

Conferences

Theological famine relief

How can we train a whole new generation of pastors in some of the poorest regions on earth? This was the sobering task set before Pastor Training International (PTI) and Christian Books Worldwide (CBW) at their first-ever joint annual conference in Swindon earlier this summer.

PTI exists to provide teaching and resources for pastors in the poorest parts of the world. It specialises in running in-country training conferences, distance mentoring from the UK and resources for self-study by pastors.

CBW provides evangelistic and teaching books in English and many other languages for the growing church in the developing world and seeks to alleviate the desperate shortage of suitable theological books in Asia and Africa.

The conference brought together PTI trainers who had just returned from some of the most challenging locations on earth in which to train pastors. Ken McIntosh of East Horsley Evangelical Church reported on a conference in Ginshi, Ethiopia, where eight different denominations provided 82 trainees, one of whom had been saved out of a family which extensively practised witchcraft.

Ethiopia now has the fastest-growing church in Africa, and at Ginshi, where the church is now 800 strong, the crying needs are for training and for land on which to build new churches.

Preaching

Gareth Jones, pastor of Milland Evangelical Church in Hampshire, told the conference how in Chidniv, Ukraine, recent training focused on showing trainees how to prepare and deliver sermons better, how to preach systematically through the Old and New Testaments and how to provide better pastoral care for their flocks.

In Burma and Thailand the situation is very different to Africa and Eastern Europe, with only 1 and 4 per cent of the population Christian, respectively. In the face of oppression and poverty Simon Percy, pastor of Woodford Evangelical Church, showed how pastors are overcoming these problems.

One effective way is by training as medics. The 'barefoot doctors', as they are called, now travel the country treating the sick and sharing the gospel.

Mike Taylor of CBW, from Christ Church, Fetcham, showed how CBW works to translate, publish and supply many thousands of books of Reformed, evangelical theology to pastors in these poor regions, describing it as 'theological famine relief'.

Since its inception in 2009, CBW has provided no less than 150,000 copies of books to Asia and African countries in eight different languages. And CBW is now investigating the possibility of sending selected second-hand English theological books to Bible colleges and pastors.

(More information from www.pastor-training.org and www.christianbooksworldwide.org).

Jeremy Marshall