

The ACT Overseas Fund: past,

1926 and all that

Believe it or not, the Overseas Fund is actually older than ACT. Let me explain. Before ACT became ACT it was known as the Christian Teachers' Fellowship (CTF); and before the CTF became CTF it was known as the Teachers' Prayer Bond (TPB), which was founded in 1926.

Soon after the Teachers' Prayer Bond was established the Overseas Fund came into being. Over the years many thousands of pounds have been donated by many hundreds of ACT members (and their CTF and TPB predecessors), and distributed to support the work of Christian teachers around the globe.

Expertise and experience

Typically, the Overseas Fund currently receives and gives out between five and seven thousand pounds a year, benefiting teachers and teaching organisations from Poland to Paraguay, and Namibia to Nepal. For example, £7,957 was donated to the ACT Overseas Fund during the year from 1 September 2003 to 31 August 2004. In that period the Fund gave a total of £6,640 to a variety of causes.

Links are often made through individual ACT members and the funds are approved and allocated by the Overseas Committee, which comprises a mixture of members of the ACT Board of Directors and other ACT members with particular overseas expertise and experience.

The Fund's main brief is to support the setting up of Christian teacher networks and associations in

The Fund's main brief is to support the setting up of Christian teacher networks and associations in other countries

Phil Mellen has been a primary school teacher since 1994 and is currently the Headteacher of a small Church of England primary school on the Cheshire/Derbyshire border. He is currently ACT's Overseas Secretary.

Phil has been a Christian since the age of 16. He currently worships at Trinity C of E Church in Buxton where he and his family moved in November 2004. He is married with one daughter and enjoys music and sport. Phil believes that ACT has a crucial role to play in supporting Christian teachers and providing a distinctive Christian voice on educational matters.

Phil was elected to ACT's Board of Directors in November 2002.

other countries. To begin with, gifts from the Overseas Fund are used to establish the fledgling organisation's systems and infrastructure. Later on they might be used to fund training and conferences for their members and supporters.

Sustainable development

Always the aim is to help networks and associations to grow and prosper, and become self-sustaining and independent. Last year the prayerful, financial support of ACT members enabled the Fund to continue to bless Christian colleagues who had received support from ACT in recent years – helping them to build their ministry secure in the knowledge that ACT would give funds for two or three years in a row. This helps overseas partners to plan ahead.

However, whilst cementing relationships with existing partners overseas is important, the Overseas Committee would not want organisations to become dependent on continuing financial support over the longer term. Hence, the ACT overseas sub-committee has always actively sought to find and support new projects for Christian teachers elsewhere in the world.

Gifts overseas

Partner organisations and individuals supported last year include:

- AUH – the Bulgarian Christian Teachers Association
- FEISA – a Christian initial teacher training college in Paraguay
- SVN – the Senior Volunteer Network
- CTFN – the Christian Teachers' Fellowship of Nepal
- John Shortt – Travelling Secretary for EurECA (the European Christian Educators' Association)

present and future



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- ETF – the Evangelical Teachers' Fellowship in India.

Funding allowed AUH to subsidise the travelling costs of delegates to a Christian teachers' conference, and helped CTFN to resource local Bible study groups for teachers, and put on an outreach conference in Kathmandu. Likewise, funding made it possible for ETF to establish a website, and helped SVN to subsidise travelling costs for volunteers wanting to freely give their time, talents and expertise to Christian schools around the world.

An ACT presence

Last year the ACT Overseas Fund was also able to pay for ACT members to attend Christian educational conferences overseas. ACT sent two delegates to participate in the EurECA Conference in April 2004. The Overseas Fund also made it possible for the Overseas Secretary to attend (and speak at) an AUH conference in Sofia.

All of these visits and conferences not only build up the ACT members who attend, they also bless the Christian colleagues they meet and share with. This contact helps to give ACT a better understanding of the needs of those we are supporting.

An Overseas Appeal

The Fund is an important part of ACT's ministry. It allows Christian teachers in England to be a blessing to Christian teachers working elsewhere in the world.

But the simple reality of the situation is that the Overseas Fund cannot meet £10,000 worth of requests for funding, no matter how worthy, if it only has £6,000 in its reserves. The Overseas Committee would like to be able to say yes to more requests.

Therefore, ACT is launching a special Overseas Fund Appeal, asking its members to give an additional one-off donation which would allow the Fund to support Christian teacher groups around the world.

The Overseas Fund Appeal has three key goals:

- 1 To allow the Overseas Fund to build new links with teacher associations and teachers in Africa and Asia.
- 2 To allow the Overseas Fund to say 'Yes' to all requests which meet the Fund's criteria.
- 3 To allow the Overseas Fund to pledge £2,000pa to EurECA/John Shortt for the next three years in support of European Christian teacher associations.

If you would like to give to the Overseas Fund Appeal please send a cheque made payable to 'ACT' to:

ACT, 94a London Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 1NX

To make a donation by credit card please phone the ACT Office on: 01727 840298

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