

GUIDE FOR LOCAL CHURCHES ON



Recognising and Encouraging Potential Missionaries



THE BIG IDEA

It is important for local churches to teach that every Christian is called to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ; equip every member to effectively communicate the God's truth by word and action; and send everyone into their neighbourhoods, workplaces and campuses to share the gospel of Jesus with people of all nations.

However, God has gifted/called/inspired some to serve the global Church as cross-cultural workers, or missionaries.ⁱ While these people may contribute a wide variety of gifts and skills to mission work (i.e. they are not all evangelists, church planters or Bible translators), they will demonstrate important characteristics necessary for cross-cultural ministry (see below).



TIPS & EXAMPLES

1. Recognising potential missionaries – Questions to ask:

- Do they have a **vital faith** in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour?
 - Missionaries need to be able to demonstrate a firm and enduring faith if they are to share it with others effectively.
- Do they have an **active devotional life**?
 - Missionaries may have to maintain their faith with little fellowship or external support – without a vital devotional life, grounded in disciplined prayer and Bible study, they are unlikely to survive for very long.
- Do they show a **concern for the lost**?
 - While not every missionary is an evangelist, a vital dynamic of missionary service is comprised of both the conviction that everyone is lost without Christ, and evidence of a desire to reach lost people with the gospel.

- Are they **grounded in their local church**?
 - They should have been members of their local church for an adequate time and shown genuine commitment to its fellowship, worship and witness – i.e. if their church would not miss them, they should not be sent.
- Do they demonstrate a **servant heart**?
 - They should be motivated by a desire to serve God , the global Church, and lost people.
 - They should not be motivated by desires for status/recognition, personal fulfilment or travel, or by feelings of discontent/escapism, superiority or guilt.
- Are they a **team player**?
 - The ability to work well with others (especially others who are culturally different, and theologically different on disputable matters) and accept direction is vital in missionary work.
- Are they “**balanced**” people?
 - E.g. able to relax and avoid taking themselves too seriously; have a good sense of humour; understand their limitations.
- Do they **relate well** to other people?
 - Missionaries need to be able to relate well with people of various backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures to their own – prejudice expressed within their own culture is unlikely to disappear in another.
- Are they ready to **accept change**?
 - If circumstances easily affect their moods it won’t be easy for them to cope with change – they should have demonstrated a willingness to learn, adapt and be challenged.
- Do they have a **good reputation**?
 - Just as church leaders should not be novices and should have a good reputation with outsiders, so it is with missionaries, most of whom will be regarded as church leaders when begin serving in another culture. They should be able to make non-Christian friends and enjoy approval without compromising their faith.
- Do they have a sense of “**call**”?
 - This is a specific sense of calling beyond the general Biblical mandate, and will be both subjective (inward prompting of the Holy Spirit; “a sense of driving constraint”) and objective (grounded in the world of God and tested by their local church).

2. Preparation:

- **Testing the sense of call**
 - The potential missionary should submit their sense of call to the church leadership – while individuals/families are responsible for making themselves available, others should judge whether they are suitable.
- **Partnering with a mission agency**
 - the wealth of experience, specialist knowledge and practical processes/systems of a respected mission agency can ensure that the entire process of preparing, sending and supporting missionaries is more effective and less stressful for both the missionary and the church.
- **Deciding to support the missionary**
 - In deciding to support/send a missionary it would be wise to give as much prayer and consideration as with a ministry leader or pastoral appointment, because the sending of the missionary will not only extend the local church's ministry across cultural and perhaps geographical borders, but also impact the existing/potential church in another place.
 - The decision on whether or not to support a potential missionary may be decided by church leadership, the [mission committee](#), or by the congregation as a whole – this should be clearly outlined in the church's [mission policy](#).
 - Support may be financial and/or in prayer (and perhaps in other specific practical ways).
- **Sharing with the church**
 - Once the decision makers/church leaders sense it is right to move forward, it is important to share with the whole congregation how the Lord has been leading their fellow member and to give them the opportunity to stand with the potential missionary in love, prayer and financial support.
- **Training**
 - The training required by each potential missionary/family will need to be planned individually to enable them to grow in their spiritual gifting and natural abilities, and to address weaknesses in cross-cultural skills and Biblical understanding.
 - Bible colleges and mission agencies increasingly appreciate the involvement and input of church leaders when assessing applicants seeking to increase their knowledge and skills for cross-cultural ministry.

3. Sending

- When the preparation is over, training is completed and the destination and date of departure are settled, it is helpful for the church family to gather to say goodbye to the new missionary/family and send them out
- The laying on of hands (or some other appropriate ritual) indicates an ongoing commitment of support, encouragement and partnership
- This ceremony also indicates the local church's ongoing concern for mission

4. Real Examples:

- **"Discernment and Development:** How one church helps guide present and future workers." Catalyst Services Postings, Vol. 9, Iss. 9, 2014. <http://catalystservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Discernment-Development.pdf>
- Ellen Livingood. **"Effective Internships in Your Missions Program."** Catalyst Services Postings, Vol. 5, Iss. 2, 2010. <http://catalystservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Interns.pdf>



HELPFUL RESOURCES

1. Richard Hibbert, Evelyn Hibbert, and Tim Silberman. **"The [Australian] journey towards long term missionary service:** How Australian missionaries are being called and choose mission agencies." Missiology: An International Review, 2015. <http://mis.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/01/08/0091829615584189.full.pdf?ikey=3Fp6QFVmuewqtk2&keytype=finite>
2. <http://missionplatform.com/> - Explore local and global mission initiatives
3. <http://www.missionsinterlink.org.au/opportunities> - to find agencies and opportunities that match your passion
4. <http://www.secondwind.net.au/> - Helping Aussie believers in their 40s 50s and 60s use their life and career skills to share their faith in cross-cultural situations. Secon Wind Network acts as a broker for about 30 Christian organisations who will help to place you in Australia and overseas.
5. Ellen Livingood. **"Charting the Path for Future Global Workers."** Catalyst Services Postings, Vol. 9, Iss. 1, 2014. <http://catalystservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Charting-the-Path.pdf>

6. Ellen Livingood. “**Identifying Cross-Cultural Gifting: who is God tapping for missions service?**” Catalyst Services Postings, Vol. 7, Iss. 7, 2012. <http://catalystservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CC-Gifting-Identifiers.pdf>
7. “**Sending Kingdom Professionals: A tool for churches’ assessment process.**” Catalyst Services Postings, Vol. 9, Iss. 11, 2014. <http://catalystservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Sending-KPs.pdf>
8. Ellen Livingood. “**Choosing Sending Partners -2: New options for churches fielding workers.**” Catalyst Services Postings, Vol. 7, Iss. 6, 2012. <http://catalystservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Sending-Partners-21.pdf>
 - This posting includes “Questions for the Church Considering Sending Alone” without partnering with a mission agency to send missionaries
9. “**Second Career Workers – 1: Mobilizing the Boomer Generation.**” Catalyst Services Postings, Vol. 4, Iss. 10, 2009. <http://catalystservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/SecCar1.pdf>
10. Ellen Livingood. “**Is This the Team for Me?: Questions to help determine fit on a field team.**” Catalyst Services Postings, Vol. 8, Iss. 6, 2013. <http://catalystservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Is-This-the-Team.pdf>
11. “**The Church/Agency/Missionary Sending Triangle.**” Catalyst Services Postings, Vol. 2, Iss. 7, 2007. <http://catalystservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Sending-Triangle.pdf>
 - This posting includes “**The Church’s Role as a Sender**”

ⁱ **Missionary/missionaries** - a person/family who has been commissioned by their sending church(es) and/or mission agency to be explicitly dedicated to the work of cross-cultural ministry. It indicates someone who is gifted, set apart and trained/prepared for cross-cultural service, and so serves a particular role in the global Body of Christ. While every follower of Jesus is called to be His witness wherever they are, some are specifically lead to cross cultural and geographical boundaries to share the gospel with those who could otherwise not comprehend its message.