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## Closure of Volunteer Missionary Movement UK

It is with great sadness that we announce the imminent closure of VMM. At an emergency online meeting of the Board of Trustees held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020 it was unanimously decided to close VMM in its 51<sup>st</sup> Year. This will take effect from 5pm Friday 10th July 2020.

The Trustees have tried their best but the changing world in which we live in terms of funding models, societal attitudes to the Church, volunteering, international development and the economic impact of the Coronavirus have made it almost impossible for a small charity such as VMM to remain viable and relevant.

The number of volunteers and projects has decreased in recent years and our model of volunteering with the associated compliance and reporting responsibilities has become untenable economically. We find ourselves with the running costs of the charity - largely the salaries of 1.8 loyal and committed employees – consuming an excessive proportion of our income to an extent that it is increasingly difficult to justify our existence and credibility which is based upon the receipt of hard earned donations from wonderful and committed supporters.



At the start of 2020 we were confident that we were in an improved situation. We had a balanced budget and had reassessed our programme and *raison d'être*. We planned to reaffirm our Christian principles and, whilst continuing our partnership activities, to develop a number of VMM-owned projects developed at the suggestion of our Africa Programme Manager and our volunteers and friends in Africa. This would build on our successful Safeguarding Projects and the commitment of the small number of VMM volunteers in Africa, most of whom had been in the field for many years.



This was premised upon a budget with income largely from four major and, what we assessed as, low risk sources ie Parish Collections, Charity Shop Income, our new Short Term Volunteering programme and grants and donations. Tragically, the first three of these were completely and immediately terminated by the Coronavirus. By government decree the churches and shops were closed and sending volunteers abroad was discouraged by common sense and the UK and African governments. So overnight a safe, low risk, responsible, exciting and balanced budget and development of a new focus for our activity was rendered impossible.

In order that we close in a responsible, honest and ethical manner with no debts and meeting our responsibilities to our staff, volunteers and funders we made the very difficult decision to close VMM.



Since that decision, which was fully endorsed by Edwina Gateley, the Board, supported by Van Garber, Tim Flynn and Louisa Preston has worked tirelessly towards 2 objectives. Firstly, the establishment of a new society based in Kenya called the *Association of Mission Volunteers (AMV)* of which Tim Flynn is its Secretary and one of the two signatories. Edwina Gateley has agreed to be the Patron of this new organisation. AMV's vision will continue to be "A world where we live in the shelter of one another". In addition to continuing partnerships with some existing VMM partners AMV will also run some of its own projects.

These will build upon VMM's previous work including the area of Safeguarding and Positive Discipline. It is hoped to change the name of Association of Mission Volunteers to Volunteer Mission (VMM Africa or Kenya) at the first opportunity in March 2021.

Secondly, the founding of a support group based in Scotland, *Friends of VMM*. This will be a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) which is a legal structure which has been purpose-built for the voluntary sector in Scotland. This will be under the leadership of former VM and Chair of VMM Doug Nisbet and including VMM Treasurer Peter Hamling and former VM Volunteer Joan McErlean. It will be the sole beneficiary of the legacy finances of VMM. This should ensure both the work of AMV and its initial financial security.

We thank you all for your support and interest in our mission and whilst lamenting its conclusion hope you will join us in celebrating Edwina Gateley's vision and our 51 years of service as well as contributing to the Friends of VMM support group. It would also be much appreciated if you could pray that Van's period of unemployment is kept to an absolute minimum.



Yours Sincerely,

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