

DEVELOPING A MISSIONS STRATEGY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

*"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
John 17:3 (NKJV)*

This short manual is not intended to answer every question about building a missions culture. However, it is intended to give you a framework of understanding and ideas to encourage you as you build a missions culture in your local church. At the heart of missions is evangelism. God has called us to Go and make disciples. A healthy missions program will be supportive of missionaries and projects that are evangelizing the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ through prayer and finances.

The most important key to a strong missions program in the local church is the pastor. The lead pastor is the one who has the most influence. Your people will be attracted to what you are passionate about. You should lead them and model a heart for missions in front of them. You should lead the way on giving. You should make it a priority for your church. I have discovered that your church will care about what you care about.

Prayer

*"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."
Colossians 4:2-4 (NKJV)*

We pray about many things over the span of our life time. We pray for personal needs, in worship, and for those we care about. Intercessory prayer is praying for people and circumstances that do not directly affect you. Nevertheless, it can be the most rewarding.

A missions strategy requires more than funding. It is essential to engage your church in intercessory prayer for the fields that are ripe. It is imperative to pray for the hard places that are unreached. It is vital to pray for our missionaries, brothers, and sisters around the world. Prayer is crucial to a healthy missions strategy.

Make prayer a central part of your missions strategy. Invite your congregation to participate and pray together for our missionaries and regions of the world in your regular services. They will discover the burden of prayer as they yield to the Holy Spirit. One of the greatest things a church can involve itself in is weeping over lost souls. It is transformational and will affect all the ministries of your church.

The greatest enemy against intercessory prayer is business. It will take time. It is hard work. But you must put it on the calendar and model it for your people. As you pray for the needs of people who you do not know and places you have never been, your church will gain a heavenly perspective of God's eternal plan for broken humanity. Pray earnestly.

Build a Missions Leadership Team

Another essential element for a successful missions strategy is gathering a team of people around you. Look for influencers, givers, and people who have a heart for missions to join you. This team can be used to plan your missions activities, come up with creative ways to share about missions in your church, and plan your missions conventions. They can also be helpful in planning a missions trip.

Set goals with your team. What do you want to accomplish as a church in the area of missions?

Choose your team wisely. You want people who have a heart for souls. They should be supporters of missions financially. They need to be collaborative and share the burden with you. I am sure that you have people in your church that will help you plan, work, and pray for missions with you. The team does not need to be large. You can give each team member an assigned task such as prayer task leader, meal coordinator, faith promise, stage set design leader, decorations leader, and missions promotions leader. You will gain momentum by gathering people around you to lead with you.

Monthly Missions Focus

You need to consistently keep missions in front of your people. There are many ways to do this. The main point is to continue giving them glimpses of the world through prayer times, special guests/missionaries, bulletin and video announcements, annual missions trips (U.S. and global), use video from missionaries, SKYPE or FaceTime, etc. People respond to video testimonies and pictures best. You can also use social media to connect with your people regularly.

Churches with strong missions programs are consistently sharing with their people about missions. Their pastors and staff are incorporating missions in their services and marketing. They are also mentioning missions and giving testimonies throughout their sermons. Include your youth, children, men, and women departments and encourage them as they work for missions.

Utilize products that are available through AGWM, LFTL, STL, and BGMC. You can find testimonies, statistics, posters, literature, and banners to help you promote missions. There are also other websites and organizations that you can glean from. Another idea is to provide space to visibly show the missionaries and ministries that you support. You can create a wall for missions, shall for missions, or have a video with picture playing in the foyer. Share their missionary family photos and your financial faith promise to them.

Monthly Faith Promises

Monthly Faith Promises are beneficial because they help provide a relatively constant monthly budget for your missions efforts. More importantly, it enables your people to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit on what they should believe God for. It also keeps your people focused on missions every month. It is important for you to plan ahead and order faith promise cards, promote it well in advance, pray, and leave the results to God.

You can let faith promises supplement your missions annual budget or use it to be the foundation of your budget. These are above their regular tithes and offerings. Only ask for them to give for a specific time period, such as the calendar year.

Missionaries depend on monthly faith promises remain on the field. That is why it is impotent for churches to support them monthly. Without monthly support, they are not able to maintain a budget for their ministry. Regular monthly support provides them a consistent income that enables them to share the gospel message.

Let me also say that as valuable as projects are, they can never replace working missionaries on the ground. The most strategic investment that you can make in missions is to your missionaries who are working with indigenous people groups. Projects are an additional tool and can be helpful, but never at the expense of our missionaries.

Missionary Partnerships

Inviting guest missionaries to come share with your congregation is an important part of building a missions culture in your church. I recognize that time is limited on a Sunday mornings. However, there are other ways to incorporate them into your primary service and church. They can do a five minute window. You can interview them and their family. You can have them SKYPE into the service. They can pre-record a video for you to use. They can participate in youth, children's church, Sunday School, or other ministry times.

The impact of their voice and passion cannot be underestimated. It also reinforces the call that God places on people's lives who are future missionaries. You could have the future Hudson Taylor or Mark Buntain sitting in your church.

Be sure and give them instructions on what you desire. Also, share with them what you have been praying for concerning missions in your church. Many will come with video and pictures. Be sure and check with them before time so you can make sure that everything is prepared for them.

I also want to encourage you to look for ways to bless them and their family. Give a generous offering to them the day they are with you. Take care of their travel expenses in addition to the offering. If they are traveling, provide a comfortable, restful, and clean place for them to stay. A meal is nice as well. I know of some churches who send missionary families on vacation for a week covering all their expenses before they minister. I know that we all cannot do that. But

there are ways that you can make their visit special. You can also send them birthday cards, anniversary cards, or gifts at Christmas to their children. When they have special prayer requests, share that with the church and pray.

Some churches have missionaries share in homes the night before and allow for their people to ask questions. It can deepen your understanding of their ministry and calling. Others will host special banquets and invite them to share. Missionaries enjoy having coffee with you and your influential givers as well. Each of these are ideas on how you can provide hospitality and connect with them.

Why Host A Missions Convention?

Missions Conventions can and should be the highlight of the year if done right. It is a time to celebrate what God has done and challenge your people to believe for the next year. This is a great opportunity to share victories and testimonies of what their giving accomplished. It also redirects those who have been distracted from giving and participating.

Invite a missionary to preach. You can host a meal or banquet with a special guest speaker. Some churches have two or three weeks of missions emphasis. Some churches present a list of missional goals locally and globally that they are inviting their people to give towards.

You can do this annually or bi-annually. It really is up to your calendar. The benefit of doing it bi-annually is that you give opportunity for people to join in who have recently joined your church. I preferred doing it in November before the Christmas season and give your people time to prepare for their faith promises to begin in January. Others do it in late January or February after the Christmas season.

Be sure and promote this special time months in advance and then begin hanging promotional posters and banners a few weeks before to draw more emphasis. Prepare special music, stage set elements, videos, personal testimonies of giving, testimonies from missionaries, and sermons for the convention. Include all your departments in participating in some way. You can even have a children's missions banquet for BGMC.

Have special times of prayer. Focus on regions of AGWM. You can purchase flags from nations that you are supporting missionaries in and display them or have a parade. Try to create moments that emotionally and spiritually connect your people to the mission field. Most of all, bathe the convention in prayer and trust God to work in the hearts of your people.

How do I create a Missions Budget?

Remember that the visions always flows from the top. Even if someone other than the Lead Pastor has an idea, the Lead Pastor is the one person who has the ability to influence the entire church more than anyone else. Empower your people to give ideas and carry out the task of building a "sending" culture in your church. Engage your people in Going, Sending, and Praying.

Determine Your Goals

One of the most challenging aspects of a healthy missions church is establishing a healthy missions budget. When preparing your budget you must determine what your goals are and how you are going to fund them. Your Missions Leadership Team should help you in answering and determining your missions DNA.

There is no right or wrong way to do this. This needs to be a matter of prayer in your life so you can be clear on what God is speaking to you. I would suggest taking some time several months before your Missions convention and ask God to speak to you. Then share it with your missions leadership team. They can help you prepare to share it with your church.

Here are some general questions to ask as you prepare:

- How many missionaries do you currently support monthly?
- How many missionaries do you want to add this year?
- Do you need to adjust any of your missionary support?
- Have you purged your missionary list from inactive or retired missionaries?
- When is the last time you gave your missionaries a raise? Do you want to do this year?
- How much did you give last year?
- How much was raised through personal monthly faith promises?
- What projects did you commit to last year? Did you reach those goals?
- When and where is your next missions trip?
- Do you provide supplemental funding for your missions trips? How much?
- Do you expect your departments (LFTL, BGMC, STL, Women's Ministries) to raise money for their own goals?
- Do you supplement the departments towards their goals?
- How many missionaries will you be hosting this year?
- What local outreaches do you have planned for the next calendar year?
- Do your events have childcare and ministry expenses that need to be included?

When preparing your budget, you need to be thinking at least 12-18 months ahead if possible. This enables you to prepare for mission trip expenses, future missions conventions, hosting missionaries, and upcoming missions project opportunities.

Create a preliminary budget in expected expenses.

Decide on how you will raise your Budget

There are many models on how to raise your budget. Faith Promises is important to any budget because it gives you a working expected income to help form your budget. Some churches tithe 10% of their undesignated tithes and offerings as well. They would try to raise missionary support from their monthly faith promises. This would release them to use the tithe for the other parts of the budget.

Some have a monthly missions offering on the first Sunday of every month where people make their faith promises and give in offerings. I know one church that hosts a Kingdom Night where they invite their church to a banquet and share their missions goals for the year and ask them to make faith promises.

More questions to consider:

Will there be any fund raisers throughout the year to help towards your church missions trip?

How much do you expect to raise through these fundraisers?

What is the best and easiest way to raise the most money possible for the trip?

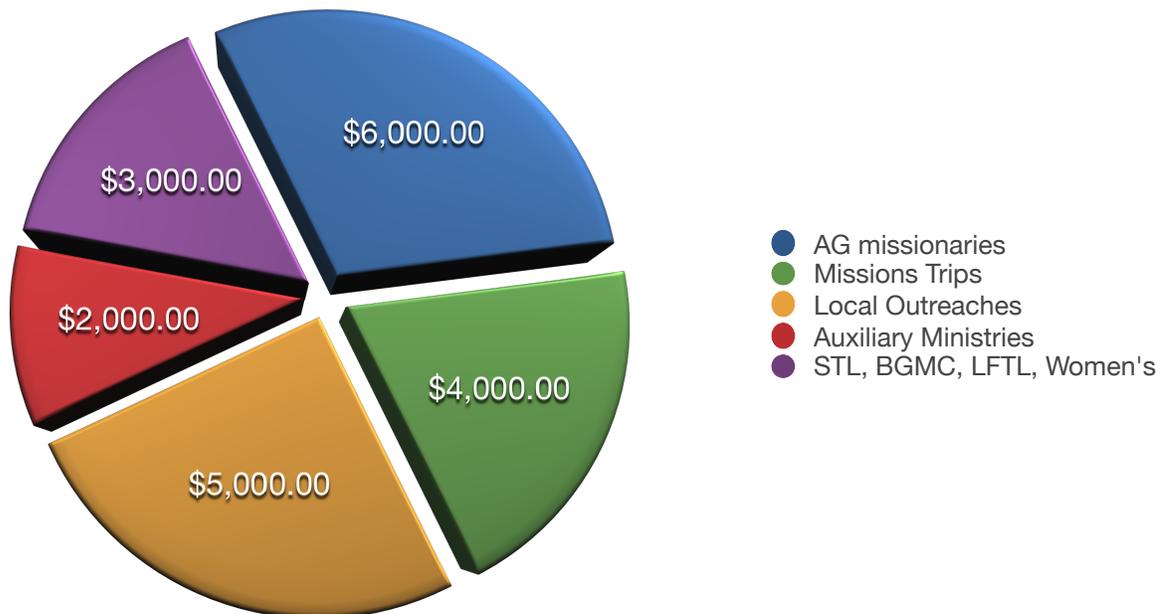
What percentage do you expect your people to pay towards the trip? 100%? 90%?

There are five categories to consider in your budget.

1. Monthly Missionary Support
2. Local Outreaches (Make sure that they are genuine outreaches that share the gospel)
3. Auxiliary Ministries and Projects (Network 211, Fire Bible, Global University, Hope House, Nepal Bible College, etc.)
4. Missions Trips
5. AG Departments (STL, BGMC, LFTL, Women's Ministries, CP&D)

Here is a sample budget. If your budget is \$20,000, here is what it could potentially look like. The key is to start where you can and make goals. If you can't do a missions trip every year, plan ahead for every two or three years.

First AG Missions Strategy Example



You will find more resources at:

<http://www.adcag.org/ministries/Missions>

<http://agwm.com>

<http://usmissions.ag.org>

<http://ag.org/top/index.cfm>