

interview

issue 3
winter / spring 2006



meet **J. John**

In this edition of interview we are focussing on some of the key issues that face the church and how we are responding to the challenges of reaching the unreached on our doorstep. You can also read about new developments in Christian Vocations and find out what we'll be up to over the next few months.

There are so many options open to us to connect with what God is doing in our own nation and beyond. Our prayer is that you will be stimulated and challenged to think about the important part you can play.

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expanding your church's horizons
- dovetail online: connecting churches & leaders
- what's on?

releasing God's people into God's work



an interview with J.John



J.John, a Greek-Cypriot by birth, lives in Chorleywood, Hertfordshire. He is married to Killy and they have 3 sons, Michael, Simeon and Benjamin. J.John became a Christian in 1975. Since then he has gained the position as one of the leading communicators of Christianity today. J.John has been described as refreshing, humorous, passionate, earthy, accessible and dynamic. To date, he has completed thousands of speaking engagements at conferences, towns, cities and universities in 31 countries on 6 continents. J.John has authored 26 titles, and there are one million copies of his books currently in print in thirteen languages.

Jo Goode talks to J.John about the challenges the church faces in reaching an increasingly God-less society.



profile:

J.John

Age:	47 but very young at heart
Favourite thing to do?	Chill out with my family
What adjective best describes you?	Passionate
Favourite food?	Greek cuisine
Favourite movie?	It's A Wonderful Life
Favourite place?	Home
Most embarrassing moment?	There have been many!
Favourite type of music?	Mellow
Favourite Bible verse?	2 Samuel 14:14
If you could ask God for one thing, what would it be?	Wisdom
Who would you most like to meet?	...ummm....
	Let me add another question! What is the hardest verse in the Bible? 'Do not worry'

an interview with J. John

1. You've been known as an evangelist for some years now. At what point in your spiritual journey did you realise you had such strong evangelistic gifting?

I started evangelising the day after I became a Christian and it was something that became natural, an overflow of the joy I experienced in knowing Christ - it was later that people started saying 'you are an evangelist' and I asked 'what's an evangelist?'

2. What personal challenges did you face when you sensed God's call to give yourself completely to the work of an evangelist?

How to 'do the work of an evangelist' when not many churches employed evangelists. My heart was for 'lost' people and I persevered in that on a personal level and before I knew it, I was being asked to take missions, first at Colleges, then Churches and then towns and cities.

3. The number of unchurched people in the UK is increasing all the time and the church faces an enormous challenge to reach them. In what ways do you think the church is failing to rise to the challenge?

The 3 'pillars' of the Church are *Worship* - look up; *Well-being* - look in and *Witness* - look out. Sadly the Church hasn't balanced these 3 it is more preoccupied with *Worship* and *Well-being*. I am endeavouring to get Church leaders to give *Witness* a higher priority and therefore equip the Church in reaching out to others through Proclamation, Presence, Prayer, Prophetic, Power and Persuasion. I have a new Friendship Evangelism course coming out in March 2006 called 'Breaking News' and will be endeavouring to get many churches to do it!

4. As the church makes increasing attempts to be culturally relevant to the surrounding culture, do you think it's possible for us to contextualise too far, to the point of losing our identity?

YES - I think we can become too 'seeker-sensitive'. When you look at Isaiah in the OT - he walked around naked for 3 years and in the NT John the Baptist, calling people vipers ...ummm...that's not very 'seeker-sensitive'! I think we should be ourselves and not apologise for what we believe and stand for. But let's make sure that our belief matches our behaviour.

5. In a society which seems to be suffering increasing moral decline, do you think it's possible for our society to step beyond the reach of the grace of God?

NO, the Lord is compassionate and gracious and desires that we be awakened spiritually. However, I do believe he is Sovereign and will also judge.

6. One of the more unusual things you've done in the course of your ministry was to come face to face with Yasser Arafat. Can you tell us about that encounter?

My friend Andrew White and I have met with Presidents, Prime Ministers, Terrorists and Peacemakers - these are always opportunities to sow good seed into their lives.

7. Besides meeting political leaders in the Middle East, what has been the most memorable experience you've had in the course of your ministry?

It was preaching to 200,000 people in India and seeing people healed physically while I was preaching.

8. One of your major projects recently has been Just 10 - a series of events focussing on the ten commandments. How did the vision for this come about?

It was definitely a God-idea which came to me in 1999 and I tried it out at my Church first and that's when I realised how powerful it was to take God's 10 Commandments seriously. Since then I have developed and presented it 22 times. We have seen thousands of lives transformed, both unchurched people and Christians, as the parameters for life are taken seriously.

9. Why do you think Just 10 has appealed so much to those who have rarely had any exposure to biblical truth?

I think because people realise they need 'values' and 'principles' for life. And the 10 Commandments are timeless principles and relevant to all aspects of life.

10. What is your vision for the church in the UK?

I want to see the Church balance *Worship*, *Well-being* and *Witness* - if it does that, I believe many other things fall into place.

11. Many Christians believe that the work of evangelism should be left to those who feel particularly called to it and gifted for it. How would you respond to this suggestion?

I believe that every Christian has a responsibility to be a 'witness' and I believe that there are people who God has called and anointed with the gift of doing the work of an evangelist - enabling people to receive Christ.

12. You clearly believe that you are doing what God has called you to do for now. What advice would you give to those who might be struggling with coming to terms with God's call on their lives and are not quite sure how to discover and use the gifts God has given them?

I think many of us often worry about what we can't do, rather than just get on with what we do know. Go as far as you can (with what you know) and when you get there, God will show you further.



For more info on J. John visit:
www.philotrust.com

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2 big questions for the church

'What's your business?' and 'How's your business?' According to Peter Drucker, famous American business guru, those are basically the only two questions any organisation or business has to ask itself. I cannot help thinking that the same applies to church!

Recently I was asked to speak at a gathering of a certain denomination and give them an 'outsider's' perspective, based on a report that each church in the constituency had compiled. It charted their attendance statistics, and gender and age profiles over the last five years, followed by a summary of their successes and failures. I admired their honesty as now each church has a public record of where they are and by which they will be judged in the future.

In reading through the book, I could not help but remember those two questions of Drucker and it struck me that the churches concerned could learn much by asking them. My guess is that the same applies to any group of churches and that this particular denomination is in no way unique!

Intriguingly, some of the churches seemed to have answered the second question - 'How's our business?' - without any reference to the first, not addressing what was their core business or purpose. When churches start their list of successes/failures by drawing attention to the state of their premises, grounds, musical instruments and the like, and then pointing out their dwindling numbers, particularly amongst the young, one cannot help but feel that somewhere along the line they have wandered away from what their business is. Even raising basic issues, such as faithfulness to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, could well come as a shock to some.

Of course, they are balanced out by those churches who have absolutely no difficulty at all in stating what their business is; churches who can give the clearest purpose statements, couched in sound language, well rooted in Scripture. However, one wonders if they stop short of asking the 'How's your business?' question, because a quick glance at their statistical analysis can show a serious problem! Numbers are on the slide, fewer and fewer young people about, and a congregation that is aging and shrinking at the same time, making little or no impact on their community.

Maybe the old 'heresy', 'God hasn't called us to be successful, just faithful,' has slipped in unawares! And yet, the servants who used their talents were praised, not the ones who buried them - and the gospels talk about, 'Well done, GOOD and faithful servant!' The quality of what we do matters! The apostles were into numbers - why else do they tell us of the numbers who came to faith and how the church grew?

This is not a rant against the church - far from it! I love the church, I thank God for it, and I trust I am even more convinced of the place of the church than I have ever been! Indeed, our whole ministry is centred in the church, and geared for the church. But life is too short merely to 'pussy-foot' or tiptoe carefully around vital, if difficult, issues. God has called us to be his people NOW, not in a previous generation, and the church, universally and locally, needs to rise to that challenge; and Peter Drucker's two questions, albeit initially geared for businesses and other organisations, might prove to be a worthwhile starting point. I honestly believe that even beginning to consider the answers to them might prove revolutionary, not to mention exciting, to many churches around the UK. Just ask the ones who have!

by Stephen Cave



Stephen Cave is General Secretary for Evangelical Alliance in Northern Ireland. He is married to Nicola and they have three children - Ben (b.1997), Maddi (b.2001) and Levi (b.2005). Prior to joining the team in January 2001, Stephen was pastor of Ballycrochan Baptist Church in Bangor. Stephen's first job on leaving University was as a primary school teacher in Carrickfergus, a town to which they have returned as a family. The passion that drives him is working to see evangelicals in Northern Ireland discover the impact we might have on our society if we were serious about unity.

missionimPOSSIBLE

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to use what I have given you, and do the job I allocate you, to help change the world!

Can you hear the music in your mind even now? *"This tape will self destruct in 10 seconds..."* If you're not old enough to be reminded of the original TV series, you will probably be aware of the same idea captured in recent day block-buster movies. There was always the most challenging task, but with limited time and limited resources, with the specially chosen team members to complete the seemingly impossible mission.

Jo and Paul were excited to be invited to be part of the team at Twynham Church in the Community, in Christchurch, planning and presenting a programme for a weekend with a mission POSSIBLE challenge – considering how we are tasked with sharing Christ from Neighbours to the Nations.

In three hours on Friday evening a large team of willing workers transformed the worship area of the church, setting up small panelled rooms, projectors and screens for DVD presentations, seminar rooms, computer stations for access to CV's website and gifting questionnaires, a prayer-pool, prayer-map and prayer activities and various displays about mission and service

Maybe your church, in partnership with others, would be interested in a similar programme – the challenge of mission in a different way. If so, please contact CV's office to enquire.
T: 0870 745 4825



opportunities. It became a full-blown interactive experience to help members take a personal journey of service, based on Moses' personal experience, from Exodus, as he encountered God in the desert by the burning bush, looking at the challenges of *"Where do I stand?"*, *"What's in my hand?"* and *"Where's my land?"*

The event was promoted to a network of local churches, giving visitors the freedom to come and go in their own time, and explore what part of the mission God would ask them to fulfil ... reaching their neighbours or going to the nations. To us, the task might seem impossible, but with God it is possible.

The Sunday programme was literally a wall-to-wall congregation, with the children having their own mission event with visitors from West Africa, giving them a truly African experience. With the youth and adults Paul and Jo looked at some heroes from God's word who were challenged to accept different missions, some seemingly mundane, others magnificent, but all meaningful to fulfil God's mission. At the heart of it was the recognition that each of us have been not only chosen by God to be part of his family but also chosen as special members of his team and equipped to fulfil the mission he tells us is POSSIBLE.



conversations & connections

Idovetail helping churches find leaders and leaders find churches

dovetail ...is one of CV's key services available to Churches and Church leaders who are seeking a new appointment. Whereas previously churches received details of leaders who were looking for new positions, now both churches and individuals will be able to view each other's details on a secure part of our website. It's another exciting development for CV.

Dovetail is not an accrediting or selecting service, but provides a place where introductory information can be shared in a secure environment. This information can then provide the basis for an ongoing conversation between the two parties.

Here's the story of one such conversation....

John and Wendy Graver make the connection

16 May 2005 I have heard from Christ Church, Exmouth, which, if, I could pick an ideal church, this would be it. They invited me to apply and I have but I expect they will be swamped with applications. Still we continue to pray.

27 June 2005 I was wondering if you have heard anything from the church. I haven't, which is strange because they led me to believe that they would let me know quite quickly whether I had made the short list or not. It probably means I haven't.

2 August 2005 I have heard from the Church Secretary and I am one of three people they have short-listed.

17 August 2005 I had a very encouraging conversation with the Church Wardens last night. I am now the only candidate and they are very enthusiastic about our visit... We go on Sunday 25 September... They were very positive indeed.



Monday 26 September 2005

We loved it. They loved us and they've offered it to us!

13 January 2006 Since moving here on December 7 we have been busy meeting the folk, conducting services etc. We have had the most brilliant welcome and enjoyed a fantastic Christmas. The Church has grown a little as some past members have returned. We are setting up new cell groups at the moment and everyone is very enthusiastic. We have composed a Vision Statement which we are running with for this year and we all are very confident that the Lord is going to add to our numbers as the year unfolds. Our induction takes place on March 11 and we are looking forward to it enormously.

Thank you all at Dovetail for your support and help.

Watch the web for the upgrade...or contact ruth on ruth@christianvocations.org.

short term service directory 2006

now only

The ultimate guide to short term mission opportunities for those taking a gap year, career break or exploring summer opportunities. With over one hundred opportunities inside, plus feature articles, personal experiences and direct contact information all for the reduced price of **£3** including post and packaging.

£3

The following is an extract from the 2006 directory.

Taking the first steps

People sometimes feel overwhelmed by the number of Christian agencies and churches working in cross-cultural ministry, and find it very difficult to choose between them. We hope that this article will help you to know where to start and clarify your thinking as you go along.

If you are thinking of undertaking a programme overseas, whether short or long term, ask yourself and ask God about your sense of 'call.' Are you thinking of going because you're fascinated by different people and cultures? Or do you sense an interest that goes beyond that and which you feel may lead to working abroad in a long-term capacity? If the latter, then read on to find out what those first steps should be.

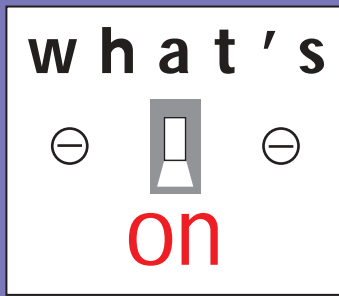
If you're a married or engaged couple it's important that you should be agreed on your course of action. Differences of opinion which may seem unimportant here can become very significant when you're operating in a different culture.



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 or
 telephone:
 0870 745 4825

six steps at the start

- 1** Take time out to pray and listen to God. Ask him what this sense of call means, and that you might know how to interpret it and act upon it.
- 2** Ask yourself whether there's a specific people group or area of the world to which you feel drawn and find out more about those people and places.
- 3** Find out what qualifications and language skills are needed and whether you need to do any further study at this stage.
- 4** Do some research and see which organisation or church group works in the area that you feel called to and whether they engage in the sort of projects that are of interest to you.
- 5** Talk with church leaders and those who know you best. Ask others to pray for you as you seek guidance and clarity.
- 6**



CV for your Church

If you are keen to see the mission vision of your church expanded, then contact us to find out how we can resource your church by providing a ready-made programme for a missions or vocations event. The article on page 5 describes how one church was enthused and challenged as we worked together with them. In February, we'll also be helping St. Mike's Church in Abersytwyth run a vocations event. For more details, contact Jo or Paul on 0870 745 4825 or email info@christianvocations.org.

an important engagement



We are delighted to announce the engagement of Jo Goode, CV's Associate Director, and Mark Jowett. They have fixed their wedding date for 1st September this year.

Go Global

During the winter and spring terms, we are normally involved in a joint mission agency venture called 'go global' which offers Christian Unions a ready-made missions evening. Over the next few months, the roadshow will visit a number of UK universities, including Plymouth, Falmouth, Southampton, Swansea, Bristol, Exeter, Bath & Birmingham. Pray for CV's part in this as we engage with students and help develop new programme ideas for the roadshow.

Clear lots of ground for your tents! Make your tents large. Spread out! Think BIG! Use plenty of rope, drive the tent pegs deep.
Isaiah 54 : 2 The Message

training

We aim to encourage and help people to find their place in the world and be fully equipped to serve God in whatever context they find themselves. Training provides a vital part of the equipping.

On 1 March 2006 the training part of CV's website will be upgraded and provide direct access to training packages which can help equip you for the future.

a new challenge at Spring Harvest

Sometimes it's important to stop and take stock of how and why we do some things. That's exactly what's happened with our involvement at Spring Harvest this year. Historically, CV has had responsibility for WHEREhouse, the place where people can engage with issues relating to Christian service and mission. WHEREhouse will no longer happen in the form it has done in recent years, but CV has been asked by Spring Harvest to continue to offer a service for the event which will enable Christians to explore issues related to the sense of calling and vocation. Do pray for us as we continue to develop ideas and prepare for this new venture. We will be drawing a team of people together who will offer vocational advice to individuals seeking help and guidance and our prayer is that this new opportunity will be a means of many individuals discovering a clearer sense of vocation in their Christian lives.

Do you want to help the ministry of CV grow?

If you have been encouraged by what you've read in this edition of interview and want to help us unwrap the potential of Christians all over the UK, why not think about a donation to our work, however small it might be. Details on how to help are below:

response form

name _____

address _____

post code _____

signature _____

date _____

I / we would like to make a gift to CV and enclose.

please circle

£10 £25 £50 £100 £

I / we are UK taxpayers and would like this gift to be 'Gift Aided'. yes / no

I / we would like any subsequent gifts to be 'Gift Aided' until I notify you otherwise. yes / no

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Thank you to those who continue to give sacrificially to our work.