

Your Local Church Can Have A World Ministry

Here's how . . .

Missionary enterprise is best born in the local church, supported by an envisioned congregation and aims to plants new churches or social works which reach others with the gospel and care for the poor whether in the UK mission field or overseas among the really lost and poor. Every local church can if it wishes move towards being a nation changing and world changing church with a wide reaching influence, and here is how on three levels.

Making a start . . .

A church needs a vision and wisdom

Proverbs 29.18 says that without a vision the people perish. Above all the senior leader needs to pick up God's heart for a world of people, and go see for himself, and go regularly because whatever impresses him or her will impact the whole church like nothing else ever will.

However, "Enthusiasm or zeal without knowledge is not good; impatience will get you into trouble." Proverbs 19.2. Wisdom is needed for the uncharted territories of world ministry, Paul in Col.1.9 prayed for the church to have ongoing '*sunesis*' that is: the ability to put pieces (of church, opportunity and mission) together like a puzzle with Godly understanding and knowledge.

Missions blossoms under leadership and ownership

The notorious committees are best avoided at all costs as decades of church experience shows that they are as often as not a real bottleneck for God's purposes with fractious meetings filled with personal agendas.

As an alternative elders can recognise the man or the woman who God is raising up and anointing to lead the church's world ministry under their supervision; and let him or her form a working team of like-minded people.

Level One A Giving Church

Even without such a leader the elders can do well by doing "*mission by proxy*" that is by supporting denominational mission or the missions agencies that the Lord brings to them. Partnership between the congregation and missions is wisdom because not one church can change the world or even reach the unreached by itself. Take advice from experienced and unbiased men such as the EA Global Connections consultants or Mike Frith of Oscar UK.

- *Beware predatory speakers that use the pulpit for marketing their mission without permission.*

- *Beware missions that deduct percentages from gifts without permission to support leader's lifestyles, luxury travel and high admin costs; equally beware the middle-men in the line to the lost and poor, each one taking its 10% until only a fraction arrives where needed.*
- *Beware the black holes and bottomless pits of supporting mission without a personal relationship with the people involved.*

Any of these three will cause certain disappointment, a loss of credibility and a poor future response from the congregation.

Mission by proxy must be much more than sending money . .

A wise church will guard its investment and use it to build the congregation's vision typically through involvement:

1. Dedicate times of prayer cover for the supported missions.
2. Allow people to contact and care for the supported workers.
3. Bring world awareness and teach the church its responsibilities.
4. Invest heavily in the youth who have time, will and energy to go.
5. Encourage opportunities to create funds by church activities.
6. Encourage trusted people to do short trips to inner-city or overseas.
7. Provide training and a forum for people who sense God's call.
8. Be open to God's call to new steps and strategies.

Level Two A Sending Church

In the Kingdom one of the church's jobs is to be fishers of men, putting out into deep waters when Jesus says so. Romans 10,14 divides the whole human race into three parts:

1. They who need to call on the name of the Lord.
2. Those who are called to go to "they" or them.
3. Those who are called to send.

Moving on from missions by proxy the church now *sends* its people who are called to *go* to '*they who need to call,*' that is to the unreached peoples of the local Jerusalem, neighbouring Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Sending is a vital call and not a second-class or a secondary occupation.

What does it mean to be a sending church?

Sending means much more than a goodbye service and a prayer. Neal Pirolo in "Serving as Senders" (ISBN 1-85078-199-0) teaches that a sending church will give this kind of encouragement:

Moral Support - positive encouragement for people to leave career, money-making, family and security to follow Christ if He is seen to be calling.

Practical Support - the help that is needed to get men and women on their way, renting their home, overseeing their affairs and family left behind.

Financial Support - to keep and equip them on the field not in poverty with just enough, but with an adequate income to live and to do the job.

Prayer Support - organised intercession to protect and bless them in life and work, not just a routine mention of them in the Sunday service.

Communications Support - regular letters, e-mails, pastoral enquiries and parcels are vital to keep the missionary family in the church family as extensions of home, not amputations from home.

Re-entry Support - is very necessary to help missionaries re-adjust to home life on their breaks and when they finally return. It is a fact that coming home can cause far more culture-shock and stress than going!

Oswald Smith, author of *A Passion for Souls* and the pastor of People's Church in Toronto, which years ago sent hundreds of people into world mission said, "*If you can't go yourself, for God's sake send someone else in your place.*" A local church is not limited to sending its own members into mission as it can adopt one a man or woman from another poorer church or adopt one of the thousands of willing native missionaries from the revival belts of Africa, Asia or Latin America who would go if they had the means to do so.

Level Three

The World Changing Church

There are 12 important strategies that an envisioned church can embrace one at a time to help finish the Great Commission.

Here they are beginning with the *easiest* and ending with the hardest:

1. Specific world intercession and spiritual warfare as a church activity.
2. *Iron sharpens iron* communication and exchanges with overseas churches.
3. Being open to the gifts of the Spirit in the missions vision context.
4. Communicating the urgency of the Great Commission to the church and consider being a training base and forum for the churches of the area.
5. Expand evangelism over the local geographic and cultural barriers.
6. Support holistic social work that always communicates the gospel and support holistic gospel preaching that always embraces care for the poor.
7. Take steps to reach to the world's children whilst they are responsive.
8. Take steps to minister to women lost behind closed doors of religion.

9. Enter into partnership and mission into the world's mega-cities.
10. Visit native church leaders to mobilise and equip them.
11. Enter into partnership to adopt and reach an unreached people group.
12. Enter into partnership to re-evangelise Europe, the hard Old World.

Obviously this is best attempted with a dedicated missions elder or leader reporting to all the elders, with his or her own like-minded working team who take responsibility to develop each of the strategies. There is sufficient involvement on offer here to occupy as many in the local church who want to do something for Jesus at home or overseas.

The final word . . .

Take much advice and often as "It isn't good to have zeal without knowledge; nor being hasty with one's feet and missing the way." *Proverbs 19:2*

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