who will consult together with the current senior staff as to the possible people to be hired, where they may be based and what their responsibilities would be. The ICCM trustees would also be part of this process. No staff will be imposed on the local ministries by the current staff and neither will the local ministries impose staff on the current staff. There is a commitment to a lack of imposition either way. Where an impasse develops it is hoped that prayer and discussion will solve the challenge. Local ministries are being asked to be prepared to defer to the current senior staff's greater experience in these decisions, while the current staff are agreeing to defer to the local ministries' greater understanding of local needs.
- 13. Will the current staff be shared?** See answer 5 above. If there is not enough money to hire staff for every local ministry, the staff and local leaderships will consult as to the best way to make staff available to all ministries in one form or another. For example if Surrey are part of this plan, but it is not possible for a staff person to be based there, then an agreement would be worked out for a current staff person to visit for teaching, preaching, training, or whatever were the greatest needs.
- 14. If we have a staff person will they be taken away from us?** No. But every ministry is being asked to sacrifice for the benefit of all (1 Cor 12:25). Some will sacrifice by sharing their money and others will sacrifice by sharing their staff. Will God not honour sacrifice willingly made? Of course He will.

15. Aren't local ministries going to be forced to merge or dissolve? No. Forcing things on people is unloving and frankly impossible in our post-2003 church. No staff member could get away with forcing such a thing on a ministry, even if they wanted to (which they do not). Any decisions regarding mergers and so on would be made with the agreement of local leaderships.

16. What if a ministry doesn't want to join now? They can join later if they want.

17. What are the consequences of not joining? It depends. The ICCM constitution allows for the existence of autonomous churches under its umbrella. Therefore any existing London congregation can continue in its present form without joining the new plan. The following points are important to note:

- a. This new grouping is not a statement about who is a Christian and who is not. We recognise members of all current London ICCM congregations as Christians.
- b. This new grouping is an agreement to cooperate on a shared set of priorities, based on a shared 'philosophy of ministry' on how scripture is to be applied.
- c. Churches that opt out of this proposal can still choose to participate/ cooperate in specific events and ministries such as the SEW, teen camps, youth and family ministry, student ministry etc. Specific arrangements and costings for such participation will have to be worked out in each case.

18. How will the money work? Every local ministry will have its own budget. It is vital that a link is maintained between local giving and local budgeting. The local leadership team will decide how the money in their local budget will be spent. However, we are proposing a significant change regarding the bigger picture about London money. All London money will effectively be in one pot so as to meet the needs more flexibly.

19. Will we be told to abandon funding HOPE projects? No. We can support HOPE, foreign missions and the local work of the gospel. It might be necessary to change the way in which some of the funds are raised and allocated. But this will be done through consultation and not through diktat.

20. Is this a permanent change? Only the word of God is permanent. It is not only likely, but certain that our structure and leadership model will change in the future. How fast and when are not possible to say, but an annual review will be conducted and changes made if and when necessary.

21. How much local control over teaching will there be? At this point we are proposing coordinated teaching across London for three months of the year. Local ministries will take responsibility for devising the teaching for the other nine months.

This handout does not answer every question, but we hope it answers most of them. As further questions come up we will seek to answer them and to continue to dialogue with local leaderships and members.

A personal note from Malcolm. "After seven years of seeing the church in London stabilise, studying the scriptures, reading extensively, gaining a qualification in theology, travelling widely, meeting with and talking to church leaders from all around the world, it is clear to me that this is our next step to greater health and effectiveness for God. I therefore recommend we adopt this plan."

Your bother, Malcolm