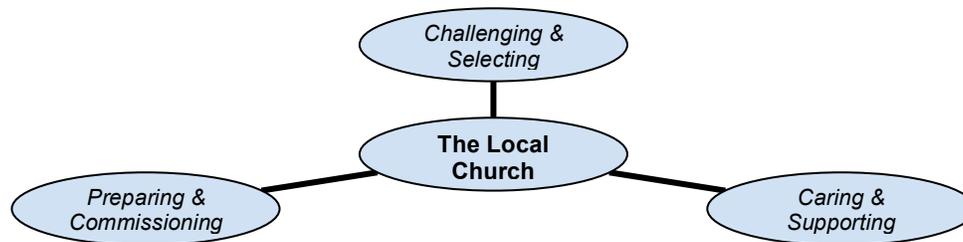


WORLD FOCUS TEAM

Assisting Local Churches and Christians in World Mission



Resource Paper 6

Motivating the Local Church for World Mission

The Mission of God.

The whole Bible revolves around the person of Christ and His mission. Jesus said *“The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”* Luke 24 v 46,47. But can we really say that the whole Bible is about mission? Not if we think of ‘missions’ as primarily something we do. **Mission is not ours it is God’s.** It is not so much that God has a mission for His church in the world, rather that God has a church for His mission in the world.

From Genesis 12 we know God to be totally, covenantally, eternally committed to the mission of blessing the nations through the agency of the people of Abraham.

Jesus did not just arrive; He was sent with a mission. It was at His baptism that Jesus received an affirmation of His true identity and mission. The mission of the Servant was to be the agent of God’s salvation reaching to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49 v 6). The mission of the Messianic king was both to rule the earth and receive the nations as His inheritance (Psalm 2 v 8).

Mission flows from the identity of God and His Christ. Mission for us means the committed participation of God’s people in the purposes of God for the redemption of the whole creation.

Now such an understanding of the mission of God turns upside down some of the common ways in which we are accustomed to think about the Christian life. It constantly forces us to open our eyes to the big picture, rather than shelter in our cosy small world. The only access that we have to that mission of God is given to us in the Bible. This is the grand narrative that is unlocked when we read Scripture in the light of the mission of God.

For a full consideration of the Mission of God in Scripture turn to Christopher J.H. Wright’s book, “The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative”, IVP, from which the above reflections are gleaned.

The message of Scripture, then, is thoroughly missional. For our present purposes let us content ourselves with the following **key missional themes**:

- ❖ **God’s Great Vision:** *“I ... am about to come and gather all the nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory.”* Isaiah 66 v 18

- ❖ **God's Great Covenant:** *"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."* Gen 12 v 2,3
- ❖ **God's Great Inheritance:** *"You are my Son;... Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, ..."* Psalm 2 v 7,8
- ❖ **God's Great Act:** *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."* John 3 v 16
- ❖ **God's Great Invitation:** *"Come, follow me ... and I will make you fishers of men."* Mark 1 v 17
- ❖ **God's Great Commandment:** *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself."* Matthew 22 v 37 - 39
- ❖ **God's Great Commission:** *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* Matthew 28 v 18 - 20
- ❖ **God's Great Empowerment:** *"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Acts 1 v 7,8
- ❖ **God's Great Fulfilment:** *"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'" Revelation 7 v 9,10*

As disciples of Jesus our vocation is to *"follow me and I will make you become fishers of men"*. Our entire lives are to be shaped by Jesus' Kingdom mission. What compelling motivation we have, and what a great privilege it is, to participate in making the kingdom of God a reality.

Mission in the Church. *Is your church a Great Commission church centred on both the Word of God and the Mission of God? The Word of God commands it. The needs of the world demand it.*

When we join in the work of world evangelisation we become partners with God in the greatest enterprise the world has ever known. We must internalise that people are lost into eternity without the saving work of God and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and act in the light of that awesome knowledge.

In partnering in God's mission understand

- what God has promised to bring forth on the earth
- how God has moved with purpose throughout the ages
- how God has called His people to join Him in His work

With the tremendous growth of the church in the Africa, Asia and Latin America western churches need to grasp the opportunity for true partnership with these churches in advancing Christ's Kingdom.

Motivational Stepping Stones. *The following six stepping stones will, under God, lead your church into a Great Commission mindset:*

1. First things First.

In John 15 Jesus is giving us a key to successful Christian living and ministry. In graphic terms He speaks of the absolute necessity of living a dependent relationship with Him. Just as a branch depends on the vine for its strength and nourishment, so we are to abide in and depend on Christ. One of the main ways in which we

can actively live out our dependence on Christ is to consistently pray. When we fail to pray we are in essence making a declaration of independence with the result that we fail to see lasting fruit in our lives and ministries.

Let prayer underpin the mission outreach of your church at all levels, vision setting, planning, challenging members, preparing those who respond and supporting those involved in mission.

Keep before the congregation specific prayer for those on the front line that are sent out by your church. Pray regularly for the church's partner churches overseas. Encourage the congregation to pray regularly for unreached peoples. Pray for the persecuted church world-wide.

2. Evaluate your Present Position.

A necessary starting point as you seek to introduce and maintain a global outlook in your church is to honestly evaluate where you are as a church with regard to global mission. This may be done under the following four headings by means of responding to searching questions, examples of which are given under each heading:

Leading

- has your church leadership, by teaching and example, set obedience to the Great Commission as a primary focus within the church?
- does your church have a mission support team that educates and encourages all the ministries of the church in missions?
- does the church have clear priorities and ambitious, though realistic, goals for mission involvement and provide resources to achieve them?

Challenging

- are the members, through all age groups, consistently taught that proclaiming the Gospel to all nations is a central purpose of the church?
- Are the members consistently challenged to get involved in missions as a normal part of Christian life?

Sending

- does the church pro-actively encourage and support short-term mission trips and mission service?
- does the church pro-actively encourage members to serve in missions longer term and adequately prepare them for such service?

Supporting

- is regular prayer for missions and people groups a normal part of the spiritual life of the church and its members?
- is the church actively caring for missionaries associated with the church beyond their financial needs?
- is the church giving a substantial portion of its income to missions?

For one approach to conducting such an evaluation see Resource Paper 5 in the World Focus section of the Affinity website >www.affinity.org.uk<

3. Set your Vision.

Simply stated a Mission-focused Vision statement is a 'big picture' statement of the preferred future. It is framed to inspire the church towards that future and should describe what is to be different, not what is to be done.

In prayerfully developing a **Mission Vision statement**:

- think of the impact you want your involvement to have rather than the programmes you want
- think depth of mission involvement rather than breadth

- give due weight to Word ministries, unreached peoples ministries and ministries to equip overseas church leaders
- think peoples not countries
- think of positive enablers as well as realistic constraints
- be stretching whilst keeping expectations realistic.

4. Mobilise around the Vision.

To mobilise your church members to become World Christians, they need to move through three stages, they need to **capture** the vision, **embrace** the vision and **respond** to the vision.

First, the leadership and membership of the church need to **capture the vision**. This step is amongst the most challenging for a church. There is a real sense in which the smaller the number of people setting the vision the smaller the number who will get a hold of it. Those people entrusted with the task, on behalf of the church, of setting the vision need to give very careful attention to embedding the vision into the life of the church.

After initial and prayerful consideration of what a Mission-focused Vision Statement may look like specific steps need to be taken by the vision-setting team to ensure that the church elders have full input into the formulation and come to the point of getting a hold of it and incorporating the vision into their teaching and leadership of the church.

Then, a similar process should be undertaken with the leadership of all of the church's ministries to ensure the incorporation of the vision into the heart of all of these ministries.

Finally, the church membership need to be brought into the process before the Vision Statement is formally adopted. In this way, the congregation needs to absorb into their thinking that there is a global cause, it is Christ's global cause. It is a vision and a strategy that demands everything they have to give. That doesn't mean they understand everything there is to know, but they gain motivation, and the vision captures them, and they can't turn away from it anymore.

Secondly, the Vision needs to be seen as relevant for all aspects of the church's and membership's life so that the leaders and members take that vision and begin to work it into their personal walk with Jesus and into the ministries of the church. So it becomes a dimension of everything they are and do as a church and as Christians. Thus, they **embrace the vision**.

Thirdly, it is the vision that gives focus to the practical steps the leaders and members take as they move out to really have a specific part as a partner in Christ's global cause. Implementing and sustaining the vision becomes an integral part of the life of the church and its members. Thus they **respond to the vision**.

The Christian, then, needs to move through these three steps. If there's any reason why a missionary vision takes hold but then fades away, it is because believers move from step one to step three and they are never helped to work through step two.

5. Chart your Course.

Remember at the outset that:

- mission is not ours it is God's - it is not so much that God has a mission for His church in the world, rather that God has a church for His mission in the world.
- when we join in the work of world evangelisation we become partners with God in the greatest enterprise the world has ever known. With a clear understanding of God's purpose for the world your church can prayerfully consider the part it will play in this partnership.

Moving on from the church's vision statement setting out the preferred future, the church's mission outreach will benefit from a mission purpose and action statement that defines how best the church can move towards that preferred future and what steps need to be taken. Having assessed where we are now and where we'd like to be consider now how the church is going to get there. If the church has a goal it will be more focused in it's mission endeavour.

In prayerfully developing a **Mission purpose and action statement**:

- evaluate your church's current mission involvements
- outline how you will continually challenge your members to personal involvement in mission
- think depth of mission involvement rather than breadth
- give due weight to Word ministries, unreached peoples ministries and equipping ministries
- consider partnerships with appropriate Mission Agencies
- consider partnering with appropriate overseas churches
- think of the programmes you want to see developed and implemented across the whole spectrum of the church's ministries
- distinguish between programmes that need one-off support and those needing on-going support
- consider what structure will best implement your purpose, goals and actions
- set short-term and medium-term goals and outline potential long-term goals
- outline how you will communicate, establish and maintain your purposes and goals.

Be creative in keeping alive the mission focus in your church by means of such things as:

- mid-week commissioning services for outgoing long-term missionaries and welcome-home services for returning missionaries
- interview slots in Sunday services for outgoing and homecoming short-term mission workers
- members of the preaching team participating in ministries such as 'Project Timothy' to train and develop overseas church leaders
- regular visits by church members to the front line with reporting back
- regular presentation to the membership of blessings and challenges in the mission work the church supports
- setting up and keeping up to date a missions resource centre and display to educate the membership – utilising the creative/artistic skills of members of the congregation and using the display materials produced by many mission agencies
- periodically showing audio-visual materials produced by mission agencies
- maintaining a link person for each missionary supported and each overseas church partnership in which the church is involved
- promoting mission involvement in the church's homegroups
- promoting mission involvement in the Sunday School / Bible Classes and mid-week Youth Groups by way of such things as involvement in any special projects that missionaries or partner churches may have, pen-pal relationships etc.
- holding periodic mission focus Sundays each year
- arranging church parties to attend Mission Agencies' open days, conferences, exposure weekends

6. Build your Team.

i. Form a missions committee made up of missions-minded people to include one or more of the church's elders. Establish clear guidelines concerning the respective roles of the elders and the mission support team as it relates to:

- establishing and maintaining the church's mission vision, purposes, goals and activities
- challenging / recruiting potential long-term missionaries from within the congregation
- selection and preparation of members called to long-term missionary service
- working with members on selection of, and preparation for, short-term mission service
- liaising with appropriate Mission Agencies
- accountability relationships with missionaries supported by the church
- pastoral care of missionaries when on the field and when at home
- allocation of financial and practical support for the church's missionaries
- forming and maintaining overseas church partnerships
- visits to missionaries on the field

ii. Develop and maintain a supporting prayer network, for each missionary and each overseas church partnership supported by the church. Consider a monthly prayer meeting for each missionary / church partnership.

iii. Maintain congregational prayer for the church's mission outreach by means of:

- keeping prayer fuel up to date by regular contact with each missionary / church partnership by telephone, email and web-cam interviews wherever possible
- encouraging 'exchange visits' with 'first-hand' reports back to the church
- regularly featuring each missionary - praying for such things as their family, their health and protection, their spiritual growth, the spiritual warfare in which they are engaged, fluency in the language of the people to whom they are ministering, their cultural adjustment and sensitivity, wisdom in their ministry and their financial needs
- regularly featuring each overseas church partnership praying for their leadership, their ministries, the blessings they receive and the challenges they face
- praying regularly for people groups yet without a Gospel witness - using such resources as Operation World, Global Connections on-line World Prayer News, Global Prayer Digest and 30 Days Muslim Prayer Guide.

In conclusion, the above stepping stones are not intended to be prescriptive but, rather, a stimulus to your thinking as you consider the context in which your church ministers and as you seek to bring a truly global perspective to that ministry. May God inspire you as you seek to partner with God in His mission to 'gather all the nations and tongues'.