



Campaign of Radical Welcome

**Update for Mission Committee
February 2012**

1. Liaison Group

The group appointed to liaise with the Steering Group on behalf of the Mission Committee and Communications & Editorial Committee is now in place and met with the Steering Group on 20th January. The members are Tracey Lewis and Nick Stanyon (Mission Committee) and Peter Lyth (Communications & Editorial Committee). It was agreed that the Steering Group would continue submitting written reports to these committees but that the Liaison Group members would add their comments and be available to address questions and concerns.

2. New version of ads

The revised body copy (included in the Review Group report of 31st August which was circulated to Mission Committee and Mission Council) has now been incorporated into five of the six ads. It is now in typewritten font rather than handwriting and is very much more legible. Changing the body copy required changes to the general designs as well, and the agency took the opportunity to update the ads and strengthen them. In presenting them to the 20th January Steering Group meeting they noted how the world had moved on in the 18 months since the posters were first designed. Widespread economic anxiety and protests such as Occupy London had made for a sharper context with more hurting people and a higher awareness of a scrap heap to which many people were being consigned. The ads had been sharpened so that they would speak powerfully into the new context.

3. Film

The Steering Group approved a proposal for a five minute documentary style film. This would be primarily for use on the internet (ZI website, YouTube, Facebook, etc.) with the hope that it would go viral. The agency anticipates that the campaign will draw significant attention from the news media and they noted that the film would be available for television news programmes as a quick introduction to the ethos of the campaign. The film would consist of interviews with people in the primary target group of the campaign (those who perceive themselves as unwelcome in churches) and would explore their attitudes about Jesus and the church. It would also show the reception they received in churches, using actors so that no vulnerable people would be injured in the process.

4. Exploring churches, companions

At last count there were 507 exploring churches. Thirty four of these had requested companions. Fiona Thomas was in touch with each synod contact person and these were the primary points of contact for the churches. She was working with them to simplify the process by which a church could opt in. Several of the synods were actively recruiting and training companions. As indicated in the Review Group report, final responsibility for determining the viability of the campaign prior to launch lies with the Steering Group. The Mission Committee had a discussion at its February meeting about

what sorts of numbers would make the campaign viable. This question will be high on the Steering Group agenda at the next meeting (29 March). There is great reluctance to announce any further postponement of the launch date given that the timetable has already changed several times in response to the plea of the churches that they need more time. Since the six ads represent 18 months worth of advertising material, it is possible to begin with a small group of affiliated churches and continue working to expand the number. However, we have heard the concerns that people have on this matter and we will give the question very serious thought in consultation with the Liaison Group.

5. Launch preparations

The launch date is 9th May. The plan is that the campaign will be launched in several locations across England and Wales centred around participating churches. Discussions with the contact person in the Synod of Scotland indicate that the launch there may be delayed by a couple of months. Precise locations will be chosen nearer the time when the list of covenanted churches is known. Local relaunches can be supported whenever new churches covenant. Media training has been arranged for Steering Group members and various regional supporters.

6. Greenbelt

The Steering Group awaits news as to the role of ZI at Greenbelt. The organisers are concerned about giving ZI a high profile when the URC is not one of the major funders of the festival. Mike Walsh has enquired as to what level of funding would buy ZI a place at the table. Suggestions for ZI participation have included workshops, art projects, Bible study and incorporation into the main Sunday Communion service. The Steering Group has also been in contact with one of the organisers of Solas (a Scottish equivalent of Greenbelt) who has been encouraging.

7. Internal Launch +1

It appears that re-launch events are only needed in a few synods and Fiona Thomas has been in touch with the synod contact people to make arrangements. Three events are planned.

8. Other Review Group requirements

Financial information for local churches Plans were in hand to publish this.

Meeting with FORG

This was being convened by Ray Adams.

Risk assessment This is due to be presented to the next Steering Group meeting.

9. Future staffing

As reported at the last Mission Council, Denese Chikwendu resigned on 11th November and left employment on 7th December. Lucy Berry's role as Strategic Consultant finished in December. This sudden reduction in staffing has been a significant challenge to the Steering Group.

Steering Group members prepared a job description and person specification for a Project Manager, intending to recruit urgently. The Staffing Advisory Group assisted in drafting these documents and the result was a clear list of tasks needed for both the development and delivery of the campaign. Unfortunately, with Christmas holidays adding to the delays inherent in this consultative process, the decision of the Steering Group in January was that it was too late to recruit a Project Manager.

A proposal is under consideration for the secondment of a member of the Communications department to work three days per week on the campaign. This would be a good solution because most of the remaining tasks are related to communications.

Admin support would also be required, again ideally via cooption of a current Church House staff member. The proposal received the blessing of the Communications & Editorial Committee and it is now in the hands of the Human Resources office so that the practical arrangements can be made. Names and details should be confirmed in time to report them to Mission Council in March.

10. Connection with Back to Church Sunday

Francis Brienen and Gill Nichol attended the relaunch of Back to Church Sunday in January. The Steering Group agreed their suggestion that while churches would be invited to participate in Back to Church Sunday regardless of whether they were involved with ZI, the ZI churches should be encouraged to use it as a particular opportunity for invitation and welcome.

11. Looking to the future

It is now over a year since the decision was taken to remove the URC logo from the ads so that in due course the campaign would be fully ecumenical. The ads will refer enquirers to a website where all of the covenanted ZI churches will be listed, with links to their websites for further information. When the campaign goes live on 9th May this list will be almost entirely URC. However, the plan for the past year has been to roll the campaign out ecumenically as a resource for any churches wishing to participate. The General Secretary has made personal visits to over 20 partner denominations and agencies and has received an enthusiastic response from most of them. The Steering Group will soon be actively exploring how ZI could be handed over responsibly to a new body that would enable full ecumenical ownership and participation. The funding from CWM that has paid for the development of the campaign and the staff to deliver it will have been exhausted by the end of 2012, so these explorations are urgent if the campaign is to move smoothly into its next phase of life. Serious fundraising will be necessary to pay for this transition and notice was given to the Mission Committee that there would probably be a proposal at their next meeting that an application should be made to the URC Legacy Fund for the costs of the ecumenical roll-out.

Roberta Rominger
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