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ASSESSING AND DEVELOPING PRE-FIELD MISSIONARIES  
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Missiology

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by  
Nathaniel Garth Sloan  
May 2018

**APPROVAL SHEET**

**ASSESSING AND DEVELOPING PRE-FIELD MISSIONARIES  
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**

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## PREFACE

Completing a doctoral program has been one of the most difficult, yet rewarding accomplishments of my life. As I reflect on the last three years, I am filled with gratitude for all the people who have supported me along the way. This process would not have been possible without their support and encouragement.

Thank you to my wife, Sarah, who supported the initial idea and has stood beside me every step of the way, even when our life outside of my studies brought suffering and pain. Thank you for caring for me, our children, and our home; and for being a sounding board for the ideas I constantly threw your way. You have not only been my best friend and companion, but an amazing help in my missiological writing.

Thank you to my church, Sojourn Community Church, who gave of their resources and allowed me space to study and write as I did my work of pastoring. Sojourn has not only given me space to read, write, and learn from others; they have provided me a living laboratory to practice the lessons I have learned. Thank you for having a kingdom perspective and allowing me margin to grow as a missions pastor and missiologist.

Thank you to all the men who have invested in me over the years as I have developed my love, passion, and skill in missions. Rick Evans, Doug Hodges, Jack Scallions, Todd Entner, Jim Long, Bruce Carlton, Daniel Montgomery, Nate Irwin, and Larry McCrary have invested countless hours into my development as a godly man, leader, and missions pastor. I cannot thank them enough for the impact they have made on my life, ministry, and study of missions.

Thank you to my doctoral supervisor, Jeff Walters, and to my professor, John Klaasson. You have both invested in my education and in my passion to see local churches

take a leading role in global missions. Thank you for sharing your wisdom and time to helping me grow as a missiologist.

Finally, thank you to Christ Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit in my life. It is a work of God that I am at this point in my missiological studies. My development as a pastor and student are works of God's grace, lived out as an overflow of gratitude for what the Lord has done in my own life to save me from sin and brokenness. I pray that the opportunities the Lord has given me through my studies in missiology will be used to see the kingdom of God expand, his name glorified to greater degrees, and my love and passion for him continually increase.

Nathan Sloan

Louisville, Kentucky

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Maturity and growth are keys to any area of life. Whether it be a profession, a hobby, marriage, or any relationship; ongoing growth is essential. To mature and grow in these areas intentional development is needed. The same is true for those going overseas as missionaries. Pre-field missionaries need intentional, holistic development for their whole person. Pre-field missionaries need development for their head: knowing God, his Word, and his mission; their heart: ongoing character growth and transformation into the likeness of Christ; and their hands: the skills they need to do the work of cross-cultural ministry. This holistic development of potential missionaries is vital to long and fruitful ministry, but from where should this development come? For a long time, mission agencies and seminaries have taken the lead in the development of missionaries, but these organizations are limited in what they can and should do.

Kevin Nguyen addresses this development tension between para-church agencies and churches when he writes,

Academia and seminary can mess up some of our perceptions about developing church leaders for the ministry. Many churches have literally handed off biblical and pastoral development to seminaries. . . . I feel confident in saying that the church is the best environment to cultivate future church leaders for the mission field.<sup>1</sup>

Nguyen goes on to write that he believes God has commanded and given the resources needed to the local church “for the task of bringing in, building up and sending out leaders”<sup>2</sup> for the expansion of the kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup>Kevin Nguyen, “Releasing Your Best for the Mission for God,” Send Net, May 12, 2014, accessed March 25, 2016, <http://sendnetwork.com/2014/05/12/releasing-your-best-for-the-mission-of-god/>.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

If development of pre-field missionaries is vital, and it is, and the local church is the best place to build up people for missionary service, which it is, then how can local churches best go about assessing the gifts and limitations of pre-field missionaries? Furthermore, how can churches provide pathways and tools for the growth needed to thrive overseas? Local churches need helpful and accessible models for the assessment and development of their pre-field missionaries.

The practice of assessing and training missionary candidates for global missions has a rich and deep history. Agencies and other para-church organizations have spent decades developing quality assessment tools and well thought out training programs to prepare people for a life of health and fruitfulness overseas. The para-church missions world has a lot to offer missionaries but too often the local church has had a limited role in this process. For the most part, this is not the fault of mission agencies. The problem lies in the limited tools available to local churches and the common misconception that local churches do not have the expertise needed to assess and develop their own people. Both of these issues need to be addressed and local churches need to be empowered to take an active role in the process of assessing and developing their own people for cross-cultural ministry.

When a church sends out a missionary, the act of sending should entail more than just a commissioning service. Sending should be preceded by a robust process of building up people for life and ministry in a cross-cultural context along with an honest assessment of a person's gifting and limitations. Churches need to play the key role in this pre-field process. Why? Because through the ups and downs of ordinary life within the church, a person's character, gifts, and commitment to ministry will be discovered and cultivated. Indeed, as Neal Pirolo suggests, the local church is the "ideal testing ground for potential missionaries."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Neal Pirolo, *Serving as Senders Today: How to Care for Your Missionaries as They Prepare to Go, Are on the Field and Return Home* (San Diego: Emmaus Road International, 2012), 56.

## Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to address the concepts of assessment and development of potential pre-field missionaries in the context of the local church by (1) building a basis for the centrality of the local church in missions, specifically addressing assessment and development; (2) examining the methodology and models in assessing and developing missionaries currently used by local churches; and (3) proposing a flexible model and methodology for local churches to assess and develop their own prospective missionaries.

## Centrality of the Local Church

This dissertation focuses on the preparation of pre-field missionaries in the local church context, but the foundational question is why is the local church so important in missions? Does it really matter who sends the missionary and how they are sent as long as they go? Though the going of the missionary is obviously vital, so is the way they are sent and the local church's role in that sending process. Indeed, the local church is at the center of the mission of God. George Peters addresses the centrality of the local church in missions when he writes,

The local congregation of believers stands in a unique relationship to Christ and that local assembly becomes the mediating and authoritative sending body of the New Testament missionary. This is a vital, biblical principle and we dare not weaken, minimize nor disregard it.<sup>4</sup>

The early church that started in Acts 2 and continues to this day is the church on mission, seeking to expand the kingdom of God. That mission is the outworking of the *missio Dei*. *Missio Dei* is Latin for the "mission of God" and is the key concept for understanding the sending work of the Trinity and the call of the church to be on mission. It is within the *missio Dei* that the church finds the strongest grounding for its missional identity,<sup>5</sup> the call to be witnesses in all spheres of life both where it finds itself and onward

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<sup>4</sup>George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Moody, 1984), 55.

<sup>5</sup>Gregg Allison defines the missional identity of the church as "the body of divinely called and

to the nations. Lalsangkima Pachuau explains that the *missio Dei* “seeks to ground Christian missionary theory and practice in the missionary activity of the Triune God.”<sup>6</sup> Zach Bradley writes, “If the *missio Dei* describes broadly what God is about, it also defines narrowly how he gets it done: his little church. The church is the collection of sent ones.”<sup>7</sup> Through the mystery of God’s grace, he has chosen his church, and therefore local churches, to be the bearers of the message of the cross. Those who make up the church are sent ones, their identity rooted in the sending work of God, commissioned by Christ himself, and empowered by the Spirit of God to be on mission.

At the centerpiece of this missiological discussion of the sending nature of the church are Jesus’ words in John 20:21: “Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” Jesus’ words to his disciples are a beautiful promise of grace. If there was hope for this broken band of Christ followers, there is hope for the church today.<sup>8</sup> If God can use this group of fearful believers to boldly proclaim the gospel in Acts 2 and then suffer oppression with joy for this same type of boldness in Act 5-7, then God can and will use current local churches to be active participants in the *missio Dei*, for the same Spirit abides with both.

The term “sending church” is newer terminology used to describe an ancient idea. Just as God the Father sent the Son and the Father and Son sent the Spirit of God, so the Triune God sends the church out on mission. Local churches are sending churches because they have been sent out with the gospel to a lost world. What Augustine

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divinely sent ministers proclaiming the gospel and advancing the kingdom of God.” Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 1.

<sup>6</sup>Lalsangkima Pachuau, *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, ed. John Corrie (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity, 2007), 232-33.

<sup>7</sup>Zach Bradley, *The Sending Church Defined* (Knoxville: The Upstream Collective, 2015), 9.

<sup>8</sup>Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Westmont, IL: IVP, 2012), 23.

understood as the *missio Dei*, Trinitarian sending,<sup>9</sup> now includes the movement of the church living out the *missio Dei*. A sending church is simply a local church that intentionally seeks to live out its sentness in a broken world.

The Upstream Collective, a mission group seeking to empower local churches to send their members locally and globally, created a more comprehensive definition for this term:

A Sending Church is a local community of Christ-followers who have made a covenant together to be prayerful, deliberate, and proactive in developing, commissioning, and sending their own members both locally and globally, often in partnership with other churches or agencies, and continuing to encourage, support, and advocate for them while making disciples cross-culturally.<sup>10</sup>

This definition is a robust attempt to bring clarity to a biblical concept that dates back to the early church and continues to this day.

The current expression of local churches living out their sentness is what could be called the Sending Church Movement. In the West, more and more churches are coming to a realization of their identity as sending churches, the same identity that Antioch and Philippi lived out in the New Testament.

Part of this movement has come from a growing frustration with mission sending agencies, but by far the greatest driving factor has come from a renewed awareness that the Bible calls local churches to be at the center of mission engagement. After all, the Great Commission was directed at Christ's disciples who were soon to become the church, the bride of Christ. The church, and by nature the localized expressions of the church as seen in local churches, was given the command to go and make disciples. The local church is the final movement in the *missio Dei*. David Bosch's words on this issue are worth stating: "The classic doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the

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<sup>9</sup>Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. Edmund Hill and John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1990), 101-5.

<sup>10</sup>Bradley, *The Sending Church Defined*, 2.

Father sending the Son, and God the Father and Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another “movement”: Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”<sup>11</sup> A renewed passion and movement to this sending church intentionality is taking place in Western evangelical churches today.

From this renewed awareness of local churches being at the center of missions sending grows the need for churches to be active in assessing and developing their own people for life and ministry overseas. Churches do not need to do this in isolation but with help from mission agencies, seminaries, and alongside other local churches that have the same sending convictions. Because missions should happen in and through the local church, the church should take an active role in preparing and assessing their people holistically in the life of the church.

### **Current Models of Assessment and Development**

Along with books, articles, and documents addressing the assessment and preparation of missionaries, I researched the current assessment and development practices of nine leading sending churches through in-depth interviews. These interviews with churches took place through email. Interviews with local churches included: Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina; Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas; Antioch Community Church in Waco, Texas; Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Brook Hills Church in Birmingham, Alabama; Calvary Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Cornerstone Church in Ames, Iowa; Immanuel Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky; and Christ Community Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

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<sup>11</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed., American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 381.

## **Proposed Model for Local Churches**

A quick look around missions in North America shows two things: the leaders in sending are mission agencies and mega-churches. Mission agencies have led the way for years and now alongside them come large churches with staff, funds, and vision to send their people to take the gospel to the nations. From this trend of mega-church missions engagement comes the myth that only large churches with dedicated staff can be sending churches. More specifically, only large churches are able to participate in the assessment and preparation of their pre-field missionaries. Often churches and agencies alike believe the lie that this new sending church movement is relegated to a handful of mega-churches and that medium and small churches have little to add. This common belief is simply not true. Although larger churches with missions staff and significant budget may find sending easier in certain areas, churches of all sizes and strengths have something to offer in the area of examining their own people and preparing them for a life of health and fruitfulness overseas.

In my dissertation I examine the patterns and practices of leading sending churches, most of them larger, but a few are medium to small in size. From this examination of sending church practices and from other in-depth research, I propose a comprehensive model for assessing, encouraging, and providing ongoing development for pre-field missions in churches that has the flexibility to be adapted according to church size and need. There is no one size fits all model. Every church is different and every church has something different to offer in the pre-field preparation process. The proposed model is able to be applied to varying degrees depending upon the needs and ability of the local church. When it comes to assessment and development of members, churches should be able to live into their strengths as sending churches and find the help they need for other areas through outside organizations and additional resources.

The model for developing and assessing pre-field missionaries is rooted in the holistic model of developing the whole person: his knowledge, character, and skills. This model of head, heart, and hands was originally brought into the sending church

conversation by Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, through the work of Tom Stellar. Stellar and others at Bethlehem developed the Nurture Program.<sup>12</sup> This was one of the first missionary preparation models created by a local church for the local church context. This model, and the work done by Bethlehem as a sending church, has set the standard for many other churches. This model of holistic development is also advocated by Greg Carter in *Skills, Knowledge, Character: A Church Based Approach to Missionary Candidate Preparation*<sup>13</sup> and *Training Missionaries* by Evelyn and Richard Hibbert.<sup>14</sup>

Based on Stellar's work, Carter's, Hibbert's, and others, this dissertation proposes a grounded and accessible model for pre-field missionary preparation that is adaptable to most North American church contexts.

## **Background**

My interest in the centrality of the local church in missions began when I was sent out as a cross-cultural missionary from my own local church. I had learned a great deal from my church and they sent me out with their blessing but there was little forethought in their sending. They did what they knew how to do but it was not much more than a monthly check and a commissioning service. Once I was on the mission field, I began to feel the effects of a church that was not deeply involved in my life and ministry. At the same time, I was reading through the book of Acts, specifically Acts 13-15, detailing the Church at Antioch as a sending church and how Paul and Barnabas were sent and often returned to their sending church. My home church's lack of connectedness

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<sup>12</sup>Bethlehem Baptist Church, "Nurture Program Handbook," 2014, accessed February 15, 2016, <https://www.amazon.com/clouddrive/share/tYv5IEEc91xUv6wE1bhVEJEsUaLmCIrOV8k5I9AcbkY>

<sup>13</sup>Greg Carter, *Skills Knowledge Character: A Church-Based Approach to Missionary Candidate Preparation* (Valparaiso, IN: Turtle River Press, 2010).

<sup>14</sup>Evelyn Hibbert and Richard Hibbert, *Training Missionaries: Principles and Possibilities* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2016).

to my work, as well as the picture I saw of the local church as a sending church in the New Testament, lead me to ask hard questions. While on furlough, my wife and I decided to share this vision of a sending church with both our home churches as well as with other local churches in our city. At the time, no one was willing or able to send us out in an Antioch-like manner. After some time of prayer and conversation with others, we decided to resign from our mission agency, plant roots in a local church, and begin serving alongside others to see our church grow into a rich missions sending church.

From this initial experience, I have grown more in my love for the local church and my conviction that missions should happen in and through the local church, including the assessment and development of sent out ones. I hope that my research and writing will help my local church, as well as other churches, be better equipped to be churches that assess and send missionaries in a way that reflects the spirit of the church at Antioch found in Acts 11-18.

### **Definitions**

Before diving into the methodology of this thesis, it is important to define certain words and ideas that are central to this writing. Specifically, four words need definition: *pre-field ministry*, *para-church organization*, *assessment*, and *development*. These four ideas can be understood from a number of perspectives but for the use of this thesis, they are defined as follows.

*Pre-field ministry*. The term *pre-field* is used to describe the ministry that takes place after a church and/or mission agency have affirmed a prospective cross-cultural missionary until the time they arrive at their field of service. Often seen as simply support raising, pre-field ministry is much more than the acquisition of funds. Pre-field ministry might include continued education and development, support-raising, developing a support network, mobilization, finishing stateside responsibilities, and other such activities. The term pre-field ministry has been chosen for this dissertation because it communicates a more robust and healthy idea of life and ministry while preparing for cross-cultural work.

*Para-church organization.* *Para-church* ministry is defined as an organization not under local church authority, normally under the authority of a governing board of directors, that seeks to fulfill a stated mission of engaging in evangelism, missions, social action, or any number of ministry related areas. Mack Stiles, in his article, “Nine Marks of a Healthy Parachurch Ministry” writes, “Parachurch ministries should come alongside the church both to fulfill important roles and to protect the unique and primary calling of the church.”<sup>15</sup> Healthy para-church ministries support and empower the local church including mission agencies, seminaries, and other supporting ministries.

*Assessment.* Paul Seger in his book *Senders* writes to local church leaders: “To grow, train, and send your own missionaries requires a plan.”<sup>16</sup> He goes on to write, “The first step in establishing a plan is to have a clear portrait of what a missionary looks like.”<sup>17</sup> Seger’s point is that local churches need an understanding of who they want to send and what they are looking for in a pre-field missionary candidate so they can send their people out with confidence, which is at the core of local church missionary assessment. *Assessment*, as it relates to this dissertation, is defined as the process of evaluating a candidate’s missionary readiness according to a predetermined set of standards and then providing ongoing pathways toward growth.

Assessment is often seen as a pass or fail test, either one is ready, or not. Local church assessment should be different in that a local church can both assess the readiness of candidates and continue to walk alongside them toward ongoing growth because they are walking with them over a long period of time. It is within the context of the local church, in the routine of daily life, that a person’s true self is revealed.

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<sup>15</sup>Mack Sills, “Nine Marks of a Healthy Parachurch Ministry,” in “Church and Parachurch: Friends or Foes?” special issue, *9Marks* (March 2011): 1, accessed November 1, 2016, <https://9marks.org/article/journalnine-marks-healthy-parachurch-ministry/>.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Seger, *Senders: How Your Church Can Identify, Train, and Deploy Missionaries* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent, 2015), 87.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 88.

*Development.* The words *development* and *training* are often synonymous when it comes to missionary preparation. However, the two terms need to be distinguished from one another because each has an important role in preparing the pre-field missionary. In the area of business, a clear distinction is made between these two ideas. William Fitzgerald, the former training and development manager for Hewlett-Packard, defines training as the “acquisition of knowledge and skill for present tasks, a tool to help individuals contribute to the organization.”<sup>18</sup> He goes on to write that development on the other hand is the “acquisition of knowledge and skill that may be used in the present or the future, the preparation of individuals to enrich the organization in the future.”<sup>19</sup> The difference between training and development, as Fitzgerald points out, is that training focuses on imparting skill for present tasks while development focuses on preparing individuals. Although training is also vital for pre-field missionaries, development is more valuable because it cultivates growth in the individual for the long-term. *Development*, as it relates to this dissertation, is defined as the ongoing cultivation of holistic growth for healthy and effective life and ministry cross-culturally.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The goal of this dissertation was to understand the current landscape and practices of a sampling of influential sending churches, specifically looking at how they assess and prepare missionaries. By doing this, I propose a model that is both holistic and simple enough for churches of most any size to be able to engage in the assessment and development of their people. Because of this limited focus, I did not address every aspect of assessment and development, even if it was an area that would be beneficial. This

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<sup>18</sup>William Fitzgerald, “Training Verses Development,” *Training and Development*, May 1992, 1, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://lms.powercam.cc/sysdata/user/42/irisli/blog/doc/6aaf13ba58c720ef/attach/160.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

inability to engage with all relevant data does not mean these aspects are unimportant, only that they are outside the scope of this research and writing.

First, my writing was limited in its interaction with educational theory. Educational or learning theories address the scientific study of learning and describe how information is received, processed, and retained.<sup>20</sup> Educational theories are a vital part of understanding education and helpful to understand when seeking to prepare people for overseas service. Although my dissertation dealt with education, training, and missionary preparation, it was beyond the scope of my research to deal with the scope of educational theory and philosophy.

Second, understanding the whole person is vital when assessing a person for cross-cultural service, specifically exploring an individual's personality profile,<sup>21</sup> family of origin, and mental health. These underlying and often overlooked areas provide churches and agencies a deeper look into the life of a candidate, a part of the person that is often unknown, even to the person being assessed. Although these issues were addressed to some degree, this dissertation was not able to address each aspect nor the tools that help cultivate an understanding of these areas.

Third, given the fact there are hundreds of thousands of churches across North America, it was beyond the reach of my writing to interview and understand the assessment and development process for each. This research was limited to a small sampling of churches that are known for doing assessment and preparation well. These churches have led the way for others in their streams of influence. By taking a look at what these churches

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<sup>20</sup>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, "Most Influential Theories of Learning," 2004, accessed June 11, 2016, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/quality-framework/technical-notes/influential-theories-of-learning/>.

<sup>21</sup>Many useful personality profile tests are available to help local churches understand the personality makeup of their pre-field missionaries better. A few I have found useful include Myers-Briggs, Enneagram, StrengthsFinder, and DISC.

of different sizes, denominations, and methodologies are doing, I hoped to show common practices and patterns that will prove helpful on a larger level.

Fourth, the exclusiveness of this research on the local church should not in any way lessen the value and beauty of the church universal and its organizational expressions. The doctrinal statement of Sojourn Community Church, the church where I pastor, defines the universal church as “a spiritual organism made up of all believer everywhere for all time. All Christians in all times and in all places have been united into a single body by an operation of God. This resultant union is called the Body of Christ, the Universal Church.”<sup>22</sup> The universal church is a beautiful truth that all believers at all times are unified into a family across time, ethnicity, language, and culture through the blood of Christ. The universality of the church also means that believers of different local churches, creeds, and denominations can come together in para-church organizations for the good and expansion of the kingdom. Mission agencies and training institutions are a reflection of members of the universal church coming together for the sake of the kingdom of God. Though my dissertation is pro local church, it is not intended to be a statement against agencies or other para-church organizations. Mission agencies and training institutions have been used of God in powerful ways to expand the kingdom. However, these para-church organizations are at their best when they are helping local churches carry out the mission and vision God has given them.

Fifth, the original research plan included interviewing several mission agencies to learn best practices as well as their view on the local church’s role in assessment and development. However, a limited number of mission agencies responded to my research request. The number of agencies that responded was not sufficient to provide valuable research finding. Therefore, the research plan was adjusted to reflect this limitation.

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<sup>22</sup>Sojourn Community Church, “What We Believe,” accessed February 13, 2018, <https://sojournchurch.com/about/what-we-believe/>.

Finally, this research and writing focused on the assessment and development of missionaries in the North American context, which is what Paul Hiebert calls the “modern missions paradigm.”<sup>23</sup> This model of sending out Western Christians from Western churches to other parts of the world developed from 1700 to 1970.<sup>24</sup> Since that time, the world has grown into a globalized world. No longer are people groups and languages isolated from one another. People from all corners of the world often have access to the same information, same technology, and now live in the same cities, towns, and neighborhoods. Globalization has affected missions sending as well. No longer is it the “from West to the rest” but “from everywhere, to everywhere.”<sup>25</sup> The missions sending epicenter has shifted from Europe and North America to the majority world regions of Africa, Latin America, and Asia, otherwise known as the Global South.<sup>26</sup> This movement in missions is exciting, but it does not mean that missions sending from North America should cease. Churches in North America should still be sending people around the world but in healthy partnership, often in submission, to brothers and sisters in the global church. Because this research and writing focused on the church in North America, I did not address the movement of global churches on mission and their need to assess and develop their people. My hope was that many of the principles addressed in this dissertation help other churches outside the North American context.

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<sup>23</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 177.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>Felix Wilfred, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 145.

<sup>26</sup>Elijah J. F. Kim, *The Rise of the Global South: The Decline of Western Christendom and the Rise of Majority World Christianity*, 2012 ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 1.

## **Methodology**

The methodologies used to research and write this dissertation included quantitative research, gathering information through the methods of examining books, documents, articles, online resources, other published materials, and using a predetermined and preapproved set of interview questions.<sup>27</sup>

Though a limited number of published works specifically address assessment and development in the local church, a fair number of resources address the core issues and ideas for assessment and development from a mission agency point of view and from an academic view. Most of the works cited in this dissertation that directly relate to the local church are documents created for in-house use by local churches. These missionary preparation manuals, though not formally published, provide significant insight into how leading sending churches are assessing and preparing their people.

The following research questions were used to gain a deeper understanding into the what, how, and why of the sending processes of a select number of American sending churches from different denominations within the evangelical world. This research was compiled and studied to discover common themes and best practices in assessment and development.

### **Questions for Local Churches**

1. What is the context of your church location/demographic? (ex. City/rural, college or seminary town, rich/middle class/ poor, etc.)
2. What is the weekly attendance at your church?
3. How many years would you estimate your church has been involved in sending missionaries?
4. What are your church's denominational/network affiliations?
5. How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?

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<sup>27</sup>All of the research instruments used in this dissertation were performed in compliance with and approval by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Ethics Committee prior to use in the research.

6. What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?
7. What are the 2-3 strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?
8. In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas? What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?
9. When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?
10. When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?
11. What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?
12. What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development?

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CENTRALITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IN MISSIONS

The assessment and development of healthy members within a local church is the outworking of a much larger idea—the idea that the centrality of missions is rooted in local churches. If indeed, as one pastor put it, “the local church is God’s plan A for reaching the nations,”<sup>1</sup> then the implications for the local church and for missions is significant. One of those being the necessity for local churches to put thought and effort into both disciple-making and further development of their members for quality ministry within their own local context and onward toward the nations.

Too often however, when local churches, both leaders and members, think about global missions, their understanding and motivation for mission obedience stops with passages like Matthew 28:18-20 or other similar Great Commission passages (see Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Indeed, the last command of Christ, the Great Commission, does provide for the church<sup>2</sup> a clear and compelling call to take the gospel to those who do not know Christ as Savior. These words are applicable and binding to the church. Missiologist Timothy Tennent writes, “Missions, of course, is never less than a command of Christ, but it is certainly far more than that.”<sup>3</sup> The Scriptures provide

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<sup>1</sup>Mitch McCaskell, Summit Church, Raleigh, NC, email to author, July 27, 2017.

<sup>2</sup>Should the word *church* primarily refer to the collection of God’s elect throughout all the centuries (universal church) or to the local expression of believers committed to one another in unity, practice, and identification? Both are true and needed concepts, but my intent in this chapter is to address the issues surrounding actual local churches. The universal church is an important truth, however, it is never to be separated from the local expression of church. God’s intent was for God’s people to understand and experience the church, his bride, in local form.

<sup>3</sup>Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: a Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-*

an even greater grounding for missions, that grounding is God himself. In fact, when looking through church history, the Great Commission being motivation for engaging in God's redemptive work has not always been a common view.

In the fourth century, Matthew 28:19-20 was understood to be a key supporting passage for the Trinity, not for missions.<sup>4</sup> During the age of the Reformation and later in the age of Puritanism, this passage was understood by the Anabaptists to support believer's baptism.<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, during the Reformation era, understood the mission mandate found in Mark 16:15, as well as those in other places, as having already been fulfilled by the apostles and thus having no prescriptive bearing on Christians.<sup>6</sup> This misunderstanding of the Great Commission does not mean that Calvin or other church leaders in the eras discounted the need or call to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. In fact, Calvin was convinced that "God gathers churches unto himself from all parts of the earth."<sup>7</sup> In his own ministry, Calvin and the church in Geneva were active in planting churches in France and in sending missionaries to Brazil.<sup>8</sup> In fact, much of what Calvin and the church at Geneva did in France and Brazil are seen as a precursor to William Carey and those that followed after Carey.<sup>9</sup> The point however is that the church's commitment to evangelism and missions for much of history was rooted in more than just Great Commission passages.

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*First Century*, Invitation to Theological Studies Series 3 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 99.

<sup>4</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, *To the Ends of the Earth: Calvin's Missional Vision and Legacy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 11.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 21:1056-57.

<sup>7</sup>Haykin, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 12.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 65-73.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 73.

Robert Speer, a leader and thinker in global missions in the first half of the twentieth century, argues that though the Great Commission is a compelling call to missions engagement, the greatest call was found in God himself and the desire to please him:

The Last command of Christ is not the deep and final ground of the church's missionary duty. The duty is authoritatively stated in the words of the great commission, and it is of infinite consequence to have had it so stated by our Lord Himself. But if these particular words had never been spoken by Him, or if, having been spoken, they had not been preserved, the missionary duty of the Church would not be in the least affected. . . . The supreme arguments for missions are not found in any specific words. It is in the very being and character of God that the deepest ground of the missionary enterprise is to be found.<sup>10</sup>

Speer quotes Adoniram Judson when he writes, "If any of you enter Gospel ministry in this or other lands, let not your object be so much to 'do your duty,' or even to 'save souls' though these should have a place in your motives, as to please the Lord Jesus. Let this be your ruling motive in all that you do."<sup>11</sup> These words from Speer and Judson clarify the truth that the sentness of the church, the whole body of believers throughout time and carried out through the expression of local churches, is reinforced in the Great Commission but ultimately rooted in the Triune God. This biblical truth, seen throughout the Bible's grand metanarrative, gives the deepest rooting possible for local churches to move forward in missions with conviction and sustainable strength.

The aim of this chapter is to show that the church's sending nature, its call and compulsion to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, can best be rooted in the sending work of God himself. The sending work of the Trinity is what fuels the sentness of the local church and shows that the centrality of missions is rooted in and flows from the Bride of Christ. The Father sent the Son, the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit and the Triune God sends the church to make his glory known in all the world. John 20:21-23 is central biblical passage connecting the sending nature of the Trinity and the sentness of

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<sup>10</sup>Robert Speer, *Christianity and the Nations* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), 17.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

His church. Jesus says to his disciples who are gathered in a locked upper room, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

Through an understanding of the *missio Dei*, the mission of God, through the models given in the New Testament churches of Antioch and Philippi, and through a selection of churches in church history, readers can have assurance that local churches have their identity as sent churches rooted and grounded in the overarching plan of redemption, the sending work of the Triune God. From this grounding, it is logical to see that if the mission of God is rooted in and flows from local churches, these same local sending churches need to value, not just sending, but sending well. Part of sending well then includes intentional assessment and holistic development of its members for life and ministry cross-culturally.

### **The Concept of *Missio Dei***

*Missio Dei* is Latin for the *mission of God*, and is the key concept for understanding the sending work of the Trinity. Within the *missio Dei* the church finds the strongest grounding for its missional identity,<sup>12</sup> the call to be witnesses in all spheres of life both where it finds itself and onward to the nations. Pachuau writes that *missio Dei* “seeks to ground Christian missionary theory and practice in the missionary activity of the Triune God.”<sup>13</sup> In more recent years, John G. Flett has written a comprehensive work on the *mission Dei*, Trinitarian mission, and Karl Barth.<sup>14</sup> Though overly academic at points, it brings clarity and depth to this subject.

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<sup>12</sup>Allison defines the missional identity of the church as “the body of divinely called and divinely sent ministers proclaiming the gospel and advancing the kingdom of God.” Gregg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 140.

<sup>13</sup>Lalsangkima Pachuau, “*Missio Dei*,” in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, ed. John Corrie (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity, 2007), 232-33.

<sup>14</sup>John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

For much of church history, *missio Dei* was seen exclusively as the sending work of God. The Father sent the Son, the Father and the Son sent the Spirit. Not until the Jesuits began to use this term in the sixteenth century does one find a more modern understanding and application of missions.<sup>15</sup> In 1934, German missiologist Karl Hartenstein, in responding to the work of Karl Barth and his focus on the “actions of God,” coined the term *missio Dei* for its modern usage.<sup>16</sup> In 1952, the term began to gain popularity at the Willingen Conference. Until this conference, the concept of *missio Dei* was gaining good traction as a solid grounding for Trinitarian missiology. In Willingen, the application of the *missio Dei* shifted. Those in the ecumenical movement began to separate mission from the church. They argued that if indeed mission belonged to God, and not the church, then church was unimportant in carrying forth God’s mission. In the post-Willingen era, for many liberals, the world set the agenda for mission and not the church.<sup>17</sup> This liberal shift in the understanding of the *missio Dei* saw the primary mission of God as the redemption of economics, politics, and social justice issues, and not as much the redemption of men and women through the life and ministry of the church.

Not until the book *The Mission of God* by Georg Vicedom was published in 1958, did a written work on the *missio Dei* shift back to a healthy missiology. The work of Donald McGavran, Arthur Glasser, and the Lausanne Congress aided in this redirection back to a redemptive focus on the *missio Dei*, a missiology that was God centered and church focused.<sup>18</sup> The concept of the *missio Dei* now included both the redemptive work of God and the sending nature of the church. David Bosh states, “The classic doctrine on

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<sup>15</sup>David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 380.

<sup>16</sup>Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 62.

<sup>17</sup>Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 55-60.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 58-60

the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another “movement”: Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”<sup>19</sup>

The *missio Dei* is important for another reason. It not only provides grounding for the sentness of the local church, it also reveals that the center and driving focus in global missions is not the church or para-church organizations, but the Triune God. In his work on Trinitarian missiology, *An Invitation to World Missions*, Tennent states,

Mission is first and foremost about God and his redemptive purposes and initiatives in the world, quite apart from any actions or task or strategies the church may undertake. To put it plainly, mission is far more about God and who he is than about us and what we do.<sup>20</sup>

Mission is indeed for God, rooted in God, and reflective of the glory of God. When mission or missions<sup>21</sup> becomes about the church, or even worse, about an individual person, the central emphasis of God’s glory is missed.

Mission is God-centered, but it is also most definitely church-focused. Tennent states, “God does, in fact, work in and through the church and that is central, not ancillary, to his mission. Indeed the church is the only community Jesus Christ has specifically instituted to reflect the Trinity and to participate in His mission in the world.”<sup>22</sup>

Because the mission of the church is grounded in and flows out of the mission of God, it is immensely important to understand what God’s mission is.<sup>23</sup> Too often

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<sup>19</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 381.

<sup>20</sup>Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 54-55.

<sup>21</sup>There is significant disagreement among solid evangelical missiologists as to the definition of *mission* and *missions*. For this thesis, *mission* (singular) is defined as all that the church is sent into the world to do. Scott Moreau defines mission as “a broader term referring to everything the church is doing that points toward the kingdom of God.” *Missions* (plural) on the other hand is more narrowly defined as Great Commission fulfillment—proclamation of the gospel, discipling and multiplying new Christians, and planting new churches. A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 17.

<sup>22</sup>Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 58-59.

<sup>23</sup>Keith Whitfield, “The Triune God: The God of Mission,” in *Theology and Practice of*

*missio Dei* is defined so broadly that almost anything can be attached to it. The mission of God must be well understood in order for the church to live out its sentness with clarity. British missiologist J. Andrew Kirk points out that the *missio Dei* is often used broadly, often too broadly: “The wideness of its scope means that it has become a tag on which an enormous range of meaning has been hung. Legitimately and illegitimately the *missio Dei* has been used to advance all kinds of missiological agendas.”<sup>24</sup> Kirk argues for a more defined Trinitarian and redemptive understanding of the mission of God. One helpful way of understanding the *missio Dei* is by looking at it through four broad categories.<sup>25</sup> Though limited in what they can do, these four conceptual models provide four views of gaining a deeper understanding of the *missio Dei*.

### **Conceptual Models of *Missio Dei***

The first concept of the mission of God is to see it as restoring the world for the world’s sake. This view is distinctively eschatological and is the view that came out of the liberal shift beginning at the Willigen Conference in 1952. This thinking originated from J. C. Hoekendijk’s journal article initialed “The Church in Missionary Thinking.”<sup>26</sup> When referring to this view of the *missio Dei*, author Keith Whitfield writes, “Redemption is defined by a return to *Shalom* in the world. The work of mission, therefore, is the

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*Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, ed. Bruce Ashford (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 19.

<sup>24</sup>Tormod Engelsen, “Missio Dei: The Understanding and Misunderstanding of a Theological Concept in European Churches and Missiology,” *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 367 (October 2003): 485.

<sup>25</sup>These categories were first developed by Goheen when examining the work of Lesslie Newbigin. Michael Goheen, “As the Father has Sent Me, I am Sending You: Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology,” *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 362 (2002): 354-69. These categories were then further developed by Whitfield, “The Triune God,” 17-35.

<sup>26</sup>J. C. Hoekendijk, “The Church in Missionary Thinking,” *International Review of Mission* 41, no. 3 (July 1952): 324-36.

development of society.”<sup>27</sup> This concept is distinctively flawed because, although the proponents of this view claim to find their centering in God and his mission, their view is world-centered, placing the focus of God’s redemptive plan on simply mending broken societies.

Second is the view that the mission of God as a mission to save from sin. Instead of seeing the mission of God dealing with all of human history, it focuses on the saving of individual souls. This view is soteriological in nature and not eschatological.<sup>28</sup> Both St. Augustine<sup>29</sup> and missiologist Georg Vicedom<sup>30</sup> were advocates of this view. Though it goes without question that the chief result of the redemptive work of Christ is the salvation of the elect, his redemptive work does more than bring about the salvation of man, namely the restoration of all things (Col 1:20) and the establishment of God’s glorious rule and reign over sin and death. Tennent puts it well when he writes,

The Cross and the Resurrection always must remain central to the church’s proclamation. However, it is important to recognize that the gospel does not stop at the Cross and the Resurrection but continues to unfold in God’s ongoing initiatives at Pentecost and in the life of the church.<sup>31</sup>

The third view is to see the mission of God primarily as the God who sends. This view focuses on the activities of God in his mission and the fact that the Scriptures detail a “sending” narrative in God’s plan of redemption. In the “God who sends” model of the *missio Dei*, each member of the Trinity is active in the sending process. Proponents of this view are Karl Barth and John Stott.<sup>32</sup> Much of the argument in this chapter is

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<sup>27</sup>Whitfield, “The Triune God,” 20.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>29</sup>Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1990).

<sup>30</sup>Georg F. Vicedom, *Mission of God* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965).

<sup>31</sup>Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 63.

<sup>32</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the World of God* (London: T & T Clark, 2004); John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1974).

focused on the idea that God's mission of redemption is rooted in himself and his sending work. However, it would be inaccurate to say the mission of God can be wholly detailed with this view. God without doubt is a sending God and the people of God are a part of his sent churches, but there is more depth to the mission of God than to simply understand it by its activities.

The fourth and final view sees the *missio Dei* through the lens of God who redeems and restores for his sake. This view is widely held in theologically reformed circles and among many modern missiologist, such as Christopher Wright, Timothy Tennent, and Lesslie Newbigin.<sup>33</sup> This view is eschatological in that it sees the *missio Dei* as encompassing all of history.<sup>34</sup> This biblically sound idea of God saving for his own sake and for his own glory has been made popular in this generation by author and pastor John Piper, and continues to grow in popularity. Some push against this idea that God desires glory through the displaying of love through redemption. Richard Bauckham addresses this tension well in his book *Bible and Mission*:

We may have difficulty with the picture of God desiring and achieving fame for himself, something we would regard as self-seeking vanity an ambition if it were said of a human being. But this is surely one of those human analogies which is actually appropriate uniquely to God. The good of God's human creatures requires that he be known to them as God. There is not vanity, only revelation of truth in God's demonstrating of his deity to the nations."<sup>35</sup>

Mission then moves from activities to purpose, the overarching reason behind God's redemptive work. The mission of God is clarified as the commitment of God to make himself known to all nations for his glory and for the church's good.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of Church*, reissue ed. (New York: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

<sup>34</sup>Whitfield, "The Triune God," 21.

<sup>35</sup>Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 37.

<sup>36</sup>Whitfield, "The Triune God," 22.

All four of these concepts of the *missio Dei* have some validity. They bring helpful perspective to a holistic understanding of the mission of God. The first, the idea that God is restoring the world for the sake of the world, is the weakest of the four arguments. Though the first argument does bring up the helpful point that some restoration is happening in societies and culture, it ultimately falls apart as a man-centered approach to the *missio Dei*.

Instead of landing on one concept as the key to understanding the *missio Dei*, it is more helpful to work toward a blending of the last two: the God who sends and the God who redeems and restores for his sake. Wedding the two provides a more robust understanding of the *missio Dei*: the sending work of God, carried forward by the sent church for the sake of God's glory and for the salvation of God's people. The reason the second concept, a God who saves from sin, is not as important to mention is because this theological idea is imbedded in both the idea that God sends and that God saves for his sake. In both concepts the activity is the salvation of God's people.

This newly wedded paradigm of the *missio Dei* sees God as a sent and sending God for the sake of his own name and for the good of his people. These ideas are not mutually exclusive but, in fact, inform and support the other. God's name is deeply glorified as he himself has sent his Son and as continually sends out the church on mission. Whitfield writes, "Missions includes our efforts to plan and go, but it does not primarily depend on our activity and initiation. Missions is the privileged participation of a Christian in God's mission to make himself known."<sup>37</sup> Indeed, many in both camps of thought regarding the mission of God would agree that these ideas are both true: the supremacy of God in mission, as well as the sending work of God and sent identity of the local church. There is need, however, for both to be articulated, not as though they oppose one another, but in an interwoven way that celebrates the importance of both.

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<sup>37</sup>Whitfield, "The Triune God," 22.

## **The Sending Work of the Trinity**

In *Invitation to World Missions*, Tennent builds a framework for the sending work of the Trinity through examining how each member of the Trinity is involved in the sending process: “The Father is the Sender, the ‘Lord of the harvest,’ the incarnate Son is the model embodiment of mission in the world; the Holy Spirit is the divine empowering presence for all mission.”<sup>38</sup> David Bosch agrees that mission flows from God himself: “To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is the fountain of sending love.”<sup>39</sup> God himself is the root and fountainhead of the movement of redemption to his people.

### **God the Father**

God the Father, the first member of the Trinity, is the source and initiator of the mission of God.<sup>40</sup> From eternity past the plan of redemptive sending was present. Ross Hastings writes, “The sentness of the church is connected to the sentness of the Son by the Father, a sending planned in eternity past within the covenanting counsels of God. Missions is expressed as flowing from the very life of the Trinity.”<sup>41</sup> It is from God the Father, part of this Trinitarian life, that the source of all sending is found.

Missiologist and practitioner Lesslie Newbigin developed a Trinitarian framework for mission that had God the Father as the first movement of mission. He writes,

The mission of the Church is to be understood, can only be rightly understood, in terms of the Trinitarian model. It is the Father who holds all things in his hand,

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<sup>38</sup>Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 75. I adapted Tennent’s basic framework (major headings) for Trinitarian missions and developed a case for why each member of the Trinity is itself involved in the sending process: the sending of the Son and the sending of the church.

<sup>39</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 400.

<sup>40</sup>Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 75.

<sup>41</sup>Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 27-28.

whose providence upholds all things, whose tender mercies are all over his works. . . . In the incarnation of the Son he has made know his nature and purpose fully and completely, for in Jesus “all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col 1:19).<sup>42</sup>

God the Father has been working out his plan of redemption from before the beginning. It is in the pages of Scripture that the *missio Dei* is more fully explained and understood.

When Adam and Eve first sinned, God the Father had a plan in place to ultimately restore this severed relationship. God first lays out his promise to send his Son in Genesis 3:15. God here is passing out punishments for the sin committed earlier in Genesis 3. God says to the Serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” This is the first foreshadowing of the coming Savior, one that God the Father sends to restore and redeem. This promise of sending is further seen in Genesis 12:1-3. God the Father in this passage promises to create a nation from one man, Abraham, and his family, what would soon be the nation of Israel. Attached to this promise of land and forthcoming greatness is a promise that through Abram would come a blessing for all nations. Through the family and lineage of Abraham would come this sent and sending Savior. The whole Old Testament then unfolds an epic narrative of this promised one who will one day be sent to restore all things.

Within the pages on the New Testament is confirmation that indeed God the Father sent his Son, just as he had promised, to be the sent and sending Savior for all nations. Romans 8:3 provides assurance of this sending promise fulfilled: “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.” First John 4:9 reiterates the love of God displayed in the sending of his Son: “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.”

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<sup>42</sup>Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 118.

Rooting mission in the *missio Dei* and in God the Father as the source and initiator of mission shows that mission is more than just a collection of mission passages in the New Testament or even an outworking of the life of the church but instead the major theme of the grand metanarrative of the Bible.<sup>43</sup> God the Father, in unity within the Trinity, worked out his pre-creation plan of sending his Son to redeem the world. Eric Wright highlights the Father's plan and passion for missions: "In the practical outworking of the Father's eternal plan, missions occupies a central role. To express no interest in missions is to display no regard for the fulfillment of the Father's eternal plan."<sup>44</sup> The act of the Father sending the Son was also the impetus for the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the sending of the church.

### **God the Son**

God the Son, Jesus Christ, is the embodiment of the mission of God.<sup>45</sup> Jesus is the "Sent One" promised by the Father who comes bearing a message and fulfilling a mission. Christ is the embodiment of mission because he is the one sent to accomplish salvation for mankind. Christ is both the message the church is called to take to the nations and the actual one who sends the church to the nations (John 20:21). The incarnated Christ, through his death and resurrection, became what missions is all about. Whether in word or in deed, in gospel proclamation or gospel demonstration, Christ is the center and message of missions.

The incarnation of Christ then becomes the embodiment of the *missio Dei*. Philippians 2:5-11, part of a possible early church hymn based on Isaiah 40-55,<sup>46</sup> details

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<sup>43</sup>Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 77.

<sup>44</sup>Eric E. Wright, *A Practical Theology of Missions: Dispelling the Mystery, Recovering the Passion* (Leominster, UK: Day One, 2010), 36.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>46</sup>Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Philippians*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 216.

the mission of God carried out in the incarnation of Christ:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The passage here in Philippians 2 shows that Christ emptied himself and came to earth in the form of a servant. He was born flesh and blood and fully obeyed the sending plan of the Triune God by dying on a cross. Tennent makes a helpful observation about the sentness of the church and its rootedness in Christ:

Missionaries are both bearers of a message and embodiments of that message. Whenever a missionary crosses cultural boundaries, learns a language and culture, and seeks to communicate the gospel, this is a reflection of the Incarnation itself. From the perspective of the Trinity, Jesus is the archetypal missionary.<sup>47</sup>

Not only does Philippians 2 provide a clear picture of the sentness of Christ from the Father and the incarnational model of missions, but it also shows the glorious victory that Christ will have in the *missio Dei*: “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10-11). Though Christ was sent as a Suffering Servant, with the completion of the *missio Dei* here on earth, he will reign as victorious King.

The book of John is another place where the sentness of the Son by the Father is clearly seen. John 9:4 says, “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.” In fact, John refers to God the Father sending his Son thirty-two times.<sup>48</sup> The pages of both the Old and New Testament show that sentness of the Son by the Father is scripturally undeniable.

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<sup>47</sup>Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 77.

<sup>48</sup>Wright, *A Practical Theology of Missions*, 43.

Timothy Tennant explains that as the sent church moves forward on mission, it must “constantly bear in mind the goal, the final vision, of all missions, which is the cosmic exaltation of Christ and the worship of the triune, living God by all nations.”<sup>49</sup> Christ was sent by the Father to accomplish a mission of redemption that will ultimately end in the worship of the Triune God by all peoples.

### **God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the empowering presence of the mission of God.<sup>50</sup> As the Father sent the Son, so the Father and Son send the Spirit of God into the world. The Holy Spirit is often neglected in the study of theology, especially in non-Charismatic churches, but in many ways is the lifeblood of the church. The Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity who convicts, sanctifies, and empowers local churches.

During Jesus’ resurrection state, as he prepares for his ascension, he reminds his disciples of the gospel message, gives them a clear mission, and promises to empower them:

Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:46-49)

Jesus’ words of empowerment are a commitment to send “the promise of my Father” to his disciples. This promise from God the Father is the promise of the Holy Spirit who would empower the disciples in life and mission. Whitfield writes, “The Spirit comes to glorify God by making the Son known.”<sup>51</sup> The Spirit makes Christ known both in the life of the Christians and through Christians in their outward witness to others.

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<sup>49</sup>Tennant, *Invitation to World Missions*, 84.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>51</sup>Whitfield, “The Triune God,” 27.

John 14:26 is another passage pointing to the work of the Father sending the Spirit to the disciples: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” What a beautiful picture of the Trinity in action. All three members of the Trinity are present in this passage that promises to bring enlightenment and insight to the early church.

Luke, the author who wrote both Luke and Acts, writes about the coming work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Within this Great Commission passage is a bold declaration that the sent Holy Spirit empowers the disciples, and therefore the church, to be on mission. Often when reading this passage, people walk away with a commitment to gospel action, and well they should. However, it is vital to see that Christ’s words in Luke 24 and Acts 1 show that the sending of the Holy Spirit by God the Father and Son are what carry the gospel forward in the lives of local churches. Through this Trinitarian sending, carried forward by the Spirit of God, the church is able to live sent. In his book *Missional God* *Missional Church*, Hastings hits on this same idea when he writes,

There is an actual correspondence between the sending from the Father and their [disciples] sending from Christ. Each assumes a union. Just as Christ is sent as the Son in union with the Father, so now they were sent ones because of their union with Christ, by the Spirit he was about to breathe into them. The Spirit would mediate the presence of Christ in them so that they would be his body, his hands and feet on earth.<sup>52</sup>

### **Sentness of the Church**

The church that began in Acts 2 and continues to this very day is the church on mission. That mission is the outworking of the *missio Dei*, the mission of God. Just as God the Father sent the Son, and Father and Son sent the Spirit, so the Triune God sends

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<sup>52</sup>Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 82.

the church to take the gospel in word and deed to a world in need of reconciliation and redemption. Zach Bradley writes, “If the *missio Dei* describes broadly what God is about, it also defines narrowly how he gets it done: his little church. The church is the collection of sent ones.”<sup>53</sup> By God’s grace, he has chosen his church, and therefore local churches to be the messengers of the gospel to a lost and dying world. Those who make up the church are sent ones, their very identity as Christians being rooted in the sending work of God, commissioned by Christ, and empowered by the Spirit to live on mission.

The focal point of the sending nature of the church, and therefore all Christians, is found in Jesus’ words in John 20:21: “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’” Jesus here stands before his disciples as they hid in a locked upper room, cowering in fear. Two different times in this passage, three times if Jesus’ conversation with Thomas is included, Jesus assures his closest friends with the words, “Peace be with you.” They were still shell shocked from the events that took place surrounding Jesus’ death and now a resurrected Christ stands in their midst assuring them of peace. Jesus then communicates to his followers the apex of missional sending. Jesus is sending out the disciples, who would soon become the church in Acts 2, just as he himself was sent from the Father. These are far-reaching words. The implication here is that the same Trinitarian plan of redemptive sending that included sending the Son, also includes sending the church. How could this be? How could God use individuals so jaded, broken, and cowardly as these followers hiding in a locked room?

Jesus’ words to his disciples in John 20 is a beautiful promise of hope. If there was hope for this broken band of Christians, there is hope for the church today.<sup>54</sup> If God can use this group of fearful followers to boldly proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ in Acts 2, and then suffer persecution and oppression with joy for this same type of

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<sup>53</sup>Zach Bradley, *The Sending Church Defined* (Knoxville: Upstream Collective, 2015), 9.

<sup>54</sup>Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 23.

boldness in Act 5-7, then God can and will use current local churches to be active participants in the *missio Dei*; for the same Spirit abides in both.

The Triune God, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, worked through this little community to expand the borders of the kingdom of God to such a rapid degree it is hard to imagine. Eleven apostles were present when Jesus spoke these words in John 20, and then a total of 120 before Pentecost. This small group grew to 5,000 by Acts 4. By AD 100 there were 25,000, and by the fourth century there were an estimated 5-7.5 million followers of Christ spread across the known world gathered in local churches.<sup>55</sup> This growth can only happen through the sending power of the Holy Spirit and the sent nature of the church rooted in the God who sent them.

### **The Church at Antioch**

The first century church at Antioch is known for being the first great missions sending church and a model for any local church seeking to live out their sending nature. In Antioch, a multi-ethnic church formed through the witness of Christ's followers who were scattered from Jerusalem because of persecution, after the stoning of Stephen.<sup>56</sup> In his commentary on Acts, Kent Hughes comments, "The perfect profile for a missionary church was exhibited there in Antioch. They were a microcosm of what the church would become in the world. This was no accident but rather a deliberate work of God!"<sup>57</sup> Although the details of Antioch's sending are too vague to call it a "perfect sending church," Antioch did indeed set an early precedent for sending well with Spirit-dependent intentionality.

The church in Jerusalem heard what was happening in Antioch and sent one of their leaders, a man named Barnabas, to see what was happening in that city. Barnabas

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<sup>55</sup>Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 23.

<sup>56</sup>Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 738.

<sup>57</sup>Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996), loc. 2926, Kindle.

went to Antioch and rejoiced at what God was doing in this great Gentile city. He then traveled to a place called Tarsus to find a former persecutor of the faith, now follower of Christ, whose name was Saul, later called Paul. Together these men spent one year in Antioch teaching and leading before the Spirit led the church to act on their sending nature. Halley writes, “Antioch rapidly became the leading center of gentile Christianity. . . . It became Paul’s headquarters for missionary work. From Antioch he started on his three missionary journeys, and to Antioch he returned at the end of the first two to bring a report.”<sup>58</sup>

Acts 13:1-4 contains the key descriptive passage of what sending in a local church can be:

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Acts 13:1-4 provides a foundational model for a sending church. The elders of the church at Antioch came together to fast, pray, and worship. As they did so, the Holy Spirit called out Paul and Barnabas to be “sent out ones” to take the gospel where it had not yet been. After they fasted and prayed, the church laid hands on them and sent them off to carry out the ministry God had called them to do. From this point on, Paul has a close connection with Antioch specifically, along with a handful of other churches throughout his ministry. In Acts 14:21, 26, after Paul and Barnabas’ first missionary journey, they returned to Antioch to share with the church “all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:26). This pattern is repeated again after the second missionary journey in Acts 18:22-23 when Paul returned to Antioch to invest time in his sending church. Acts 15:40 sheds further light on this

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<sup>58</sup>Halley, *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, 740-41.

mutual sending relationship as Antioch gives their blessing and confirmation in sending out Mark with Barnabas and Silas with Paul. Even though there was a dispute between two of the church's leaders in Paul and Barnabas, God used this situation to double the number of teams being sent out from Antioch.

Much of Paul's relationship with Antioch is not fully revealed in Scripture, but what is understood is that Paul had a deep and meaningful relationship with his sending church. Antioch saw Paul's gifts, was led through the Holy Spirit to send Paul and Barnabas out, and had an intentional relationship with Paul during his ministry.

From the story of Paul's missionary endeavors throughout the book of Acts, and his relationship with the church at Antioch, several insights can be gleaned related to missions being rooted in the local church.

**Sent out through the local church.** First of all, it is helpful to observe that Paul and Barnabas were sent from a local church. Paul and Barnabas were leaders and teachers at Antioch. They were rooted and grounded in the local church context of Antioch for a full year, faithfully serving and leading the church. It was in the local church that Paul and Barnabas used their gifts and were further developed and sent out through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. These men invested part of their lives in the local church. Through Paul and Barnabas' investment in the local church, they were proven as faithful leaders and affirmed by other elders. It was through the local church that God sent these men to be participants in the *missio Dei*. The church at Antioch models a deep centrality of the local church in sending and sustaining sent ones for the mission of God.

**Calling came in community.** It was in the context of the local church, in community, that Paul and Barnabas received their call to go on this specific cross-cultural mission. Both men were deeply involved in ministry and Paul had already received a call to the Gentiles, but it was at Antioch that they were given direction and affirmation to go.

When considering the importance of the church in calling, John Stott states,

There is no evidence that Barnabas and Saul “volunteered” for missionary service; they were “sent” by the Spirit through the church. Still today it is the responsibility of every local church (especially of its leaders) to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, in order to discover whom he may be gifting and calling.<sup>59</sup>

**Elders were worshipping the Lord.** In Acts 13, a body of elders is seeking the Lord and his will for their local church. They were listening for the Holy Spirit, and when he spoke they were ready to act. This passage reveals a group of local pastors deeply committed to the act of abiding in Christ. They were fasting, praying and seeking the presence of God.

This example provided in Antioch is central for present day churches who desire to live out their sentness. The *missio Dei* is only truly lived out as the church abides in Christ, and through that abiding comes mission.

**The church sent out Paul and Barnabas as a team.** Paul and Barnabas are sent out from Antioch as a team in Acts 13 and then as two teams in Acts 15. Through a survey of Acts and the New Testament books that follow, one can see that Paul carried out almost all of his ministry in the context of a team. In fact, apart from waiting for his team to arrive from Berea and join him in Athens (Acts 17:16-34), Paul always did his ministry travels with a team.

**Maintained a relationship with his sending church.** There is limited information provided in Scripture about Paul’s relationship with Antioch. What is clear is that Paul’s relationship with Antioch, his sending church, continued throughout his ministry. For example, in Acts 14:21, 26-28, after Paul and Barnabas’ first missionary journey, they returned to Antioch to share with the church what God had done. This pattern is repeated again after the second missionary journey in Acts 18:22-23. Not only

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<sup>59</sup>John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1994), loc. 3863, Kindle.

did they return to report what God had been doing on their missionary travels, both passages that detail the return trip to Antioch indicate they invested a significant amount of time in their sending church.

The church at Antioch, the first Gentile church, lived out their sentness with commitment to sacrifice and deep intentionality. Antioch shows what a church can do when they take intentional steps to live out their sending nature through the power of the sending God.

### **The Church at Philippi**

The second example of a New Testament church that lived out their sending nature was the church at Philippi. This church was planted by Paul and his team in Acts 16 with the conversions of Lydia and her household and the Philippian jailer and his household. From its beginnings, Philippi and its church planter, Paul, developed a mutually deep relationship. Philippians 1:3-8 reads,

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

These words from Philippians 1 overflow with affection from a church planter to the church he planted. Paul's love for the members of this church is undeniable as he writes phrases like "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you," "I hold you in my heart," and "I yearn for you with all the affection of Christ Jesus." These are the words of a missionary who had a deep and ongoing relationship with a local church. It was more than just ministry or finances; their partnership was based on an established relationship that was multifaceted.

Philippians 4 provides greater detail into the ministry partnership between Paul the missionary and Philippi his ministry partner. Paul writes,

Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. (Phil 4:14-18)

This local church was a financial partner for Paul and also sent a missionary to serve on his team. Financially, Philippi gave to Paul over and over again, in Macedonia and multiple times when he was working in Thessalonica (4:15-16). They even sent Epaphroditus, no doubt a church leader in Philippi, with a financial gift. Epaphroditus stayed to assist Paul in his missionary endeavors (2:25-30).

Frank Thielman, in his commentary on Philippians, takes note of this committed partnership between a missionary and a local church—a partnership that reflects the Philippians’ commitment to live out their sentness:

The Philippian church appears to have been Paul’s favorite church. The Philippians were willing to support Paul’s missionary efforts in other towns from the beginning (4:15a) and gave him help even during times when other churches were either unable or unwilling to assist him (4:15b). . . . During a time of often difficult relationships with his other churches, Paul must have valued this tangible and sacrificial support of his efforts to proclaim the Gospel as a token of genuine friendship.<sup>60</sup>

### **The Sending Church**

The word “sending church” is terminology used to describe an ancient concept. Just as God the Father sent the Son and the Father and Son sent the Spirit of God, so the Triune God sends the church out on mission. What Augustine knew as the *missio Dei*, Trinitarian sending,<sup>61</sup> now includes the movement of the church living on mission, seeking to expand the kingdom of God. A sending church is simply a local church that intentionally seeks to live out its sentness in a broken and lost world. The primary way the church lives out its sentness is through the deliberate equipping of its members for effective ministry

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<sup>60</sup>Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, The NIV Application Commentary, epub ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), loc. 252, Kindle.

<sup>61</sup>Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 101-5.

across the street, across the country, and across the world. Sending is less an activity and more an identity that is cultivated among members of the church. Sending is action that flows from a God-given identity.

The Upstream Collective, a nonprofit that seeks to help local churches send their members out on mission, created a more comprehensive definition for the term *sending church*:

A Sending Church is a local community of Christ-followers who have made a covenant together to be prayerful, deliberate, and proactive in developing, commissioning, and sending their own members both locally and globally, often in partnership with other churches or agencies, and continuing to encourage, support, and advocate for them while making disciples cross-culturally.<sup>62</sup>

This definition highlights the intentionality a church can have when they seeking to send out their members with the gospel both across the street and across the world.

For too long, churches have seen missions as merely activity. Many churches simply asked the question, what should our involvement be in global missions? Or, more simply, what should our missions activities be? Churches often start with wrong questions like these when they think about missions. Instead, local churches should be asking, what is our identity and calling as a local church? What does the Bible say the church is called to be and do? How has God uniquely equipped our specific local church to be effective for the expansion of the kingdom of God? When churches start with more foundational questions like these, they get at the root of what it means to be a sending church. More than mere activity, mission engagement as a sending church is the outworking of their identity in the *mission Dei*. When churches rediscover their identity as sent and sending churches, they make a paradigm-shifting discovery; their purpose as a church is so much weightier and significant than they ever imagined. Their purpose is not only to grow as believers, as vital as this might be; or to grow their congregation numerically, through

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<sup>62</sup>Bradley, *The Sending Church Defined*, 2.

this can be meaningful. One of their key purposes as a local church is to see the kingdom of God expand through the living out of their identity and call as a sending church.

How local churches have sought to live out their sentness has looked different over the course of church history. At times, like the New Testament era and during stretches of history since the Reformation, the church has done this well. At others times, the church has failed to intentionally live out its sent and sending nature.

### **Sending Church History**

Often when people familiar with missions think of a sending church, they imagine a church that is busy with any number of missions activities. Too often those in the missions world create a “once size fits all” picture of an active sending church; one that preaches great missions sermons, holds exciting mission events, does great missionary care, or any number of other important mission ministries. With that said, however, what a local church does to live out its sentness can and should look different depending on the church. Each church is unique and has different things to offer in global missions. When it comes to being a church that lives out the *missio Dei*, there can be variety in application, but there must always be intentionality. At the core of every great sending church is a pattern of mission intentionality.

It cannot be said, however, that the church throughout history has always lived out its sending nature with intentionality. There have been times in church history where local churches did not take an active role in the mission of God. Whether it is from a lack of mission history in this area, a lack of living sent on the part of local churches, or a mixture of the two, there are limited examples of local churches living as sending churches. Limited though they are, solid examples of sending churches do exist.

**Early church.** New Testament churches like Antioch and Philippi set a standard for what a sending church could be. Edward Smither, in his work on early Christian missions, writes,

Since the earliest Christian period, missionaries were sent out from established churches to proclaim the gospel, evangelism continued to happen within the context of the church. While monastic missionary societies such as the Franciscans and Dominicans would emerge in the medieval period, one defining attribute of early Christian mission was that the church itself was a viable locus of mission.<sup>63</sup>

In a paper presented to the Evangelical Missiological Society, Smither brought even more clarity to local church sending in the early church:

[T]he church itself, expressed in local communities and networks of communities, was the primary locus of mission. Aided by preaching, catechism, liturgy, good works, and cultural engagement, and fueled by some church leaders who championed all of the above, the church itself was the primary missions society in the first five hundred years of Christianity.<sup>64</sup>

Though later the church's investment in missions would decrease, many early churches were still very active in living out their sentness.

One prime example of an early local church, more likely a network of churches, functioning as sending churches is in Rome under the leadership of Gregory of Rome (AD 540-604). Smither explains,

While Gregory was not personally involved in mission work, his contribution was noteworthy because he had a passion for sending missionaries. . . . Gregory's compassion for the English became evident when he sent Augustine of Canterbury and a team of forty monks to evangelize them in 596.<sup>65</sup>

**Calvin's Geneva Church.** The Reformers have long been accused of caring little about missions. This is not a fair summation however. It is true that they did not write much on the gospel expanding into new lands, but it was less because they did not believe in the need and more because of their preoccupation with fighting for right doctrine.

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<sup>63</sup>Edward L. Smither, *Mission in the Early Church: Themes and Reflections* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), loc. 3843, Kindle.

<sup>64</sup>Ed Smither, "The Church as the Place and Means of Mission in Early Christianity" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Missiological Society, San Diego, 2014), accessed August 7, 2017, [http://www.edsmither.com/uploads/5/6/4/6/564614/ets\\_2014\\_paper\\_smither.pdf](http://www.edsmither.com/uploads/5/6/4/6/564614/ets_2014_paper_smither.pdf).

<sup>65</sup>Smither, *Mission in the Early Church*, loc. 867.

John Calvin and his church in Geneva provide a beautiful example of what a sending church can do. Calvin's church, in the heart of Geneva, was active in training refugees from all over Europe to do gospel ministry, sending church planters across the border into France and, to a lesser degree, sending missionaries to Brazil.<sup>66</sup> Michael Haykin writes,

In 1555, Geneva began sending ministers to serve the infant Protestant churches in France. Between 1555 and 1562, it is estimated that nearly a hundred ministers left the safe haven of Geneva and traveled surreptitiously to destinations all over the French kingdom. . . . The effort was successful. It is estimated that by 1559 there were at least fifty-nine churches across the kingdom of France. In 1555, there had been but five Reformed churches in France.<sup>67</sup>

Calvin's pastorate in Geneva was marked by missions. In fact, Calvin was involved with almost every conceivable aspect of missionary work. One of the most profound was his establishment of a chapel in Geneva where Christian refugees from all over the world could come and worship. Calvin provided training for many of these people so that when they went back to their home, they would have adequate training for gospel ministry.<sup>68</sup>

**Moravians and the Church at Herrnhut.** The Moravians began as a small group of refugees, spiritual descendants of the fifteenth century Hussite movement. It was not until Count Nikolaus Ludwig Von Zinzendorf brought the group to his estate called "Herrnhut" in 1722, and the Spirit of God moved in them in 1727, that missions became a driving force for this locally rooted church. One year later, in 1728, Zinzendorf unveiled plans to send out missionaries from Herrnhut to the West Indies, Turkey, and Lapland.

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<sup>66</sup>Haykin, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 65-73.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 68.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 65-66.

Twenty-six people in all made a covenant to go and a prayer chain was started that ran around the clock for one hundred years.<sup>69</sup>

This local gathering of believers lived out their sentness in radical ways. They were known for going to some of the hardest places and working with the most oppressed people. Many died on the field but they kept sending people out on mission. This relatively small church-based missions group is significant in that it supplied over half of the world's Protestant cross-cultural missionaries in the eighteenth century.<sup>70</sup>

The Moravians' major focus was on global missions, not just a segment of the church, but all those who called themselves Moravian were deeply involved in missions. Their sacrificial work not only brought the gospel to many corners of the globe, it also influenced John Wesley, as well as William Carey and the establishment of the first modern missionary society, the Baptist Missionary Society.<sup>71</sup>

**Carey and mission societies.** In the spring of 1792, Baptist pastors around Nottingham, England, gathered for their regular associational meeting. At this meeting, William Carey would preach his famous sermon from Isaiah 55:2-3: "Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God." On this same day, Carey challenged the men in that room to establish a mission society that would take the gospel to unreached places. Through much conversation and questions, they wrote into the minutes of that meeting a statement committing to work together as local churches for the expansion of the gospel around the world. The meeting minutes read, "[That] a plan be prepared against the next

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<sup>69</sup>Paul E. Pierson, "Moravians," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 660-61.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

minister's meeting for the forming of a Baptist Society for the propagation of the gospel among the heathens."<sup>72</sup>

Mission societies first began in the seventeenth century but did not flourish until the nineteenth century in Europe and North America.<sup>73</sup> These societies were small groups of local churches and individuals from these churches that banded together in order to send and support missionaries and engage lost parts of the world. At the root of early mission societies was a commitment to local church partnership, sharing of resources, and common vision for gospel expansion.

It would be romanticized to say that mission societies were created to facilitate the sending of missionaries from local churches. In fact, one of the main reasons mission societies were created was because the current church structures of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century hampered the expansion of the gospel to the lost.<sup>74</sup> Andrew Walls writes,

It [mission societies] arose because none of the classical patterns of church government, whether Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational or connexional, had any machinery (in their late 18<sup>th</sup> century form anyway) to do the tasks for which missionary societies came into being by its very success, the voluntary society subverted all classical forms of church government, while fitting comfortably into none of them.<sup>75</sup>

John G. Flett, in his book *the Witness of God*, takes a harsher tone in his view of the relationship between local churches and mission societies: "Churches and mission societies were distinctive entities. Missions occurred apart from the church. . . .

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<sup>72</sup>Daniel Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 30-33.

<sup>73</sup>Timothy Dakin, "Mission Societies," in *Dictionary of Mission Theology*, 235-37.

<sup>74</sup>Andrew Walls, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. Ralph Winter (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 257.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*

Volunteer missionary societies developed because the ecclesiologies of the period proved insufficient for the missionary task”<sup>76</sup>

William Cary and others began to realize that for the gospel to reach the lost parts of the world, a new structure had to be created outside the high church structures of the day. However, what could seem as subverting the local church was in many ways empowering it. No longer did local churches have to simply fall into the structures of their denomination. Churches and individuals from these churches could join mission societies to live out their sentness.

Another reason mission societies were important to local church sending was that until recently, most local churches were limited in their capacity to send. With limited technology in communications and aviation, as well as a lack of wealth among the vast majority of churches, the best way for a local church to live out its sending identity was often by co-laboring with other churches in the formation of mission societies. Though these societies, and later mission sending agencies, would grow more and more removed from local churches, in the beginning, mission societies were a great example of an entity that helped local churches send their members, or at the very least, help Christians in local churches be sent outside of cumbersome, often hindering, high church structures.

**Sending Church Movement.** Finally, the current expression of local churches living out their sentness is what could be called the Sending Church Movement. In the West, a greater number of churches are coming to a renewed understanding of their call to be sending churches, the same call seen in New Testament churches like Antioch and Philippi. This movement has grown dramatically over the last decade. No longer is it just a conversation among a small number of local churches. Church of all sizes, from various denominations and networks are asking themselves how they can, as a church, actively live out their sentness? How can they send out members with greater intentionality and

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<sup>76</sup>Flett, *The Witness of God*, 62.

for greater effectiveness? Along with a growing interest among churches, more conferences, books, blogs, and organizations are appearing that deal with sending church ideas.<sup>77</sup> The Sending Church Movement is steadily becoming a core identity of an increasing number of evangelical churches and denominations around North America.

A thorough history has yet to be done on the modern day Sending Church Movement in North America, so it is difficult to trace its history with accuracy. One good place to start is with Park Street Church in Boston. Park Street was founded in 1809, with a desire to be a beacon of light and to fight the rise of Unitarianism in New England.<sup>78</sup> Park Street has been a major player in missions since 1812, and was a part of the society of churches that sent out Adoniram Judson and Samuel Mills.<sup>79</sup> In the mid-twentieth century, Park Street had well over one hundred missionaries sent from their church, fully supported by the church. Park Street was known around the country during this time as a sending church, though that specific terminology was not used. Over the last eighty-years, they have sent over three hundred full-time missionaries and given over thirty million dollars to global missions.<sup>80</sup> Park Street set a high standard for other local churches to follow.

Another pace-setting church is Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. What could be called the “father of modern sending churches,” Bethlehem became a sending church in the 1980s through the teaching and writing of John Piper and through the on-

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<sup>77</sup>Several books have been published in the last ten years that deal with sending church ideas, including, but not limited to, David Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission* (Nashville: B & H, 2011); Bradley, *The Sending Church Defined*; J. D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); and Steve Beirn, *Well Sent* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publishing, 2015). Organizations have also been created to help local churches grow as sending churches. These include, but are not limited to, The Upstream Collective; Sixteen:Fifteen Mission Coaching; and Catalyst Services.

<sup>78</sup>Park Street Church, “Park Street History,” accessed August 6, 2017, <https://www.parkstreet.org/about-park-street/park-street-history>.

<sup>79</sup>Park Street Church, “Missions,” accessed August 6, 2017, <https://www.parkstreet.org/ministries/missions-0>.

<sup>80</sup>Tom Telford and Lois Shaw, *Today’s All-Star Missions Churches: Strategies to Help Your Church Get into the Game* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 73-83.

ground missions leadership of Tom Steller.<sup>81</sup> The sending church ideas that Park Street Church began espousing in the early 1800s, Bethlehem Baptist rediscovered and modeled for a whole new generation of churches in the 1980s. No one church has done more to shape the face of missions in the last thirty years than Bethlehem. Whether it is through books like *Let the Nations Be Glad*, member care programs like Barnabas Teams, or missionary development programs like the Nurture Program, Bethlehem has blazed the trail that thousands of churches now walk down.<sup>82</sup> Even now, as local churches begin to consider how they might intentionally live out their sentness, the first place many of them look is to Bethlehem.

In the last ten years there has been a boom of growth in the Sending Church Movement led by newer more missional churches, many of which have been interviewed for this dissertation. Some of these churches include Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina; Antioch Community Church in Waco, Texas; and Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas. This new crop of sending churches is shaping the future of how the Western church is engaged in global missions. The local church is moving back to the center of the last movement of the *missio Dei* where the Trinity sends the church out on mission. Local churches can and should continue to carry out this renewed church-centric passion for the mission of God in an ever-increasing way.

### **Conclusion**

John 20:21 provides an anchor of sorts to find a grounding for the *missio Dei* and its outworking for the centrality of the local church in missions. Just as the Father sent the Son into the world for its redemption, and the Father and Son sent the Spirit into the world for the life and growth of the church, the Trinity now sends the church into the

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 15-26.

<sup>82</sup>Bethlehem Baptist Church, "Global Outreach," accessed February 27, 2015, [www.hopeingod.org/outreach/global-outreach](http://www.hopeingod.org/outreach/global-outreach).

world as its vessel for *missio Dei* hope. This Great Commission passage should compel local churches onward to the nations, but to stop here would be to settle for a less than satisfactory missiological foundation. Tennent expands on this idea when he writes: “The perspective of the New Testament is never, ‘How can we motivate someone to go?’<sup>83</sup> but rather, ‘Who could possibly be silent in light of the resurrection?’”<sup>84</sup>

The full picture of the sentness of the local church, and her centrality in missions, lies in her interwovenness to the mission of God and the God of that mission. Local churches are compelled to go because God first went himself and continues to go with them through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus promises his followers that he will go with them in their sentness: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Hastings summarizes the importance of rooting the mission of the church in the sending work of God:

What is sufficient for Christian mission, and indeed crucial to it, is the awareness that the Trinity as revealed in the sending of the Son and the giving of the Spirit is the essence of the gospel, and indeed that the extent to which the church lives in the experience of the Trinity, it will accomplish its mission.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 99.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup>Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 104.

## CHAPTER 3

### CURRENT MODELS AND METHODS IN THE ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-FIELD MISSIONARIES

#### **Introduction**

Donald Whitney writes, “A call to preach is a call to prepare.”<sup>1</sup> In much the same way, a call to global missions is a call to prepare well for the often tedious task ahead. Before a person can move overseas and commit his life to reaching a people with the gospel, he needs to give the time and effort required to ready himself holistically; his mind, character and skill set; for life and ministry overseas. There is no better place for this preparation than within the community of a local church. Todd Rasmuson, the pastor of global outreach at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, strongly advocates this idea when he writes, “We identify the church as the primary means to assess and confirm the knowledge, character, and skills of the global partner and it is the church’s responsibility to recognize and affirm the Holy Spirit’s calling on the lives of the global partner.”<sup>2</sup> Rasmuson is not alone in this belief—every church mission leader interviewed held to the same local church conviction that the church should be the center of assessing and developing cross-cultural missionaries.

Before one can understand the need and value of local church assessment and development, it is important to understand the meaning of assessment and development for pre-field missionary candidates. Assessment can be defined as the process of evaluating

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<sup>1</sup>Donald Whitney, “The Call of God to Preach the Gospel,” accessed December 5, 2017, <http://biblicalspirituality.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/THE-CALL-OF-GOD-TO-PREACH-THE-GOSPEL.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>Todd Rasmuson and Micah Boerckel, email to author, August 1, 2017.

a pre-field candidate's missionary readiness according to a predetermined set of standards and then providing ongoing pathways toward growth. Development can be defined as the ongoing cultivation of holistic growth for healthy and effective life and ministry cross-culturally.<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that although assessment and development are two different ideas that carry their own meaning and demand specific attention, many churches doing intentional missionary sending, including my own, weave these ideas together. Though separate ideas, there is a good deal of crossover between the assessment of missionaries and their need for further development and growth. Because of this crossover, assessment and development often are woven together in the interview answers from church leaders.

### **Why Local Church Assessment and Development?**

The task of taking the gospel to the nations was given to the Church and should flow out of local churches.<sup>4</sup> Though para-church organizations play a significant part, their role should be to support and empower local churches to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Thomas Hale stresses this idea when he writes, "The local church, as in the case of Paul and Barnabas, is the primary sender of missionaries."<sup>5</sup>

George Peters emphasizes this same point:

The church and not the missionary sending agency, as such, is God's authority and creation for sending forth missionaries. . . . The mission agency ought to be the church's provision, instrument, and arm to efficiently expedite her task. It can neither displace nor replace the church.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Assessment and development are more thoroughly defined in chap. 1 under "Definitions."

<sup>4</sup>This statement comes from my understanding of the five Great Commission passages: Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Hale and Gene Daniels, *On Being a Missionary*, rev. ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2012), 60.

<sup>6</sup>George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 229.

If indeed the local church is the one who sends out missionaries for gospel ministry, then local churches should also take an active role in assessing the readiness of those they send and providing development pathways to send them well equipped for life and ministry overseas. The global mission leaders at Bethlehem Baptist Church share their conviction in this area when they write, “It is the responsibility of the local church to evaluate the character and competency of our global partners. The local church has a mandate to recruit, equip, confirm, and affirm some of its best people in order to send them out as cross-cultural missionaries.”<sup>7</sup> There are four reasons the local church should take the leading role in the assessment and development of pre-field missionaries.

First, when it comes to knowing and assessing a person for missionary service, no organization or outside group knows the candidate as well as the local church. It is within the context of the local church, in the routine of daily life, that a person’s true self is revealed. Through the ups and downs of ordinary life within the church, a person’s character, gifts, and commitment to ministry will be discovered and cultivated. Neal Pirolo writes that the local church is the “ideal testing ground for potential missionaries.”<sup>8</sup> Thomas Hale takes this a step further when he writes, “What do the people who know you best say about you? Because the single most important factor in predicting one’s future missionary performance is one’s past performance as a Christian.”<sup>9</sup> This seems like a simple idea. Church leaders can know how a person will behave and perform in future situations based on how they have behaved and performed in the past. However, this concept is troubling to many, especially those who have a romanticized view of missionary service. Often those with this view believe the myth that sharing their faith,

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<sup>7</sup>Bethlehem Baptist Church, “Nurture Program Handbook,” 2016, accessed December 7, 2017, <https://www.amazon.com/clouddrive/share/tYv5IEEc91xUv6wE1bhVEJEsUaLmCIROV8k5I9AcbkY>.

<sup>8</sup>Neal Pirolo, *Serving as Senders Today: How to Care for Your Missionaries as They Prepare to Go, Are on the Field and Return Home* (San Diego: Emmaus Road International, 2012), 56.

<sup>9</sup>Hale and Daniels, *On Being a Missionary*, 54

discipling others, and life in general will become easier once they arrive on the field. Church-based assessment and development can debunk this myth by holding people accountable to a missional lifestyle here and now, in their own context, and by calling people to continual growth. The local church can and should use their intimate knowledge of pre-field missionary candidates to hold them to a high standard and invest in their lives, even when what needs to be said is difficult. Often times, speaking hard truth to a potential missionary is the greatest gift an elder or church leader can give.

A second reason churches need to take the leading role in missionary assessment and development is the fact that local churches are in the best place to help missionaries grow. The purpose of an assessment is both to assess the readiness of a candidate for service but to then encourage them toward development and continued growth in areas that have been identified as weaknesses. The local church has the unique opportunity to help those within their congregation who desire to serve overseas because they live and worship with them on a regular basis. Mission agency training, seminaries, and para-church organizations are great tools to utilize in developing people, but they can never replace the transformative work that the church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can have in people's lives.

A third reason local churches have an advantage over agencies and training institutions in the area of development specifically is that they have more time to invest in the potential missionary and thus having a great relational influence. In fact, what local churches are able to provide through extended time and deep relationship is truer to the idea of development whereas agencies and institutions are only able to offer training. Gyrus, a management development company, clarifies the difference between training and development. Training is focused more on the short-term with a concrete goal in mind.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Surabhi Singh, "The Difference between Training and Development," Gyrus, May 17, 2016, accessed October 3, 2017, <https://www.gyrus.com/the-difference-between-training-and-development/>.

Development on the other hand focuses on the long-term with goals that are open ended and ongoing.<sup>11</sup> Training often focuses on roles and tasks whereas development focuses on building and strengthening the person.<sup>12</sup> In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus, urging them to use their gifts to build up one another toward maturity. He exhorts them “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Paul here is urging the elders that one of their primary roles is to equip believers for ministry—to develop people who will be faithful to the work that God has called them. An outworking of this truth is seen in preparing church members for ministry overseas. It is within the context of the church that potential missionaries can continue their growth and development toward a healthy departure for cross-cultural missions.

A final reason assessment should happen in the local church is that calling and confirmation for ministry come in community. In Acts 13:1-3, a group of elders from Antioch were fasting, praying, and worshipping the Lord together. While they were worshipping the Lord, the Holy Spirit spoke to them, saying, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off” (v. 2). In this passage, pastors in the Church of Antioch hear from God, respond in obedience, and send out two of their own to be cross-cultural missionaries. It is important to notice that Paul and Barnabas’s call came in community, the community of church leaders to be specific. The church then affirmed them when the leaders laid hands and prayed over them. The model of calling and sending that the New Testament gives is one that happens within the community of faith, the local

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<sup>11</sup>Singh, “The Difference between Training and Development.”

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

church. Churches must not assume that mission agencies will evaluate calling and capability. Many agencies will do this well but that does not mean churches should abdicate their responsibility. Local churches are the ones who know their people best and need to take a leading role in the evaluation of calling.<sup>13</sup> Churches must also not depend solely on an individual's desire to be a missionary. A person's call and competency for the task must be more than a personal feeling. As Jeremiah 17:9 reminds, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" The heart, or understanding of the heart and emotions, can never be trusted outside of the discerning voice of Christian community. Michael Griffiths writes, "The most an individual can do is express their willingness. Others must determine his worthiness. The individual may be free to go but only his church knows if he is really fitted to go."<sup>14</sup>

In *Introducing World Missions*, Scott Moreau details this idea:

Although the one who ultimately calls or sends is God, often in the immediate context it is a local body of believers who sense or confirm a call. . . . The body of Christ then has a significant role to play in the calling of people into ministry. As did the church at Antioch, they confirm and enact on behalf of God what the calling entails. The local body of believers, who usually best know the individual or team, should be able to affirm the call or leading and play a key role in helping the call to be fulfilled.<sup>15</sup>

Griffiths and Moreau are both articulating that the local church has a role and responsibility to evaluate, shape, and confirm the call of ministry in the lives of people within their community. This does not mean they dictate calling or lead with a heavy hand, but it does mean the church journeys with people in their call, even when that demands the church say hard things.

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<sup>13</sup>Harold R. Cook, *An Introduction to Christian Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 267.

<sup>14</sup>Michael Griffiths, *Who Really Sends the Missionary?* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 15-16.

<sup>15</sup>A. Scott Moreau, Gary Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, Encountering Mission (Grand Rapids.: Baker, 2004), 170.

## **Models and Methods of Assessment and Development**

In an effort to best understand the current models and methods of assessment and development of pre-field missionaries being used in local churches today, email interviews were done of nine sending churches in the United States who are known in evangelical mission circles for quality assessment and development of their missionaries. It should be noted that the sample of churches interviewed were limited by my knowledge, relationships, and research of current dynamic sending churches. There are other significant sending churches in the United States, but they either did not respond to the survey request, did not fit the profile of churches being surveyed (churches strong in assessment and development), or are unknown even after research.<sup>16</sup>

The email interview sent to nine sending churches included twelve questions focused on how these specific churches assess and develop their members for cross-cultural ministry. The nine churches included in this interview were Antioch Church in Waco, Texas; Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas; Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Brook Hills Church in Birmingham, Alabama; Calvary Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Christ Community Church in Memphis, Tennessee; Cornerstone in Ames, Iowa; Immanuel Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky; and Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. The rest of this chapter focuses on the results of these twelve questions and ends with observations and common themes, as well as observable best practices.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Other churches asked through email to participate in this research, but did not respond, include Park Street Church, Boston, and Pinelake Church, Brandon, MS. It was also my intent to interview someone at Village Church in Dallas, but at the time of writing they did not have a designated global missions leader.

<sup>17</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all information on churches interviewed can be found in appendix 1. Supplemental information on these churches or direct quotes from the interviewees are footnoted.

## **Background of Sending Churches Examined**

### **What Is the Context of Your Church Location/Demographics?**

The nine churches surveyed are similar in that the majority of them are predominantly white, middle-class churches, and either in the suburbs or the urban core of mid-sized city. Austin Stone, Summit, and Bethlehem, all multisite churches, have campuses in the urban center of their city but the majority of their campuses and people are suburban. Christ Community and Immanuel were the only churches wholly in an urban context, but it should be noted that a large number of their people are not originally urban dwellers in the sense that many of them moved into the city for school, work, or ministry. There is a diversity in age among these churches, but they all tend toward the younger side, with Brook Hills, Calvary, and Bethlehem being more established churches with a higher average age. Of the nine churches, four are single-site churches (Antioch, Brook Hills, Calvary, Cornerstone, and Immanuel); three are multisite churches (Austin Stone, Summit, and Bethlehem); and one is a network of house churches (Christ Community).

It is also worth noting that eight of the nine churches are in areas with large student populations. Summit and Immanuel are near large seminaries; Christ Community is connected to a medical residency; and the other five churches are near one or more universities. One clear observation from these churches, and the large numbers many of them are sending overseas, is that their close proximity to student populations is a great benefit to their sending programs. Three churches (Austin Stone, Cornerstone, and Summit) have seen elevated numbers in sending in large part to their student populations. The exception is Calvary Church, which is in a suburb of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Calvary Church has ninety-seven members serving overseas, but no seminary or college to act as a feeder for sending.

### **What Is the Weekly Attendance at Your Church?**

The churches surveyed can be broken down into three sizes of churches: small to medium, large, and megachurch. While *Christianity Today* defines a megachurch “as a church with an average weekly attendance of 2,000 or greater,”<sup>18</sup> for the purposes of this research, a small to medium church is defined as a church under one thousand people, a large church is defined as a church between a thousand and five thousand people, and a megachurch is defined as a church over five thousand people.

Two of the churches interviewed, Christ Community (320) and Immanuel (700), are classified as small to medium sized churches. Five of the churches, Antioch (3,500), Brook Hills (4,000), Calvary (3,500) Bethlehem (3,500), and Cornerstone (2,700), are large churches. The two remaining churches, Austin Stone (6,000) and Summit (11,000), are megachurches.

It seems important to note that all of the churches, Christ Community being the exception, had the size and funding needed to hire a person solely designated to lead global missions. In fact, all but two of the churches surveyed, the two smallest churches, had multiple staff designated to global missions.

### **How Many Years Would You Estimate Your Church Has Been Involved in Sending Missionaries?**

The churches surveyed were chosen because they put significant emphasis on developing and sending out their own people for missionary service. Therefore, it is helpful to know how many people these churches have sent and how long they have been sending, thus showing their experience and commitment in sending. The surveys show that all nine churches have significant experience in sending. Some churches simply provided information on the number of years they have been intentionally sending, while others

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<sup>18</sup>“Megachurch,” *Christianity Today*, accessed December 7, 2017, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/topics/m/megachurches/>.

also added the amount of units (family or single) or number of individuals they have sent out. A “unit” is a word used in the missions world to describe a unit of sending whether it be a single person, a married couple, or a whole family.

Antioch Community Church has been sending for thirty years, but much of their intentional sending effort began in 1999.<sup>19</sup> As of 2015, the church had 59 teams serving in 34 countries.<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that Antioch in many ways has moved from a more typical sending church to an internal sending organization.

Austin Stone has been intentionally sending for eight years, half the life of the church, and has sent out 203 people and currently has 143 people on the field.<sup>21</sup> This mass of sending began with the vision of the leaders at Austin Stone creating the 100 People Network. The vision of the 100 People Network is “to send at least 100 people from our church body to unreached peoples for two years or more.”<sup>22</sup> They have more than surpassed this original goal.

Bethlehem Baptist Church, under the leadership of John Piper and Tom Stellar, have been internationally sending for thirty-four years. They currently have 115 units sent from their church.<sup>23</sup> Brook Hills Church under the leadership of the former pastor David Platt and former missions pastor Jonathan Bean, began intentionally sending ten years

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<sup>19</sup>Kerry Ethridge, email to author, August 15, 2017. Unless otherwise noted, all information on this church and its mission ministry comes from this email interview. For a full transcript of this interview, see appendix 1.

<sup>20</sup>Owen Wible, “Your Part,” July 14, 2015, accessed December 4, 2017, <https://antiochcc.com/tag/missionaries/>.

<sup>21</sup>Andy Kampman, email to author, August 10, 2017. Unless otherwise noted, all information on this church and its missions ministry comes from this email interview. For a full transcript of this interview, see appendix 1.

<sup>22</sup>100 People Network, accessed December 5, 2017, <http://www.100peoplenetwork.org/>.

<sup>23</sup>Rasmuson and Boerckel, email to author. Unless otherwise noted, all information on this church and its missions ministry comes from this email interview. For a full transcript of this interview, see appendix 1.

ago. They have currently sent out 15 long-term units and around 150 mid-term personnel to the field.<sup>24</sup> Calvary Church has been sending out missionaries for eighty years and have sent out people all but three of those years. They currently have 97 members serving overseas as cross-cultural missionaries.<sup>25</sup> Cornerstone Church has been sending for twenty-three years, the whole existence of the church. Over those twenty-three years, they have sent 73 units and have 50 units are currently out on the field. The large number of sent missionaries is tied to Cornerstone's focus on college ministry and vision to sending college students as mid and long-term missionaries.<sup>26</sup>

Christ Community Church, a collection of sixteen house churches, has been intentionally sending their people for twelve years.<sup>27</sup> Immanuel Baptist Church sent a few workers between 1910 and 2002 but they have been internally sending out their members for the last eleven years.<sup>28</sup>

Summit Church, under the leadership of J. D. Greear, has been actively sending out people for the last fourteen years. They have sent out over 1,000 people to

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<sup>24</sup>Jim Fox, email to author, August 10, 2017. Unless otherwise noted, all information on this church and its missions ministry comes from this email interview. For a full transcript of this interview, see appendix 1.

<sup>25</sup>Steve Beirn, email to author, August 3, 2017. Unless otherwise noted, all information on this church and its missions ministry comes from this email interview. For a full transcript of this interview, see appendix 1.

<sup>26</sup>Mike Easton, email to author, July 25, 2017. Unless otherwise noted, all information on this church and its missions ministry comes from this email interview. For a full transcript of this interview, see appendix 1.

<sup>27</sup>Nathan Cook, email to author, August 7, 2017. Unless otherwise noted, all information on this church and its missions ministry comes from this email interview. For a full transcript of this interview, see appendix 1.

<sup>28</sup>Andy Morris, email to author, August 22, 2017. Unless otherwise noted, all information on this church and its missions ministry comes from this email interview. For a full transcript of this interview, see appendix 1.

plant churches in North America and to start new works overseas. Currently, they have 228 people living and serving overseas.<sup>29</sup>

### **What Are Your Church's Denominational/ Network Affiliations?**

All but one of the churches surveyed had at least one denominational or network affiliation, Calvary Church being the exception. Six of the nine churches were Southern Baptist (Austin Stone, Brooks Hills, Cornerstone, Christ Community, Immanuel, and Summit) and one church, Bethlehem Baptist, is affiliated with the Converge denomination. Five of the churches are affiliated with church planting networks (Antioch-Antioch International Movement of Churches, Austin Stone-Acts 29, Cornerstone-Salt Network, Immanuel-Immanuel Network, and Summit-Summit Network.)<sup>30</sup> Four of the five were not only affiliated with networks, but had actually started the network they were a part of, Austin Stone and their membership in the Acts 29 Network being the exception.

One thing to observe is that churches who have a passion and drive to send, often do it in connection with other like-minded churches, i.e. denominations and church planting networks. Also, many times this passion for missions spills over into the creation of new missionally driven networks with a focus on church planting and kingdom expansion.

The remaining eight questions asked of the churches interviewed relate to their assessment and development processes as a church. In an effort to understand these churches and their sending processes in context, the remaining eight questions in the email

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<sup>29</sup>Chelsea Neal, Mitch McCaskell, and Todd Unzicker, email to author, July 27, 2017. Unless otherwise noted, all information on this church and its missions ministry comes from this email interview. For a full transcript of this interview, see appendix 1.

<sup>30</sup>Each of the networks mentioned has a focus on planting new churches, some in international context and others in the North American context. More detailed information on these networks can be found on their websites: Antioch International Movement of Churches, [antiochcc.com/missions/nation](http://antiochcc.com/missions/nation); Acts 29, [acts29.com](http://acts29.com); Salt Network, [saltcompany.com](http://saltcompany.com); Immanuel Network, [immanuelky.org/immanuel-network](http://immanuelky.org/immanuel-network); Summit Network, [thesummitnetwork.com](http://thesummitnetwork.com).

interview are examined by profiling each sending church's assessment and development process. The remaining eight questions include: (1) How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?; (2) What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?; (3) What are the two to three strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?; (4) In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas? What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?; (5) When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?; (6) When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?; (7) What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?; (8) What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development? It is also important to note, not every question asked in the church interviews will be addressed in every church profile, as not every church provided information that was useful for the purposes of this research. For the full church interview transcripts, see appendix 1.

### **Assessment and Development Process Examined**

#### **Antioch Community Church**

Antioch Community Church is known in the North American missions community for taking local church-based assessment and development seriously. To a large degree, the development of missionaries and the sending of their people is at the core of who they are as a church. Part of Antioch's mission statement includes the following,

We believe everyone has a meaningful part to play in the Kingdom of God, called to proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel to the world. As we respond to needs, from

one end of the earth to the other, we plant churches and impact communities with God's love so we might see His Kingdom come and His will be done.<sup>31</sup>

Antioch has demonstrated a faithful response to this belief by sending out 400 missionaries over the last nineteen years. Currently, 140 of their members are serving cross-culturally.

Antioch starts their assessment and development process, or sending process, with a call to membership and faithful involvement in the local church. Part of faithful involvement is living in community with other Christians in small groups, or Lifegroups.

According to Antioch's website, a

Lifegroup is a place to experience authentic community and learn to grow as disciples of Jesus through intentional investment in each other's lives and by reaching out to others. Lifegroups are at the heart of our church and the best way for you to get involved at Antioch.<sup>32</sup>

Next in the sending process, prospective missionaries are called to go through Antioch's four-month Discipleship School. The Discipleship School "provide[s] a hands-on learning environment that empowers you to deepen your walk with God, walk in life-long fruitfulness and discover your unique purpose in life."<sup>33</sup> The Discipleship School calls people to greater discipleship in their lives. Kerry Ethridge, a staff member in missions at Antioch, writes about this call to greater discipleship: "Regardless of a calling to overseas mission work or not, our heart is to encourage everyone to live missionally. From the businessman to the teacher to stay at home [mom], this is what we call people to."

For those who continue to feel called to overseas missions, Antioch invites them to apply to their three-month Church Planting School. The purpose behind this second-tier training is to provide "biblical teaching and practical training for teams that want to be

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<sup>31</sup>Antioch Community Church, "About," accessed December 6, 2017, <https://antiochcc.com/about/>.

<sup>32</sup>Antioch Community Church, "LifeGroups," accessed December 6, 2017, <https://antiochcc.com/ministries/lifegroups>.

<sup>33</sup>Antioch Community Church, "Antioch Training Schools," accessed December 6, 2017, <https://antiochcc.com/antioch-training-schools/schools/>.

sent to the mission field with Antioch.”<sup>34</sup> Through the Church Planting School and the internal missions ministry of the church, Antioch Ministries International, Antioch has planted more than 100 churches overseas.<sup>35</sup>

Alongside the Church Planting School, Antioch has an in-depth application process for those who want to be sent overseas. The in-depth application covers a wide variety of things, including doctrinal beliefs, moral standards, psychological questions, etc. Applicants must also provide four references and have a self-awareness interview where more questions are asked. In addition, they must have a marriage evaluation and meet with a counselor. In the future, Antioch leaders plan to add more psychological testing to the sending process. Once a person is accepted, they are put in one of two preparation tracks, one for team leaders and one for team members.

The methodology and desire behind Antioch’s assessment and development process is first of all a desire to see their members live missionally. The heart of the sending process is not to keep people from the field but to set them up for long-term success and to see them thrive on in life and ministry on the field. When it comes to the actual development of the missionary for ministry overseas, most of Antioch process centers around the formal Church Planting School.

As the leaders of Antioch examined their sending process, they found the thoroughness of their training schools and assessment as a real strength as well as the fact that multiple church leaders are involved and have a voice in the process. Another observable strength is Antioch’s commitment to continually making their sending processes better through observation, critique, and ongoing adjustment. One weakness of the past was the romanticizing of missions. As they promoted and trained people for missions engagement, Antioch would often romanticize the role and life of a missionary

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<sup>34</sup>Antioch Community Church, “Church Planting School,” accessed December 6, 2017, <https://antiochcc.com/church-planting-school/>.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

to a detrimental degree. They have learned from this mistake, often through the attrition of their people, and now include lessons on suffering and the reality of life overseas to help better prepare pre-field missionaries.

### **Austin Stone Community Church**

Austin Stone, a relatively young church, has grown dramatically in its fifteen-year existence. More than just numerical growth, it has sought to make an impact beyond its own doors. This commitment to gospel impact flows from one of its eight core convictions: to be relentless in mission. Their conviction states,

We are relentless in mission to see the earth filled with the glory of God. This is the end-all reason for which God created the universe and everything in it. God, through Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, has established His church to accomplish this mission that each of us would know, love, and obey Him to declare and demonstrate the gospel in the city of Austin and to the ends of the earth.<sup>36</sup>

The church's desire is that everyone in the church would play an active role in reaching every language, tribe, and tongue with the gospel. In light of this desire, they provide three clear steps to get more actively engaged in global missions: providing tangible needs for their missionaries on stateside assignment, going on a short-term trip, and participating in a Goer Missional Community.<sup>37</sup> This last step, the Goer Missional Community or Goer MC, is the backbone of the development and assessment process at Austin Stone. A Goer MC "exist[s] to equip disciple-makers intending to go to unreached people groups, and those who will stay to mobilize others to engage the unreached."<sup>38</sup> This nine-month missional small group does more than simply meet weekly for fellowship. A Goer MC lives life together in intimate community as they are held accountable to

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<sup>36</sup>Austin Stone, "Eight Convictions of the Austin Stone," accessed December 14, 2017, <https://austinstone.org/convictions#eight>.

<sup>37</sup>Austin Stone, "For the Nations," accessed December 14, 2017, <https://austinstone.org/forthenations>.

<sup>38</sup>100 People Network, "Goers," accessed December 14, 2017, <http://www.100peoplenetwork.org/goers/>.

spiritual growth and disciple-making obedience among internationals in the community. While they are living on mission together, they study God's Word and the missional skills needed to thrive and multiply themselves cross-culturally.<sup>39</sup> The leaders at Austin Stone, like other churches interviewed, believe that the best assessment and development of pre-field missionaries happens in community as people live on mission with intentionality.

The sending process at Austin Stone typically takes twelve to eighteen months to complete the confirmation, equipping, and support-raising aspects of the process.<sup>40</sup> The sending process includes (1) entering the sending process through conversations and affirmation from a candidate's small group leader and another church leader; (2) filling out a Goer interest form; (3) meeting with a missions mobilizer from the church; (4) joining and completing a Goer Missional Community; (5) recruiting an advocate team leader<sup>41</sup>; (6) finding a field team to join and serve with; and (7) going through support-raising training and fully raising support.<sup>42</sup>

Austin Stone's requirement of their pre-field missionaries to live in deep community with a strong commitment to sharing the gospel and discipling new believers is done in conjunction with a ministry called Launch Global. Launch Global's vision is to help local churches prepare "this generation to overflow Christ and ignite church planting movements among the unreached."<sup>43</sup> They do this through implanting mission mobilizers

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<sup>39</sup>100 People Network, "Goers."

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Advocate Teams are members from a sending church that take responsibility and ownership of the support and encouragement of a missionary. These are typically teams of people that fulfill specific and varied roles of support. 100 People Network, "Advocate Team Description and Roles," accessed December 14, 2017, <http://www.100peoplenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Advocacy-Team-Description-and-Roles.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup>100 People Network, "Goers."

<sup>43</sup>"Launch Global," accessed December 14, 2017, <https://www.amazon.com/clouddrive/share/SL8val31af89t3f64dZJVeTqUpuvOPgZemUuyekGO2j>.

in local churches to help mobilizer members to live on mission and go to the nations with the gospel through a three-fold ministry model: discover, develop, and deploy. The first part of what they call a 3D ministry model includes helping people discover God's heart for the nations and their specific role in fulfilling God's mission. Second, the model includes developing people in their partner churches through two phases: a ten-week disciple-making training<sup>44</sup> and a nine-month Launch Community intended to help people both reach their international neighbors and prepare for life and ministry overseas. This last phase of preparation is what Austin has named the Goer Missional Community. The content of the nine-month Launch Community, or Goer MC, includes, "identity/character/purity, how to learn a language, choosing a field/team, raising support, resolving conflict, spiritual warfare, church planting, contextualization, as well as abiding in Christ as the foundation of ministry."<sup>45</sup>

The core conviction behind Austin's assessment and development process is that the best preparation a person can have for cross-cultural missions is hands-on, in-ministry training. Andy Kampman, one the mission pastors at Austin Stone and also a leader within Launch Global, writes,

Often local churches and agencies send people who are weak in one of the 3 areas of head, heart or hands. In my estimation- hands is the more negated. And so we send folks overseas who for the most part never lived out disciple-making here, so why should be surprised when they don't do disciple making in a more difficult setting.

Kampman's conviction is clear here, those who are faithful to the task of crossing a culture and making disciples here and now, hands-on learning, are the ones who will thrive and be successful overseas doing so the same. Austin Stone's stout development and assessment process calls people to a high standard of missional living and learning and provides a

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<sup>44</sup>Bob McNabb, *Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World: Why Some Disciple-Makers Reproduce When Others Fail* (Vestavia Hills, AL: Multiplication Press, 2013)

<sup>45</sup>"Launch Global," accessed December 14, 2017, <https://www.amazon.com/clouddrive/share/SL8val31af89t3f64dZJVeTqUpuvOPgZemUuyekGO2j>.

training ground to develop these skills in a home context before being launched out to do the same in a different country.

When asked about the strengths of their assessment and development process, Kampman said there were multiple benefits to the local church owning the appointment, training, and sending of their own people. These strengths included the local ministry at the church, and in their city of Austin, being helped. Thirty people came to faith in Christ through pre-field missionaries living on mission in the city of Austin in the last twelve months. A second strength is seen in the knowability of those the local church sends. Because the local church takes ownership in assessing and developing, the sent ones are really known because they spend significant time living life with the church body. Kampman says the fastest assessment and development process at Austin Stone is twelve to eighteen months, longer than the development or assessment process of an agency. A third strength is seen in the fact that as pre-field missionaries walk through the lengthy sending process, they are able to mobilize greater numbers of church members toward global missions. The mobilization comes through relationships, advocate teams, working with internationals locally, serving in the church, and financial commitment to those being sent.

One weakness of the sending process at Austin Stone is in reconnecting people who go through the sending process but do not go overseas. Because the sending process expects them to step out of their normal church community group and into an eighteen-month process, including nine months of a Goer MC, if they do not end up being sent, they are often detached from the life of the church body at large. This transition back into normal church life can be difficult.

When asked about the role of the agency and the local church in the assessment and development process, Kampmen writes,

The local church, I believe both theologically and practically, needs to own the development and assessment process. This does not negate the agency in any way, but the local church really needs to be the driver in the development and a process. We see the local church and the agency both bringing unique benefits and therefore both can

work together to send “more and better” people to see Jesus worshiped by all the peoples of the world.<sup>46</sup>

Kampman’s conviction of the local church’s ownership in the sending process is also seen throughout other interviews with church mission leaders. Churches who own development and assessment do so because they believe it is their theological responsibility and it practically makes sense.

### **Bethlehem Baptist Church**

Bethlehem Baptist Church has been a model sending church since John Piper, former lead pastor, preached a sermon at their annual missions conference in 1983, after a scheduled guest speaker cancel. As Piper was preparing his sermon, he became convinced that missions was the central work of the church and got excited about what God wanted to do through Bethlehem. The church shared in his excitement after preaching the sermon.<sup>47</sup> Another key moment for Bethlehem and their development as a sending church was the impact the Perspectives course made on the church and its leaders.<sup>48</sup> From Piper’s preaching, Tom Stellar leadership, and the mission influence of programs like Perspectives and the US Center for World Mission, Bethlehem has become a sending church that this current generation of sending churches is modeled after.<sup>49</sup> Bethlehem was an early innovator of a church-based approach to missionary development and many of the current

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<sup>46</sup>Kampman, email to author.

<sup>47</sup>Tom Telford and Lois Shaw, *Today’s All-Star Missions Churches: Strategies to Help Your Church Get into the Game* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 18.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 19-20. Perspectives is a fifteen-week training course intended to educate people in global mission realities. This nation-wide training course can be found in most areas of the US. For more information go to their website, <http://www.perspectives.org>.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid. Tom Stellar is no longer the missions pastor at Bethlehem. He is now Pastor for Leadership Development at Bethlehem Baptist Church and the Dean of Global & Alumni Outreach at Bethlehem College and Seminary.

assessment and development processes used by churches today can be traced back to Bethlehem's work in this area.<sup>50</sup>

The core of Bethlehem's strong missions sending program is their assessment and development process call the Nurture Program. The purpose behind the creation of the Nurture Program is

to prepare cross-cultural ministers with the basic knowledge, character, and skills required for effective service, in the context of their sending church, so that we [Bethlehem Baptist Church] can recognize and affirm the Holy Spirit's calling on their life (Acts 13:1-3), and fulfill our responsibility as their sending church (3 John 6).<sup>51</sup>

The Nurture Program is divided into three developmental sections that build upon one another, with each previous step creating a foundation for the next. The sending process is self-driven, meaning it is necessary for the pre-field missionary to take initiative to move through the process, though candidates are encouraged and communicated with along the way. As a help to participants, the Nurture Program is clearly communicated through the program handbook, the Nurture Program Diagram, and the Nurture Program Component Checklist. The whole program is built on the educational methodology of knowledge, character, and skills.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Greg Carter, *Skills Knowledge Character: A Church-Based Approach to Missionary Candidate Preparation* (Valparaiso, IN: Turtle River, 2010), 5. Carter also talks about the late Woody Philips, Jr., and his early work on church-based missions preparation at Cross Roads Church in Los Gatos, CA, and Church of the Savior in Wayne, PA.

<sup>51</sup>Bethlehem Baptist Church, "Nurture Program Handbook," 2016, accessed December 7, 2017, <https://www.amazon.com/clouddrive/share/tYv5IEEc91xUv6wE1bhVEJEsUaLmCIROV8k5I9AcbkY>.

<sup>52</sup>The educational model of "knowledge, character, skills" or "head, heart, hands" focuses on developing the whole person and has become popular in church-based missionary training. The "head, heart, hands model" is also seen in some parts of general educational theory (see Susan Drake and Rebecca Burns, *Meeting Standards through Integrated Curriculum* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2004). In the missions world, the model seems to originate with Bethlehem Baptist Church and has been adapted by churches such as Village Church in Dallas, Austin Stone, and Sojourn Community Church in Louisville. In addition, mission books have been written based on the model such as Greg Carter, *Skills, Knowledge, Character*, and M. David Sills, *Hearts, Heads, and Hands: A Manual for Teaching Others to Teach Others* (Nashville: B & H, 2016).

The first developmental level of the Nurture Program focuses on building a base foundation of theology and missiology through taking the Perspectives course, reading a few key books, attending seminars, and developing an intentional cross-cultural relationship.<sup>53</sup> This first level is intended to be accessible to a wide range of people to help them grow in their passion for missions. Along with building foundational components of theology and missiology, level 1 of the Nurture program stresses membership and faithful participation in the local church.<sup>54</sup>

The goal of the second level of the Nurture Program is to continue to focus on a foundation of discipleship while building in various knowledge and skill components related to cross-cultural ministry.<sup>55</sup> Level 2 contains the majority of the development components of the Nurture Program, including classes on hermeneutics and theology, several seminars, finding an accountability partner, growing in various ways to deal with conflict, joining a missions fellowship, and going on a Nurture Program retreat.<sup>56</sup>

Last, level 3 focuses on the actual preparation of members for long-term missionary service. Level 3 requires less to allow pre-field missionaries time and space to develop a relationship with a mission agency and to do partnership development.<sup>57</sup> Acceptance into level 3 makes a Bethlehem member eligible for long-term sending and means they will receive a letter of recommendation they can give mission agencies. Acceptance into level 3 of the Nurture Program may make a person eligible for sending,

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<sup>53</sup>Bethlehem Baptist Church, "Nurture Program Handbook," 11-14.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 15-18.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 18-20. For Bethlehem Baptist Church, partnership development includes choose and going through an agency's process, support raising, and building a Barnabas Team (church-based care team).

however, it does not guarantee sending as funds would also need to be available for partnership to happen.<sup>58</sup>

Each level of the Nurture Program has gateway steps into the next level of the program. The entry step into the Nurture Program as a whole is an orientation class, a basic level 1 application, and a welcome interview with someone on the global outreach staff.<sup>59</sup> Gateway steps into level 2 include a level 2 application, which is much more in-depth, filling out a personal inventory called a “Preparedness Questionnaire” that helps make the difficult realities of living and working overseas more concrete, meeting with a counselor, and doing a pastoral interview. Level 2 is intended to narrow the field of those in the Nurture program.<sup>60</sup> Finally, level 3 gateway steps include a final application step and an interview with a person’s campus specific Global Outreach team.<sup>61</sup>

The methodology behind the Nurture Program is rooted in the concept of holistically developing people for missionary service through their knowledge of God’s Word and his world, the development of their character, and the development and refining of their skills for life and ministry. This model of developing a person’s knowledge, character, and skills for effective cross-cultural ministry will be further examined in chapter 4 as a model for other churches to follow for missionary development and assessment.

When looking at strengths and weaknesses of the Nurture Program, the mission leaders at Bethlehem see their program’s two strengths as doing a solid job of developing people holistically (knowledge, character, and skills) and of allowing their sent ones to speak back into the Nurture program and provide critical feedback. One clear weakness is

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<sup>58</sup>Bethlehem Baptist Church, “Nurture Program Handbook,” 18.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 18.

that with over one hundred people currently in the Nurture Program, it is hard to actually nurture people, or be deeply relational, through the process.

When asked about the roles of assessment and development in the lives of the missionary candidate, Bethlehem mission leaders write,

We identify the church as the primary means to assess and confirm the knowledge, character, and skills of the global partner and it is the church's responsibility to recognize and affirm the Holy Spirit's calling on the lives of the global partner. That said, we realize our limitations and the benefit of partnering with agencies to help assess and confirm the calling of the individual.

This comment reveals the conviction of many sending church mission leaders that the sending of missionaries is a role given to local churches. Agencies, however, often prove to be essential sending partners. In fact, to be sent from Bethlehem, a pre-field missionary must be sent through a partner sending agency or an approved alternative option.

### **Brook Hills Church**

Known largely through their former pastor, David Platt, Brook Hills Church has a strong and deep commitment to sending their people overseas mid- and long-term. The primary goal in sending at Brook Hills is "long-term sending of church planting teams to unreached people groups . . . to achieve the goal of establishing the church in 'unreached' contexts."<sup>62</sup>

The assessment and development process at Brook Hills includes an extensive interview, a cross-cultural workers assessment, psychological profile, background check, involvement in a small group, and a one-year equipping period that includes aspects of development through a classroom setting. Perhaps most important in the minds of mission leaders at Brooks Hills is the belief that the best assessment and development comes from having real life cross-cultural experience through serving short-term or mid-term. Mid-

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<sup>62</sup>The Church at Brook Hills, "Long-Term Missions," accessed December 10, 2017, <http://www.brookhills.org/missions/global/long-term>.

term service, serving two months to two years, is highly encouraged for anyone wanting to be sent long-term.<sup>63</sup>

More than any other church interviewed, Brook Hills places a heavy emphasis on the assessment of the pre-field worker, helping determine their readiness and health for ministry overseas. Much of the emphasis on pre-field assessment comes through the influence of one of the mission pastors, Jim Fox. Fox, a retired businessman now part-time mission pastor, has developed a cross-cultural worker assessment to evaluate cross-cultural church planting teams as well as individuals.<sup>64</sup> This online assessment tool assesses a person's readiness for cross-cultural ministry by evaluating a person or team's competencies, attributes, and behaviors.<sup>65</sup> This robust assessment tool has proven helpful to both assess the readiness of a person preparing to leave for the field as well as helping teams on the field growth in their health and ministry effectiveness.

### **Calvary Church**

Calvary Church, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is a well-established sending church, much like Bethlehem Baptist, and has modeled the way in global missions for countless other local churches. Their love and commitment to global missions, specifically to the people they send out, is almost unequalled. One clear sign of their commitment to

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<sup>63</sup>Jonathan Bean, interview by author, Louisville, November 5, 2014. Bean, the former mission pastor at Brook Hills, talked with me about the value he saw in asking people to serve mid-term before sending them long-term from his church.

<sup>64</sup>The Lions Lead, accessed December 10, 2017, <http://home.thelionslead.com/>. The cross-cultural assessment tool mentioned was developed under Jim Fox's leadership, with his company Foxworthy and Associates, and in partnership with the leadership consulting group, The Lions Head.

<sup>65</sup>Cross-Cultural Worker Assessments are the property of Foxworthy and Associates in Birmingham, AL. For a sample profile or for more information, contact the company. The assessment is explained in detail on J. D. Payne, "3 More Tools for Assessing Church Planters," May 21, 2017, accessed December 10, 2017, <http://www.jdpayne.org/2017/05/21/3-more-tools-for-assessing-church-planters/>.

sending globally is that Calvary gives 2.5 million dollars a year to global missions.<sup>66</sup> That 2.5 million is over 50 percent of their annual church budget.<sup>67</sup> In addition to giving, the church has sent out more than 400 of its own members for long-term cross-cultural service.<sup>68</sup> That means Calvary has sent an average of 5 members as long-term missionaries for the last 80 years.<sup>69</sup>

One reason Calvary has been able to be this committed to global missions for this long is they started out fully committed. Tom Telford writes, “Calvary Church grew out of a missions conference. Men and women who had come together for a Bible and mission conference decided to form a church when they saw the need to add some continuity to the missions vision that was emerging from the conference.” This church was literally formed so that the movement of missions that was happening in the lives of people could find a home.<sup>70</sup> The very foundations of the church were built with the building blocks of missions vision and passion. No wonder global missions has been the lifeblood of Calvary.

A second reason Calvary has been able to send and give so well is that they have intentionally kept global missions as the focus of the church. Steve Beirn, the pastor of global ministry, writes, “An important part of our history is that missions has never been seen as a piece of the ministry pie but as the hub and wheel, central to everything.”<sup>71</sup> In

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<sup>66</sup>Steve Beirn, *Well Sent: Reimagining the Church’s Missionary-Sending Process* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2015), 29.

<sup>67</sup>Telford and Shaw, *Today’s All-Star Missions Churches*, 139.

<sup>68</sup>Beirn, *Well Sent*, 29.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>For a more detailed history of the church, see Lancaster Online, “Mission Possible,” accessed December 10, 2017, [http://lancasteronline.com/news/mission-possible/article\\_8f7b5010-a901-578e-8962-c6fc3aab5792.html](http://lancasteronline.com/news/mission-possible/article_8f7b5010-a901-578e-8962-c6fc3aab5792.html).

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

fact, Robert Torrey, the very first pastor, held the same conviction eighty years ago when he wrote, “Missions is a matter of life and death for the church.”<sup>72</sup>

An outworking of this longstanding commitment to missionary sending is Calvary’s church-based missionary training called Cross Training. Calvary’s sending program is robust, covering every area imaginable in the pre-field process, and then some, and has been developed over decades from church leaders who have knowledge and experience in sending and sustain missionaries well. Although Cross Training may not be replicable by every church, it does provide a wealth of information and tools that can be used and adapted by other local churches for their own context.

The Cross Training program exists “to prepare missionaries for effective cross-cultural ministry through personal assessment, spiritual growth, useful ministry experience and individual mentoring.”<sup>73</sup> Cross Training is a self-driven, self-paced program, that centers around a mentoring relationship.<sup>74</sup> In this self-paced development program, candidates are developed toward five learning outcomes: (1) growing spiritually; (2) healthy relational skills, (3) cross-cultural; discernment; (4) competency in discipleship; and (5) and compatible philosophy and doctrine. These five learning outcomes were added to the program in 2008, to provide clarity to what Calvary was looking for as it assessed and developed its pre-field missionaries.<sup>75</sup>

Cross Training is divided into three progressive levels, each providing a written requirement list of what needs to be accomplished by the candidate before they are able to move to the next level. Level 1 focuses on assessment and training and includes being

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<sup>72</sup>Telford and Shaw, *Today’s All-Star Missions Churches*, 139.

<sup>73</sup>Calvary Church, “Cross Training,” accessed December 15, 2017, <http://calvarychurch.org/ministries/global/opportunities/crosstraining>.

<sup>74</sup>Calvary Church, “Cross Training Candidate Manual,” 2017, accessed December 15, 2015, <https://www.amazon.com/clouddrive/share/PnLOtUzqU3FSF3njz4tvW8qTp5hGEnan03BWfnWHuJP>, 5.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

assigned a mentor, and a member of the Cross Training Team tailors the program to meet the needs of the candidate. The goal of level 1 is a clear affirmation of God's missional leading in the person's life and increasing the cross-cultural preparation for service.<sup>76</sup>

Level 1's requirements include church membership, establishing a mentorship relationship, taking a Perspectives class, reading assignments, attending lectures, filling out paperwork, ministry service, and taking a short-term trip.<sup>77</sup>

Level 2 focuses on helping the candidate explore actual opportunities for missionary service through exploring people groups, ministries, and sending agencies. This process also includes application and approval with a partnering sending agency. Level 2's requirements included issue-specific trainings, people group research, agency selection and application, assigned readings, lectures, and meetings with someone from the Cross Training Team as well the assigned mentor.

Level 3 focuses on the final step of the pre-field development process, the building of a support team, including prayer, finances, and practical support. Level 3's requirements include assigned readings, developing a PAC (Prayer and Care) Team, attending lectures, securing prayer partners, and finishing required paperwork.

Once candidates complete all three level of the development process, including the requirement sheets, meeting regularly with their mentor and Cross Training Team member, and being affirmed by the church in their calling, character, competency, and compatibility for the task of cross-cultural ministry, they are given the green light to move overseas.<sup>78</sup> The culmination of the whole assessment and development process at Calvary is the sending of the newly appointed missionary through a commissioning service.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Calvary Church, "Cross Training Candidate Manual," 9.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 57.

When asked about the roles of the church and the agency in the sending process, Beirn writes,

The church should encourage availability and discern suitability. The church should incorporate the four building blocks of personal development. They are assessment, spiritual growth, ministry experience and mentoring. Candidates should move to the agency when the church feels the candidate is ready. The agency, with the church and candidate, can explore ministry role and place. The agency should provide specialized ministry preparation for the future audience of the missionary (Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, etc.). The agency also provides the cultural and language training along with any other specialized training.

Beirn's thoughts on assessment and development lie in the centrality of the local church, in partnership with sending agencies. Beirn believes that the local church should vet the call and capability of the pre-field worker and that only after the candidate has been developed and assessed by the church should they move on to the agency process.

### **Christ Community Church**

Christ Community Church is very different than the other churches interviewed in that they are actually a network of sixteen house churches that share a governing body, common mission, meet monthly together, but find identity and fellowship as small house churches of ten to thirty people.<sup>80</sup> Christ Community intentional does church small so they can multiply more and model for those they send out what it looks like to be a house church with a deep missional culture loving and sharing the gospel with the poor. This vision for missional living means a call to great sacrifice. The church's website communicates the vision the church leaders have for their people:

For most of us that means purchasing a home or renting in the community . . . or sending our children to the local school. For all of us it means sharing our lives together outside the Sunday gathering as we love God and neighbor. Our desire is to penetrate every aspect of community life with the love of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Christ Community, "House Churches," accessed December 11, 2017, <http://www.housechurchmemphis.org/about/>.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

Much of this call to a missional lifestyle in the urban neighborhoods of Memphis is closely tied to the church's desire to plant the gospel among unreached people groups in Memphis and around the world. One of the key components behind reaching the neighborhoods of Memphis and the nations of the earth is a close connection to the health care industry and medical residents. Christ Community is closely tied to Resurrection Health, which has three clinics in the city.<sup>82</sup> Rick Donlon, the CEO of Resurrection Health and a member of Christ Community, said in an interview,

Everything that we've done is by the grace of God and sort of trial and error. And oddly enough, in Memphis, through Christ Community and Resurrection, we have planted 15 house churches [now sixteen churches] . . . by engaging the culture at the place of need, we're seeing the opposite of what denominations are seeing. We're seeing growth in the church. We're seeing churches being planted in low-income areas.<sup>83</sup>

This commitment to missional living and church planting in hard places is a perfect training ground for missionaries. Though Christ Community says they lack a clear sending process, the aspects they do have in place can be broken into two parts: pre-field ministry experience and cross-cultural training. Pre-field ministry experience includes a requirement to share the gospel with neighbors and a call to lead one of Christ Community's house churches. The cross-cultural training includes training in Four Fields,<sup>84</sup> Training for Trainers,<sup>85</sup> Creation to Christ,<sup>86</sup> and the Discovery Bible Study

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<sup>82</sup>Resurrection Health, accessed December 11, 2017, <http://www.rezhealth.org>.

<sup>83</sup>"Rick Donlon and Nathan Cook: Calling Young Physicians to Help Create a More Just Health Care System," October 18, 2016, accessed December 11, 2017, <https://www.faithandleadership.com/rick-donlon-and-nathan-cook-calling-young-physicians-help-create-more-just-health-care-system>.

<sup>84</sup>Church Planting Movements, "Four Fields of Kingdom Growth," August 17, 2011, accessed December 11, 2017, [http://www.churchplantingmovements.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=126:the-four-fields-of-kingdom-growth&catid=36:the-big-picture&Itemid=78](http://www.churchplantingmovements.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=126:the-four-fields-of-kingdom-growth&catid=36:the-big-picture&Itemid=78). "Four Fields of Kingdom Growth" is a global mission method used to multiply churches. Four Fields was developed by Nathan and Kari Shank through their work in India.

<sup>85</sup>Steve Smith, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution: The Story Behind the World's Fastest Growing Church Planting Movement and How It Can Happen in Your Community!* (Monument, CO: WIGTake, 2011).

<sup>86</sup>"Creation to Christ," accessed December 11, 2017, <https://orality.imb.org/resources/?id=200>.

Method.<sup>87</sup> All of these ministry tools are currently being used to reach people with the gospel and plant the church by a number of organizations around the world. Nathan Cook, a pastor at Christ Community, also mentioned that TOAG, a nine-month pre-field training run by Frontiers, is a training they encourage some of their people to go through, especially those working with Muslims.<sup>88</sup>

The self-stated weakness of Christ Community's assessment and development process is the lack of a clear and accessible process for pre-field missionaries. Strengths with their process include a strong missional culture within the church, living and serving in urban poor neighborhoods, teaching the importance of unreached people groups, and normalizing suffering.

For a small church like Christ Community, the relationship with the sending agency is even more important. Because of a lack of time, staff, and funding, small to medium-sized churches have an even greater dependence on the relationship and experience of sending agencies. This does not mean that large churches do not need agencies as well, but it is important to notice the need is greater with churches who have limited staffing and ministry bandwidth. Knowing this sending relationship is vital, Cook reflects on the church's role in the sending process when he writes,

I think it would be helpful if agencies were willing to share their model for selection, especially psychological assessments that are performed that may fall outside the scope of traditional churches. Agencies may have a better understanding of the marks needed for long term success on the field. I think the role of the church is to motivate, equip, and send people for missionary service. The church's role is to develop a theological understanding of salvation, the church and missions; to help people find their identity in Christ alone, and to identify and develop their spiritual gifts. The church should also train people to develop spiritual disciplines such as

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Creation to Christ is a method of sharing the gospel in story form and is used by many church planting and disciple-making strategies.

<sup>87</sup>"Discover Bible Study Method," accessed December 11, 2017, [https://www.frontiersusa.org/WOF\\_DBS\\_Process\\_Download.pdf](https://www.frontiersusa.org/WOF_DBS_Process_Download.pdf). Discovery Bible Study Method is a method of disciple-making that helps people engage in a discussion about God, his Word, and their obedience to what the Bible says.

<sup>88</sup>"Training Ordinary Apprentices to Go," accessed December 11, 2017, <https://toag.org/>.

prayer and obedience to the scriptures while also developing a reproducible model of discipleship.<sup>89</sup>

### **Cornerstone Church**

Cornerstone is 2,700-member church that sprung out of a college ministry at Iowa State in Ames, Iowa. The major focus of Cornerstone's sending strategy comes from sending university students and recent graduates overseas to one of three main global locations to plant churches on university campuses. Cornerstone and its leaders see the assessment and development of their future missionaries coming from the ordinary discipleship of college students. Mike Easton, mission director at Cornerstone says, "95% of assessment and development happens in the regular discipleship process of our university leadership/discipleship process."<sup>90</sup> For Cornerstone, assessment and development of pre-field missionaries is woven together and is rooted in the local church. Assessment and development happen together through the four-year life of a college student and their service at Cornerstone. Easton affirms this view: "We have a 4-year interview process that is our discipleship process in our university ministry."<sup>91</sup>

This four-year assessment and development process includes (1) examining how a student did leading a small group; (2) how they did on their required summer mission trip; (3) how they did in a weekly discipleship group with a staff member; (4) whether the field missionaries want them to come back overseas; (5) what Cornerstone's college staff think of their potential to live overseas; and (6) seniors interested in missions are put into a mission focused small group led by a former missionary with specific cross-cultural development content. A final aspect of assessment comes after college students are sent out for two year assignments. If they desire to go back long-term, Cornerstone,

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<sup>89</sup>Cook, email to author.

<sup>90</sup>Easton, email to author.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

along with the field, help assess whether mid-termers are suited for long-term work. Easton says, “We’ve found it pretty difficult to assess long-term success from the States. Our MO [modus operandi] is to get them over there as young as possible in a great team context. Get them language, get them ministry experience, and then assess their future after those 2 years.”<sup>92</sup>

For years Cornerstone included a lot more mission-specific training in their sending process, including Perspective, Focus International,<sup>93</sup> and some in-house mission training. However, as they cut back on these trainings, they realized the quality of those they were sending out was the same. Cornerstone’s leaders concluded the culture they were creating through their college ministry was more of a shaping factor in their sent ones than the mission trainings they were offering. Their conclusion was that culture was greater than training, so they committed to build a sending culture at Cornerstone to an even greater degree.

Cornerstone’s commitment to sending, unique location, and defined ministry model make their sending program strong in several ways. First, being primarily focused on developing and sending college students gives Cornerstone four years of in-house development and ongoing assessment. This long period of time helps them see how well a person will do overseas by walking with them in a normal yet defined discipleship process. A second strength is they do not need to create a full missionary sending process because the church is structured around developing leaders and future missionaries. Because the whole church has bought into the sending vision, including staff and elders, the missionary sending process is woven into the life and discipleship process of the church. Supplemental processes and tools are added to this discipleship process to better send cross-culturally.

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<sup>92</sup>Easton, email to author.

<sup>93</sup>Focus International, accessed December 12, 2017, <http://focusinternationalinc.org>. Focus International helps recruit, train, and send students overseas.

Though Cornerstone's conviction is that missions is firmly rooted in the centrality of the local church, they do find partnership with agencies essential. Mike Easton gives his thoughts on the value of partner sending agencies:

I think the agency should bring their expertise to: 1) train local churches on what to look for, both positive and negative, in prospective missionaries; 2) give tips on developing missionaries; but 3) ultimately find churches they trust and trust them to make the decisions about who goes overseas.<sup>94</sup>

### **Immanuel Baptist Church**

The second smallest of the churches surveyed, Immanuel, has the benefit of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary as a feeder school to their missionary sending pipeline. Even with this benefit, Immanuel has been intentional to develop, send, and care for its people, as well as call them to plant roots deep within the local church before they go. By being intentional with sending, Immanuel has influence and reach well beyond its size. As Immanuel began sending more people to plant churches in North America and in other parts of the world, they saw the need to start the Immanuel Network. The Immanuel Network is a cooperative of mission leaders influenced by and connected to Immanuel Baptist Church who are seeking to plant or strengthen churches in North American and across the globe.<sup>95</sup> Currently, Immanuel's missionaries are working in fifteen nations among seven of the eight major world religions.<sup>96</sup>

Immanuel's development and assessment of their pre-field workers is rooted in commitment to life on life ministry in the local church and is focused on building and assessing biblical character. The primary means Immanuel has for developing and

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<sup>94</sup>Easton, email to author.

<sup>95</sup>"Immanuel Network," accessed December 12, 2017, <http://immanuelky.org/immanuel-network/>.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

accessing future global workers and church planters is their three-year pastoral apprenticeship for men. The purpose behind the pastoral apprenticeship is

to raise up men from within the church who will shepherd this congregation for years to come, as well as to train men to be sent out to churches in America and to the nations. We want to entrust the gospel message to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2). The apprenticeship program includes biblical and theological study in a classroom setting, as well as opportunities to observe and participate in practical, pastoral ministry. We want to see men grow in knowledge, character, and experience, so we structure our efforts to address all of these areas.<sup>97</sup>

Immanuel has a strong focus on developing men for future ministry. They have also done some intentional equipping for single women preparing for the field—though this is not detailed in the interview or online, their does not seem to be preparation for married women or families as a whole. The final assessment for field readiness comes as candidates are assessed to be either elder qualified or team member qualified. The elder board of Immanuel vets and approves candidates that are deemed elder qualified.<sup>98</sup>

### **Summit Church**

The largest church and most prolific missionary senders, Summit Church, is also blessed to be near a very mission-minded seminary, Southeastern Theological Seminary, and near numerous universities in North Carolina. Along with being the benefactors of a pipeline of people wanting to be sent, they are also very intentional to build a culture of sending at their church. Two of their “plumb lines,” or core convictions, as a church, are, “We judge our success by sending capacity, not seating capacity”<sup>99</sup> and “The church is

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<sup>97</sup>“Pastor Apprenticeship,” accessed December 12, 2017, <http://immanuelky.org/ministries/pastoral-apprenticeship/>.

<sup>98</sup>It is unclear from the interview or from the information found online whether or not just men, or men and women both, are measure for field readiness according to elder qualifications found in the New Testament.

<sup>99</sup>J. D. Greear, “Plumb Lines for The Summit Church,” June 27, 2016, accessed December 12, 2017, <https://jdgrear.com/blog/plumb-lines-for-the-summit-church/>.

not an audience; it's an army."<sup>100</sup> Summit believes that to follow Jesus is to be sent and that the church gains the most by giving away.<sup>101</sup> Summit connects their theology of sending with rather ambitious goals. The vision of sending at Summit is to send 5,000 long-term workers over the lifetime of their church and to plant 1,000 new churches domestically and abroad.<sup>102</sup> As farfetched as these number sound, Summit is working their way to this goal. As of 2015, Summit has planted 113 new churches.<sup>103</sup> As of 2017, Summit had sent out just under 1,000 people to serve overseas or to be a part of new church plants in North America.

In such a large church with such large sending numbers, the leaders at Summit admit it can be difficult to know everyone that wants to be sent globally, which is one of the primary reasons for their assessment structure—to get to know their people. Chelsea Neal writes,

Because we have such a large church, it is possible that people can go through the process of serving overseas with their organization without having much contact or training with our international mission team. Part of our assessment is in place so we can ensure that we know everyone that is being sent through our church.<sup>104</sup>

Because of Summit's size and complexity, they have created a robust sending process to help people grow toward health and maturity long before leaving for the field. Before beginning the assessment and development process, the sending process, all members are encouraged to develop a passion and commitment to global missions by

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<sup>100</sup>Greear, "Plumb Lines for The Summit Church."

<sup>101</sup>J. D. Greear, "Plumb Line #2: We Judge Our Success by Sending Capacity, Not Seating Capacity," October 5, 2016, accessed December 12, 2017, <https://jdgrear.com/blog/we-judge-our-success-by-sending-capacity-not-seating-capacity>.

<sup>102</sup>J. D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches That Send*, Exponential Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 205.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>104</sup>Neal, McCaskell, and Unzicker, email to author.

taking two training classes, The Missions Course and Explore Missions Study.<sup>105</sup> The first training class is intended to help all Summit Church members get engaged in missions both locally and globally, and the second class is intended to help members take the next step by diving deeper into the realities of global missions and their personal call in the Great Commission.<sup>106</sup> These two training classes are prerequisites to the official sending process, and members are encouraged to take them three to four years before leave for the field.

The first step in the sending process is to meet with a member of the International Mission Team. This orientation meeting is a chance for the pre-field missionary and the Summit staff member to get to know one another and start a dialogue where good questions can be asked. It also allows the two parties to pray together and seek the Lord's direction about next steps in the process.

The second part of the process is a long-term missions application. This application asks questions related to spiritual maturity, current practices of evangelism and discipleship, desires for overseas services, etc. Along with the application, candidates are asked to provide two references, one from their campus pastor and one from their small group leader. These two references ask questions related to the candidate's faithfulness to ministry in their current life and location.

After being approved, pre-field missionaries are invited to join the International Church Planting Cohort (ICP). The ICP is intended to provide intentional training and set proper expectation for those who want to be sent out from Summit Church for two or more years. The ICP meets monthly and the candidate is placed in a small coaching group led by someone who has previously served overseas. These monthly large group teaching times cover nine topics: (1) gospel-centered missions; (2) what is a church and how to start

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<sup>105</sup>The Summit Church, "International," accessed December 13, 2017, <https://www.summitrdu.com/outreach/international/>.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

one; (3) healthy family; (4) effective evangelism and discipleship; (5) effective contextualization and dealing with culture shock; (6) healthy teaming and conflict; (7) spiritual warfare; (8) developing field strategy; and (9) the core tasks of a missionary.<sup>107</sup> Along with training in a classroom setting, coaching groups (small groups within ICP) go out in the community to do hands-on training through engaging their neighbors in gospel conversation.

Summit's desire throughout the sending process is to see the assessment and development of cross-cultural missionaries as ongoing discipleship. Neal affirms this view when she writes that Summit's aim is "to view assessment as discipleship."<sup>108</sup> As discipleship is happening in the life of the church, pre-field missionaries are being assessed on five core characteristics that Summit leaders hope to see in all those they send: (1) character; (2) conviction; (3) calling; (4) chemistry; and (5) competency.

The final development aspect of Summit's sending process is for pre-field missionaries to complete a six- to ten-month small group study of the New Testament, called Deepen Discipleship. This in-depth study, created by the International Mission Board, is intended to help prepare Christians for local and global disciple-making in the context of the local church.<sup>109</sup> This interactive study is to be done in community with other Christians and pushes people to do more than just study—they are also to go and do the work of discipleship-making.<sup>110</sup>

As a last step in the process, before pre-field missionaries are commissioned at their respective campus, a member of the International Missions Team meets with them

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<sup>107</sup>The Summit Church, "International."

<sup>108</sup>Neal, McCaskell, and Unzicker, email to author.

<sup>109</sup>IMB, "Deepen Discipleship," accessed December 13, 2017, <https://www.imb.org/topic/deepen-discipleship/>.

<sup>110</sup>The International Mission Board has made this missionary training tool available for free online and in a PDF format. IMB, "Deepen Discipleship," accessed December 13, 2017, <https://www.imb.org/topic/deepen-discipleship>.

for one final exit interview. This interview also acts as the last step of assessment: has this person done all they have been asked to do and are they ready for the field? Pre-field missionaries are asked to sign a church-missionary covenant detailing the responsibilities and expectations of both parties. Once this is done, final affirmation is given from Summit leaders that the church does indeed desire to send them out as a cross-cultural missionary.

Summit's commitment to sending, multiple sending team staff members, and large missions budget have allowed them to create and implement a stout sending process that has many strengths. The first strength is that Summit has a storehouse of resources. Yes, they have money, but more than that, they have missiologist and mission practitioners in their congregation that can both teach and mentor pre-field missionaries. Second, because of their sizable footprint in the missions world and their connections with agency leaders, they often have a strong voice with their partner agencies and are some of the first to know of changes and new indicatives from agencies. These strong agency relationships also give them a front row seat to learn from these agencies' best practices. Third, despite its size, missionaries from the Summit articulate that they feel very cared for. Summit traces this success back to setting proper expectations and providing good training in this area.

One weakness that Summit and other established sending churches can face is the burden of processes for the pre-field missionary. Because Summit has a clarified process and timeframe for sending, as does every agency they partner with, this added layer of burden on the missionary and the sending church can be difficult. Having to walk through two different processes to be sent overseas can be difficult for the pre-field missionary. However, the need for a church-based sending process cannot be abdicated. Summit, along with other churches interviewed, would benefit from a shared and agreed upon sending process, one that could cross agencies and be accessible to local churches.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, in partnership with several sending agencies, is developing a cross-agency application process. This would allow a pre-field missionary to fill out one

The relationship between Summit and its sending agency partners is an important topic for Summit mission leaders. Chelsea Neal and Mitch McCaskell, when asked about the role the church and agency in the assessment and development process, write,

We believe that the local church is God's plan A for reaching the nations. It is the local church who sends the missionary. The local church is responsible for the discipleship, care, assessment and development of the missionary candidate. The local church should give a confident affirmation of a missionary candidate to serve as a missionary as well as do all they can to help support, train, and send their member overseas. The agency's role of logistics, teaming, research, resources, training, etc. are very valuable and helpful in assessing and developing a missionary candidate and are a role they should play. . . . The agency cannot be self-sufficient to assess and develop the missionary candidate, they must look to the local church. The agency cannot know first hand the gifts and faithfulness of the missionary candidate like the local church can. The local church can have limitations because of lack of resources and experience in assessing and developing missionaries.

Summit, as much as any church interviewed, believes in and lives out the commitment to partnership between the sending church and the agency, though they root this relationship deeply within the local church.

### **Observations and Best Practices of Sending Churches**

Each of the nine churches interviewed is unique in their context, vision for ministry, and resources to carry out that vision. They have different nuances to how they mobilize people, provide training to their congregation at large, assess pre-field missionaries, and development them for life and ministry in a cross-cultural setting. Different as they might be, they are unified in their desire to mobilize, assess, develop, send, and care for their people. Sending well is a core value of each of the churches interviewed. With that said, as these nine churches are examined together, they reveal a number of best sending practices that can be observed, adapted, and applied in other local church contexts. The following eight observations and best practices can be applied in most

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application that would work for multiple agencies. It is unknown if local churches will have access to this system for their own assessment and development purposes. This is per a conversation with Ben Thornley, mission leader at Southeast, April 19, 2017.

church contexts. Every church may not have the skills, staff, or funding to do exactly what the churches interviewed are doing, i.e., their method or scope, but they are able to implement the principles behind these best practices.

### **Centrality of the Local Church**

Every church interviewed, without exception, voiced a deep belief and conviction that global missions should find their root and grounding in the local church. This observation is expected, as every church interviewed is already taking ownership in sending through their local church. Nonetheless, it is a significant finding that every mission leader has built and carries out their sending process rooted in the conviction that global missions should happen in and through the local church. This topic has been covered thoroughly in chapter 2, as well as in many of the church profiles, and does not need further explanation.

Not only do the mission leaders believe that global missions should be rooted in the local church, but they call their pre-field missionaries to be rooted in the local church as well. Being sent involves more than just association or presence; it requires rootedness, belonging to a place and a people. Every church interviewed practices the importance of rootedness for missionaries by calling their pre-field missionaries to walk through a church-based development process that takes significant time and requires the candidate's life to be woven within the life of church.

It should be noted, however, that just because every mission leader interviewed expressed a strong commitment to local churches primarily owning global sending, does not mean these churches are doing it apart from agencies. In fact, all but one, Antioch Community Church, work closely with partner sending agencies.<sup>112</sup> Todd Rasmuson

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<sup>112</sup>Antioch Community Church, "Nations," accessed December 22, 2017, <https://antiochcc.com/missions/nations/>. Antioch Community Church has created their own internal sending agency called Antioch International Movement of Churches to send their missionaries and to a lesser degree, the missionaries sent from their church plants.

from Bethlehem Baptist recognizes their church's limitations when he writes, "We love partnering with agencies. . . . We readily admit our limitations with the 115 global partners and 100 members in the Nurture Program [and] we do not have the capacity to do all the member care and cannot specialize in certain areas of the world."<sup>113</sup> The global mission leaders at the Summit also see great value in partnering with agencies: "The agency's role of logistics, teaming, research, resources, training, etc. are very valuable and helpful in assessing and developing a missionary candidate and are [roles] they should play."<sup>114</sup>

### **Formalized Sending Process**

All but one church interviewed had a formalized sending process in place with well thought through steps and expectations for pre-field candidates. Christ Community Church, though lacking in a clear step-by-step sending process, offers clear pathways to development, missional living, and specific cross-cultural training. Because of their size, under 300 people, they are able to root their assessment and development process primarily in relationships and have less need for a formalized process

For the other eight churches, the intentionality of having a well thought through sending process has proven to be beneficial to both the church and those in the church who want to be sent. The formalized sending process, specifically the assessing and developing of new missionaries, is structured differently according to the church's context, ability, and philosophy of ministry. These churches fit into several different ministry philosophy models of doing assessment and development. The first model is the school-based approach practiced by Antioch Community Church and to a lesser degree Summit. This model includes a heavy emphasis on developing and accessing through a formalized school or learning cohort that prioritizes teaching in the classroom setting. It is worth noting that the two churches who utilize the school-based approach are also the two

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<sup>113</sup>Rasmuson and Boerckel, email to author.

<sup>114</sup>Neal, McCaskell, and Unzicker, email to author.

churches that send the largest numbers of mid and long-term missionaries. The school-based model is most likely not the cause of the elevated sending numbers, but is a reflection of the structure needed to be able to handle these large numbers.

The second model is the self-driven model. This approach may share much of the same content with the school-based approach, including lectures, reading, and classroom learning but they deliver the content through a self-paced, self-driven structure. This process includes different levels of development that need to be worked through, often with a mentor or small group leader. The self-driven model is used by Bethlehem, Calvary, and Summit.

The third model seen in the churches interviewed is the in-ministry model. The in-ministry model focuses on developing and accessing pre-field workers as they are actively engaged in ministry, often cross-cultural ministry, in the here and now. By calling candidates to being on mission where they find themselves now, church leaders are able to development people in context, in real life, and to assess their character and competency for cross-cultural ministry. The churches who take this approach to assessment and development are Austin Stone, Christ Community Church, and Cornerstone.

The last two churches, Immanuel and Brook Hills, take a slightly different approach to their sending process. Brook Hills emphasizes their role in assessment over development. Brook Hills uses mid-term sending, some in-house missions training, and their partnerships with sending agencies for their development. Immanuel Church, on the other hand, puts their primary focus on developing character through being rooted in the local church, depending heavily on their elder development program for assessing and developing missionaries. Immanuel therefore uses a cohort-based model for developing their pre-field missionaries. Every church interviewed had similar, through varying, best practices of written applications, face-to-face interviews, classroom trainings, ministry participation, assessment tools, and clarified expectations of pre-field missionaries.

## **Missional Living**

One common theme seen in many of the churches interviewed is a call to see pre-field missionaries live on mission in their everyday lives. Before these churches will send people overseas to share the gospel and make disciples, they expect their members to be doing it where they live now among the people they find themselves. The idea is that living missionally is not a destination, such as living overseas, but a way of life. Thomas Hale's words mentioned earlier in this chapter are worth repeating: "The single most important factor in predicting one's future missionary performance is one's past performance as a Christian."<sup>115</sup>

The word *missional* is a call to every believer to proclaim the gospel of Jesus in their everyday rhythms of life. Too often missions is seen as limited to an activity of the church (a program) or exclusively for the clergy, those like cross-cultural missionaries. Alan Hirsh explains,

A missional theology is not content with mission being a church-based work. Rather, it applies to the whole life of every believer. Every disciple is to be an agent of the kingdom of God, and every disciple is to carry the mission of God into every sphere of life. We are all missionaries sent into a non-Christian culture.<sup>116</sup>

A best practice of many of the churches interviewed is to help their members live on mission and to create pathways for them to grow in their missional living skills. Through this call to missional living, churches like Antioch, Austin Stone, Christ Community, and Cornerstone are able to assess the competency and obedience of members in evangelism and disciple-making for the purpose of sending them overseas.

## **In-Ministry Assessment and Development**

Another observable best practice among churches interviewed is the development and on-going assessment of pre-field missionaries through in-ministry

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<sup>115</sup>Hale and Daniels, *On Being a Missionary*, 54

<sup>116</sup>Alan Hirsch, "Defining Missional," *Christianity Today*, Fall 2008, accessed January 1, 2018, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2008/fall/17.20.html>.

service. Several of the churches realized the limitation of cross-cultural training alone being sufficient for missionary development. They came to the conviction that the best missionaries are ones who live in obedience to ministry before they are sent anywhere. Teaching and relevant training on cross-cultural ministry are needed in the process, but calling people to actually do the work of ministry is even more effective for developing people and assessing them for life and ministry overseas. Andy Kampman, mission pastor at Austin Stone, writes, “We send folks overseas who for the most part never lived out disciple making here, so why should we be surprised when they don’t do disciple making in more difficult settings.”<sup>117</sup>

Churches who use in-ministry models to assess and develop for cross-cultural sending include Austin Stone, Christ Community, Cornerstone, and Brook Hills. Austin Stone does this through their Goer Missional Community. Christ Community does this through living and doing ministry in an inner-city context. Cornerstone does this through their four-year college ministry that includes service in the church, on the college campus, and on overseas trips.

Brooks Hills and Cornerstone are unique in that they see mid-term assignments, serving overseas for 1-3 years, as a part of their development and assessment process. Mid-term sending is seen as a vital and needed way to share the gospel, make disciples, and plant churches, but it is also seen as a way to test and develop individuals who desire to invest a lifetime overseas. The church can send a person overseas and allow the mid-term assignment to provide greater development and also help assess if a longer commitment to cross-cultural ministry is what is best for the mid-term missionary and for the church.

### **Cross-Cultural Training**

All nine churches interviewed articulated some level of commitment to training their pre-field missionaries, and to a large degree their regular members, in specific cross-

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<sup>117</sup>Kampman, email to author.

cultural missionary skills and concepts. Churches varied in the amount, content, and delivery method of their mission specific training, but all of them found this to be at least partially a role of the local church.

Antioch, Bethlehem, Calvary, Christ Community, and Summit place an emphasis on cross-cultural training through more formal structures like classes, schools, cohorts, etc. Austin Stone and Cornerstone provide cross-cultural training through a more hands-on model combined with aspects of formal training. Immanuel and Brook Hills provided limited in-house missionary specific training and depend more on their mission sending agencies.

### **Focus on Discipleship**

One surprising yet insightful aspect of the sending process seen in several churches is a deep belief that basic Christian discipleship is the best preparation for sending. All of the churches demonstrated that discipleship within the church is essential, but three churches in particular found discipleship as paramount in their assessment and development process: Cornerstone, Summit, and Immanuel.

Cornerstone builds their whole sending process around the four-year discipleship process that they take their college students through. As they have simplified their process over the years, they came to realize that the discipleship culture they set in their church was better than any training they could provide. Mike Easton, the mission pastor at Cornerstone, writes, “95% of our assessment and development happens in the regular process of our university leadership/discipleship process.”<sup>118</sup> The mission leaders at Summit Church agree with this philosophy when they write, “Our team really aims to make sure that assessment is seen as discipleship.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Easton, email to author.

<sup>119</sup>Neal, McCaskell, and Unzicker, email to author.

This best practice of intentional discipleship is key to addressing the common myth that only large churches can assess, develop, and send well. Though small churches do face challenges, if discipleship is the core of the assessment and development process, then smaller churches have just as much ability, if not more, to disciple pre-field missionaries well. Kampman from Austin Stone, comments, “I would advocate that if a local church really is trying to raise up disciple-makers who treasure Jesus, love the Word and share their faith and help new believers do the same...then they have really owned the right part.”

### **Community, Mentorship, and Accountability**

A best practice seen in many churches, though not instantly recognizable, is the need and importance for Christian community, mentorship, and regular accountability in the sending process. Churches like Calvary, Cornerstone, and Immanuel take the most advantage of this idea of mentorship by requiring their pre-field candidates to be in relationship with a mentor at some point in the process. However, every church had built-in aspects of community with other pre-field missionaries in the process, regular accountability back to the church, and input and guidance from leaders along the way. This concept of mentorship and accountability, when done well, seems to be very valuable to the pre-field missionary in the sending process.

### **Mobilize Student Populations**

As mentioned, all but one church, Calvary Church, has a significant college or seminary student population near them that has enhanced the church’s sending program. Most of these churches also seem to recognize this reality and are being strategic in sending students and young families post-graduation.

Antioch Community Church is a perfect example of this strategic commitment to sending students. Jimmy Seibert, the lead and founding pastor of Antioch, recounts the story of Antioch’s passion for sending college students in his book, *Passion and Purpose*.

After he became the college pastor of the church that eventually started Antioch, he began to study the history of missions and the role college students played in the movement of the gospel. He writes, “I found that they were the catalysts to major revivals of God, not only in American history but also in world history.”<sup>120</sup> This realization gave Seibert a deep passion to see the gospel spread around the world through college students. He goes on to write, “When students encounter Jesus and his transforming power, they are ready to change the world. However, that excitement needs a process to get them there. The Church is that answer.”<sup>121</sup>

More research needs to be done into the details and best practices of sending churches who specifically mobilize college and seminary students. Two other strong examples of this best practice are Cornerstone Church in Ames, Iowa, which is near Iowa State and Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, which is near Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary as well as three major state universities.

Each of the nine churches interviewed, through their commitment to sending well and through years of experience, provide deep insight into the best practices of sending cross-cultural missionaries. These churches, along with mission committed churches like them, are models for other churches to follow when it comes to the methodology and best practices of assessing and developing the next generation of missionaries.

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<sup>120</sup>Jimmy Seibert, *Passion and Purpose: Believing the Church Can Still Change the World* (Brentwood, TN: Clear Day, 2014), 1285, Kindle.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 1457.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROPOSED SENDING PROCESS

Steve Beirn has written an excellent book, entitled *Well Sent*, that provides his thoughts on the need and possibilities of local churches taking greater ownership in global mission. He has a strong conviction that sending must be rooted in a place and that place must be the local church. Beirn writes,

A missionary, then, is a “sent one,” and, more specifically, a “sent from” one. But sent from where to where? Missionary sending is not a haphazard sending from anywhere to anywhere; it is a deliberate sending from where the gospel is known to where the gospel is not known. . . . Our God is a missionary sending God, but it is equally true to say that missionaries are sent by local churches.<sup>1</sup>

A key aspect of sending missionaries is taking ownership of sending them well, which includes being intentional to develop and assess people before sending them out. Biern articulates this conviction: “It is important for someone committing his or her life to cross-cultural ministry to be part of a local church that not only encourages that commitment [to the church] but also helps prepare and support him.”<sup>2</sup>

Through research done among the nine sending churches interviewed in the previous chapter and through talking with various church leaders, it was shown that most local church mission leaders view the development and assessment of pre-field worker as concepts woven together. This view was not articulated as a direct statement; instead, it came to light through the observation of best practices and secondary statements that reflect a belief that the assessment of a person’s character, calling, and competency for ministry is best evaluated throughout the development process and through in-ministry

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<sup>1</sup>Steve Beirn, *Well Sent: Reimagining the Church’s Missionary-Sending Process* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2015), 165.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 53-54.

observation. In light of this, the following chapter proposes a model for assessing and developing missionaries in the local church that weds these two concepts.

Given that a best practice of observed sending churches is to assess people as they walk through a development process and as they are faithful to ministry in a particular locale, the following proposed model focuses more on the development of pre-field missionaries and secondarily highlights the assessment that takes place throughout the development process. Assessment tools, interviews, and outcomes are also incorporated in the proposed model to strengthen the assessment portion of the development process.

### **Methodology for Assessment and Development**

Developing missionaries is not an activity that should be done haphazardly. If a church is going to send missionaries well for life and ministry overseas, they need to be intentional with the systems, curriculum, and accountability structures they create. This process of identification, assessment, and development of pre-field missionaries within the local church is also referred to as a sending process. When it comes to developing missionaries in a sending process, or any discipleship and training program, church leaders often rush to the latest book or training method without taking the time to think deeply about the “why” behind the program. Instead of rushing to what is most accessible at the moment, church leaders should slow down and seek to develop a sending process that fits their church context, theology, and convictions about missions. Church leaders can start by asking three questions that relate to education and development.

Susan Drake and Rebecca Burns, experts in educational theory, lay out three core questions to ask when developing educational curriculum: “What is most important for students to KNOW? What is most important for students to be able to DO? What kind of person do we want students to BE?”<sup>3</sup> Drake and Burns refer to this integrated

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<sup>3</sup>Susan Drake and Rebecca Burns, *Meeting Standards through Integrated Curriculum* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2004), 31.

educational theory as the “Know, Be, Do Bridge.”<sup>4</sup> An integrated approach to education focuses on combining subjects and experiences in the classroom for a more “integrated” experience for students.<sup>5</sup> This integration is thought to create a better learning experience and enrich the develop of the whole person. The thought behind the “Know, Be, Do” model of education is to not only feed instruction to the mind but to develop a person in a holistic manner. Although education has often been seen as shaping the mind exclusively, many educators are committed to shaping the whole person. When Drake and Burns talked with teachers in their research, they discovered that many teachers were passionate about the “Be,” or character development, aspect of education. They express the fact that they got into the business of teaching to see students excel in life and not just on a test.<sup>6</sup>

Integrated education is a valuable concept and the “Know, Be, Do” questions are helpful for church leaders as they think through methodology and curriculum development for pre-field missionaries. The “Know, Be, Do” model, also known as “Knowledge, Character, Skills,” and hereafter known as “Head, Heart, Hands,” is not exclusive to the world of education. This holistic model of development has also been embraced by many practitioners in missions education. Books such as *Skills, Knowledge, Character: A Church-Based Approach to Missionary Preparation* by Greg Carter; *Training Missionaries* by Evelyn Hibbert and Richard Hibbert; *Heart, Heads, and Hands* by David Sills; and *Integral Ministry Training* edited by Robert Brynjolfson and Jonathan Lewis, foster this idea of holistic development.<sup>7</sup> In addition to books, many local churches use various

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<sup>4</sup>Drake and Rebecca Burns, *Meeting Standards*, 31.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 6-8.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>7</sup>Greg Carter, *Skills, Knowledge, Character: A Church-Based Approach to Missionary Candidate Preparation* (Valparaiso, IN: Turtle River, 2010); Evelyn Hibbert and Richard Hibbert, *Training Missionaries: Principles and Possibilities* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2016), Robert Brynjolfson, *Integral Ministry Training: Design and Evaluation*, ed. Robert Brynjolfson and Jonathan Lewis (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006).

forms of “Head, Heart, Hands” in their assessment and development processes, including Austin Stone Community Church, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, and the Village Church in Dallas. In the missions community, the “Head, Heart, Hands” model was made popular by Bethlehem Baptist Church through their sending process, called the Nurture Program.<sup>8</sup>

Done well, the “Head, Heart, Hands” model of holistic development provides clear purpose, measurable goals, and has proven to be effective for greater longevity on the mission field. *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures for Missionary Attrition* shows that pre-field development and training that focuses on the three aspects of knowing, being, and doing are among the top three factors that prevent the attrition of long-term cross-cultural missionaries.<sup>9</sup>

Greg Carter lays out an argument for the value of doing church-based missionary development using the integrated model of “Knowledge, Character, Skills” or “Head, Heart, Hands.” Though limited in its scope, Carter’s book provides a useful resource for churches to begin thinking and constructing a quality sending process. When thinking through the methodology of church-based development, Carter writes, “All three [knowledge, character, and skills] are needed and ought to be addressed by the local church as part of a thorough missionary candidate preparation process.”<sup>10</sup> When talking about these three concepts Carter explains, “Knowledge is probably the easiest of the three areas to address and evaluate. Skills can also be taught and measured, though not

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<sup>8</sup>Bethlehem Baptist Church, “Nurture Program Handbook,” 2016, accessed December 7, 2017, <https://www.amazon.com/clouddrive/share/tYv5IEEc91xUv6wE1bhVEJEsUaLmCIROV8k5I9AcbkY>.

<sup>9</sup>Detlef Blöcher and Jonathan Lewis, “Further Finds in the Research Data,” in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William David Taylor, Globalization of Mission Series (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 105-25.

<sup>10</sup>Carter, *Skills, Knowledge, Character*, 33.

with the same ease as knowledge. Perhaps the most critical of the three and the hardest to evaluate objectively is character.”<sup>11</sup>

Carter’s evaluation of “Head, Heart, Hands” proves to be true. For most churches, though not all, teaching biblical truth and cross-cultural knowledge is much easier and measurable than developing character or skills. Pre-field missionary knowledge, though important, is less valuable in the long-term than skills or character. The most valuable of these aspects is a character that has been developed and tested. In *Loving the Church, Blessing the Nations*, George Miley states, “Over time, godly character is the single most important issue in the effectiveness of those sent to start churches among unreached peoples. It is the most important area of training for cross-cultural service.”<sup>12</sup> Writing over one hundred years ago, Eugene Stock wrote on the same idea: “In the mission-field abroad, as in fact at home, too, character counts more than learning, for more than skill. Character, humanly speaking, is almost everything.”<sup>13</sup> Though teaching knowledge content may initially be easier for a local church, it is actually the church that is best positioned to help missionary candidates grow in deepening character and useful skills in preparation for ministry overseas.

Hibbert and Hibbert, authors of *Training Missionaries*, discuss the practical side of developing pre-field missionaries through the “Head, Heart, Hands” grid:

Character qualities are best developed through interaction with other people and the challenges of life, and the reflecting on that interaction. Skills are best developed by doing, by giving people opportunities to see them being performed by someone who is good at them, by giving opportunities to practice them, and by giving feedback on how well trainees did them. Knowledge is best developed by explaining theory in

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<sup>11</sup>Carter, *Skills, Knowledge, Character*, 33.

<sup>12</sup>George Miley, *Loving the Church, Blessing the Nations: Pursuing the Role of Local Churches in Global Mission* (Westmont, IL: IVP, 2005), 71.

<sup>13</sup>Eugene Stock, “The Training of Character,” in *The Call, Qualifications and Preparation of Candidates for Foreign Missionary Service*, ed. Fennell P Turner (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1901), 76.

the context of trying to answer questions and problems from real life so that strong connections between theory/theology and practice can be made.<sup>14</sup>

The Hibberts also provide their own list of questions to ask when developing missionary training curriculum. These questions mirror closely the ones suggested by Drake and Burns. The questions include, “Being: What kind of person does the missionary need to be? Doing: What does the missionary need to be able to do? Knowing: What do the missionaries need to know in order to be the person God wants them to be and do the work he has given them to do?”<sup>15</sup>

Although it is helpful to examine the three aspects of “head, heart, hands” separately to best understand the nuances of what goes into developing and accessing pre-field workers, it is essential to remember that these concepts should function together as one concept. A simple way to illustrate this is to think of the “head, heart, hands” model of development as three interconnected circles, each able to function on its own, but when united, create a more robust model of development.

Figure 1 shows how all three aspects of “head, heart, hands” are connected and work best when local church leaders assess and grow their members toward holistic development.<sup>16</sup> When a church-based development process includes these three concepts, carried out together, a pre-field missionary is more likely to acquire the desired outcomes of competence in life and ministry, confidence for the task ahead, and credibility among others.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Hibbert and Hibbert, *Training Missionaries*, 11.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Figure 1 has been adapted from Greg Carter’s three component circles, in Carter, *Skills, Knowledge, Character*, 35.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

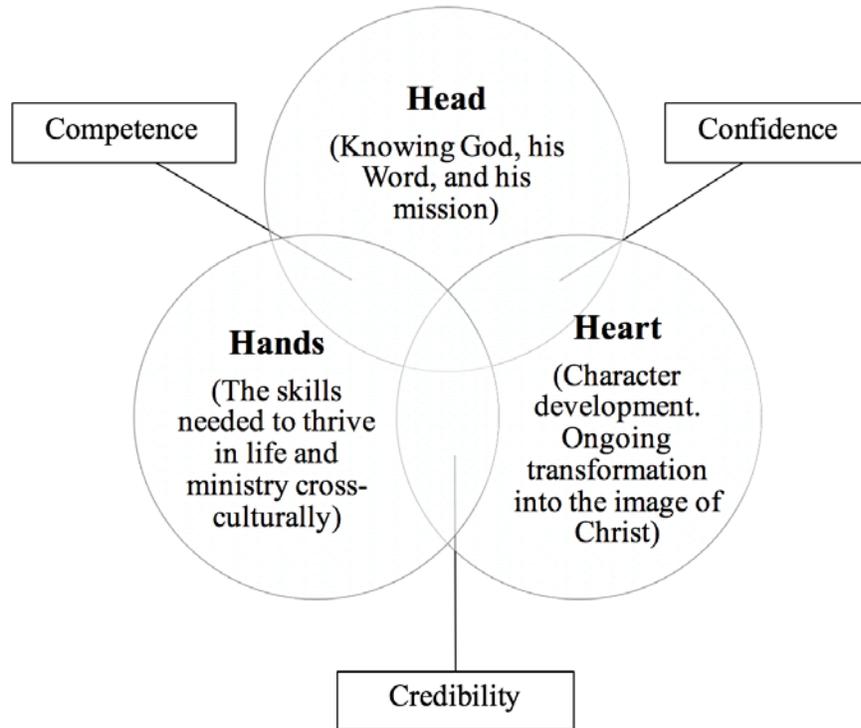


Figure 1. The “Head, Heart, Hands” model of development

### **Profile of an Effective Missionary**

The “head, heart, hands” model of holistic development is more than a theoretical grid for educational study. This model also provides a grounding for local churches to help answer questions like, what are we looking for in someone we send, and what does an effective missionary look like? Before a local church can develop and assess a potential missionary for work overseas, they need to know what they are developing toward and on what criteria they should base their assessment. Rooted in the “Head, Heart, Hands” concept, churches should create clear and measurable developmental markers to help provide clarity to church leaders, as well as aspiring missionaries. These markers, known as a missionary profile, provide a picture of what could and should be when it comes to sending a healthy missionary. Hibbert and Hibbert discuss this common practice among sending agencies and missionary trainers:

Missionary trainers and agencies often design their training with a profile of an effective missionary in mind. The profile outlines the qualities that they expect

missionaries to have. Profiles help mission agencies select candidates who are best suited for missionary work and help training institutions develop curricula that develop the characteristics outlined in the profile.<sup>18</sup>

If mission agencies and training institutions put this much effort and intentionality into training, why not the local church? Jonathan Lewis and Robert Ferris also advocate for creating a profile of an effective missionary when they write,

The profiling exercise creates a verbal picture- a “profile”—which defines the outcome goals in a holistic manner, specifically focusing on the character qualities and skills needed for effectiveness in ministry. . . . This is an important shift from concern only with what individuals need to *know* to what they *are* and can *do* as a result of training.<sup>19</sup>

This idea of having a picture of an effective missionary is not a new concept. For generations, mission agencies and field practitioners have created lists, or profiles, that they believed missionaries going to the field should possess.

C. T. Studd, famous missionary to China and Africa, believed that only the most qualified people should move overseas and engage in cross-cultural missions. He once told those from his mission organization, WEC,<sup>20</sup> that

weaklings should be nursed at home! If any have jealousy, pride or talebearing traits lurking about them, do not send them nor any who are prone to criticize. Send only Pauls and Timothys; men who are full of zeal, holiness, and power. All others are hindrances. If you send us ten such men the work will be done. Quantity is nothing; quality is what matters.<sup>21</sup>

Studd was an intense man known for his bluntness. However, what Studd lacked in tact, he made up for in wisdom. Studd was not alone in his views. Many of history’s greatest missionaries had a similar stance on the need for high caliber missionaries. Hudson Taylor looked for missionaries who were not only willing but skilled as well.<sup>22</sup> Adoniram Judson

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<sup>18</sup>Hibbert and Hibbert, *Training Missionaries*, 4.

<sup>19</sup>Jonathan Lewis and Robert W. Ferris, *Establishing Ministry Training: A Manual for Programme Developers*, ed. Robert W. Ferris (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 24.

<sup>20</sup>WEC International, “History,” accessed January 15, 2018, <http://www.wecinternational.org>.

<sup>21</sup>Tom Telford and Lois Shaw, *Today’s All-Star Missions Churches: Strategies to Help Your Church Get into the Game* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 128.

<sup>22</sup>Tom A. Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas, *Encountering Missionary Life and Work:*

shared in this high expectation of missionary candidates. In writing to the Foreign Missionary Association of Hampton, New York, he wrote,

Let it be a missionary life; that is, come out for life, and not for a limited term. Do not fancy that you have a true missionary spirit, while you are intending all along to leave the heathen soon after acquiring their language. Leave them! for what? To spend the rest of your days in enjoying the ease and plenty of your native land?<sup>23</sup>

Although these missionary heroes of the past come off a bit harsh by today's standards, they did well by asking the very best out of people. Hopefully, however, modern day church-based development processes will have a bit more encouragement and grace attached to them. These missionaries of old were focused on what the end result of a missionary should be: a person with deep character, sufficient knowledge, and a robust skill set for ministry overseas. The role of the church, along with any partner sending and training organizations, is to come alongside pre-field missionaries to equip and cultivate them toward continued maturity. The following section offers several examples of missionary profiles both past and present. Though varied, these profiles provide insight into the need to have clear and measurable objectives when developing and accessing people for cross-cultural missions. The final missionary profile is my proposal of key characteristics of an effective missionary.

### **Qualifications of Elders and Deacons**

Paul's writing in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 provides a detailed list of the qualification of an elder and deacon of a local church. Three lists of qualifications, two for elders and one for deacons, are provided in these two passages. While there is no biblical mandate that cross-cultural missionaries need to be elder or deacon qualified, it seems fitting to use these lists as a way to measure the lives of missionaries sent from

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*Preparing for Intercultural Ministry, Encountering Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 111.

<sup>23</sup>Edward Judson, *Adoniram Judson, D. D. His Life and Labours* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1883), 577-78.

churches. After all, the model given in Acts 13 is of a local church sending out two of their best leaders for missionary service.

The qualifications for elders and deacons seen in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 include (1) blameless, (2) self-controlled, (3) able to teach, (4) not violent but gentle, (5) not quarrelsome, (6) not a lover of money, (7) not a recent convert, (8) has a good reputation with outsiders, (9) not overbearing, (10) not quick-tempered, (11) loves what is good, (12) upright and holy, (13) disciplined, (14) temperate, (15) respectable, (16) not given to drunkenness, (17) husband of one wife, (18) manages his own family well, (19) does not pursue dishonest gain, (20) keeps hold of the deep truths of the faith, (21) sincere, and (22) tested.

In addition, Galatians 5:22-24 provides a list of the fruit of the Spirit—traits that are progressively true of those who follow Christ and are transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit. This list is helpful because it gives a picture into what the life of a growing believer should exhibit. The fruit of the Spirit are (1) love, (2) joy, (3) peace, (4) patience, (5) kindness, (6) goodness, (7) faithfulness, (8) gentleness, and (9) self-control. The list ends with self-control, but it is helpful to include verse 24 to get the full context of the passage: “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

### **Hudson Taylor**

In *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, George Peters offers a list from Hudson Taylor on what he believed were essential characteristics for any missionary. Taylor’s list includes (1) a life yielded to God and controlled by the Spirit, (2) a restful trust in God for the supply of all needs, (3) a sympathetic spirit and a willingness to take a lowly place, (4) tact in dealing with people and adaptability toward circumstances, (5) zeal in service and steadfastness in discouragements, (6) love for communion with God and for the study of the Word, (7) some experience and blessing in the Lord’s work at home, and (8) a

healthy body and vigorous mind.<sup>24</sup> What is most striking about Taylor’s list is the life and ministry that came before it was written. Hudson Taylor created this list of expectations from a lifetime of his own missionary experience.

### **Thomas Hale**

Thomas Hale, in his book *On Being A Missionary*, provides a list of key qualities he believes mission agencies should look for in the missionary recruits they assess. This same list applies to local church assessment. Hale’s list includes (1) insight, (2) adaptability, (3) perseverance, (4) a zeal for sharing the gospel, (5) ability to get along with others, (6) emotional stability, (7) humility, (8) spiritual maturity, and (9) a spirit-filled life.<sup>25</sup> Hale goes on to say the single greatest element of a missionary career is a Christ-like life, asking the question, do people see Jesus in this person?<sup>26</sup>

### **John Piper**

In 1995, John Piper wrote an article entitled, “The Marks of a Spiritual Leader.” In the article, he details the character and characteristics of spiritual leaders. Although his list is not specifically about the missionary context, his insights prove to be one of the most helpful in seeking to understand and assess the right people for missionary service. Piper defines spiritual leadership as “knowing where God wants people to be and taking the initiative to use God’s methods to get them there in reliance on God’s power. The answer to where God wants people to be is in a spiritual condition and lifestyle that display his glory and honor his name.”<sup>27</sup> This should be the goal and aim of anyone seeking

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<sup>24</sup>George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 229.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas Hale, *On Being a Missionary* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2003), 47-54.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>27</sup>John Piper, “The Marks of a Spiritual Leader,” *Desiring God*, January 1, 1995, accessed January 15, 2018, <https://www.desiringgod.org/books/the-marks-of-a-spiritual-leader>.

to do cross-cultural missions, that their life may “display his glory and honor his name.”<sup>28</sup> Piper breaks his “marks of a spiritual leader” down into two categories: the inner circle of spiritual leadership and the outer circle of spiritual leadership.

**The inner circle of spiritual leadership.** The inner circle contains the things that make spiritual leadership spiritual. It contains the marks that have to do with the soul’s vitality. These markers should be true for every Christian, but even more so for those leading others.<sup>29</sup> Before the outer circle marks can be developed, the inner circle marks must be present. The inner circle of spiritual leadership includes (1) helping others experience the glory of God, (2) loving both friend and foe by trusting in God and hoping in his promises, (3) meditating on and praying over his Word, and (4) acknowledging his helplessness and need for Christ.<sup>30</sup> These core inner circle markers build the foundation for the outward attributes and actions of a spiritual leader.

**The outer circle of spiritual leadership.** The outer circle contains characteristics that make up a great leader, both spiritual and non-spiritual leaders.<sup>31</sup> Not all of these traits are distinctly spiritual in nature, but a life that seeks to live them out must depend on the Holy Spirit and his power. The outer circle contains the outworking of a life lived in dependence upon Christ. The outer circle of spiritual leadership includes being (1) restless—a holy discontent with the status quo, (2) optimistic—confident based on the goodness of God, (3) intense—a zeal for life and what it holds, (4) self-controlled—someone who masters their drives through the power of the Spirit, (5) thick-skinned—able to handle criticism well, (6) energetic—one who has a work drive and is able to live

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<sup>28</sup>Piper, “The Marks of a Spiritual Leader.”

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

under pressure, (7) hard thinker—thinks deeply and carefully about things, (8) articulate—can state their thoughts clearly and with force, (9) able to teach, (10) good judge of character—can detect the difference between those who have potential and those who are untrustworthy, (11) tactful—a quality of grace when interacting with people, (12) theologically oriented, (13) dreamer—has a vision of what the future could be, (14) organized and efficient, (15) decisive—is willing to take risks rather than do nothing, (16) perseveres—commits to a task and finishes it even when it would be easier to quit, (17) a lover—loves their spouse deeply and sacrificially, and (18) restful—is able to put down work and rest.<sup>32</sup> Only as these outward attributes and actions are rooted in and flow out of the inner circle spiritual practices do they prove to be healthy and sustainable.

### **The Gateway Missionary Training Centre**

One of the most comprehensive books on the creation and methodology behind missionary training is *Integral Ministry Training: Design and Evaluation*. This book focuses on ministry training from a global perspective, but the central theme is holistic missionary training. Author Robert Brynjolfson writes about his experience starting a missionary training center:

I began to understand the concept of integral ministry training- that to ensure a missionary was well trained we had to have a clear idea of who the missionary is (not just what he knows or does). WEC International had developed a missionary profile, and started using that as a beginning, my cohort and I developed a profile of the missionary we wanted to emerge from the center by describing who a missionary should be, along with what he needs to do and know. The profile became the picture for the outcomes of our program. It was to be the foundation to all of the training at our new Gateway Missionary Training Centre.<sup>33</sup>

Brynjolfson, and those at the Gateway Missionary Training Centre, realized from the beginning that they needed to train missionaries holistically, not just with a knowledge or skills-based curriculum. He did this by creating a missionary profile of what

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<sup>32</sup>Piper, “The Marks of a Spiritual Leader.”

<sup>33</sup>Brynjolfson, *Integral Ministry Training*, 3.

he wanted to see in pre-field missionaries that graduated from his training center.

Brunjolfson stresses one of the keys to creating a successful profile when he writes, “We kept the end in mind—what actually needed to be produced in the life of the missionary candidate.”<sup>34</sup> From this end vision, Brynjolfson and his team worked backward to create a missionary training program that would produce missionaries ready for the field.

The following list of training outcomes make up the missionary profile created by the team at Gateway Missionary Training Centre: (1) spirituality: demonstrates growth in relationship with God; (2) character: reflects Christ-likeness in attitude and action; (3) interpersonal skills: demonstrates ability in relating to others; (4) physical and emotional health: evidences a balanced holistic approach to life; (5) church: demonstrates commitment to the universal body of Christ locally and globally; (6) Bible and theology of missions: has a firm grasp of the Bible and mission theology; (7) team work: able to function effectively on a team; (8) cross-cultural adaptation: understands and values differences in culture and demonstrates adaptability; (9) contextualization: understands the culture and adapts the gospel message to communicate it effectively; (10) language learning: demonstrates competence in acquiring another language; (11) communication: communicates effectively in a variety of settings; (12) evangelism: intentionally seeks opportunities to introduce people to Jesus Christ; (13) discipleship: is a disciple and makes disciples of Jesus; (14) practical skills: willing to learn and to perform activities related to daily living; (15) family and single life: understands and demonstrates what family and or single life involves here and on the mission field; (16) pre-field ministry: knows the steps and practices the skills/activities that are essential to getting to the field.<sup>35</sup> This comprehensive list provides a deep look into what a missionary needs to know, be, and do to be a healthy and effective cross-cultural missionary.

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<sup>34</sup>Brynjolfson, *Integral Ministry Training*, 3-4.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 214-17.

## **Proposed Missionary Profile**

Different forms of missionary profiles have been used in missions recruitment, development, and selection for much of modern missions history, though not always created or used with great intentionality. One great historical example of thoughtful missionary profiles is found in *The Call, Qualifications and Preparation of Candidates for Foreign Missionary Service*. This compilation of articles from 1901, was written by missionaries and missiologists providing their thoughtful reflection on the need for quality missionaries. A missionary profile, or list of character traits, has been as basic as the thoughts put forth by historical missionaries such as Hudson Taylor and Adoniram Judson to well-developed, intentionally-created profiles, such as those used by the Gateway Missionary Training Centre. Missionary profiles can be helpful for agencies and training centers as they assess and train their pre-field workers, but also for local churches seeking to sending well.

Over the last eight years of mobilizing, developing, and assessing potential missionaries in my own local church, I have created the following profile, or picture, of the ideal missionary we hope to send from our church, Sojourn Community Church. This is not to say that everyone we send must perfectly embody every element of the profile. In reality, there is no such thing as an ideal or perfect missionary. God has created his people unique and God has proven to use that uniqueness for his glory. We know from Scriptures that God often uses the weak and broken for his purposes. Whether it be Moses with his hesitancy to obey and fear of speaking (Exod 3-4), Peter with his uncontrolled tongue (Mark 9:2-6) and unbelief (John 18:15-8; 25-27), or Paul and his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:7-8); God is pleased to used his feeble people, simple jars of clay (2 Cor 4:7) to display his glory. Weakness in a missionary that leads to humility and dependence on Christ is also a needed characteristic, but it should never be an excuse. Along with weakness, another common trait among Moses, Peter, Paul, and others in Scripture used to accomplish great things is that they greatly depended on God and continued to grow and mature in the midst of their weakness. Paul articulates this well 2

Corinthians 12:9: “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me.” A missionary profile is not a call to perfection, but a call to maturity and ongoing growth in the midst of weakness and humility.

The church-based profile of an effective missionary used at Sojourn Community Church gives our church leaders a grid, or measuring tool, to help know what we are developing people toward and on what standard we are basing our assessment of people.<sup>36</sup> The ultimate goal of having a working profile of an effective missionary is to have a standard that church leaders can encourage people toward while also having the grace and wisdom to know that ultimately the church is looking for growth and maturity in these key areas.

Sojourn Community Church’s profile of an effective missionary includes twelve characteristics. These twelve characters are seen as interlocking circles that relate to one another in the sending process, and to a greater degree, in the ongoing life and ministry of a missionary. These twelve interlocking circles flow out of and are connected to a person’s relationship with Christ. If a missionary is abiding in Christ through a life of faith marked by a passionate pursuit of Jesus, these markers of an effective missionary will be more evident and long-lasting. Without a life rooted and grounded in a love relationship with Jesus, a missionary cannot hope to thrive, produce fruit in ministry, or even endure on the field. Life with God, abiding in him, is the most necessary element in the life of any missionary. Everything else must flow out of a person’s vibrant love relationship with God, including these twelve characteristics.

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<sup>36</sup>The creation of the “Characteristics of an Effective Missionary” was heavily influenced by the teaching and personal mentorship of Nate Irwin, missions pastor at College Park Church in Indianapolis. Figure 2, “The Characteristics of an Ideal Missionary,” has been adapted from a chapter I wrote in *Church on Mission*. Nathan Garth, “Pre-Field Missionary Assessment in the Context of the Local Church,” in *Churches on Mission: God’s Grace Abounding to the Nations*, ed. Geoffrey Hartt, Christopher Little, and John Wang, Evangelical Missiological Society Series, vol. 25 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2017), 298-99.

The twelve characteristics featured in Sojourn’s missionary profile are broken into the three developmental categories of head, heart, and hands, with each characteristic adding to the development of that particular category. As pre-field missionaries either show themselves to be satisfactory in a particular characteristic, or begin to grow in maturity in that area, holistic development begins to take place, and the result is the whole person being prepared for life and ministry on the field. Each of these twelve characteristics is simply a descriptor of a broader concept that relates to cross-cultural life and ministry.

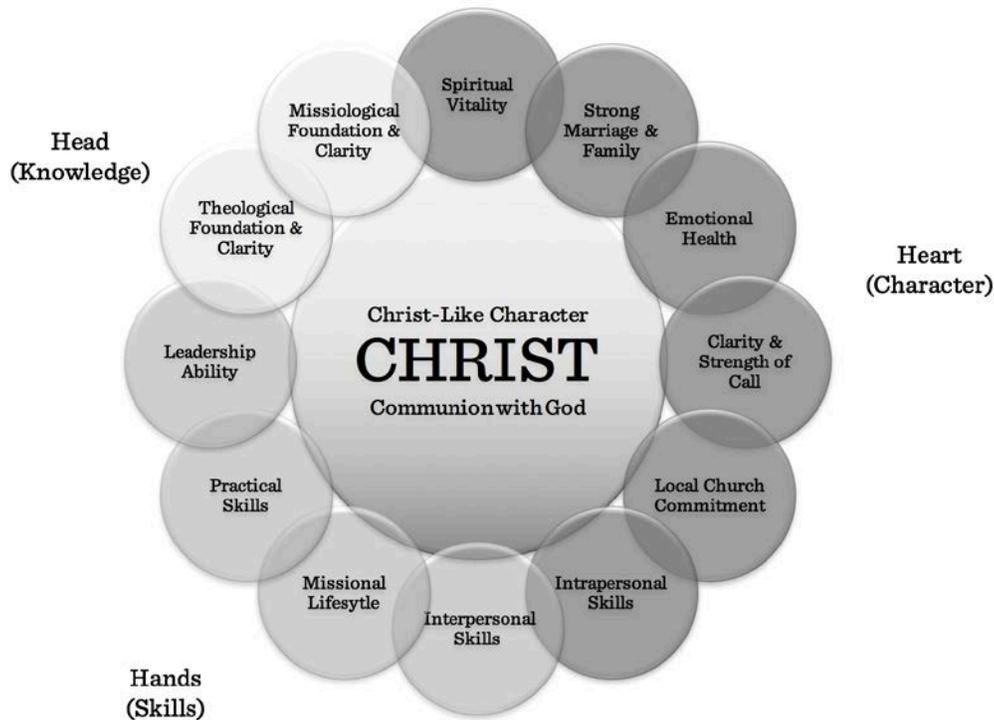


Figure 2. Sojourn Community Church’s “Characteristics of an Effective Missionary.”

**Spiritual vitality.** Spiritual vitality describes the need to have an established, healthy, and growing walk with God. The outworking of this growing life with God can be seen in established practices of spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading and memorization, regular prayer, community with other Christians, rootedness in a local

church, silence and solitude, Sabbath practice, fasting, among others disciplines.<sup>37</sup> However, as needed as these spiritual disciplines are, a person's walk with God must not be solely defined by the outward activities they perform. Spiritual vitality is primarily rooted in a person's identity in Christ, ongoing love relationship with Jesus, and seen in the sanctification of one's ordinary life. Spiritual vitality can also be measured by means such as the Fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-24, the way a person treats others, how a person handles the suffering and pain of life, the victory a person has over sin, etc. A person's spiritual vitality, as seen in figure 2, is connected to and flows from one's communion with God and ongoing development in Christ-like character. This characteristic may be the most important when it comes to health, longevity, and spiritual fruit on the field. Ryan Shaw writes, "Perhaps no other factor contributes more to the ability to produce spiritual fruit than God's powerful presence in a life. A human life filled with the presence and power of God is one of God's choicest gifts to his church and the world."<sup>38</sup> Not only is a life marked with the presence of God vital for ministry, but it is also vital to the health and joy of the missionary. If a person does not abide in Christ and strive to have a healthy spiritual life, everything else will eventually come crumbling down.

**Strong marriage and family.** The characteristic of having a strong marriage and family describes the need to prioritize and maintain essential relationships. These relationships include a spouse and children, if married. For those who are single, this may include a roommate, close Christian community, or extended family that remains stateside.

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<sup>37</sup>I have found the following five books to be helpful as they relate to missionaries and their need to develop health spiritual disciplines. I often recommend these books to both aspiring missionaries and veteran missionaries longing to grow in this area: Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, updated ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014); Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper, 1998); Jerry Bridges, *Growing Your Faith: How to Mature in Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004); Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008); Ryan Shaw, *Spiritual Equipping for Mission: Thriving as God's Message Bearers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014)

<sup>38</sup>Shaw, *Spiritual Equipping for Mission*, 34.

Primarily however, this characteristic relates to those who have a spouse and/or children. Paul addresses the idea in 1 Corinthians 7:25-35 that being married brings additional responsibilities to life. These are joyful responsibilities, but they must be considered when preparing for cross-cultural ministry. Paul explains, “But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit” (vv. 33-34). Paul here is not forbidding marriage but reminding those in the church at Corinth that marriage brings additional responsibilities. In light of this, church leaders need to observe and ask hard questions of the marriages and families of those they seek to send out. Questions such as, how are the pre-field missionaries loving and relating to their spouse and children? Do they have a healthy and functioning marriage? Do they give the attention and energies needed to parent well? Are they maintaining a health work/family balance in their everyday life?

These, along with other questions, are important to explore with a missionary candidate before leaving for the field. Cross-cultural living can put pressures on marriage and family that, if not dealt with properly, can be devastating for a family and for a ministry team. Hale addresses the importance of having a healthy work/family balance when he writes,

Providing for the needs of one’s family is a sacred obligation. It comes before one’s mission work. Older generations of missionaries, thinking they were obeying Christ’s words in Matthew 10:37 and Luke 14:26, put their work before their families with often tragic consequences. They sincerely believed that if they took care of God’s work, God would take care of their wives and children; but it did not always happen that way. . . . The missionary who neglects his family is no better than the businessman who neglects his family. What good is it to gain a church and lose a home, or to win the heathen and lose your children? God never expects us to fulfill one responsibility by neglecting another.<sup>39</sup>

Balancing life and ministry can be difficult for a Christian in any setting but especially for those seeking to do so cross-culturally, which is why it is so valuable for a pre-field

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<sup>39</sup>Hale and Daniels, *On Being a Missionary*, 449-50.

missionary's marriage and family to be strong and well-functioning before going into ministry overseas.

**Emotional health.** Understanding and evaluating a pre-field missionary's emotional and mental health can be a problematic task. Mental health issues and how they are understood vary greatly. People in and outside the church have varying ways of understanding how these issues are best addressed. Local church leaders need to draw close to their pre-field missionaries, ask hard questions, and provide quality pastoral care. It would be easy to pass over this area, but emotional and mental health issues often arise on the field with devastating consequences. These issues must be addressed before a person is sent. It is not wise to send pre-field missionaries overseas without first addressing emotional and mental health issues. This is an area where local church leaders should put essential questions, evaluations, and tests in place, but if they feel unable to address certain situations, they should refer people to mental health professionals or capable counselors. This does not mean an issue would disqualify a person from ministry overseas, but that issues must be addressed.

Helpful tools for local churches in the area of emotional health include personality tests such as Myers-Bridges<sup>40</sup> or Enneagram<sup>41</sup>; psychological tests such as The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)<sup>42</sup> that has been created to assess potential mental health or clinical issues; having an approved list of area counselors and mental health professionals; developing a relationship with the member care departments of the sending agencies a church partners with; and providing counseling

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<sup>40</sup>The Myers & Briggs Foundation, "MBTI Basics," accessed January 22, 2018, <http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/>.

<sup>41</sup>John Starke, "An Evangelicals Guide to the Enneagram," *Christianity Today*, accessed January 22, 2018, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/november/evangelicals-guide-to-enneagram.html>

<sup>42</sup>Jane Framingham, "The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory," Psych Central, accessed January 22, 2018, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/minnesota-multiphasic-personality-inventory-mmipi/>.

sessions as a means of checking in and staying healthy for anyone the church sends out. A local church will need to determine their own convictions and capacity in this area and develop a plan to evaluate and encourage people in their emotional and mental health.

**Clarity and strength of call.** Understanding a person's call to cross-cultural ministry and being confident in that call is important for health and longevity on the field. Tom Steffen defines a call to ministry as “an intense conviction that the sovereign God, through the Word, the Holy Spirit and the community of faith, has set apart a follower of Christ for participation in a specific ministry.”<sup>43</sup> This definition provides a healthy foundation for understanding a missionary call. With that said, people within the world of missions have varying ways of understanding the missionary call. Some think a special call is needed while others think all that is needed is a love for God, a commitment to the Great Commission, and a willingness to go. Robert Speer, the well-respected late nineteenth century missiologist, writes, “The question for us to answer is not, Am I called to the foreign field? But, Can I show sufficient cause for not going?”<sup>44</sup> Speer, along with many others of his day, were committed to the idea that a pre-field missionary candidate did not need a special foreign missionary call. Speer goes on to write, “The essential element of a missionary call is an openness of mind to the last command of Christ and the need of the world; and then one needs only to subject himself to the judgement of the proper authorities as to whether he is qualified to go.”<sup>45</sup>

Local churches will land on differing views of the missionary call, but what is essential here for a church-based development process is the conviction that a pre-field missionary's call should not come in isolation. A personal desire for missionary service is

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<sup>43</sup>Steffen and Douglas, *Encountering Missionary Life and Work*, 55.

<sup>44</sup>Robert E. Speer, “What Essentially Constitutes a Missionary Call,” in Turner, *The Call, Qualifications and Preparation*, 6.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

not the same as a call to go. A true calling must be affirmed and tested by those who have authority in sending, primarily the local church. The local church needs to ask questions related to call and test that call in the context of the local church as far as it is possible. Part of a healthy evaluation of call comes through examining a track record of faithfulness in the candidate's life and through evaluating their history of being resolute during trials and suffering. One helpful question to ask is, has this person been faithful to the call on their life thus far?

**Local church commitment.** Commitment to the local church in the life of a pre-field missionary is vital for a few reasons. First, for someone to be sent, they first need a home, and that takes commitment and time invested in a local church context. For a church to really send well they need to know the person they send and feel a certain level of responsibility that only comes through mutual commitment. In *The Sending Church Defined*, Zach Bradley discusses the problem often seen in churches of people wanting to rush to the field without first planting roots locally. He writes,

Missionary wannabes tend to approach church leaders with a personal calling and a plan already in place—"just sign my church affirmation form and I'll be on my way," they say. Yet covenant [with the church] calls them to not only ask what Christ's church can do for them, but what they can do for Christ's church.<sup>46</sup>

Second, a pre-field missionary needs not only commitment to their local sending church in their home culture, but also to the local church in the place they plan to move. This commitment to the local church on the field can take many forms. Be it local national church membership, membership to an international church, or joining a local house church; the outworking of a love and commitment to the church must be seen in how they engage the local church in their new context. The characteristic of local church commitment should be seen in how the prospective missionary views and values the local church of God no matter what the context, culture, ethnicity, or location. Gerald Bates

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<sup>46</sup>Zach Bradley, *The Sending Church Defined* (Knoxville: The Upstream Collective, 2015), 44.

wrote an article in 1977, on qualifications of a missionary and emphasized the need for sent ones to be “church-oriented” people. He writes, “A missionary oriented exclusively to his profession or activity, to the exclusion of the church, risks almost certain alienation and failure.”<sup>47</sup> Missionaries must be people in love with and committed to local churches.

For local sending church leaders, this characteristic proves easier than some to evaluate and develop. Church leaders can evaluate a person based on their past involvement and commitment to the church. Are they members? Are they active in the church and in regular community with other church members? Do they respond positively to correction and discipleship? Have they been teachable in the local church context? What do others in the church think of the pre-field missionary? The answer to these questions, among others, will provide clarity when asking the larger question: is this person committed to our local church. If there is a lack of commitment, leaders should invite the pre-field missionary into greater involvement and see how they respond.

**Intrapersonal skills.** Intrapersonal skills can be defined as the characteristics and skills that function within someone’s mind or self. This skill set is in contrast to interpersonal skills that relate to the characteristics and abilities functioning outwardly in relationships with others. Judith Anderson Koenig defines intrapersonal skills as the “talents or abilities that reside within the individual and aid him or her in problem solving.”<sup>48</sup> Intrapersonal skills are vital to a cross-cultural missionary because these skills provide the necessary tools and ability to live functionally in society, be able to cross a cultural effectively, and function with health and success over the long-term. Not writing with missionary development in mind, Koenig lists two broad intrapersonal skills:

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<sup>47</sup>Gerald E. Bates, “Who Is Qualified to Be Called as a Missionary,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (October 1977), accessed January 23, 2018, <https://missionexus.org/who-is-qualified-to-be-called-as-a-missionary/>.

<sup>48</sup>Judith Anderson Koenig, *Assessing 21st Century Skills: Summary of a Workshop* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2011), 63.

adaptability and self-management/self-development.<sup>49</sup> Although these are helpful categories, church leaders doing missionary assessment and development need more specific categories relating to cross-cultural ministry. Some of the intrapersonal characteristics and skills related to cross-cultural ministry include, but are not limited to, (1) self-awareness; (2) self-control; (3) resilience; (4) adaptability; (5) flexibility; (6) perseverance; (7) teachability; (8) ability to suffer well; (9) responds well to authority; (10) spirit of humility and servanthood; (11) stress management; (12) emotional stability; (13) displays an inward dependence on and trust in Christ.

**Interpersonal skills.** Interpersonal skills relate to the characteristics and skills needed when communication with and relating to other people. These skills are vital in the life of missionaries because they allow them to relate and work with both their target people and with coworkers.<sup>50</sup> Some of the interpersonal characteristics and skills related to cross-cultural ministry include, but are not limited to, (1) listens and learns from others; (2) displays conflict management skills; (3) team player; (4) shows awareness of other's thoughts, needs, and feelings; (5) able to relate across other cultures; (6) displays humility and deference; (7) shows tact when dealing with others; (8) able to forgive and move on; (9) understands and is able to engage in social norms.

**Missional lifestyle.** Developing a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship, also known as a missional lifestyle, is an essential skill for anyone looking to serve in cross-cultural ministry. Too often, aspiring missionaries have a desire and passion to share the

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<sup>49</sup>Koenig, *Assessing 21st Century Skills*, 63.

<sup>50</sup>Another useful tool for developing both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills for cross-cultural ministry is the idea of cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence is a way of measuring and growing in a person's ability to relate with others cross-culturally. David Livermore believes there is not just one aspect to crossing a culture but four: knowledge CQ—understanding cultural differences; interpretive CQ—interpreting cues; perseverance CQ—persevering through cross-cultural conflict; and behavioral CQ—acting appropriately. David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 109-12.

gospel and make disciples overseas, but when asked about their missional practices within their everyday life, they prove to be unfaithful. In conversations with Andy Kampman, one of the mission pastors at Austin Stone Community Church, he laments the fact that the church too often sends people as cross-cultural disciples makers when they have not proven to be disciple makers in their own context.<sup>51</sup> The end result is often significant struggle and can result in burnout and failure.

Local church leaders have a unique opportunity to call their members to share the gospel and make disciples in the “here and now” of their everyday lives because they live and worship with them on a regular basis. To do this well, churches can provide evangelism and discipleship training, personally model for them what these practices look like, and provide mentorship along the way in order to help missionary candidates grow in living missionally.

**Practical skills.** For a pre-field missionary to transition to a different culture and context, and to thrive in that new setting, pre-field missionaries need a certain set of practical skills. Each culture and context will demand a specific set of practice skills. Some skills are vital no matter where a pre-field missionary moves, such as language learning acumen, ability to navigate complex cross-cultural setting, some understanding and ability in technology, and ability to manage a budget. Other skills will be determined by context, such as handyman skills, medical/first aid training, proven business experience, or an ability to prepare meals from scratch.

These skills, along with many others, need to be developed before a pre-field missionary leaves for the field. Not all needed skills are attainable in a pre-field setting, but those that are should be sought out. For church mission leaders to best understand the practical skills needed for their pre-field workers, leaders need to work with sending

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<sup>51</sup>Andy Kampman, email to author, August 10, 2017.

agencies, missionaries on the field, and their missionary candidates to create a list of needed practical skills.

**Leadership ability.** Not every sent out missionary needs to be a gifted leader, but every sent one needs to possess some leadership ability, if only the ability to lead themselves and those in their family. Everyone is called upon to lead in some form or fashion at some point in their ministry, the question is, to what degree does a person desire leadership or to what degree do they have the ability to lead. Determining a pre-field missionary's leadership desire and ability gives church leaders insight into proper expectations, future leadership goals, and areas of growth in the candidate's life. This characteristic can be developed in the local church setting through providing growing levels of leadership experience and responsibility within the church and through ongoing mentorship by experienced church leaders.

**Theological foundation and clarity.** The final two characteristics of theology and missiology fall under the category of Head, or knowledge development. Although these are often overemphasized to the detriment of holistic development, this is not always the case. Some church traditions or missionary training programs do not emphasize theology and missiology enough. It is vital to have a strong and ongoing education in the Bible, theology, missiology, and current missionary trends.

Almost universally in the missionary profiles I have examined is a desire to see missionaries be well developed in their understanding of the Bible and in theology. Eric Wright quotes longtime missionary Russ Irwin when he writes, "Emphasize, emphasize, emphasize Bible training. It is needed in every type of missionary work and in all situations."<sup>52</sup> Some could assume that knowing and applying the truths of the Bible would

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<sup>52</sup>Eric E. Wright, *A Practical Theology of Missions: Dispelling the Mystery, Recovering the Passion (Ministry and Mission) (Ministry Mission)* (Leominster, UK: Day One, 2010), 188.

be a given for those in ministry but this is not always the case. Hibbert and Hibbert address the value of knowing and apply the Bible in cross-cultural ministry:

Despite going to Bible college or seminary training, many of us who have served as missionaries felt unprepared for what we faced on the field. Two recent studies of ministry and missionary training highlight that missionaries particularly feel unable to relate the issues they face in cross-cultural ministry to their studies of Bible and theology. As missionaries, we are meant to pass on our understanding of the Bible. We therefore need to know the Bible well.<sup>53</sup>

What better place to learn the Bible and grow in its truths than in the context of the local church. Through being an active leader in the church, pre-field missionaries should already be actively pursuing Bible learning and teaching opportunities. However, more specific training should be put in place. Robust theological training can take place at seminaries or Bible colleges, but the church is also capable of doing this well. Options for local churches include extended discipleship relationships that focus on Bible and theology, small group studies through content like the New Testament or through theology books like Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, or by participating in theological extension programs like Porterbrook Learning<sup>54</sup> or Ligonier Connect.<sup>55</sup> These options are just a few of the many pathways of theological development most any local church can offer its members.

**Missiological foundation and clarity.** Along with a good understanding of the Bible and theology, a pre-field missionary needs to be grounded and have clarity in missiology, or, the study of missions, and its practical outworkings. Hibbert and Hibbert explain,

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<sup>53</sup>Hibbert and Hibbert, *Training Missionaries*, 39.

<sup>54</sup>Porterbrook, "Porterbrook Learning," accessed January 24, 2018, <http://porterbrooknetwork.org/porterbrook-learning>.

<sup>55</sup>Ligonier Ministries, "Ligonier Connect," accessed January 24, 2018, <https://www.ligonier.org/connect/>.

Missiology is a practical discipline. More than simply recording missionary practice or theorizing about it, its purpose is to help missionaries become more effective in the ministry. . . . Missiology gives cross-cultural workers tools for analyzing and understanding what is going on in other cultures so that missionaries can do their task better.<sup>56</sup>

While some of the lessons needed in missiology will be learned on the field, it would be foolish to send cross-cultural missionaries without first expecting them to have a foundation in mission theology, mission history, strategy and engagement, culture and anthropology, world religions, mission trends, and specific field related issues.

This area, more than any other, can be intimidating for a local church. Few local churches have seasoned mission leaders to provide training in this area. This does not mean, however, that the church has to wholly outsource the task of missiological development. Although most sending agencies do offer some mission training for their candidates, local churches can also take an active role in mission training through a variety of creative ways. This includes, but is not limited to, intentional training through short-term teams, small group book studies on relevant mission books, hosting a Perspectives class,<sup>57</sup> joining with area churches to create a practical missionary training course, or inviting a furloughing missionary to base out of their local church to provide mentorship for pre-field missionaries.

### **Church-Based Sending Process**

Once local church leaders determine what they are looking for in a missionary candidate, leaders then need to create a clear and accessible sending process to help candidates grow toward this idea. A sending process is the journey a potential missionary takes through identification, development, assessment, and affirmation before being sent out with the blessing and support of their local church. As seen in chapter 3, through

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<sup>56</sup>Hibbert and Hibbert, *Training Missionaries*, 57.

<sup>57</sup>Perspectives of the World Christian Movement, accessed January 27, 2018, <http://www.perspectives.org/>.

interviews with sending church leaders, there are numerous variations of how churches put together and carry out a church-based sending process. Churches like Bethlehem Baptist Church<sup>58</sup> or Calvary Church<sup>59</sup> have a very formalized, comprehensive process, whereas churches like Christ Community Church and Brook Hills Church rely more heavily on relationships and simplified processes.<sup>60</sup>

Local churches need to examine their culture, capacity, and competency to determine what they have to offer in pre-field missionary development and create a process that fits their context. Many aspects of the development process can be done within a local church while other things may best be done in partnership with other organizations or churches. There is no “one size fits all” way of developing and accessing missionaries. The following proposed sending process is not intended to be a “one size fits all” model to simply drop in the middle of any church context. Instead, the proposed process is to act as a model, or skeleton, to give structure that will allow a church to build a contextualized approach to developing and accessing pre-field missionaries in their specific context.

The proposed church-based sending process is organized into three phases—foundations, development, and sending—with each phase being differentiated by two different interviews. Each phase builds upon the other and seeks to accomplish the shared goal of helping a prospective missionary grow roots in the local church, explore their call and gifts, be developed toward cross-cultural engagement, and be sent out for ministry as well prepared as possible.

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<sup>58</sup>Bethlehem Baptist Church, “Nurture Program Handbook.”

<sup>59</sup>Calvary Church, “Cross Training Candidate Manual,” 2017, accessed December 15, 2015, <https://www.amazon.com/clouddrive/share/PnLOtUzqU3FSF3njz4tvW8qTp5hGEnan03BWfnWHuJP>, 5.

<sup>60</sup>In figure 3, the proposed church-based sending process is a variation of Sojourn Community Church’s sending process. Nathan Garth, “Sending Process,” Sojourn International, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://international.sojournchurch.com/sending-process/>.

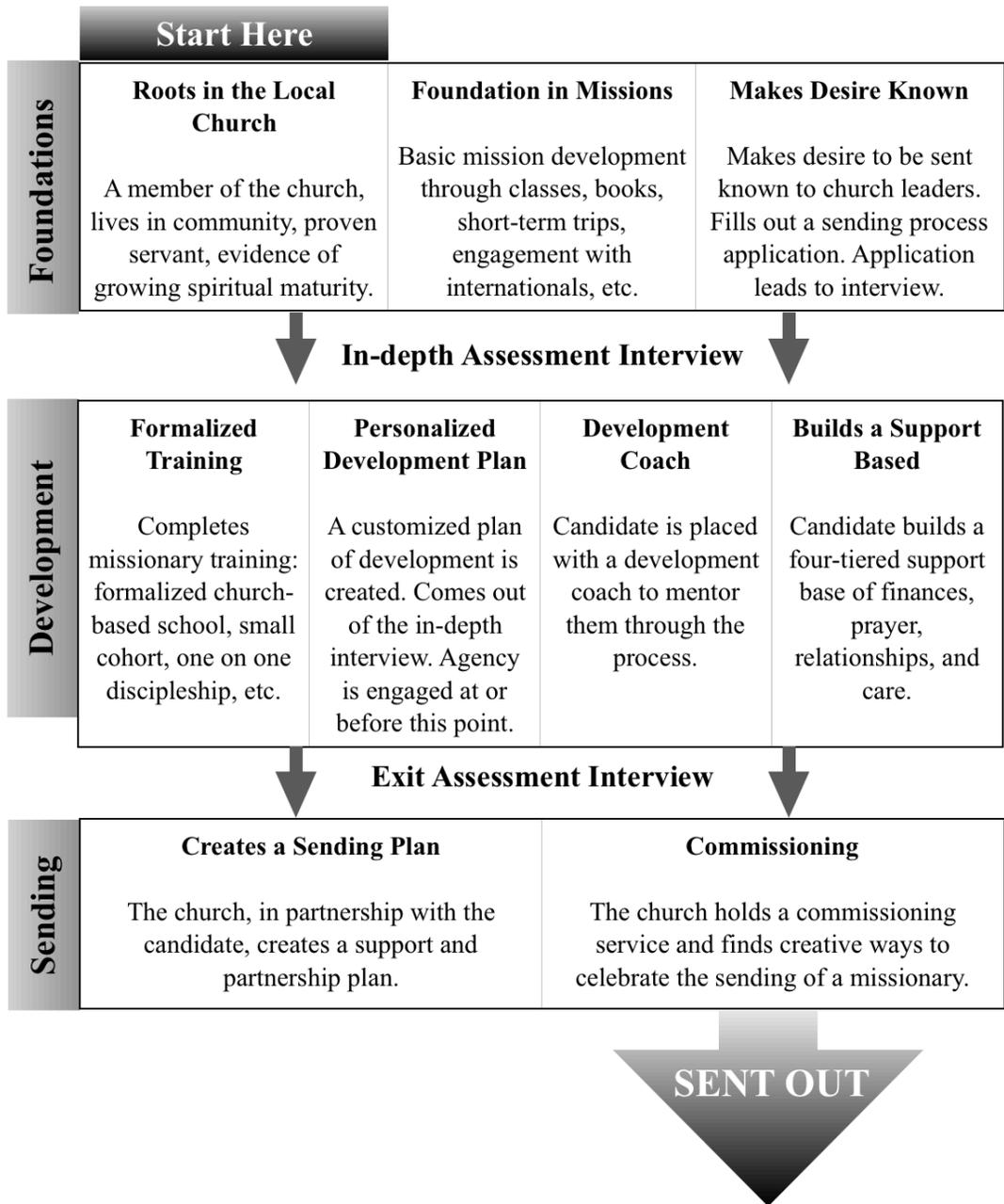


Figure 3. Church-based sending process

### Foundations

The first phase in the sending process is the *foundations phase*. The focus of this phase is to lay the ground work of being sent well by cultivating the relationship between the church and prospective missionary, and by developing a basic knowledge and passion for missions. In many ways, this is a pre-development phase that needs to take place before

a member enters the intentional sending process. Successful completion of this phase includes active membership and service in the local church, a growing knowledge and engagement in missions, and a conversation with church leaders exploring a pre-field missionary's call and desire to be sent.

**Roots in the local church.** The starting point for the church-based sending process is membership to a local body. Before a pre-field missionary can be send out of a church they need to be officially committed to that church and take steps to plant roots that will last once they go overseas. Commitment to a local church can be seen in how pre-field missionaries faithfully serve, how long they have been active members of the church, and to what degree they are living in community with other church members.

This aspect of the sending process should not be rushed. For the health of the missionary and the health of the sending church, a pre-field missionary should spend sufficient time as an active member of the church. If a pre-field missionary is able to invest deeply over an extended period, the benefit for the missionary and the church will become evident over time. When writing about the value of the local church in missionary preparation, Steve Hoke and Bill Taylor write, “You [the pre-field missionary] need the body. You cannot expect to launch into crosscultural outreach without a rock-solid foundation in a local body of Christ.”<sup>61</sup> Deep roots planted in the local church will result in more support raising success, more committed and lasting prayer partners, a healthier strategic partnership, and a better home base to return to when the missionary comes back on furlough. Time invested on the frontend of sending will almost always result in better partnership as well as a healthier missionary and a more engaged sending church.

On a practical note, putting a timeframe and expectations of membership into the sending process is helpful. How long do church leaders expect pre-field missionaries

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<sup>61</sup>Steve Hoke and Bill Taylor, *Global Mission Handbook: A Guide for Crosscultural Service* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 81.

to be rooted locally before they are sent out? What tangible membership markers are leaders looking for when sending? An example of creating rootedness in the local church would be to ask potential missionaries to be faithful members for two years, active in a small group, and serve in leadership in an area of ministry within the church.

**Foundation in missions.** The second aspect of the foundations phase is establishing a baseline of missions education and exposure. Most often, potential missionaries will already have some exposure and love for missions. The role of the church here is to provide the whole congregation with exposure and training opportunities to help members grow in an awareness of God’s heart for the nations found in Scripture, a deeper understanding of global mission realities, and every Christian’s responsibility to engage in reaching the nations.

The church’s role in establishing a foundation for missions in every member can be accomplished in a number of ways. Some suggestions include, but are not limited to, designing and offering an introduction class on global missions,<sup>62</sup> asking small groups and Sunday School classes to study a missionary biography or other mission-related book, hosting a Perspectives class, offering short-term trips that are combined with robust training in missions,<sup>63</sup> or offering opportunities to engage with the international population in a church’s community. These opportunities, among others, will lay a foundation of understanding and passion needed for those God is calling to cross-cultural ministry.

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<sup>62</sup>One helpful book providing an introduction to mission and mission realities is Jeff Lewis, *God’s Heart for the Nations* (Orlando: BottomLine Media, 2015). This eight-week study takes people through a biblical basis of mission, asks engaging questions, and provides prayer promotes on several unreached people groups.

<sup>63</sup>Two useful resources when seeking to develop robust short-term mission teams includes Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*; and The Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, “7 Standards of Excellence,” accessed January 29, 2018, [http://www.soe.org/explore/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/SOE\\_Booklet\\_Online.pdf](http://www.soe.org/explore/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/SOE_Booklet_Online.pdf).

**Makes desire known.** The final aspect of the foundations phase is for pre-field missionaries to make their desire to be sent as a cross-cultural missionary known to the leaders of the church. If a potential missionary plants roots in the local church and seeks to develop basic mission foundations through the church's ministries, then this initial meeting should not come as a surprise to church leaders. However, this meeting can also act as an opportunity to call passionate missions people who have limited connection or service in the church to slow down and be sent well. Either way, this initial conversation can act as a starting point of intentional development. It can make church leaders aware of a person's desire to go, give leaders an opportunity to explain the sending process, call the prospective missionary to greater growth, and allow church leaders to provide words of encouragement.

**Application.** Once a prospective missionary works through the foundations phase of the sending process and is given the green light to move forward, he or she should complete a sending process application and have an assessment interview with key church leaders. A sending process application should be created by the local church in an effort to help leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of a pre-field missionary and to know how to best provide develop for the candidate moving forward.

A good application asks open-ended questions in the three areas of "knowledge, character, skills" or "head, heart, and hands." These questions should provide in-depth information on a person's current readiness for the field. A well-developed sending process application includes hard questions that get past walls people often put up and get to the heart of a pre-field missionary's story. An application should seek answers to three overarching assessment areas: knowledge—does this person have the knowledge needed to be the person God wants him or her to be and do the work he has given them to do, character—is this person who he or she needs to be, to be healthy and flourish overseas, skills—does this person have the skills needed to be able to function and do the job in a cross-cultural context? These questions, along with a church's profile of an effective

missionary, should be sufficient to help create questions for a sending process application.<sup>64</sup>

**In-depth assessment.** Once a pre-field missionary fills out an application, church leaders should then set up an in-depth assessment interview. An assessment interview is an opportunity for missionary candidates to examine themselves and have others examine their call, character, and competency for ministry and to provide a clear pathway toward growth. Zach Bradley emphasizes the value of church-based assessment when he writes,

Assessment that's rooted in the local church helps lead candidates to a biblical posture of affection and commitment to their local church. . . . At the same time, assessment draws the church into ownership of the missionary and their missionary task. It naturally develops plurality, vulnerability, and affection. A church may not feel they have enough expertise in cross-cultural missions to effectively assess candidates. However, they absolutely have what is most needed: the context for shaping men and women in the gospel.<sup>65</sup>

Assessment should be something people look forward to going through because they know it will point them to continued growth in their development journey. Too often, people think of assessment as a bouncer at an exclusive club. As they get closer to the front of the line they nervously wonder if they are good enough to make the cut. In reality, assessment should be more like an encouraging football coach. Sure, he can keep you from joining the game, but ultimately his desire is to teach and coach you in such a way that you perform at your highest level.

This assessment interview can take place in any number of environments, but it should be a place where candidates can feel safe to be honest and vulnerable. The interview can be based on a set of prearranged questions or based off the written sending process

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<sup>64</sup>See appendix 2 for an example of a sending process application.

<sup>65</sup>Zach Bradley, "Fit for the Task: Why the Local Church Must Lead in Missionary Assessment," October 23, 2016, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://www.imb.org/2016/10/23/fit-for-the-task-missionary-assessment/>.

application turned in before the interview. The interviewer should consider providing a set of self-assessment questions to pre-field missionaries so that they can begin to assess their missionary readiness long before the interview takes place. These self-assessment questions can also be used in the interview for discussion.<sup>66</sup>

Church leaders should also consider doing the interview in community with several key leaders from the church. Having too many people in the assessment can be intimidating, but consider having an experienced person lead the interview. This person might be someone from the church who receives outside training in assessment or a church leader with experience in ministry and who themselves may have gone through a ministry assessment. Requiring character references in the sending process application is also helpful for the interview process.

It is important for church leaders to ask hard questions, but also be ready to provide pastoral care and encouragement along the way. Very rarely should assessment be seen as a pass or fail test. Only when it becomes clear that a potential missionary is not ready to move forward in missionary development should an assessment end with a no.<sup>67</sup> However, sometimes saying no, or telling a missionary candidate they are not ready to be sent, is the best gift a church leader can give. Going to the field with unresolved issues can be destructive to a missionary team and to the person who goes.

A good assessment drills down deep into hard and painful areas. The deep things of the heart need to be revealed so that a plan for growth can be developed. Deep things will only come to light once the church has built trust through the sending process and

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<sup>66</sup>See appendix 3 for an example of self-assessment questions.

<sup>67</sup>When talking about assessment, Sojourn Community Church uses the analogy of a traffic light. A red light symbolizes a person we will not send. This rarely happens in the first assessment. This normally comes after time and many opportunities have been given to an individual. A yellow light is normal for an assessment. It means that a person can move forward with caution but has areas they need to work on before leaving for the field. A green light is used for a person who is good to go. This also rarely happens at the end of an in-depth assessment interview. A green light is normally given after growth in identifiable areas has taken place.

those leading the assessment are willing to ask the hard, poignant questions. For example, make sure to ask clear questions about pornography, masturbation, sexual abuse, hidden sins, health of a marriage, and other things that will strip away the false veneer that is often presented. Candidates have to get raw about their sins, fears, and hidden expectations before an assessment team can take the proper steps of providing encouragement and a plan of growth.

**Development.** After the in-depth interview is completed, unless something significant is discovered, a candidate is invited into the development phase, which includes involvement in formal mission training, the creation of a personal development plan, and being assigned a development coach.

**Formalized training.** Providing specialized missionary training is an important, albeit challenging, part of developing missionaries in the local church. Although some excellent para-church organizations provide quality missionary training,<sup>68</sup> this does not mean the local church should wholly relegate this responsibility. Valuable questions a church should ask when considering missionary training is, what can the church provide in the area of specialized missions training and what does the church need help with? Whatever the answers, every local church can take some responsibility.

As a church seeks to put together a specific missionary training plan that fits the capability of the church, it is important to develop the curriculum around the methodology of “head, heart, hands.” When talking about ministry readiness, Tom Steffen writes,

The tasks required of graduates should determine every curricular decision. They identify all the major tasks of the ministry in relation to what students should know,

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<sup>68</sup>Along with training provided through sending organizations, organizations exist exclusively to provide missionary training. These include, but are not limited to, Mission Training International (MTI) in Colorado Springs, CO; The Center for Intercultural Studies (CIT) in Urban Mills, NC; and Radius International in Tijuana, Mexico. Steffen and Douglas, *Encountering Missionary Life and Work*, 112.

do, and be. From these tasks they identify the competencies, character, and commitment levels necessary to accomplish them. Once this is done, they create the profile of the type of person who can accomplish the tasks. From the profile they project backward to identify the curriculum necessary for specific ministry effectiveness.<sup>69</sup>

Steffen here provides a helpful model to follow when developing the content of mission-specific training. What should a missionary know, be, and do? What level of competency, character, and commitment is needed? From the answers to these questions, a profile of an effective missionary is created. Once a profile is created, a missionary training curriculum can be developed to help people grow toward this model missionary profile. For example, if a local church used the missionary profile proposed earlier in this chapter, then church leaders would provide missionary training in-house and in partnership with organizations to develop their pre-field missionary toward these twelve characteristics. Once a curriculum is determined, the question becomes, what model of content delivery would be best suited for the church?

Of the nine sending churches surveyed in the previous chapter, all nine had some form of specific missionary training. The way in which they delivered this content varied. Antioch Community Church and Summit Church provided mission-specific training through a school-based model.<sup>70</sup> Calvary Church and Bethlehem Baptist Church provided mission-specific training through self-paced, self-driven development programs. Churches like Austin Stone Community Church, Cornerstone Church, Christ Community Church, and Brook Hills Church delivered mission-specific training through a model that focused on getting involved in ministry and learning as a person served. This in-ministry model is often combined with additional mission-specific training classes, experiences, and reading assignments. Immanuel Baptist Church provides the final model in their

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<sup>69</sup>Steffen and Douglas, *Encountering Missionary Life and Work*, 103.

<sup>70</sup>For an example of a school-based approach to training, see Sojourn Community Church's School of Missions in appendix 4.

discipleship, small group-based training. They do this by calling prospective missions to a three-year pastoral residency.

In all, the churches surveyed provide four models of content delivery, though each contains its own nuances and variations. The four models include school-based training, best seen in Antioch's Church Planting School; self-driven training, seen in Bethlehem's Nurture Program and Calvary's Cross Training; in-ministry training, best seen in Austin Stone's Goer Communities; and small group discipleship or cohort-based training, seen in Immanuel's residency program. These, and variations of the four, are all valid ways of providing mission specific training in a local church context. A fifth model not seen in the churches surveyed, but particularly useful for small churches, is the one-on-one discipleship model. This model of missionary training would allow a church leader to mentor, study with, and disciple a prospective missionary when it is not possible to do training in community with others.

If church leaders feel unequipped to handle this developmental task, one idea would be to ask other known missions-minded churches what they do for missiological training or ask partner sending agencies what they recommend. Often, the best resource for churches wanting to grow in sending church ideas is to actively learn from other churches. Most local churches are happy to share what they have found to be helpful.

**Personal development plan.** Along with formalized mission training, a pre-field missionary should also complete a personalized development plan created for them by church leaders after the assessment interview. A personal development plan, or PDP, is a written list of assignments that help fill the gaps of development that need to be met before being sent overseas. For example, if it becomes apparent in the assessment interview that a missionary candidate has past issues with sexual sin, limited experience with internationals, or limited theological training, then a PDP would be created to fill those developmental gaps. For example, this person's PDP could include (1) counseling for sexual sin and the establishment of an accountability relationship; (2) three months

serving at a refugee resettlement organization; and (3) completing a book study with other pre-field missionaries of Gregg Allison's *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith*.<sup>71</sup> A pre-field missionary's PDP can be done at the same time other formal mission training is taking place, but it should be completed before a candidate is commissioned and sent overseas. Completion of a PDP strengthens commitment to growth and provides confidence that the pre-field missionary is well prepared. A pre-field missionary's PDP should be done in conjunction with an ongoing relationship with a development coach.

**Development coach.** Within the development phase, all four aspects of formal training, PDP, relationship with a coach, and support raising; are often happening at or around the same time. This four-tiered approach to development seeks to provide missionary training in community with others, address a potential missionary's specific need through a customized development plan, all while being mentored through the process by a seasoned Christian. A good development coach is part mentor (someone who shares wisdom and insight) and part coach (someone who encourages and challenges toward growth). A development coach can be a former missionary but does not need to be. Often the best coaches are mature Christians who are a few years ahead in life, are present with the pre-field missionary, and act as a stabilizing force in the sending process. A development coach actively gets to know the mentee, meets with the mentee regularly, and journeys with the mentee through the whole sending process. Development coaches often continue this relationship once a missionary arrives on the field and continues to act as a mentor and coach. *Transmissional Coaching* by Steve Ogen and Tim Roehl, though not specifically about missionary coaching, is a great resource for training development coaches in the local church context.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Gregg R. Allison, *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith: A Guide to Understanding and Teaching Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018).

<sup>72</sup>Steve Ogen and Tim Roehl, *Transmissional Coaching: Empowering Spiritual Leaders in a Changing Ministry World* (Nashville: B & H, 2008).

**Builds a support base.** The final aspect of the development phase is the aspect of building a support base. Support raising is sometimes seen as simply raising financial support, however, this is a limited and unhelpful way to look at the support raising process. Money is indeed an important factor, without it a pre-field worker could not get to the field; yet, for a prospective missionary to be sent and also thrive on the field, a more robust support structure is needed. Figure 4 shows a four-tiered model of missionary support that includes financial support, prayer support, relational support, and member care support.

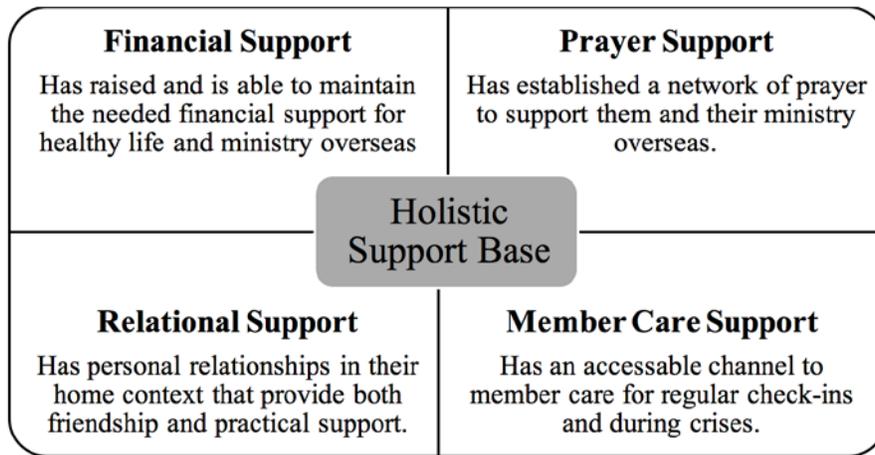


Figure 4. Four-tiered model of missionary support

This four-tiered model is just one of several examples of robust missionary support that can come from the local church. Other examples of church-based support structures include Austin Stone Community Church’s advocate team model,<sup>73</sup> Bethlehem Baptist Church’s Barnabas Teams,<sup>74</sup> and the model of support advocated for in Neal

<sup>73</sup>100 People Network, “Advocate Team Description and Roles,” accessed December 14, 2017, <http://www.100peoplenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Advocacy-Team-Description-and-Roles.pdf>.

<sup>74</sup>Bethlehem Baptist Church, “Nurture Program Handbook.”

Pirollo's *Serving as Senders Today*. Pirollo's model includes moral support, logistical support, financial support, prayer support, communication support, and reentry support.<sup>75</sup>

## **Sending**

Following the completion, or near completion, of the development phase of the sending process, a pre-field missionary will have a second official interview with church leaders. This second interview is far less formal and less intensive. The purpose of the exit interview is to check in with the prospective missionary, and together with the development coach, make sure the candidate has completed their PDP and is ready to be commissioned. Unless something new is brought to light, this final interview should be one of encouragement and a place where leaders provide a final challenge to ongoing growth.

**Creates a sending plan.** The first step in the final phase of the sending process is for local church leaders, in collaboration with the pre-field missionary, to create a support and partnership plan. This document, signed by both parties, clearly communicates the amount of financial support that will be given and the details of other types of support and on-going partnership. A document like this is helpful because it provides clarity and sets proper expectations for both the pre-field missionary and the sending church.<sup>76</sup>

**Commissioning.** The final aspect of the sending process is the actual sending of the pre-field missionary. This includes a commissioning service and other various means of celebration done within the local church. This aspect of the sending process is intended to celebrate both the life and faithfulness of the one being sent and of the God behind the sending. The idea of a church commissioning its leaders for missionary service is found in Acts 13:1-4. In Acts, the leaders of the church are fasting, praying, and worshipping the

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<sup>75</sup>Neal Pirollo, *Serving as Senders Today: How to Care for Your Missionaries as They Prepare to Go, Are on the Field and Return Home*, 20<sup>th</sup> ed. (San Diego: Emmaus Road, 2012).

<sup>76</sup>See an example of a sending agreement in appendix 5.

Lord. As they are worshipping, the Holy Spirit tells them to send two of their best leaders, Barnabas and Saul, for ministry in the unreached world. In obedience, the church sent them out. Acts 13:3 reads, “Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.” The Church at Antioch provides a model for other churches to follow in the way they send out their leaders for ministry.

In addition to a commissioning service being a biblical concept, it is also a legally needed one. The commissioning service, and specifically a commissioning certificate, are important for tax reasons. Long-term missionaries are considered self-employed ministers by the IRS (in the United States), and because of this, proof of a missionary’s commissioning can be important for certain tax provisions.<sup>77</sup>

The key idea behind a church sending out their missionaries through a commissioning service is that commissioning acts as a means of affirmation to the church at large that the leaders of the church, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, support this newly appointed missionary. Second, by publicly commissioning a pre-field missionary, the church is also celebrating the life and service of the one they are sending. Indeed, sending is a real reason to celebrate as a church. Additional ways to celebrate the sending of a missionary include, but are not limited to, celebration events and meals, videos, gifts to the missionary, an additional offering taken during the commissioning service.

**Final thoughts on the sending process.** For any church that plans to send out missionaries, having a well-defined and well-communicated sending process is a valuable tool. It gives prospective missionaries accessible steps toward being sent and it gives

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<sup>77</sup>For more details on the legal implications of a commissioning service and for a model of how to hold a commissioning service, see The Evangelical Alliance Mission, “Complete Guide to a Commissioning Service,” accessed January, 26, 2018, <https://team.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Guide-to-Commissioning-Service.pdf?hsCtaTracking=eae741d0-e5bc-431c-a4f9-d85bdc5388f6%7Ce6bba09b-763d-4f12-ae1e-7e6f9c8ff5cd>

local church leaders clarity on the type of person they want to send and what expectations they should have for those in the sending process.

From the observable best practices of the nine sending churches interviewed and from my own experience as an international missions pastor, there are a few important things to consider when assessing and developing missionaries in the context of the local church. First, at the core of any pre-field missionary training process is the idea of discipleship. Missionary training is more than basic discipleship, but it is certainly not less. Mike Easton, the mission pastor at Cornerstone Church in Ames, Iowa, has helped build the church sending process around their normal college discipleship program. He says, “We aren’t creating new programs in our church to meet the assessment and development of missionaries. Our process-driven church is our missionary development tool. We don’t separate out missionary development from our normal discipleship process.”<sup>78</sup> Cornerstone maybe an extreme example given their context as primarily a college church built for discipleship and leader development, however, if a church, no matter what the size, builds their sending process around discipleship and discipleship principles, they will be well on their way to producing quality missionary candidates. Howard Foltz, when discussing church-based missionary preparation, writes, “A training program needs to be in place that builds Christian character and personal discipleship. Members of a sending church understand that their need to be discipled is met within the church, and they are not dependent upon parachurch sources for discipling.”<sup>79</sup> At its core, missionary development is discipleship.

A helpful resource for churches looking to grow in disciple making and in equipping disciple makers is the International Mission Board’s “Deepen Discipleship.”

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<sup>78</sup>Mike Easton, email to author, July 25, 2017.

<sup>79</sup>Howard Foltz, “Developing a Church-Based Missionary Preparation Program for Charismatic Churches” (D.Min. diss., Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1989), 111.

This resource is intended to be “an interactive discipleship process that will prepare Christians for both local and global disciple-making in the context of local church community . . . it’s also about deepening your relationship with God and others.”<sup>80</sup> This web-based program takes a participant, in community with others, through six months of studying the New Testament interactively. “Deepen Discipleship” includes three interactive pieces: read and learn, reflect and change, and go and do.<sup>81</sup> Although the International Mission Board created this community-based discipleship program for their sending churches and pre-field missionaries, the program is available free of charge to anyone.

Second, the ideal way to do missionary training and development is in community. Hibbert and Hibbert write,

Experiencing a healthy community provides the trainee with a living model to refer back to for comparison when face with difficult experiences on the field. The more closely their training community resembles their later on-field missionary experience, the more helpful that community will be in the long run.<sup>82</sup>

Along with preparing a pre-field missionary for community on the field, doing development in community also allows prospective missionaries to share ideas and experiences, sharpen one another in character development, and potentially build relationships that lead to the forming of church-based teams. Herbert Brasher details the importance of community in missionary development when he writes,

Christian character development is the product of both intimacy with God and transparency/accountability in the context of community. . . . The biblical point of view is that community is a context where basic biblical knowledge is gathered, attitudes are formed, and ministry gifting begins to show itself (Acts 13:1-2).<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>International Mission Board, “Deepen Discipleship,” accessed January 29, 2018, <https://www.imb.org/topic/deepen-discipleship/>.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Hibbert and Hibbert, *Training Missionary*, 84.

<sup>83</sup>Herbert Brasher, Jr, “Important Factors in Pre-Field and Field-Based Preparation of Missionaries Serving with Cross and Crescent International.” (D.Min. diss., Columbia International University, 2007), 22.

Third, and finally, as much as it is possible to do in a church's local context, the church should create a sending process that allows development to happen in-ministry, as a person is serving among the nations. A clear best practice of the nine churches surveyed is that doing development through an in-ministry model is highly effective. When discussing the in-ministry model of missionary development, Hibbert and Hibbert write,

Ideally, missionary trainees should be exposed to authentic cross-cultural ministry problems through participation in authentic cross-cultural ministry. They should be confronted with questions for which they have no pre-prepared answers, and experiences that do not easily fit their inherited Christian frameworks.<sup>84</sup>

Development in-ministry allows pre-field missionaries to learn as they are engaging a different culture, relating with people, and testing out ministry tools. For in-ministry development to be as effective as possible, it should be combined with more formal training elements and should include regular mentorship and debriefing.

### **Concluding Remarks and Areas of Further Study**

J. Herbert Kane, the famous missiologist, grew weary of the underprepared missionaries that were being sent to the mission field. He called for missionaries to be prepared in theology, cross-cultural communication, history and theology of missions, missionary anthropology, world religions, and current missionary issues.<sup>85</sup> Kane writes, "We should do our very best to send fully qualified missionaries. Anything else is unfair to the national churches and dishonoring to the Lord."<sup>86</sup> Kane, who had years of experience both as a missions educator and missionary, clearly states the need for well-prepared missionaries. A key aspect of seeing the kingdom of God advance into the darkest places of the world is for the church to send well prepared, well assessed missionaries for cross-

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<sup>84</sup>Bracher, "Important Factors," 85.

<sup>85</sup>David Harley, *Preparing to Serve: Training for Cross-Cultural Mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2012), 7.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

cultural ministry. To do anything less is both ineffective and, as Kane put it, “Dishonoring to the Lord.” In a similar vein, David Harley, in his book *Preparing to Serve*, writes,

Too many families have suffered because they were given insufficient preparation for missionary service; too many marriages have ended in divorce; too many wives have suffered break downs or depression; too many children carry scars of bitterness because no-one ever cared for their feelings. The burden of responsibility for providing adequate preparation rests with the churches and mission agencies which send them out.”<sup>87</sup>

Both Kane and Harley bluntly, yet rightly, conclude that missionary preparation is vital for both the health of mission engagement and the wellbeing of missionaries. Local churches must see the importance of missionary assessment and development as it relates to the gospel going forward to the unreached in healthy and sustainable ways. As a growing number of churches take more ownership in this area, the preparedness and effectiveness of those they send will only increase. Steve Hoke and Bill Taylor write about this growing movement of sending churches. “Increasingly, local churches are assuming greater responsibility in training their missionary candidates.”<sup>88</sup> Hoke and Taylor are observing a movement in the North American missions community of local sending churches taking greater ownership and responsibility to invest in and send out their people well prepared. This is not just seen in the nine sending churches I interviewed, but in many others of varies sized and denominations who are seeking to be faithful in the area of sending.<sup>89</sup>

In this dissertation, I attempted to provide an apologetic for the need of assessment and development in the local church. Furthermore, I sought to provide practical steps and structures to do this well in the context of the local church. My hope is that local churches will continue to take an increasingly active role in assessing and developing

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<sup>87</sup>Harley, *Preparing to Serve*, 8.

<sup>88</sup>Hoke and Taylor, *Global Mission Handbook*, 83.

<sup>89</sup>For more examples of active sending churches, see Telford and Shaw, *Today’s All-Star Mission Churches*; Bradley, *The Sending Church Defined*; and Carter, *Skill, Knowledge, Character*.

potential missionaries in their local church, not in an arrogant or controlling manner, but with a posture of humility and a desire to work with other churches and sending agencies to help send missionaries in a manner worth of the Lord.

As far as areas of further study, several need additional attention. The research in this dissertation was limited to nine known and respected sending churches, but there are undoubtedly more local churches in the North American context, and outside the North American context, that would provide a richer and more textured study of sending church practices. In the same vein, it would be helpful to do research more specifically on small to medium size churches. How are these churches assessing and developing missionaries given both their unique strengths and limitations?

Second, the research for this dissertation was narrowed to local churches and the limited number of books and resources available on this issue. Even more insight and rich content would be discovered by studying the methodologies and best practices of mission agencies and missionary training centers. These established institutions have decades of experience and expertise to add to the conversation. Many of them have dedicated staff who have spent years fleshing out their assessment and development practices. This research would also help bridge the often-present gap between agencies and sending churches.

Third, although it would have been helpful to see the long-term effectiveness of the ways local churches and agencies assess and develop people, it was beyond the scope of this dissertation to dive deep into this area. Some internal research has been done by a few of the churches interviewed but more formal research could be done to examine the long-term effectiveness of church-based missionary preparation and assessment, specifically examining the elements that prove most helpful for long-term effectiveness and health on the field.

Fourth, further study could be done on the effectiveness of church-based mission training. It is assumed that much of the research on the effectiveness of missionary training

in general would apply given the fact that many churches adopt similar educational methodologies like “head, heart, hands.” However, until detailed research is completed, this is only an educated assumption. By asking a predetermined set of questions to various missionaries from a wide range of local churches who practices robust development serving in different locations, at various points in their missionary career, one would have a better picture into the effectiveness of church-based assessment and development.

Last, this research was limited to the North American context, a very small sample size given the scope of the world and the prominence of cross-cultural missions in the Global South. Additional research needs to be done on the development and assessment practices of non-North American, and to a greater degree, non-Western churches. Without question, our brothers and sisters would offer remarkable insight and depth into how churches around the global can better assess and develop cross-cultural missionaries.

## APPENDIX 1

### SENDING CHURCH INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

#### **Antioch Community Church—Waco, Texas**

**Interviewee:** Kerry Ethridge

1. **What is the context of your church location/demographic?** City, college town, while we have the whole spectrum in our congregation from poor to rich, we are mostly middle class.
2. **What is the weekly attendance at your church?** Average between 3,000 - 3,500 including kids.
3. **How many years would you estimate your church has been involved in sending missionaries?** For almost 30 years; our missions arm first began in 1987 under Highland Baptist Church, and then Antioch was planted in June 1999 out of Highland.
4. **What are your church's denominational/network affiliations?** Non-denominational
5. **How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?** It starts from the get go of someone becoming involved and a member at our church. We have a new members class as well as a Vision and Values class that runs for 11 weeks. This really helps new people to see who we are and what we are all about from the very beginning. From there, we have lifegroups and community that focus on discipleship to help people to continue to grow, deepen and strengthen their faith. We then have a discipleship school that provides further more in depth training as well. Regardless of a calling to overseas mission work or not, our heart is to encourage everyone to live missionally. From the businessman to teacher to stay at home, this is what we call people to. After the discipleship school, we have our church planting school for those who do feel the call to go overseas. While the heart would be that people at this point would have been being disciple as well as investing in others and living the missional lifestyle mentioned, we do have an in depth application process. People must fill out an application that covers anything from doctrine questions to morals to psychological, etc. They must also provide 4 references as well as have a self-awareness interview, where more in depth questions are asked. They also have a counseling appointment and marriage evaluation if married. It looks like we are also getting ready to implement a few other psych type of tests as well to further strengthen our system. Once accepted, our team leaders also go through our team leader prep track while team members go through "team members being added" process.
6. **What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?** The thought process behind the system is that, again, bottom line, we want people to live missionally. As far as our application process goes, we have

strengthened this more and more as the years have gone by. Our heart is never to try and keep someone from going to the field. At the same time, this has happened at times as a result of the application process. That said, the reason for our in depth process is that so that we set up the people we send for long term success and to see them and their families and teams thrive on the field.

7. **What are the 2-3 strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?** As already stated, I see the thoroughness as a real strength. There a reason behind all we do. Another strength is that there are multiple people involved in the process so you get fresh eyes and different perspectives which is helpful. A weakness is that because there are several appointments to do and multiple people involved, scheduling can be difficult at times to get all done one's desired timeframe.
8. **In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas? What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?** Yes, I believe it is. As we have strengthened our system, providing better tools and help along the way, including increased care for our people while on the field, we have seen more healthy individuals and more healthy teams. This by all means does not mean there is never conflict and that we haven't had some very difficult situation the past couple of years. We have, but this is also why we are likely adding the other tools I mentioned in questions #5. As far as research goes, we studied our attrition numbers a few years ago. In that season, in almost every situation where someone came home, there was ongoing team conflict. While some may not have said that was what brought them home, it was a factor for a large number of them. Today, while we have entered another season of more attrition, the reasons seem far more healthy and that God really is moving people on.
9. **When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?** This is a hard question to answer as our church and missions arm are so closely tied together. I would say our church develops a lot from small groups to our corporate gatherings to discipleship and other opportunities of ministry and service. Our schools continue this development and begin the assessment part of which the missions arm then completes in the actual application process.
10. **When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?** The limitations are that we simply can't know everything. I've seen us send people who we all thought would be overseas the rest of their lives and end up not completing their first term. We have sent others that felt like a huge risk and end up being some of our greatest missionaries. In the end, it's a risk for the missionary and for the sending organization/church. We seek to have a great system in place to set people up to thrive, and in the end we ultimately trust God.
11. **What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?** Not sure
12. **What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development?** In the past, we used to "romanticize" the missionary life to some degree. The glory stories were told, but we didn't share enough of the reality/challenging/suffering stories. This has changed over the years and oh so helpful. I think it's good that people count the cost well and face the realities BEFORE going that it could be hard and lonely.

## Austin Stone Community Church—Austin, Texas

**Interviewee:** Andy Kampman

1. **What is the context of your church location/demographic?** 5 locations: 1 upper class (west suburb), 4 mid to upper class (2 suburb, 2 urban).
2. **What is the weekly attendance at your church?** 6000
3. **How many years would you estimate your church has been involved in sending missionaries?** 8 years, sent 203, 145 still on the field.
4. **What are your church's denominational/network affiliations?** Question not answered by interviewee.
5. **How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?** Question not answered by interviewee.
6. **What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?** Question not answered by interviewee.
7. **What are the 2-3 strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?** Strengthens: Local church owns appointing, training and sending of their people. Because they are trained in local context, the local Kingdom work is helped by those preparing to go overseas (ie we saw 30 people come to faith in Christ last yr).

Because local church is facilitating the appointment and training - those who are sent to plant church are really known. Our fastest sending process is 18<sup>th</sup> months. And so we really get to see the abiding, character, marriages, disciple making, parenting, dealing with singleness of each goer. Where as most goers do 2-5 weeks in training and assessment and then try to "work out problem areas" on their own. This is not ideal. 18 months+ really allows us to work out these issues and have an accurate picture of who we are sending.

More of the church is mobilized to be about what God is doing among the nations. Because training and sending is owned by the church over the course of 18-24 months, goers natural networks within the church become apart of the process. (prayer, advocacy teams, financially, caring about unreached, working with internationals locally, and living in making disciples lifestyle)

Weakness: We are definitely still growing in re-connecting those who don't go. If a person goes through the 18 months and then doesn't go, we are trying to do a better job on connecting them back into the MC/ small group world. Because they have lived out a Acts 2.4247 lifestyle for at least 9 of those months - it can be a difficult transition back in normal small group world, where many groups aren't living out Acts 2 as actively.

8. **In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas? What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?** Stone sent long term goers over a 7yr period (Sept 2009-Sept 2016). 35 of those came back to Austin for preventable and non-preventable reasons. Preventable reasons include: team or TL conflicts, cross cultural stress, sin issues, conflict with local leadership, marriage, etc. Unpreventable reasons include: illness in which

treatment is not available in country, death, country or agency sends them out or denies re-entry. 23 of those 35 did not partake/ benefit from our 18 month training process, where as nine did. By God's great grace this seems to point to those who participated and were actually trained for over a year by our church were half as likely to return to Austin for preventable reasons.

9. **When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?** I think a combined effort is best. Agencies have 25-100yrs+ of experience and expertise in sending, caring and coaching goers. This is definitely not to be overlooked or undervalued. Agencies are able to give 100% of their time to seeing the Kingdom of God expand among those who have never heard, which has afforded them the opportunity to learn many valuable lessons and processes.

The local church, I believe both theologically and practically, needs to own the development and assessment process. This does not negate the agency in any way, but the local church really needs to be the driver in the d and a process. We see the local church and the agency both bringing unique benefits and therefore both can work together to send "more and better" people to see Jesus worshiped by all the peoples of the world.

Local church - abiding, character, disciple making, church planting, assessment and development (head, heart, and hands). Agency support structures (insurance, liability, health care, education, crisis management), church planting coaching connections when church is not able to do this or doesnt have the relational network of overseas coaches. Training about agency infrastructure and processes and physiological testing or field specific training pieces like crisis training or hostage situations etc.

Share in home assignment, team placement, care on field

10. **When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?** Often times - the smaller the church the harder the ownership is for the above (assessment especially) but I would advocate that if a local church really is trying to raise up disciple makers who treasure Jesus, love the Word and share their faith and help new believers do the same (ie development, which is the more laborious task) then they have really owned the right part. Often local churches and agencies send people who are weak in one of the 3 areas of head, heart or hands. In my estimation- hands is the more negated. And so we send folks overseas who for the most part never lived out disciple making here, so why should be surprised when they don't do disciple making in more difficult settings.

We are starting to form small networks of like minded churches in the same city. College Station is our best example. Churches may not have enough mobilizeable people (those considering going long term) to fill a group every year. But do have 2-5 folks each year. So these churches have agreed to trust our multiple church mobilizers whose full time job it is recruit and train and assess future church planters.

11. **What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?** Question not answered by interviewee.
12. **What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development?** Question not answered by interviewee.

## Bethlehem Baptist Church—Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Interviewee:** Todd Rasmuson and Micah Boerckel

- 1. What is the context of your church location/demographic?** Bethlehem is a multi-site church with three different campuses. The main downtown campus is located in downtown Minneapolis. There is a North campus (about 15 miles north) that is located in a suburb of the Twin Cities. The South campus (about 20 miles south) is more rural and is located in a smaller suburb of the Twin Cities. Each of the campuses are composed of a mix of ethnicities, ages, and income levels. Because of its location, the downtown campus has the most differing demographics. Minneapolis area hosts many different colleges, the most notable being the University of Minnesota, which is located about 4 miles from Bethlehem downtown campus.
- 2. What is the weekly attendance at your church?** Weekly attendance at Bethlehem is about 3,500 people (all three campuses).
- 3. How many years would you estimate your church has been involved in sending missionaries?** Bethlehem has been involved in sending missionaries since its beginning as a Swedish church with the sending of Ola Hanson in about 1890 (more details on this [here](#)). In 1983 Pastors Tom Steller and John Piper were increasingly convicted of God's heart for the nations and the church took up the call with greater clarity and purpose. Out of this conviction, the Nurture Program was birthed. More details on this [here](#).
- 4. What are your church's denominational/network affiliations?** Bethlehem is currently affiliated with the Converge (Baptist General Conference) denomination. We currently partner with 38 different missions agencies in sending our 115 global partner units. Our top agencies are Pioneers, Frontiers, Wycliffe, Navigators, WorldVenture.
- 5. How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?** As mentioned earlier we have a missions training program that we require everyone we send out to go through. The Nurture Program exists to 1) to prepare prospective global partners with the basic knowledge, character, and skills necessary for effective cross-cultural service and 2) to help Bethlehem recognize and affirm the Holy Spirit's calling on their lives and fulfill our responsibility as their sending church.  
  
I have attached several documents detailing our Nurture Program. We regularly share our resources and talk with other churches about how to customize a Nurture Program, of sorts, to fit their church body. I would be happy to talk more about the details of the Nurture Program, if interested.
- 6. What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?** See Nurture Program Overview and Nurture Program Handbook documents attached. The first is a brief overview while the second provides a more in-depth look at methodology and thought process behind the Nurture Program. Feel free to contact me for any questions or clarifications.
- 7. What are the 2-3 strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?** Currently, the Nurture Program (NP) is strong in developing knowledge, character, and skills in the life of the NP member by getting them plugged into the life of the church, reading books, taking

classes, and getting involved in ministry. With around 100 people in our Nurture Program we are finding that the relational or nurturing component of the NP is often lacking

8. **In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas? What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?** In our opinion Bethlehem's Nurture Program is successful. While we admit many shortcomings and areas of growth we find that it has been extremely helpful in preparing global partners for the field and helping the church recognize and affirm the Holy Spirit's calling on the individual's life. We frequently ask our global partners what was helpful and what could be improved in our Nurture Program. Besides ongoing development and changes that we make to the Nurture Program based on interaction with agencies and global partners we have not done a research that measures success or failure.
9. **When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?** We identify the church as the primary means to assess and confirm the knowledge, character, and skills of the global partner and it is the church's responsibility to recognize and affirm the Holy Spirit's calling on the lives of the global partner. That said, we realize our limitations and the benefit of partnering with agencies to help assess and confirm the calling of the individual. Ideally, the church should affirm the individual and the agency likewise, assess the individual and affirm or deny the church's assessment. If the two disagree, they should further discuss the reasons for disagreement.
10. **When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?** We love partnering with agencies. In fact, every one of our global partners must be sent with an agency or an approved alternative option (church, BAM group, etc.) to be sent through BBC. We readily admit our limitations with 115 global partners and 100 members in the Nurture Program we do not have the capacity to do all of the member care and cannot specialize in certain areas of the world. Agencies help with member care and have the ability to specialize in areas that Bethlehem cannot. We look for 3 primary aspects (besides doctrinal agreement) for an agency: 1) member care, 2) financial handling and accountability, and 3) offering of continuing education (conferences, security training, etc.).
11. **What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?** We have interacted with many missions leaders, and we have learned of many good "pieces" and "parts" used to assess and prepare missionary candidates. However, we have not evaluated any other church's program to answer whether those churches are doing "well" overall.
12. **What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development?** We are thankful for the continued research on this topic. Unfortunately, many churches do not have a way to develop and affirm the individual's call to missions. As a result, many missionaries are sent out without the proper expectations and training.

## Brook Hills Church—Birmingham, Alabama

**Interviewee:** Jim Fox

1. **What is the context of your church location/demographic?** We are in a suburban area adjacent to a medium metro urban center with two Universities within 12 miles. The area would be classified as a middle to upper middle class area of the metro area.
2. **What is the weekly attendance at your church?** We have approximately 4,000 in attendance for worship each week.
3. **How many years would you estimate your church has been involved in sending missionaries?** We sent missionaries out 20 years ago but only a few. In the last 10 years we have commissioned out approximately 15 people.
4. **What are your church's denominational/network affiliations?** We are affiliated with the SBC
5. **How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?** We have an extensive interview process, cross cultural worker assessment, psychological profile, background check, 1 year equipping period with personal as well as classroom development. Each person is required to go serve in another context on a short-term and mid-term basis and be involved in a small group before they can go long term.
6. **What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?** Our desire is for each person to truly have a call from the Lord, to have experience and understand what it is like to live in another cross-cultural context, know the biblical imperatives, global realities and able to plant a church.
7. **What are the 2-3 strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?** We have a good up front interview and online assessment process coupled with a strong requirement for cross-cultural experience. Additional leadership and business structures development should be added
8. **In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas? What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?** For the most part we feel that the model is successful but certainly can be improved or strengthened.
9. **When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?** The church should play the strongest role in the assessment part as we should know the person best. The agency should play the strongest role in the development as most churches don't have the expertise or ability to do so.
10. **When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?** The agency doesn't know the people like the church does and they are too traditional in their mission development thinking. Many churches simply don't have the manpower, knowhow or budget to provide the development part.

11. **What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?** The Summit and Johnson Ferry
12. **What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development?** I think all is covered.

## Calvary Church—Lancaster, Pennsylvania

**Interviewee:** Steve Beirn

1. **What is the context of your church location/demographic?** Our church background is a suburban setting considered middle class with some diversity. The approximate average age is 40.
2. **What is the weekly attendance at your church?** 3,500
3. **How many years would you estimate your church has been involved in sending missionaries?** We have sent out workers around the world for 80 years. People have been sent every year but 3. Presently we have 97 members overseas.
4. **What are your church's denominational/network affiliations?** Unaffiliated
5. **How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?** Global Ministries is one of 5 values of our church. The ministry environment encourages the adoption of our 5 values in individual lives. We have a church-based missionary preparation ministry. It is a 3-year preparation process. We can provide our preparation notebook upon request.
6. **What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?** We believe in the centrality of the local church. We believe the local church is the most natural learning laboratory for missionary training. We have 5 outcomes we desire to accomplish over our time together. We incorporate self-paced learning with mentoring and a focus on discipleship.
7. **What are the 2-3 strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?** Our Cross Training ministry is our quality control effort to send out individuals that are suitable and prepared. This ministry helps address attrition issues and avoid problems to a large degree. Our efforts also enable us to unify our vision for ministry so we are more focused. One weakness is a minimal opportunity to really develop a better sense of community among our candidates.
8. **In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas? What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?** We have largely been pleased with our church-based approach. We have had other agencies or churches incorporate some of our approach to their preparation. Our people have felt grateful for their preparation once they arrived at their overseas ministries and either faced challenges or saw the results of lack of preparation in others. We have enjoyed almost no attrition issues with more than 40 adults who are overseas.
9. **When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?** The church should encourage availability and discern suitability. The church should incorporate the four building blocks of personal development. They are assessment, spiritual growth, ministry experience and mentoring. Candidates should move to the agency when the church feels the candidate is ready. The agency, with the church and candidate, can explore ministry role and place. The agency should provide specialized ministry preparation for the future audience of the missionary (Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, etc.). The

agency also provides the cultural and language training along with any other specialized training.

10. **When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?** In assessment and development, the church should have a distinct advantage knowing the candidate well. The church should be able to provide some type of growth and preparation plan. The agency is not well acquainted with the person. Some areas of development may be the expertise of the agency because they know the ministry dynamics the person will face in their field of ministry. Both the church and the agency should treat one another like equal partners in the ministry.
11. **What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?** We can provide contact information should someone want to invest in a phone call.
12. **What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development?** Assessment is important. A better fit makes a better missionary. If the agency wants the local church to assume more ownership of this process, it should provide the church with ways it can help. Churches usually feel inferior to agencies. The agency needs to work harder to forge practical partnerships together. These thoughts are the tip of the iceberg.

## Christ Community Church—Memphis, Tennessee

**Interviewee:** Nathan Cook

1. **What is the context of your church location/demographic?** We have 16 house churches that are located in poor urban neighborhoods in Memphis.
2. **What is the weekly attendance at your church?** Attendance varies, but on average there are about 20 people per house church.
3. **How many years would you estimate your church has been involved in sending missionaries?** 12
4. **What are your church's denominational/network affiliations?** We are affiliated with the Southern Baptists.
5. **How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?** We encourage prospective missionaries to lead a house church and to actively share the gospel with their neighbors. They get some training in four fields, T4T, Creation to Christ, and discovery bible study. Some have also found TOAG, a nine month prefield training offered by Frontiers, to be helpful, especially with engaging Muslims. Recently we have made prayer more of a focus, using *The Hour that Changes the World* by Dick Eastman, as a guide for engaging in prayer.
6. **What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?** We want to model "simple church" that is reproducible without formal seminary training.
7. **What are the 2-3 strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?** The weakness is definitely a lack of a clear process. The primary strength is the missional culture that has been established through living in urban neighborhoods, and preaching the importance of missions among unreached people groups. Second to that would be normalizing suffering as a logical consequence of engaging a sinful world with the gospel.
8. **In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas? What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?** It has been successful in motivating people for long term service and mobilizing people engage closed countries with the gospel. I think we could improve preparation for culture shock through more formalized training. We haven't done any research on our success or failure, although that would be welcomed.
9. **When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?** That is a great question. I think it would be helpful if agencies were willing to share their model for selection, especially psychological assessments that are performed that may fall outside the scope of traditional churches. Agencies may have a better understanding of the marks needed for long term success on the field. I think the role of the church is to motivate, equip, and send people for missionary service. The church's role is to develop a theological understanding of salvation, the church and missions; to help people find their identity in Christ alone, and to identify and develop their spiritual gifts. The church should also train people to develop spiritual disciplines such as

prayer and obedience to the scriptures while also developing a reproducible model of discipleship.

10. **When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?** I don't think most churches think in terms of preparing people for living cross culturally. The agency does not have long term relationships with the candidates, nor do they really have the ability to know candidates on the field apart from working with them directly on the field as a part of the team.
11. **What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?** I don't know, but would like to be connected with others to learn from their best practices.
12. **What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development?** Candidates need to understand that the church is primarily people on mission with God and not its buildings, services, programs, or institutions. Suffering is a normal part of the Christian life (Acts 14:22). Jesus, and the restoration he provides through his relationship with us, is what grounds our identity and purpose, not our service or success. Culture shock is real. The best way to prepare for it is to know that it will happen and to be aware of its "symptoms." Evangelism and discipleship does not just happen, it takes intentionality, a plan, and accountability. Our flesh is weak and in need of constant reproof through personal spiritual disciplines and a community of faith to keep us encouraged and moving forward.

## Cornerstone Church—Ames, Iowa

**Interviewee:** Mike Easton

1. **What is the context of your church location/demographic?** College town
2. **What is the weekly attendance at your church?** 2700 attendance
3. **How many years would you estimate your church has been involved in sending missionaries?** 23 years (whole existence)
4. **What are your church's denominational/network affiliations?** SBC. Founding church of the Salt Network
5. **How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?** We mainly develop prospective ministries through our university leadership/discipleship process in the context of our local church. From our over 300+ collegiate small group leaders we look at the context of: 1) how they did leading a small group; 2) how they did on their summer trip; 3) how they did in their weekly discipleship group with a staff member; 4) whether or not the field personnel want them overseas; 5) what does our collegiate staff think of their potential in an overseas context; and 6) in their senior year, those interested in overseas work are in a specific discipleship group, that's led by a former missionary that will assess their overseas preparedness and help add some specific training to their normal discipleship process. So in essence, we have a 4-year interview process that is our discipleship process in our university ministry.

We have often had overseas missionaries say about our students, Salt Co sends, hands down, the best teams we receive. For years, we thought this was maybe true to all the training we did with students on the front end. We realized, however, as we cut Perspectives, as we cut focus, as we cut meetings and simplified our development process for short-term trips, that the training wasn't what made our students beneficial, it was the culture of our college ministry that produced that type of student.

When we feel like we don't have students coming out of that ministry that are ready for overseas, we don't ask the question, what processes do we need to change about assessing and developing, but what is wrong with our collegiate discipleship? We still put in place applications, some specific readings, etc. but 95% of assessment and development happens in the regular discipleship process of our university leadership/discipleship process.

6. **What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?** We have a high focus on sending recent university grads to plant churches in teams amongst university populations around the world. As a university focused church, we have 3 locations for our church network around the world in which we are filling teams with recent college grads for 2-year terms. At the end of those two-year terms we assess whether or not those "residents" should go on to become career missionaries. We've found it pretty difficult to assess long-term success from the States. Our MO, is get them over there as young as possible in a great team context. Get them language, get them ministry experience, and then assess their future after those 2 years. It's working on a small scale so far. Currently we have 5 residents who a year in. Our field and these residents all think that they will make the switch to career.

7. **What are the 2-3 strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?** Strengths - a 4-year interview process. We believe the best place to find out how well someone will do overseas is in the context of our normal discipleship process. We aren't creating new programs in our church to meet the assessment and development of missionaries. Our process-driven church is our missionary development tool. We don't separate out missionary development from our normal process of discipleship.

Weakness – you've got to have a great discipleship and leadership development process to pull this off. As well, you have to have all your staff on board. This idea only works if both of those things are happening.

8. **In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas? What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?** We are newer into this. But, I would say that we have a team of 11 in one city and a team of 2 in another city. We're about ready to launch our 3<sup>rd</sup> city. The teams are some of the healthiest I've ever seen. They are cut from the same cloth. And churches are getting planted in these places. I think we've not had to put significant time and resources into developing a missionary track. I think that our normal discipleship processes have been strengthened by the approach of not creating a separate track for missionaries.
9. **When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?** I think the agency should bring their expertise to: 1) train local churches on what to look for, both positive and negative, in prospective missionaries; 2) give tips on developing missionaries; but 3) ultimately find churches they trust and trust them to make the decisions about who goes overseas.
10. **When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?** The agency will always be limited by the most important assessment tool: proximity. You can't beat proximity to know whether or not someone is ready and equipped for overseas work. You can't find that out in an assessment tool. For the churches, we sometimes rely too much on proximity and forget that a good assessment tool can help bring to light some things that are not easily observed in proximity. All to say, I think it's helpful to have both the agency and the church involved. But if you can only have one, the church is most needed.
11. **What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?** Walnut Creek Church in Des Moines, IA: Greg Altmaier: greg.altmaier@gmail.com.
12. **What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development?** Here's a few of our assessment links. We mostly stole these from you [Sojourn Community Church].  
Missions Mentoring Application  
Self-Assessment Questionnaire  
Personal Development Plan  
Intangibles for Overseas Workers

## Immanuel Baptist Church—Louisville, Kentucky

**Interviewee:** Andy Morris

1. **What is the context of your church location/demographic?** We have members from all over the city and S. Indiana. We have a significant Seminary, college student population, but increasingly are seeing long term Louisville residents enter our ranks. Our local is 850 s 4th Street.
2. **What is the weekly attendance at your church?** Approximately 700 people
3. **How many years would you estimate your church has been involved in sending missionaries?** Since a major revitalization beginning in 2002. Our church first began sending 2006, so 11 years. Since our church began in 1910 a couple of former pastors also left the pastorate at Immanuel to pursue overseas missions. There has not been a model of sending developed to my knowledge before 2006 & following.
4. **What are your church's denominational/network affiliations?** SBC, & we have a fledging network of sent ones we call "Immanuel Network".
5. **How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?** We have a 3 year pastoral apprenticeship program for Men. We also have done equipping for single women as well. Our focus is on biblical character and desire an individual to either be "Elder qualified" OR "Team Member" qualified. Elder board approves and vets all candidates at the Elder qualified status.
6. **What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?** We focus on an individual's preparation and proven character in our church before we move to officially send them. Some will bug out prematurely, but that is not our desire or counsel to most people.
7. **What are the 2-3 strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?** Strengths: We don't rush, we focus on character, & we desire to see belief in practice. Weakness: We could do better at leadership development in allowing more and varied opportunities to people growing up in our ranks.
8. **In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas?** YES. PTL. Not because we are smart, but because we simply are seeking to follow the Scripture examples and prescription for those who are sent. Both their character and their Aim. **What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?** No Comprehensive research has been done at this point. Most sent ones are still in full time ministry and relate strongly with Immanuel on an ongoing basis. We have sought to support these individuals through prayer, Groups calls, conferences, resources, etc.
9. **When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?** Local church should Vet and equip. Agency are helpful vehicles and support structures that should help local churches achieve their responsibility of taking the gospel to the nations.

10. **When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?** Agencies in our day tend to be pragmatic and not seek to work strongly with local churches. Vetting processes are often too humanistic in their approach. Often psychological versus biblical. Churches can be limited to provide fine tuned training in terms of training in language, fundraising, & cross cultural acquisition, etc. As a church we have sought to outsource some of this specific training.
11. **What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?** Summit Church, Sojourn, 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue.
12. **What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development?** Local churches must take this task seriously as to be the church is to be Missional. It is at the core of who God has made us and commanded us to be. To not do so, is to bypass the entirety of what a healthy church is commanded to, modeled as, and exists for as we display God's glory.

## Summit Church—Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina

**Interviewees:** Chelsea Neal, Mitch McCaskell, and Todd Unzicker

1. **What is the context of your church location/demographic?** Because of our 11 campuses, we are in a mix of downtown and suburbs; vast majority are in middle/upper middle class [neighborhoods].
2. **What is the weekly attendance at your church?** 11,000
3. **How many years would you estimate your church has been involved in sending missionaries?** We have been actively sending for the last 14 years, we've sent just under 100 people during that time (North American and international) and currently have 228 people living overseas.
4. **What are your church's denominational/network affiliations?** Interviewees did not answer.
5. **How are you currently assessing and developing prospective missionaries in the context of your local church?** Usually, in the beginning stages of their process of serving overseas someone from our International Missions Team will meet up with the prospective missionary to get to know them and help answer questions about the process. Through this, we prayerfully discern with the prospective missionary what the right next steps are for them. At the Summit one of the first steps in our assessment and training process is for a member to join complete a long-term missions application as they begin the process of serving overseas. This is an application that gives us some basic information on the person (spiritual maturity, current evangelism & discipleship, and their hopes to serve overseas). We also ask for a reference from their campus pastor and their small group leader. This help us to assess where an applicant is in their faithfulness to do here what they are going to do there. For those that are going to be serving overseas for two or more years in the next 2 years we will invite them to join our International Church Planting cohort. This is a monthly meeting that helps prepare and develop future missionaries to serve overseas. We cover topics such as gospel centered missions, what a church is and how to start one, evangelism, discipleship, healthy teaming, cross cultural contextualization, spiritual warfare, developing a field strategy, and healthy marriage or singleness overseas. As a part of these monthly meetings, participants are placed in a group with other people that are led by someone who has served overseas (they are able to help assess and develop those in the process through these groups). In the coming months we will be going out together as groups, providing hands on training and modeling in entering gospel conversations with people. As a member gets within a year from moving overseas they are recommended by their cohort coach to be a part of a 6-10month interactive study of the new testament called Deepen Discipleship. This study was developed by the IMB and includes accountability questions and activities to be discussed with a coach that we pair them with. As a participant gets within a few months of leaving and before we commission them at their campus we have a final assessment before they leave which is an exit interview where we review our church/missionary covenant and give a final affirmation that we desire to send them as a Summit missionary.
6. **What is the methodology or thought process behind the system you have in place?** We aim to view assessment as discipleship. We look at five different characteristic we hope to see in a missionary candidate. These include character, convictions, calling, chemistry and competency. Because we have such a large

church, it is possible that people could go through the process of serving overseas with their organization without having much contact or training with our International missions team. Part of our assessment is in place so we can ensure that we know everyone that is being sent through our church. This is a huge part of the assessment: we do not want to send people that have a lot of knowledge of missiology but are not sharing the gospel and making disciples in their current context. As we train and develop people that are preparing to go we see everything under the umbrella of three main goals: learn to love God, learn serve others, learn to serve the nations.

7. **What are the 2-3 strengths you see in your church's assessment and development model and what is one weakness?** *Strength 1:* People from our church feel very cared for. We do try to give many opportunities for our people to be equipped and have healthy expectations before serving overseas. Although we have much to learn, we have had the experience of sending many missionaries overseas from our church and have learned through that process how to grow in assessing, equipping and caring for sent ones from our church. *Strength 2:* As a large church, we have been blessed with many resources to bless those preparing to be sent. That includes the opportunity to have great teachers and returned missionaries invest and share with those we are developing, or the ability to resource people with books as well as opportunities to learn hands on. *Strength 3:* We have the ability to work closely with different sending agencies and be aware of the directions they are going and the way they view assessment and development. This helps us to resource our people and help them through the process. This also gives us a front seat to learn from sending agencies. One weakness is trying to work alongside various sending agencies/programs that require different assessment at different times in the process. Assessment and development can become a big task for the applicant.

We don't want to overwhelm people with paperwork and tasks, but we also want to make sure we know everyone and that we can confidently send them from our church. Finding that balance is difficult with a large number of people preparing to be sent.

8. **In your opinion, is your church's assessment and development model successful? Has it proven to assess and develop people well for life and ministry overseas? What, if any, research has been done to show success or failure?** While we have much room to grow and are always seeking better ways to assess and develop our people I believe our model is successful because of the people we are sending out. As I think about the people we have sent out this year alone, I think of people who are faithful to abide with Christ, make disciples, and have deep burdens to see people from all nations know and worship Christ. I am so proud of those that the Summit has sent out and am so encouraged by them. In my observations, many of our people are living healthily and faithfully overseas. Our team is deeply invested in caring for those we have sent out which gives us opportunities to see the things they are struggling with and ways we need to develop people better.
9. **When it comes to assessment and development, what role should the agency play and what role should the local church play?** We believe that the local church is God's plan A for reaching the nations. It is the local church who sends the missionary. The local church is responsible for the discipleship, care, assessment and development of the missionary candidate. The local church should give a confident affirmation of a missionary candidate to serve as a missionary as well as do all they can to help support, train, and send their member overseas. The agency's role of logistics, teaming, research, resources, training, etc. are very valuable and

helpful in assessing and developing a missionary candidate and are a role they should play.

10. **When it comes to assessment and development, what are the limitations of the agency and what are the limitations of the church?** The agency can not be self-sufficient to assess and develop the missionary candidate, they must look to the local church. The agency cannot know first hand the gifts and faithfulness of the missionary candidate like the local church can. The local church can have limitations because of lack of resources and experience in assessing and developing missionaries.
11. **What other churches do you know who are doing assessment and/or development well?** I recently spoke with a staff member from Prestonwood in Dallas who is working with assessment and development for those being sent through her church. Their development is very hands on and places extreme emphasis on being faithful to share the gospel and make disciples here before being sent.
12. **What other thoughts or comments do you have about pre-field missionary assessment or development?** Our team really aims to make sure that assessment is seen as discipleship. We do not judge the worthiness of our members to go to the nations. We want to biblically discern how we should care for our people and set them up to be successful cross-cultural missionaries. We want to send people to places, and teams for lengths of time that will be most beneficial to them and the teams they join.

APPENDIX 2  
SENDING PROCESS APPLICATION

Name: <sup>1</sup>

Birthdate:

Address:

Marital Status: Single/Married/ Engaged/ Divorced/Separated

Names and ages of kids:

Phone number & email address:

Fill out the following questions honestly and in detail. The information provided will remain confidential within the staff and elders of the church unless prohibited by law.

1. How long have you been a member of the church?
2. Who are your small group leaders and how long have you been involved in the group?
3. How are you currently involved in serving at the church?
4. In 300 words or less, share how you became a follower of Christ.
5. Share a little about your relationship with Christ? How are you actively abiding in Christ?
6. Do you have a devotional life that is marked with some consistency? Detail what this looks like for you.
7. Are you a continual learner? What actions do you take to continually learn and grow in your knowledge, character, and practical skills?
8. In what ways do you see God working in and through you now? How is he transforming you and how is he using you in the lives of others?
9. If married, what is the state of your marriage? How are you sacrificially loving and serving one another? How are you spiritually encouraging one another?

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<sup>1</sup>This sending process application has been adapted from the development process application from Sojourn Community Church.

10. If married, what is the hardest part of your marriage relationship right now? What sin patterns do you see in your marriage?
11. If you have kids, what excites you about raising them overseas and what fears do you have?
12. How does your extended family feel about your desire to live overseas? What will it be like for you to say goodbye to them?
13. In your life right now, how are you actively sharing Christ with others in word and deed? When was the last time you shared your faith?
14. In your life right now, how are you actively discipling others both in formal ways and in informal ways?
15. What have been the defining moments of your life? List them and give a short description of each.
16. Share a bit about your past sin struggles. How have these sin struggles affected you? How have you seen God bring about redemption in your life in these areas?
17. What are your current sin struggles? Are you seeing God work in the midst of these struggles? If so, how?
18. When was the last time you looked at pornography? What kind of pornography did or do you view? Share this answer with your spouse or close friend before your assessment interview.
19. As you think about living and serving overseas, what areas do you think will be a struggle for you? Be specific.
20. Have you led a small group or other ministry in the church? How have you seen multiplication in ministry?
21. Are you a self-starter? Do you have entrepreneurial giftings? Have you ever started something from scratch and seen it grow and mature? Please detail.
22. Would you call yourself a leader? Please clarify your answer.
23. In 300 words or less, articulate your call to international missions.
24. In your opinion, what is the goal of international missions?
25. What involvement do you have in cross-cultural missions? Detail your past and current international ministry engagement, locations of service, and length of time.
26. Have you raised support before? Are you willing to raise support to go overseas mid or long-term? Please explain.
27. Have you spent more than a month at one time serving in an international context? If not would you consider going mid-term (2 months- 2 years) before going long-term (2 years+)?

28. Where do your interests and burdens lie when thinking about international missions? Area to consider: areas of the world, specific people groups, specific cities, specific mission teams, sending organizations, religious background, type of ministry, justice issues, church planting, etc.
29. Are there specific mission organizations you are interested in serving with?
30. Knowing that plans change, when do you hope to leave for the mission field?
31. What theological (knowledge of the Bible and theology) and missiological (knowledge of missions and global issues) education do you have? Detail formal and informal.
32. What skills, work history, or abilities do you bring to the mission field apart from ministry training?
33. Detail your education background. Schools, degrees, internships, etc.
34. Detail seasons of suffering in your life. How did God grow and shape you in these times? How did you respond to these seasons of suffering?
35. In your opinion, what are your spiritual gifts?
36. Detail two of your personal strengths and two of your personal weaknesses.
37. What are your strengths and weaknesses when working with others?
38. Where is your home church? Where does your extended family live? Where will you do your stateside assignments (furlough)?
39. What are areas you want to grow in or skills you want to develop before going to the field?
40. What do you hope to get out of the development process? What questions do you have for church leadership?

## Theological Questionnaire<sup>2</sup>

Feel free to read this document ahead of time but when actually answering the questionnaire, take no more than three hours to complete. Use God's Word to communicate and support your understanding. You may use a Bible but not a study Bible or any other resources.

1. Describe yourself theologically; that is, briefly present your theological identity and key theological views (e.g., continuationist or cessationist; complementarian or egalitarian)
2. What is the gospel?
3. What is your view on the authority, sufficiency, and inerrancy of Scripture?
4. Describe your understanding of the Trinity. Where is it seen in Scripture?
5. How would you respond to the question of God's relationship to all the pain, suffering, and evil in the world?
6. What does it mean that human beings are created in the image of God?
7. What happened when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden? Describe your understanding of human sinfulness.
8. Describe your understanding of the full humanity and full divinity of Christ.
9. How would you articulate salvation to someone? Use the Scriptures.
10. What is your position on Reformed Theology, specifically predestination & election?
11. What is sanctification, how does it come about, and what is the church's role in it?
12. What is your perspective on the role of men and women in the home and church? Do you believe women should be ordained as pastors and elders? What role do women have on the mission field?
13. What does it mean to walk in/be guided by the Spirit, and why is following the guidance of the Holy Spirit important to you personally?
14. What are your convictions about the spiritual gifts and the Holy Spirit, specifically the role of the 'sign' gifts (prophecy, healings, tongues, etc.) in the contemporary church? Do you personally practice any of these gifts?
15. What is the church?
16. Detail your understanding of contextualization and the insider movement. Where do your personal convictions place you on the C1-C6 scale? Please explain.

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<sup>2</sup>The theological questionnaire has been adapted from the Sojourn Network Theological Assessment written by Dr. Gregg Allison.

17. What is church planting and where do you see it in Scripture?
18. What is the role of the local church in reaching the nations? Detail your response from Scripture.
19. Describe your views on baptism, the Lord's Supper, and church discipline.
20. Detail your belief regarding spiritual warfare?
21. What is your understanding of suffering in the life of a believer and in the life of the church?
22. What is your understanding of the meaning and implications of Matthew 24:14?
23. What are your beliefs regarding the end times? How does the return of Christ motivate your personal life and ministry efforts?

### **Personal References**

Two personal references will need to be complete. One needs to come from a church pastor or your small group leader. The other can come from another solid Christian of your choosing. Try and ask people who are willing to share both your strengths and your weakness as this will be most beneficial for you in your development.

## APPENDIX 3

### SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Being a cross-cultural missionary is a high calling.<sup>1</sup> With this calling comes a need to examine oneself and begin growing toward mission readiness. Before your assessment interview, take time to ask yourself the following questions. Where are you excelling and where do you need to grow? Come to the interview ready to share what you discover.

The following are the three key areas missionary development:

#### **Knowing:** Knowing God, His Word & His Mission

1. Do you have a deep understanding of the Bible; the unfolding of the redemptive story, general concepts, and major themes? Are you able to study the Bible for yourself and teach it to others?
2. Do you have a solid understanding of theology? Are you able to articulated these truths and teach them to others?
3. Do you have a solid understanding of global missions including biblical themes, history, best practices, current trends, practical issues, and definitions of major concepts?
4. Do you have a solid understanding of the world outside of America including world geography, different cultures, global trends, and the state of the global church?

#### **Being:** Being Transformed into the Image of Christ

1. How are you practicing a planned and consistent devotional life personally and for your family? How can you grow in this area?
2. How are being intentional to love and serve your wife, children, and friends? How are you living in open and transparent community with other believers?
3. Do you consistently practice the disciplines of abiding in Christ, confession of sin, solitude, rest, self-denial and humility? What does this look like for you?
4. Do you meet the qualifications laid out for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-16? Which of these do you need to grow in?
5. What emotional baggage do you still carry with you from your past? What are sin struggles you have dealt with in the past and what are the sins you currently struggling with?

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<sup>1</sup>These self-assessment questions have been adapted from a chapter I wrote in *Church on Mission*. Nathan Garth, "Pre-field Missionary Assessment in the Context of the Local Church," in *Churches on Mission: God's Grace Abounding to the Nations*, ed. Geoffrey Hartt, Christopher Little, and John Wang, Evangelical Missiological Society Series, vol. 25 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2017), 298-99.

6. What character weakness do you see in your own life?

**Doing:** Doing the Work of Ministry and Multiplication

1. How have your skills, leadership, and calling been tested in the context of the local church? How are you growing in these areas now?
2. How are you living the life of a missionary here in your current context? Are you sharing the Gospel with people on a regular basis? How are you discipling believers toward maturity?
3. Do you have significant experience, more than one month, in an international context? Are you in relationships with internationals in your current context?
4. Outside of ministry skills; what experience, assets, and skills do you have to offer? This might include degrees, work history, hobbies, life experience, etc.

## APPENDIX 4

### SCHOOL-BASED MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT

#### **Sojourn Community Church - School of Missions**

The purpose of the School of Missions is to: Expose people to holistic missions (head, heart, hands); see them formed into the image of Christ, move them toward greater engagement in cross-cultural missions

The curriculum for School of Missions is geared toward those who are moving overseas as international missionaries but is beneficial for anyone wanting to grow in their understanding and skill in global missions.

The School of Missions is birthed out of the vision to see the local church at the center of raising up and sending out its own wave of gospel-centered missionaries. The goal of the School of Missions is not to replace or repeat what a seminary or mission organization has to offer but to complement these organizations and to offer additional tools. The hope is to see missionaries go out in teams or join existing teams to multiply disciples and churches in cities around the global.

All those seeking to be sent from Sojourn as missionaries must complete the Development Process which is detailed in the section below. It is advised that you go through this development process within two years before moving to the field.

The School of Missions is developed around three key areas:  
Developing the person's Head, Heart and Hands:



**Head (Knowledge):** Knowing the Word of God and how to apply it are essential for all of God's people, but especially those working in a cross-cultural setting. It is also key to have a clear and working knowledge of theology, mission principles and practice, and global awareness.



**Heart (Character):** Regular involvement and service within the body at Sojourn aids in character development that will be beneficial overseas. It is also key to begin working through deep-rooted issues that will be a source of struggle on the field. Refining your character is of utmost importance.



**Hands (Skills):** Whether it is learning a language, driving a manual car, developing international friends, sharing your faith, or navigating culture shock; cross-cultural skills must be developed long before you arrive on the field. We also want to encourage local cross-cultural ministry involvement as an essential way to prepare for overseas ministry.

## **Schedule**

Lesson 1: Biblical Basis to Mission  
Lesson 2: Introduction to Sojourn International  
Lesson 3: Missions History  
Lesson 4: Missionary Call  
Lesson 5: Traits of an Effective Missionary  
Lesson 6: Cross Cultural Principles  
Lesson 7: Life and Ministry in Cities  
Lesson 8: Engaging with the Poor and Broken  
Lesson 9: Abiding in Christ  
Lesson 10: Theology of Suffering  
Lesson 11: World Religions Overview  
Lesson 12: World Religion Site Visit  
Lesson 13: First Term Overseas  
Lesson 14: Marriage, Family and Singleness Overseas  
Lesson 15: Heart for Evangelism  
Lesson 16: Prayer as Engagement  
Lesson 17: Bible Storying  
Lesson 18: Multiplying Disciples  
Lesson 19: Understanding and Multiplying the Church  
Lesson 20: Healthy Partnerships  
Lesson 21: Team & Community  
Lesson 22: Preparing for the Field  
Lesson 23: Current Issues in Missions  
Lesson 24: Care for the Missionary  
Lesson 25: Strategic Case Studies  
Lesson 26: Co-Mission: Being on Mission with God

## **Books & Articles Needed**

*A Practical Theology of Mission* by Eric Wright (provided)  
*Cross-Cultural Connections* by Duane Elmer (provided)  
*On Being a Missionary* by Thomas Hale  
*Everyday Church* by Tim Chester and Steve Timmis  
*Global Mission Handbook* by Stephen Hoke and William David Taylor  
*Let the Nations Be Glad* by John Piper  
Selected missionary biographies  
“Why God Made Cities” by Tim Keller  
“Critical Contextualization” by Paul Heibert  
“Followers of Jesus in Islamic Mosques” by Timonny Tennent  
“Forgiveness and Reconciliation” by Tim Keller

## **Time and Format**

Sunday Evenings, 6pm-7:30pm, attendance is mandatory.  
Each session will include three movements of learning: 1) reading discussion or case study; 2) teaching time; 3) discussion and application time is at table cohorts.

## APPENDIX 5

### SENDING AGREEMENT

The Book of Acts and the Book of Philippians paint a distinct picture of a local church partnering with Paul in reaching other nations with the gospel. In the spirit of these models, our church seeks to have healthy and defined roles with those we send out and those with whom we partner. This partnership agreement allows all parties to understand their role in the relationship and help create a healthy partnership.

#### **Church's Responsibility**

- Community Church will seek to train, send out, and sustain its missionaries in a manner worthy of the Lord as modeled in Paul's relationship with Antioch (Acts 13ff) and his relationship with the Church at Philippi (Phil. 1 and 4)
- Community Church commits to formally commission its missionaries.
- Community Church commits to regularly pray for the missionary's needs as the church is made aware by the missionary through regular updates.
- Community Church commits to provide member care through the missionary's adopted small groups, advocate team, coach, and the pastoral staff at the church.
- Community Church commits to provide this member care either on-field or online as needed.
- Community Church commits to stay involved in the missionary's life through its members and staff. This will include periodic communication and accountability from coaches and staff.
- Community Church commits to send short-term teams as requested.
- Community Church commits to provide the agreed-upon financial support of \_\_\_\_\_ per month.

\_\_\_\_\_  
International Missions Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Pastor

#### **Missionaries Responsibility**

- The missionary will complete all the requirements laid out in the Sending Process. These must be completed before the missionary is formally commissioned.
- The missionary will build deep relationships with leaders and members at the church. This includes having a recommendation from an elder, developing an advocate team, and recruiting three adoptive community groups.
- The missionary will send quarterly updates/prayer needs to the Missions Pastor, advocate teams, and adoptive community groups. This is essential for people to pray effectively.
- The missionary will maintain open and honest communication with the Missions Pastor and the advocate team leader.

- The missionary will fill out yearly reflection questions to help personally think through the year and to provide the church missions staff with information to provide better care.
- Community Church missionaries will commit at least 33% of their stateside time to living near the church and serving the church (3 months = 1 month, 6 months = 2 months and 1 year = 4 months). This will include being a “missionary-in-residence,” teaching as needed, speaking in small groups, mentoring missionary candidates, etc.
- All missionaries sent from Sojourn Community Church must agree and sign the member covenant and doctrinal statement. If at anytime the missionary can no long live faithfully by these two documents, the missionary must let the Missions Pastor know.

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Missionary

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Missionary

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## ABSTRACT

### ASSESSING AND DEVELOPING PRE-FIELD MISSIONARIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

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Pre-field assessment and development are proven tools to help missionary candidates better prepare for life and ministry overseas. There is no better place to do this assessment and development than in the context of the local church. Chapter 1 lays the framework for the rest of the dissertation by providing an apologetic to the centrality of the local church and giving a basic overview of what will be covered in the dissertation. Chapter 1 then provide definitions to key concepts, addresses limitation and delimitations, and then lays out the methodology of research.

Chapter 2 provides a biblical and historical basis for the sentness of God and the sentness of the local church. This Trinitarian sending shows that God the Father sent the Son, the Father and Son sent the Spirit, and the Triune God sends the church out on a mission of redemption. Chapter 2 goes on to show the sentness of the local church as displayed throughout history from Acts 2 through the current Sending Church Movement. This theological understanding of the *mission Dei*, the mission of God, is essential to understanding and valuing the local church's role in global missions, specifically assessment and development.

Chapter 3 starts by answering the question of why the local church matters in the assessment and development of pre-field missionaries. The chapter then discuss the results of a twelve-question interview given to nine known and respected sending churches in North America. The results of these interviews were analyzed, discussed, and

observations are made. Finally, the chapter discussed best practices of assessment and development seen in the churches interviewed.

Chapter 4 considers the findings of chapter 3, as well as the current literature available on missionary assessment and development, and then proposes a model of assessment and development that can be used by leaders in local churches. This proposed model includes the methodology, processes, tools, and best practices needed for assessing and developing prospective missionaries within the local church.

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