

Missionary Care
Working Paper
Global Strategy Roundtable
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Basic Assumptions

The following assumptions are those elements that every church must possess to provide a healthy partnership with its missionaries. It is important that the church review, edit, and create parameters and procedures that ensure these are part of the church's missionary care.

Vision

Possess amicable partnerships through the lens of your church's mission and vision. View the missionaries as an extension of your congregation.

Missionaries should not be considered as separate from your congregation's vision and mission. It is important to consider the type of ministry, geographic location, and the targeted people group when selecting your missionaries. As well as their vision, values, and passions. Do they mesh well with your congregation?

Attention

Possess the right amount of ministry partners to give the right amount of missionary care. Finding the "right amount" is a constant tension, that must be monitored.

There is no magic formula for this. It depends on who is, or will be, the "go-between" with your church and the missionaries. It is always better to select less and not more. When a missionary is coming off the field, resist the urge to fill their spot immediately.

Finance

You are giving a substantial amount to their personal/projects budgets and increasing your support by a minimum of 3% every year. In addition, create margin in your budgets to

provide care throughout the year. This may mean helping them go on vacation, sending birthday and holiday gifts, or doing something special for their children.

Again, there is not a magic formula. However, it is important that you ask the right questions and creates parameters that make sense for your congregation considering the size, mission's budget, and the number of people involved in missions.

Partnership

The missionaries are partners not employees and are not accountable to your church. That responsibility falls on Global Strategy. Likewise, you are not the only church supporting them. Realize that you are one of many partners who are asking for their attention. Distinguish boundaries between what we can say/do as a supporting church. In supporting a missionary, you automatically become partners with the missionaries and Global Strategy.

However, do not assume that someone else (i.e. Global Strategy, another church, etc.) is providing care with the missionary. Take the necessary steps to ask who is providing care, the type of care they are providing, and how that care is being provided. Identify those gaps that your church can fill.

Pro-Active Steps

Discuss the following steps when a church decides to support missionaries. They will ensure that the missionaries feel cared for, connected to, and backed by the congregation.

Communicate

Connect often via video or phone calls once every 4-6 weeks with a lay or staff person, or with a team of people. One option is to have a designated person or group (i.e. Sunday School, small group, mission's team, etc.) connect with a missionary once a month for prayer support and to keep communication lines open.

Context

To understand what your missionaries are doing and the challenges they are facing your church must make an annual visit. Schedule a team of 8-10 people, a small group of 2-3 people, or 1 person depending on where you are going and what you are doing. These trips do not have to be “work” trips. It is important that your congregation go, learn, and understand the context of your ministry partners.

When your church conducts a trip, make sure that you are not creating extra work for the missionaries. Create trips in a way that helps “move the ball down the field” so that they are fulfilling their mission and vision with the help of your church. Utilize trips to connect with the missionary and their family. Take them out to a nice supper. Offer to watch their children so they can have a date night.

Resource

Most missionaries and the people they serve are under-resourced. Leverage your congregation's resources such as graphic designs, videos, children's material, sermon series, etc. Obviously, you must take consideration of language and cultural differences.

Connect

When missionaries are on home assignment, it is important to give them some “downtime,” but also connect them to your congregation. Rather than ask them to preach, have them do a short Q & A at the beginning of the service. To connect them with the church's staff, invite them to participate in your weekly staff meeting.

Available

Make yourself available to strategize and work together. Ask the missionaries what challenges they are facing and offer them your services. Many times their challenges are not

much different than the challenges our churches and leaders face. Work together by discussing the cultural nuances, challenges, and ways to overcome.

Re-Active Steps

If your church has in place the “Basic Assumptions” and is executing the “Pro-Active” Steps, then you will be ready to respond when difficulties arise. Below are three ways how your church can step in to help when it is needed.

Be present

Technology allows us to know when natural disasters, conflicts, and family emergencies are happening. Make sure someone from your church is communicating with the missionaries as soon as possible.

In addition, identify how to be present for the entire missionary family. It is easy to overlook the children’s needs as well. Communicate with the missionary parents to identify ways in which your church can care for their children. Ask the missionaries what they need and how your congregation can meet their needs.

Counsel

Missionaries are susceptible to stress, fatigue, and burnout. When these are present, they will disrupt ministry, marriages, relationships, and personal growth. Ensure that the missionaries are being cared for by offering assistance via counseling, training, or some other form.

Good-bye

Inevitably, missionaries will have to say good-bye to the people, ministry, and the country they are serving. Help them to say "goodbye" well by offering your services. That could mean sending a team to help pack up their possessions. Sending someone to speak at a farewell

service and honoring their years of service. However, you help, ensure that you talk this through with the missionaries.

Book Recommendations

Corbett, S., & Fikkert, B. (2009). When helping hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor-- and yourself. Chicago, IL: Moody.

Julien, Tom. Antioch Revisited: Reuniting the Church with Her Mission. Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 2006. Print.

Lederleitner, M. T. (2010). Cross-cultural partnerships: Navigating the complexities of money and mission. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Livermore, D. A. (2006). Serving with eyes wide open: Doing short-term missions with cultural intelligence. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Martin, J. (2008). Giving wisely? Sister, Or.: Last Chapter Publishing.