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STRENGTHENING MISSIONARY FAMILIES THROUGH
MEMBER CARE BY THE SENDING CHURCH

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STRENGTHENING MISSIONARY FAMILIES THROUGH
MEMBER CARE BY THE SENDING CHURCH

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PREFACE

For ten years after completing my master's degree, I had the desire to go back to school. However, it was an intimidating prospect for many reasons. If not for the encouragement of my family, staff, and many close friends, this thesis would never have happened. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Jeff Walters. You not only guided me into the program as a friend and mentor, but coached me to its completion. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. John Klaassen and Dr. David Sills. As both professors and wise counselors, you have pushed me to think critically about missiology and the sending church.

I am grateful to my parents as well as my in-laws. You believed in me, encouraged me, prayed for me, and showed a genuine concern for the research I have conducted. You regularly asked about my writing and helped to create the margin in my life needed for this season.

I could thank many others for their support over the last several years, particularly the staff and elders at Heartland Worship Center in Paducah, Kentucky, where I served through most of this program. You encouraged me, as a full-time pastor, to pursue this dream and made sacrifices along the way, including time out of the office and financial support. Most recently, I would also like to thank Collierville First Baptist Church in Collierville, Tennessee. You hired me knowing I had most of this dissertation to write and have allowed me time and space over the past eight months to finish. I am indebted to both of these great churches.

I also wish to express deep gratitude to my wife, Ashley, and our kids, Thomas, Maggie, and Mary Taylor. You honestly deserve this degree as much as I. It has been a team effort in many ways. The sacrifices you have made over the past several

years are numerous. You have also encouraged and motivated me every step of the way, believing the doctoral program to be a work to which God called us to. I take pride in this accomplishment knowing you take pride in it with me and am thankful to have had you on the journey.

Finally, I wish to thank God for guiding me through this process. He gave me a burden for the world nearly twenty years ago and an understanding of my identity as His ambassador. I pray He will use my efforts here to expand His kingdom on earth.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century presents great opportunities to the church for sending and keeping families on the mission field. Movements are taking place all over the world that beckon more laborers, and with globalization and modern technology, no one is too far from the harvest. Despite the reality of these opportunities, challenges remain for families in these fields, and senders, even healthy ones, often find it difficult to meet the care needs of those they have sent. In many instances, the missionary family feels isolated spiritually, spatially, and emotionally. Aside from a monthly emailed newsletter, they may have very little connection with their former home. David Horner notes, “One of the toughest battles missionaries have to face is the prospect of being lonely in a distant place with no recourse, no relief and no remedy.”¹ With all the issues currently facing sending churches,² it would seem that care would be the easiest in which to engage. Many churches make the subtle mistaken assumption that these tasks are easy to execute. Also, the distance often makes it difficult to know about the needs and how to provide timely care. Sending churches, large and small, should lead in proactive and responsive care ministry for their sent families by creating healthy, long-distance gospel community, support, and accountability while working with agencies and other member care professionals. This care will serve to lower the preventable reasons families return

¹David Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission: You and Your Church Can Reach the World* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2011), 197.

²Most sending churches and agencies recognize the following stages for sending: pre-missionary discipleship, assessment and development, the actual sending process, care, and reentry.

from the field and offer the support necessary for the missionary family to remain obedient to their call.

I used qualitative research methods for each section of this dissertation. By exploring past and current models of sending care, a search of New Testament Scripture for the biblical precedent and surveying six significant sending churches through interviews, I gained helpful understanding and offer suggestions for both small and large churches intending to be healthy future senders, particularly those who desire to do member care well.

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation was to encourage sending churches to prioritize and evaluate their structure for member care to the families they have sent.

Through this research, I sought to answer at least four questions:

1. Are there measurable ways care ministry lowers attrition rates for missionary families? For many churches, their role in the sending process has largely equaled financial support. For others they have only introduced a strategy for care in the last 5 years.
2. How can sending churches reclaim their role in the member care process to the families they are sending? Furthermore, it is estimated that only 10 percent of Southern Baptist Churches have a functional model of missions sending.³
3. Is there a healthy, reasonable model for care of which both small and large churches can take ownership?
4. How can sending churches and agencies work together in the task of care ministry to missionary families?

While Southern Baptists currently have about 3,800 missionaries on the field,⁴ they represent only a portion of full-time missionary workers worldwide.⁵ Kelly

³Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission*, 197.

⁴This number is down nearly 1,000 missionary units since the restructuring that began in 2015.

⁵Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "Southern Baptists Lose Almost 1000 Missionaries as IMB Cuts Costs," accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/>

O'Donnell suggests there are an estimated 400,000 full-time foreign missionaries and over 11.8 million national Christian workers from all denominations.⁶ Many within this number lack adequate member care support from a local sending church or agency. Those who have care support most often get it from an agency. Such dependency on an agency reveals the problem that churches have lost their primary place in leading this effort. In fact, there has been steady diminishing in the role of the church in the sending process in recent decades. David Beirn notes that although the SBC leads evangelicals with 45,000 churches, more than 80 percent have not sent anyone overseas.⁷ Furthermore, when it comes to Southern Baptists as a denomination, Horner goes on to point out,

Nearly 90% of the models to which pastors are exposed have not demonstrated a functional model to missions. In the absence of such models, what else would pastors assume but that their ministry is normal if they only occasionally tip their hat to the mandate Christ has given for missions.⁸

How can churches understand the need to properly care for their sent ones if they are rarely involved in sending? As will be seen in future chapters, churches can and should prioritize and lead in caring for the families they are praying for and supporting.

Care is critical to the success of the missionary family for many reasons. Some of these reasons include the rigorous process of culture and language learning for each family member complicated by their varying ages, on-field trauma and stress, maintaining sufficient funds to remain on the field, issues with aging parents, etc. Truthfully, these examples merely scratch the surface. Senders that dig a little deeper will find that some less exposed care needs include mental health, deeper issues of soul care, accountability,

2016/february/southern-baptists-lose-1132-missionaries-staff-imb-cuts.html.

⁶Kelly O'Donnell, *Global Member Care*, vol. 1, *The Pearls and Perils of Good Practice* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011), 5.

⁷Steve Beirn, *Well Sent: Reimagining the Church's Missionary Sending Process* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2015), 31.

⁸Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission*, 33.

specific marriage needs, and dealing with varying and regular forms of loss. Thousands of missionary families are all too familiar with these challenges, yet their sending churches may have little knowledge, and even if they do, they are rarely equipped or given access by the missionary to offer helpful or corrective support. ReMap statistics show attrition rates among missionaries, both married and unmarried, and have found that the average length of stay for both is only two to four years.⁹ For career missionaries, ReMap reveals that 47 percent of missionaries leave the field during their first five years.¹⁰ Seventy-one percent leave for preventable reasons.¹¹ Many of these “preventable” reasons could have been avoided had a sending church been coached and given access to support. ReMap II, an updated, more recent version of the work done in ReMap I, offers three primary factors that most hinder a missionary’s effectiveness: finances, family issues, and relationship problems.¹² Family issues, as polarizing as they may be, are always at the center of either a missionary’s effectiveness or demise. Long-term sustainability for the twenty-first-century family on mission should be at the forefront of every sending church and agency strategy.

⁹Remap and Remap II are some of the most thorough mission research studies conducted just before and shortly after the turn of the millennium with regard to missionary retention. ReMap is an acronym for Reducing Missionary Attrition Project. The research contained in them was conducted by the Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance. The fieldwork in Remap II involved 600 agencies across 22 countries and represent some 40,000 missionaries. The effort was primarily led by William D. Taylor. World Evangelical Alliance, “ReMap II: Worldwide Missionary Retention Study & Best Practices,” 10, accessed January 6, 2016, http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/res3_96_link_1292358945.pdf.

¹⁰William D. Taylor, “Examining the Iceberg Called Attrition,” in *Too Valuable to Lose: Examining the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 13.

¹¹Ibid. “Preventable Reasons” include work or team related issues, dismissal, personal issues, and agency issues. “Unpreventable Reasons” include retirement, death, loss of visa, and appointment to leadership in agency.

¹²World Evangelical Alliance, “ReMap II,” 27.

There is much conversation today in the American church on the need for gospel community in the life of the church and soul care for the individuals inside them. Gospel community is necessary for spiritual health, spiritual growth and accountability, missional living, etc. Without the hope of some type of continued community on the part of the sending church, how can missionaries be sent with any staying power? I do not deny the Holy Spirit ultimately calls and directs all believers and their individual roles in the mission. However, the Holy Spirit uses the local sending church to encourage, support, and guide. There are special challenges in providing a significant amount or level of gospel community for a church's sent ones, but a responsibility to do so remains. There is biblical precedent for such a task and significant footprint churches¹³ in the sending world can be observed. Horner explains, "Being alone is not the same thing as being lonely."¹⁴ No sending church can lessen the physical distance between home and field. However, with a commitment to robust and intentional gospel care, missionaries will be empowered and energized, attrition rates will become less of an issue, and the churches that send them will be stronger and better equipped to continue sending.

Neal Pirolo has researched and written with regard to missionary care. In *Serving as Senders Today*, he observes the four levels of member care: agency level, church level, personal/relational level, and crisis level.¹⁵ He acknowledges two important issues. First, when the first three levels "fulfill their function in cooperation and harmony there is a lesser need for the fourth level."¹⁶ Second, the focus of *Serving as Senders*, as with most of his other research, has focused on the third level: personal and relational.

¹³Further explanation for the phrase "significant footprint churches" is offered later in this work. For now, the phrase meanw "influential."

¹⁴Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission*, 197.

¹⁵Neal 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, 2012), ix.

¹⁶Ibid.

The following research sought to focus on the second level, the church. The church should take the leading role in caring for its sent ones whereas agencies have taken the primary role in recent years. Also, this work has not been researched and prescribed in such a clear way to offer a path for smaller churches. It was the goal to show how churches can strengthen the families they have sent through care ministry.

The apostle Paul describes this type of missionary care on the part of a healthy sending church in Philippians 4:14-18: “Yet it was kind of you to share in 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.”¹⁷ In the coming pages, careful analysis of this passage and its implications help reclaim the heart of care on the part of a sending church for its sent ones. Churches are reminded that they have not only been released to this work, but they will have the confidence to know they are in the position to provide better care than the popular alternatives.

Definitions

It is beneficial to define the key terms. The primary terms are *agency*, *attrition*, *member care*, *retention*, and sending church.

Agency. Agencies are often independent entities responsible for missionary evaluating, equipping, sending, and member care. They are also accountable to churches, groups of churches or denominations, although some are non-denominational and completely independent. Agencies exist to serve as a partner to those God has called on the field. Ralph Winter distinguished between churches and agencies with the language

¹⁷Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

of “modalities” and “sodalities.”¹⁸ He did not give priority to one over the other but saw the need for both to work together as agencies have the advantage of specializing in areas uncommon to most churches. I basically agree with Winter and argue that agencies are no longer necessary through the research in this dissertation. I simply encourage a plan for churches to send and care as they did in the church’s origins as seen in the New Testament regardless of the presence or absence of an agency.

Attrition. Attrition is the gradual reduction in number or strength to a missions organization, denomination, or agency. Even the healthiest sending organizations have an attrition rate. Detlef Blocher writes that attrition rates are calculated “as the annual number of returnees divided by the number of active missionaries on the field of this agency.”¹⁹ Jim Haney, from the International Mission Board (IMB) expands on this definition: “There are four categories for abnormal or potentially preventable loss, otherwise known as attrition: death, resignation, medical disability and termination. Other kinds of losses, such as completions and retirements are not attrition.”²⁰ The formula the IMB uses is slightly different from the aforementioned definition. Their formula is the number of attrition divided by (last year end of year count minus number of attrition) = percentage of attrition.²¹ Most organizations have an attrition rate somewhere between

¹⁸Ralph D. Winter, “Churches Need Missions because Modalities Need Sodalities,” *Evangelism Missions Quarterly* (July 1971), accessed March 11, 2016, <https://emqonline.com/node/914>. To clarify, Winter referred to local churches as modalities and parachurch organizations as sodalities.

¹⁹Rob Hay, *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library & World Evangelical Alliance, 2007), 11.

²⁰Jim Haney, Director of Global Research, International Mission Board, email to author, October 19, 2016.

²¹Ibid.

4.5 percent and 7 percent annually. According to Gordon Fort, the SBC currently boasts of the best attritions rates in decades coming in just under 5 percent.²²

Retention. Retention is essentially the opposite of attrition and the goal for senders. Retention is a church's or agencies process of keeping or retaining its missionaries in the fields that God has called them.

Member care. Member care includes the sharing of best practices for personnel within Christian mission/aid sector practitioners. O'Donnell explains that member care at its best prioritizes personal and professional growth through "character and competency, permeated with compassion, in order to provide good practice."²³ She describes member care as more of a movement and argues that it has really only developed using a common language over the past twenty years: "Member care has truly become international, is increasingly mainstreamed into the ethos of sending groups, and is considered to be a central part of the mission/aid strategy."²⁴ Care ministry and member care are essentially synonymous and are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation depending on the situation and formality of its use.²⁵ O'Donnell has now written two volumes on member care and shed a huge light on the discipline. It has been the foundation for much of the recent conversation regarding sending and care in the sending church. Additionally, I differentiate between proactive and reactive (or responsive) care throughout this paper.

²²Gordon Fort put me in touch with Jim Haney. The International Mission Board's official attrition data and information on individual cases is closed to the public; however, the IMB granted me access to the data (abnormal or potentially preventable losses—resignation, death, medical disability, and termination) for the last ten years. In order to gain insight into ways sending churches care for families, which can serve to bolster retention. It should be noted that this data was given before the VRI (Volunteer Early Retirement) in 2015.

²³O'Donnell, *Global Member Care*, 3.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

²⁵I prefer to use *member care* when referring to an agency and *care ministry* when referring to a local sending church.

Proactive care seeks to stay ahead of potential problems by predicting their origin and helping missionaries avoid them from ever happening. The local church can really help speak into the proactive part. As to reactive care, unfortunately, serious issues do arise while on the field and often there is little warning. These issues could be related to security, physical danger, mental health, a particular sin issue, or a host of other things. Reactive care is often where the agency specializes.

Sending church. Zach Bradley of The Upstream Collective has written to help bring definition to a healthy sending church and develop resources for sending and supporting churches set on reclaiming this vital role. He defines the sending church this way:

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.²⁶

An entire book has been dedicated to defining the healthy sending church. Although this definition is helpful and comprehensive in scope, my criticism is that it is slightly long and perhaps too complex for the average church. Its biblical and functional accuracy, however, cannot be questioned. Pat Hood has also dedicated a helpful resource that should be considered when defining the sending church. Rather than differentiating between “church” and “sending church,” Hood suggests that a healthy church is by nature a sending church and offers two pillars by which one should define it: Lordship of Christ, who is the ultimate sender, and the authority of Scripture, which prioritizes sending through the commands of Christ.²⁷

²⁶Zach Bradley, *Sending Church Defined* (Knoxville, TN: Upstream Collective, 2015), 7.

²⁷Pat Hood, *The Sending Church: The Church Must Leave the Building* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2013), 22-24.

Why Families and Why Sending Church?

To be clear, the local church is God's plan for missionary sending and must be critically involved in the care of its families. In the spirit of the Church of Antioch and in the rich tradition of churches that have sent and cared well, this research will begin. Perhaps this should be obvious but often, well intending churches do not have a strong culture of care in their DNA. Who should know more about and care more about missionaries than their sending church? However, time and time again. I run into families with no clear local church sender, and even more often, churches that have little more involvement than a regular financial contribution. Missionaries need and yearn for care support. They should be able to rely on such support. Churches that step up to the challenge of caring will fuel these families to fulfill their call by supporting in appropriate ways. This level of care culture will carry with it the reciprocal added bonus of fueling the church to be on mission in a greater capacity as well.

Statistically, global totals for the Western sending world reveal that families make up 83 percent of the mission force.²⁸ The IMB shows missionary family unit totals just a little higher at 86 percent currently.²⁹ Even though there has been a rise of unmarried missionaries, particularly in the short and mid-terms,³⁰ the vast majority of Protestant missionaries remain family units. So the problem lies more with keeping families on the field than it does getting families to the field. ReMap statistics show attrition rates among missionaries, both married and unmarried, and have found that the average length of stay for both is only two to four years.³¹

²⁸Justin Long, email to author, January 8, 2016, and January 13, 2016. Long is a missiological researcher with ACT Beyond. Some of his family missions research is from confidential case studies. Others can be shared through his blog or simply in general through email correspondence.

²⁹Eric King, email to author, January 14, 2016.

³⁰It is widely accepted that short and mid-term missions equal two years or less.

³¹World Evangelical Alliance, "ReMap II," 10.

If the apostle Paul, a single missionary, needed care support from his own network of local churches, there can be no question that families with children of varying ages need intentional and specific support as well. Each sending church has the potential to be like the Church of Philippi for its missionaries. Serving sent ones is one of the highest honors the church can have.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited by several factors. It is difficult for a single church to excel in every part of healthy care ministry, as it is as wide as it is deep. Even though churches, small and large, should prioritize their proper place in care, they need to consult with help from the outside. To further complicate the challenge of healthy care, not every missionary family needs the same level of care or is at the same stage. Some families need more than others. Also, focusing on families brings challenges of its own, as there are different sizes and types, ages of children, and varying care needs depending on the field of service. Missionaries tend to be tough-minded people who are not accustomed to asking for help. Care at a distance is complicated. Care is only as good as the other major components involved in sending. A church's identification of sent ones, assessment, and development process, plan for sending and reentry, and engagement must be touched on in conjunction with care.

The only significant delimitation was that even though this research could easily be applied to single missionaries, I focused on families and the unique challenges for care involving a dad, mom, and children on the mission field. Additionally, I did not seek to address any of the specific issues required in care and accountability of singles. These issues could include, but are not limited to, dating on the field, isolation often experienced for singles, authority issues with field team leaders, etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research is meant to be a help to missionary families by being a help to sending churches. I prioritize member care by looking at the history of missions, the Scriptures, and some of today's healthiest senders. I doubtless researched this through a Southern Baptist lens, of which I am personally a product. However, my intention was to look objectively and diversify by interviewing and researching different size churches and some with identity outside of Southern Baptist life.

There has been no greater time in history for churches to send missionary families than today. Helping them be adequately prepared and supported increases their chance to make a dent in spiritual darkness around the world and the Bible supports this endeavor. History was not always kind to missionary families with regard to care, but that is where the sending church can learn. Technology today allows for engagement and connection with the home church and field in ways never before possible. Churches must commit to send and then commit to a robust plan to care for those the Spirit calls out.

CHAPTER 2
HISTORY OF MEMBER CARE AND CURRENT
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

**On Whose Shoulders Does the
Sending Church Stand?**

Healthy member care today ultimately stands on the shoulders of hundreds of sent ones, their families, and their senders who have gone out in obedience to the Great Commission. Until recent years, missionaries were faithful to the call despite little opportunity or strategy for member care. They knew once they set sail for whatever foreign land God had called them, that they would rely fully on Him for any care He deemed necessary. However, caring has evolved significantly over the last century. Lottie Moon left for China when member care was essentially a non-factor in the sending process. It was soon acknowledged as an acceptable reality and is now seen by all in the sending community as an essential piece. *Member care*, as it most commonly referred worldwide, has its foundation in the New Testament and was administered by the local church as the primary sender.¹ Yet, in recent decades, the responsibility of member care has been assumed by sending agencies and, in best-case scenarios, shared in some small ways by the local church. This dichotomy is a problem. In *Antioch Revisited*, Tom Julien writes, “Missions is not what the church does for the missionary, but what the church does through the missionary.”² Steve Beirn adds to description that missions “is what the church does

¹As a term, *member care* has an institutional feel that has historically been acceptable, since it is most commonly practiced by sending agencies. I use the term *member care* throughout the dissertation, but not when referring to care provided by sending churches.

²Tom Julien, *Antioch Revisited: Reuniting the Church with Her Mission* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 2006), 25.

through and with the missionary.”³ The relationship between the missionary and the sending church, and the health of this relationship, is of great importance. Fortunately, the twenty-first century has brought a resurgence in sending with the local church at the center.

In this context, churches are being encouraged to take back their rightful role in sending and care; however, many churches lack a robust plan for starting and executing. While evangelical churches have a reputation of working to recruit missionaries to send them overseas, less attention is often given to their needs while on the field. Dorris Shultz and Dale Hawley rightfully note, “This is the time when they need it the most.”⁴ While member care has become an increasing priority of local sending churches, many struggle to know where to start, how to maintain healthy care, or if they even have the authority to speak into all areas of care legally. This chapter starts by tracing some of member care’s historical and recent roots and considers some of the special contemporary issues facing sending churches that desire to care well.

William Carey and the Importance Care Organization

William Carey serves as an incredible example to the sending church of a missionary leader who understood the value of the sender organization. In many ways, he modeled for future generations how to submit to the authority of a sender and how to help create healthier sending organizations through faithfulness on the field. He was not a perfect missionary, husband, or father. In fact, through his clear mistakes, one can substantiate the need for the sender to be organized in the care it provides.

³Steve Beirn, *Well Sent: Reimagining the Church’s Missionary Sending Process* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2015), 143.

⁴Dorris Shultz and Dale Hawley, “Past, Present and Future Trends in Missionary Care,” *Leaven* 21, no. 1 (2013): 1, accessed February 16, 2017, <http://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2214&context=leaven>.

William Carey is considered the father of modern missions. He was a British Particular Baptist missionary who set sail for India in 1793.⁵ He would never return home. In preparation to answer his call, Carey faced a hyper-Calvinism that had no interest in missionary sending of any sort. Timothy George notes a significant turning point was when John Ryland, Sr., famously responded to Carey's call by saying, "Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine!"⁶ Carey was not discouraged by the heavy pushback he received from local pastors. In the coming months, similar to Lottie Moon, he used both his mouth and his pen to move the missionary agenda. In 1792, he published his famous plan of action, entitled "An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen." Timothy George summarized the document:

The Enquiry consists of an introduction and five chapters dealing, respectively, with the Great Commission, historical precedents, a world survey, obstacles to missions, and the Christian's duty to promote the cause of missions. The last five words in the first paragraph of the introduction set the entire missions enterprise in the context of its ultimate, transcendent source- the character of God himself.⁷

Along with many sermons expressing his great faith in God, this booklet ultimately persuaded Baptists of sending validity, sending as a team, and the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society.⁸ Eventually, this group of Baptists formed the first sending agency. These actions were all important building blocks for sending and they still prove effective today. Member care was not a reality for Carey, but the foundation was laid nonetheless.

⁵Daniel L. Akin, *10 Who Changed the World* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 1.

⁶Timothy George, "The Faithful Witness of William Carey," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (October 1992), accessed February 24, 2017, <https://emqonline.com/node/1408>.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 123.

Tucker notes that the evening before the missionary society was formed, Carey is said to have preached from Isaiah 54:2-3 and made the famous statement: “Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.”⁹ In March of 1793, John Thomas, William Carey, and their families were commissioned by the newly formed society as its first missionaries.¹⁰ They had studied the Moravians and the book of Acts but had few sending examples to follow. Regardless, the families were appointed at Kettering and to these men it might as well have been Antioch and they, Paul and Barnabas.

One thing to note is that Dorothy Carey, pregnant and already raising three small children, was adamantly opposed to this plan.¹¹ In the beginning, she actually refused to go but later decided to join her husband after a fund-raising delay. Despite her concerns, the family, along with her sister, set sail June 19, 1793. On that day, Carey wrote in his journal, “This has been a day of gladness to my soul. I was returned that I might take all my family with me, and enjoy all the blessings which I had surrendered to God.”¹² This was one of the few happy moments with regard to Dorothy and their missions experience. Over the next two years, she suffered significant physical and mental distress. Tucker notes that Dorothy became so mentally ill that she suffered delusions regarding their marriage and William’s faithfulness to her, leading her to follow him in secret and often create awkward public scenes.¹³ In one of his journal entries from this time, Carey wrote,

This is indeed the Valley of the Shadow of Death to me. . . . O what a load is a barren heart. . . . O that this day could be consigned to oblivion. . . . Much to

⁹Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 123.

¹⁰W. S. Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1925), 60.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 61.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 125.

complain of, such another dead soul I think scarcely exists in the world. . . . Mine is a lonely life indeed. . . . My soul is overwhelmed with depression.¹⁴

The next several years did not prove any easier. He faced opposition on many fronts culturally, physically, and spiritually. One of their children, Peter, died of dysentery in 1794,¹⁵ and Dorothy never improved. She struggled in India for thirteen years before eventually passing away December 7, 1807.¹⁶ Considering these trials and that Carey saw no converts until year seven, his commitment to the mission and his faith in God are truly remarkable. He soon married again and went on to become an incredible Bible translator, educator, advocate for social justice, and preacher of the gospel. One looks back in fond remembrance of William Carey and his missionary accomplishments, but hears little of the sacrifices his wife and children made to see God come in so much power. The price paid by Dorothy and countless other missionary wives will never fully be known in this life. As for Carey, by the time he died in 1834, he had served India for forty-one years without a furlough.¹⁷ This sacrifice, however, inspired a generation of new missionary recruits willing to go to the most difficult places on earth in obedience to the Great Commission.

Robby Butler notes that Ralph Winter insightfully highlighted the organized work of William Carey by speaking of three great eras for missions. The first era started with Carey and was the first broad, organized effort for Protestants to go.¹⁸ The focus of

¹⁴James R. Beck, *Dorothy Carey: The Tragic and Untold Story of Mrs. William Carey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 116-17.

¹⁵Stewart, *Early Baptist Missionaries and Pioneers*, 63.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁷“William Carey: Father of Modern Missions,” *Christianity Today*, accessed March 12, 2017. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/missionaries/william-carey.html>.

¹⁸Robby Butler, “New Insight from the Three Eras of Mission History,” *Missions Frontiers*, November 1, 2008, accessed March 6, 2017

this era was to reach the coastlands of the world and the timeline ranged from 1800 to 1910. The second was the inland era, led by Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission. Winter's thinking is that this era ranged from 1865 to 1980.¹⁹ This era was characterized by missionaries feeling led to all areas, particularly the interior areas of many previously untouched countries. The third and current era is the "unreached peoples" led by Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran. This era has been characterized by the translation of the biblical word "nations" or *ethne* in the Greek, as distinct ethnic groupings rather than countries with geopolitical borders.²⁰

Much is unique regarding Winter's insights regarding the first era. William Carey is important to the conversation about the future of member care because he saw early on the value of an organized sending effort back on the home front. Winter notes,

It took Carey's blueprint for an organized "means to evangelize the heathens" to produce the six often mentioned and self-consciously parallel organizations born in the 1790's-the Baptist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society, the Scottish Missionary Society, the Glasgow Missionary Society, the Netherlands Missionary Society, and the Church Missionary Society.²¹

As it relates to common missiological thinking about member care, it is important to note that, during this era, nineteen of the twenty missionaries sent by these societies died on the field.²² Even though the organized sending efforts led by Carey focused on missionary selection, finances, and theological guidance, they were the beginnings of member care.

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/new-insight-from-the-three-eras-of-mission-history>.

¹⁹Butler, "New Insight."

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ralph D. Winter, "The Concept of a Third Era in Missions," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (April 1981), accessed March 9, 2017 <https://emqonline.com/node/1182>.

²²Ibid.

Lottie Moon and Southern Baptist Care Beginnings

Charlotte (Lottie) Diggs Moon represents pioneer missions in the truest sense. Not only did she lead a missions movement in China, she pioneered member care for Southern Baptists in the nineteenth century, becoming a strong activist for member care and sender responsibilities. Lottie has been called the “patron saint” of Baptist missions.²³ She was born December 12, 1840, in Virginia, to a pre-Civil War southern aristocracy unlikely to produce a missionary force the likes of Lottie Moon.²⁴ In addition to wealth and land, the Moons were also highly educated. The Moons encouraged critical thinking in faith and practice in all areas of their life. However, Edward Moon, Lottie’s father was fundamental with regard to local church participation. He rarely allowed anyone in the family to miss a weekly service.²⁵ Lottie’s older siblings both became doctors—her sister, Orianna, was the first female doctor in the South.²⁶ Like others in her family, Lottie was also highly intelligent. In 1857, she enrolled at Albemarle Female Institute hoping to not only to further her education, which was somewhat taboo for women at the time, but the cause for women’s rights.²⁷ She excelled in every area, particularly languages. By the end of her first year, she had acquired a degree in Latin and was at the top of her class in Greek, Italian, French, and Spanish.²⁸ During these college years, however, she rebelled against her strict Baptist upbringing. It was not until a campus revival lead by Reverend

²³Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 294.

²⁴Akin, *10 Who Changed the World*, 47.

²⁵Janet Benge and Geoff Benge, *Lottie Moon: Giving Her All for China* (Seattle: YWAM, 2001), loc. 62, Kindle.

²⁶*Ibid.*, loc. 293.

²⁷*Ibid.*, loc. 303.

²⁸*Ibid.*, loc. 313.

John Broadus of Charlottesville Baptist Church did her faith come alive.²⁹ She actually only went to ridicule the other students. Lottie later wrote, “I went to the service to scoff, and returned to my room to pray all night.”³⁰ She asked to be baptized the very next day and found her faith growing with as much or more passion than her education, which had been her life. In May 1861, Lottie graduated with a master’s degree at the very top of her class and was said to be one of the most educated women in the south.³¹ In April of this same year the Civil War started, which sent her home and ultimately laid the foundation that would take her to China. The war devastated her family’s fortunes and changed her thinking about the world. Danny Akin notes, “Her family’s wealth was one-fortieth of its prewar value after the war ended.”³² These difficult life experiences yielded significant maturity in Lottie. Whereas she previously cared about money, influence, and education, God began to stir in her heart a desire not to waste her life on things many others her age were wasting them on. She previously cared very little about missions but now found herself with a great desire to serve God overseas, particularly the Shantung province in China. The biggest hurdle was that until 1871, the Southern Baptist Convention’s Foreign Mission Board refused to send single women as missionaries. It was in this year that Henry Tupper, the newly appointed corresponding secretary of the board, made a visit to the Moon family stating these rules were changing.³³ More women had an interest in missions, which was evidenced by the large number of women’s missionary societies popping up in Baptist churches. Lottie’s sister, Edmonia, along with another girl. named

²⁹Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 294.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 295.

³¹Benge and Benge, *Lottie Moon*, loc. 342.

³²Akin, *10 Who Changed the World*, 47.

³³Regina D. Sullivan, *Lottie Moon: A Southern Baptist Missionary to China in History and Legend* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 33.

Lula Whilden, became the first single women sent out under the board's revised policy.³⁴ However, Lottie, could not follow her sister for a year as she had previously committed herself as a teacher. She followed Edmonia to China in September 1873.

At this time, there was basically no plan for care among Baptists for their missionaries. They were doing good to raise enough funds to send missionaries to the field. Lottie's sending church, the First Baptist Church of Cartersville, Georgia, was excited to send a female missionary and formed a women's missionary society to help with financial and moral support.³⁵ Bengé and Bengé note that the society assumed their only future correspondence from Lottie would be by letter³⁶ as the girls had pledged to stay in China until death, which was customary for all missionaries at the time.³⁷

Both she and her sister were prepared for cultural differences, sickness, and many forms of risk, but the transition proved even more difficult than they imagined. Soon after she arrived, Lottie realized that her sister "Eddie," was struggling to withstand the hardships of missionary life. Between multiple bouts with sickness, difficulty in language study, and rigorous culture acquisition, Eddie suffered what was called a "hysterical seizure."³⁸ Today this would likely be treated as culture stress but in the absence of a member care structure, Eddie's condition did not improve. By the fall of 1976, Lottie decided that Eddie needed a break and sent her on to Yokohama, Japan, to spend some time in the city with missionary friends.³⁹ However, one week into the

³⁴Sullivan, *Lottie Moon*, 34.

³⁵This society eventually became the WMU or Women's Missionary Union, and still exists today as a vital supportive arm of Southern Baptist Missions.

³⁶Benge and Bengé, *Lottie Moon*, loc. 604.

³⁷*Ibid.*, loc. 954.

³⁸Sullivan, *Lottie Moon*, 44.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 49.

voyage, Eddie took a turn for the worse, and a telegram was sent to Lottie to join them immediately. It simply said, “Eddie much worse. Send her sister to Japan immediately.”⁴⁰ The telegram included a letter from a doctor that said, “Your sister arrived on Saturday last in very low spirits. She remained in bed from Saturday till Wednesday. . . . We did all we could to divert her thoughts from the subject that causes her so much mortal agony.”⁴¹ Lottie left for Shanghai immediately and decided a trip back to Virginia was unavoidable. Only three years into her work in China she was forced to return home to assist her sister, who was struggling with a mental breakdown.

Eddie never returned to China, and due to funding, Lottie was forced to wait more than a year herself. She was not able to return until November 8, 1877.⁴² This delay ended up being very providential as it ultimately contributed to the sustainability of her next thirty-five years in China. Lottie became frustrated early on in her time back home as she observed her supporting churches lacked in sympathy for the difficulties the sisters and other missionaries were facing on the field. Many were actually frustrated that they had returned at all. Lottie began to speak and write specifically to help churches understand the hard conditions in China and the need for strong support. Bengé and Bengé write, “Indeed, Lottie felt as passionate about educating Baptists concerning the realities of missionary life as she did educating the Chinese people about the Christian life.”⁴³ She truly became the first advocate for member care even though the words were never uttered in her lifetime.

⁴⁰Keith Harper, ed., *Send the Light: Lottie Moon’s Letters and Other Writings* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002), 48.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 49.

⁴²Bengé and Bengé, *Lottie Moon*, loc. 963.

⁴³*Ibid.*, loc. 954.

Lottie Moon served the Lord in China for thirty-nine years until her death just before Christmas in 1912.⁴⁴ One of her most significant accomplishments was leading Southern Baptists to care not only for the mission more deeply but also for the missionaries they send. According to the International Mission Board, in 1888,⁴⁵ she called Baptists to raise \$3,315 to send three new female missionaries to China. One hundred percent of the Lottie Moon Christmas offering is given to support missionaries and their families. In 2015, the Christmas offering totaled \$165.8 million, the highest in the history of the offering.⁴⁶

After raising the necessary funds to return to China, Lottie wrote these words:

We feel we should press this country work to the limit of our ability. But our inadequate our force! Here is a province of thirty million souls & Southern Baptists can only send one man and three women to tell them the story of redeeming love. Oh! That my words could be as a trumpet call stirring the hearts of my brethren & sisters to pray, to labor, to give themselves to this people. “But,” some will say, “We must have results, else interest flags.” I have seen the husbandman go forth in the autumn to plow the fields; later, I have seen him scatter the seed broadcast; anon, the tiny green shoots came up scarcely visible at first; then the snows of winter fell concealing them for weeks; spring brought its fructifying rains, few feeble workers, scattering the grain according as time & strength permit. God will give the harvest; doubt it not. But the laborers are so few. Where we have four, we should have not less than one hundred. Are these wild words? They would not seem so were the church of God awake to her high privileges & her weighty responsibilities.”

-Yours sincerely,

L. Moon.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Akin, *10 Who Changed the World*, 47.

⁴⁵Since 1888, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions has supported Southern Baptist missionaries as they share the gospel around the world. The offering represents 59 percent of IMB total annual support. Every penny given to the offering goes directly to support missionaries, including salaries, medical care, housing, transportation, and children’s education. International Mission Board, “Lottie Moon Christmas Offering,” accessed April 28, 2017, <https://www.imb.org/lottie-moon-christmas-offering>.

⁴⁶Julie McGowan, “Lottie Offering Tops \$165.8 Million,” The International Mission Board, June 10, 2016, accessed February 24, 2017, <https://www.imb.org/2016/06/10/20160905lottie-moon-offering-tops-165-8-million/>.

⁴⁷Harper, *Send the Light*, 83.

Lottie Moon proved to be one of the greatest missionaries of all time and a model for Baptist missions all over the world. Her quest to awaken the church to its role of prioritizing ongoing care to its missionaries proved invaluable and in many ways laid the foundation for its future.

The Past Fifty Years of Member Care

Recent decades have seen a continued increase in the sending of missionary families. Member care, however, as a movement has evolved slowly even though much has changed in the world over the past fifty years. Kelly O'Donnell notes, "It was often through crises, mistakes, and failure that we began to realize that Christian workers needed quality support in order to help them in their challenging tasks."⁴⁸ Early on in the member care conversation, many thought missionary families were being unspiritual or weak, and not trusting the Lord enough. O'Donnell continues, "We were overlooking our own humanness, sometimes trying to be something that we were not created or called to be and began to realize our Biblical need for one another."⁴⁹ Today's missionary is able to leverage technology and globalization, which has created amazing opportunities with regard to travel and communication. David Sills highlights the global trends toward urbanization and globalization in his 2015 book, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission*. In 2011, the United Nations announced that for the first time in history the world is more urban than rural.⁵⁰ Urbanization means that more missionary families are living in global cities than ever before and able to access the emerging technologies contained in these

⁴⁸Kelly O'Donnell, "Historical Perspectives on Member Care," accessed February 23, 2017, <http://www.ethne.net/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/ethne-mc-web-historical-perspectives-on-member-care-revised-dec-06.pdf>.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰M. David Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission: Responding to Global Challenges* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 24.

urban areas. Many missionaries still labor in rural areas, but even they have increasing access to cell service, wireless internet, better health care, etc.

All this technology has opened new doors for member care. Technology, however, has brought with it greater access for missionary families, which naturally results in more units on the field. In addition to these increases, the 1970s ushered in a renewed interest in world evangelization, missions research, and as a result, member care strategies. Many have contributed to the field. Shultz and Hawley note that Joseph Stringham published two articles on missionaries and emotional health in 1970 for *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*.⁵¹ Marjorie Collins wrote the first known book on missionary care in 1974, *Who Cares about the Missionary?*⁵² These and other resources began popping up independent of each other. That same year, Ralph Winter gave his famous lecture entitled “The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism” at the Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland.⁵³ This speech is believed to be a watershed moment for missions in the twentieth century. With more than 2,700 people in attendance representing over 150 different nations, the gathering has been compared to Vatican II for Protestants.⁵⁴ Through speaking, writing, training, and sound research, Winter helped bring an emphasis and renewal to pioneer missions.

By the 1980s, conferences were made available all over the world related to specific areas of member care, such as the first International Conference on Missionary

⁵¹Shultz and Hawley, “Past, Present and Future Trends,” 2. See Joseph Stringham, “Likely Causes of Emotional Difficulties among Missionaries,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 6 (1970): 192-203; Joseph Stringham, “The Missionary’s Mental Health,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 7 (1970): 1-9.

⁵²Marjorie Collins, *Who Cares about the Missionary?* (Chicago: Moody, 1974).

⁵³Alan Johnson, “Analyzing the Frontier Mission Movement and Unreached People Group Thinking,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 79-80.

⁵⁴Harold Fickett, *The Ralph D. Winter Story: How One Man Dared to Shake Up World Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 1.

Kids in Manila in 1984.⁵⁵ The past thirty years have seen a growing body of literature and training opportunities concentrated on the varying aspects of member care and reentry. Dozens of names could be referenced here, but Kelly O'Donnell and Neal Pirolo are two that have most shaped thinking on member care. O'Donnell and O'Donnell began writing in the 1980s with *Helping Missionaries Grow*⁵⁶ and has now written widely on member care. Neal Pirolo first wrote *Serving as Senders*⁵⁷ in 1991, and has followed that with many new editions over the years as it continues to prove its importance.

Enthusiasm for world missions and the rise of the world wide web in the mid-1990s yielded a perfect environment for the sending church to reclaim its place in the sending and care process. Today, many resources can be found⁵⁸ related but not limited to all of the following categories: pastoral and spiritual growth, physical and medical care, career issues and reentry, team building, interpersonal relationships, partnerships, families, couples, singles, finances, accountability, ethics, stress, trauma, crises, contingency management, counseling, coaching, consulting, and member care overviews. One must remember that member care is wide and must span human needs in mind, body, and emotions, be age appropriate, both active and responsive, and often be tailored to each member of a single family unit. This process can be overwhelming, but churches must not lose heart. The field of member care is growing and in the last several years local

⁵⁵Schultz and Hawley, "Past, Present and Future Trends," 2.

⁵⁶Kelly O'Donnell and Michele O'Donnell, eds., *Helping Missionaries Grow: Readings in Mental Health and Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1988).

⁵⁷Neal Pirolo, *Serving as Senders: How to Care for Your Missionaries While They Are Preparing to Go, While They Are on the Field, When They Return Home* (San Diego: Emmaus Road, 1991).

⁵⁸The list comes from Member Care Associates, "Featured Resources," accessed April 3, 2017, www.membercare.org and was last updated in 2014. "Featured Resources" offers many helpful books and articles for member care.

churches, in conjunction with agencies, are taking responsibilities for the care of their sent ones in similar fashion to the book of Acts.

Recent Practices and Developments

The Upstream Collective is one example of a resource group committed to help sending churches care for their missionaries well. In *The Sending Church Defined*, Zach Bradley describes the sending church:

A Sending Church is a local community of Christ-followers, who have make 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.⁵⁹

The words “continuing to encourage, support and advocate” have their own chapters in the book. Bradley recognizes that member care is an amazing opportunity for churches to relieve the financial, emotional, and physical stresses that mark the career of sent ones.⁶⁰

Doing so not only bridges the spatial distance between the missionary family and the sending church, it follows the heart of God through Scripture as expressed in the sending nature of the Trinity. Bradley writes,

Advocacy is an expression of God. The Scriptures regularly stress God as advocate, fully pictured in all three persons: the Father (Deuteronomy 10:18, Psalm 68:5) the Son (I John 2:1, Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25), and the Spirit (John 14:26, Romans 8:27). We cannot fail to understand advocacy unless we fail to understand our identity in Christ.⁶¹

Churches must be prepared for long-term commitment in the care of the sent ones along with the messiness that comes with their call and lives. Churches cannot see care through a consumer mentality. Consumerism will not be sustainable and will ultimately have the opposite effect on the families the church was trying to represent. Bradley goes on to

⁵⁹Zach Bradley, *The Sending Church Defined* (Knoxville, TN: The Upstream Collective, 2015), 8.

⁶⁰Ibid., 122.

⁶¹Ibid., 141-42.

highlight the work of several churches doing an effective job practicing holistic care for their sent ones, along with some of their best practices.⁶²

In *Changing World, Unchanging Mission*, David Sills, President of the sending agency Reaching and Teaching International Ministries, addresses the trend of churches acting as sending agencies, looks to examples in Scripture, and highlights some of the pros and cons in the movement. Though he is not as enthusiastic about the future success of sending churches, he recognizes that ultimately, churches have always sent missionaries and agencies were only meant to offer assistance in the process.⁶³ He writes,

There is wisdom in churches sending their own missionaries where they have painstakingly developed field missionaries and sought to evangelize, disciple and plant churches in their adopted area. They are concerned that the work be brought to maturity, able to stand on its own in a Biblically faithful ministry.⁶⁴

According to Sills, there is both wisdom and folly in the trend of churches sending their own and going completely around agencies. His largest area of concern has to do with member care and whether or not the majority of churches can send and offer the entire support package necessary for missionaries to stay on the field. This concern is legitimate. Will the church support “include salary, airfares for the family to and from the field, outfitting allowance on the field, health and life insurance, retirement, children’s education, and visas?”⁶⁵ If not, where does this necessary support come from and who will have the authority to speak into the life of the sent family? Will it ultimately be the sending church, the agency, a shared amount of oversight or neither? Sills’ concerns should not be read a complete push against the sending church and potential for sending families. These are,

⁶²These churches are studied in chap. 4.

⁶³Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission*, 132.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., 139.

however, significant questions sending churches must wrestle with if long-term sustainability is to be reached.⁶⁶

The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has been affected by the sending church movement and gone through many changes over the past few years that effect sending and member care. Some of these changes are related to new leadership, particularly new President David Platt, in 2014.⁶⁷ He brought with him a renewed focus on completing the Great Commission, which meant diversifying and creating new paths for sending. Certainly, these new paths include working together with thousands of SBC churches in an attempt to send far more than 4,000 to 5,000⁶⁸ workers worldwide. The 2016 theme for this campaign was “Limitless.”⁶⁹ This new trend seems to be more than lip service as long-term missionaries and strategy coordinators within the IMB’s field personnel seem to be more open to short and long-term volunteers sending churches are preparing for the field. Recently, my church was preparing two college students to spend the summer in central India to work with an unreached people group we adopted over three years ago. Before preparing to send them, I reached out to the IMB strategy coordinator and the South Asia Peoples Student Strategist to inquire about

⁶⁶Suggestions for this area are offered later in the dissertation.

⁶⁷David Burnette, “Pastor David Platt Elected as the New President of the IMB,” August 27, 2014, Radical website, accessed March 5, 2017, <http://www.radical.net/blog/post/pastor-david-platt-elected-as-the-new-president-of-the-imb/>.

⁶⁸Until recently, the IMB boasted of being the largest US-based sending agency with approximately 5,000 workers represented worldwide. In order to meet budget, the IMB went through a bit of an overhaul creating ways for early retirement and a hand raising opportunity to leave the field for those feeling called to other areas or in jobs and locations not as strategic as the IMB’s new vision desired. Through this overhaul, the IMB lost about 20 percent of its workforce. This may seem like a significant setback except for the “Limitless Sending” initiative, which hopes to leverage the sending church in an attempt to send double or even triple the amount of missionaries into harvest fields over the coming years.

⁶⁹Editorial Staff, “Limitless,” August 27, 2016, IMB, accessed March 5, 2017, <https://www.imb.org/2016/08/27/20160827limitless-opportunity-limitless-sending/>.

opportunities to work together. I received advice through a conference call, and by email correspondence I found out about eight options available for these young men, ranging from one week to one year.⁷⁰ As a local church pastor concerned about sending well, I was encouraged by the interchange and potential for our church and the IMB to work together in this way.

Contemporary Issues for the Sending Church and Member Care

Some important areas for missionary sending need clarification before moving on. These areas represent both opportunities and potential threats for sending churches that desire to care in appropriate ways. First, a contemporary working definition of member care needs to be addressed. Second, specific issues of care related to the missionary kid will be reviewed. Finally, a section is offered to help understand attrition and returning sent ones.

Member Care Defined

Kelly O'Donnell describes the work of care best when she explains,

Member care, I have learned over and over again, is not about creating a comfortable lifestyle. Nor is it about trusting people instead of trusting God. Rather, it is about further developing the resiliency to do our work well, which includes our character, competencies, and social support. It is also about developing relational resiliency, which includes working through the inevitable differences and impasses with international and local fellow-workers. Member care helps to balance the realistic demands of suffering and sacrifice with the realistic needs for support and nurture in our lives.⁷¹

She goes on to very practically remind that her dentist encourages her to floss only the teeth she wants to keep. In member care, this is no different: “The only people to whom we really need to provide member care are the ones we want to keep.”⁷²

⁷⁰Kyle R., email to author, December 19, 2016.

⁷¹Kelly O'Donnell, *Global Member Care: The Pearls and Perils of Good Practice* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011), loc. 456, Kindle.

⁷²Ibid.

Larry and Lois Dodd help bring sobering clarity to the task of member care:

Missionary work is inherently stressful. Ministry itself is a hazardous occupation! It exposes one to the deepest needs of humanity, many of which can never really be met. The values inherent in ministry are for self-giving and self-sacrifice. Ministry calls for change- change in self, change in others and change in society. Ministry is never finished. There is always more to do. It is often difficult, if not impossible, to measure a ministry's success. Feelings of failure and opportunities for burnout among those who are ministers are inherent in this work. While stress can be a source of growth, and although many ministers withstand the rigors of their work without adverse side effects, many others do not.

Choosing to minister across cultures compounds the hazards almost geometrically. In addition to the hazards of ministry itself, going cross-cultural means adding layer upon layer of complexity. One steps out of one's own context, exchanging it for a whole new set of struggles and challenges. Change of culture brings with it changes of language, value systems, climate, geography, social systems, role definitions and a host of other life elements. Usually a life of ministry across cultures places one in a position to experience potential high levels of stress, as almost everything in one's self and one's life must adapt to new realities."⁷³

Cross-cultural work is a daunting task and one never meant to be shared alone.

Both the sender and those sent must work together in community with the Holy Spirit and other faith-based professionals. Even when this community is in place and committed to the health of the missionary, it is still hard to define the customized needs that might arise. Ronald Kotesky reminds,

Many words can be used to describe what takes place in missionary member care. Some of those words are friendship, encouragement, affirmation, help and fellowship as well as sharing, communicating, visiting, guiding, comforting, counseling and debriefing. All of these and more are facets of member care.⁷⁴

Kelly O'Donnell argues that it is important to see member care as a discipline:⁷⁵ "It is a personal, community and Biblical practice. It is an intentional practice to help renew

⁷³Larry Dodd and Lois Dodd, "Stressed from Core to Cosmos: Needs and Issues Arising from Cross-Cultural Ministry," Heartstream Resources, accessed February 15, 2017, <http://www.heartstreamresources.org/wp-content/uploads/CORE2COS.pdf>.

⁷⁴Ronald L. Kotesky, "Missionary Member Care: An Introduction," accessed February 16, 2017, http://www.missionarycare.com/ebooks/Member_Care_Introduction_%20Book.pdf.

⁷⁵O'Donnell, *Global Member Care*, loc. 495.

workers, to help them remain resilient, and to help them remain effective.”⁷⁶

Since the member care definition includes such a wide spectrum of needs, it is easy to see why sending churches feel overwhelmed with the task. As it will be seen in the next chapter, however, one must remember that the foundations of member care are ultimately rooted in the gospel, and in that, God has given the church everything it needs to care for its sent ones well.

Through this gospel lens, O’Donnell suggests a five-sphere model that offers some clarity to organizing the task of member care: (1) Master Care—care that comes from Jesus Christ Himself; (2) Self and Mutual Care—care from oneself and relationships within the home; (3) Sender Care—care from the primary sending groups—church and agency; (4) Specialist Care—care from professional, personal and practical equippers; and (5) Network Care—facilitators from international member care networks that provide and develop supportive resources.⁷⁷

Though this tool is helpful, it is a weighty reminder of the challenges facing the sending church. The church can glean a few effects regarding member care from this model. First, the church has been largely sidelined in the member care process with only a shared role in a single sphere: sender care. Second, if the sending church is to lead the way in the care of its sent ones, it must take full responsibility, including a willingness to develop a robust plan for sending that includes directions in all spheres. Third, the sending church will be required to partner with many specialists. No single church will be good in all areas of care without the help of others in the care community. Finally, a point to consider when defining member care for the sending church is the family. As previously

⁷⁶O’Donnell, *Global Member Care*, loc. 506.

⁷⁷Kelly O’Donnell, “Going Global: A Member Care Model for Best Practice,” *Missions Frontiers*, September 1, 2002, accessed March 3, 2017 <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/going-global>.

stated, family units make up over 80 percent of the missionary work force,⁷⁸ which is also true for the business and expat community. Craig Storti notes that 69 percent of expats are married and 61 percent take their children overseas.⁷⁹ Despite the cost and potential risk of failure, many businesses, even small ones, see the need for global work. Storti goes on to write,

The costs of cross-cultural failure, for individuals and their organizations have been well documented. There are personal costs and family costs; financial, professional, and emotional costs; and costs to one's career prospects, to one's self-esteem, and to one's marriage and family.⁸⁰

Getting and keeping family units on the field is expensive, and the care needs that follow crossing cultures can be exaggerated because different ages of family members call for different types and degrees of care.

Member Care and the Missionary Kid

Children are a gift from the Lord, and as a parent who had their first child on the mission field, I can say from personal experience that having a child on the field is a tremendous blessing and even a chance to open new doors in the work. Raising children on the mission field also bring challenges, all of which cannot possibly be anticipated. The sending church has a huge role to play in the care of these children. Michael Polluck explains that Missionary kids, or MKs⁸¹ as they are commonly referred, are

individuals who, having spent a significant part of their developmental years in a culture other than their parents' culture, develop a sense of relationship to all of the

⁷⁸Justin Long, email to author, January 8, 2016.

⁷⁹Craig Storti, *The Art of Crossing Cultures* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey, 2001), loc. 111, Kindle.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Using the abbreviation MK is probably not politically correct nor preferred by most missionary children, but has become commonplace in local church vernacular. The roots of the designation are not known, but likely connected in some way to the abbreviation PK—preacher's kid. Edward E. Danielson, *Missionary Kid—MK* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1984), viii. TKC or Third Culture Kid is also regularly used particularly among missionaries.

cultures, while not have full ownership in any. Elements of each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience.⁸²

MKs are often referred to as “third culture kids.” In recent years, much has been written on the role the MK plays in missionary life and how to care for these children. Lynn Dixon Sidebotham writes, “The third culture concept holds that missionary kids constitute a third culture distinct from their sending and receiving cultures.”⁸³ During my time on the field, my wife and I saw MK challenges first-hand.⁸⁴ A few months into our time as missionaries we were approached by a field partner and asked to consider leading a gathering of MKs once a month. The idea was for it to be informal and some small version of a church youth group in the US. We agreed and were shocked by how hungry these children were for leadership and identity. Within just a few months, the group grew, and we found an incredible open door to minister to and disciple these MKs. They were longing for encouragement and a chance to be told they were “normal.” Early on, MKs struggle to assimilate into their receiving culture for all the same reasons their parents struggle (language and culture acquisition). The parents have clear roles to play or jobs to fulfill, but finding identity is more difficult for the children. After years of struggling to find their place, they then struggle to return to the sending culture that at one time was familiar. These kids are left asking, “Where do I fit in?”

Sending churches must remember the sacrifices their sent families have made and take care to consider the needs of these children when identifying ways to advocate

⁸²Michael Polluck, “Third Culture Kids in the Church: Finding Where You Belong,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (April 2015), accessed March 10, 2017, <https://emqonline.com/node/3291>.

⁸³Lynn Dixon Sidebotham, “Thinking about MK Vulnerability,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 1998), accessed March 10, 2017, <https://emqonline.com/node/541>.

⁸⁴Ashley and I were missionaries with the IMB in southern Africa from 2003 to 2004. We lived in a capital city in proximity to many missionary families with children.

and support. First, churches should educate their members of the challenges existing for MKs and debunk ridiculous myths that may exist about them in the congregation. Through research in the mid-1980s, six important MK myths were identified:⁸⁵

1. There is a certain amount of deprivation and personality underdevelopment resulting from missionary overseas upbringing.
2. MKs suffer academically.
3. MKs are rebellious toward their parents and the Christian faith.
4. Boarding homes are basically detrimental to a child's development and serve to lower self-concept.
5. Because the MK parents are "busy serving the Lord full-time," the Lord makes up the gaps in the children's upbringing.
6. MKs really don't have any problems to worry about.⁸⁶

Though the previous list is a little dated, it offers a realistic view into the ignorant gaps that often exist between sending churches and the MKs that return to them on stateside assignments or permanently. More specific suggestions will be offered in chapter 4, but Michael Polluck offers a few ways churches can start to own member care within their congregations. First, they should look for third culture kids in their city.⁸⁷ Most cities have growing immigrant communities that may include refugees, families of international workers, or even exchange students. By identifying and ministering to these people, the church will literally be educating and preparing itself for returning sent ones. The church would also be growing in understanding of the needs MKs and their families have while still on the field. Second, Pullock suggest that churches should know and listen to their MKs, which includes regular communication with the missionaries but also specifically with the MKs—encouraging them, asking for stories, listening actively, and praying for

⁸⁵Larry W. Sharp, "Toward a Greater Understanding of the Real MK: A Review of Recent Research," in *Helping Missionaries Grow*, 219.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 220-26.

⁸⁷Polluck, "Third Culture Kids."

discernment. Finally, he says churches should recognize and build on the potential of MKs.⁸⁸ With an increasing global culture in the US, MKs carry varying degrees of international experience and skill sets not likely to be held by most children in the church. These skills can be an amazing gift to be leveraged within the church and community and will help offer appreciation and identity to the MK.

Larry Sharp offers a convicting and important statement regarding the thinking on MKs by the local church in the US:

MKs are not just a costly appendage to their parents' ministry, but they are an important present and future resource for missions and world understanding at home and abroad. We would not be excessively optimistic in suggesting that perhaps MKs hold potential answers to some of the cross-cultural problems of international misunderstanding in our day.⁸⁹

Understanding Attrition and Returning Sent Ones

There will always be missionary attrition. Even the most intentional sending church cannot ultimately be responsible every time a missionary returns home from the field. Some will have positive experiences, and realistically, some will have negative ones. Both churches and agencies alike desire low attrition rates. As stated in chapter 1, neither the church nor the agency can prevent death, retirement, physical disability, or a forced termination.⁹⁰ Therefore, these items are not normally counted in attrition numbers. Some of the common preventable reasons for attrition include on-field trauma and stress, lack of sending church and/or agency support, issues with children and/or extended family, lack of funds, lack of preparation, and leading of the Holy Spirit.⁹¹

⁸⁸Polluck, "Third Culture Kids."

⁸⁹Sharp, "Toward a Greater Understanding," 226.

⁹⁰Jim Haney, Director of Global Research, International Mission Board, email to author, October 19, 2016.

⁹¹This list is certainly not exhaustive; it simply stands to serve as an example of the real issues facing missionary families.

Approximately 50 percent of first-time missionaries return home early or do not return for a second term at all.⁹² Churches want to see the missionaries they send be successful, but often times success is defined in arbitrary ways creating unrealistic expectations for sent families. Examples might include measuring success only through metrics, fuzzy expectations, an absence of expectations, minimum number of years on the field, or a minimum number of baptisms, etc. These items are not likely to be expressly stated, but could be assumed creating pressure for the missionary to fulfill things only God can do. Sending churches must be clear in the expectations of its sent ones, but must also extend grace easily and often, which means the sending church must be prepared to handle the reentry of its sent ones.

Neal Pirolo states, “Re-entry is often the hardest part of an overseas experience and it should not be ignored.”⁹³ He says the challenges of re-entry “culture shock” include professional, financial, cultural, social, political, educational and spiritual.⁹⁴ There are many reasons missionaries return home sooner than expected, yet given the chance, a sending church committed to member care could speak into these. Pirolo also explains, “Your church, no matter its size, if it is going to take responsibility of sending out missionary, must accept with equal responsibility the awesome task of seeing them through the process of reentry to full integration.”⁹⁵ The International Mission Board has recently gone through a significant period of downsizing in order to meet budgets, which included early retirees and a “hand raising opportunity” for others that simply felt God might be leading them to something different. The large numbers of missionaries returning home has created an awesome opportunity for Southern Baptist churches to rally around those

⁹²Pirolo, *Serving as Senders*, 136.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid., 139-46.

⁹⁵Neal Pirolo, *The Reentry Team: Caring for Your Returning Missionaries* (San Diego: Emmaus Road, 2000), loc. 4167, Kindle.

no longer on the field in love and support. I personally have many friends who have fallen into this category. Some are doing great and moving on to new roles while others have floundered trying to find their place in the church and marketplace.

Regardless of the reason, attrition is a reality that churches should prepare for. Sending is one of the most exciting and heartfelt times in the life of a local church while reentry often feels quite the opposite: awkward, embarrassing, confusing, etc. Though not as glamorous as sending, taking responsibility in the receiving of sent ones is an important part of the process. Returning sent ones have much to offer the sending church that chooses to embrace them with love and grace.

Conclusion

The history of organized sending and member care reveals that the church has learned much. On the heels of the Protestant Reformation, there is little evidence of organized sending, yet shortly after those dark ages, the enlightenment brought a period of creative discovery that opened many doors for the church. Missions went from a New Testament concept to an eighteenth-century reality. As the church grew healthier, so did its missions efforts, as seen through the obedience of William Carey and Lottie Moon. They represent just two examples of the people whose efforts helped bring clarity to the need for member care. In the past fifty years, significant strides have been made, including the emergence of member care as a discipline and growing relationships between varying practitioners in conjunction with technology and urbanization. At the core of all strides in member care for the past several hundred years are relationships. O'Donnell writes,

As I reflect upon my journey in member care over the last twenty-five years, one of my main conclusions is that the timing and grace of God coupled with careful cooperative planning, have characterized the development of member care. Prayer and partnership have been essential. And at the core of partnerships are relationships—solid relationships, healthy relationships, resilient relationships, love-based relationships. Such relationships last through thick and thin and help us to develop as good practitioners.⁹⁶

⁹⁶O'Donnell, *Global Member Care*, locs. 734-45.

Having surveyed the foundations of care ministry over the past couple of hundred years, a journey even farther is needed in order to trace the New Testament roots of member care in the early church and the apostle Paul's missionary journeys.

CHAPTER 3
WHY CARE OF SENT ONES IS FAITHFULNESS
TO SCRIPTURE

Biblical Precedent for the Care Community

There is strong New Testament support for healthy member care. Healthy member care can be observed through the faithful, generous, and caring community of the church at Antioch, as well as Paul's epistles to the various other local churches, particularly Philippi. Support can additionally be found by looking closely at the flaws found in Corinth, Rome, Jerusalem, and other places. It is also important to note that no sending agency was involved with the first century church and the early movement of Christianity. Outside the local church, there was no organized effort to send missionaries until thousands of years later. Jeff Iorg reminds, "The church (expressed as local churches) is God's eternal plan, the summation of His redemptive work, and its glorification the culmination of history. Local churches, warts and all, are God's strategy for advancing His kingdom."¹ This section surveys several examples of biblically healthy senders and sent ones including the church of Antioch and Philippi and a few key supportive texts.

One might ask whether Paul really saw a need for care support from the local churches he was planting. When speaking of his own personal challenges, Paul gives a clear picture in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28:

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city,

¹Jeff Iorg, *The Case for Antioch: A Biblical Model for a Transformational Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2011), 4.

danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

Paul's writing of these verses in 2 Corinthians fits into Acts 20, which means the events of all three missionary journeys would have taken place.² Murray Harris notes that when one compares the difficulties described in Acts to that of Paul's own testimony in 2 Corinthians 11, they are not exaggerated.³ Paul faced unimaginable suffering on a consistent basis for many years. His description reveals physical, emotional, and even familial struggles. To say Paul relied on the care of these newly planted churches would be an understatement. Their prayer and financial support, gifts, friendships, and encouragement were life to Paul. Joey Shaw, Director for the International Field Office of The Austin Stone, observes this list of member care responsibilities as they relate to the sending nature of the local church found in the New Testament:

- Mobilizing/Choosing: Acts 15:22
- Commissioning: Acts 13:1-3
- Logistical Support: 2 Timothy 4:13
- Financial Support: Philippians 4:10-11
- Prayer Support: Ephesians 6:19
- Advocating: Acts 18:27
- Encouraging: Philippians 2:19
- Re-Entry Support: Acts 14:26-28⁴

Tom Julien uses New Testament examples to suggest a “Three-Way Partnership” in the shape of a pyramid to describe the roles in sending.⁵ At the top corner is the missionary, down to the lower left is local church (spiritual accountability), and the

²Murray J. Harris, *2 Corinthians*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 391.

³Ibid.

⁴Joey Shaw, “Biblical Basis of Sending: A Survey of the Local Church as the Sender of New Testament Missionaries,” unpublished document written for the 100 People Network of the Austin Stone Community Church. Shaw gave me this document in a personal interview I conducted with him on February 7, 2017, Collierville, TN.

⁵Tom Julien, *Antioch Revisited: Reuniting the Church with Her Mission* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 2006), 59.

lower right is the mission agency (organizational accountability).⁶ Steve Beirn uses this same idea to suggest a balanced relationship between the missionary, church, and agency.⁷ Ralph Winter essentially agreed with this summation although he used different language to describe the relationship between the church and agency. He distinguished between these as modalities (the local church) and sodalities (the universal church or parachurch organization) and insisted that world missions needed both: “Churches need missions because modalities need sodalities.”⁸ In sum, missionary families need support in multiple ways. There is certainly room for sending churches and agencies to work in conjunction with one another in healthy, respectful relationship. Though not specifically mentioned in the Bible, sending agencies are also not prohibited. By looking to the New Testament in the next section, these theories are compared with the first century strategies for missions.

Antioch as Sender and Provider

This survey of the New Testament begins by looking at the care community fostered in the church of Antioch. Antioch was a healthy sending church, which is evidenced through passages⁹ describing their sending mindset as well as their absence from any list where the New Testament writers addressed several unhealthy and dysfunctional churches. Considering the flaws in the churches at Corinth, Rome, Galatia, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and the list given by John in the book of Revelation, Iorg notes,

⁶Julien, *Antioch Revisited*, 59.

⁷Steve Beirn and George W. Murray, *Well Sent: Reimagining the Church’s Missionary Sending Process* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2015), 87.

⁸Ralph Winter, “Churches Need Missions because Modalities Need Sodalities,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 1971), accessed January 10, 2016, <https://emqonline.com/node/914>.

⁹Some of the passages are cited in the following paragraphs, but all of Acts 11-18 is of significance when it comes to the role Antioch played early on in the missions sending activity of the church.

“There was one exception, one beautiful exception. One transformational church overcame formidable obstacles to model healthy, balanced, effective church life.”¹⁰ Antioch was that exception.

Little is known about the formation of the church at Antioch. During the first fifteen to twenty years of the New Testament church, most of the efforts were aimed at reaching Jews.¹¹ The first gospel witness to Antioch was incidental. David Niringiye rightly observes,

Those who had been scattered by the persecution in Jerusalem in connection with Stephen went about gossiping the good news, so to speak, but only to the Jews. But believers from Cyprus and Cyrene decided that if Jesus was such good news to the Jews, he must also be good news to the Greeks as well. The result was a great number of Greek and Jewish converts, but the missionary outreach of the Jerusalem church was not an organized effort.¹²

The first mention of Antioch in the New Testament comes in Acts 11:19-26:

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

The growth rate and conversion of Samaritans along with other Gentiles caused such a stir in Jerusalem that they ended up sending a scouting team to observe, correct mistakes, and report back to the mother church. Longenecker writes, “With the

¹⁰Iorg, *The Case for Antioch*, 6.

¹¹Darrell Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 29.

¹²David Zac Niringiye, “Jerusalem to Antioch to the World: A Biblical Missions Strategy,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (January 1990), accessed March 23, 2017, <https://emqonline.com/node/1644>.

report of a mixed congregation in Syrian Antioch, many in Jerusalem were doubtless fearful that the Christian mission was moving ahead so rapidly as to be out of control.”¹³ Barnabas was selected, and with his nickname “Son of Encouragement,” no better candidate could have been chosen for Antioch.¹⁴ The response of Barnabas in the scene was actually a crisis point in the history of the early church and, as Longenecker goes on to note, “Much depended on Barnabas’ reaction, counsel, and report not only at Antioch itself, but also at Jerusalem and in the later advance of the gospel through Paul’s missions.”¹⁵

Interestingly enough, Barnabas and Saul were among the first to go to Antioch, and after only a year they were the first to be sent from this church. It is not a stretch to say Antioch, as new as it may have been, was in large part responsible for the leadership development of Paul along with the missionary vision and strategy he would soon embrace.

Another key passage that helps one understand what was taking place in Antioch is Acts 13:1-3:

Now there were in the church in 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.

The local church was always God’s conduit for carrying out the Great Commission.

Antioch became the first model because of its faithfulness in two key areas: prayer and obedience to the Holy Spirit. Ken Kilinski notes,

The church in Antioch became the vehicle for two areas, first the vision and second the strategy. They were a great church with tremendous leadership. It had a significant ministry of fasting and prayer, and the believers were in tune with the

¹³Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 401.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God was able to communicate a vision: ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’¹⁶

Antioch was an interesting community for sending for many reasons. It was the third largest city in the Roman Empire with an estimated population of 500,000-800,000.¹⁷ It had a prominent Greek heritage. Antioch was a free city but served as the capitol of the Syrian province, making it a prime government center.¹⁸ In addition, it was a city known for religious practices, particularly the worship of the Greek gods Artemis, Apollos, and Astarte.¹⁹ Aberrant behavior in Antioch included much moral laxity, such as temple prostitution.²⁰ Finally, Antioch was a multicultural hub. There was said to have been Greeks, Syrians, Phoenicians, Jews, Arabs, Persians, and Italians among the city’s population mix.²¹ In summary, Antioch was a large city with many of the same characteristics as today’s urban areas. Iorg writes, “Unlike most modern cities, the gospel thrived in Antioch. As our world becomes more urbanized, we must have confidence the gospel can change lives and transformational churches can grow in cities.”²²

The church at Antioch became an incubator for church growth and missions. Though likely not the strategic location to have been originally chosen by Jerusalem, God saw through the politics and chose to build His church through a group of faithful, newly converted Syrians. There is much the twenty-first century sending church can learn from

¹⁶Ken Kilinski, “How Churches Can Follow Antioch’s Model,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (January 1979), accessed March 24, 2017, <https://emqonline.com/node/1086>.

¹⁷Iorg, *The Case for Antioch*, 14.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Bock, *Acts*, 413.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Iorg, *The Case for Antioch*, 15.

their example. The care Antioch showed can be seen best by the sending and returning of Paul and Barnabas from the first journey. First, it was a process all of the church was involved in and not just a few or a committee. Longenecker explains, “The whole congregation, together with its leaders, was involved with attesting the validity of the revelation received, laid their hands on the missionaries, and sent them out. This is confirmed by the reference to the whole church in Acts 14:27.”²³ It is a common misconception that only large churches can be great senders. Can you imagine the entire church family gathering on both the sending and the return of Paul and Barnabas? It would have been an extremely powerful scene to witness. Now imagine a mega church by today’s western standards doing the same. This would be nearly impossible to replicate with the same effect.

After eighteen long, difficult months, Paul and Barnabas came back excited and were greeted by expectant brothers and sisters.²⁴ The church cared by praying and being in tune with the Spirit in both the sending and receiving, followed by zealous gathering and active listening on the missionaries return (Acts 14:27-28). A common concern missionaries express is the feeling that the longer they serve on the field, the more disconnected they feel from those they left at home.²⁵ Nothing encourages the heart of a missionary like people from their home church actively listening to the stories of all

²³Longenecker, *Acts*, 417.

²⁴A. T. Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles, Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Nashville: Broadman, 1930), 218.

²⁵I have many friends who returned from various fields over the past eighteen months having taken the “hand raising opportunity” with the IMB. As hundreds have tried to assimilate back into US culture, stories like this are commonplace. One such set of friends is Ted and Kerri Dewett. I had lunch with them on December 6, 2016, only a short time after their return from Ecuador with their two daughters. Ted said, “We are struggling to find our place, find a church home where we fit in, struggling to feel normal and most of all struggling to feel heard in a way our faith family can understand all God did over the past eight years.”

God has done on the field then allowing those experiences to shape the existing church culture so that future sending can be done even more effectively.

Scripture also proves how the church in Antioch cared by one important fact that is not explicitly stated. There is no evidence that Paul and Barnabas made a report to Jerusalem on completion of the first journey. A. T. Robertson notes, “This was a turning point in the growth of the NT church.”²⁶ Officially, authority may be assumed by a particular agency but relationships forged by healthy, caring senders are always natural, making that authority equally natural. Antioch, not Jerusalem, was where Paul always returned to report. Antioch is mentioned twenty times in the New Testament.²⁷ Of those occurrences eighteen take place in the book of Acts and seventeen of those are from chapters 11 to 18, all surrounding the three missionary journeys of Paul. The significance of the church in Antioch cannot be overstated with regard to Paul and Barnabas. Antioch was not just home base. Antioch was the spiritual strength and supporting encourager they needed standing behind them on each mission. Today’s sending church would do well to learn to care like the church in Antioch.

Philippi as Best Example of Care

Antioch served as a healthy first sender for Paul, and as a result of their strong support, he planted many other churches in the years that followed. Some of those churches multiplied and many became healthy senders and champions of care ministry in their own right. One such church was Philippi. Paul founded the church on his second missionary journey from Antioch most likely around AD 51.²⁸ He wrote the epistle back

²⁶Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 219.

²⁷Bible Study Tools, “Search Results: Antioch,” accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?s=bibles&q=Antioch&t=niv&c=all>.

²⁸Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 26. Melick goes on to say the best chronology places the second missionary journey at about A.D. 50, shortly after

to the Philippian church approximately ten years later between AD 61-62 during his first Roman imprisonment.²⁹

Philippi was an important location according to Scripture, not necessarily because of its geographical location, but because the Holy Spirit specifically chose it (Acts 16:9). In his commentary on Philippians, John Pringle notes that Philippi was the first place in Europe in which the gospel of Christ was proclaimed, and not by the intention of the apostles.³⁰ He also speaks of the spontaneous growth and health of the church:

From its small beginnings a flourishing Christian Church had sprung up, which, at the time when the epistle was written, was in so prosperous a state, that the Apostle, who reproveth so sharply the Churches of Corinth and Galatia, finds no occasion for censuring the Philippians, but commends in the highest terms their exemplary deportment.³¹

Paul entered the city of Philippi and would have started his ministry in the synagogue, which was his custom, except there is no indication that a synagogue existed.³² In fact, as F. F. Bruce notes, “There was no Jewish community at all to speak of.”³³ Bruce explains that Paul started his ministry just outside the city where a group of God-fearers gathered each Sabbath to recite Scriptures to one another.³⁴ It was here that Paul

the Jerusalem Counsel. Paul probably entered Europe during the middle of the second journey.

²⁹Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 40.

³⁰John Pringle, preface to John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*, trans. John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 8.

³¹Ibid.

³²F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 219.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 221.

met Lydia, his person of peace³⁵ and first Christian convert (Acts 16:11-15). She was so moved by the gospel and the work of these men that she insisted they stay with her the remainder of their time in Philippi. She became a church leader and one of Paul's strongest allies.

Philippi received its name from Philip II of Macedon in 358 BC after he gained control of the city and made it the center of the Greek empire.³⁶ By the first century, Philippi had a diverse population primarily made up of three ethnic groups: Thracians, Greeks, and Romans.³⁷ Melick writes, "Apart from Rome, Philippi was no doubt the most Roman of all the cities Paul visited."³⁸ The official language would have been Latin, although anyone with a working knowledge of Greek would have been fully conversant in most parts of the city.³⁹ As to religion, there would also have been a high level of diversity, but with the extent of Roman influence, no worship was so great as to the emperor himself. This is evident from Acts 16:21 when Luke says, "They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice."⁴⁰ Ultimately, Philippi, much like Antioch, was a diverse, large metropolitan area with little to no previous Jewish religious influence. It was an unreached area that quickly became a harvest field. Philippi ended up being one of the strongest churches Paul planted. This should come as no shock since the Holy Spirit initiated the work there.

³⁵The concept of a "Person of Peace" was introduced in Luke 10 and is used today as a pioneer missions strategy all over the world.

³⁶Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 23.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 25.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹Barbara Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 161.

⁴⁰The accusation that led to Paul and Silas' imprisonment was the casting out of the demon of a girl with the spirit of divination. The owners were upset and used their being "Roman" rather than "religious" in their case against them.

Paul describes Philippi as his best and only true, committed example of care.

In Philippians 4:14-19, Paul says,

Yet it was kind of you to share in 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. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

So what made Philippi so special? Melick suggests that the New Testament offers four key characteristics of the Philippian congregation that led to their unique role in Paul's missionary success:⁴¹ First, "Gentiles—The first converts were Gentiles . . . and historical data supports a primarily Gentile congregation."⁴² The church at Philippi was not opposed to Jewish Christians, but was largely formed by converts directly from the harvest. The leaders were necessarily new converts. New believers with little or no religious history have less religious baggage and less to deconstruct.

Second, "Women—Women played an important role in the life of the church at Philippi."⁴³ Four women in particular are mentioned: Lydia, the slave girl, Euodia, and Syntyche. Euodia and Syntyche were actually listed as co-laborers with Paul (4:2-7). Furthermore, Luke references the strength of female leadership from this area in Acts 17:4.

Third, "Generosity—Philippi became an example of generosity to the other churches of Macedonia and Achaia."⁴⁴ Second Corinthians 8:1-5 reads,

We want you to know brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

⁴¹Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 28-29.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 28.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints- and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

Melick writes, “The Philippian congregation was the only one specifically mentioned as sending a financial gift to Paul.”⁴⁵ The church of Philippi remains one of the best examples of genuine concern for the twenty-first century sending church.

Fourth, “Loyalty—The church stood by Paul throughout his life.”⁴⁶ This is evidenced in the gifts they gave for his support and the desire to know Paul’s condition in Rome.⁴⁷ G. B. Caird suggests that Philippi “was the one which gave him (Paul) the most satisfaction and the least trouble.”⁴⁸ They loved and supported Paul and did so from a place of deep trust and loyalty for the work he was accomplishing.

The Philippian church is a great model for today. There are clear indications of how the church uniquely partnered with Paul over a ten-year period, beginning with the second missionary journey through his imprisonment in Rome. Russ Mitchell notes, “The occasion that led Paul to write to the Philippian church was the generous gift brought to him in Rome by Epaphroditus. Thus, in a very real sense, Philippians is Paul’s ‘thank you letter’ to his one-and-only supporting church.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 28.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸G. B. Caird, *Paul’s Letters from Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 98.

⁴⁹Russ Mitchell, “Partners in Mission: The Example of the Philippian Church and the Apostle Paul,” February 4, 2014, accessed March 31, 2017, <https://discipleallnations.wordpress.com/2014/02/12/partners-in-mission-the-example-of-the-philippian-church-and-the-apostle-paul/>.

Caring Is Preparing: The Need for Robust Discipleship in Sending

In the member care process, agencies have historically focused on organizing, assessing, and caring in the realms of physical and mental health along with appropriate cross-cultural preparation. Agencies typically require sending church approval for the candidate, a minimum amount of seminary or education requirement to be met, and a series of interviews prior to appointment. They rely heavily on the local sending church to vouch for the theological preparation and personal discipleship of candidates as they will have had no history or relationship with the agency. The early church took this process seriously as well. The church is in a great position to observe the faith and action of individuals over a long period of time. Steve Beirn notes, “Building your robust faith will change you and many others where you live and potentially around the world.”⁵⁰

The World Needs More Than Missionary Passion

Passion for missions is important, but as missionaries have discovered for generations, passion alone will not sustain the work or protect it. Bruce Ashford writes,

Sometimes we ignore Scripture when forming our strategies, methods, and practices. It is as if we are saying that what we believe about God is important, but how we practice those beliefs is not. If we are not careful, these fissures between belief and practice will derail our mission and render our evangelical theology impotent.⁵¹

Good motives are not enough. Theological impotence on the part of missionaries and agencies often causes blurred lines on important issues and can leave once passionate workers feeling dumbfounded. Furthermore, passion will not protect the church in the West, or the third world, from error.

⁵⁰Beirn and Murray, *Well Sent*, 41.

⁵¹Bruce Riley Ashford, ed., *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church and the Nations* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), loc. 7464, Kindle.

Missionaries are resilient, determined people who often risk their lives for a people not their own. For this reason they need to be deeply spiritual people grounded in the true gospel, nurturing a hunger to grow stronger in Christ and the knowledge of His Word. G. K. Chesterton called this “The Romance of Orthodoxy.”⁵² He offers apologetic insights into basic doctrines to show how solid Christian orthodoxy “alone brings real progress and is safe from oppression, both liberal and other world religious oppression.”⁵³ Over one hundred years ago, Chesterton saw threats to Christianity like liberalism and Islam and knew that only a love of orthodoxy would really protect the freedoms promised in the gospel. He wrote, “Not only is orthodoxy the only safe guardian of morality or order, but is also the only logical guardian of liberty, innovation and advance.”⁵⁴

Along similar lines, David Hesselgrave has written a helpful book entitled *Paradigms in Conflict*, where he uses Scripture to answer some of the toughest questions facing missions today.⁵⁵ When comparing missionaries of the past century to today, he writes, “Even though the swords of those who remain may still be sharp, their ability to wield them and press the battle show evidence of weakness.”⁵⁶ Even though, the methods may change as culture changes, God’s Word never changes and neither should the priority given to it by the world’s Christian leaders.

The Great Commission calls for missionaries and movements with depth of character and theology and it always has. This section offers a closer look into the theological preparation of the apostle Paul as a representative of a healthy missionary. The attitude of all the apostles will also be seen as written in the Apostles Creed. Finally,

⁵²G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (1908; repr., Public Domain 2013), 118, Kindle.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., 134.

⁵⁵David Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 19.

⁵⁶Ibid.

a brief look is given at two of modern missions' best examples with regard to theological preparation and how it served them and the Great Commission long term.

The Apostle Paul

Though Paul was clear that he boasted only in Christ, he was vocal about his pre-conversion training. Little is known about the three-some odd years between his conversion and the start of his ministry, but both contributed to the type of missionary Paul became. As to pre-conversion training, Paul claimed in Philippians 3:5 to be “A Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee.” He was of the tribe of Benjamin, which Bruce notes is how his name was likely even chosen as Saul, the first King of Israel and also the most outstanding Benjaminite in Hebrew history.⁵⁷

Paul also claimed to have been educated at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). This was significant as Gamaliel was likely the leading Pharisee of his day.⁵⁸ Paul was sent to him to be trained at a very young age. His father and mother wanted him to be educated in the law and prepared to be a leader among the Jews. Despite this, in 1 Corinthians 15:9, Paul claimed to be the “least of the apostles.” Paul had the equivalent of many religious degrees by ancient standards but it was lacking nonetheless. Theological preparation includes much more than knowledge-based training. It must be obedience-based.

After his conversion, Paul continued his preparation for service but few details are given regarding the specifics. What Paul describes in Galatians 1:11-20 is not just a beautiful representation of his entire testimony, it reveals the heart of what God desires in preparation through the true gospel:

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

⁵⁷Bruce, *Paul*, 41.

⁵⁸Ibid.

And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people; so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.”

Assumptions can be made about the exact location and agenda of these three years in Arabia, but the change in Paul was so drastic that he was likely in a state of solitude among other believers, sorting out the implications of the gospel in light of all the law Paul had previously been taught.⁵⁹ Neander suggests that he may have even gone to this “neighboring district to prepare himself in an independent manner.”⁶⁰ In the end, great evidence of varying degrees of theological preparation in the life of Paul preceded his days as an apostle.

The Apostles Creed

An in-depth study of the Apostles Creed is not necessary here. Rather, an attempt to show its doctrinal nature and how that served as a representation of life and the missional priority for the original apostles, early church fathers, and even the modern missions movement will be made:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.⁶¹

⁵⁹Augustus Neander, *History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1880), 91.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Alister McGrath, *“I Believe”*: *Exploring the Apostles Creed* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1997), 10. This translation of the Latin text was approved by the fourth century church. Allister McGrath explains that early on, the creed was simply “Jesus is Lord” but by the fourth century, it had taken this form. It was not written by the original Apostles but certainly stood as a representation of what they lived by and confessed to.

Alister McGrath writes, “The Apostles Creed is an ideal starting point for this vital process of consolidating your grasp of your faith.”⁶² Even though it was most likely not written by the original apostles, it is characteristic of what was most pure and close to their faith. It was not just a statement of faith; it was an important tool for missionary motivation and new believer discipleship. J. I. Packer states, “The Creed itself was born as an instrument of evangelism-first, as a summary syllabus for catechetical teaching of the faith to non-Jewish inquirers, and then as a declaration of personal faith for converts to use at the time of their baptism.”⁶³

Packer goes on to remind how during the second century when the Apostles Creed was still being crystalized into the form that exists today, it was used to ward off Gnosticism and protect true believers from error.⁶⁴ The gospel is clearly seen in the Creed and each teaching depends on the next so that the gospel is fully stated by the end. Early Christians relied heavily on its clear expectations to stay true to Jesus’ teachings and have influence under difficult circumstances. In twenty-first century world cultures, missionaries face pagans all around the world no different than that of the Roman Empire. Packer explains,

The ABC approach is thus not full enough; the whole story of the Father’s Christ-exalting plan of redeeming love, from eternity, must be told, or the radical reorientation of life for which the gospel calls will not be understood, and the required total shift from man-centeredness, and more specifically from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness, will not take place.⁶⁵

The spirit of the Apostles Creed survives in all orthodox, evangelical churches. It is an important historical document still relevant for the twenty-first century church that can be useful in many aspects, including missiological training and candidate preparation.

⁶²McGrath, “*I Believe*,” 10.

⁶³J. I. Packer, *Affirming the Apostles Creed* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 17.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 23.

Recommendations for a Healthy Process

No single church will be able to fully prepare a missionary candidate and guarantee their success and retention. Success always and ultimately comes at the hand of the Holy Spirit. However, many things should be learned from the examples already offered from Scripture, early church history, and modern missions. In this section, several recommendations are made, including early spiritual development of maturing believers, a minimum standard of formal training, and contributions the local church can make after the missionaries have been sent.

An Encouragement to Develop Maturing Believers Early

Children really are like theological sponges, which is why Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 19:14). Not only are they often capable of more than adults when it comes to issues of faith, they process deep spiritual realities in a simplistic way that can shape their worldview permanently. Old Testament Israel understood this, which is why Moses gave the Shema. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 says,

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

These words would have been the John 3:16 of the Old Testament, particularly for young Israelites. The children would have memorized these words early and repeated them often. Scot McKnight writes, “The Shema is the first prayer that Jewish children are taught to say and it is the quintessential expression of the most fundamental belief and commitment

to Judaism.”⁶⁶ As the Apostles Creed served the early New Testament Church, the Shema would have been the heart of Jewish orthodoxy.

The closest modern equivalent is the practice of catechism, which can be done with both adults and children, but is probably most effective with children and new believers. Tim Keller and Redeemer Presbyterian recently wrote and implemented a new catechism, called the New City Catechism. When speaking of catechism in general, Keller explains,

Today many churches and Christian organizations publish "statements of faith" that outline their beliefs. But in the past it was expected that documents of this nature would be so biblically rich and carefully crafted that they would be memorized and used for Christian growth and training. At present, the practice of catechesis, particularly among adults, has been almost completely lost. Modern discipleship programs concentrate on practices such as Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and evangelism and can at times be superficial when it comes to doctrine. In contrast, the classic catechisms take students through the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer—a perfect balance of biblical theology, practical ethics, and spiritual experience.⁶⁷

There are many ways to disciple children and the idea here is not to encourage the local church to disciple only in missions. Rather, the local church that desires to be a sending church should disciple through multiple means toward the mission. Whether catechism, parent training, specific curricula, or simply through the power of the pulpit, the idea is to train in the mysteries of the gospel early and often. Through this, God will take a heart pliable and bent toward Him and call it into His mission. When this happens, whether they have formal theological training or not, like the apostles, Taylor or Carey, they will be better prepared for what God calls them into. Additionally, as it relates to the entire family on mission and their varying ages, a stronger discipleship will serve them all

⁶⁶Scot McKnight, *The Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2004), 7.

⁶⁷Tim Keller, “The New City Catechism: Introduction,” accessed July 18, 2015, <http://www.newcitycatechism.com/intro.php>. The New City Catechism utilizes one question per week (52) to be used by the family and includes Scripture, teaching material, questions, and a helpful video.

appropriately, give them clarity in the mission, and help each in articulating his or her own call to the work.

Preparation for Adult Candidates

The issue of seminary for missionaries has been widely debated in recent years. Many questions arise: Is seminary necessary? If so, how many hours should be required? Should both the husband and the wife be required to have a minimal amount of formal training? Some agencies require a minimum amount of accredited seminary hours and others do not, but the one thing that is clear—there is no uniform pattern. The largest American agencies have formulated varying policies when it comes to sending. For instance, the IMB requires a minimum of 20-30 hours of graduate level accredited biblical training for the husband and 12 hours for the wife.⁶⁸ Pioneers does not require a minimum amount of accredited or unaccredited theological education. Rather, they have individually tailored training requirements depending on the job.⁶⁹ African Inland Mission does not require a minimum amount of hours. Instead, they require a list of Bible competency classes that could come from varying different sources including, but not limited to, seminary, Bible college or other approved means.⁷⁰ The list includes Bible Survey, Life of Christ, Inductive Bible Study Methods, Church History, etc.

For sending churches, the spectrum is much wider. Some churches have created their own schools of missions that include different requirements and different amounts of time. Some churches implement their own requirements and additionally utilize

⁶⁸The IMB currently requires varying minimal amounts of seminary depending on the job assignment. Team Strategy Leaders, for instance, are required to have thirty hours. International Mission Board, “Seminary Requirements,” accessed October 5, 2017. <https://www.imb.org/mission-opportunities/#1473144825787-fd9675bf-aaa0>.

⁶⁹Pioneers, “Long Term Preparation,” accessed July 18, 2015, <http://www.pioneers.org/go/long-term>.

⁷⁰Lew Johnson, interview by author, Louisville, July 20, 2015.

agencies to help train their missionary candidates. The Village Church, for instance, in the Dallas/Fort Worth area of Texas, sends large numbers of missionaries and North American church planters annually. Rather than a seminary minimum, they require either 1 or 2 years in a Sending Program directed by their church.⁷¹ The length varies depending on whether or not the candidate is a North American or international church planter.

Regardless of the amount of formal theological education a church decides to require, the role of ensuring theological preparedness rests on the shoulders of the local sending church. Through an assessment process, they should be able to determine the preparedness of the candidate and whether or not more formal or informal education is necessary. Also through the preaching, teaching, small groups, mentorship, and general culture of the mission, the role of the local church in the Great Commission should be modeled. Greg Carter writes,

The local church will correctly assume the role of teaching the foundational issues of doctrine, theology, missions and spiritual warfare. It does this through a systematic approach topics of sermons and its adult/teen/children's education curriculum as well as the direction it gives it members in where to find resources outside.⁷²

Theological Contribution after the Missionaries are Sent

It may seem difficult for the church to make much of a theological/spiritual contribution once the missionaries are no longer candidates. Preparation continues on the field but it is usually in the form of language school, cultural preparation, and logistical issues. During this time, the greatest spiritual contribution the sending church can make is prayer support. Neal Pirolo writes,

Prayer is where the action is—supporting and sustaining those on the fields of the world. It is vitally important for your cross-cultural worker to have a strong prayer support team every step of the way: from his calling to his church's approval, from

⁷¹The Village Church, "Gospel-Centered Multiplication," accessed July 12, 2015, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/outreach/sending-program/>.

⁷²Greg Carter, *Skills, Knowledge, Character: A Church-Based Approach to Missionary Candidate Preparation* (Valparaiso, IN: Turtle River, 2010), 27.

his Biblical and cultural training to his developing his whole support team-all before he even arrives on the field. And that intercession must continue daily throughout his time on the field.⁷³

In addition to prayer, the sending church can continue to provide opportunities for theological reinforcement through regular communication with the missionaries, assessment of ongoing needs and strategic opportunities while the missionaries are on stateside.

In *Well Sent*, Beirn offers seven steps sending churches should consider when helping build and maintain a robust faith in the life of the missionary: (1) develop perspective, (2) develop convictions, (3) develop theology, (4) develop endurance, (5) develop clarity, (6) develop heroes, and (7) develop reflection⁷⁴

To be clear, theological education and theological preparation are two different things. Education usually equals knowledge, degrees, or any general aspect of cognitive learning. Most of Jesus' apostles had little education by these standards. They were fishermen, tax collectors, rebels and other sorts.⁷⁵ On the other hand, the apostle Paul had the best Jewish education available to him for his context, yet it was not enough.

Preparation is different and though it may be a bit subjective from candidate to candidate, it is something the local church should take seriously. In a recent conversation with Gordon Fort, leader at the International Mission Board, he said, "We are putting more and more emphasis on the spiritual life in the eight weeks of candidate preparation at Field Personnel Orientation."⁷⁶ The IMB is one of the largest and healthiest sending agencies in the US and they see the need for great abiding as it relates to missionary

⁷³Neal 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, 2012), 99.

⁷⁴Beirn and Murray, *Well Sent*, 175-76.

⁷⁵John McArthur has written a book outlining the "ordinariness" of each of them. See John McArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 2.

⁷⁶Gordon Fort, telephone interview with author, May 25, 2016.

success. The church is in a strategic place to assess the preparation of a candidate. If the foundation has been laid, sending will be a joy. There is too much at stake for both the mission field and the candidates to send them into the world unprepared. Bearing much fruit does not come from luck. It comes, as John 15 reminds, by being connected to the vine. Nothing can replace a strong biblical foundation in the life of a person committed to the Great Commission.

In *When Missions Shapes the Mission*, David Horner compares best practices of effective mission churches with historic marks of effective mission movements, which is both fascinating and deeply convicting.⁷⁷ Here are the lists:

Historic Marks of Effective Missions Movements:

- Power from on high as the Holy Spirit's work flowed freely
- A passion for Christ
- Prevailing prayer
- A rich soaking in the Scriptures and sound doctrine
- Unwavering faith that trusts God to be faithful in all things
- Holiness and purity of life
- Eyes willing to see and have compassion on others
- A supportive, sacrificial, and generous sending community
- Persecution and opposition

Present Best Practices of Effective Mission Churches:

- Designated leadership responsibility for missions
- High value for partnering with indigenous works
- Maintaining consistent contact with supported missionaries
- Emphasis on missions and evangelism from the pulpit/preaching ministry
- Use of both budgeted and outside of budget funds to support missions
- Emphasized both long-term relationships and short-term trips
- Employ an assessment process in order to send those best suited and called
- Involvement in international church planting
- Highlight missions at an annual conference to raise the visibility and priority of missions
- Adopt a people group or focus on a particular nation or region⁷⁸

There is nothing inherently wrong with the second list, although it does beg some interesting questions related to pragmatism and the type of church God really uses as a

⁷⁷David Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission: You and Your Church Can Reach the World* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 139.

⁷⁸Ibid.

sender to the nations. Horner even asks, “Is there room in our consideration for recapturing the catalysts for missions movements over the centuries?”⁷⁹ No matter how strategic a church may become or how much technology may be leveraged in sending, it is essential to stay committed to the basics found in the New Testament examples of sending. The twenty-first century church can be confident God sends and fills with the same Holy Spirit read about in the book of Acts.

God Multiplies through a Strong Biblically-Based Sending Culture

Having a strong foundation not only supports the missionaries, but it has the added bonus of being reciprocal in its benefits for the local church. Paul Seger notes the added benefits of having a biblical missions culture by using the illustration of a farm team:

Professional baseball teams have A, AA, and AAA teams so they can groom future players. This plan assures there is never a shortage of players for the major leagues. The same could be true of a local church. Most churches need more and better leaders. Maybe a farm system would meet that need. It would certainly populate the mission fields of the world if churches would do this.⁸⁰

A strategic and proactive plan is necessary for local church sending and it should start with faithfulness to Scripture. The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention implements this approach in its recruitment and training of church planters.⁸¹ This practice has proven effective in increasing the number of planters in recent years. There are options for the local church to be involved in sending and supportive roles, but their goal is that the local church be at the center of the process. There are opportunities for churches of all sizes to take part. Some send, some support,

⁷⁹Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission*, 139.

⁸⁰Paul Seger, *Senders: How Your Church Can Identify, Train and Deploy Missionaries* (Middletown, DE: Paul Segar, 2015) 85.

⁸¹North American Mission Board and Send Network, accessed April 3, 2017, <https://www.namb.net/send-network>.

and all of them have the chance to offer financial or prayer support at different levels. As the church gets involved in the mission, God uses small and large steps to stir in the hearts of new people, some of which will eventually be called into the mission themselves. I have seen this at the church I currently serve. We support church planters in Toronto and as our church has stayed committed to the work, our efforts have multiplied both on the field and in our local body.⁸²

As the church reclaims its role in the sending and care processes according to Scripture, it will see multiplication in prayer, financial support, and individual family units sent. Biblical sending can infuse the local church with a new vitality. Steve Beirn writes, “This journey will develop faith, resiliency, and confidence within that local body of believers. As a high view of God becomes normative in a local church, its members respond to the Great Commission’s call to action.”⁸³

Conclusion

There can be no question that Scripture calls for care in sending. This chapter showed how sending was modeled through the churches of Antioch and Philippi. Their examples continue to speak into the twenty-first century church in ways that offer much to those desiring to send and care well. When adequate love and support is given to sent ones, it shows faithfulness to Scripture, the legacy of the Great Commission, and reflects well on the bride of Christ. Kelly O’Donnell rightly reminds,

Member care is founded upon the Biblical command to love one another (John 13:34-35) and on the ethical sense of duty to help vulnerable people (Proverbs 24:11-12). This commitment to love one another and duty to others is tested in

⁸²In three years, the original church plant multiplied to three additional plants in the greater Toronto area, which has breathed new strength into the church in countless ways. At least two others from the congregation have committed to missions as a result of the commitment as a sending church to this one partner.

⁸³Beirn and Murray, *Well Sent*, 73.

many ways for all of us, individually and collectively. The testing is often in the “furnace of health, relational and organizational struggles.”⁸⁴

The triangle mentioned early on between the missionary, the sending church, and the agency must function as a community committed to sending and keeping families on the field. In 2017, one can observe many healthy examples of churches committed to reclaiming their role in sending yet faithful to partner with agencies. The next chapter surveys six of these churches. Through research interviews, I summarize their best practices and offer suggestions for the future senders.

⁸⁴Kelly O’Donnell and Lewis O’Donnell, eds., *Global Member Care*, vol. 2, *Crossing Sectors for Serving Humanity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011), xvii.

CHAPTER 4

SIGNIFICANT FOOTPRINT CHURCHES AND HOW THEY PROVIDE CARE

In this chapter, I highlight some of the healthiest and well-respected US-based sending churches and their member care strategies. It will be seen how their faithfulness to care well is keeping some of God's choicest servants on the field and the extent of care they provide in order to do so. Six churches were selected based on their strategy, size, missionaries sent, denominational affiliation, and reputation in the US sending community.¹ One limiting factor in this research is that, with only one exception, these churches are large and mostly Caucasian congregations. Also, most of them are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. For the purpose of this dissertation, however, these churches offer a helpful sampling from which future sending churches will be able to draw, and where diversity can be found in them it will be highlighted.

For each of these churches, an interview was conducted with someone from the paid missions staff of the church. The interviews varied in time but averaged about an hour each in length.² The research here is qualitative in nature. The list of interview questions provided simply served as a starting place for gathering helpful information on the current

¹I consulted with many helpful missions mobilizers and member care workers in deciding who to interview and which interviews to include in this chapter. A few of those consultants were Jeff Walters and Jonathan Whitt at Pinelake Church in Jackson, MS; Gordon Fort of the IMB; Sam Nichols of Collierville FBC, TN; and Nathan Joyce and Dax Hughes of Heartland Worship Center in Paducah, KY. Additionally, some of the ideas for these interviews came from current sending and care reading.

²Some of these interview lasted over an hour and a half. I am immensely thankful the time and investment on the part of these men. Each of them lead departments, families, and have busy lives. Their willingness to help others and me is a testimony to their commitment to make disciples that make disciples.

status of their programs for sending.³ The second part of this chapter reveals a summary of their best practices in order to help discover patterns for future healthy senders. Finally, suggestions for healthy twenty-first century church-based member care and sending is offered.

Interviews

Based on several trusted recommendations, I chosen Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, Kentucky; Christ Community Church in Memphis, Tennessee; Hershey Evangelical Free Church in Hershey, Pennsylvania; The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas; The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama; and The Summit Church in Raleigh Durham, North Carolina. In a conversation with Gordon Fort nearly a year ago, he suggested I interview at least three from this list.⁴ He referred to these as “significant footprint churches,” and that is where my research began.⁵ The fruit of these interviews and other research has been encouraging. First, these churches are reclaiming their rightful role as sender and biblically-confirmed authoritative voice in the lives of their sent ones. Second, they are attempting to work with agencies in healthy ways so that the relationships (shepherd and organizational) between all three parties are maximized for the sake of the mission.

³See appendix 1 for the list of questions used in each interview.

⁴Gordon Fort’s, leader at the IMB, telephone conversation, with author, May 25, 2016. In addition to Fort’s being a personal friend, he was my regional leader in Botswana, Africa, in 2003, as an IMB missionary myself.

⁵Gordon Fort used this phrasing informally, but the language communicates effectively. In contrast to the carbon footprint spoken of frequently in American culture, he means to say churches with a strong sending/caring culture make a large imprint on the world of missions for the sake of the gospel.

Sojourn Community Church

Sojourn is a growing SBC fellowship in urban Louisville, Kentucky. I interviewed Nathan Garth, Pastor of International Missions and Director of Sojourn International.⁶ Their average weekend attendance is 4,200 on 4 campuses. They refer to these campuses as “congregations” in the hopes of giving them more independence as individual parts of the whole.

Sojourn is a leader in sending and member care in many ways. For one, they have dedicated full- and part-time staff support to sending with one full-time pastor, three part-time staff, and an office administrator. When asked to describe his church’s biblical framework for sending, he was able to articulate its roots in their interpretation of the New Testament. Their understanding is that the church is meant to send as Jesus Himself was sent. He said, “Our goal is to get our members moving towards the nations and their neighbors based on their biblical identity of sentness.”

Garth said they have sent more than fifty missionary families (units) in the past five years. In this number, he includes both mid and long-term missionaries who were sent for a minimum of two years. Of this number, about 50 percent were singles and 50 percent were families with children. This number of singles is higher than average, but not surprising as Sojourn draws on a large number of college students and other millennials in the Louisville area. Recently, Justin Long published the aggregate results of more than 25,000 missionaries. His research shows couples outnumber singles 8:2 and single women outnumber single men 7:3.⁷ Garth says the total number of men, women and children currently on the field from Sojourn comes to 105.

⁶Unless otherwise stated, information reported in this section is from Nathan Garth, telephone interview by author, April 4, 2017. For each of the interviews, meticulous notes were taken. Much of this chapter is the summaries of those interviews.

⁷Justin Long, “Singles vs Couples,” accessed April 7, 2017, <https://justinlong.org/singles-vs-couples.php>.

As to strategic steps taken in member care, Sojourn has both proactive and reactive measures in place. Their proactive care starts with pre-assessment of the candidate and continues through confirmation, call, and development of the missionary. Garth says they focus on cultivation of the Christian life and depth of community so that healthy relationships are in place before the missionary enters the field. They require each unit to have an advocate team, which is built by the candidate prior to departure. Essentially, each missionary recruits a team of people to lead in proactive care from their own small group and other natural relationships within the church body. Sojourn's philosophy of advocate teams draws on practices by Bethlehem Baptist Church's "Barnabas Teams" and The Austin Stone's "Advocate Teams." One example of this care is that they encourage a once-per-month virtual small group with the team. Garth says they currently average about 50 percent participation with this. Other examples include the missionaries completing regular reports, readings, and having access to church staff. These measures allow for unique, personalized care and keep communication two-sided.

Reactive care is also in place at Sojourn. They prepare for various situations that may arise by having trained member care professionals in the leadership of the church. There is video care and counseling appointments as well as reentry care. They try to make these appointments normative for all missionaries to reduce the need for reactive care and also create ease of access. Some staff at the church are also trained to assist in critical care situations, such as marital or mental health issues. Garth says he has seen the church excel in the areas of conflict resolution because of the professionals God has brought to their church. In addition, they hold annual Global Retreats and other on-field training events. Sojourn budgets around \$100,000 for these retreats.

In terms of identified weaknesses in their member care strategy, Garth says they need to continue to improve the quality of their systems, follow through, and number of people within the body willing and capable of assisting. Garth comments,

One negative of being a larger church is that we miss many opportunities to care for our sent ones. This can actually be done better by a small church. For one, they

have less sent ones to care for and also there is a perceived safety in access to personal and intimate areas in the lives of the sent ones on the part of a local church verses an agency.

Sojourn partners with a small number of approved agencies, including the IMB, Pioneers, Serge, and Shepherd's Staff. He says the relationship between the leadership of these agencies and the church is healthy and improving: "We have people on the inside to call and keeping this limited and also allows for greater authority with the church. Often we ask the missionaries to sign HIPAA rights over so the church has greater access in communication."⁸ Sometimes they even mediate conversations together (church and agency) for conflict resolution. He went on to say, "We know we have the Biblical authority over our sent ones but as I work with the agencies, I knowingly agree to forfeit some of the organizational authority and do it on purpose." The relationship with these agencies begins with trust so there is not a problem working together.

In terms of attrition, Sojourn is seeing great success, but only in the second generation of sending. They have been operating under these current systems for about five years. Much of their global strategy can be found on their website and also the site for Sojourn International. An entire tab is dedicated to "care."⁹

Christ Community Church

Christ Community (CCC) is one of the most unique sending churches I had the privilege to interview. They are an SBC cooperating house church network currently with fifteen churches all meeting in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee. The church is only fifteen years old and totals about 250 in weekend attendance across all groups. The church has no paid staff for missions. In fact, they have no paid staff of any variety.

⁸HIPAA is the "Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act." HIPAA was enacted in 1996, and exists to offer public standards of privacy and security in healthy information.

⁹Sojourn International, accessed April 13, 2017, <https://international.sojournchurch.com>.

There are six elders and each house church has one “mission champion.” I was able to interview Steve Moses, one of the six elders. Steve also served overseas and has been involved in international mobilization for nearly twenty years as a pastor, missionary, and consultant with the IMB.¹⁰

CCC has managed to send eighteen missionary families over the last five years. All of these are located in North Africa and the Middle East and all focused to reaching Muslims. They currently have three more units in their sending pipeline that they hope to deploy in the next six to twelve months. They are unique in their laser-focused strategy, but also in that they are a small church with almost no overhead. Their success in sending flows directly out of their biblical framework. They believe they have a commitment to send based on the church’s primary call to “make disciples of all nations” from Matthew 28. Furthermore, their global sending emphasis flows directly out of their passion for local missions. Each church in the CCC network is heavily involved in various mission efforts in urban Memphis, which includes refugee work and mercy ministry.

When asked about strategic unique steps they have taken to insure quality member care, Moses mentioned a couple of different things. First, “our goal is to send in teams of at least two units or more.” If one person or family feels called to go, they will delay sending until at least one other is prepared to join them. This system helps provide accountability and avoid isolation in difficult places. CCC’s commitment to send to the Middle East brings with it innate challenges of security and risk. Sending in teams provides a buffer. Second, as previously mentioned, each church has a mission champion that is responsible to keep the church and missionary connected. Last, they have built, purchased, and renovated a mission house to be a blessing to the sent ones while on furlough. The church owns no property with the exception of a facility dedicated to care

¹⁰Unless otherwise stated, information reported in this section is from Steve Moses, interview with author, Memphis, TN, April 6, 2017.

for missionaries. According to CCC's website where applications for the "Antioch Mission House" are made, there is often a two to three year wait.¹¹

As to weaknesses, Moses says reentry is difficult. They have not seen many return so far as the church is only fifteen years old. However, their short-lived experience has proven to be a challenge. Moses says, "Sometimes the families end up at a different church or even moving to a different city."¹²

As to reactive care, CCC relies heavily on the sending agencies they send missionaries through. There are several they prefer to use, although no specific ones are required. The emphasis is given to those with complimentary biblical views and missiological standards. Also, those that help prepare their missionaries to best live in the Middle East and reach Muslims are preferred. Moses mentioned the IMB and Pioneers as two examples. They have good relationships with the agencies they use and work together to speak in the care and organization needs of their sent ones.

CCC is a great example to small churches. Their members live life and accomplish ministry together, send together, and work to keep their sent ones on the field together.

Hershey Evangelical Free Church

Hershey Free is mid-sized and denominationally affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church.¹³ They average 1,250 in weekend attendance in three services. They do not consider themselves to be multi-campus even though one of the three services meets at a different location from the main campus. Hershey Free has a long history of healthy missionary sending and member care. They were listed in Tom Telford's 2001 book,

¹¹Christ Community Church, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.housechurchmemphis.org/antioch/>.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Hershey Free is the shortened name the church uses.

Today's All-Star Mission Churches, as a model church for excellence in missionary care.¹⁴ For this church, I interviewed Dave Hyatt, the Pastor of Local and Global Outreach.¹⁵ He is full-time and has a part-time administrative assistant for missions. There is also a full-time pastor dedicated to pastoral and missionary care. Hyatt also noted that the senior pastor is very involved in missions. In addition, a retired missionary couple in the church works in a voluntary capacity to offer counseling as needed.

When I posed the question regarding Hershey Free's biblical framework for sending, Hyatt described Acts 13 and the church of Antioch as their model. He said they teach that sending is a vital part of their identity in Christ. He went on to describe this in practical ways: "We are always looking for character, competency and call in the people we send. We would like to see people very involved in leadership and evangelism locally before deployment."

Hershey Free currently has forty-three total missionaries (this includes men, women and children). Eighteen of these units are true member missionaries with four other units coming from daughter churches that have been planted by Hershey Free. They also support several other families that have been sent in conjunction with other Evangelical Free churches. Hyatt did not specify a number for these.

For member care, they take several steps to ensure their missionaries are given priority. For one, they only send through organizations that have a robust history of sending and care, though they are not limited by a specific list. They currently have missionaries on the field with Reach Global, Wycliffe, Campus Crusade, SIM (Serving in Mission), Pioneers, and African Inland Mission. The church requires a quarterly and

¹⁴Tom Telford, *Today's All-Star Missions Churches: Strategies to Help Your Church Get into the Game* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 27.

¹⁵Unless otherwise stated, information reported in this section is from Dave Hyatt, telephone interview with author, April 6, 2017.

separate annual report that each unit completes for personal proactive care.¹⁶ It only needs to be fifty words or less so it is not bulky or time consuming for these families. Each missionary family is encouraged to maintain regular connection with a small group from within the church, but since these are transient, only about one third of their missionaries take full advantage of this. He also says the longer missionaries are on the field, the harder it is to stay connected to these groups. Hershey Free has two fully furnished missionary houses dedicated to help with stateside assignments. They rent them out on a first come served basis, but offer them at a reasonable rate. They also regularly highlight the work these families are doing in the main church services so that strong prayer support and communication are happening with the members.

One of the simple yet powerful things Hyatt said was, “Our church really loves missionaries and has a true desire to help them succeed.” This is demonstrated by their budgeted and designated giving to missions. Their annual budget is more than \$500,000, which seems more than average for a church their size. Additionally, they have a Global Ministry Project Fund for strategic initiatives and give away roughly \$75,000 annually to support extra needs on the field. The church also cares in many small ways: Christmas presents, theme park tickets, regular letters and simply taking time to respond to every update. He mentioned that they also do a lot to help with reentry and missionary children.

As to weaknesses in their care strategy, Hyatt said the sheer spread of their missionaries has created a broad communication challenge. They try to leverage technology but have a growing need for better communication. Also, most of their missionaries are spread thin financially. Support is weaker than it needs to be but limited by tithes. They are looking for ways to increase support.

¹⁶See appendix 2 for a blank copy of this report.

Hershey Free has healthy relationships with the agencies they partner with. They let the agency do most of the organizing of support as well as responsive care when necessary. The missionaries know they can be honest with the church because Hershey Free has proven they care. There are a few examples where the church knew of needs earlier than the agency and they have been able to work together to see those needs met.

Hershey Free has been sending long enough to see multiple generations of missionaries go out from their church. In terms of attrition, the way they care is proving effective. Hyatt says they almost never see anyone return from the field for reasons other than retirement or completion of a project.

The Austin Stone

The Austin Stone is a growing, multi-campus SBC fellowship located in Austin, Texas. They average 6,500-6,800 in weekend attendance. They have two full-time and one three quarter-time staff dedicated to missions. Additionally, several volunteer missions administrators raise their own support. For The Austin Stone, I was able to interview Ryan King, the Director of International Mission.¹⁷ When asked about their church's biblical framework for sending, King said, "It is reflective of the Great Commission and we believe it's one of our church's primary purposes. With His own authority, God sent us (the whole church) for the sake of making disciples in the world."

In the past five years, The Austin Stone has sent 150 missionaries committed to at least two years or longer. The majority of them have been on the field an average of two and a half years now. They prepare to go long enough to see transformation of a people group and coach all of them toward a career in missions. They do no separate training for mid or long-term missionaries. Roughly half of these 150 are families with

¹⁷Unless otherwise stated, information reported in this section is from Ryan King, telephone interview with author, April 6, 2017.

children. Similar to Sojourn, the Austin Stone has a higher than average number of singles based on the location and focus of their ministries reaching millennials.

As to member care, they are doing very intentional work. They proactively require each missionary to build an advocacy team of 6 to 8 people that supports in care and communication. The church also has its own counseling department where they have cross-trained many of these counselors specifically for sending issues. The church introduces the missionaries to them ahead of departure and this relationship goes on into their time on the field. Austin Stone additionally has a field office in Barcelona led by two families and one single missionary. Being geographically closer, they work with all the missionaries and wear the hat of ongoing care and coaching. King says, “Their goal is for every missionary to thrive, personally and spiritually, and see them stay on the task of mission.” The church gets regular reports that are both qualitative and quantitative. Further, every two years, there is an intentional gathering of all missionaries that are able to attend for the purpose of care and coaching. They receive shepherding from the church’s elders, time for networking, worship, etc. The church pays for the gathering, making it a great blessing for the missionaries. Finally, the church also has a plan for “transition goes,” those in between or changing fields, as well as those in the midst of reentry. When asked about a weakness, King said it seems to be in their advocacy teams: “The equipping and onboarding of new teams has not changed in eight years so systems need to be more robust. There is room for growth.”

The Austin Stone partners with several different agencies for member care. They are currently linked with the IMB, Frontiers, Pioneers, and East West. King says the conversation on health between their church and these agencies is very proactive. All of them say they exist to serve the local church in sending and reciprocally, the church provides information and support in such a way where authority is shared even though the church takes the lead. In fact, much of the issues that could pose a problem are mitigated since the team leader is often times one of the church’s own missionaries. King

said, “Sending missionaries in teams and choosing their own team leaders from the beginning keeps us ahead of many potential organizational issues.”

Kings says they are attempting to track attrition but it is difficult. Between both preventable and non-preventable attrition, they are currently at a rate of about 15 percent. The difficulty for the Austin Stone is that they have only been sending for eight years. Ten years from now, they will have more data. They currently average sending 30 new missionaries per year and are close to sending their 200th.

The Church at Brook Hills

The Church at Brook Hills is a large SBC church located in Birmingham, Alabama. They only have one campus with multiple weekend services averaging 4,500 in attendance. They have dedicated a significant portion of paid staff to missions, including a full-time Pastor of Global Disciple Making and full-time Pastor of Church Multiplication, and both have administrative assistants. There is also paid staff for short-term (part-time), mid-term (full-time) and long-term (part-time) missions. One of these is also dedicated specifically to the coaching and care piece. In addition, three part-timers focus on partnerships, logistics, and other administrative duties. In total, Brook Hills has seven paid staff on the global missions team and two paid staff on the local missions team.

I was able to interview Jonathan Bean, Pastor of Global Disciple-Making.¹⁸

When asked about their biblical framework for sending, Bean said,

It starts with our motivation for God’s glory. We believe worship motivates mission and we desire to see God’s name be glorified to the ends of the earth. In sending, we believe it must be God-centered as opposed to man-centered. From here, we desire to ensure all practices flow from the Word of God and not simply pragmatism. Scripture is our source for all authority in missions. Your identity as a missionary and sentness is rooted in the Gospel. Based on this, we believe the Holy Spirit calls and the church confirms. Member care really starts here.

¹⁸Unless otherwise stated, information reported in this section is from Jonathan Bean, telephone interview with author, April 12, 2017.

In the past five years, Brook Hills has sent 228 people, which includes 182 adults and 46 children. Approximately one third of these are long term. They usually have between 36-40 long-termers out in a given year. Caring for these people is a strategic part of what Brook Hills is doing, but it starts early. It begins with the conversation regarding call, which makes their assessment process crucial. Bean believes churches that send to the field and then ask, “What can we do to care?,” miss opportunities that would have been afforded had they started with established relationships. Additionally, many of the issues missionaries deal with on the field were already present in their life and simply become magnified on the field. Their commitment to a robust assessment process means they say “no” or “not yet” to many candidates, but it significantly reduces the reactive care later.

As to Brook Hills’ proactive care processes, Bean says they do not have a school of missions or live near a major seminary, so the development process is built case by case. The church also utilizes advocacy teams for each missionary that they build themselves.¹⁹ They additionally pair each unit with a coach who walks through the process with them. These families can submit a financial request, but not until the advocacy team is in place, which then gives the family priority. In terms of a specialization, Bean says they rely heavily on the agency for care, particularly reactive and specialist care. This reactive care emphasis puts a burden on the church to send through agencies with the most robust plans for member care so that less is required of the church. Brook Hills has seen success in sending missionaries in teams, when it is possible. They also do a marriage assessment, leadership and team assessments, and utilize advocacy teams to help with the day-to-day, ongoing care. Early on, the church required missionaries to pair with an individual small group. These groups tend to be transient, and therefore, lacked stability for the missionary family. For this reason, the church shifted to advocacy teams. The church has only been

¹⁹See appendix 3 for detailed description of their Advocacy Teams and expectations.

utilizing advocacy teams for about two and a half years. Many of these teams even go with the families for the first one or two weeks to help with the initial transition of moving and setting up. Occasional care conferences are also provided by the church.

In terms of reactive care, several different issues have come up, including marriage struggles, pornography use, and even same-sex attraction. Bean says, “These are a reality, unfortunately. Churches often do not talk about them or are not engaged with their sent ones enough to have knowledge.” When the church gets involved in these difficult issues, they have found great pastoral opportunities. Some of Brook Hill’s missionary families have been brought home, received help and gotten back to the field in as quick as eight months.

As to a weakness in the member care strategy, Bean says it is with regard to maturity. Now that they have been sending long enough to see people complete their assignments or return for other reasons, they have to grow in their reentry strategy or even that of those changing fields. There are also more kids on the field and they have the opportunity to send more short-term teams for member care than ever before. These are a few examples of the opportunities they currently have that often create challenges.

Brook Hills also partners with a few different agencies in sending. About 50 percent of their missionaries are with the IMB. The remaining 50 percent are sent out through SIM, Pioneers, and Shepherds Staff. Who they use really depends on the candidate, team leaders, and place of call. Brook Hills has good relationships with these agencies, particularly when there is collaboration between the field team leader and the church. So the field leaders are important. Bean says, “Just because we are committed to work with the IMB doesn’t mean we will work with everyone in the IMB.” Healthy relationships always require a lot of homework and clear communication. As to the relationships themselves, the church does more “soft” accountability while the agency does more of the “hard” accountability. Since the field leader knows more about the missionary’s weekly schedule, language issues, etc., it is more natural for them to take

the lead. Bean went on to say, “We have found it is helpful to separate care and strategy conversations and we do these monthly.”

Brook Hills is seeing how healthy member care is lowering attrition. They do not have hard numbers on this yet because they have only been sending for five or six years. Utilizing the community of faith and maintaining a strong connection is helping. A recent example includes a family struggling with emotional problems. They returned, connected with the church and their advocacy team, and made it back to the field in only six months.

The Summit Church

The Summit Church is the largest of the churches I interviewed. They are a multi-campus²⁰ SBC fellowship in the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina. Their average weekend attendance is 10,000. Their staff includes an International Team with has three full-time positions (global strategy, global member care and an administrator). Two additional part-time roles are dedicated to training materials and communications. For the Summit Church, I interviewed Matt Clark, the Pastor of Global Member Care.²¹

When asked about the Summit’s biblical framework for sending, Clark responded by pointing to the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and other key Scriptures pointing to sentness. He said, “We believe in what we see in the book of Revelation that there will be people around the throne from every tribe and nation. That gives us hope to go to even the hardest places. Acts is our model and church planting is our main focus.” The Summit has a goal of planting 1,000 churches in this generation. It is lofty, yet so far in the first fifteen years, they have planted 192 international churches and many others in North America. In the last five years, the Summit Church has sent 123 missionary units

²⁰The Summit Church currently has nine campuses spread across the Raleigh-Durham area.

²¹Unless otherwise stated, information reported in this section is from Matt Clark, telephone interview with author, April 13, 2017.

out for two years or more. This adds up to 234 total people, 165 of which are adults. There are 34 family units.

The Summit is doing many exciting things with regard to member care. Clark says they originally connected all their missionary families to small groups, but because of these groups transient nature, their church has established the Advocacy program. Each missionary has one advocate from the congregation who is responsible for building prayer ministry in the body, connecting to small groups, and one voice-to-voice check in per month. The advocate then reports to Matt Clark once per month having used a simple questionnaire with the missionary to help guide the time.²² In addition, there is a quarterly call for every missionary unit on the field. They use a program called WebEx²³ to connect all missionaries at the same time. The executive staff at the Summit, including senior pastor J. D. Greear participates in these calls. They have devotions, share books and materials, and encourage one another. Out of the 85 units currently on the field, approximately 50 of these make on at any given time.²⁴ Over half of the current missionaries with the Summit have gone through the IMB so they receive regular proactive care through their programs and events, such as Annual General Meetings (AGM). The Summit Church also has a counseling center in Raleigh-Durham and the church pays for at least four sessions for missionaries when they are home. Even while on the field, these families are connected with counselors by phone and receive coaching from the advocates. All of Summit's advocates are taught to look for proactive opportunities to counsel.

²²The Summit puts most of their advocacy information and forms online. The Summit Church, "The Advocacy Program," accessed April 14, 2017, summitrdu.com/advocacy.

²³For more info, see Cisco WebEx, accessed April 14, 2017, <https://www.webex.com>.

²⁴The low number is usually due to scheduling and varying time zones. They also offer regular regional conference calls to help keep everyone connected.

Reactive care strategy is case by case. Clark says they have not had any major issues that required sending a team to the field on short notice. However, there have been instances of moving an entire team from one city to another city for periods of time in order for them to regroup or get help dealing with an issue. The church sends a short-term team to every partner that wants or needs it, one once per year.

As to niche strengths in the church's member care, Clark says the counseling center has been successful and really helped meet a need. Having the entire church buy into it has allowed for its success. Missions is at the highest level of culture in the DNA of the church. Even the children's area of the church looks like the RDU terminal of the airport in the hopes of creating an atmosphere of the sending experience. Connections between the field and the church are important. Many even write hand-written letters to the missionaries.

As for weaknesses, Clark said,

The return piece needs to improve. Re-acclimation, helping find jobs, sharing stories, and feeling valued is important but often difficult. The Advocate is supposed to help but busyness takes over and the missionaries often feel forgotten. In August of this year, we are planning a celebration weekend to highlight people who have come back since the church is now 15 years old.

All returning sent ones will be highlighted at this event. There are several that had to come home for medical reasons or other (maybe even hoping to go back) so being sensitive to that is delicate. They are hoping a group study will come this event so care will continue beyond the initial return.

The Summit partners with several agencies, including the IMB, Frontiers, Pioneers, Campus Outreach, and has many marketplace missionaries through the Global Cities Initiative. The closest relationship they have is with the IMB, but partnering with the others has been healthy and continues to improve. Clark says most of their partnering agencies allow them to be involved at all levels of care and support. The Summit trusts the organizations they send through and reciprocally, all these agencies trust the Summit as the missionary's primary sending authority.

When I asked about observable connections between their member care strategies and attrition, Clark said,

We are being less rigid than in the past. We have more margin for people who step away and that is helpful. As we grow in resources to help with retreats and counseling, people feel that they are empowered to ask for help. When issues arise, we are on the side of grace and allow the missionaries to ask for what they need. They know they are a priority at the top of the church's leadership. Whatever they need, we are going to consider and pray for it. We are trying to bust that perceived myth that missionaries have it all together, are perfect and don't have real needs.

A Summary of Best Practices toward a Care Culture and Sending

In 1992, Kelly O'Donnell wrote, "It is imperative that the local church play a larger role in world missions, particularly in the care and development of missionaries that they send out."²⁵ Twenty-five years later, it is exciting to see this becoming a reality in so many churches. The six churches I interviewed for this chapter represent some of the best examples from around the US. They are certainly not the only ones, but they give a picture of what is happening around the country as they lead from each of their six respective states.

Zach Bradley summarizes that healthy support from sending churches usually falls in one of these categories: finances, co-laborers, prayer, and logistics/accountability.²⁶ The other important piece is that these churches advocate for their sent ones. Advocacy has in it the idea of an intermediary. When churches advocate, they sacrifice together for the sake of the gospel.²⁷ In order for advocacy to happen, there must be clear and constant communication so the needs can be seen by the sending church body. The geographical distance between the sent one and sender often makes

²⁵Kelly O'Donnell, *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), 299.

²⁶Zach Bradley, *The Sending Church Defined* (Knoxville, TN: Upstream Collective, 2015), 136-38.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 141.

this a challenge. All of the six churches interviewed are advocates. In this section, I summarize the best ways these six churches support and advocate for their missionaries.

Summaries

As I read over and reflect on my notes from the interviews, several consistent elements rise to the surface. Many exciting practices make each of these churches great senders, but these six reveal the subtle yet best of those practices that lie under the success of their member care strategies.

Each church can articulate a robust biblical framework for sending. The churches all use different specific verses or passages to express the way they interpret the call to send; however, all of them reflect the same central message. John 20:21 says, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” This verse communicates that “sentness” is a part of a believer’s identity in Christ. When sending is believed to be the central reason, not just a part or program, for the church’s existence, it takes priority. This is reflected in each church’s core values, staff placements, budgets, sermon series, etc. Additionally when a biblical framework for sending is articulated at all levels, the church avoids seeing missions as a program built around what is pragmatic. Many churches cannot send in healthy ways because they get bogged down focusing on projects over partners, humanitarian projects over church planting, and other gospel-focused work and short-term missions over long-term mobilization.

Each church focuses on proactive care as a remedy to reactive care. The most difficult place a church can find itself is attempting to respond to crisis-based care needs when no proactive care ever took place. The cart gets placed before the proverbial horse. Each of these churches interviewed start care at the beginning and this is a culture change for many churches. Sending starts with assessment and identification. It starts with asking the right questions early and often. When candidates submit to the authority of the church at the beginning, they are more likely to submit to the church’s authority

later. Also, issues that might otherwise mask themselves until the stress of culture and language acquisition kick in might be revealed ahead of time and dealt with, preventing a crisis later. Finally, member care is often overwhelming for churches to consider. Remembering that whatever ways they care for members at home should be the same ways they attempt to care for those they send. Proactive care has prevented a lot of reactive care in each of the churches I interviewed.

Each church has a commitment to sending and care at the highest level of leadership in the church. Not only does each church dedicate staff, time, and resources to sending, each of their senior pastors champion the process, which means there is buy in at all levels. Most of them say one cannot even hear a single sermon at their respective churches without knowing what they believe about sending. They would further say even their children's areas reflect the values of sending in the education and aesthetics of the area. Additionally, when the church buys into sending and commits to care, a natural feeder system emerges. A church cannot send if there are no candidates. Each of these churches have people in a pipeline waiting or preparing to be sent. It helps that each church is located in a major metropolitan area with colleges or a seminary nearby. However, many churches exist in densely populated towns near schools yet not all churches are healthy senders. Having executive level commitment and regular articulation of sending creates a discipleship incubator for future missionaries.

Each church invests heavily in the support of their sent ones. All of them have abandoned the idea that a missions offering once or twice per year suffices. Most of these churches give in excess of 10 percent of their annual tithes and additionally generate large designated funds to contribute specifically to support the needs of missionaries. They see this as Biblical and prioritize it each year. They understand it is not possible to be a high mission church and a high maintenance church simultaneously.

Each church works hard to have healthy relationships with the agencies they choose. All of the churches I interviewed are particular about the agencies with which they choose to align their missionaries. Some of them have their list down to only three or four agencies based on biblical values, sending DNA, and willingness to share authority. A sending pyramid was referred to in chapter 2 and is important for each of these churches and any church that wants to care well.²⁸ There must be a mutual and shared responsibility between the missionary, the church, and the agency. Many churches have given most of the burden and excitement in sending to the agency. Taking ownership of sending does not mean eliminating the agency, but it does mean choosing those agencies that reflect the church's values and a willingness to share authority. Each of these six churches is intentionally working to improve the relationships with the agencies with which they have chosen to work.

Each church keeps their sent ones connected to the life of the church in two-way communication. The missionary not only reports to the church, but the church also reports to the missionary. Each of the six churches I interviewed has intentional plans in place for communication to happen. All of them require quarterly check-ins and some do it each month. Also, the advocate or advocacy team keeps the larger church body up to speed on ways to pray and current needs. Although this should be easy, over time the separation becomes hard to fill. Churches typically need to be coached in this area. Jonathan Bean said, "I would encourage small churches to think about the things they do for their members on a regular basis. How can they continue to do that with people that go out? They don't need a new set of competencies; just continue doing what they already do."

²⁸Steve Beirn and George W. Murray, *Well Sent: Reimagining the Church's Missionary Sending Process* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2015), 87.

Conclusion

The research for this chapter has been the most exciting part of this thesis. I have been encouraged that the call of Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples of all nations continues strong and in exciting new ways in this generation. I was encouraged by the skills of the men and women leading each church's program and encouraged at their generosity to share their practices and time, even to be honest about their weaknesses and struggles. Also, many of the churches share these same practices with each other. For churches desiring to be healthy senders, there is a community available willing to teach and learn from one another.

In the next chapter I summarize the research presented so far and offer four suggestions for the twenty-first century church desiring to send well, care well, and finish well in this endeavor.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to *send* them in their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to *support* people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth. (3 John 5-8)

Local church-based member care should be a priority for every sending church. It is not enough to joyfully send families yet outsource their member care to an agency. It is also not enough to wait until responsive care is needed before making a robust plan. A proactive plan to care from assessment all the way through reentry should be the goal. Through this project, I showed the biblical mandate for missionary care, the historical and recent developments in care, and highlighted some of the healthiest caring churches in the US. The research questions I asked in the first chapter should be revisited at this point.

Research Questions

Four key questions guided this research. I mention them again briefly to ensure they have been answered in an acceptable manner.

Question 1: *Are there any measurable ways local church member care lowers attrition rates for missionary families?* Long-term sustainability should be the goal for families on mission in the twenty-first century and member care is an important piece in the sending strategy. However, there is no direct link between member care and lower attrition rates for families or singles. All of the churches I interviewed are seeing very low attrition rates for those they have sent, but most of them are only in the first or second generation of sending. These churches feel strongly, however, that their work is yielding long-term fruit in the preparedness of these families. I noted in chapter 1 that

“family issues” were at the core of reasons families struggle and often end up returning from the field.¹ Somehow, “family issues” need to be at the center of success rather than at the center of struggle. Many agencies will not even send families with children that have reached adolescence simply because the struggles are often highlighted during this phase of life. Until recently, the IMB was one such agency. Although they have lightly reduced the age restrictions for teenagers to a “case by case basis,” it is still discouraged.² Technically, there do not seem to be any ways healthy member care ensures lower preventable attrition. However, all six of the churches I interviewed are committed to a robust strategy for care and firmly believe the work they are doing is obedience to Scripture and yielding eternal fruit.

Question 2: How can sending churches reclaim their role in the member care process to the families they are sending? Over the past several decades, church support of its missionaries has largely equaled financial support. However, churches can look to the biblical models of Antioch and Philippi to see Paul’s reliance on healthy senders. They can look to history both in its mistakes and its victories to see how the church has been the primary sender and equipper of missionaries over the centuries. Finally, they can look to sister churches today who are sending in healthy ways. This question is not meant to suggest a future where sending agencies are no longer needed. It is, however, meant to call the church to take a stronger role in sending out the families in which they have invested and deployed, help assess and develop them, and stay in relationship with them all the way through the sending and reentry process. Reclaiming this vital role should start with clear expectations early in the sending process. Once the missionaries have been sent, it is difficult to implement changes to the strategy.

¹World Evangelical Alliance, “ReMap II: Worldwide Missionary Retention Study & Best Practices,” 10, accessed January 6, 2016, http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/res3_96_link_1292358945.pdf.

²International Mission Board, “Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed January 13, 2016, <http://www.imb.org/go/faq.aspx#.VpaE8HgirzI>.

Question 3: *Is there a model for care that both small and large churches can take ownership of?* Yes, there is such a model, and it should include a few fundamental elements: a robust, biblical framework for sending, a strong relationship with the family prior to sending (one that lends itself to the exercise of authority), advocacy through a small group (either the small group ministry within the church, a group chosen by the missionary, or a group appointed by the church leadership), regular contact that is intentionally bent toward identifying and meeting needs, a commitment from the church to each member of the family (husband/wife specific, marriage-focused, missionary kid sensitive, etc.), and a commitment to work together in conjunction with the agencies chosen in such a way to leverage skills necessary to keep families on the field. Nothing in this list is dependent on church size; therefore, small and large churches should be able to celebrate the sending of missionary families by utilizing these steps in sending. If anything, smaller churches may actually have an advantage in these steps toward caring.

Question 4: *How can sending churches and agencies work together in the task of care ministry to missionary families?* I agree in theory with the “sending triangle” mentioned previously by Steve Beirn. Using this image, Beirn illustrates the important relationship between church, agency and candidate.³ Once the Spirit of God calls the missionary, the local church should be the primary sender. Then they should share in the organizational and shepherding efforts with a healthy approved agency. The agency and church should have enough overlapping DNA to keep the relationship beneficial for the missionary. The agency and church should also have an open relationship where communication between the two happens regularly. Finally, on this point, it seems the largest point of tension lies with the issue of authority. The sending church should have the missionary sign a document ensuring HIPAA laws do not prevent the transference of information that would prevent necessary care. Agencies should not harbor information

³Steve Beirn, *Well Sent: Reimagining the Church’s Missionary-Sending Process* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2015), 110.

from churches that might otherwise be able to speak into the life of the family. For regular transference of information between churches and agencies, there must be clear expectations and trust must be strong between all parties. The churches I interviewed felt that they have this level of communication between the agencies with which they work. However, all of them admitted this healthy model requires work and consistency.

What Is at Stake?

A return to an ancient way of thinking might be a good start for the twenty-first century church. A commitment to pray and support these families should be the foundation of care. The call of the Spirit of God and the sending nature of the Trinity are enough to guide these families and preserve them on the field. Believing in the strong Word of God should give the church confidence to send. What is at stake when the church lacks these core convictions and a robust plan for sending and care? It is the families that are sent and the urgency to reach a lost and dying world.

Perhaps the percentage of unmarried to married missionary units should be 50/50 instead of 83/17.⁴ If the research eventually proves singles have an advantage among some peoples while families have the advantage in reaching others, the church should allow that to influence the strategy. For now, however, this project has emphasized member care to families simply because the overwhelming majority of long-term missionary units currently sent are families. Also, the member care needs are more extensive for families than for singles. The apostle Paul even acknowledged this in 1 Corinthians 7:32-35:

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

⁴Justin Long, email to author, January 8, 2016, and January 13, 2016.

In the context of anxiety, Paul encourages singleness so that holiness and devotion to the Lord can be protected. This certainly does not mean family units in missions lack holiness or devotion—it simply stands to reason that both in ancient and modern culture, people have not changed that much. The needs of a family on the mission field will be compounded thus making the support of a local church and agency even more important to ensure any chance of keeping them on the field through completion of their call.

Finally, missionary kids are watching closely to see whether or not their families are cared for in appropriate ways. They will make up at least a portion of the next generation’s missionary force. It would be wise for the church today to care for and even disciple them through care as they will be a part of future sending.

Recommendations

Based upon this research, I now want to offer four important recommendations for the future of member care and the sending church.

Principle 1: *Lead with a prayer strategy.* Oswald Chambers wrote, “Prayer does not prepare us for the greater works—prayer is the greater work.”⁵ No single recommendation is more important than a plan for deep, meaningful prayer on the part of the sending church. It is clear in Acts 13 that prayer both preceded and followed sending: “While they were worshipping 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” (vv. 2-3). Churches should be as serious about mobilizing prayer for missionaries as they do about mobilizing the missionaries themselves.

Principle 2: *Ensure there is an advocacy plan.* David Horner notes that churches that not only send but also sustain missionaries focus on two best practices:

⁵Oswald Chambers, “My Utmost for His Highest,” accessed May 2, 2017, <https://utmost.org/the-key-of-the-greater-work/>.

personal contact and relationships, and cultivating generous giving communities.⁶ The most unique part of each church I interviewed was their intentional practice of responsive care through advocacy. There are varying ways for a local church to advocate for their sent ones, but building this into the fabric of sending will yield amazing results for both the sent and sender. However, churches must be careful not to promise things they cannot deliver on yet they must be rigorous in being faithful to the ones they have sent. This support will be important for keeping them focused on the task to which they were called.

Principle 3: *Labor in care with healthy agency partners.* If churches want to be healthy senders, they need the support of good agencies. It is estimated that there are over seven hundred agencies to choose from in the US alone.⁷ These agencies come from all different denominational backgrounds and areas of expertise. Choosing one can often be overwhelming for individuals. Churches should choose to align with a few based on common theological views and missiological practices. They should also be sure there is the potential to work together in a relationship that helps keep the missionary healthy and on the field. These churches should be willing to share the way authority and oversight is given to their sent ones, knowing the Spirit of God ultimately extended the call to go.

Principle 4: *Seek to achieve healthy reentry.* Reentry is easily the weakest link in the sending and care process for both churches and agencies. Of most churches, Neal Pirollo writes, “The reentry time in the life of a missionary remains shrouded in ignorance.”⁸ David Wilson writes that even Jesus struggled when returning home from mission work. From Matthew 13, Wilson explains,

⁶David Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission: You and Your Church Can Reach the World* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 196.

⁷Greg Carter, *Skills, Knowledge, Character: A Church-Based Approach to Missionary Candidate Preparation* (Valparaiso, IN: Turtle River, 2010), 29.

⁸Neal Pirollo, *The Reentry Team: Caring for Your Returning Missionaries* (San Diego: Emmaus Road, 2000), loc. 205, Kindle.

His experience recorded in the Gospels as He returned home from serving on the “mission field” provides a glimpse inside His humanity. He is questioned, challenged and misunderstood by the people who knew Him well from His hometown. This is one of the few places in Jesus’ ministry where He did not do miracles. He had great success in other places, but home was a challenge.⁹

Based on this example, it should come as no surprise that most senders admit struggle with the reentry aspect of member care. Churches should be prepared to receive their sent ones with grace and dignity, whether they have completed the mission or have returned early. They should walk in relationship with these returning sent ones to help navigate reentry issues and be prepared to offer professional counsel, if needed, to help the family fully reintegrate back home. Pirolo also states that task should be a shared responsibility between the agency and home church.¹⁰ Reentry is usually harder than anyone anticipates, including the missionaries. All sending parties must labor in the effort to see these obedient servants find their place in a home that has changed in their absence.

If sending churches will commit to each of these four areas, member care will not seem like an overwhelming prospect. Rather, the church will grow in confidence as a sender and simultaneously send healthier families. Systems can be created and implemented where the church shares the responsibility of care and gets the benefit of journeying alongside the families they have sent. In turn, these families will feel love and commitment in a way that is a blessing rather than a burden. There is a reason the apostle Paul always returned to Antioch to report rather than Jerusalem: as a local church, they prioritized member care.

⁹David J. Wilson, ed., *Mind the Gaps: Engaging the Church in Missionary Care* (Redlands, CA: David J. Wilson, 2015), 166.

¹⁰Ibid.

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ON MEMBER CARE

1. General size and description of church
 - a. Name of church?
 - b. Denominational affiliation?
 - c. Average weekend attendance?
 - d. Multicampus?
 - e. Paid staff dedicated to Missions?
2. Would you describe your Biblical framework for sending?
3. How many missionaries has your church sent in the past 5 years?
4. How many were families with children?
5. What steps have you taken to provide adequate and ongoing care?
6. Is there a member care specialization your church has: financial, marriage and family support, mental health, crisis management, etc..?
7. Are there unique/creative things your church does to meet the care needs of sent ones?
8. Are there current areas of weakness in your member care strategy?
9. Do you partner with agencies in your efforts to care? Which ones?
10. How does that relationship work?
11. Is the authority to care released in shepherding sent ones only or does it also include organizational authority?
12. How have you observed caring well contribute to lower missionary attrition?
13. Do you have forms/documents your church uses for member care that you would be willing to share?

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE QUARTERLY REPORT FORM FOR HERSHEY EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form! Our hope is that your honest feedback will help us to better care for you and to be mutually encouraged in the Lord's work. If you are married and spouses have different ministry focus, please reflect that on this form. We are blessed to partner with you in the Gospel! (Phil 1:5)

Contact Information

Name: Name

Email: Email

Address: Address **Country:** Country

Skype: Skype

Phone: Phone

Director's Information

Director's Name: Director's Name

Director's Contact (email & phone): Director's Contact Email & Phone

Reflection

How is your personal time with God?

Click here to enter text.

How is your time with family and co-workers?

Click here to enter text.

What are some highlights of the past quarter? What has been the greatest struggle(s) this past quarter?

Click here to enter text.

In the past quarter, what work/steps/progress has been made towards annual goals?

Click here to enter text.

Anticipated work in the next quarter:

Click here to enter text.

Praises and prayer requests:

Click here to enter text.

Additional comments:

Click here to enter text.

APPENDIX 3

GLOBAL DISCIPLE MAKING GREAT COMMISSION ADVOCACY TEAMS

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. Philippians 1:3-5

How can cross-cultural Christian workers (GOERS) sent out from our faith family effectively make disciples and plant churches in spite of the overwhelming challenges of language, culture, spiritual darkness, persecution, inadequate numbers and resources, loneliness, and discouragement? An equally daunting question is how can the average believer here at The Church at Brook Hills who has not been led by God to plant his/her life long-term in a different context still obey the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus to “Go and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19)?

One biblical answer to these problems is the establishment of Great Commission Partnerships through Brook Hills Advocacy Teams (A-Teams) that are patterned after the relationship between the missionary Paul and the Christ followers in Philippi.

Most of us are aware of the phenomenal success that Paul experienced in making disciples and planting churches in spite of less than favorable conditions and without the advantage of modern technology. At the same time the New Testament paints a picture of church vitality and growth that is rare in our day. God alone deserves the credit for these things, but there seems to be a clear link between the blessings of God on the local church and their commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission both locally and globally. Just like today, some believers were sent out for varying lengths of time. However, even those who remained behind were committed to the task of global discipleship. This commitment had a great impact on the missionaries that were sent out and on the ministries that remained.

This document is a description of a Great Commission Partnership involving Brook Hills A-Teams and Brook Hills GOERS based on the book of Philippians.

What Is An Advocacy Team?

An A-Team consists of a group of at least 5 members of The Church at Brook Hills who already know the GOERS and are fully committed to the ministry. A-Team members believe that God has led them to make disciples of all nations through partnership in this ministry.

*An A-Team can include GOER family members or believers from other churches, but the A-Team leader and at least 5 members should be BH members.

An Advocacy Team (A-Team) “partners” with GOERS for the sake of the Great Commission. The two primary roles of an A-Team are care and representation. The

success of an A-Team depends on its ability to accomplish these two goals from the time that the GOER prepares to leave for the field until his or her return.

Care

Many GOERS live in physically challenging environments. Some are raising children far from extended family. Others struggle with cultural adjustments and language barriers. Most significantly, all serve on the front lines of spiritual warfare. For survival and spiritual health, GOERS need the assurance that they are not alone, that there are others in the body of Christ who love them and are committed to their welfare and also to the success of their work. GOERS need empathetic listeners—compassionate, caring friends who are not in a supervisory role. The A-Team can consistently provide that kind of spiritual and emotional care. Caring also involves identifying specific needs that the team can meet or organize others in our church to meet.

Representation

The Advocate Team also champions the GOER and his or her work to our church body and advocates for ongoing participation in that GOER's ministry even when he or she is far away. This work should begin before the GOER leaves for the field. It may include assistance with developing small group partnerships and securing other prayer and financial partners. The A-Team helps Brook Hills and the GOERS to maintain a sense of true partnership!

What Can An A-Team Do?

***Meet Monthly**

Teams can meet at anytime and anywhere. However, each team should commit to meet once a month to fulfill their role as advocates. (A monthly A-Team gathering is a critical element in partnering with Long-term GOERS)

***Pray**

The main role of an A-Team should pray monthly as a team and on an individual basis. We also ask that you hold your GOER accountable to update their prayer requests monthly. You will also want to encourage prayer by small group partners and others at The Church at Brook Hills. Helping with the GOERS prayer letters and updates could be a great help.

Anyone who has read the Bible knows that God's work is impossible without His enablement. We also know that He releases His power in response to prayer and that He works in response to the prayers of His children where He alone gets the credit.

PRAY! PRAY! PRAY! Pray for both your partner and for the work. Pray as if everything depends on prayer. Pray when you're A-Team gets together. You may want to ask members of your A-Team volunteer to pray at home so that someone is praying every day of the week. Have special times of focus for praying for your partner. Expect God to answer and to bless your partner and his/her ministry in a new way. Don't forget to thank Him when He does. Since Great Commission Partnerships are not "one-way" be sure to keep your partner informed of needs for prayer in A-Team and the faith family.

***Communicate**

In any relationship, communication is a vital component. Without accurate, consistent communication relationships cannot be maintained or developed. In Great Commission Partnerships the GOER can easily become discouraged and efficiency can suffer without sufficient communication. Communication from the field helps partners at home to pray effectively and fulfill their roles. Make sure this is part of you're A-Team meeting!

The A-Team can also encourage small group partners to communicate regularly with your GOER. Share correspondence with small group partners when appropriate and offer suggestions and assistance in communication.

There are more avenues for long distance communication now than ever before. In addition to snail mail, you can utilize email, telephone, Skype, Instant Messenger, blogs, etc. Overseas partners will be able to identify which of these methods works best. Don't be discouraged if your partner cannot respond to every letter or email that you send. Don't forget time changes and security issues as well. (See Security Guidelines.) When writing or calling, simply ask how things are going or request information about the ministry. Be sure to share with them what is happening in your personal life, small group, and the faith family as a whole.

****Send Care Packages**

A great way to communicate love to a GOER is a package containing a box of ranch dressing mix, chocolate and a few good books or magazines. A-Teams might want to send a couple of care packages a year to their GOER. Security issues and customs fees should always be considered. Ask your partner about resources that would help them or their children spiritually, physically, or intellectually. Consider sending books, magazines, CD's, or care packages. Kindle books are great! Be sure to check with your partner before sending anything directly to the field!

****Share Resources**

Resources are needed to carry on God's work anywhere in the world. God has entrusted His resources to His children for the sake of His kingdom. These resources might include things like finances, literature, expertise, training, and spiritual gifts. God has ordained that Christ-followers work together so that sufficient resources will always be available for His work.

The Global Disciple-Making Team is knowledgeable about how to help financially with partners and the ministry that small groups will share with them. In addition to financial support that comes through the Brook Hills Global Offering there may be a need for additional support or resources such as Bibles, teaching materials, tools, or special projects.

Keep informed regarding needed resources for your GOER. Check with GDM regarding appropriate ways of communicating these needs within the Brook Hills faith family. Then take the lead in assisting the GOER in communicating and procuring needed resources.

****Make Visits**

The church at Philippi sent messengers and helpers to Paul. He sent messengers and helpers to them. Finally, Paul himself made visits to Philippi to report on what God had been doing through their Great Commission Partnership. There is no substitute for face-to-face encounters and arm-in-arm ministry.

Talk with your GOER about the best way of having this kind of direct contact. In most cases it will be possible to send a short-term team from the A-Team and small group partners. When going, the goal should be to minister to and with overseas partners and to gain a better understanding of the people and mission. Ask GDM for assistance in planning a short-term ministry trip. If it is not feasible to send a short-term team, a private visit by one or two members of the A-Team/small group partners could be made to encourage and share resources with GOERS.

****Help with Departure, Arrival, and Stateside assignment**

Some of the hardest times for your GOER will be preparing to leave for the field and returning home for a stateside visit. When leaving for the field the A-Team might be able

to help with packing, shipping, disposal of unwanted items, outgoing expenses, a good-bye gathering, etc.

When returning from the field for short or longer periods needs include: housing, transportation, medical check-ups, setting up house, partner update gatherings, temporary arrangements for school-aged children,

***Connect**

The A-Team serves as the primary source of communication and connection between the GOER-GDM-Small group partners-The Church at Brook Hills. As such, the A-Team should maintain at least quarterly contact with GDM and small group partners. This communication can include updates and requests for prayer or other resources. The A-Team can also offer assistance to GDM and small groups as they strive to communicate with GOERS.

*These are minimum expectations for every A-Team.

**These are some ways that you *may be able* to partner with your GOER. You will undoubtedly discover many other avenues of partnership that are uniquely suited to the A-Team and your GOER. Be sure to share your ideas with GDM.

How to start an Advocacy Team?

Here are some things to do to get you're A-Team started: (If it is not possible to initiate the A-Team before the GOER reaches the field, establish a secure method of communication with the GOER prior to setting up an A-Team.)

- Talk to the GOER and get a list of potential A-Team members from the GOER.
- Inform the Director of Long-term Missions of your desire to form an A-Team.
- Contact potential A-Team members and schedule a gathering to discuss goals. All potential A-Team members should already know the GOER and/or be passionate about the ministry in which they are involved. (You can invite someone from GDM to participate in this initial meeting.)
- Choose an A-Team leader. (The foundation of each A-Team is the team leader. The team leader either already knows the missionary deeply or commits to build a deep relationship. A-Team members are asked to make one-year renewable commitments. We ask however that team leaders commit to the GOERS full term (2-4 years) and/or be willing to replace themselves in this role if needed.)
- Present the Advocacy Team/GOER Partnership Agreement and discuss possible modifications or additions for your Team. Ask each potential A-Team member to prayerfully consider a one-year commitment to the Agreement.
- Once the A-Team is formed get contact information (email, SKYPE, phone, address, etc.) for each member as well as the GOER. Establish communication guidelines between the A-Team and GOER.
- Schedule the first official A-Team meeting. If the GOER cannot be present, arrange for them to participate via SKYPE.
- Make sure each A-Team member has a specific role in which they can serve.
- Ask GDM for information about all Brook Hills small group partnerships with your GOER and have GDM introduce the A-Team to SGP.

ADDITIONAL HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR BH ADVOCACY TEAMS:

- Spend time with the GOER and their family prior to their departure. Get to know them and their kids on a personal level.
- Ask specific questions about their lives in the host country.

- What kind of work are they doing? What does a typical day look like? What are their living arrangements? What is transportation like? What is it like to shop for food, or cook there? What is the climate and how does it affect them? How are they treated by the locals? How are their children treated by the locals? Do they work on a team? If so, how are the relationships within the team?
- Ask specific questions about the culture/environment of the host country.
 - What is the host culture's attitude toward time, slow or fast-paced? Do locals tend to be more task-oriented or people-oriented? Are the locals generally open to interacting with foreigners? What is their attitude toward Americans? How welcoming are the national and local governments to foreigners like themselves? What is the level of risk in operating as a cross-cultural worker in the host country? If a high level of risk is involved, what kinds of precautions do they take to do their work? What is/are the prevailing religion(s) and/or beliefs in the area? What is the level of spiritual oppression, including outright demonic activity in the area? How does this affect them and their family? How healthy is the local church? What kind of interaction do they have with the local church?
- Ask specific questions about their ministry (if possible, in light of security precautions).
 - What are their ministry objectives? How are they pursuing those objectives? What obstacles have they run into their ministry? What are some encouraging aspects of the work going on there? What are some discouraging aspects of the work?
- Read up on current events in their country and/or region and ask how these events affect their lives and/or ministry.
- Beginning six months before the GOER's departure, meet with them once a month for prayer.
- Share prayer request information with the Global Disciple-Making Team and other Small Group Partners, being sure to seek the GOER's permission before doing so.
- Compile, write, or provide prayer request information to the Global Disciple-Making Team for use during once a month prayer meetings.
- Send birthday cards, anniversary cards or Christmas cards.
- Ask if they have any practical needs that the faith family can help them with.
- Ask questions about their physical, emotional and spiritual health.
- Inform them of recent happenings at Brook Hills, providing as many details as possible.
- Inform them of what's going on in the lives of those on the A-Team.
- Understand that life on the field is just as full (if not more so) than life in the U.S. and that you may not immediately hear back from the GOER. If they don't get back with you within a week or so, try again. If they continue to be non-responsive, contact the Global Disciple-Making Team.
- Relate pertinent information on the GOER 's life and ministry (including prayer requests, updates, needs, concerns, etc.) to the Global Disciple-Making Team on a regular basis.

- Serve as the go-between for the small groups and the GOER.
- Coordinate with the Global Disciple-Making Team to send packages and supplies requested by the GOER.
- Ask the GOER if they need assistance in areas of personal business, such as preparing taxes or registering for absentee ballots during elections.
- If the GOER will be coming home on furlough, ask them whether or not they need assistance finding housing or a vehicle.
- Help clean the GOER's residence before they return.
- Coordinate meals and/or childcare for the GOER the first week of their arrival.
- While the GOER is in pre-field training, meet together once a month for prayer and encouragement.
- As the GOER's departure date draws near, assist in packing, moving, shopping, and/or childcare, while the parents take care of the above.
- If possible, send the GOER off at the airport when they depart.
- Read a book on re-entry to prepare for the GOER's homecoming. (Suggestion: The Re-entry Team by Neal Pirolo)
- If needed, assist the GOER in securing housing and a vehicle before they return.
- If possible, meet the GOER at the airport when they return.
- When the GOER comes home, schedule time with them to ask questions, see pictures and talk about life in their host country.
- After they return, pray with the GOER about their host country, including their friends/contacts in the host country.

SECURITY GUIDELINES

*If you are not certain whether these security guides apply to your GOER, assume that they do until you have checked with the GOER and GDM.

ON THE WEB OR IN PRINT

- **IT IS PERMISSIBLE TO**
 - Share stories from field work using pseudonyms to refer to nationals
 - Reference general world and continental region (i.e. East Asia, or North Africa)
 - Share real statistics and cultural information about the people group without using the people group name.
 - Show photos containing the people group and culture but not showing field workers or identifiable geographical landmarks. (i.e. Famous buildings or signage)
- **IT IS NOT PERMISSIBLE TO**
 - Reference the specific people group name
 - Reference specific geographical location (i.e. Country or City)
 - Identify the GOER in any way, including pseudonyms/initials
 - Display pictures of the GOER even without identification
 - Use voice of the GOER
 - In any way connect the GOER name and/or pseudonyms/initials with any specific mission sending organization
 - Post specifics about the work that is taking place among the people group. (i.e. That "x" number of churches were planted this year among the upg,

that an NGO was started to allow access to reach the upg, that two couples just moved into "x" area to begin reaching out to this upg)

- Not permissible to post Short-term trips for public access. Short-term teams should be assembled through personal work of the short-term facilitators. Those considered for these trips must be educated about security and ideally involved in stateside work with the people group.

IN WORSHIP GATHERINGS: This refers to LIVE worship gatherings and disallows recording for publication or distribution on the web or otherwise

- IT IS PERMISSIBLE TO
 - Show the face of the GOER and Family LIVE (not to be captured for publication or distribution)
 - Interview the GOER
 - Share updates from the field work using general terms (i.e. there are two new believers from the work in North Africa)
 - Share stories from field work using pseudonyms to refer to nationals
 - Reference general world and continental region (i.e. East Asia, or North Africa)
 - Refer to People Group (PG) by a nickname
 - Share real statistics and cultural information of the PG without using the PG name.
 - Show photos containing the people and culture but not showing field workers or identifiable geographical landmarks. (i.e. Famous buildings or signage)
- IT IS NOT PERMISSIBLE TO
 - Reference the specific people group name
 - Reference specific geographical location (i.e. Country or City)
 - Identify the GOER by true name when pseudonyms/initials are preferred
 - In any way connect the GOER name and/or pseudonyms/initials with any specific mission sending organization
 - Share updates from the field work using specific terms (i.e. there are two new believers from the work in city or country)
 - Capture the face or voice of the GOER in video or audio

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ABSTRACT

STRENGTHENING MISSIONARY FAMILIES THROUGH MEMBER CARE BY THE SENDING CHURCH

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The purpose of this dissertation is to help sending churches of all sizes confidently reclaim their biblical role of member care to the missionary families they send. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of member care and establishes the local church as primary care giver in missions. It also shows the purpose, definitions, limitations and delimitations, and research methodology.

Chapter 2 looks at the history of member care starting with William Carey and Lottie Moon and the beginnings of Baptist missionary care. The chapter then looks at the past fifty years of member care. This chapter also looks at preventable and non-preventable attrition and special issues in care including re-entry and the missionary kid.

Chapter 3 surveys the Scriptures to build a case for a biblical mandate for care to its sent ones. It starts by looking at biblical precedent for such care using the churches at Antioch and Philippi as examples.

Chapter 4 examines six leading member care churches in the US and surveys their best practices in care culture to families. Through the research obtained in these interviews, I offer a list of best practices in care ministry to families.

Chapter 5 offers suggestions for sending churches to start care well by accessing, training, and mobilizing families with care in mind. In this chapter I summarize the research and make recommendations for the twenty-first century sending church.

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