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## **PRACTICAL ADVICE ON CULTIVATING AND SUSTAINING A LOCAL CHURCH'S INTEREST AND SUPPORT OF MISSION**

**Ernest Oliver**

In offering these notes it is presumed that folk in our local assemblies contribute to *Echoes of Service* and use the excellent Daily Prayer Guide associated with it. It is also assumed that missionaries on the *Echoes* list are invited to speak while on home leave and continue to encourage prayerful interest through their correspondence. The notes, however, are intended to draw attention to the availability of wider sources of information concerning evangelical missionary work and training courses.

*The UK Christian Handbook* published jointly by MARC Europe, the Bible Society and the Evangelical Alliance every three or four years, includes some eighty-four different directory sections covering a comprehensive range of religious activity carried out from bases in the UK.

The 1985/86 Edition has just been published, priced £9.55, and is available from the Evangelical Alliance, 186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT.

*The Evangelical Missionary Alliance* (186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT) has, for the past twenty-seven years, brought into its membership those missionary societies and agencies, and those theological and Bible training colleges as well as individual members, all of whose work and ministry is based on the scriptures. (The above quoted *UK Christian Handbook* includes a list of those societies and colleges which are in membership with the EMA). The present Secretary is the Rev Stanley Davies, for many years a missionary in Kenya with the Africa Inland Mission and, just prior to becoming Secretary of the EMA in 1983, Missions lecturer and tutor at Moorlands Bible College. The Evangelical Missionary Alliance arranges quarterly meetings for societies within a geographical or functional area for mutual information, encouragement and prayer; annually it holds, in association with All Nations

Christian College, refresher courses for missionaries, as well as a course for orientation into Muslim work (syllabuses available from EMA); it holds annual and periodic conferences on subjects of interest and concern to those involved in mission; it represents to the Government in this country the concerns of missionaries working overseas, eg nationality issues, education of missionaries' children etc.; it produces a quarterly list of books relevant to missionary work, and is available to provide information about missions and colleges, as well as to advise and arrange the conduct of missionary meetings. The current subscription for individual members is £5 per annum. The EMA produces a bi-monthly prayer digest called *Missionary Mandate* which in each issue gives a substantial prayer item for each day covering, in each issue, all the continents. Subscription to this is £1.55 per annum.

*Materials* for creating and sustaining interest for prayer, support and involvement are available from almost all the member societies of the EMA. It is not practicable to publish a comprehensive list of such items as: magazines, fact sheets, books, prayer diaries, filmstrips, films, video tapes or games for stimulating the interest of young people, but most societies have a variety of material suited to differing age groups, and as the *UK Christian Handbook* indicates clearly the geographical working areas and particular functions (eg literature, radio etc.) of the societies and agencies, it is not difficult to make a selection of societies to whom to write for the relevant audio-visual aids needed by a particular local church.

It should be emphasized that the majority of missionary society leaders are willing to answer queries, to advise churches and also to give direction to young people seeking guidance on future work for the Lord.

*Training Colleges* Since 1960 the theological and Bible colleges in membership of the EMA have included within their courses, in an increasing measure, particular curricula related to the great missionary task of the church. While the colleges run two and three year courses, quite a number of them will admit students for a year or even a term for specially tailored courses.

A number of them, eg All Nations Christian College, regularly arrange a Summer School of Missions ideally suited to help ministers, elders, missionary secretaries and youth leaders of churches.

Prospectuses of all courses are available on application and many of the colleges will advise on pre-entry preparation.