

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Someone once asked Billy Graham if he were an optimist or a pessimist. "I am an optimist," he answered. "I've read the last page of the Bible." Mired as we are in this decaying world, it is easy to lose sight of the glories that lie before us. Surrounded as we are by fear and uncertainty, it is easy to forget that the future is certain, secured for us by Jesus' death and resurrection.

Writing this, I am consciously lifting my horizons from the wasteland of banks' balance sheets and the corporate distress that is the daily diet of a fixed income investment geek. In my professional life it is hard to be upbeat just now. But as a trustee of the Gospel Partners Trust it is hard to be anything but upbeat. Let me explain.

It is not that we have a super-abundance of money. Ever since our first trustees' meeting God has kept us dependant on Him; as each meeting approaches each of the trustees has had to acknowledge that we require Him to provide. To date He has given us money to spend at each meeting, so that we can consider the requests that have been before us. But He has not given us so much that we have not had to exercise judgement and discernment, and at each meeting we have had to separate out the less convincing applications in order to fund the best ones. At our most recent meeting we passed the £1 million mark in terms of gifts received by the trust and also in terms of grants made. What a thrill!

But the biggest thrill comes to me on each occasion that I prepare for a trustees' meeting and as I read the applications from people who are seeking funding. The quality and calibre of the applications is extremely high and the passion for mission is real and heart-felt.

It is hard to know if the "word is out", so that the news that the Gospel Partners Trust is there to help has rippled out across the wider church pond, or if there genuinely are increases in the number of people seeking to be trained for ministry and in new ministry initiatives. I strongly suspect the latter. For instance, in the North West of England alone, 25 new Bible-teaching congregations have been started in the last five years. Some are completely new churches in towns that had minimal gospel witness before, whilst others are congregations that have been added by churches that are making use of existing buildings and looking to reach a new set of people in their locality. The trust has been thrilled to support a number of these ventures in the North West. In all we have contributed over the last five years to 57 ministry initiatives in the UK and overseas. *(Continued on back page)*

The lives of individuals are transformed as the Word of Life is held out. We believe – humanly speaking – that if our heavenly Father is to have his name hallowed and if His kingdom is to come in the UK, then we need men and women to be equipped to hold out His Word. The trust is currently supporting 42 people at theological college, and 21 individuals in ministry apprenticeships. Since we started our activities we have helped a total of 128 people to be better equipped for this life-saving work.

And hence, like Billy Graham, I am an optimist. I look forward to the day when the Lord will return to usher in the New Creation. I rejoice that there will be a great multitude drawn from all tribes and tongues who will be gathered round the throne in worship of the Lamb. And so with John, I say "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).

Simon Pilcher, Chairman

For further information including how to become a Partner please visit the Gospel Partners Trust website at www.gospelpartnerstrust.org.

Alternatively contact us at info@gospelpartnerstrust.org or

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TRUSTEES

Simon Pilcher (Chairman)
Simon Johnson (Treasurer)
Brian O'Donoghue
Mike Ovey
Carrie Sandom

gospel partners trust annual report 2008

We are very thankful to God that since the trust's inception in 2003 it has given over £1m to gospel work. This year's annual report therefore covers not only the year just gone but also the past five years.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2008

INCOME

Trust partners gave £302,000 in 2008, in amounts ranging from £600 to £100,000. Partners give through regular bank standing orders and one-off gifts. Around 70% of income came through Gift Aid donations.

22 Partners made donations in 2008, up from 18 in the previous year.

COSTS

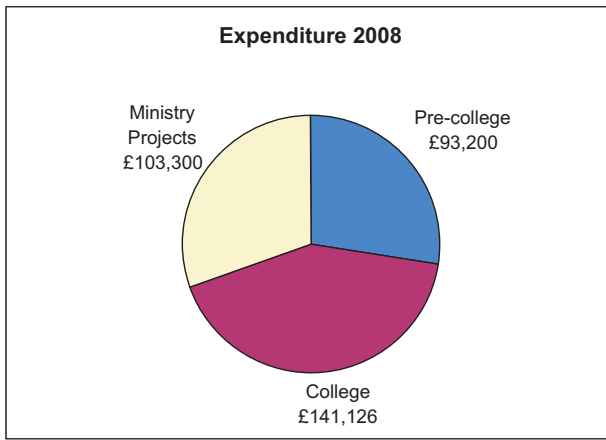
Costs The trust's running costs and the cost of its fund raising events have been covered by separate and private donations.

GRANTS

The trust gave £340,000 in grants in 2008; amounts ranged between £500 and £10,000. The trustees aim to distribute donations swiftly and not maintain significant cash balances above commitments already made.

GOSPEL PARTNERSHIP IN 2008

The trust made grants of £340,000 in 2008, as follows.



PRE-COLLEGE: £3,000 AVERAGE GRANT

The trust supported 25 apprentices and 6 ministry apprentice schemes (including three overseas training schemes, one in Siberia and two in Africa). We anticipate at least ten of these apprentices and schemes seeking further funding from us in 2009.

COLLEGE: £3,500 AVERAGE GRANT

The average budget for a couple with children is £30,000 and £13,000 for single students. 42 students received funding from the trust to support full-time theology study in 2008. 25 of these will need further support in 2009 and the trustees have already received 20 first-time applications for support in 2009.

MINISTRY PROJECTS: £4,000 AVERAGE GRANT

The trust helped fund 19 new gospel workers in 2008. These included associate/assistant ministers, curates and women, children and youth workers and ministers. It also supported eight church plants. The trust's policy is to "pump-prime" these initiatives, giving funding in such a way to encourage them to be self-funding after the first few years.

GOSPEL PARTNERSHIP IN 2009

Because of the nature of its income, the trust cannot guarantee funding for more than a single year, but trustees are sympathetic to repeat applications. Such repeat funding for 2009 totals £195,000.

SIX YEARS OF GOSPEL PARTNERSHIP

Since the Gospel Partners Trust was formed in 2003, over £1m has been raised and given to support gospel work in both the UK and overseas. This represents:

53 pre-college trainees

(of which 7 have been non-UK nationals)

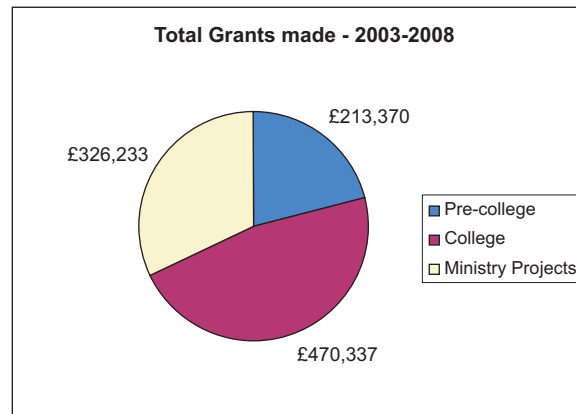
75 individuals and couples at college

(of whom 15 have studied overseas or come to the UK to study)

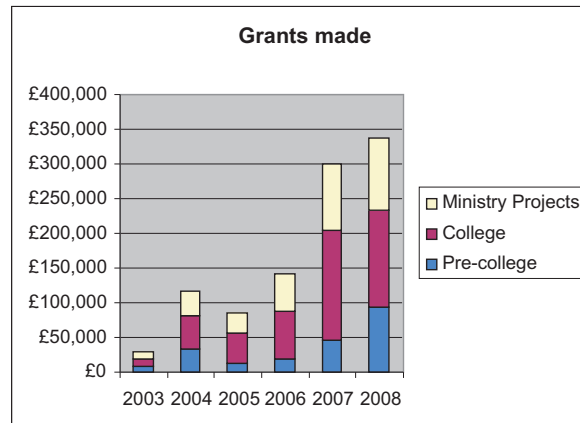
57 ministry projects

(of which 18 have been outside the UK)

The amounts given are as follows:



Under God, the trustees have been delighted to see increasing amounts raised and disbursed each year, as follows:



FOCUS ON MINISTRY PROJECTS

The Trustees are glad to see the proportion of funds given to ministry projects steadily increase so that in 2008 just over 30% of funds were given to fund gospel workers in new ministry situations. These are either church plants or additional workers in churches wanting to extend their ministry in new area. The aim of the trust is to "pump-prime" these initiatives in the first few years while they are becoming established and self-supporting.

The largest proportion of funds is still given to support students studying at theological colleges, but as these new gospel workers graduate, we anticipate the opportunities to give funding to ministry projects to increase.

As more trained workers for the harvest field become available, we are noticing two patterns. Firstly, churches are seeing opportunities where they can launch new ministries. For example, East Finchley Baptist Church asked Gareth Crispin, their placement student from the Youth and Children's ministry course at Oak Hill (and who was himself a recipient of GPT funding), to come up with short and long term proposals for the growth and development of their ministry to children, young people and families. As a result of his review, the church leadership identified a need for a full-time children's youth minister to provide the oversight, training and discipleship necessary for work amongst this group to develop. They saw in Gareth the ideal worker for this position, and the trust was glad to help support this new initiative.

Secondly, the expectation of many students is that they will need to be pioneers in gospel ministry. Almost all the individuals who apply to us for theological funding go to college without a specific ministry situation in sight when they finish their studies. They also know that growth in God's kingdom means reaching new geographical areas of groups of people. They are therefore keen to lead a church plant - like Trevor Harris, whom GPT funded through college and has now begun a new church in the Paris suburbs - or join a "church turnaround" like Dawn Evans who went to be the Children's worker at a Church of England inner-city parish which has only recently had an evangelical minister.

The trust's aim is to see more Bible-teaching churches established around the country, and key to this is the provision of gospel workers. We are excited when we see individuals whom the Trust supported through college coming back to us looking for funding for a church plant or new ministry position. It is a joy to see people in whose training we've invested reaching the harvest fields.