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...To the first issue of *TransMission*, Bible Society's new journal for church leaders. It is aimed at all who have a passion for mission in the West. As the title suggests, it is concerned to show how the mission of the local church can touch all aspects of life and faith, and seeks to cross theological, cultural and social boundaries. It will be published three times a year (Spring, Autumn and Winter), and will contain articles and reflections by acknowledged specialists. There will also be news items, details of new resources which are geared to the missionary needs of the local church, and space for you to contribute feedback or to initiate important debates. Above all, I hope that it will be a forum where ideas are shared, different traditions enrich one another, and support is given to everyone wrestling with the challenge of bringing about change in Church and culture.

New Direction for Bible Society

Over the past few years, Bible Society has been asking how it can become more effective in serving the churches of England and Wales as they seek to fulfil their mission – particularly in their use of the Bible. Already, there are a number of programmes in place to enable this,

Welcome...

and we are committed to working with and giving support to churches in the areas of discipleship, apologetics and spirituality. We have a vision of the gospel as a major force in the reshaping of Church and society, and we want to begin by affirming Bishop Lesslie Newbigin's belief that "the only hermeneutic of the gospel is a community of men and women who believe it and live by it".

New Ways of Being Church

One of the many positive developments witnessed during the Decade of Evangelism is a changing pattern of church life, both in terms of internal organization and external focus. The recession has played its part in forcing many churches to review their priorities, of course. But there is also an emerging pattern, suggesting that churches are becoming increasingly open to the patterns of ministry and mission from outside our immediate, domestic context.

The example of the early Celtic churches in these islands (reflected in the work of the Iona Community, for example) offers a model of *koinonia* which acts as a springboard to fuller engagement with the life of society. The use of the Catechumenate, which was reintroduced in the early decades of this century by missionaries in Africa, is helping us to understand how evangelism and nurture, as an integrated whole, belongs at the very heart of church life by involving all church members. And the exciting developments taking place at the Willow Creek Community

Church in the USA have helped many churches here to reach the unchurched in their neighbourhoods.

Meanwhile in the UK, the Church of England's National Officer for Evangelism, Canon Robert Warren, has been instrumental in helping local churches to understand how they can become "missionary congregations". His important book, *Being Human, Being Church: Spirituality and Mission in the Local Church* (Marshall Pickering, 1995) explored the notion of the "emerging church" as a place of integration and wholeness, which challenges many of our received assumptions about what the characteristics of a missionary church are. In this edition of *TransMission* he develops this theme by discussing the nature of Christian initiation, in the light of insights from the Catechumenate, and suggests how it can become the focus for a renewal of faith in the life of the local church.

Our Partnership with the Church

I hope that the content of *TransMission* will prove stimulating and be appropriate to your particular concerns and struggles. If you find it helpful – or provocative – do write and let me know. If there are important and exciting things going on in your church, which you think we and others should know about, tell us about them. Above all, I hope you will feel able to be part of the dialogue we hope to see developing between Bible Society and the churches of England and Wales.