

## Missionary Accountants

Paul Bosson



In the late 1980s, my fiancée Alison persuaded me to go along to a meeting at her church to hear a missionary chartered accountant speak. This finance professional had returned to the UK, having spent several years involved in mission in Africa.

Alison wanted me to understand that God needs missionary accountants just as much as missionary doctors. A medical student, who had done her medical elective with AIM in Kenya, she had a strong desire to return to the mission field — preferably with a useful husband!

I will always be grateful to my wife for taking me to that meeting, for it opened my eyes not only to the world of mission, but also to the need for financial people in missionary work.

By 1990 Alison and I were on the mission field ourselves, serving at Mukinge Hospital in Zambia with AEF (prior to its merger with SIM). This was our first year of marriage, and what a year it was!



While Alison treated patients, I found myself running the financial and business affairs of the hospital. Within a few weeks, I made the first of several trips to the head office of the ECZ (Evangelical Church in Zambia) in Lusaka, working with the Secretary for Finance on a range of complex financial issues.

What I found most surprising was the enormous need and appreciation for the financial advice I was able to give. Rather than playing second fiddle to a wife whose profession is more readily understood in the context of mission, I discovered that my own training and experience could be put to good use in a wide variety of different situations.

These ranged from managing the finances of an institution, to explaining to the governing body of ECZ why it was necessary to implement new ways of doing things.

One major aspect of the work of an accountant, whether in professional practice, business or mission, is engaging with and relating to other people. In mission work, this is particularly so.

### Working with Christians from other nations

It is richly rewarding to work with Christians of differing nationalities and skills, all serving the Lord together. Sometimes there are challenging issues to work through, particularly where ethical considerations are concerned. It's been fascinating to observe how passionate even missionaries can be over financial decisions and the allocation of resources.

Since returning from our year in Zambia, I've had the privilege of serving first on the British Council of AEF, and now the SIM-UK Board in roles that have enabled me to use my financial experience.

In addition, I've had the joy of visiting Zambia each year for many years to carry out an audit of the ECZ. I'm sure one reason that these opportunities for service have opened up for me is because of the relatively small number of financial people in missionary work.

This is compounded by a general misunderstanding in the West that the key 'missionary' professions are the traditional ones of medicine, teaching and theology. Unaware of the great need for Christian finance professionals in mission, few people offer themselves for service.

I know that the Lord led me into finance so that I might be equipped to serve him — 'his good, pleasing and perfect will'. It has been a surprise and a joy to discover the great need for financial skills on the mission field.

My prayer is that other finance professionals might earnestly seek whether the Lord is calling them to serve him in this way.

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## Urgent Prayer Need

Pray for the country of Nigeria - for peace to be restored, and for the Lord's comfort for all those affected by the recent violence.