



Report for the Regional Associations Meeting at the IAMS Conference, 2004

History

The British and Irish Association for Mission Studies was founded in 1989 by a consortium of churches and agencies and held its first conference the following year. Its aims are:

- to promote the study of the history, theology and practice of mission.
- to encourage awareness of major issues in contemporary mission.
- to provide a meeting point for mutual enrichment, challenge and collaboration in mission.

Activities

- 1) **Conferences.** BIAMS meets every second year in residential conference, which has been the main focus of BIAMS' activity. A list of conferences to date is included overleaf. The conferences have been held in rotation in each of the four nations of the British Isles. In intervening years a day conference is held, usually in Birmingham. Over the years, BIAMS conferences have tackled many pertinent mission issues and also addressed many different dimensions of mission studies.
- 2) **Research.** Through its Studies Secretary, BIAMS has tried to promote mission research by forming interest groups who would meet occasionally but work mainly by correspondence. These have rarely functioned formally but BIAMS has supported the research of members through its networking activity. More successful has been the BIAMS discussion list (hosted by the Diocese of Durham), which has been used for pre- and post-conference discussion.
- 3) **Networking.** BIAMS circulates a very useful *Newsletter* (edited by Timothy Yates and printed by the Church in Wales) twice a year which contains one or two short articles, book reviews and news about BIAMS and other mission associations. The Members Interest Directory (produced by Philip Thomas, Studies Secretary) has been a helpful in enabling members to network with one another.

Membership

BIAMS has also aimed to bring together academics and practitioners and this is reflected in its membership, which currently includes 200 individuals. Both individual and corporate membership is allowed. Corporate members now number about 40 and are encouraged to name two or more individuals as members. The benefits of membership include receiving the twice-yearly *BIAMS Newsletter*, a reduction on Conference fees, mission studies news by e-mail, and inclusion in the members' interests directory. Corporate members have the additional benefit of being listed on the BIAMS brochure and having a link on the website. Fees for individual members now stand at £20.00 per annum, though concessions are allowed.

Organisation

- 1) **Executive.** BIAMS is led by an Executive Committee consisting of an elected Chairperson, Honorary Treasurer, *ex officio* members: the Executive Secretary, the Editor of the *Newsletter*, and the Studies Secretary and up to six other elected members. The Churches' Commission on Mission (CCOM) nominates a representative to the Committee.
- 2) **Finance.** BIAMS activities are supported financially by membership fees and any profit made on conferences. BIAMS could not function without the practical support of a number of corporate members mentioned here.
- 3) **Administration.** Since 1998 BIAMS has had an institutional base at the Henry Martyn Centre, for the study of mission and world Christianity, in Cambridge (www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk), which has greatly added to organisational stability. The HMC Administrator is also BIAMS Administrator.

Publications

In addition to the *BIAMS Newsletter*, which has appeared almost continuously for the nearly 15 years, the papers from each of the last three BIAMS conferences have been published in a joint venture with Cliff College Publishing. These are:

Timothy Yates (ed.) *Mission - An Invitation to God's Future* (2000)

Howard Mellor & Timothy Yates (eds.) *Mission and Spirituality: Creative Ways of Being Church* (2002)

Howard Mellor & Timothy Yates (eds.) *Mission, Violence, and Reconciliation* (2004)

Current research

BIAMS research is currently focused toward the next day conference, which will take place in Selly Oak, Birmingham on 23 October this year. The theme will be "Equipping for Mission" and the speaker/facilitator will be David Harley. The next residential conference will take place on 28 July – 1 August 2005 in Belfast. Two main speakers – Vinoth Ramachandra, Werner Ustorf – and other representatives of the churches worldwide will be asked to respond to Philip Jenkins' book, *The Next Christendom?*