Member Care Update

Ethnê-MC Facilitation Team
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Ethnê-MC Update **Issue 1: November 2006**

A warm welcome to the first issue of the *Update*! This monthly report is designed to inform you about important member care resources, news, and topics. We especially want to further equip people with member care responsibilities who are focussing on mission/aid personnel in least-reached people groups (LPGs). Each issue is archived on our web site: **www.ethne.net/membercare**. (Note the web site is scheduled to go live this month—November 2006). Please share the *Update* with others and feel free to submit materials for us to include. May the Lord bless you and your work!

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In this Issue:

SPECIAL RESOURCES

- CHAMP—Chinese Asian Membercare Projects

Finally!—Member care materials in Chinese!

SPECIAL NEWS

- Events to help you connect and contribute to the growing member care field:

*International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church; November 2006
*Member Care Courses—Adelaide, Australia January 2007; Singapore March 2007
*Training in Trauma Healing—Nairobi, Kenya; February 2007

SPECIAL TOPICS

- Coaching Mission/Aid Workers for On-Field Development, by Dr. Keith Webb

Keith shares why coaching is important in LPG settings, and how to benefit from it.

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The *Update* is compiled on behalf of the *Ethnê-Member Care Network*. We are a core, growing *network of colleagues* who are involved in member care. We come from different nations and organisations. Our passion is to see the least-reached people groups (LPGs) experience the transforming love of Jesus Christ. We are committed to help provide and develop member care resources in order to support the diversity of people/senders who are working among LPGs. Our *Network* is part of the Ethnê to Ethnê Movement (**www.ethne.net**).

Email: mc@ethne.net
Ethnê-MC Website: **www.ethne.net/membercare**
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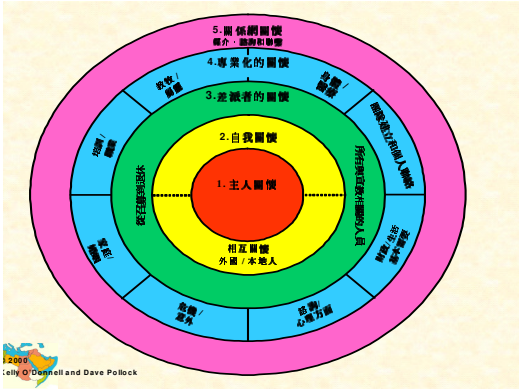
SPECIAL RESOURCES

- CHAMP—Chinese Asian Membercare Projects

New! Visit **www.chinamembercare.com** for member care materials in Chinese.

CHAMP is an ongoing, cooperative project. The purpose is to develop resources to help support Chinese workers both within and from China. One of the initial projects was to translate, write, and field test several articles related to member care. Little material of this nature is currently available in Chinese. As is true in other countries, without sufficient member care, many workers will seriously struggle and possibly leave their work prematurely. The initial member care materials have been put together under the name *Running to Win—Resources for Chinese Workers*. They serve as an important reference point as Chinese Christians further develop their strategies for effective cross-cultural work. Each of the 16 articles and five case studies has a short introduction to orient the readers about its relevance to the Chinese contexts. There are also audio portions (the overall introduction and case studies) on the web site, as well as translations of two important books. All the materials are in Chinese and English. For example, the diagram above is the Chinese version of the international member care model in *Doing Member Care Well*. Other written and audio materials will be added in the months ahead at **www.chinamembercare.com.** Please spread the word!



SPECIAL NEWS

- *International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP)*; 12 and 19 Nov. 2006

IDOP is a global day of intercession for persecuted Christians worldwide. Its primary focus is the work of intercessory prayer and citizen action on behalf of persecuted communities of the Christian faith. The organisers also encourage prayer for oppressors, the nations that promote persecution, and those who ignore it. Materials are also in French, Spanish, and Russian. Get involved. Intentional member care, through intercessory prayer, is key!

Contacts: **www.persecutedchurch.org;** and **www.idop.org**

- *Member Care Courses*—Adelaide, Australia Jan 2007 and Singapore March 2007

Two identical four-week member care courses are being offered in order to train those who would like to function (or are already functioning) as member care workers within their own sending groups. Mission personnel from all evangelical sending groups are welcome to participate. Speakers are member care practitioners and others from various agencies. These courses are accredited with YWAM's University of the Nations. Pre-requisites to attend course: preliminary training of your sending group, one-year of mission experience, and a heart for mission personnel.

Contacts: emails: **purejoy@gmx.ch** and **cgharrison@ozemail.com.au**

- *Training in Trauma Healing*—Nairobi, Kenya, TX USA; 5-9 February 2007

So many people around the world are affected by war and other traumas. At this workshop, participants will learn how to train local church leaders to help people who are suffering from war and other trauma. It is based on the book, *Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church can Help*. This book was developed in Africa and it has already been translated and taught in local workshops in over 40 language groups.

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SPECIAL TOPICS

Coaching Mission/Aid Workers for On-Field Development

Dr. Keith E. Webb

"I haven't told this to anyone, but I'm thinking of leaving the field and going to work for my dad back in Europe," confided Jeffrey*, a team leader based in Bangladesh. Jeffrey and I met at a conference. When he found out I coached leaders and had least-reached people groups (LPGs) field experience he shared his difficulties with me.

Jeffrey described his situation: he felt isolated, experienced frequent interpersonal conflict, slow ministry results, had run out of ideas, and felt his vision for ministry slowly draining from him. I felt a lot of compassion for Jeffrey, who had endured these difficulties for most of the past three years.

He lived in an isolated region with four other foreign families from his organisation spread out in various villages, but all within an hour's drive of each other. Jeffrey became team leader more or less by default, he moved there eight years ago and the other team members joined over the past five years.

Jeffrey needed more than an encouraging pat on the back.—much more than a couple hours of listening and advice. He needed someone who would walk through these challenges with him over the critical next few months. Who could do that?

Jeffrey's case is not unusual, in fact, I'm observing it to be all too common. Field personnel may receive adequate pre-field training, but often inadequate on-field development. On-the-job field development is a key factor in missionary longevity and effectiveness.

Limiting Factors in On-Field Development

Sending groups such as mission/church organisations point to a lack of experts, time and money constraints, geographical distance, or simply a lack of follow through.

- *Experts*. By far, I hear leaders lament that there are just not enough experts to mentor field workers. Much of my work is with mission/aid personnel working in least-reached people groups (LPGs). By definition, there are no experts in their mission field. Otherwise, the group would be reached!
- *Time*. Those who do have expertise in field work are usually the ones with the busiest schedule and the most fruitful work. Many are reluctant to give time to newer workers instead of the local co-workers or converts with whom they partner.
- *Money*. Some sending groups try to visit their staff once a year, and have their staff gather somewhere for a conference once a year. Twice a year simply isn't effective for on-going development. The results of conferences tend to be largely motivational and relational, but the effect also can quickly dissipate after returning to the field.
- *Geography*. Many LPG workers live in remote locations. Agency leaders are stretched with time and money constraints in getting out to where their field workers live.
- *Reality*. Many organizations have field mentoring or member care plans that include regular monthly meetings. In reality, however, these plans often break down because of one of the above factors, or simply because the plan looks good on paper but it doesn't work.

What's the answer here? I believe the answer is in rethinking how we help people develop, where that's done, and who can do it. Coaching is one answer to effectively develop mission/aid workers on the field. Let me explain what I mean by coaching, then I'll tell you how things turned out with Jeffrey.

Using Coaching Skills to Empower Leaders

Coaching is an ongoing conversation that empowers a person or team to fully live out God's calling—in their life and profession. The goal of coaching is to develop a person or team to more effectively reflect, correct, and generate new learning. It's learning new ways to learn, listening to the heart and the Holy Spirit, and taking action to reshape their lives around that learning.

Coaching is an advanced form of adult learning. Adults learn better through dialogue and discovery rather than someone teaching them. Maybe you can relate to Winston Churchill when he said, "I am always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught."

Coaching focuses on learning rather than teaching. Coachees (those who are coached) are in the driver's seat. Coachees choose their own growth goals. Coachees reflect deeply about their current situation. Coachees think through their options. Coachees decide their next steps. All the while, the coach actively listens and asks reflective questions, supportively challenging limited beliefs and behaviours. Advice-giving is kept to a minimum so that the coachee can discover Holy Spirit-inspired solutions.

Holy Spirit-Based Learning

Coaching works because it brings out a person's best—what God put in. Coaching is based on the theological understanding that every believer already has an advisor— the Holy Spirit.

Jesus explained the Holy Spirit's role in a believer's life: "But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). Christian leaders are not a substitute for the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we forget. We too often jump into teaching or advice-giving before the coachee has had a chance to reflect and hear from God.

Coaching Maximizes a Person's Potential

God uniquely created each person to *become* someone special and to *do* something special. This is *calling*. Calling is not just for certain people. Every believer has a calling in at least three areas of his or her life: calling to character or personal holiness (Eph 1:4), calling to relationship with God (Eph 1:5), and calling to ministry—a unique contribution to God's Kingdom (Eph 2:10). Coaching honours the uniqueness of people and their calling by not assuming an advice-giving role.

Coaching believes that coachees can find their own answers but may need help getting there. Coaches provide a supportive environment to help a coachee to "discover" what God has for them. This process prepares coachees to find their own answers when the coach isn't around. Mission/aid workers particularly require this ability because of their often isolated locations.

Time after time a coachee comes up with a brilliant insight or idea that never occurred to me. These experiences reinforce my willingness to trust the Holy Spirit, listen well, and ask questions to go for the "discovery"!

Coaching Cuts Travel, Saves Time, and It's Doable!

Most coaching is over the telephone. I coach people from literally around the world. If I can meet the coachee in person, then that's a bonus, but not a requirement. Even when we live in the same city many coachees enjoy the focus of 60-minute telephone coaching session twice a month.

Even those with a tight budget can affordably receive coaching these days with discounted international telephone or free Internet communications like Skype.com. Compare the cost of an hour telephone call to that of an airplane ticket. A person could be coached for years for the same cost of just one conference or trip back "home." And which would have longer lasting impact? My experience says coaching.

Coaching by telephone allows an organization to utilize trained staff as coaches no matter where they live—and even if they are busy. Travel costs are no longer a factor. Neither is time away from home or work. Even the busiest person could coach a couple of people by phone twice a month for an hour.

Coaching Well Requires Skill

Coaching uses some of the counselling, facilitation, or mentoring skills that you may have already learned. My observation of Christian leaders, however, is that many know *about* active listening and inquiry, for example, but don't regularly practice them.

Coaching requires a special set of skills. Skills take practice and you need feedback to improve. Here's some of the top coaching skills I've identified:

- Listening: Taming the Tongue
- Inquiry: Provoking Reflection
- Feedback: Speaking the Truth in Love
- Expanding: Facilitating Discovery
- Focusing: Designing Actions
- Following-up: Supporting Progress

In addition there are many techniques and models that can enhance your effectiveness as a coach. I've found it to be worth my time and effort to gain skills in coaching others. Feel free to my website for training and other resources. **www.CreativeResultsManagement.com**

What Happened with Jeffrey?

Jeffrey and I began a telephone coaching relationship. We spoke every two weeks for an hour to an hour and a half. Each time I allowed Jeffrey to focus the topic of the conversation based on his need. During the first call we explored why he wanted to leave the field, what his original vision was, and identified a continuing, yet discouraged, passion for ministry in Bangladesh.

In the next few calls Jeffrey worked through a conflict with a team-mate, how to find additional school resources for his teenage daughter, getting his spiritual development back on track, and further exploring the job position in Europe. Each topic came from Jeffrey. As we talked, I asked questions, listened, challenged and supported him as he moved ahead. Together we searched for God's direction in it all. Jeffrey made several important discoveries about himself. Each call produced several action steps— homework—that Jeffrey decided on and would do before our next call.

Within three months, Jeffrey had regained his confidence, and was enthusiastic about the future. He resolved the conflict with his team-mate and helped the team to set up new ground rules for how the team would communicate and interact. He encouraged his wife to use the phone—and thus spend money—to call overseas to find school resources. She did. Jeffrey changed his devotional pattern and reinvigorated his walk with the Lord. He explored the job with his father in Europe and quickly realized that its attraction was mostly to escape his current role. Last, Jeffrey re-evaluated his calling, identified his gifting more clearly, and began reshaping his work roles around that understanding.

Unusual? Not really. Through coaching I've seen many people make similar discoveries and progress. But it can't be done with one-off meetings or calls, because it requires an on-going process and coaching skills.

There are few short cuts in helping people develop. "Efficiently" helping people through a newsletter, conference, or yearly visit isn't enough. People need on-going personalized help. But, they don't need the same amount of help all the time. Jeffrey required an larger time investment the first six months. After that, we spoke on the telephone only once a month.

Are you getting the help you need? Is your sending group providing on-going development to all your staff? Coaching may be part of the solution.

Keith E. Webb is an international leadership coach living in Asia since 1991. He works with non-profit organizations to multiply their impact through on-field leadership development and coaching systems. He can be reached at http://www.CreativeResultsManagement.com

* "Jeffrey's" identity and details were drastically changed to maintain confidentiality.

Introductory Books on Coaching:

Ogne, Steve, & Tom Nebel. (1995). *Empowering Leaders Through Coaching*. An excellent training set (tapes and workbook) for learning the skills of coaching those in Christian ministry. **www.churchsmart.com**

Stoltzfus, Tony. (2005). *Leadership Coaching: The Disciplines, Skills and Heart of a Coach*. Currently the only Christian book that explains *how* to coach. **www.amazon.com**

Whitmore, John. (2002). *Coaching for Performance: Growing People, Performance and Purpose* (3rd ed.). London: Nicholas Brealey. Clear, concise, hands-on and widely available. This secular guide is one of the best introductory books on coaching.