

A consultation on JMA

By Chris Turner

Objective

This report was commissioned by Mike Seaton. The objective being to “research how JMA can develop”. I was asked to speak to all major JMA stakeholders and pool together my findings in this document. Stakeholder defines to anyone currently or previously involved with JMA – from the children/young people themselves to district and national secretaries. Outside agencies and opinions have also been sought.

To fulfil this objective certain aims were set:

- ❑ To use all gathered information to analyse JMA strategy
- ❑ To explore what could be learnt from the market place
- ❑ To look at models, researches and structures that JMA could learn from

In researching this information I aimed to reflect the rich history of JMA, and promote its strengths, and seek solutions and ideas to areas others define as issues that need addressing. This report also basis its research on tried and tested methods and models. In a wider remit it will also touch briefly on how this might fit into a wider Children’s and Youth strategy.

Resources used and people spoken to are listed at the back. I am very grateful to every one who helped me in my research. I wish to acknowledge to commitment of everyone currently involved with JMA. The ideas and suggestions are not meant in anyway to reflect badly on them, rather to build on their foundation. I have made every effort to make this as factual and reflective of the comments received as possible.

My background

Since 1996 I have practised youth work as a full time occupation. I studied Youth Ministry and Applied Theology in Oxford, and have been working in North Devon for The Methodist Church for the last 6 years. Posts before this include Director of Time For God in New Zealand, and previous to this National Product Manager for a specialised home cinema manufacturer.

In 2003 I started the UK charity edukid which focuses heavily on educating young people in the UK and Ireland on developing world issues, and enables and empowers them to help people their own age who live in poverty.

JMA History

Joseph Blake is largely attributed to instigating the start of JMA. He first conceived the idea in 1812 and by 1841 it had become an integral part of The Methodist Church. Its official title in those days was Juvenile Missionary Society. Joseph’s early concept of inspiring children to collect money each week for mission remains in place to this day. As does his vision of education, prayer and service. The more modern title of Junior Mission for All (now known as JMA) and the JMA promise of “I promise to learn, pray and serve the worldwide church of Jesus Christ” reflect all the key aspects Joseph Blake originally started over 150 years ago. The focus of JMA is

not so much on the income raised, but rather the training and education it delivers. Money raised is mainly seen as the outcome of this delivery, or as one interviewee put it “don’t give them a fish, rather show them how to fish”.

JMA’s income is divided into fifths. One fifth is spent on “Mission in Britain” and the remaining four fifths goes on mission abroad. In Ireland however the split is 50-50.

The regional structure Joseph Blake put in place in 1841 is largely still used to this day. There are district, circuit and church JMA representatives whose job it is to promote JMA among the children and young people in their area.

JMA’s income is held by The Methodist Church and allocated by The Fund For World Mission often referred to as EEPS.

Operations

What already exists and peoples opinions on this.

Penny Fuller in The Children’s and Youth Department at Methodist House currently runs JMA. JMA forms a small proportion of her overall job role. A full colour magazine called Rainbow is produced three times a year, along with some educational resources and worship material.

The **structure of JMA** is one of it’s main attributes. There are church, circuit, and district representatives that link in directly with relevant church/circuit/district councils. These are overseen nationally by Penny Fuller. This means JMA can get its resources and message out very effectively on a national and local level. Such an operating network is incredibly rare amongst similar organisations, and must surely be regarded as a major strength of JMA.

As this structure has lasted so well over the years it is fair to say JMA has been “inter-generational. It’s message of serving presents a picture of church regarded as useful” – Steve Pearce

Virtually all **JMA secretaries** are female. There are several ways of interpreting this. A secretary in former years has largely been a female job. In the last few decades it has become a male and female job. This suggests the role of secretary has not evolved in a similar way to the wider community. It suggests this role is not taken as seriously by adult males in Methodist Churches. It provides far fewer role models for young males. Whatever changes JMA chooses to make it would be worth reviewing the trans gender role of adults supporting JMA and indeed the title given to JMA co-ordinators. Certainly their appears to be a perception amongst churches that this is a female role, and possibly one not on a level with male within the church.

Rainbow and more recently Peacemakers are magazines that are sent every few months during the year, and the JMA handbook provides useful information defining JMA secretaries roles and explaining how JMA links into The Methodist Church. Church/circuit and district secretaries valued these greatly and this formed the majority of JMA teaching, speaking about rainbow with great affection. For many it was the only resource they used. Often secretaries spoke of giving Rainbow magazine

to children and young people who had left church, and this being the only source of contact they now had with them. Rainbow was often referred to as the reference point from which JMA secretaries tried defining JMA. This meant occasional stories could be remembered, but not the overall definition of JMA. Stakeholders from outside agencies viewed these magazines as very dated and limited, stating that the “standard”, “quality” and “content” was significantly higher in other organisations. Research into this affirmed this view, although given the limited hours staff are allocated to JMA it is hard to see how this can improve in the current set up.

Surprisingly there is no **JMA website** (other than an Irish JMA site – which differs slightly from the UK JMA), which in this age of technology is surprising. There is reference to JMA on the Methodist website, and resources and information can be downloaded this site. NFP Synergy is a research consultancy specialising in non-profit organisations. Their document *Mission Impossible* gives clear advice and suggestions on the importance of a website. Implying that for many it is the “shop window” of an organisation. It is often the a place where people can fidmn the essence of an organisation. By this I mean it “showcases the dreams, character and direction that distinguishes it from other charities. The six elements that help define this are usually: vision, purpose, mission, values, beliefs, strapline. The result of not clearly defining JMA in this way was apparent on every conversation with stakeholders. Secretaries in church, circuit, and district would occasionally mention the “learn, pray and serve” strapline but could not define JMA any further. It caused great unease amongst people when this question was asked. The word “mission” was referred to by many, although their interpretation of mission varied greatly. All influential stakeholders acknowledged this point straight away when asked.

Money is mainly raised through church fund-raisers, JMA money boxes and **The JMA Collecting Book**. This book is used by children/young people, to identify adults willing to donate money each week to JMA. The children then collect this money, and they are rewarded with annual certificates and badges in recognition of this. People interviewed had very mixed views on the collecting book. Many in church look on it fondly, remembering the time they used to collect in this manner. On the whole the people who felt this way were JMA secretaries and people in church congregations. There was an acknowledgment by some people higher in the chain in Methodism that this was possibly an outdated approach, and one they felt awkward towards. Within this group of people some reflected an unease at asking children to fund raise in this way. Children and young people reflected a cross section of views. Some were happy with the book, and others felt uncomfortable asking people for money. Overall this approached seemed to be used by children with many young people having left church and therefore being less active with JMA. Many children’s views were none committal, and seemingly transmitted a view that at this age many were simply doing as they were encouraged and had no/little personal view themselves. Hence a more educational interpretation was being received by most children/young people. Those outside of The Methodist Church interviewed believed this approach to be very positive, and unique to JMA.

The set up of JMA that encourages children/young people to collect money from adults, serves in part as a way of enabling adults to “tithe their money” (Chris Elliott). The process is a way of nurturing continued support from adults, and builds a regular

relationship between the younger and older generations in church. In fact you could argue it's the children/young people acting as the adults in this relationship. One reason for so many adults feeling so positive about JMA is that they are nurtured and encouraged by the young people/children. Other than the designated JMA person in each church, who educates, nurtures and supports the children/young people on a weekly basis? This in turn leads to a broader question; "how do you facilitate adults to do this without leadership centrally from JMA? If there are no full time staff to enable, resource, encourage, educate and nurture how does JMA facilitate people to become actively and daily involved in the "whole church"? JMA is creating interest in this topic in the younger generation largely through educating via Rainbow and Peacemakers magazines. There is no daily or weekly nurture, and few avenues for people to continue their journey of learning and caring through their adult life.

Taking all factors into account the collecting book appears to be one of the first ways children/young people come to learn about giving money to help others. Indeed this for most is the first time they will have actively taken part in collecting money to help others. It evidently is received as an educational activity. Without this there would be ethical questions about this practice. It is largely regarded as a means of encouraging/challenging children and young people to think about giving as they grow older, and raises an awareness of our responsibility to our neighbours. Some JMA secretaries spoke of children/young people who had left church, but still collect for JMA - a reflection maybe on how JMA could be viewed by the wider community and the value of the JMA link within Methodism. Without exception all children and young people (including former ones -adults) spoke of their sense of achievement at receiving certificates and rewards for their endeavours. Some acknowledged this was their main motivation for collecting. Assuming the collecting book is just used as a way of educating and encouraging young people to engage with helping others then the overall view is very positive. Further more it gives JMA a distinct difference over other organisations/charities. This approach also links in with Children and Youth Strategy in that it encourages participation. It could be argued that supporters of JMA view this as one of the main ways JMA receives it's income. This is most definitely a cause for alarm. My research has shown the majority of JMA secretaries with little or no young people in their churches/circuit. JMA is in distinct danger of having a unique and powerful method of engaging young people/children, but no audience to educate. On the flip side there are signs that JMA can be made relevant to the wider community, although it would raise questions on whether the community would value how the money is used.

The consultation process threw up alternative suggestions. Many of which were similar. Below are the collective of ideas on how the operational side of JMA could look. This is explained by taking each of the above operation points in turn.

Employed staff - virtually everyone wanted to see more energy and resources provided by JMA. Secretaries wanted more resource information, and help and advice delivering it. Secretaries reflected frustration at a cause they felt passionate about, but found hard to deliver. At a higher stakeholder level, many observed how efficient JMA had been run in the past, and reflected a sadness/frustration that there is not the personnel to sustain the past performance.

It should be added with the limited hours Penny Fuller has, it is incredible the resources that are available, and should not be taken as a reflection on her input.

In short the consultation showed that the future of JMA is very much dependant on resourcing people to run it. Frustrations mentioned by those interviewed regularly suggest JMA is of a size that to “fit it into” The Methodist Church often seems to restrict it from growing.

The structure of JMA - was believed to be a main strength and no further suggestions were made to enhance this.

In the role of secretaries only Chris Elliott elaborated on this subject, but the evidence suggested she had a very valid point. Firstly the role of a church/circuit/district JMA link needs equal acknowledgement to other roles in the church. A new title for the JMA link person would help.

Observations in my telephone conversations made me question whether the right people were being chosen, and what further training could be provided. There was great support by secretaries, but an overall feeling of helplessness was often transmitted back. Who are they JMA representatives to (many churches have little of no children/young people)? How do I over come this? Many were apologetic and indicated they felt partly to blame.

Whatever changes JMA adopt it can mainly only be applied with the support of these people. Investment in training, and encouragement and empowerment to these people is likely to be central to the future of JMA. The results of Chris Elliotts time in charge illustrate this. Although this should be counter balanced with the fact far less children/young people are now being reached and youth culture will have changed in that period.

Rainbow and more recently Peacemakers - Kirsty Smith of MRDF, and Paul Langley of Christian Aid described these magazines as very dated and could be updated and modernised. Influential Methodist stakeholders also felt improvement could be made. Suggestions included “articles written by children from the projects we are helping”, and “a questions section from children in the UK”. These suggestions meet with the Children and Youth Strategy of encouraging much greater participation with young people. More participation in the magazine from children/young people would be compliant with the Children and Youth Strategy. Chris Elliott suggested children receiving the help could write articles, and children/young people in the UK could have a questions section. Links could be made promoting a JMA website and resources. Website. Comparing Rainbow magazine to other literature in a similar vein available from charities such as Christian Aid validated these points.

Paul Langley suggested Christian Aid could help in this. MRDF and edukid amongst others also have experienced people who could help. Another alternative could be recruiting and employing an experienced person as a member of staff for JMA.

Rainbow is not just a magazine. There is a website copy on the Methodist.org site. It's dated Jan 2008.

JMA Website - As JMA is currently aimed at children and young people then a website that is interactive, creative, informative and educational would seem a basic resource to offer, as the internet is very much part of youth culture. A website is an inexpensive way of enabling people to reflect their views, and acknowledge their efforts. It is often the first “port of call” for people wanting to find out more information, as well as clearly defining the history, and role of the organisation. In

more recent times it can be interactive and useful for Blogs and forums where people can exchange ideas or write about their involvement with the organisation. Weblinks can also be used on popular sites like Facebook and Twitter which in turn freely promotes the said site. The site could contain films that can be downloaded about the projects JMA help. Likewise people in the UK could upload videos, blogs and pictures expressing their views and illustrating their involvement

After all “the purpose of Methodism is to equip people to live in the world. There is no holiness without social holiness” – Chris Elliott.

JMA “gives children the opportunity to learn about what it means to be part of the *whole church*” – Stephen Poxon.

There is a Methodist Children and Youth website that has all the above included in it. JMA is not referred to or represented on this site. This would suggest the current situation of linking JMA with the Children and Youth is not currently working well. One comment by a former National JMA Secretary reflected “within Methodist Children’s Work we haven’t encouraged them to have a vision outside of themselves”. On examination of the site it clearly does encourage a “vision outside of themselves”, but not in a JMA context.

Since the start of JMA its formation has always remained a project within an organisation. Maybe for this reason there is no well defined definition of JMA other than it’s core values and strapline. As Chris Elliott stated “years ago it was accepted people gave with the right hand whilst the left hand didn’t know what was going on. Things have moved on now”. What are JMA’s defining elements of essence? Or more simply put what is JMA’s Vision, Purpose, Mission, etc. Everyone asked during this research struggled to define this. This was most evident at grassroots level where the lack of understanding on this hampered their proclamation of JMA. Simply put JMA secretaries and church members loved JMA and had enormous loyalty, but struggled to define just what JMA was striving to achieve and who it helped. This is best illustrated when referring to the JMA handbook. It aptly describes how JMA is intrinsically entwined with The Methodist Church, but struggles to focus on a clear, focused, definition. The enclosed NRG document will help on this, and explains the benefits to any organisation. Likewise any website will need to have these definitions clearly on display to enhance peoples understanding of JMA and increase the chances of their involvement.

JMA Money Boxes and Collecting books – Taking on board views such as Peter Brady (Methodist Youth President) “I felt a little awkward asking adults for money. I wasn’t very comfortable with it.” Collecting books are likely not to be suitable for all, and money box collecting is an easier more informal approach. Having said that children and young people have a much starker sense of right and wrong, especially when it comes to injustice. Provide them with a situation demonstrating this, educate them of the need, and facilitate ways they can respond and you have fired up children/young people.

When speaking with people such as Michael King and Steve Pearce it is abundantly clear the money is going to places fitting the criteria. The unusual thing with this operation is JMA can’t tell people in advance what the money will exactly be spent on. Most charities will appeal to their supporters by educating them of the need and asking for a response. JMA operates by first spending the money and then telling people where just some of the money was spent.

When you compare the two systems it is likely that JMA could create more interest by first educating people of the need and then facilitating ways in which to respond. This way supporters can see the difference they are making. This suggested response is more relational and would fit into the Children's and Youth style of work, and empower people to believe they could make a difference as well as enabling them to know who exactly it is they are effecting. This would require identifying the need at least a year ahead, and far more planning. That said clearly the operations of established charities show the rewards are far greater. With this method churches or individuals could be given a project and target to aim for, forging multi-cultural links with individuals/churches/communities abroad. Indeed there are examples I have heard from two outside charities where churches and individuals have continued to support a project abroad even after the charity has stopped its promotion/initiative. This could forge church partnerships, lead to visit exchanges, a deeper understanding of the issues, and enable JMA to move on to another project needing their help in the knowledge that the one they left behind has continued support.

In August 2009 Bideford Methodist Circuit in North Devon supported a circuit youth group visit to Cambodia through edukid. The circuit has now adopted a village in Cambodia and all churches in the circuit are now helping children from that village have an education. This is one example where young people took the initiative of visiting a project following educational resources provided by edukid and Christian Aid. This in turned formed relationships with communities from another country and the circuit have now taken on responsibility for funding part of this village. MRDF has experienced the same situation through its Methodist Schools work. A simple way of making JMA relevant to the wider community would be to develop a programme that fits into school curriculum. This is one of many ways more children/young people could hear about JMA and the important work it is involved in. The Shoe Box Appeal is widely adopted by schools around Christmas time. This type of concept is another way that could be developed by JMA. There are many models applied by charities and organisations that would enable JMA to widen their catchment, and educate and nurture many times more children than they currently do.

Money boxes and collecting books are just one way of giving people outlets to respond. The illustrations just mentioned show what can happen when children/young people/adults are enabled to express themselves in ways they feel driven.

The Children's and Youth Strategy favours the state approach of enabling greater participation from young people and children. This can take many forms, such as having young people on steering committee's, and involved in decision making. Youth workers can also be used as enablers in this process. Were JMA to accommodate this approach it would appear the JMA aim of "learn, pray and serve" would be even more fully applied. This argument is backed up by an interview with Paul Langley of Christian Aid. Paul was brought up a Methodist and was actively involved with JMA during his youth. He claims "part of the reason he looked out of his own church and country and engaged with people outside of local issues was due to JMA". Paul display a perfect argument why JMA does not have to be restricted just to children and young people.

Finances

It took four attempts to obtain a list of JMA accounts. It appeared to cause difficulty to the accounts department to identify this money. It would be normal to expect these figures to be readily available. When money is received by Methodist House it is coded according to the purpose it is given. Likewise on expenditure. The process of identifying JMA's turnover therefore should have been theoretically straightforward and speedy and available. This was not the case.

It is alarming that a project of this turnover has no staff readily aware of it's finances. It shows there is no financial budget, and no forecasting. This evidence would back a former National JMA Secretary comments "church never takes children seriously. We are all Gods children. Church is always happy to take money but not involve children in the decision making". Not only are children/young people raising the money, they are not involved in how it's spent, informed how much is raised, or have any say In any decision making.

Past JMA National Secretaries spoke of much higher turnover during their reign, attributing this to more children/young people within church, visiting major church JMA strongholds, sending annual packs about running a children's programme, and targeting specifically the people working with children. It should also be noted far more paid hours were allocated to make this happen.

As The Methodist Church now has to submit accounts in correspondence with the Charities Commission, there is an opportunity to display these figures each year. However even then JMA doesn't have to be separately identified, audited and declared. Were JMA to be set up as a Methodist charity in it's own right it would ensure JMA was regulated by the Charities Commission and therefore make JMA accountable and it's finances completely transparent. It puts in place rules and policies that avoid this situation reoccurring. Like every other charity in the UK people would then be able to see the turnover of JMA and have insight into the way it's run. Currently it "appears" JMA reports to no body, and is financially drifting.

Mission - Criterea for Adopted Causes

JMA distribution of funds falls into two catagories. Home Mission Fund and Fund For World Mission. The criterea for these are as follows:

Home Mission Fund:

- Grants to local churches and circuits
- Evangelism, training, and resources, including Share Jesus International
- Planting new congregations
- Workplace Chaplaincy
- Chaplaincy in further education and higher education institutions
- Mission in rural areas
- Urban Mission
- Creative arts in Methodism
- Media relations
- Cliff College
- Relations with people of other faiths
- Mission Alongside the poor

- ❑ Resourcing mission
- ❑ Political and Parliamentary affairs
- ❑ Support for children's work

Fund For World Mission:

- ❑ Block grants are given to partner churches enabling them to take further initiatives

Other partnerships include:

- ❑ Mission partners serving throughout the world
- ❑ World Church in Britain Partnership (lay people and ministers from overseas serving in Britain)
- ❑ Scholarship students
- ❑ Experience Exchange Programme
- ❑ Nationals in Mission Appointments
- ❑ Special Grants and Special Projects
- ❑ Ministry to Chinese Communities
- ❑ United College of Ascension
- ❑ Inter Faith Work

It has been suggested by Steve Pearce that a Mission Partner could spend the last three months of their three year contract back in the UK, informing people and telling stories of their experiences – a practice held by other organisations such as The Baptist Mission Society and QPSW.

The first criteria for World Mission of “providing block grants to partner churches to enable them to take local initiatives” is broad and in itself offers great scope for mission. It enables JMA to financially support Methodist Church initiatives throughout the world, and has achieved much over the years. Likewise the partnerships in this section provide very valuable support in church mission.

The grassroots feedback show people have a varying interpretation was on where the money was spent. Not one of the church/circuit/district JMA secretaries could quote any of the above. Just two could recount the proportion of giving going abroad and staying in Britain. Most were apologetic of this and some could mention certain projects they knew of from Rainbow magazine. Everyone understood the money was for mission, but when questioned on their interpretation of mission it was very mixed. This varied from helping churches abroad to a wider sense of mission such as funding “schools”, providing “clean drinking water”, and emergency aid. When questioned on how they would like the money to be spent, the response was largely helping Christian work abroad and supporting mission in it's broader sense – schools, water pumps, etc. A number of people believed and were passionate about JMA helping children abroad, and liked the idea of children in Britain providing help to children their own age. This was also reflected when I asked people who they wished JMA to help.

Over the last few years “mission” has come to mean many different things. This raises questions for JMA. Does JMA want to broaden its sense of mission to the “wider community”? A number of comments were received from JMA Church secretaries like this one: “we don't really have many children in our church anymore, but some of

those that have left still do JMA, and Rainbow is my only reason for seeing them these days”.

At the Methodist 2000 conference a document called “Our Calling” was adopted as a strategy of “mission for the whole church. It has four headings: worship, learning and caring, service, and evangelism. These are defined as follows:

Worship – *Christians are called to increase awareness of God’s presence and to celebrate God’s love.*

Most certainly the resources of JMA services and alike serve to this purpose. The delivery of this by other agencies/charities could be argued are for a broader audience and are more varied. One likely reason for this is the staff and resources designated by these agencies for this purpose. Staff are also coming from varied backgrounds and this is being reflected in their worship approach. If JMA wants to widen it’s approach to the wider community there are things that can be learnt from this. Like Rainbow the worship resources are dated in comparison to other organisations.

Learning and Caring – *Christians are called to help people to learn and grow in faith through mutual support and care.*

Caring for individual people and communities

Building partnerships with other churches and groups who share some of our mission aims

Sharing the task of education and social and spiritual development

These points are share very much JMA’s values. I have found little evidence of point 2 (building partnerships ...) happening on any recognisable national scale. On point 3 it should be noted that charities such as MRDF, edukid, and others are active in schools and do trips to visit communities and projects they are helping. This experience enables people to do “joined up thinking” of how to live their faith, build relationships, and apply what they have learnt from their experience. A key point comes out here between the differences of some other agencies. Christian Aid for example will interpret spiritual development on a level that partner them with other faith organizations, and broadens their scope for working alongside the government, which in turn widens it’s catchment and makes it’s voice arguably more powerful nationally. An MRDF or edukid approach has traditionally focused it’s work on those within Methodism or Christianity, hence a different slant on spiritual development. It should be noted the people they help can come from a cross section of faiths and cultures.

Service – *Christians are called to be good neighbours to people in need and to challenge injustice.*

Caring for the earth

Becoming friends with people of different cultures and faiths

Struggling for a just world

Being alongside the poor

Again visits that enable cross-cultural relationships between churches/communities/individuals would greatly enhance this. Facilitating this professionally would require more resources.

Evangelism – *Christians are called to make more followers of Jesus Christ.*

Telling the good news of Jesus
Calling people to faith in Jesus Christ and Christian
Discipleship

Currently JMA expenditure facilitates this, largely through supporting Methodist churches abroad.

There is information in the JMA handbook that touches on developing some of these points. Again it would appear that without the resources these are mainly ideas and suggestions and this has hampered any application.

The Churches Network for Mission report to CTBI Trustees as distributed at the World Mission Group (WGM) earlier this year makes some very progressive suggestions on mission that covers issues mentioned above on “Service” and “caring for the earth”. The following quotes reflect this:

“Mission as Celebration – the Gospel is Good News. Eg enabling people to see environmental issues as a spur to action and to envision how much better the environment could be in 40 years time: enabling people to celebrate the diversity that immigration offers rather than see it as a problem to be solved.

Mission as Reconciliation

- People to people
- People to God
- People to earth

Mission as Accompaniment – getting alongside to support and to be transformed”

This report was presented to the WGM by Michael King. Michael co-ordinates and visits many of the projects JMA helps. It shows how ideas from project grassroots can be applied nationally within the UK through JMA, and gives insight as to how the Methodist Church and JMA could apply these thoughts on mission, and at the same time fulfil the values of JMA, Our Calling, and the Children’s and Youth Strategy. It is a small attempt at a big subject, but shows clearly how this can be achieved, and illustrates how the UK Methodist Church can be educated themselves through their partner churches and it’s experiences abroad.

In the report there is mention of how “The Network” “continues to grapple with questions around it’s perceived relevance to it’s potential membership”. My research heard time again how people in Methodist Churches either partly envision money was being spent in a “wider mission context” or wished it to be.

The report also makes mention to “how best to address mission issues that are outside the expertise of Network participants”, and mentions how the Network “has given serious consideration to it’s purpose and role, recognising that these must be clear and communicated effectively to generate the active participation of Churches and mission agencies in the Network”.

It is interesting that the Methodist Church has a number of Methodist linked organisations/charities such as MRDF, edukid, Action For Children, and a number of others, that have expertise on how to deliver this to children/young people, and therefore direct relevance to JMA. They also have resources that could help in this area.

Summary of consultation points

Defining JMA: What is the essence of JMA – Vision, Purpose, Mission, Strapline, Values and Beliefs. To prayerfully seek answers to this a forum could be set up. Any forum would be advisable to include stakeholders from grassroots up, and inclusive of outside stakeholders (other agencies), as well as people of all ages.

Possible questions to be asked are:

What is the contextualisation of Joseph Blakes vision in todays culture?

What is the evolution of JMA that combines not just existing JMA people, but people from the wider community - and how to apply it?

On the definition of mission there are numerous ways people from within Methodism are applying their faith in developing world countries. Sunderland Samba, edukid and MRDF are just some of these. It might prove helpful for any forum to gather these examples to see whether it encompasses or helps the forum in it's quest for mission.

The above is most likely to lead to the catchment audience JMA wishes to aim at. Will it be just children/young people, all age, churched or wider community.

This is also an opportunity for JMA to define the category of it's aid. For example does JMA wish to provide all aid through Methodist Churches or does it wish to open doors to a wider remit. This could take the form of more direct aid, or working alongside Methodist partner organisations, etc.

Very broadly speaking aid can fall into three catagories: emergency aid, transitional aid (when emergency aid pulls out, but long term aid has not committed), and long term aid. Is there areas JMA wishes to focus more on than others, or indeed not at all.

Should this action be taken it is likely JMA may wish to review the list of people/organisations they currently support to ensure consistency.

Models: There are varying models that can be used to identify where JMA focuses it's work. This may include new models, or modernised old models. One example being The Maslow Theory:



Pyramid of Needs (After Abraham Maslow)

This model shows emergency aid at the foundation and long term aid nearer top. Food and water, followed by shelter can be viewed as largely emergency aid, and things

such as education can be seen as providing long term aid as it work towards making people self-sufficient.

Strategy: Once JMA has examined it's identity, audience and purpose, then it has the ability to plan ahead. By setting objectives on where JMA would like to be in say 5 years time, then aims and realistic goals can be planned to set the scene on how this can be achieved.

The consultation process showed two points that highlighted this need. Firstly, outside agencies like Christian Aid, MRDF, edukid and numerous others, identify the need first, then educate people of this need, then nurture that need, and then offer people ways to respond. This method has proved increasingly more fruitful than the current model of JMA which works in reverse. Secondly, it alludes to JMA effectively asking for money before educating people of the need – which is exactly against the values JMA stand for. The model applied by other agencies is far better suited to JMA's standing on education being the main theme and finance being merely a response from this. One person stressed a “childs/young persons response through fund raising should always remain just an option”, - not mandatory. Time and again people mentioned one of the main focus's of JMA should be education. Many believed if this was done right then the “rest would follow”. As in the case of Paul Langley the benefits of education might not be realised until later in their lives.

This means you can educate in advance of the aid, and give people opportunities to be involved and build relationships with those JMA is helping. It breeds nurture, long term help, self-esteem, realisation of purpose/ability. The more real the experience/relationship the more likely people are to engage. Laura's work with MRDF is one example of this.

All this raises serious implications for the people delivering the above. Where is the cut off point for the Children and Youth department? Should the above be applied well then the evidence of MRDF, edukid and others show the work snowballs into supporters wishing to develop a relationship with projects.

A number of consultations aired frustrations they had encountered, by sharing resources. This ranged from publication issues, to personnel hours and different priorities in work. For example a National JMA secretary will naturally lean towards a social expression of faith. To a Children and Youth Worker they may recognise this as important, but focus more on enabling people to have a faith. The two are linked, and can work together, but the natural evolvement process will most likely lead to some feeling restricted in their work and expression of faith.

One idea expressed during this consultation was for Children and Youth to focus on raising awareness of these issues, and for JMA to then build on this with it's own workers and resources. Things such as events like Breakout that feature heavy focus on promoting charities and causes, are one example of Children and Youth raising awareness of helping others. A JMA link here could offer a platform for people to discover more and develop their social action journey.

Certainly the current hours allocated to JMA within the Children and Youth set up show a decline in resources, workers and finance, and suggests the change from separate JMA workers to sharing job roles between JMA and Children and Youth has not worked as well.

Resources: Magazine and website content when built on a two way relationship and can reflect all peoples views, not just educating but nurturing and encouraging people to live the cause, daily/weekly rather than a Sunday or every few months edition.

Facebook, Bebo, and Twitter are just some example of this. In fact within these sites virtual reality games exist where you can plant a tree or buy a present, etc. It shows people are aware and wanting to be enabled. Consequently any magazine needs to be more regular, and a website fast moving of thoughts and involvement and communication – participation- current moving culture. Both of these would help JMA evolve and be on the pulse as things develop and happen. It adds excitement and joy and can feel like you are living faith because people feel connected and can see the results and answers to prayer. Prayer pages, prayer days, different prayers, talking to God, asking for miracles, installing belief that things can change and God answers prayer, showing faith to children/young people. It can be likened to leading a “movement”.

To create this requires personnel and funding. In an age of economic decline businesses and organisations are looking to minimise their overheads. One way this is often addressed is through the formation of partnerships with other parties. This is entered into when the partnership is beneficial to all sides. There seems little evidence to suggest that this context could not be applied amongst faith organisations i.e. JMA/Methodist Church/charities. For example MRDF, edukid, Action For Children are all Methodist associated charities with experience of delivering the above. Christian Aid also have a wide range of resources, and have indicated they would be willing to share these. Any partnership needs to be beneficial to both parties. If JMA wanted to avoid this then contracting work out alleviates long term financial commitment, and recruits experience and expertise.

Another choice could be to employ worker again. The consultation showed that amongst grassroots level people accepted administration costs as long as these were kept low. One way of creating an income would be for JMA to be a registered charity in it's own right. This way Gift Aid could fund things like personnel.

The registered charity route would also make JMA responsible to a body (UK Charities Commission) which would ensure transparent practice in areas such as finance.

Secretaries: Some JMA secretaries lists are out of date and need updating. Is Secretary the right terminology for this role? What type of people do we want to encourage to hold these positions?

God gave Joseph Blake a totally radical vision, something that was utterly amazing in its day. It was embraced by The Methodist Church. Maybe the Methodist Church should embrace the vision and understanding all stakeholders have of this mission. History shows that it took the church 40/50 years to adopt Joseph Blakes vision, but when they did the result was monumentus and lasted for literally well over a century. The challenge is to avoid the wait of change and be just as monumentus. Where is God leading JMA. This consultation spoke to many different people, but it was very surprising how many people felt the same way and had similar suggestions.

Resources used

- 2 Southwell Methodist Church website
- 3 Irish JMA website
- 4 UK Charities Commission
- 5 Rainbow Autumn 2008
- 6 Marie Smith JMA Secretary Bedworth Methodist Church
- 7 Rev Robert Dean Bedworth Methodist Church
- 8 Stargazers Jan 2000 edition
- 9 Sylvia Lee Enfield Circuit
- 10 Joyce Alderson Cannock Chase Circuit
- 11 Joyce Bearne Stafford Circuit
- 12 Pat Guest Walsall Circuit
- 13 Norma Bryan Brownhill's Circuit
- 14 Methodist Church UK website
- 15 Chris Elliott
- 16 Churches Network for Mission – report to CTBI Trustees
- 17 Minutes of World Mission Group 5/10/2009
- 18 JMA handbook
- 19 NRG report
- 20 David Bennett
- 21 Kirsty Smith
- 22 Young People from Southampton and Exeter Districts
- 23 Peter Brady
- 24 Stephen Poxon
- 25 Michael King
- 26 Steve Pearce

- 27 Laura Cook
- 28 Paul Langley
- 29 Tim Dunwoody