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MISSIONARY PREPARATION AND CARE AT MERCY
CHURCH, IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

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MISSIONARY PREPARATION AND CARE AT MERCY
CHURCH, IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

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To my father, Kurt Urbanek, who showed me the way.

I love you.

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PREFACE

Credit for this project goes to my family and friends, who have supported me throughout the entire process. First, I want to thank my wife, Jessica, for creating the space for me to pursue this endeavor. Your persistence and encouragement throughout this process made it all possible. I could not have done this project were it not for you. I love you.

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Scott Urbanek

Charlotte, North Carolina

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Jesus’s final words to his disciples showed them and future followers their ultimate purpose (Acts 1:8; 2:39). Jesus gave the mandate to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all he had commanded (Matt 28:18-20). It was Jesus’s plan from the beginning of time to bring the message of salvation and to make disciples from among every people group (*panta ta ethne*)¹ on earth (Gen 12:2-3; Matt 24:14; Acts 1:8; Rev 7:9). In response to the direct calling by Jesus, the apostle Paul sought to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal 1:15-16; Acts 9:15-16; Acts 22:21; Gal 2:9; Eph 3:7-9; Rom 15:18-19).² His heart was to take the gospel where Christ’s name was not already known (Rom 15:20). Paul and the churches he established trained other pastors and missionaries. Ministry preparation was an important focus.³ Examples of this focus can be seen in how Paul intentionally trained Timothy, Titus, and others for ministry and expected them to do the same (2 Tim 2:2; Titus 2:1-8; Acts 18:8; 10-11, 23).

¹ *Panta ta ethne* is “all the nations” in the original Greek. John Piper says, “The issue of “nations” as found in Scripture] is crucial for understanding the missionary task of the Church. Specifically, the words “make disciples of all nations” must be examined. They contain the very important phrase “all nations,” which is often referred to in the Greek form *panta ta ethne* (*panta* = all, *ta* = the, *ethne* = nations.) The reason this is such an important phrase is that *ethne*, when translated as “nations,” sounds like a political or geographic grouping. This is the most common English usage. But we will see that is not what the Greek means. . . . It means, “Go and disciple all the ethnic groups.” (John Piper, “Discipling All The Peoples,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter, Steven C. Hawthorne, and Darrell R. Dorr, 4th ed. [Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2009], 132)

² See also Chuck Lawless, “Paul and Leadership Development,” in *Paul’s Missionary Methods: In His Time and Ours*, ed. Robert L. Plummer and John Mark Terry (Nottingham: InterVarsity, 2012), 217. Lawless claims, “Paul’s calling emphasized his Great Commission mandate. . . . His commission—to be a witness to Jew and Gentile alike (Acts 20:21), with emphasis on the Gentiles (Acts 9:15)” (225).

³ Lawless, “Paul and Leadership Development,” 225-27.

In addition to training, Paul continued to care for the churches he planted and those he trained by visiting them and writing letters. Paul knew that ministry was difficult, so he followed up with them to ensure that they were challenged and encouraged for the task God entrusted to them.

In the New Testament, local churches were both the product of missionary outreach and the training ground for future missionaries. Even though modern churches see that Paul prepared pastors and missionaries, many churches today struggle to prepare cross-cultural missionaries. Mercy Church desires to train and send missionaries to where Christ is unknown but has not had an effective program to accomplish this task. The need to revamp training and sending led the church to enter a strategic partnership with Launch Global. Launch Global's central focus is to work with local churches to prepare cross-cultural missionaries.

Context

Mercy Church was planted in 2015 by the Summit Church in partnership with the Summit Network. As a demonstration of the Summit Church's priority of planting churches and sending missionaries, Spence Shelton, a former pastor at Summit Church, was commissioned to found Mercy Church and serve as its lead pastor. The vision of Mercy Church is to see a gospel awakening in the city of Charlotte that would spread to the ends of the earth. Mercy Church was planted with an initial launch team of eighty people. Currently, Mercy Church is one church in two campus locations with plans to add a third campus in the next two years in the Charlotte, North Carolina metro area. The average attendance of Mercy Church is seven hundred adults and one hundred children between the two campuses.

The mission of Mercy Church is to make disciples who love God, love each other, and love our world. Charlotte, North Carolina, is a rapidly growing city.⁴ It is the number four city in the US for young professionals to work⁵ and is the third-largest financial hub in the United States.⁶ There are more than 115,000 college students living within an hour of Charlotte's city center.⁷ College students and young professionals are a strategic population for missions. College graduates and young professionals have fewer barriers to becoming missionaries and can find jobs in strategic areas around the world. Mercy Church is filled with college students and young professionals, making Mercy Church a prime center for mission's mobilization.

Charlotte is also home to a large refugee population. Approximately 17,000 refugees have resettled in Charlotte since the mid-1990s.⁸ Over the past few years, around 700 refugees have arrived in Charlotte each year from Syria, Burma, Bhutan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁹ One in seven people living in Charlotte (15 percent) were born outside of the United States.¹⁰ The large number of refugees and people from unreached people groups make Charlotte a strategic city for missional engagement and missionary training.

⁴ Hank Lee and Ruby Durham, "Carolinas Well-Represented on List of Fastest-Growing US Cities," *WCNC Charlotte*, July 14, 2021, <https://www.wcnc.com/article/news/local/charlotte-among-fastest-growing-american-cities-us-news-world-report/275-8ed9e1c1-3cc5-44f5-9587-b9481b9d04e3>.

⁵ CollegeSimply, "Colleges Near Charlotte," accessed August 24, 2022, <https://www.collegesimply.com/colleges-near/north-carolina/charlotte/>. The article bases this on the growth opportunities, compensation, benefits, work-life balance, career advancement, senior management, job security, and whether they would recommend their job to others.

⁶ For CLT, "Charlotte State of the City," 2019, <https://forcharlotte.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/State-of-the-City-Report-2019-English-2.pdf>.

⁷ CollegeSimply, "Colleges Near Charlotte."

⁸ For CLT, "Charlotte State of the City."

⁹ For CLT, "Charlotte State of the City."

¹⁰ For CLT, "Charlotte State of the City."

Mercy Church has struggled to develop a missionary training program that adequately prepares members who desire to go to the mission field. The church's frequent turnover of mission's pastors and constantly changing focus in the mission's department contributed to the church's inability to implement a sound training program. Mercy Church staff believes that there needs to be a strengthening in the training of its missionaries. This research project would prove or disprove this reality. Historically, any member who showed an interest in being a missionary was encouraged to lead a short-term trip, start discipleship groups, or apply for appointment through the International Mission Board (IMB) if they showed evidence of multiplying disciples.¹¹ The emergence of COVID-19 in 2020 shut down all missions opportunities and provided space for Mercy Church leadership to come to grips with its lack of effective missionary training and sending, and to search for a biblical and missiologically sound alternative. As a solution, Mercy Church entered a partnership with Launch Global in May 2021.

Launch global was founded in 2005 by Bob McNabb and Andy Kampman, with the Austin Stone Church in Austin, Texas being the first church partnership.¹² Launch Global exists to partner with like-minded churches by providing tools, resources, and personnel to fulfill its vision of sending out missionaries.¹³ Launch Global does not operate as a sending agency. Their objective "is to connect well-prepared laborers with strategic opportunities through churches, agencies, and sending ministries to catalyze Church Planting Movements among the unreached."¹⁴ Launch Global embeds team

¹¹ Mercy Church has sent three members through the IMB in six years. Nine others have been sent overseas through other mission organizations.

¹² Peter Chang, US Strategy Officer for Launch Global, telephone conversation with author, January 22, 2022.

¹³ Launch Global, "Why We Exist," accessed March 31, 2022, <https://www.launchglobal.org/our-heart>.

¹⁴ Launch Global, "Why We Exist."

capacity. In fifteen years, churches partnered with Launch Global have sent 390 missionaries.¹⁵ Over a nine-year span, 73 percent of long-term missionaries trained by Launch Global and partner churches remained on the field past two years, compared to 53 percent of those trained in other mission organizations.¹⁶ The leadership at Mercy Church was particularly impressed with their ability to mobilize members of local churches and the long-term rate of missionary retention.

Rationale

Preparing missionaries before they arrive in a cross-cultural context is vital to their success. Fruitful disciple-making in one's context does not necessarily ensure fruitfulness in a cross-cultural context.¹⁷ Taking the gospel to a cross-cultural context presents emotional, mental, practical, relational, linguistic, and spiritual challenges, which can lead to missionaries coming home from the field prematurely. Churches must take these challenges seriously and do all they can to prepare the missionaries they send.

Even when churches want to prepare cross-cultural missionaries in their local church, many do not have the training, experience, or resources to equip missionaries. Therefore, many churches entrust the training of their members to professional mission organizations. For example, the Southern Baptist Convention trains missionaries through the IMB. Frequently, however, the training that prospective missionaries receive from their local churches is minimal. This problem leads many prospective missionaries

¹⁵ Chang, conversation.

¹⁶ Jim Van Meter, "US Report of Findings on Missionary Retention," World Evangelicals, December 2003, https://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/res3_95_link_1292358708.pdf. This 2020 study shows the retention rate of 78 mission agencies from within U.S. These agencies represented 15,087 missionaries.

¹⁷ International Missions Project, "The Acts 1:8 Calling: A Missionary Assessment," International Missions Project, accessed January 11, 2022, https://www.intlmissions.org/?page_id=29. E-1 Evangelism is within one's own culture and language (Jerusalem and Judea). E-2 Evangelism is within a near culture and language (Samaria). E-3 Evangelism is within a far culture and far language (the ends of the earth). From a US perspective, the majority of unreached peoples are found among the far culture and far language groups. See also Jason Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* (San Bernardino, CA: Timē, 2014).

arriving at the International Learning Center in Richmond, Virginia, lacking biblical literacy and minimal disciple-making skills.¹⁸ The IMB has sought to help solve this problem through the newly created “Deepen Discipleship” program. This program provides potential missionary candidates with tools to develop biblical literacy, discipleship training, and deepening habits of obedience in the Christian life.¹⁹ The need for programs like Deepen Discipleship exposes the lack of disciple-making training in local churches, especially when dealing with cross-cultural disciple-making. Biblically literate and experienced disciple-making candidates cannot be fast-tracked. They need time to mature and cultivate skills and to discover and minister in their spiritual gifting. Mercy Church has recognized that their missionary preparation process has deficiencies²⁰ and wants future candidates to have a solid training experience before being sent cross-culturally.

A partnership with Launch Global assists Mercy Church by providing a tested program to ensure that all missions candidates receive quality training. Embedding Launch Global team members into the staff team of Mercy Church affords the candidates training from people who will walk alongside them through the entire process. The Launch Global missionary development program consists of three stages: discover, develop, and deploy.²¹ Stage 1 is “discover.” In the discovery stage, the goal is to help members of Mercy Church see God’s heart for the unreached and help them understand what role they can play in reaching them. All church members can take “The Mission of God” class that unpacks the biblical basis for missions and shows the current state of the world with a particular emphasis on unreached people groups. After this class, those interested in more training

¹⁸ Zane Pratt, Vice President of Global Training for the IMB, e-mail to author, May 5, 2020.

¹⁹ IMB, “Deepen Discipleship,” accessed March 20, 2022, <https://imb.pathwright.com/library/deepen-discipleship-48762/102497/about/>.

²⁰ Mercy Church sent out a survey to the nine missionaries to assess their preparation for the field.

²¹ Launch Global, “Launch Global,” accessed November 2, 2022, <https://www.launchglobal.org/>.

can join a ten-week disciple-making team. This introductory team focuses on training participants in cross-cultural disciple-making. Launch Global team members have conversations with each participant during this class to gauge interest in serving as cross-cultural missionaries. Not every participant who completes stage 1 senses a call to long-term missions. Those who do not want to pursue becoming a long-term missionary still leave the program equipped to be quality participants in the Great Commission by praying, giving, and making disciples through Mercy Church.

If the participants and Launch Global staff are confident that they want to pursue serving as long-term missionaries, then they can advance to stage 2 of the program. In stage 2, the “develop” stage, participants enter a launch community. For nine months, those who commit to going overseas will move into a predominantly international neighborhood to live near and practice ministry with Launch Global team members in a cross-cultural context. Launch communities help trainees learn to operate on a team as they would on the mission field. Living in an international neighborhood will help each trainee become acutely aware of what it could feel like to live overseas. As these launch communities live and work together to make disciples in these neighborhoods, the Launch Global team walks them through a nine-month missionary preparation curriculum. The curriculum focuses on developing three passions: a passion for Jesus, a passion for His kingdom, and a passion for biblical strategies to launch disciple-making movements among unreached people groups.²²

In stage 3, the Launch Global team’s “deploy” stage helps connect participants to a strategic sending agency, team, and location in partnership with the Mercy Church mission’s pastor. The deployment process can take one to three years. The goal is to send each participant to healthy missionary teams in partnership with Mercy Church.

²² Launch Global, “Launch Communities,” accessed March 20, 2022, <https://www.launchglobal.org/launch>.

As demonstrated, missionary preparation is vital for a missionary's long-term success. However, a limitation to Launch Global's plan exists. After a missionary is deployed, Launch Global does not have a formal process for providing missionary care. Launch Global focuses only on the preparation of a missionary. Launch Global entrusts missionary care to agencies and local churches. While agencies can provide care for their missionaries, and many do, care can be provided best by sending churches in cooperation with sending agencies. Local churches can play a pivotal role in missionary preparation and long-term care.

Mercy Church desires to provide a robust training program to ensure that every missionary sent from Mercy Church will be as prepared as possible for the task God has given them. Mercy Church also desires to provide long-term care and support to accomplish its God-given tasks. Without proper training and long-term care, Mercy Church risks missionaries coming home prematurely for possibly preventative reasons. Mercy Church would be negligent if it sent out missionaries who are not prepared or cared for in an ongoing manner. As Mercy Church implemented this training, it was vital to measure its effectiveness.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to strengthen missionary preparation at Mercy Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, by implementing the Launch Global program.

Goals

The following three goals served as objectives to ensure the success of the project's purpose.

1. The first goal was to assess the challenge of missionary preparation at Mercy Church.
2. The second goal was to design a path toward missionary preparation in cooperation with Launch Global.
3. The third goal was to design a pastoral care plan to minister to the missionaries sent by Mercy Church in collaboration with Launch Global.

A specific research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of the three goals. The methodology is described in the following section.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess the challenge of missionary preparation at Mercy Church. This goal included the creation of surveys to assess how well Mercy Church has prepared missionaries. This goal was measured by administering surveys to every missionary deployed overseas through Mercy Church.²³ The first survey evaluated each missionary's cross-cultural preparation before deployment.²⁴ The survey determined the effectiveness of each missionaries' preparation through Mercy Church and whether they believe they were adequately trained. The survey communicated the strengths and weaknesses of their preparation. The second survey evaluated how well Mercy Church has managed missionary care after deployment.²⁵ This survey was beneficial in proving that long-term care is vital for the overall well-being of Mercy Church's missionaries. This goal was considered successfully met when the surveys had been analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the effectiveness of missionary preparation and missionary care.

The second goal was to design a path toward missionary preparation in cooperation with Launch Global. This goal detailed a path toward missionary preparation for those sent through Mercy Church using the tools and training provided by Launch Global. This goal was considered successfully met when Launch Global's tools and training were fully implemented at Mercy Church.

The third goal was to design a pastoral care plan to minister to the missionaries sent by Mercy Church in collaboration with Launch Global. This goal used the data

²³ The research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

²⁴ See appendix 1.

²⁵ See appendix 2.

collected in the second survey on missionary care to design a strategic plan to complement Launch Global's processes. The strategic plan demonstrated how to provide long-term care for the missionaries sent by Mercy Church. This goal was considered successfully met when the strategic plan was completed.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Throughout this project, some key terms are used. Clarity for these terms are established in this section.

Missions. George Peters defines *missions* in his work, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*:

Missions is a specialized term. By it I mean sending forth of authorized persons beyond the borders of the New Testament church and her immediate gospel influence to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in gospel-destitute areas, to win converts from other faiths or non-faiths to Jesus Christ, into establish functioning multiplying local congregations who will bear fruit of Christianity in that community and in that country.²⁶

All cross-cultural ministry is not necessarily *missions*. Cross-cultural ministry to the poor, orphan care, disaster relief, and other ministries are God honoring and can be effective strategies for missions, but if they do not directly contribute to the planting of churches it is not considered missions. This project uses *missions* to mean cross-cultural evangelism, discipleship, and church planting that results in reproducing indigenous churches.²⁷

The Local Church. The International Mission Board defines *the local church* as “a group of baptized believers in Jesus Christ who are committed to each other as the body of Christ and who meet regularly to carry out the functions of a biblical church.”²⁸

²⁶ George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago Moody, 1972), 11.

²⁷ Robert L. Plummer, “Paul and Indigenous Missions,” in Plummer and Terry, *Paul's Missionary Methods*, 160.

²⁸ International Mission Board, “Foundations,” 2022, <https://store.imb.org/imb-foundations-digital-download/>, 91. The twelve functions of a healthy church are evangelism, discipleship, membership, leadership, preaching and teaching, ordinances, worship, fellowship, prayer, accountability and discipline, giving, and mission. Launch Global submits to Mercy Church and our definition of a local church.

Church planting movement. David Garrison writes, “A Church Planting Movement is a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment.”²⁹ Launch Global trains participants based on church planting movement principles: extraordinary prayer, abundant evangelism, intentional planting of reproducing churches, the authority of God’s Word, local leadership, lay leadership, house or cell churches, churches planting churches, rapid reproduction, and healthy churches.³⁰

Unreached people group. An *unreached people group* is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this group without outside assistance.³¹

There are limitations to this project. First, this project only evaluated stage 1 and 2 (discover and develop) and not stage 3 (deploy) of the Launch Global process.³² To properly analyze stage 3 would require waiting for several years to evaluate the success of the missionary’s deployment. Second, a limit was placed on evaluating participants’ ability to plant churches cross-culturally since they have yet to be deployed overseas. Third, I am only using The Summit Church and The Austin Stone’s missionary care processes as examples of healthy missionary care plans. Evaluating additional missionary care plans would require further research.

²⁹ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake, 2004), 21. I chose to use Garrison’s definition of a on church planting movement as presented in his second work on the subject. Launch Global trains missionaries on church planting movement and disciple making movement principles. These concepts are taught and applied in phase 2 of the development plan.

³⁰ Garrison, *Redeeming a Lost World*, 11-12. Church planting movements have been criticized by many scholars and missiologists. The critiques and merits of church planting movements will be addressed in chap. 3.

³¹ Joshua Project, “Definitions,” accessed August 24, 2022, <https://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions>.

³² Phase 3 falls outside of the timeline of this project. This project was completed before accurate data could be compiled.

Conclusion

The following chapters examine the theology, methodology, and assessment of missionary preparation as applied through the lens of the missionary preparation of Launch Global within Mercy Church. Chapter 2 will make a biblical defense of the role of local churches in missionary sending. Chapter 3 will explain Launch Global's approach to missionary preparation through the local church. Chapter 4 will show the need for long-term missionary care. Chapter 5 will lay out the pastoral care plan to minister to the missionaries sent by Mercy Church in collaboration with Launch Global. I desire that this project will lead to hundreds of prepared long-term missionaries successfully sent to unreached people groups through Mercy Church for the glory of Christ.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IN MISSIONARY SENDING

Mercy Church desires to send out missionaries with the best training, care, and support possible to enhance their success and well-being. Mercy Church believes that careful assessment and selection, thoughtful preparation, and attentive long-term care are the responsibilities of every local church that sends out a missionary. This approach is predicated on the primacy of local churches in missionary sending. Since the establishment of the church in the book of Acts, the sending of missionaries has been a key component of the local church.

All Scripture points to the fact that God is a missionary God. From the beginning, God reveals His desire to bring the nations to Himself. All Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, points to this reality. This chapter examines the role of the local church in assessing, preparing, and providing care for missionaries who are sent, and looks at how the early church addressed these same concerns.

The Mission of the Church

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:18-20)¹

For two thousand years, followers of Jesus have given their lives to advancing the gospel through the ministry of local churches. While Jesus’s mandate to make disciples of all nations in Matthew 28:18-20 is for every follower of Christ, his intention was for this

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the Christian Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.

task to be carried out by every believer as they live out their faith as committed members of local churches. Christ gave the responsibility of the Great Commission to the church.

Mark Dever shares his ideas of the role of the local church:

So, think once more of the four commands of the Great Commission: go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. Who does all of this? Who sends out the going disciples to make disciples? The local church. And who names them as disciples by baptizing them, and then helps them grow by teaching them? The local church does. The local church is the normal means God has given to fulfill the Great Commission.²

Every disciple of Jesus Christ was entrusted with the Great Commission but the making of disciples is to be carried out in the context of a local body of believers.

Andy Johnson is in agreement with Dever. Johnson states in *Missions*,

Each of us individually is called to obey Christ's command to make disciples who know and obey his Word. But how does he intend us to do that? His word is clear—normally we are to pursue obedience, build up disciples, and plant churches through the local church. The local church makes clear who is and who is not a disciple through baptism and membership in the body (Acts 2:41). The local church is where most discipling takes place (Heb. 10:24-25). The local church sends out missionaries (Acts 13:3) and cares for missionaries after they are sent (Phil. 4:15-16; 3 John 1-8). And healthy reproducing local churches are normally the aim and end of our missionary effort (Acts 15:41; Titus 1:5).³

The earliest followers of Jesus understood that Jesus called and trained them to be fishers of men (Matt 4:19). The earliest missionaries believed that salvation was dependent upon sharing the good news to Jews and Gentiles, to the ends of the earth. There are many priorities for a local church, but its true north is to seek to fulfill the Great Commission by taking the gospel all over the earth, planting churches, and sending more people to go and do the same.

Even though the biblical model for sending missionaries is through the local church, many modern missionary agencies have taken the mantle of organizing and

² Mark Dever, *Understanding the Great Commission* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 2.

³ Andy Johnson, *Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 26.

sending missionaries.⁴ Parachurch organizations, mission societies, and denominational structures have contributed significantly to missionary assessment, preparation, worldview training, and sending. However, they are not a replacement for the local church.

The Origination of Mission

The local church's priority is the Great Commission. As local churches begin to play their part, it is essential to look back at the early church and learn from them. This section will show the establishment of the early church, the leaders in the movement, and how the gospel spread throughout the region.

The First Church and Establishment of Missionary Leadership

It is important to understand that the Jerusalem church was the first church. All models and the kingdom's expansion began with the church in Jerusalem as they sought to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, in obedience to Acts 1:8. These early Christians knew the commission given to them to make disciples of all nations but did not know how exactly to go about accomplishing this daunting task. As thousands living and visiting Jerusalem began to come to Christ, leaders were identified, and the church was established. The Jerusalem church met in the temple court and house to house. The young church began to walk in the characteristics of a healthy church.⁵ It is important to note that as the first ever church, the Jerusalem church did not have categories for how to assess, prepare, and care for its missionaries long-term. These developments came much later as the church matured and addressed its global, cross-cultural expansion.

⁴ In the case of the Southern Baptist Convention, the IMB did not take the mantle. They were given the responsibility by the voluntary association of local churches to help facilitate the training and sending of missionaries being sent by their fellowships. It is true, historically, that many local fellowships have not been as involved with their missionaries as they needed to be. In some cases it appears local churches deferred their responsibility to the mission agency.

⁵ Characteristics of a healthy church as seen in International Mission Board, "Foundations," 2022, <https://store.imb.org/imb-foundations-digital-download/>, 80-82.

Peter was the first major leader in the early church. As he preached in Acts 2, there were representatives of fifteen different geographical regions with their unique languages and cultures. We know that they spoke other languages because Acts 2:8 says, “How is it that each of us can hear them in our own native language? They were Parthians Medes and Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and Converts), Cretans and Arabs” (Acts 2:9-11). Many of the first 3,000 who came to Christ had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish festival of Pentecost.⁶ Many stayed in Jerusalem to learn about their new-found faith. This was the only church in existence. Since these new believers were from faraway lands, the early church sought to minister to them as they sought to grow in their faith. This is one reason the early disciples sold their lands and goods—to provide for those in the early church who were living away from their home territories and in need. These new converts from far away geographical regions would have been unemployed and without income because they intended only to stay there for the Pentecost feast before returning home. The church raised offerings to take care of those who stayed to learn about their faith (Acts 2:45).

As a result of 3,000 souls being added to the church, one sees the founding of Christian community (Acts 2:37-48). In many ways, the New Testament church followed the synagogue structure.⁷ It is the only structure they knew. The apostle Peter would go into temple during the hour of prayer and preach Christological messages.⁸ It is clear that when the apostle Paul entered a new city, he first taught in the local synagogue. He remained teaching there until he was expelled (Acts 14:1; 17:1). The early church in

⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 193.

⁷ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 193.

⁸ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 2:1044.

Jerusalem saw themselves as part of the Hebrew faith.⁹ The difference for them was that they had met the Messiah.¹⁰ The separation of the early church from Judaism was a long-term process that happened over the first century. Initially, the Roman empire saw the Christian church as a sect of Judaism.¹¹ As the God-fearers, Samaritans, and Gentiles were added to the church, they were forced outside the Jewish structures. The new teachings within the church included Christian baptism, apostles teaching, and breaking of bread from house to house. They lived their lives in community, whether in temple for corporate worship or house to house for fellowship, breaking of bread, the Lord's Supper, and prayer. They praised God and had favor with all the people. The Lord added daily to those being saved.

By Acts 4:4, the church expanded to 5,000. An example of the church's community is seen in Acts 4:32: "The entire group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead had everything in common." Craig Bartholomew writes, "This is not merely a history lesson but also a blueprint for what the newly constituted people of God ought to be in every age."¹² In Acts 4:36, Barnabas came to Christ and sold his field and laid the money at the apostles' feet. They started to see people bringing their family and friends who were sick to be healed and to come and hear the gospel in 5:16. In 5:28, the high priest stated that they had filled all of Jerusalem with their teaching and doctrine. Elbert Smith explains, "The Jerusalem church provides us the description of a healthy church: It was

⁹ E. Glenn Hinson, *The Early Church: Origins to the Dawn of the Middle Ages* (Nashville: Abington, 2010), 20.

¹⁰ Edward A. Engelbrecht, *The Church from Age to Age: A History* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 5.

¹¹ Martin Goodman, *A World History of Christianity*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 20-21.

¹² Craig G. Bartholomew, *The Drama of Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 190.

characterized by discipleship, fellowship, worship, ministry, and evangelism.”¹³ The church was growing so rapidly through evangelism and through signs and wonders that they began to face Jewish opposition. So much so that Peter and John were arrested, and the church began to be persecuted (Acts 4, 6, 7).

Despite the Lord multiplying the number of disciples in Jerusalem, the church had yet to intentionally take the gospel out of Jerusalem. There were many great things happening in their midst, but they had not taken the gospel out of their own city. As the very first church, they had to work through new ways of walking out their new faith. Like many churches today, they undoubtedly knew what they were supposed to do, but did not know how or were reluctant to obey. God would show them how to take the gospel all over the world, and it came at a great cost.

Persecution: A Catalyst for Mission

Persecution was also a catalyst for the gospel advancing into other regions. The martyrdom of Stephen in Acts 7 was the first sign of the persecution that would propel the gospel forward.¹⁴ Following the martyrdom of Stephen, great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem. Believers were all scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, while the apostles remained in Jerusalem to teach and oversee the administration of the church (Acts 8:1).

Saul, colluding with those carrying out the death of Stephen, created havoc in the church, entering every house and committing Christians to prison. As this persecution broke out, believers scattered from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria. Acts 8 is a transitional section in the book, showing believers being scattered as it introduces the reader to Saul, the great persecutor of the church.¹⁵ In this moment, Saul approved of the stoning of

¹³ E. Elbert Smith, *Church Planting by the Book* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2015), 45.

¹⁴ Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 354.

¹⁵ Keener, *Acts*, 2:1444.

Stephen and the persecution of the church. Saul, who would later be converted to be a follower of Jesus, attested to this moment having a profound effect later in his life (Acts 22:20).¹⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger states, “The major opponent of Christianity became the greatest protagonist of the church’s mission, and he would take the gospel to ‘the ends of the earth.’”¹⁷

After Saul’s conversion in Acts 9, Barnabas helped introduce Saul to the apostles because the disciples in the Jerusalem church were afraid of him. Barnabas’s prestige with the apostles and other believers in Jerusalem was such that when he gave them his guarantee that Saul was now a true disciple of Jesus, they were reassured.¹⁸ Saul is introduced to the church, and the church confirms his conversion, growth, and bold witness. Then, the brethren of the church in Jerusalem found out about the Hellenists’ plot to kill Paul and they brought him out to Caesarea and sent him to Tarsus.

Jerusalem Sends Peter and Barnabas

Despite persecution, the church in Jerusalem sent out two very important missionaries, Peter and Barnabas. Both early church leaders would be vital in the advancement of the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. Peter was the apostle to the Jews and Barnabas helped to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Barnabas was also the man who modeled ministry for the apostle Paul.

In Acts 10, Peter received a vision. The Lord tells him, “What God has made clean, do not call impure” (v. 15). As he wonders about this vision and what it means (v. 17), men sent from Cornelius, a Centurion from Caesarea, came to call Peter to travel to his house. As Peter is preaching to Cornelius and his entire household, verses 44-45 says, “While Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the message. The

¹⁶ J. B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 210.

¹⁷ Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, 355.

¹⁸ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 193.

circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.” Then Peter says in verses 47-48, “Can anyone withhold water and prevent these people from being baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” Peter’s concludes that the Gentiles should be baptized. Eckhard J. Schnabel, states that the Gentiles baptism “certifies that they have come to faith in Jesus, that they are ready to pledge allegiance to Israel’s messiah, and that resistance to Gentiles being admitted to the people of God should be abandoned.”¹⁹

In Acts 11, Peter reports back to the church in Jerusalem about how the Gentiles have received the gospel. Eckhard J. Schnabel writes, “The basic point of this narrative is the acceptance of uncircumcised Gentiles who become believers in Jesus into the fellowship of God’s people.”²⁰ The church in Jerusalem acknowledges Peter’s mission in verse 18: “When they heard this they became silent. And they glorified God, saying, ‘So then, God has given repentance resulting in life even to the gentiles.’” The church in Jerusalem serves both as Peter’s sending church and as those who will hold him accountable.

The church in Jerusalem was a healthy and thriving church, but they experienced a lot of firsts. They were the first church: the first to organize a church body, the first to practice the ordinances, and the first to be persecuted and scattered abroad to preach the gospel. The Acts 1:8 vision started with the church in Jerusalem. Since they were the first church, they were still learning. They had the words from Jesus and were responsible for all levels of missionary sending to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Jesus’s Acts 1:8 command as not meant to be a progression. They were meant to reach Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth simultaneously. However, since

¹⁹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins, 2012), 506.

²⁰ Schnabel, *Acts*, 506.

they were a new movement, they were still trying to work out something that had not existed before. The Jerusalem church is an example of a healthy church, and much can be learned from the characteristics they displayed. They were thriving in evangelism, discipleship, and providing a model for Christian community. Yet despite their faith, they were reluctant to send missionaries outside of their own context.

The Church in Antioch

Although the Acts 1:8 vision started in Jerusalem, it became more developed at the church in Antioch. Charles H. Talbert states that the church in Antioch “constitutes the first missionary journey of Paul.”²¹ Clear examples of missionary assessment and preparation can be seen and begin to develop. Antioch was located in Syria, which is North of Israel. Antioch was a large city filled with Gentiles. Antioch was first reached with the gospel when involuntary migrant missionaries preached the Word to Greek-speaking Jews²² called Hellenists²³ and planted the church in Antioch. When the news of the movement in Antioch reached the Jerusalem church, the church sent Barnabas to investigate (Acts 11:22). When Barnabas arrived and saw that the grace of God was at work, he encouraged them to continue in the Lord. Through the ministry of Barnabas, a great number of people were added to the Lord (Acts 11:24). Barnabas’s presence and his assessment in the church provided the example for missionary assessment that other churches would follow.

Missionary Assessment in Antioch

The church in Antioch is the first example of a sending church in Acts. One is able to see models of assessment in how Barnabas assessed Saul for ministry. Barnabas

²¹ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, rev. ed (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 115.

²² Grant R. Osborne, “Hellenists,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 961.

²³ Osborne, “Hellenists,” 961.

had previously worked with Saul in Jerusalem and Damascus shortly after Saul's conversion (Acts 9:27-30). Barnabas walked closely with Saul and helped convince the apostles that Saul had become a follower of Christ (Acts 9:26-27). The apostles were likely very skeptical of Saul due to his former activities as a persecutor of the church. F. F. Bruce points out, "Barnabas's prestige with the apostles and other believers in Jerusalem was such that when he gave them his guarantee that Saul was now a true disciple of Jesus, they were reassured."²⁴ After Barnabas was able to convince the disciples of his conversion, they were able to assess Saul's readiness for ministry, having him work alongside the twelve disciples in their ministry to Jerusalem.²⁵ They labored together by conversing and debating with the Hellenistic Jews (Acts 9:28). The apostles' admiration and care for Saul became evident by their desire to protect him when these same Hellenists sought to kill him. When the twelve disciples and Barnabas found about the plot to kill Saul, they helped him escape by taking him back to his hometown of Tarsus (Acts 9:30).

Years later, when the church in Antioch was being established and large numbers were being added to the Lord, Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Saul and help lead this new group of believers. Barnabas called upon Saul because of his familiarity with the Greek language. He was also aware that Saul had been called by Jesus to reach Gentiles (Acts 9:15). During this time, Barnabas co-labored with Saul just as the apostles co-labored with Barnabas in the beginning of his ministry (Acts 4:36; 8:1-8; 9:27; 11:21-26). Barnabas and Saul met with the church for a year as they ministered to the body and taught in large numbers (Acts 11:25-26). In the context of the book of Acts, Saul spending a year doing ministry with Barnabas was a long time.²⁶ With the exception of Corinth (eighteen months)

²⁴ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 193.

²⁵ It is important to note that Paul taught about Jesus in the synagogues in Acts 9:20-22, before he went to Jerusalem.

²⁶ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 1070.

and Ephesus (over two years), he spent considerably less time in other cities.²⁷ This timeline is important because it demonstrates that it takes time to properly assess missionaries.

The church in Antioch knew Saul's story and had seen that he had been properly assessed even prior to his arrival in Antioch. Now they were able to see and be ministered to personally by Saul, and when it came time for the Holy Spirit to call Saul to leave their church as a missionary, the church wholeheartedly approved his commissioning (Acts 13:1-2).²⁸ This church had seen the fruitfulness of his teaching, the evidence of his character, and the results of his leadership. Bruce, commenting on the giftedness of Barnabas and Saul, states, "It is perhaps worth noticing that the two men who were to be released for what would nowadays be called missionary service overseas were the two most eminent and gifted leaders in the church."²⁹ However, the church in Antioch did not rely solely on God's calling to missionary work, they recognized the need for training and preparation as well to prepare Saul for success.

Missionary Preparation in Antioch

Barnabas assessed Saul's qualifications before asking him to join him to lead in ministry.³⁰ Barnabas was also able work extensively alongside Saul as a way of preparing Saul for the ministry that lay ahead. In many ways, Barnabas's assessment and time alongside Saul served to prepare him for ministry. During their time together, Saul gleaned a great deal, which led to a fruitful time of hard ministry preparation. Saul, who

²⁷ Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 1070.

²⁸ In this passage the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for missions work. After fasting and praying, the church laid hands on them and sent them off.

²⁹ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 246.

³⁰ Barnabas brought Saul with him because of his calling to reach the gentiles (Acts 9:15).

was also called Paul, the great missionary, would build on the mentoring lessons and experiences from his time with Barnabas to help other leaders.³¹

Other examples of Barnabas preparing Saul through working together can be seen throughout Acts: Barnabas and Saul teach great numbers of people (11:25-26); Saul is able to help Barnabas provide aid in a relief mission to the Jerusalem church facing a famine (11:27-29); and Saul wades through the difficult realities and pressures of other prominent leaders being persecuted, like James being martyred (12:1) and Peter being jailed (Acts 12:5). All these experiences were certainly transformational for Saul. They taught him many important lessons that he would undoubtedly draw from to help counsel future church leaders in years to come.

Barnabas ministered under the oversight of the twelve apostles for many years prior to being sent to organize the church in Antioch.³² Saul was able to witness with his eyes what he would then model for many other ministers, such with Timothy (Acts 16:1-3; 18:5; 19:22; 1 Cor 4:17), Titus (Titus 1:4; 2 Cor 8:16-20, 23; Gal 2:1-3), Silas (Acts 15:22, 32, 40; 16:25, 31-33, 40; 17:14; 18:5; 1 Thess 1:1), Apollos (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1; 1 Cor 3:5-6; 16:12), Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19), Tychicus (Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-9; 2 Tim 4:12), and John Mark (2 Tim 4:11). These missionaries, pastors, and servants of the church all benefitted from the development of the early ministry days of Saul. It is no surprise that Saul would one day write to his most excellent protégé, Timothy, how to develop others ministers of the gospel when he said, “You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ

³¹ Orlando Rivera says Barnabas mentored Saul through four stages: initiation (Acts 11:25-26), cultivation (Acts 13), separation (Acts 15:36-59), and redefinition (Acts 15:39-41). Orlando Rivera, “Mentoring Stages in the Relationship between Barnabas and Paul,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 2007, <https://www.regent.edu/journal/journal-of-biblical-perspectives-in-leadership/mentoring-stages-in-the-relationship-between-barnabas-and-paul/>.

³² Barnabas proved to be a worthy mentor for Saul. The placing of Barnabas’s name before Saul (Paul) in the Scriptures may indicate the priority of Barnabas at this time. The writer of Acts, Luke, gave Barnabas’s name precedence until Acts 15 when it becomes clear that Paul’s name is given priority (15:2, 22, 35, 36). Barry J. Beitzel, “Barnabas,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 264.

Jesus. What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). Saul knew that for the gospel to continue to move forward to the uttermost parts of the earth, it would do so through people who have been developed for the task by people who have walked with them and lived it themselves. However, the relationship does not end with assessment and preparation.

Long-Term Missionary Care

There are many examples of long-term relationships between sending churches and their missionaries throughout Scripture. In Antioch, one sees assessment, preparation, and then continued support of the apostle Paul throughout his ministry. It is evident that Paul returns to Antioch, his base of ministry operation, after his missionary journeys to report to his sending church and to continue to nurture his deep relationship with the church and the people who sent and support him.³³ It is also important to note that Paul was not sent out by the leadership exclusively. Paul and his companions were sent out by the whole church body.³⁴ As Paul left on his journeys, he left as a missionary anchored by a partnership with the church that sent him. The church in Antioch would welcome him back upon every return. Just as Jerusalem would receive reports from Barnabas about the work in Antioch, Paul too would report back on what the Lord had done during his time away.

Paul took three missionary journeys. He visited Antioch for a considerable time after his first missionary journey, reporting on all the Lord had done to open the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:26-28). Paul returned to Antioch after he visited the Jerusalem council (Acts 15). He also took time with his sending church before and after his second missionary journey with Silas (Acts 15:36; 18:23). Before his third journey,

³³ Stanley D Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: Victor, 1985), 387.

³⁴ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 246.

Scripture tells that Paul felt the need to spend time and strengthen the disciples (Acts 18:23). The common thread in all of Paul's missionary journeys was that he consistently returned to Antioch. Paul's ministry was anchored in and through the church in Antioch, regardless of where Paul was doing ministry. The connection of Paul to the church in Antioch displays the mutual commitment, love, and devotion they have to one another. Paul continues this pattern of mutual commitment, love, and devotion with every church he or his disciples subsequently plant.³⁵

Paul understood the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with the church that sent him. Romans 10:14-15 states, "How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent?" Some go, others send. Neil Pirolo, commenting on Romans 10, says that there are those who go and those who stay to serve as senders.³⁶ Both are part of what he calls a local church's "cross-cultural outreach team."³⁷ Pirolo writes, "Those who go and those who serve as senders merge their callings and talents and giftings to form the cross-cultural team. All equally important. All are vitally involved in the fulfillment of the great commission. All are dynamically integrated and moving toward the same goal."³⁸ Paul's correspondence

³⁵ Paul was not the only missionary sent out by churches during this time. Churches that Paul had established would eventually send out missionaries of their own, just as they had heard about the example of Antioch. Timothy is an example of this reality. It is possible that Timothy was converted in Lystra after Paul's departure and sent out by the church to join Paul in his second missionary Journey in Acts 16. Christoph W. Stenschke, "Paul's Mission as the Mission of the Church," in *Paul's Missionary Methods: In His Time and Ours*, ed. John Mark Terry and Robert L. Plummer (Nottingham: InterVarsity, 2013), 78. Christoph W. Stenschke comments that Timothy not being named in Acts 14:21 implies that he came to faith after Paul departed from the area. This means that it was the local church in Lystra who commissioned Timothy as a missionary; a pattern learned from the church in Antioch. Timothy would later become an elder of the church in Ephesus, and Paul would frequently encourage him. In times of Paul's absence, his letters of encouragement displayed his commitment to Timothy's discipleship and care (78).

³⁶ Neil Pirolo, *Serving as Senders* (San Diego: Emmaus Road, 1991), 14.

³⁷ Pirolo, *Serving as Senders*, 15.

³⁸ Pirolo, *Serving as Senders*, 15.

with Antioch and other churches he helped to plant shows that Paul depended on their ongoing support and care for gospel advancement.

Ways Senders Serve Missions

Most Christians are aware of the need for missionaries to plant churches. Unfortunately, many people desire to participate in God's global mission but are unaware of the vital role of serving those who go as missionaries. Pirollo describes six ways Paul asked for support. Paul asked for moral support, logistical support, financial support, prayer support, communication support, and re-entry support.³⁹ Sending churches and members of those sending churches can support missionaries and take an active part in God's global mission in all of these ways.

Moral Support

In Ephesians 6:18-19, Paul asks for moral support through prayers. He says in verse 19, "Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel." This prayer for boldness comes in the context of him teaching the Ephesians about spiritual warfare. Paul too needed boldness, and the prayers of this church would help him persevere. Like Paul, all missionaries need on-going moral support. They face spiritual warfare and ministry pressures unlike anything they previously experienced at home. Having members of local churches who are aware of these pressures and realities can ensure that missionaries receive the moral support they need to continue to persevere in ministry. Prayer is the most basic yet powerful way to support missionaries. Missionaries who know that there are people at home praying for their perseverance are deeply encouraged.

³⁹ Pirollo, *Serving as Senders*, 22.

Logistical Support

Depending on the context in which the missionary lives and ministers, logistical needs can be an impediment to gospel advancement. Examples can be the scarcity of evangelism, discipleship, and ministry materials or resources, transportation challenges, health needs, or communication challenges. When Paul had logistical needs, he asked Timothy and his church in Ephesus to help. Even with simple needs. Paul asked Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:13, “When you come, bring the cloak I left in Troas with Carpus, as well as the scrolls, especially the parchments.”⁴⁰

Financial Support

One of the more pressing needs for mission work is financial support. Throughout history, one can see that the gospel advanced through the generosity of God’s people. Some examples show business men and women, such as Humphrey Monmouth (1530s), Lady Huntington (1740s), John Thorton (1760s), and countless others providing funds for the more widely known William Tyndale, John Newton, and George Whitefield.⁴¹ Ministry can be expensive, and Paul depended on financial support to ensure gospel advancement. Paul commended the church in Philippi for asking how they could support him financially. In Philippians 4:10-11 he thanked them by saying, “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly because once again you renewed your care for me. You were, in fact, concerned about me but lacked the opportunity to show it. I don’t say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself.” In verse 10 Paul rejoiced in the frequency with which the church in Philippi supported him. This consistency is a model for all churches. Missionaries, like anyone else, need to be able to trust in their support system. Andrew Walker writes, “William Carey Famously told Andrew Fuller, ‘I will go down into the pit, if you will hold the ropes.’ . . . Today missions

⁴⁰ His cloak was requested to keep him warm. Even toward the end of his life, Paul desired to write and learn more from the Scriptures. All made possible through logistical support.

⁴¹ John Rinehart, *Gospel Patrons: People Whose Generosity Changed the World* (Minneapolis: Reclaimed, 2016), 21.

movements are still enabled by rope-holders—committed believers who pray, send money, and staff organizations that equip and send missionaries to foreign lands.”⁴² Churches should ensure that their missionaries have all they need to do the Lord’s will. Johnson notes that local churches have a high bar regarding financial generosity: “Our support for missionaries should aim to see that they lack nothing, as if we were supplying Jesus himself for a journey.”⁴³ The church at Philippi met this high bar along with many others who used their finances to advance the gospel (Acts 18:1-3, 26; 1 Cor 16:19).⁴⁴

Prayer Support

The apostle Paul suffered greatly for the gospel. In 2 Corinthians 6:4-10, Paul describes his ministry as filled with afflictions, hardships, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, and times of hunger. As a missionary, Paul is asking in most of his letters for fellow churches to pray for him. He is particularly pointed with the church in Rome when he asks them for prayer. In Romans 15:30 he asked,

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in fervent prayers on my behalf. Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, and that, by God’s will, I may come to you with joy and be refreshed together with you.

Paul understands the importance and power of prayer and its role in helping sending churches participate in God’s global mission as senders come alongside missionaries.

Communication Support

Good communication is essential in any human interaction and relationship. Communication is even more essential in providing missionary care. In Philippians 2:19, Paul said to the church, “I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I

⁴² Andrew T. Walker, “Holding the Ropes,” *First Things*, February, 20, 2014, <https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2014/02/holding-the-ropes>.

⁴³ Johnson, *Missions*, 26.

⁴⁴ Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple in the early church, used their home, business, and finances to support Paul and the ministry.

too may be cheered by news of you” (ESV). Paul says he will be cheered by receiving news about what is going in the church at Philippi. Receiving good news from home reinforces connection and brings joy to missionaries. The biblical writers also give a helpful pattern for communication. The most effective and primary way of communication in the New Testament was through writing letters. In today’s context there are many ways to communicate. Senders can write letters, send care packages, send e-mails, phone calls, and utilize video call technology. Biblical writers were specific in their encouragement, reinforcing their commitment to their missionaries despite times of rebuke, they were timely in communication and unafraid to continuously remind their missionaries of the importance of their work.⁴⁵

Re-Entry Support

Missionaries who return from the field after years of service face difficulties in re-entry. Like the workers in Acts 14:28, many missionaries are returning home after staying with their ministries and disciples for a long time. They will face many spiritual, financial, and practical challenges. Churches need to provide space for these missionaries to debrief their experience in hopes of helping them navigate all the challenges they will face.⁴⁶ David Pollock explains, “De-briefing should be an opportunity to hear both the good and the bad without defense (or offense). Its goal should be to discover ways to contribute to support, healing, and preparation for the future.”⁴⁷

Missionary Care in 3 John

Nearly an entire book of the Bible is dedicated to missionary care. In 3 John, the apostle John is writing as an elder to a Christian man named Gaius to commend him

⁴⁵ Pirolo, *Serving as Senders*, 125.

⁴⁶ David Pollock, “Developing a Flow of Care and Caregivers,” in *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World*, ed. Kelly O’Donnell (Littleton, CO: W. Carey, 2002), 30.

⁴⁷ Pollock, “Developing a Flow of Care and Caregivers,” 30.

for showing hospitality to traveling missionaries. Third John displays John's concern for those who were sent from his own church. It is evident that his responsibility for looking after and caring for missionaries sent from his church did not end when they departed. In many ways, his work of caring for missionaries seems to have just begun. Third John shows that this letter was given to Gaius by the missionaries he welcomed. Third John 5 states, "Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are" (ESV). It is clear that it is not the first time John had sent missionaries to stay with Gaius, and verse 6 points out that those whom he welcomed previously testified to his care and love for the church. John Anderson states, "It is a polite request that he help again in the present situation."⁴⁸ John also mentioned that Gaius was not just welcoming missionaries, but he was welcoming missionaries who were strangers to him. This kind of godly commitment leads the apostle John to describe Gaius's hospitality as being faithful (3 John 5).⁴⁹

In 3 John 6, John tells Gaius to "send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God" (ESV). Colin G. Kruse writes, "The expression 'to send them on their way' translates a form of the verb *propempō*, which functioned as a technical term for missionary support in the early church (cf. Acts 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; Rom 15:24; 1 Cor 16:6, 11; 2 Cor 1:16; Tit 3:13), and this is also its function here."⁵⁰ Gaius's hospitality and care prepared them to represent their Lord when they left his care. This is likely what is meant when John says to send them in a manner worthy of God. The missionaries are representing the Lord by going with the gospel and Gaius is representing the Lord by showing hospitality and supporting these missionaries. Since they are representing God,

⁴⁸ John L. Anderson, *An Exegetical Summary of 1, 2, and 3 John*, Exegetical Summaries of the New Testament, 2nd ed. (Dallas: SIL, 2008), 227.

⁴⁹ Anderson, *An Exegetical Summary of 1, 2, and 3 John*, 226.

⁵⁰ Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2020), 223.

they need to be sent in a manner worthy of God.⁵¹ Kruse notes that in verses 7-8 there are three reasons why it was appropriate to send missionaries on their way, in a manner worthy of God. First, “It was for the sake of the Name that they went out.”⁵² The name, meaning that it was for the name of Christ they were sent.⁵³ The second reason they deserved to be sent out in a manner worthy of God was because they went out receiving no help from the Gentiles.⁵⁴ Since they were not going to receive help from Gentiles, the church was expected to help. The third reason to send missionaries in a manner worthy of God was so that they may work together for the truth.⁵⁵ Missionary work cannot be done without partnership. Senders assist in advancing the truth of the gospel through their hospitality and sending. Working in and for the name of Christ, leaning into the importance of their mission rather than local popularity and support from their Gentile audience, and remembering to hold fast to the truth of the gospel would be the foundation of their mission. All of which would require constant reinforcement from their sending body, reflecting being sent out in a manner worthy of God.

Third John not only shows the apostle’s heart for their care, but also his concern regarding those who lack hospitality in supporting missionaries. Diotrefes, unlike Gaius, refused to show hospitality to missionaries who were sent his way. Diotrefes was likely a leader in a church near where Gaius lived.⁵⁶ John states that Diotrefes was gossiping maliciously about them, and points out that Diotrefes “refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church” (2 John 10 ESV). The

⁵¹ Kruse, *The Letters of John*, 223.

⁵² Kruse, *The Letters of John*, 223.

⁵³ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Logos, 1997), 2:540.

⁵⁴ Kruse, *The Letters of John*, 224.

⁵⁵ Kruse, *The Letters of John*, 224.

⁵⁶ Daniel. L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, The New American Commentary, vol. 38 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 246.

apostle John asks Gaius not to imitate the evil of Diotrephes's lack of hospitality (3 John 11). The apostle John's affirmation of Gaius's hospitality and his condemnation of Diotrephes's lack of hospitality shows how important missionary care is to gospel advancement. Third John 9-10 shows why Diotrephes refused to assist these missionaries: (1) he is gossiping maliciously; (2) he refuses hospitality to the traveling teachers; (3) he prevents others in the church who want to from doing so; and (4) he attempts to put out of the church those who extend hospitality.⁵⁷ John's rebuke of Diotrephes serves as a warning to churches and church leaders. Caring for missionaries is vital for gospel advancement. Any attitude that leads to a church refusing to help missionaries sent with the gospel is not properly focused on building the kingdom (3 John 11).

Third John also commends Demetrius, who likely served as the courier of the letter to Gaius.⁵⁸ Demetrius was likely the leader who led the missionary team in 3 John 5. Third John 12 says, "Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true" (ESV). In this verse Demetrius was lauded for being well spoken of by everyone, his life was consistent with the truth, and he had the testimony of the elders and his church on his side.⁵⁹ When John says, "We also add our testimony," the plural language is communicating that both the apostle John and his sending church are affirming Demetrius's testimony.⁶⁰ R. C. H. Lenski writes, "Gaius certainly knows that their testimony is true, that they would not endorse as a leader a man concerning whom they had the least doubt."⁶¹ The apostle John wrote 3 John to Gaius as instruction and a

⁵⁷ Akin, *I, 2, 3 John*, 248.

⁵⁸ Akin, *I, 2, 3 John*, 249.

⁵⁹ Akin, *I, 2, 3 John*, 251.

⁶⁰ Brooke. F. Westcott, ed., *The Epistles of St. John: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, England: Macmillan, 1902), 242.

⁶¹ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), 591.

request to support the missionaries he is sending. However, John also writes to reflect the desire and intent of the sending church body who care deeply for these missionaries and the success of their mission.

Conclusion

Assessing, preparing, and providing care for missionaries is what local churches have been doing since the early church. This can give modern church leaders confidence that the local church has always been God's plan A to fulfill the Great Commission.⁶² Many local churches today understand the responsibility they have and may desire to participate in the fulfillment of the Great Commission but lack the training and resources to confidently send missionaries out into the world.

In current mission practices, many organizations have limited contact with local churches as they assess and train candidates. For example, the IMB, Pioneers, and Frontiers all have equipping processes and structures for missionary candidates. The IMB has a seven-step process for sending missionaries, and the IMB entirely carries out the training.⁶³ The first step for Frontiers and Pioneers is for missionary candidates to set up interviews with a team member from those organizations.⁶⁴ All three organizations consult local church leadership early on in the process but continue to assess and train candidates separately from their local churches. There are even times when these organizations place missionaries with a team overseas without an inquiry into their local church's missions or church planting strategies. This disconnect can inevitably lead to a local church's removal from the process. While this disconnect is undesirable, it is unfortunately a fact that many local churches do not have the means to adequately assess and train those who desire to

⁶² J. D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 69.

⁶³ International Mission Board, "Process," accessed April 1, 2022, <https://www.imb.org/go/process/>.

⁶⁴ Pioneers, "Start Form," accessed on April 1, 2022, <https://pioneers.org/#/>. Frontiers, "Take Your First Step," accessed April 1, 2022, <https://frontiersusa.org/long-term/>.

be missionaries. Missions organizations make up for this by providing candidates with the assessment and training their local churches cannot provide.

Local churches and missions organizations must work together, but the responsibility lies on the local church to send missionaries. Since local churches are responsible for carrying out the Great Commission, local churches and their pastors are responsible for assessing, training, and providing long-term care to any missionaries sent out by their congregations. Prioritizing assessment and training of future missionaries needs to be part of every local church's strategy. To not engage in this work is negligent and will undoubtedly lead to many unprepared and ineffective missionaries going on the field.

It is the belief of Mercy Church that local churches should be the ones to assess, prepare, and provide long-term care for the missionaries sent from Mercy Church, as modeled throughout the New Testament. A partnership with Launch Global assists in making this a reality. As a parachurch organization, Launch Global is committed to seeing local churches take ownership in sending their own missionaries. Instead of coming alongside churches, Launch Global embed themselves onto local church staff teams, become members of these local churches, and submit to their leadership to help assess, prepare, and send missionaries. The leadership of Mercy Church prefers the approach of Launch Global to work inside local churches rather than merely working beside in order to reduce miscommunication and confusion for local church leaders, mission organizations, and the missionaries who desire clarity in their sending process. Chapter 3 will show Launch Global's approach to missionary preparation through local churches, including a recommendation for a wholistic plan and commitment toward long-term missionary care.

CHAPTER 3

THE LAUNCH GLOBAL MISSIONARY PREPARATION PROGRAM

As seen in the previous chapter, missionary assessment and preparation were evident for missionaries of the early church. Today, Launch Global has dedicated itself to assist local churches with these tasks. This chapter will examine Launch Global's approach, success, and challenges through my own experience over the past eighteen-month relationship with the organization as the Pastor of Missions for Mercy Church, Charlotte. This chapter will highlight the vision of Launch Global, how Launch Global partners with local churches in general and Mercy specifically, how they help identify and prepare missionaries, and also my thoughts on ways for improving the relationship and our symbiotic effectiveness by expanding into a more holistic approach.

Mercy Church's Challenge in Missionary Preparation

From the inception of Mercy Church seven years ago, taking the gospel to the ends of the earth has been a key component of its mission statement. However, missionary preparation has been a challenge. Mercy Church has struggled to develop a missionary training program that adequately prepared members who desiring to go to the mission field. Mercy Church has seen ten individuals go to the nations in seven years.¹ The church has been successful in connecting individuals to potential destinations but struggled in preparing them to know what to expect. In addition, we were challenged to provide resources to help them in the spiritual, practical, and ministerial challenges they would experience in the months and years to follow. The frequent turnover of mission pastors

¹ Mercy Church has sent ten individuals: six singles and two married couples.

and the corresponding change of focus within the mission's department has also contributed to the church's inability to implement a sound training program.²

Mercy Church formed a relationship with Launch Global in May of 2021 to implement quality missionary preparation for its members. The vision of Launch Global expressly met the missionary preparation need of Mercy Church. The sending of missionaries to take the gospel to the ends of the earth has been much more effective with the help Launch Global.

The Launch Global Solution

Launch Global states that it “exists to mobilize churches to develop laborers and leaders who will multiply churches among unreached people groups.”³ Launch Global does not operate as an autonomous sending agency but instead functions as a resource and bridge for the local church to connect to the unreached. They aim to connect well-prepared laborers from local church bodies with strategic opportunities through churches, agencies, and sending ministries to catalyze church planting movements among the unreached.

Partnerships with Local Churches

Mercy Church has desired to be a church that sends missionaries to unreached people groups since its inception in 2015. Launch Global's vision is to partner with local churches that have the shared goal of sending missionaries to unreached people groups. Launch Global seeks out churches with similar aspirations to empower them by providing tools, resources, and people (professional staff) to fulfill their vision. Launch Global states on their website, “One of the ways we do this is by embedding a Launch Global team that functions as part of the church staff, increasing the church's training and sending capacity. This team works with the church leaders to customize some of our specialized tools and

² Chap. 4 will show other contributing factors and evidence for Mercy Church's struggle.

³ Launch Global, accessed November 2, 2022, <https://www.launchglobal.org/>.

methods to fit the church's needs and desires.”⁴ Local churches often do not have staff dedicated to missionary preparation. The embedded teams from Launch Global help build upon a culture of sending that currently exists within a church.

The Mercy/Launch Global Partnership

The partnership between Mercy Church and Launch Global formally began in May 2021. Launch Global embedded one of its mobilizers from Grace Bible Church in College Station, Texas. Launch Global exhibited great openhandedness by sending Sarah Wampler to Mercy Church. Wampler was a mobilization team leader for three years at her church in College Station and came highly recommended by her supervisor, Chris Merrell. Upon Wampler's arrival in Charlotte, she built a team to labor alongside her. Apollos Digges, Adeline Santangelo, and Chet McDilliams joined her team as mission mobilizers. Digges was previously part of the missions residency program at Mercy Church under my leadership as the missions pastor. Santangelo followed Wampler from Grace Bible shortly after graduating from Texas A & M, as did McDilliams.

Launch Global has guidelines that determine whether a church is expected to be a healthy partnership. These guidelines help Launch Global and the churches ensure that the partnership is successful. Every church partner must have the desire to send people to the unreached. Church partners must focus on fomenting church planting movements and desire that the missionaries they send do the same in cross-cultural contexts.⁵ Church

⁴ Launch Global, “Our Mission,” accessed November 2, 2022, <https://www.launchglobal.org/our-heart>.

⁵ There is considerable criticism against church planting movements. Researchers like Steve Wilkes, “Missiological Misgivings?,” *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* 6 (Spring 2007): 1-2; Hoyte Lovelace, “Is Church Planting Movement Methodology Viable?: An Examination of Selected Controversies Associated with the CPM Strategy,” *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* 6 (Spring 2007): 45-58; and Jeff Brawner, “An Examination of Nine Key Issues Concerning CPM,” *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* 6 (Spring 2007): 3-13, reveal their missiological concerns regarding church planting movements. One of the major concerns is the universal application of church planting movement principles across the world as “the method” without considering the local field realities. Additional criticism against Garrison's idea of “just-in-time” lay leadership training is also warranted. David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake, 2004), 189-191. Just-in-time training thrusts new

partners must have many members who can be mobilized for mission sending, such as college students, young professionals, and young families. In other words, church partners must have a highly mobilizable population in its congregation, whether because of sheer number or turnover/transition rates in that city or church. The most important guideline is that partner churches must be ready to receive Launch Global staff members (mobilizers) as their church staff members. For partnerships to work well, the church partner needs to be prepared to embed mobilizers fully as part of their church staff. A mobilizer works for Launch Global and raises financial support through Launch Global but works as if they were a staff member of the local church. It is common for many church members of partner churches not even to know that a Launch Global employee is on staff because the language used for their roles is contextualized to the church and not focused on using Launch Global's brand or wording. Launch Global seeks to honor the bride of Christ above all and trusts the local church to lead the implementation of missionary sending and defers to the church's leadership from the vision of sending all the way down to the final selection of missionaries, partner teams, and agencies. To ensure the guidelines are clear for both parties, before finalizing the partnership, Launch Global sends a memorandum of understanding outlining the partnership's details.

In Mercy Church's experience, Launch Global did an excellent job working with the staff to help them understand not only the benefits of imbedding Launch Global into the church, but also helped to see potential challenges. The memorandum of

believers into local church leadership. Just-in-time training supplies the new believer or emerging leader with only enough information to take their next step in their walk or the next level in their leadership development. While putting new believers into local church leadership is unwise (1 Tim 3:6), Garrison's idea was never meant to prevent young leaders from future training and development. Another criticism of church planting movements surround the principle of rapid reproduction. Jeff Brawner argues that that rapid reproduction of churches goes against the biblical pattern. He uses the fact that Jesus only spent three years with the first disciples as a key argument. Jeff Brawner, "An Examination of Nine Key Issues Concerning CPM," *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* 6 (Spring 2007): 3-13. In addition to legitimate criticisms, some efforts that claim to be church planting movements have even been found to be untrue. See Jim Slack, "How Many Church Planting Movements Are There?," *Mission Frontiers: Church Planting Movements*, March 2011, 12-13. Despite these concerns, Mercy Church believes that church planting movements are a faithful approach to missions.

understanding was vital in helping to outline guidelines and set expectations for how the leadership of Mercy Church should relate to Launch Global staff members. The memorandum of understanding states,

Launch Global desires to mobilize “as the church” not “with the church.” The Launch Global team will embed into Mercy Church and adopt a Mercy Church identity. The team will introduce themselves as a part of the Mercy Church staff team rather than Launch Global and seek to use Mercy Church’s vocabulary. The team leader will participate in weekly staff meetings with the other Mercy Church staff in order to stay informed and in line with the church’s major objectives.⁶

Launch Global expects churches to agree that 90 percent of Launch Global mobilizers will spend their time within the discover, develop, and deploy pipeline. This protects mobilizers from being asked to do things outside their job description. In Mercy Church’s experience, one of the main challenges was the need for constant monitoring to keep church staff from asking mobilizers to be heavily involved in time-consuming activities outside of their primary role to discover, develop, and deploying missionaries. Due to Wamplers’s passion and gift for public speaking, various Mercy Church staff members attempted to recruit her assistance in participating and even leading events outside her purview. Wampler and I had to remind the staff that those requests are outside of the agreement.

Imbedding the Launch Global team into the Mercy Church staff has been smooth and presented little difficulty. The staff team has a good understanding of the dynamic of the partnership. Launch Global representatives like Chris Merrell, Andy Kampman, and Sarah Wampler have been integral to the success of this transition. It is evident that Launch Global loves the bride of Christ and truly desires to serve the church.

Missionary Preparation

Sending missionaries to difficult places requires significant time, focused investment, and proper training. Without appropriate investment and training, missionaries

⁶ Mercy Church, “Mercy Go Group Handbook 2022-2023,” accessed February 3, 2023, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1n1osYH5Vc-xNtJe-JNuFl3HfmDmv4zrWDmLuXutP8bs/edit>.

are at risk of coming home prematurely for preventable reasons. Cross-cultural contexts present emotional, mental, practical, relational, linguistic, and spiritual challenges, which can lead to missionaries coming home prematurely or living cross-culturally in a way that is harmful to themselves and those around them. Mercy Church wants to do everything possible to prepare its missionary candidates to confront these many challenges effectively. The Launch Global missionary development program consists of three stages: discover, develop, and deploy. Each stage strategically and methodically moves a person from having no knowledge or interest in missions to being sent as a missionary in one to three years.⁷

Stage 1: Discover

The first stage of the program is called “Discover.” In the discovery stage, the goal is to help the broad membership of Mercy Church see God’s heart for the unreached and help them understand what role they can play in reaching them. The mobilization team focuses on three things in stage 1: (1) one-on-one “discover conversations” with individuals to help them explore and discover God’s heart for the unreached; (2) ask those contacts to attend the Mission of God class;⁸ (3) based upon conversations before and after the mission of God class, those who possibly sense a call to the nations join a ten-week Disciple-Making Team (DMT). The main objectives of this stage are to increase Mercy Church’s heart for unreached peoples, create opportunities for individuals to engage in the Great Commission immediately alongside others, and find people who may be interested in being sent as a missionaries.

Discover conversations serve two purposes, one for the mobilizer and one for the member. The first purpose is to help the individual discover that God desires all

⁷ The timeline is dependent upon the overall readiness of the missionary and how quickly the missionary can be connected to a team.

⁸ The Mission of God class only happens once a year. If the class is too far out, a mobilizer may invite them into a different step to continue to cultivate a heart for missions. Examples could be prayer nights, evangelism trainings, and even a disciple-making team.

people to know and worship Him. In these meetings, a mobilizer will try to use a tool referred to as “God’s Heart for the Nations.”⁹ This tool gives a quick picture of what God’s Word says about God’s heart for the nations, an overview of the task that still remains, and how all believers can see the gospel advance among the unreached. This tool, often simply drawn on a napkin or piece of paper, is a quick way to explain to a church member the role of missions and convey an understanding of the unreached and the Great Commission. The second purpose of discover meetings is for the mobilizers to find people in the church expressing a call or desire to serve as missionaries. This discovery often goes hand in hand with their discovering God’s role for the church in making disciples and planting healthy churches among all people groups.¹⁰ These conversations give mobilizers an understanding of how to follow up with the member and further cultivate their heart for the nations. Discover meetings serve as a filtering process for mobilizers to identify members who are ready to move to the next step in the mission preparation and sending process. Those next steps may include attending the Mission of God class, participating with a Disciple Making Team or just additional one-on-one meetings with a mobilizer. The goal is to move the member step-by-step in discovering God’s plan for their life in a context where the member is personally known by the mobilizer(s).

In the Mission of God class, participants are provided with a survey outlining introductory aspects of missions.¹¹ This six-week class guides members with a general interest in missions to have a better understanding of what exactly is meant by the term, “missions.” A different person teaches each week, and teachers change from year-to-year

⁹ Sarah Wampler, “God’s Heart for the Nations,” accessed February 3, 2023, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dI6pyuzeMfCrzN4i9CGJ9x30zcZbcuZZ/view>.

¹⁰ Launch Global submits to Mercy Church’s definition of a local church as seen in chap. 1.

¹¹ This class is developed by the mobilization team in partnership with Mercy Church leadership. Not every Launch Global partnership has a Mission of God class. Each church must decide on the pedagogy that would be most effective in their context.

and course-to-course. The class is a mixture of lectures and activities emphasizing knowledge transfer. While this class offers opportunities to share the gospel, it is not the primary purpose. The purpose is exposure to and increased knowledge regarding global missions.

The Mission of God class begins with a survey of the entire canon of Scripture and the theme of God's glory among the nations. The following week focuses on the church's role in God's mission. The third week looks at the state of the world and the task remaining by answering the question, "what still needs to be done?" Week four addresses culture and different expressions of the local church. Week five looks at the history of missions and how the church has sent missionaries in the past. The final week looks at current models of sending and the costs of being a missionary. At this time, Mercy has offered this class twice (Fall of 2021 and Fall of 2022) and has had sixty total participants between both classes.

After participants take the Mission of God class, they are invited to join a Disciple-Making Team. These ten-week groups help individuals develop habits necessary for making new disciples cross-culturally. The groups run in the fall, spring, and summer. A group meets in someone's home and models an example of an easily reproducible model of church for the participants. The time together is spent in prayer, worshipping, and sharing what they have seen God do in the previous week. This team sets rhythms of spiritual disciplines together and practices them throughout the week. Participants grow in evangelism, prayer, spending time daily in the Word, and Scripture memory. By participating in these rhythms together, participants gain the accountability, motivation and healthy habit of carrying these tasks weekly. Outside this weekly meeting, a person commits to spending three hours a week with Jesus, two hours with the lost, and one hour praying as a team for the unreached. They also read through *Spiritual Multiplication in the*

Real World by Dr. Bob McNabb and an accompanying workbook.¹² This book provides tools and research to help them learn the necessity of disciple-making as a team and the simplicity of the process of Christ’s command to make disciples.

The Disciple-Making Team is fertile ground for mobilizers to find people interested in becoming missionaries long-term. As the groups meet, mobilizers evaluate what the Lord is doing in the group members. They can witness the faithfulness of participants, how they are using their gifts to engage in the mission, observe their level of dedication to completing their assignments, and learn a lot about the members as they pray together and observe how they share their faith throughout the process. The mobilizers lead these groups at first and as groups multiply, the groups are led by laypeople who have finished the ten-week disciple-making team and are reproducing what they have learned. The practical and reproducible focus of these groups on the evangelism of unreached peoples makes a Disciple-Making team a training ground and recruiting pool for the identification of future missionaries.

Mercy Church has led nine Disciple-Making Teams since 2021, with sixty-one participants. Twenty participants within these Disciple-Making Teams decided to help lead subsequent groups the next time they were offered. For many churches, these Disciple-Making Teams are largely led by Launch Global Mobilizers. An encouraging sign that these groups have been successful at Mercy Church has been that a former member of each group agreed to lead a group the next time it was offered.

Stage 2: Develop

In stage 2, the “develop” stage, participants enter a launch community. Mercy Church’s Handbook explains, “Launch Communities exist to equip disciple-makers who intend to move overseas within the next one to three years. They provide a clear and proven pathway for Mercy Members to prepare for a life of abiding in Christ, disciple-

¹² Bob McNabb, *Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World: Why Some Disciple-Makers Reproduce When Others Fail* (Austin, TX: Multiplication, 2013).

making and church planting among the unreached.”¹³ For nine months, participants move into a predominantly international neighborhood (or multi-ethnic neighborhood) to live near and practice ministry with a member of the Launch Global team. Launch communities help trainees learn to operate on a team as they would on the mission field. Living in an international neighborhood helps trainees become more aware of what it could feel like to live overseas and develop relationships with men and women from a different cultural background. As these launch communities live and work together to make disciples in these neighborhoods, the Launch Global team walks them through a nine-month missionary preparation curriculum. The curriculum focuses on character development (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), abiding in Christ (John 15; Gal 5:16-24; 1 John 2:6), teamwork (John 13:24-35; Rom 12:3-21), how to sense God’s leadership (Acts 13:1-3; Eph 4:11; Rom 12:3-8; 15:20; Phil 2:13), and ministry skills (Titus 1:9; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2:2; Acts 4:23-31).¹⁴ Overall, the curriculum addresses both practical issues and barriers for going and staying on the field, establishes a deeper biblical foundation for missional strategy, and helps trainees deepen their walks with Jesus in community for their flourishing now and in the future. The training also includes an introduction to support raising, conflict resolution, confession of sin, team dynamics, mission strategy, and culture shock. All these topics are vital for missionary preparation and assist in reinforcing the desire for missionaries to stay on the field and not leave prematurely.

Once all the Launch Community participants have moved into the neighborhood together, they begin to work through the training process. The nine-month period is divided into two semesters: August through December and January through May, with a six-week break in the middle. While the basic structure of the fall and spring are almost identical, the fall is meant to be a time in which candidates receive intentional modeling, coaching,

¹³ Mercy Church, “Mercy Go Group Handbook 2022-2023.”

¹⁴ Character, abiding, teamwork, sensing God’s leadership, and ministry skills all fall under what Launch Global calls their “portrait of a goer.” Sarah Wampler, “Portrait of a Goer,” accessed November 8, 2022, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OMa1KzC54Sbht4VjyYSaa1D4EX2cDcQ3dPRtExJr60/edit>.

and discipleship, whereas the spring pushes candidates to turn around and experience what it is like to lead and multiply their lives while still in the context of the Launch Community.

During the fall and spring semesters, the Launch Community meets once a week, a “Half-Time Meeting.” These meetings typically last three to four hours on the same night each week. Their time together starts with a meal and then transitions to worship and prayer, debriefing and sharing stories of the past week, making plans for the upcoming week, discussing their daily Scripture reading, and ending with a discussion of the curriculum reading and trainings. Each Half-Time is meant to accomplish several important things: (1) increase fellowship and enjoyment of Jesus; (2) train and teach the curriculum effectively; and (3) refocus on the mission of reaching the lost around them by training other believers how make disciples.¹⁵

The content of the fall starts with two weeks of training on how to abide in Christ. Of all the topics covered, Launch Global states that “abiding in Christ is the most important and permeates throughout the rest of the curriculum.”¹⁶ After the first two weeks, participants go through a five-week overview of church planting movements.¹⁷ During these five weeks the team is given a framework for the future strategy of the teams they may join on the mission field, as well as help formulating a strategy to reach their current cross-cultural neighborhood. Operating under the principles taught in these five weeks takes time to learn and model. The following three weeks quickly cover support raising,

¹⁵ Principles for running halftimes assist in maintaining effective meetings. The principles include prayer for individuals and the group; trusting leadership; effective planning; sticking to the plan and watching the time of the meeting; maintaining the 80/20 of participants having discussion more than leaders teaching, participants preparation, full engagement, creatively structuring the halftime, hospitable learning environment, and having fun together. Mercy Church, “Mercy Go Group Handbook 2022-2023.”

¹⁶ Mercy Church, “Mercy Go Group Handbook 2022-2023.”

¹⁷ This overview covers extraordinary prayer, abundant evangelism, intentional planting of reproducing churches, the authority of God’s Word, local leadership, lay leadership, house or cell churches, churches planting churches, rapid reproduction, and healthy churches.

SHAPE,¹⁸ and conflict resolution. The Launch community finishes with four weeks on their identities in Christ.

Covering identity in Christ is important because missionaries need to be able to separate the work they do, their giftings, ministry, or anything else external from their central identity as a follower of Christ. Missionaries often face opposition, and when they do their identities must be securely placed in Christ. The end of the fall period is also when conversations start with these candidates about their readiness for the field. These conversations can be challenging for candidates as it forces them to immediately implement what they have learned about where their identity lies.

The spring semester starts after the group has a five-week break. During the break, participants are given books to read that pertain to areas of growth or that would be helpful in their development. Books are typically related to identity in Christ, sexual integrity, and emotional and relational health. When the group restarts, they begin by focusing the first two weeks on abiding in Christ to reemphasize that apart from Christ they can do nothing (John 15:5). The following week focuses on contextualization and language. It is not an expectation that they master contextualization or language, but rather to provide a basic understanding that can be built upon in the future. At this point, the group returns to another four weeks of church planting movements. In these weeks they focus on understanding the “church planting cycle.”¹⁹ Participants are taught the process of a church plant from the beginning of forming a team, all the way to electing elders in a new church. This teaching includes instruction on gathering a church, discipling churches, selecting and developing leaders, electing elders, and empowering multiplication throughout the cycle. By the end of these weeks, participants should be able to explain the characteristics of church planting movements as well as be able to defend it biblically.

¹⁸ This test was taken from The Shapes Test, “What’s Your Shape,” accessed November 8, 2022, <https://theshapestest.com/>.

¹⁹ Launch Global, *Launch Communities Workbook* (Richardson, TX: Launch Global, 2021), 245.

The launch community ends its spring semester by covering conflict resolution a second time, two weeks on spiritual warfare, and two weeks on suffering in the Christian life. It is important for missionaries to be able to recognize spiritual warfare when it comes and how to respond biblically. The group ends on a sobering note to remind them that a life of following Jesus promises deep joy, but also the possibility of sorrow and rejection (Luke 14:14, 27-30; Matt 8:20; 13:44).

By the end of the fall and spring semesters, launch community participants have spent nine months in rich community, training, and preparation. They have experienced highs and lows of life but in the middle of a group of people who are all focused on the shared goal of multiplying disciple-makers in their neighborhood. Living like this is often what being part of a healthy team looks like overseas. They will be with a small group of people going through all of the highs and lows of life with the same focus of reaching people with the gospel. The secret of launch communities is not necessarily what the participants learn from the mobilizers or from the quality trainings they are privileged to experience. Launch community teaches participants how to build the kind of community that will multiply disciple-makers. One of the most important aspects that one needs to learn about being a multiplying disciple-maker is that one needs to learn how to build the kind of communities that results in multiplication. Multiplication of disciple-makers and churches is the goal of church planting movements, which is the aim of Launch Global and Mercy Church.²⁰

Mercy Church started the first Launch Community in August 2022 and will finish in May of 2023. Sarah Wampler, Apollos Digges, and Chet McDilliams are the Launch Global Mobilizers who lead this group.²¹ Wampler and McDilliams have

²⁰ While church planting movements are the aim, a missionary is not deemed a failure if a church planting movement does not occur. Church planting movements are a movement fueled by God and by persisting in church planting principles.

²¹ Mercy Church and Launch Global hope to expand the mobilization team from three to six by 2024.

participated in Launch Communities in previous years at their previous church in Austin, Texas (Wampler has led five Launch Communities; McDilliams was a participant in a Launch Community in 2021-2022). This is Digges' first time leading a Launch Community. There are six missionary candidates participating in this group: Marvin and Elise Barnham, James Bart, Charlize Stietz, Michael Cable, Kaylynn Sunday. These candidates were members from Mercy Church with the exception of Michael Cable. He moved from out of state to take part in the Launch Community. The ideal size of a Launch Community is three candidates to one mobilizer. This ratio ensures that the mobilizer does not get overwhelmed with too many candidates, which could compromise the candidates' development. Mercy Church is praying for nine participants to start in August 2023.

Stage 3: Deploy

The final stage of the program is called the "deploy" stage, which helps connect missionary candidates to a strategic sending agency, team, and location, in partnership with the Mercy Church's mission pastor. The deployment process can take one to three years. Launch Global empowers the local church to be the ones who connect Launch Community participants with specific missionary partners overseas. Launch Global focuses on missionary identification and preparation, allowing the local church to focus on establishing strategic long-term partnerships. When Launch Community members reach the halfway point of the nine-month training, mobilizers and the missions pastor of Mercy Church begin to have conversations with participants about potential teams they could join.

Prior to discussions with each launch community participant, the mobilizers and missions pastor go through a "Go Plan," which put together during the nine months of training the participant. The plan lays out the mobilizers' recommendation regarding the participants' timeline and overseas team as well as potential barriers to going. Across Launch Global, all mobilizers set aside a day to intentionally discuss each participant's Go Plan. This day is called Draft Day. In preparation for Draft Day, the mobilizers and

missions pastor set aside multiple days to fast and pray for the Lord's guidance. November 14-15 of 2022 was Mercy Church's first Draft Day. After two days of fasting and prayer, the mobilization team and I got together to discuss each candidate and their readiness for the mission field. We were able to go through each individual's Go Plan and discuss strengths, growth areas, and potential timelines for each individual.

An important dynamic of the deploy stage is that Launch Global desires for local churches to lead the way in vetting any missionary team with whom they will partner.²² Launch Global has many relationships around the world, and can provide recommendations, but chooses to submit to the sending strategy of the local church. Launch Global defers to the local church's strategy for sending to ensure that there are fewer opportunities for miscommunication and confusion with who decides where a candidate is placed overseas. The deploy stage also allows mobilizers and the local church opportunities to dialogue with the missionary candidates about specific overseas opportunities. As the process continues, the missionary candidate can have conversations with the team they are considering joining, and the missionary team or mission organization has an opportunity to vet the candidate. These conversations can help prevent the missionary candidate from joining a team that does not fully align with the sending strategy of the local church and ensures a higher chance of candidates joining a team that will work well. Once a team has been selected and the "deploy" phase ends, the mobilization team passes the ownership and care of the candidate to the Missions Pastor for follow up and ongoing care. The mobilization team's role at this point is to merely cheer them on.

As these candidates are passed along, it becomes the Missions Pastor's responsibility to connect them with healthy teams among unreached people groups. Since

²² Partners are vetted by looking into their team culture and health, along with questions on whether they are seeking to see church planting movements among unreached people groups.

2015, Mercy Church's primary partnership has been in South Asia.²³ We have sent numerous teams to assist in training church planters and to support our missionary partners. These teams are with the IMB. Mercy Church has the goal to establish three partnerships with healthy teams working among unreached people groups. We are working on solidifying a partnership in the Middle East and an additional team in Southeast Asia. While we are grateful for our partnership with the IMB, we hope that at least one of these partners is with a different sending organization. We are doing this in case a candidate is unable to qualify to be sent through the IMB. We have had conversations with Pioneers, Frontiers, and Launch Global International as other potential sending agencies.

A Wholistic Approach with Launch Global and Mercy Church

The partnership with Launch Global and Mercy Church to discover, develop, and deploy missionaries to the unreached is a God honoring plan. Many of the preventable reasons that missionaries come home early are due to a lack of robust preparation. Mercy Church believes that incorporating Launch Global's missionary preparation program ensures that we are doing everything possible to send prepared missionaries to the mission field. However, preparation is only a component of what is needed to ensure we are doing all we can to help our missionaries. There also needs to be a missionary care plan that will provide consistent care and long-term connection with every missionary sent out from Mercy Church.

Mercy Church also needs to design a pastoral care plan to minister to the missionaries sent out from the church. The following chapter assesses the needs of missionary care by reviewing the survey data collected from missionaries who have already been sent out from Mercy Church. Based on the survey, chapter 4 will show why missionary care is needed for Mercy Church's missionaries. In addition, I will provide recommendations for Launch Global regarding missionary care, make observations of

²³ All three of these missionary teams are with the IMB.

how other churches offer missionary care, and recommend how to partner with sending organizations without redundancies.

CHAPTER 4

THE NEED FOR MISSIONARY CARE IN THE MISSIONARY SENDING PROCESS

Mercy Church has greatly benefitted from its partnership with Launch Global. The Launch Global plan for missionary preparation has been a good step in helping the church train competent missionaries. However, this step of preparation leaves the issue of on-going care unaddressed. This chapter will show that preparation is an important step but not the only component of what is needed to ensure that all is provided to help missionaries. A missionary care plan also needs to be in place at Mercy Church for every missionary sent from the congregation.

This chapter will also reveal the survey tool used with missionaries to measure the effectiveness of missionary preparation and missionary care, the results of the survey, and recommendations in light of survey results. Based on the results of the survey, this chapter will show why care is needed for Mercy Church missionaries. In addition to reviewing the survey, recommendations will be provided for Launch Global regarding missionary care, observations on how other churches offer missionary care, and how to partner with sending organizations without redundancies, and will begin to articulate the strategic plan for missionary care through Mercy Church.

Missionary Preparation and Care Surveys

To assess how well Mercy Church has done with missionary preparation and care, I chose to use surveys to assess what Mercy Church has done in these areas. Two surveys were conducted using both a Likert scale survey and a survey with open-ended

questions. The first survey evaluated each missionary's preparation before deployment.¹ The results of the first survey determined the effectiveness of each missionary's preparation and whether they were adequately trained. The survey communicated strengths and weaknesses of their preparation. The second survey evaluated how well Mercy Church has managed missionary care after their deployment.² This survey proved that long-term care is vital for the over-all wellbeing of Mercy Church's missionaries. This survey communicated both strengths and weaknesses of Mercy Church's missionary care.

The survey participants were missionaries who have been sent out from Mercy Church in the last five years. The surveys were sent to nine missionaries on January 6, 2023, and eight of them were returned by January 18, 2023. None of the missionaries who were surveyed have taken part in Launch Global's missionary preparation program through Mercy Church since they were all sent prior to its implementation. The participants were also surveyed on their experience of missionary care without a formal process being in place.

Missionary Preparation Survey

The survey for missionary preparation included five Likert scale questions and five open-ended questions. The questions were vetted by the Launch Global mobilization team on November 17, 2022. The Likert scale questions were based upon Launch Global's program focuses: character development, abiding in Christ, team work, ability to sense God's leadership to be a missionary, and overall development in ministry skills. Even though none of the missionaries had participated in Launch Global's missionary development program, it was prudent to survey the missionaries based upon Launch Global's training goals. This would help the teams measure the effectiveness of Launch

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 2.

Global’s program in the future. Mercy Church would be able to measure the preparedness of the missionaries who participated in Launch Global’s program against those who predated the program. They were asked to respond with one answer based on the following: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), disagree somewhat (3), agree somewhat (4), agree (5), and strongly agree (6). Table 1 shows the Likert scale questions that were used in the survey:

Table 1. Missionary preparation survey results

Survey Question	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
1. I am satisfied with the character development I received from Mercy Church to help me love God and love others.	5.375	5	0.518
2. I am satisfied with the development from Mercy Church to abide in Christ.	5.375	5	0.518
3. I am satisfied with my preparation from Mercy Church to work well on a team.	4.625	4.5	0.744
4. I am satisfied with my preparation from Mercy Church to sense God’s leadership to be a missionary.	4.625	4.5	0.744
5. I am satisfied with my preparation from Mercy Church to be developed in ministry skills.	4.125	4	1.246

The results of this survey showed that the missionaries responded favorably in their overall satisfaction with their missionary preparation. For statements 1 and 2, 37.5 percent strongly agreed and 62.5 percent agreed, which were the questions of highest satisfaction. Statements 1 and 2 showed the highest level of satisfaction with an average score of 5.375. The lowest score recorded was in statement 5, with the average being at 4.125. This question asked if the missionaries were satisfied with their development in ministry skills. Since ministry skills were never formally trained in the missionaries prior to sending them, it makes sense that some were not as prepared to lead in their ministries. Even though this is the lowest average score, the missionaries on average agree that they were satisfied with missionary preparation they received from Mercy Church. The standard deviation of statement 5 was 1.246, which indicates a broad spectrum of preparedness in

ministry skills amongst the missionaries, with two missionaries specifically commenting in both the Likert scale and open-ended questions that they felt they lacked in this area of training upon arriving on the field. Overall, these scores were a surprise to Mercy Church leadership. The leadership anticipated that more missionaries would have indicated they did not receive proper preparation since none of them went through the Launch Global preparation program.

The open-ended questions provided answers for why some of missionaries were less prepared in ministry skills. Two of the open-ended questions provided opportunities for missionaries to show the ministry skills they lacked. The first questions were: (1) What could Mercy Church have done better to prepare you to face the challenges you have experienced on the field? And (2) What can Mercy Church do to better prepare missionaries in the future? Three missionaries indicated that they needed more support raising training. Another three indicated that they wanted more training in evangelism and cross-cultural engagement. Support raising training, evangelism, and cross-cultural training are area's where the Launch Global preparation training would have benefitted these missionaries. The leadership is pleased that most missionaries indicated that they were prepared for the missionary work despite not going through the Launch Global program. Even though Mercy Church is pleased the missionaries felt prepared, the leadership still believes missionary preparation needs to be prioritized, and that the church can send missionaries who are better equipped in ministry skills, cross-cultural engagement, and support raising.

Missionary Care Survey

The second survey administered to missionaries was related to missionary care. The leadership desired to know how well the missionaries have been cared for by Mercy Church since they arrived overseas. The survey for missionary care included five Likert scale questions and five open-ended questions. The Likert scale questions were based on categories of where Mercy Church desires to care for its missionaries: communication,

moral support, prayer support, logistical support, and financial support. It is important to note that Mercy Church does not currently have a formal Missionary Care program, therefore none of the current missionaries are in a missionary care process. The future process will be articulated later in this paper. See table 2 for survey results.

Table 2. Missionary care survey results

Survey Statement	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
6. I am satisfied with Mercy Church’s care for me after arriving overseas.	4.125	4	1.126
7. I am satisfied with Mercy Church’s frequency of communication with me while overseas.	3.500	3	1.414
8. I am satisfied with Mercy Church’s moral support of me while overseas.	4.250	5	1.389
9. I am satisfied with Mercy Church’s prayer support of me while overseas.	4.625	5	0.916
10. I am satisfied with Mercy Church’s logistical and financial support of me while overseas.	4.500	5	1.604

The highest average overall score was prayer support at 4.625. Fifty percent of the missionaries agree that they are satisfied with the prayer support they have received. The other scores showed that 12.5 percent strongly agree, 25 percent agree somewhat, 12.5 percent disagree somewhat. The lowest score was with Mercy Church’s frequency of communication with the missionaries. The score for overall communication averaged at 3.5. Unlike prayer support, five out of the eight missionaries are not satisfied with Mercy Church’s frequency of communication. Of respondents, 37 percent disagree somewhat that they are satisfied with frequency of communication, 25 percent disagree, 12.5 percent agree somewhat, 12.5 percent agree, and 12.5 percent strongly agree.

Unlike missionary preparation, every survey question pertaining to missionary care had a standard deviation higher than .9, indicating that there were a wide range of answers. A possible reason for the standard deviation being so high is that one survey participant answered strongly agree on every missionary care question. The wide range of

answers indicate that there are major inconsistencies and unpredictability in what Mercy Church's missionaries are experiencing in missionary care.

The results of the open-ended questions reveal a similar theme. Half of the missionaries indicated that they were discouraged that pastors from Mercy Church have not stayed in contact with them on a consistent basis. One of the open-ended questions asked, what are some specific areas we can improve on in missionary care? The responses indicated that the most important thing to five of the eight missionaries was that they desired more consistent communication with Mercy Church pastors, elders, and staff. They desired to stay connected with the church that sent them.³

The overall results of the survey on missionary care indicates that missionary care is greatly needed for missionaries. If they are to remain faithful to their work as missionaries, it is vital for Mercy Church to care well for them. Mercy Church's missionaries are not alone in their desire for better missionary care. They have needs, and sending churches need to help provide quality missionary care.

The Need for Missionary Care

As mentioned in chapter 3, missionaries can face difficult challenges while serving overseas. They can face culture shock, difficulty learning the language and culture, team conflict, difficulty with the adjustment of their children, lack of resources, as well as isolation and loneliness, to name a few. Preparing missionaries to face these realities certainly aids in their transition, but these difficult realities can wear on missionaries, especially over long periods of time.

As Mercy Church seeks to send missionaries to unreached people groups, the leadership understands that these places are unreached with the gospel for a reason. In many cases, the countries where they are sent can be difficult places to work, live, and do

³ All of these missionaries are considered members of Mercy Church. However, it is worth considering whether each missionary should remain in Mercy Church's care if they have established membership in a church overseas.

ministry. Nathan Creitz, in his article “Challenges to Reaching Unreached People Groups,” lists four major categories for why unreached people groups are hard to reach: physical challenges, religious challenges, safety challenges, and resource challenges.⁴ Physical challenges include travel time, climate adjustment, isolation, and the physical exertion it sometimes takes to get to there.⁵ Religious challenges include animosity toward Christianity, repression of the gospel, and persecution.⁶ Safety challenges include civil war within the countries, hostility toward US citizens, and criminal attacks against missionaries.⁷ Resource challenges include the limited heart language resources and the fact that two-thirds of the world populations are oral communicators and do not communicate in any other way.⁸ William Carey mentions five challenges to the conversion of the heathen: their distance, their way of living, the danger of being killed by them, difficulty of procuring resources, and learning their languages.⁹ The IMB’s 2005 “To The Edge” field manual lists eighteen reasons why unreached people groups are still unreached: they are overlooked, governmental gatekeepers have protected them from Christians, the poor and illiterate have been overlooked for more educated peoples, the use of market or trade languages have left their heart language, the lack of Scripture in their heart language, incompatible communication styles, transportation difficulties, worldview differences,

⁴ Nathan Creitz, “Challenges to Reaching Unreached People Groups (Over There), March 1, 2012, <https://nathancreitz.net/unreached-people-groups-challenges/>.

⁵ Creitz, “Challenges to Reaching.”

⁶ Creitz, “Challenges to Reaching.”

⁷ Creitz, “Challenges to Reaching.”

⁸ Creitz, “Challenges to Reaching.”

⁹ William Carey, “An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter, Steven C. Hawthorne, and Darrell R. Dorr, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2009), 316-17.

lack of resources and finances, historical conflicts with Christians, and many more.¹⁰ Samuel Zwemer adds to the list of challenges by stating that loneliness is one of the greatest challenges facing pioneer missionaries.¹¹ Zwemer continues by saying, “The unoccupied fields of the world await those who are willing to be lonely for the sake of Christ.”¹² All of these challenges make unreached people groups difficult to reach with the gospel. These are also significant hurdles that make circumstances difficult for missionaries trying to live in these countries for long periods of time. The challenges that make people groups difficult to reach with the gospel are the same reasons it is difficult to remain long-term.

In addition to the worldly challenges listed, there is also a spiritual force working against missionaries. In Revelation 12:7, one sees a glimpse into the spiritual battle in the world today and how God will judge Satan: “So, the great dragon was thrown out – the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world. He was thrown to earth, and his angels with him.” Satan is the deceiver of the whole world. He has deceived the nations away from the person and work of Jesus Christ. Satan has been a deceiver from the beginning of creation. In Genesis 3, the serpent deceived Eve and her husband, Adam, to distrust God. Satan attempted to deceive Jesus in the wilderness after Jesus’s baptism in Luke 4. The apostle Paul warned the church of this reality in 2 Corinthians 4:4: “In their case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” John Piper notes, “This blinding is the deadliest

¹⁰ Lewis Myers, James Slack, and Mark Snowden, *To the Edge: A Strategy Development Process Manual for an Ethnolinguistic People Group Focus Globally*, sequential ed. (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, 2005-2009), 16.

¹¹ Samuel Zwemer, “The Glory of the Impossible,” in Winter, Hawthorne, and Dorr, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 330.

¹² Zwemer, “The Glory of the Impossible,” 330.

weapon in Satan’s arsenal.”¹³ Satan has no compassion and hates missionaries. Satan’s work is in full force among unreached people groups, blinding them to the salvation they can only find in Jesus Christ. These spiritual realities add additional weight to the already difficult challenges faced every day by missionaries. Missionaries need people who support them in prayer. They need a team of people who see it as their responsibility to pray against the enemy’s schemes.

The physical, religious, safety, resource, and spiritual challenges are abundant. These challenges should not be faced alone. Unfortunately, loneliness is a sentiment many missionaries can feel. Zach Bradley, in his article on missionary comments on this reality: “The loneliness and disappointment due to a lack of tangible support can lead not only to disconnection, but downright disfunction.”¹⁴ Within Reach Global, a missions organization that focuses on reaching unreached people groups, wrote a blog which indicates that loneliness is not a phenomenon exclusive to people on the mission field. They believe it is one of the reasons why there are such disheartening statistics regarding missionary attrition.¹⁵ Missionary preparation along with missionary care needs to be an aligned effort. There cannot be one without the other. Churches should not promise preparation and then not provide long-term care to the mission for which they prepared them. Only promising preparation without long-term care is negligent and will lead to missionaries coming home prematurely. Mercy Church must commit to doing both well. A more holistic sending approach is necessary for Mercy Church.

¹³ John Piper, *Providence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 274.

¹⁴ Zach Bradley, “A Practical Way to Structure Your Church’s Missionary Care,” IMB, May 31, 2017, <https://www.imb.org/2017/05/31/practical-way-structure-church-missionary-care/>.

¹⁵ Within Reach Global, “4 Truths to Help Overcome Loneliness on the Mission Field,” May 12, 2016, <https://withinreachglobal.org/4-truths-to-help-overcome-loneliness-on-the-mission-field/>.

Recommendations for Launch Global Partnerships

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Launch Global has clear guidelines that determine how they enter partnerships with local churches, including making sure the church has a firm desire to send to unreached people groups, fomenting church planting movements, and having large mobilizable populations within their membership. Currently within launch global, there are no requirements for their church partners regarding plans for missionary care after they have been sent into the mission field. Since Launch Global sees themselves as an organization focusing on missionary preparation, however, it would behoove them to put guidelines in place to guide churches in providing long-term care for all missionaries sent from their partner churches. A great deal of investment is expended by both the Launch Global team and the local churches to prepare missionaries. Adding a requirement to their already strong program requiring a church to provide a committed care structure for all missionaries would ensure that the kingdom work that has been done by Launch Global and local churches will be supported and protected long-term.

Unfortunately, many churches like Mercy Church do not have a missionary care plan in place. It would be helpful for Launch Global to offer churches a rubric regarding how to structure and start a missionary care program in partner churches. Including this rubric would be another way for Launch Global to ensure that a high percentage of missionaries stay on the field long-term.

As partner churches are each trained in what to expect from a partnership with Launch Global, they should also add the missionary care component to this training. Simply outlining how to start and run a missionary care program with references of other churches who are doing it well would be a helpful addition to the training offered to partner local churches. When partner churches are trained in discover, develop, and deploy, Launch Global could add missionary care expectations as an important fourth component. Of long-term missionaries trained by Launch Global and their twenty partner churches, 73

percent have remained on the field past two years.¹⁶ While this percentage is admirable compared to other mission organizations, the percentage could be even higher. Twenty-seven percent of those who have left the field should be a number that Launch Global and partner churches fight to decrease or prevent as much as possible. Adding a missionary care requirement for partner churches would greatly aid in this effort as can be seen in other successful sending organizations.

Best Practices in Missionary Care

As churches wade through the potential options to best care for their missionaries, it is important for expectations to be clear in defining what missionary care should entail. However, before defining missionary care, next are some best practices regarding the matter.

Kelly O'Donnell, in *Doing Member Care Well*, writes that there are best practices churches and mission organizations should understand and follow. The model shown in her book is illustrated in the shape of a sphere. Within the sphere are the five best practice principles:

1. Master Care (their personal relationship with the Lord)
2. Self and Mutual Care (care for their own well-being and care from local friendships)
3. Sender Care (care from sending groups like churches and agencies)
4. Specialist Care (care from specialist like counselors, pastors, therapists, medical professionals, and crisis care)
5. Network Care (connection with and care from their network of other missionaries and resources).¹⁷

This outline of best practices provides holistic care for missionaries. However, it is not possible for a local church to provide all of these care practices. Sending churches need to

¹⁶ This is compared to 53 percent of those trained in other mission organizations, as mentioned in chap. 1.

¹⁷ Kelly O'Donnell, "Going Global; A Member Care Model for Best Practice," in *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from around the World*, ed. Kelly O'Donnell (Littleton, CO: William Carey, 2002), 15-20.

look at the resources available within their local body and decide which of these best practices they can provide without over-promising. Once the church is confident in the care they can provide, then they can lay out a missionary care plan with their missionaries. Missionaries having a clear understanding of what their sending church is promising to do in missionary care will help them as they go into the field.

As Mercy Church leadership has assessed our local church body, we believe that we are uniquely positioned to provide pastoral care to our missionaries. There are a lot of potential elements of missionary care that Mercy Church could provide, but we want the scope of care to be targeted and deliver on what we promise. Narrowing the focus to pastoral care for missionaries will allow us to provide quality care, but also involve other experts, should it be necessary to do so. The combination of the staff's understanding and experience with missions and the passion and commitment of church's members to provide care for missionaries make it possible to provide pastoral care to missionaries.¹⁸ In the following section, examples of missionary care from other churches will be considered.

An Example of Missionary Care from The Summit Church

The Summit Church is location in the Raleigh/Durham area of North Carolina. The Summit Church sends more missionaries through the IMB than any other church in the Southern Baptist Convention.¹⁹ Their mission statement is, "Following the Holy Spirit, we exist to create a movement of disciple/making disciples in RDU and around the world."²⁰ In light of this mission, their vision is to see 1,000 church planted in a

¹⁸ See chap. 5 of this project for a fuller explanation of how Mercy Church will provide pastoral care.

¹⁹ Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "How One Baptist Church Has Seven-Times More Missionaries than Anyone Else," The Gospel Coalition, April 10, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/sending-from-the-summit-how-one-baptist-church-has-seven-times-more-missionaries-than-anyone-else/>.

²⁰ The Summit Church, "Missions and Values," accessed December 30, 2022, <https://summitchurch.com/about/mission>.

generation.²¹ To see this vision realized, The Summit Church understands that missionary care is vital to the health of missionaries long-term. The Summit Church has incorporated missionary care into their five phases of missionary sending, which includes assessment, training, sending, supporting (missionary care), and receiving.²²

The Summit Church's missions team states,

This is the phase where the missionary leaves your geographical proximity; meaning (a) you no longer have ease-of-contact, (b) culture shock moves from a concept to an experience, (c) there is a much larger possibility of having an expectation gap, and (d) there is a greater opportunity to neglect care because physical closeness does not prompt your memory.²³

Because of these challenges, The Summit Church instituted a missionary care component they refer to as their Advocacy Program to address these challenges specifically. The program is defined as follows:

The Advocacy Program is the collective effort between advocates, church staff, and small groups (or Sunday school classes) to provide member care for missionaries and church planters sent from the local church. The program is facilitated by the missions pastor who identifies and trains advocates. The advocate serves as an extra set of eyes and ears, helping the congregation to be aware of the missionary's health and needs.²⁴

The program relies on identified volunteer advocates who serve the church by connecting church members to missionaries in the field. Advocates serve as the primary contact between the missionary and the church, provide support for the missionaries, and report back to their small group or to the missions pastor as needs arise. Advocates must be a church member, have a love for missions, and a prayerful interest in the well-being of the missionary. Advocates must commit to have one voice-to-voice conversation per month, recruit at least two small groups to aid in providing support, communicate frequently

²¹ The Summit Church, "Missions and Values."

²² Brad Hambrick, "A Comprehensive Missionary Training, Sending, and Caring Plan for Your Church," September 25, 2018, <https://bradhambrick.com/missions/>.

²³ Hambrick, "A Comprehensive Missionary Training."

²⁴ The Summit Church, "Missionary Support: Job Description for Advocate," BradHambrick.com, accessed January 25, 2023, <https://bradhambrick.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Advocate-job-description.pdf>.

about needs, maintain contact with the missions pastor to ensure adequate support, complete a monthly report, assist with coordinating support for missionary stateside visits, and take responsibility for replacing themselves as an advocate should one have to give up the position for any reason.²⁵

Small groups within the church play a large role in providing care in the Advocacy Program. It is likely that a missionary who was sent from The Summit was heavily involved in a small group. As such, it makes sense to have the people who were part of their community in the states, to be the ones intricately involved in their care when they are sent out from the church for missions. According to Brad Hambrick, “The sent missionary is relying on that same small group to continue to provide a foundation of congregational love, care, and connectedness.”²⁶

The small group supports the missionary by receiving regular updates, praying for requests, responding to requests with encouragements, sending care packages, visiting the missionary in a short-term trips, and providing stateside returning missionary care.²⁷ In addition to providing excellent care for their missionary, the support of this missionary stokes the fire of missions in the hearts of the small group members, who could one day be called to serve alongside the missionary.

In the Advocacy Program, pastors continue to play a vital role in care of missionaries. While pastors have a lot to do in their current congregation, it is admirable to see that pastors have missionary care as part of their job description. The Summit Church comments, “Missionaries are greatly impacted with the knowledge that senior leadership is invested in their work. As such, several members of the pastoral staff

²⁵ The Summit Church, “Missionary Support: Job Description for Advocate.”

²⁶ The Summit Church, “Missionary Support: Job Description for Small Group Leader,” BradHambrick.com, accessed January 25, 2023, <https://bradhambrick.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Small-Group-Leader-Job-Description.pdf>.

²⁷ The Summit Church, “Missionary Support: Job Description for Small Group Leader.”

commits to maintain regular contact with each missionary.”²⁸ These commitments include (1) e-mailing the missionaries every other month; (2) setting up a text thread between the missionary and the pastor to share news and prayer requests easily; (3) participating in a quarterly call to provide on-going training and encouragement; (4) commissioning or praying over missionaries on stage when they come home to visit; (5) aiding in recruiting for short-term trips; and (5) assisting in support for the missionary on stateside visits.²⁹

Consistent contact with a pastor ensures that if any major problems arise, they can be addressed quickly and pastorally, potentially connecting the missionary with additional resources they might need that the Advocacy Team is unable to provide. Examples of this could be trauma therapy or psychiatrists. The Summit Church takes missionary care seriously. Their Advocacy Team sets up their missionaries to have the care they will need while overseas. The strength of their program is that three different sets of people are responsible for one missionary. With this design, it is unlikely for someone to fall through the cracks, which would be the worst outcome. The weakness of the program is that there is not a definition of what a healthy missionary looks like overseas. This could lead to a moving target of health and efficacy indicators that vary from missionary to missionary. An outline of what a healthy missionary looks like would help the Advocacy Team know exactly what to look for in a healthy missionary and how to help them should they see any struggles or issues. Advocacy support is illustrated through figure 1.³⁰

²⁸ The Summit Church, “Missionary Support: Job Description for Pastoral Support,” BradHambrick.com, accessed January 25, 2023, <https://bradhambrick.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Pastoral-Support-Job-Description.pdf>.

²⁹ The Summit Church, “Missionary Support: Job Description for Pastoral Support.”

³⁰ Figure 1 taken from The Summit Church, “Missionary Support: Job Description for Advocate.”

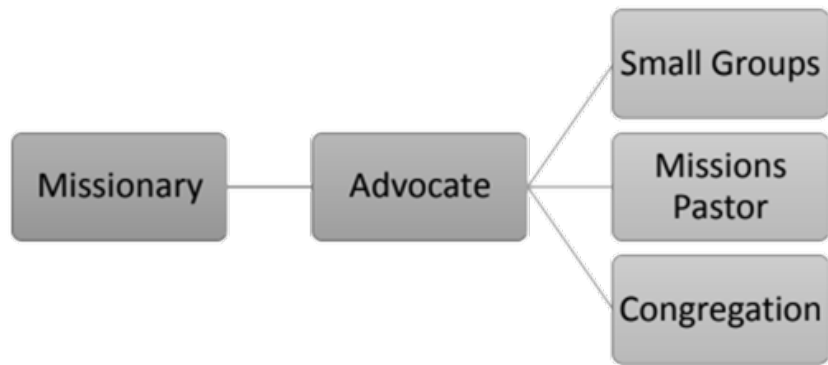


Figure 1. Advocacy support structure

An Example of Missionary Care from The Austin Stone Community Church

According to their website, The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, exists to love God, the church, the city, and the nations.³¹ As an outworking of their desire to love the nations, The Austin Stone Community missions team states, “As a family of church planters and disciple makers from The Austin Stone, our vision is to catalyze a church planting movement in 100 unreached people groups.”³² To see this vision come to fruition, the church realizes it will require healthy missionaries to remain in the field for many years. Similar to The Summit Church, The Austin Stone has what they call an Advocacy Team, and give the following description: “Advocacy Teams partner in the work of catalyzing a church planting movement in 100 unreached people groups by supporting goers sent by The Austin Stone to ensure they are thriving and staying on task.”³³ Advocacy teams are groups of 6-12 people that partner in the vision by ensuring that the

³¹ The Austin Stone, “About The Austin Stone,” accessed January 25, 2023, <https://www.austinstone.org/about#believe>.

³² Cheryl Barrett, “Goer Care Resources,” Google Drive, January 25, 2023, https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1okYMJKJPzS_OrBELcwWIOtG8Z63HZt0N.

³³ Barrett, “Goer Care Resources.”

goers sent by The Austin Stone are thriving and staying on task.³⁴ Thankfully, The Austin Stone has a defined explanation of what to look for with their missionaries (goers):

A goer is thriving when they are happy, healthy, and holy. A goer is on task when they are aware of God’s vision and calling for their life and when their decisions and actions, both large and small, are aligned with that calling. As a church body, we desire to walk with those we have sent out in a way that ensures the best of our ability that they are able to flourish in these two areas. There are many parts of the church body that are working together to this end, and Advocacy Teams are a vital component.³⁵

This explanation helps every member of the Advocacy Team know what to look for in goers. The missions team, in turn, trains the Advocacy Team on the “10 Supporting Principles of Advocacy Teams: prayer, advocacy, commitment, goer thriving, love and unity, goer voice, partners in global ministry, teamwork, servant leadership, and evaluation and reflection.”³⁶ Each of these principles embodies what they want Advocacy Team members to live out for their goers.

A helpful tool that the Advocacy Team uses with their missionaries is what they call their “Framework of Care.”³⁷ This tool, much like the tool illustrated in *Doing Member Care Well*, is a sphere that shows the concentric circles of care. Four circles build upon one another to illustrate how the flow of care is applied to ever goer.

At the center of the sphere is Goer Care. This form of care can only be done by the goer for themselves. It includes self-feeding, self-leadership, and self-care. The principle here is that the goer must self-feed. They need to cultivate their own happiness, health, and holiness.

After Goer Care, the next circle of care is peer care. Peer Care is help that goers can receive from team members, other goers from the missionary team overseas, the Advocacy Team itself, or care coaches from The Austin Stone. This circle highlights that

³⁴ Barrett, “Goer Care Resources.”

³⁵ Barrett, “Goer Care Resources.”

³⁶ Barrett, “Goer Care Resources.”

³⁷ Barrett, “Goer Care Resources.”

help can be found in the other goers they work with, and from their sending church. After Peer Care, the next circle is Pastoral Care. In this circle, if the goer needs help that cannot be provided or should not be provided by their fellow goers or the Advocacy Team, they have access to pastoral care through their sending agency, field office, or the missions staff/leaders from The Austin Stone (or For The Nations staff). If the pastoral team needs further help, the last circle of care is utilized. The last circle is Professional Care. Professional Care includes counseling centers located on the mission field or The Austin Stone counseling group that the church offers. See figure 2 for The Framework of Care.³⁸

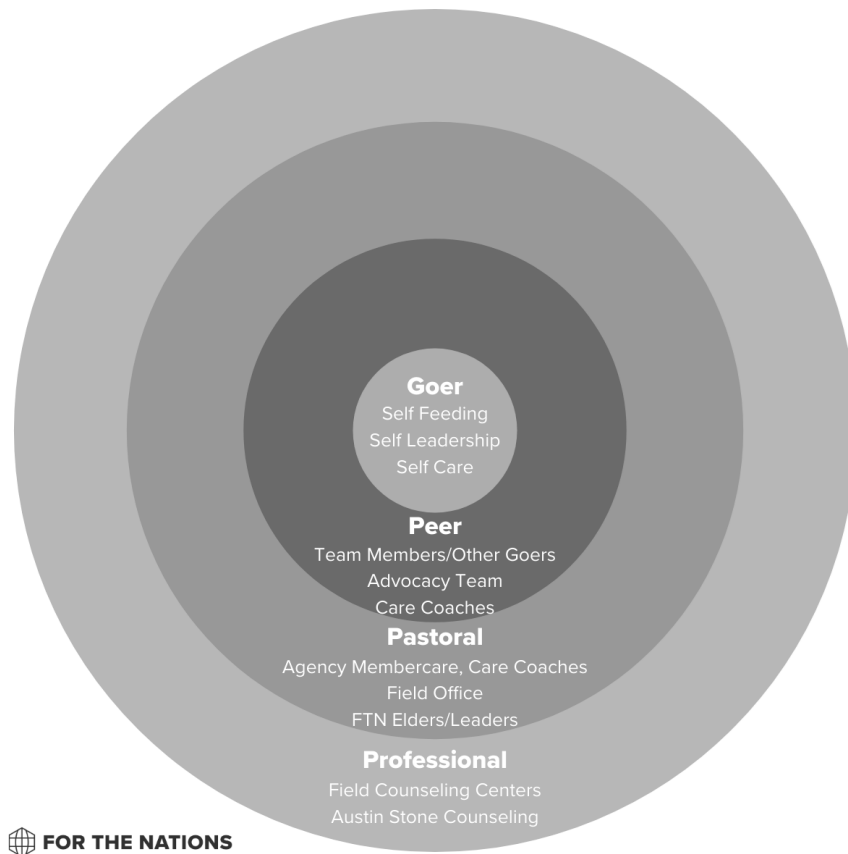


Figure 2. Framework of care

³⁸ Figure 2 taken from Barrett, “Goer Care Resources.”

The strengths of the Advocacy Team through The Austin Stone is that the definition of how they want to care for their goers is clear. They want missionaries to be happy, healthy, and holy. These goals help advocates know to specifically assess how each goer is doing. They are also able to ensure that every goer is still on task of seeing church planting movements among unreached people groups. Should goers get off task or show evidence of not being happy, healthy, or walking in holiness, the advocacy team can use the framework of care to determine the best way to direct care. The weakness of this model is that outside of the Advocacy Team the goer is not connected to the church body. A potential solution could be to include their missional community (The Austin Stone's version of small groups) with goers in the formation of their Advocacy Team.

Cooperating with Mission Organizations in Missionary Care

As seen, it is vital for a local church to have a missionary care process for the missionaries sent from their congregation. While church missionary care should be a priority, it is also important for local churches to understand that mission organizations have missionary care processes as well. Since many local churches do not have care processes, mission organizations have built their own processes to ensure the care of the missionaries under their employ. Mission organizations are also keenly aware of the pressures faced by their missionaries. They understand their own missiological strategies, contexts, and the relational dynamics of the teams with whom they serve. Mission organizations also have resources at their disposal to aid in missionary care, such as missionary care departments, counseling services, retreats, and care networks. Local churches would be wise to understand the missionary care process of every mission organization that their missionary works for. Knowing the missionary care process of every missionary's organization will help church missionary care teams know all the resources at their disposal and also prevent overlap.

It is particularly important to know when to utilize the resources offered by mission organizations. Without knowledge of how to utilize the resources offered by mission organizations it is possible for missionary care teams to miss out on potential resources that could help their missionaries. It is also possible for missionary care redundancies to exist. For example, if a missionary care team sees that a missionary couple can benefit from marriage counseling, knowing whether a mission organization offers this benefit is important. Many churches would not be able to afford the many sessions a couple might need. If the missionary organization has marriage counseling as a benefit offered to their missionaries, then it would save the local church and the mission organization from redundancies and providing less than adequate care.

The most important reason for understanding the resources offered by mission organizations is when a crisis arises. When a crisis occurs, missionary care teams need to be able to triage the situation quickly without adding confusion or stress to the missionaries. An example can be if a spouse passes away unexpectedly. If the missionary care team does not know the resources offered to their missionaries, in an attempt to help the missionary, the care team can inadvertently hurt them. Missionary care teams need to know how to cooperate with mission organizations to provide excellent care.

The International Mission Board

In the short history of Mercy Church, most of partnerships have been with the IMB. Since they will continue to be a partner for sending, looking at their processes for care is vital for the continued health of the missionary care processes. The IMB provides excellent resources to their missionaries. They provide pastoral care, counseling, access to IMB leadership, IMB medical consultants, third-culture kid consultants, and other personnel to care deeply for missionaries.³⁹ In addition, they have the Church Success

³⁹ Chris Martin, “How You Can Effectively Pray for Our Missionaries,” California Southern Baptist Convention, November 8, 2022, <https://csbc.com/resource/how-you-can-effectively-pray-for-our-missionaries/>.

Team, which allows local churches to request to partner with overseas IMB personnel.⁴⁰ Partnership, according to this website portal, means that you can be put in contact with a missionary, give a donation, order resources, request to do a short-term trip, or serve overseas.⁴¹ Unfortunately, there is currently not an option to help with missionary care outside of giving monetarily through the Lottie Moon Project for Missionary Care and Renewal.⁴²

The IMB also does not provide any trainings to local churches on how to come alongside them in caring for missionaries sent from their churches. This unfortunate reality can create the possibility of poor execution of missionary care. The IMB trains missionaries apart from local churches, which is their same approach to missionary care. All the care is executed by IMB personnel, or those to whom they contract it out. By providing churches with proper missionary care training, it is likely that churches will have a better understanding of how to care for their missionaries. Otherwise, local churches are forced to create their own missionary care processes that are divorced from IMB input. Leaving missionary care processes up to local churches to decide creates opportunities for miscommunication, frustration, and hurting their missionaries while a path to try and help. Missionary retention rates will depend on the cooperation of local churches and the IMB.

More cooperation must happen to ensure that missionary retention rates are as low as possible. O'Donnell, in her chapter on member care, states "Still another challenge is to simply raise the awareness of member care needs in certain sending churches and agencies, along with the responsibility to help provide jointly for these needs."⁴³ While

⁴⁰ IMB, "Contact Us," accessed January 30, 2023, <https://www.imb.org/contact-us/>.

⁴¹ IMB, "Contact Us."

⁴² IMB, "Missionary Care and Renewal," accessed January 30, 2023, <https://www.imb.org/give/project/missionary-care-and-renewal/>.

⁴³ O'Donnell, "Going Global," 20.

awareness is a challenge, she notes it is the responsibility of agencies and churches to jointly provide care. Since Mercy Church partners heavily with the IMB, it will be important to ensure that we work to jointly provide care alongside of the IMB.

Conclusion

Mercy Church desires to build a program that would utilize all the benefits that sending organizations offer while continuing to provide excellent care for every missionary sent from our church. Surveying missionaries who have been sent by Mercy Church revealed that missionary preparation and care are needed. The survey indicated that missionary care is a weakness. To grow in missionary care, it is clear to Mercy Church leadership that we need a missionary care program. Building a missionary care program would protect missionaries and their families from coming home prematurely. Chapter 5 will articulate a plan for missionary care through Mercy Church and provide an evaluation of the project.

CHAPTER 5

THE MISSIONARY CARE PROGRAM OF MERCY CHURCH AND EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

In this project I emphasized the importance of missionary preparation and missionary care. From the inception of the first church in Jerusalem, training and sending missionaries has been a central component in the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite sending missionaries from within their churches, the earliest churches did not believe their responsibilities stopped with assessment and preparation. They followed up and cared for the missionaries they sent out. The apostle Paul tethered his ministry to the church that sent him from Antioch. This pattern of assessing, preparing, sending, and caring for missionaries needs to continue today. In this chapter I will articulate a plan for missionary care through Mercy Church and provide an overall evaluation of this project.

As mentioned in chapter 4, Mercy Church could do many things to provide missionary care, but clarification and a definition of how the church will provide missionary care is needed. For this project and the functions of the missionary care team, Mercy Church defines missionary care as pastoral care. The missions pastor and missionary care team are committed to providing pastoral care to missionaries. By pastoral care, Mercy Church means that the missions pastor will take on the responsibility of leading a team who will oversee the prayer support, communication support, and relational support to missionaries. Prayer support means that the missionary care team continuously prays for the missionary. Communication support means on-going communication with the missionary and the missionary care team. Relational support means that the missionary care team will provide moral support to missionaries by encouraging them and helping them build relationships and friendships overseas, as well as providing logistical support as needed. Another important element of the missionary care team is for team members

to know when they need to advocate for their missionary. Advocacy means that the missionary care team will report to the missions pastor any concerns about the missionaries' spiritual, emotional, or relational health. Advocacy may help the missionary care team identify occasions more quickly when there is a need for crisis care.

The Current State of Missionary Care at Mercy Church

Mercy Church has the beginnings of a missionary care program but it lacks a formal vision and structure needed to execute it well. Currently, I oversee a group of faithful members who commit to stay in contact with Mercy Church's missionaries. Kelsey and Alex Pirro, long-time members of Mercy Church, oversee a group of six individuals who have committed to staying in contact with missionaries. This group meets quarterly to share praise reports on what the Lord is doing through their assigned missionary, share the difficulties their missionary is facing in ministry or personally, and pray for all of Mercy Church's missionaries. This group has faithfully served Mercy Church's missionaries in this way for a year-and-a-half. If there are any major concerns or needs, they communicate with me to make sure needs are met. The simple structure of this group has helped Mercy Church stay in touch with missionaries. However, it lacks the vision, structure, and the training needed to execute excellent missionary care. A more formalized program would be helpful in attaining true, on-going quality care.

Mercy Church's Missionary Care Program

As mentioned, Mercy Church has the beginnings of a missionary care program but lacks formal vision and structure to provide excellent care to missionaries. Thankfully, Mercy Church is not in short supply of people who would be excited to participate in a more formalized missionary care program. Currently ten people have requested to take part in the missionary care team, so recruiting is taken care of. All that is needed in building this team is the articulation and implementation of the missionary care plan.

The New Vision of Missionary Care for Mercy Church

The missionary care team exists to mobilize Mercy Church members to help missionaries be healthy spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. I will commit to ensuring that the missionary care team is equipped to provide excellent care. Pastoral care of missionaries will require missionary care team members who will be able to informally assess the health of the missionary and who have the training to provide the care needed.¹ Areas of concentration, evaluation, and assistance include spiritual health, emotional health, and relational health.

Spiritual health will be measured by how well the missionary is abiding in Christ. Since abiding in Christ is such a major focus of preparation, it will be important to remind every missionary that apart from abiding in Christ, they can do nothing (John 15:1-8). Asking pointed questions about what the missionary is learning in God's Word and through prayer will be vital to assessing spiritual health. In addition to assessing spiritual health, the missionary care team will care for missionaries by consistently praying for them and encouraging them through God's Word. This would be done best through a video call. The missionary care team should view their role as Aaron and Hur did with Moses in Exodus 17, by supporting them when they are weary.

Emotional health will be measured by the missionary care team to ensure that missionaries are processing both the highs and lows of life and ministry. Acknowledging the joys of life is vital for enjoyment of God. Psalm 32:11, a Psalm that rejoices in the forgiveness of God says, "Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; shout for joy, all you upright in heart." The command to be joyful will help missionaries keep a proper perspective on their circumstances. Lows in life and ministry are also a certainty. Helping missionaries lament will remind them that the Lord has not left them. Psalm 130:1 says, "Out of the depths I call to you, Lord! Lord, listen to my voice; let your ears be

¹ These assessments would be informal, observational assessments as opposed to data-driven, empirical assessments.

attentive to my cry for help.” Unprocessed highs and lows can negatively affect them emotionally as well as spiritually and relationally.

Relational health will be measured by how well the missionaries are making meaningful friendships and how well they are handling conflict. The missionary care team will help by providing friendship to the missionaries. Many missionaries experience loneliness. Knowing that they have a friend who is committed to their well-being is a powerful way to provide moral support. Prior to being sent overseas, the missionary care team will help the missionary identify a close friend who will commit to being their missionary care team leader. Having a close friend overseeing care will help the missionary feel known and understood, which will hopefully combat against loneliness. In addition to being a good friend for missionaries, the missionary care team member will hold the missionary accountable to building good friendships in their new country, because Christian community is vital for the overall health of a missionary. Close and frequent connection with friends and family from home is helpful, but the team wants missionaries to experience what Proverbs 27:10 teaches. When difficulty comes, Proverbs 27:10 says, “Better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.” There is only so much a brother can do from a distance. They need friends close by as well.

Missionary Care Team Structure

For this team to function well and best serve missionaries sent out from Mercy Church, it will need structure and organization. The missionary care team will have three different roles, or levels of involvement: (1) Care Team Member; (2) Care Team Leader; and (3) Missions Pastor. Each of these roles will play a vital part in fulfilling the vision of the care team. The people serving in these roles will be required to meet the following prerequisites to serve on the missionary care team: they must

1. They must be a follower of Christ and demonstrate an understanding of the gospel and the biblical mandate of mission.
2. They must be an active covenant member of Mercy Church who is committed to the vision and beliefs of the church.

3. They must have the ability to cast vision and identify, recruit, and develop leaders to grow deeper in the global mission of God.
4. They must be committed to devoting time and energy to their responsibilities.

A Care Team Member is committed to help ensure that their assigned missionary is spiritually, emotionally, and relationally healthy. Care team members have designated responsibilities to help their missionaries.² Care Team Members are required to do the following:

1. Pray for their missionaries for at least thirty minutes weekly, thinking of ways they can encourage them through the God's word.
1. Text or email with their missionary at least once per month to encourage them. Phone calls or video calls could be accomplished quarterly.
2. Stay up-to-date on their missionaries' news and events through newsletters, social media, and direct communication.
3. Consider participating in and encourage other missionary care team members and towards short-term trips to visit their missionary.

The time investment for a care team member is to attend a quarterly huddle with the missionary care team (1.5 hours), pray with the care team (30 minutes per week), attend the Mission of God class (six weeks), and mobilize others to be in prayer for their missionaries (possibly community group members). A care team member must commit to the care team for at least two years.

A Care Team Leader is someone who oversees care team members (no more than six). Care Team Leaders provide oversight to ensure that the care team and team members are following through on their responsibilities. Care Team Leaders' have the following responsibilities:

1. Pray for their care team members weekly.
2. Have oversight of Airtable (a database used to track all of Mercy Church's missionaries and to give reports on their health).
3. Provide monthly communication via e-mail, text, or phone with team members and the care team director.
4. Lead a quarterly huddle with the care team for encouragement and training.

² See appendix 3, "Missionary Care Team Member Role Descriptions."

5. Communicate with the missions pastor should needs arise.
6. Recruit new team members and additional leaders.

The time investments include the quarterly huddle (1.5 hours), prayer for care team members (30 minutes weekly), and attending the Mission of God class (six weeks). The commitment for a care team leader is at least two years.

The last role in for the missionary care team is the Missions Pastor (or Director). The primary role of the Missions Pastor is to oversee the missionary care program as a whole. Oversight will be done in cooperation with Care Team Leaders. The Missions Pastor will provide pastoral care to missionaries with the help of the well-organized team of people committed to the missionary's spiritual, emotional, and relational health. The Missions Pastor's responsibilities include the following:

1. Have oversight over the program as a whole.
2. Pray for missionaries and the missionary care team.
3. Provide monthly communication with team leaders.
4. Assist in the preparation and execution of quarterly huddles.
5. Supervise the execution of missionary care (financial needs, crises, and pastoral care).
6. Have a clear understanding of the missionary care resources of any missionary organization that Mercy Church's missionaries are affiliated with and partnering with them to provide care.

The pastor will also provide the missionary care team with all the resources and training they need to execute the proper care to their missionaries. For spiritual care, the Missions Pastor will train the missionary care team in how to encourage and counsel missionaries with God's Word. Helping missionaries abide is the most important thing that can be done. For emotional care, the Missions Pastor will bring in professional counselors to train the missionary care team on how to spot emotional distress and how to triage in times of crisis. For relational care, the Missions Pastor will equip the team on how to counsel missionaries on conflict resolution, should any issues arise. The Missions Pastor will equip the saints for this particular work of ministry (Eph 4:12-16). Currently, this is the role I fill at Mercy Church.

Additional Support and Care for Times of Crisis

Unfortunately, moments of crisis can happen with missionaries who live overseas. There can be marital problems, rebellious children, team conflict, or even untimely death. Mercy Church and the missionary care team need to be ready to provide care in crisis situations. I will be responsible for ensuring that crisis care happens in a timely and considerate manner. Cooperation with the mission organization that the missionary works with is crucial. To provide excellent care, having knowledge of the crisis care that the missionary's organization provides will help to avoid redundancies in care. Most mission organizations have crisis care resources available. For example, if there is a death in the family, both the mission organization and Mercy Church should talk and make a plan for meaningful care. The last thing needed in a crisis is confusion from people who should be providing care.

Crisis care is not the only category of care that requires special attention. Financial and practical support are also needed. Many mission organizations require missionaries to raise financial support for their salaries. Mercy Church desires to help missionaries by contributing to their salary. Practical support could be assisting in purchasing vehicles, sending care packages, providing housing when missionaries are on stateside assignments, and helping missionary kids transition into college. All these one-off moments require care and can help with the overall goal of having spiritually, emotionally, and relationally healthy missionaries.

Evaluation of the Project

To determine the success for any project, evaluation is required. I will attempt to provide honest feedback on the success of this project. To conclude this chapter, I will evaluate (1) the project's purpose, (2) the project's goals, (3) strengths of the project, and (4) weaknesses of the project, consider (4) what I would do differently, and offer (5) theological reflections, (6) personal reflections, and (7) concluding remarks.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

I decided to do this project out of my love for Christ, His commission, and the admiration I hold for the missionaries who have chosen to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. I attempted to study and do a project to help me understand missionary preparation and missionary care. I wanted to make it my goal that if a member of Mercy Church has a calling to be a missionary, the church would have the best missionary preparation and missionary care processes possible. I do not want there to be any reason for a missionary to come home early due to preventable reasons. The purpose of this project was to strengthen missionary preparation at Mercy Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, by implementing the Launch Global program. Preparation is key to the success of missionaries on the field. However, I discovered early on in my research that preparation is only part of what it takes to ensure the health of a missionary. On-going missionary care is vitally needed.

To provide proper preparation and care, it was necessary for me to study God's Word. The book of Acts was extremely beneficial in this project. Diving into the story of how the church started and spread allowed me to pull out helpful observations that apply to today's context. Both preparation and care were evident in the book of Acts. Seeing preparation and care play out in the narrative of Acts was encouraging, challenging, and inspirational.

After completing this project, the purpose of analyzing the Launch Global approach to missionary preparation was successful. I was able to assess the challenge of missionary preparation at Mercy Church, implement Launch Global's missionary preparation process, and design a plan to minister to every missionary sent out from Mercy Church.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

As part of this project, three goals were established: (1) assess the challenge of preparation at Mercy Church, (2) design a path toward missionary preparation in

cooperation with Launch Global, and (3) design a pastoral care plan to minister to the missionaries sent by Mercy Church in collaboration with Launch Global. Each goal had corresponding measurements for success. Each of the goals will be evaluated in this section.

Goal 1

The first goal was to assess the challenge of missionary preparation at Mercy Church. This goal included the creation of surveys to assess how well Mercy Church has prepared missionaries. This goal was measured by administering surveys to every missionary deployed overseas through Mercy Church. This survey was conducted using both a Likert scale survey and a survey with open-ended questions. The Likert scale questions were based upon what Launch Global's program focuses on: character development, abiding in Christ, team work, ability to sense God's leadership to be a missionary, and overall development in ministry skills. To my surprise, our missionaries responded favorably in their overall satisfaction with their missionary preparation. The average satisfaction of the missionaries was 4.825 out of 6. They were asked to respond with one answer, based on the following scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), disagree somewhat (3), agree somewhat (4), agree (5), and strongly agree (6). On average, the missionaries were between agree somewhat and agree that that they had proper preparation prior to going to the mission field. Based on my research and personal conversations with our missionaries, I thought Mercy Church would have scored much lower since none of the missionaries have gone through a missionary preparation process through Mercy Church.

While I am thankful that the missionaries were satisfied with their preparation, I do not believe they were as prepared as they could have been. Missionary preparation needs to be prioritized. Mercy Church can send missionaries who are better equipped in ministry skills, cross-cultural engagement, and support raising.

The open-ended questions revealed some commonalities. Three missionaries indicated that they needed more support raising training. Another three indicated that they wanted more training in evangelism and cross-cultural engagement. Thankfully, the Launch Global missionary preparation program focuses on each of those components, and future missionaries will be better equipped in those areas.

This goal was considered successfully met when the surveys had been analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the effectiveness of missionary preparation and missionary care. The surveys showed where the challenges of missionary preparation are and what Mercy Church needs to do to prepare better in the future. It was encouraging to see that preparation can improve and to know specifically how to improve our program.

Goal 2

The second goal of this project was to design a path toward missionary preparation in cooperation with Launch Global. Since 2015, Mercy Church has desired to prepare missionaries to go to unreached people groups. Launch Global entered a partnership with Mercy Church in 2021. The design of the missionary preparation program has been implemented fully into Mercy Church. The discover, develop, and deploy process for missionary preparation is fully implemented. In discover, Mercy Church had sixty participants over two Mission of God classes, nine disciple-making teams with sixty-one participants, and more groups being developed for the summer and fall of 2023. In the develop stage, Mercy Church had six participants who entered into a launch community. In the deploy stage, all six of the launch community participants are in conversations with me about their readiness for deployment and connecting them with mission organizations. Some of the participants are currently in conversations with missionary organizations about placement.

This goal was considered successfully met when Launch Global's tools and training were fully implemented at Mercy Church. The Launch Global staff and the participants of the launch community worked tirelessly to make this happen. This goal

being successfully met means that more missionaries will be prepared to go to unreached people groups from Mercy Church.

Goal 3

The third goal was to design a pastoral care plan to minister to the missionaries sent by Mercy Church in collaboration with Launch Global. This goal used the data collected in the second survey on missionary care to design a strategic plan to complement Launch Global's processes. The survey for missionary care included five Likert scale questions and five open-ended questions. The Likert scale questions were based on categories of where Mercy Church desires to care for its missionaries: communication, moral support, prayer support, logistical support, and financial support. These five categories helped build a pastoral care plan that will lead to better spiritual, emotional, and relational health.

The data collected showed that Mercy Church has room to improve in missionary care. A unique result of the missionary care survey was that every survey question pertaining to missionary care had a standard deviation higher than .9, indicating that there were a wide range of answers. A possible reason for the standard deviation being so high is that one survey participant answered strongly agree on every missionary care question. The wide range of answers indicates that there are inconsistencies and unpredictability in what Mercy Church's missionaries are experiencing in missionary care. A common theme rose to the surface in the open-ended questions. Half of our missionaries indicated that they were discouraged that pastors from Mercy Church have not stayed in contact with them on a consistent basis.

This goal was considered successfully met when the strategic plan has been completed. The completion of the missionary care program will help missionaries remain faithful to their work. Mercy Church will do all that it can to provide excellent care for missionaries.

Strengths of the Project

There are three strengths to this project. The first and most obvious strength was the successful implementation of the Launch Global missionary preparation program. There was some concern over how well Launch Global would integrate into the culture of Mercy Church, but this was accomplished extremely smoothly. This program has been very positive for the church. The discover and develop stages of the process are getting a significant number of Mercy Church members more involved in missions. The collective temperature of missions at Mercy Church has increased. Evidence of this is that Mercy Church has five disciple-making teams set to start toward the end of the spring, with plans for more in the summer and fall.

The second strength is the overall cooperation of participants in the surveys. Of Mercy Church's missionaries, 88 percent completed the survey. With a smaller overall number of potential surveyors, I was worried about low participation. However, the missionaries responded quickly and were incredibly helpful with their answers. In addition to overall cooperation, I was pleased with their honesty. Many of the surveyed missionaries said things that were difficult to read but were helpful as Mercy Church built the missionary care program. It will impact missionaries for years to come.

The third strength is the readiness of Mercy Church members to take part in missionary care. Sixteen people have currently come forward to volunteer to take part in missionary care. Six already meet regularly to pray for the missionaries they are connected to. I have no concerns about Mercy Church's ability to build a robust team as I implement the missionary care program into the fabric of Mercy Church. Members have already demonstrated that they love our missionaries. With the missionary care program in place, it will ensure that Mercy Church is doing all it can to support missionaries.

Weaknesses of the Project

This project had several weaknesses that rose while conducting my research. The first was the timeline of implementation of the Launch Global missionary preparation

program. Unfortunately, it took longer than expected to hire a team leader to oversee the program. This caused the timeline of the ministry to be pushed back nine months. Due to this, I had to delay the start of the discover, develop, and deploy stages of the program. Some of the missionaries that were surveyed would have been able to take part in the program had it been established earlier. This also led me to have to survey missionaries who have not gone through the missionary development program currently in place. In some of the open-ended questions, missionaries communicated struggles that would have been covered in the discover and develop stages of the program. It was hard to read that had Mercy Church been able to start the program sooner, the missionaries would have been better prepared for the challenges they face.

The second weakness is also related to timeline. One of the limitations of this project was that it only evaluated stage 1 and 2 (discover and develop) and not stage 3 (deploy) of the launch global process. Had I started nine months earlier, I could have surveyed program candidates to measure preparedness before they started the group and then measure preparedness after they completed the program. This information would have been valuable in evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

The third weakness was that the survey should have incorporated more questions specifically relating to spiritual, emotional, and relational health. While the survey questions were strategically designed to give a broad picture of spiritual, emotional, and relational health, the survey should have explicitly told participants that this was one of the goals of the survey, which could have yielded a clearer result that would have better helped the missionary care team know how to care well for missionaries. I plan to do a follow-up survey to remedy this weakness to ensure that the missionary care team has all the data needed to continue in this process. Understanding how well missionaries are doing spiritually, emotionally, and relationally will be key to them staying in the field long-term.

What I Would Do Differently

As mentioned in the weaknesses section, a shorter timeline to complete this project contributed to me not being able to evaluate stage 3 (deploy) of the Launch Global missionary preparation program. I wish I would have started the program sooner. One of the reasons for the delay was that it took longer than I wanted to hire a director. However, we could have started some of the elements of discover prior to the team leader's arrival. While it would not have been ideal, we could have started stage 1 before the team leader arrived. Unfortunately, I did not connect that a nine-month delay in beginning this process would have led to an inability to evaluate the deploy stage of the program. Evaluation of the deploy stage will need to happen outside of this project.

A second change I would make would have been to add specific survey questions to explicitly ask missionaries how well they are doing spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. While the questions asked helped me see how they were doing generally in these areas, it was not as clear as it could have been. For spiritual health, I would ask specific questions about Bible reading, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines that would have yielded a clearer picture of how well they are abiding in Christ. For emotional health, I would ask questions to see if they were processing the highs and lows of life and ministry in a healthy way. For relational health, I would ask pointed questions about whether they are in conflict with members of their team. The value of these additional survey questions would have helped the missionary care team see any major themes with the missionaries that needed to be addressed. If one theme rose above the others, then I could have allowed the missionary care team leaders and I to plan a quarterly training to focus on that issue.

Theological Reflections

A few theological reflections impacted me as a result of completing this project. The first reflection is that I am convinced more than ever that local churches play the primary role in the accomplishment of the Great Commission. Assessing, preparing, and

providing care for missionaries is what local churches have been doing since the early church. This can give modern church leaders confidence that the local church has always been God's plan A to fulfill the Great Commission.³ Walking through the biblical history of the book of Acts in chapter 2 of this project will permanently imprint the primacy of the local church in God's mission.

Studying the church in Antioch was pivotal in my study. Clear examples of missionary assessment can be seen. The church in Antioch was the first example of a sending church and the components in successful sending. Assessment (Acts 9-11), preparation (Acts 11-12:5), and long-term care (Acts 15:36; 18:23) are all seen in the church in Antioch. Seeing clear evidence of the early church involved as a sending church gives me confidence that this idea does not come from modern business practices, but rather, is foundational to the identity of every local church.

The second theological reflection that impacted me was the vast number of mentor relationships that can be seen throughout the New Testament. The relationship Barnabas had with Saul was the most encouraging to me. The Lord used Barnabas to co-labor and model ministry for Saul, who would become the greatest missionary in the early church. As Saul became the renowned apostle Paul, he multiplied everything he learned to other men and women. The assessment and preparation of Paul helped him model for many other ministers of the gospel, such as Timothy (Acts 16:1-3; 18:5; 19:22; 1 Cor 4:17), Titus (Titus 1:4; 2 Cor 8:16-20, 23; Gal 2:1-3), Silas (Acts 15:22, 32, 40; 16:25, 31-33, 40; 17:14; 18:5; 1 Thess 1:1), Apollos (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1; 1 Cor 3:5-6; 16:12), Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19), Tychicus (Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-9; 2 Tim 4:12), and John Mark (2 Tim 4:11). For the gospel to continue to the ends of the earth, a commitment to developing and mentoring missionaries is required.

³ J. D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 69.

The third theological reflection came in my study of 3 John. The apostle John felt responsible for the missionaries sent from his church. Third John displays the apostle John's concern for those sent from his own church. It is evident that his responsibility for looking after and caring for missionaries sent from his church did not end when they departed. In many ways, his work of caring for missionaries seems to have just begun with sending. The apostle John did not leave their health up to chance. The apostle John sent a letter to a man named Gaius to ensure he should send them in a manner worthy of God (3 John 6). This book of the Bible challenged me as a pastor. I want to be the kind of pastor that ensures that missionaries have all they need for the mission to which God has called them. Unfortunately, I have seen many missionaries lose connection with their churches when they arrive in another country. I have even seen this happen at my church under my leadership. Local churches need to prioritize long-term care. They should not leave it to mission organizations to care for them. Missionaries are depending on the churches that sent them to support them.

Personal Reflections

Throughout this project, I have been gripped by my need for Jesus to help Mercy Church be a healthy sending church. My conversations with our missionaries have led me to my knees in prayer. Being a sending church who sends dozens of missionaries to unreached people groups is a worthy pursuit. However, it must not come at the expense of proper preparation and care. Improper preparation and care are negligent and unloving. I want to give my life to impact the darkest corners of the earth with the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, I want to send people who will have the readiness to persevere in the face of opposition. I want to send people who know they have a local church that will do anything to help meet their spiritual, emotional, and relational needs.

I have also reflected on the reality that sending to unreached people groups cannot be a fringe priority of local churches. Local churches face many priorities and pressures. They are burdened with member care issues, reaching people in their

communities, and preaching the Bible faithfully. All those priorities are healthy for local churches to do; however, unreached people groups do not have local churches. They may not have access to the gospel. The world needs more laborers in the harvest. In Charlotte, there are churches filled with Christians on every corner of the city, but if a person lived in Pakistan, he might be lucky to meet a follower of Jesus in his entire life. There are currently 7,423 unreached people groups in the world with a population of 3,367,456,000 people who have little to no access to the gospel.⁴ Every single person in this grouping is made in God's image yet will spend an eternity in hell if they die without a relationship with Jesus. My life must be poured out to change this reality.

Conclusion

As much as I want to score well on this project, the more important result is the glory of God among the nations. Having healthy missionaries living among unreached people groups is the goal. It is my prayer that this project will greatly impact the people of Mercy Church. I pray that many missionaries will be sent from our church to start church planting movements among unreached people groups. In our lifetime, I pray that Mercy Church can reach 100 unreached people groups. The Great Commission has been given to all churches. I pray we faithfully play our part. May God be glorified among the nations.

⁴ Joshua Project, "Global Dashboard," accessed February 11, 2023, https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/statistics.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY ON MISSIONARY PREPARATION AT MERCY CHURCH

The following survey was used to determine how prepared missionaries sent out by Mercy Church felt upon their arrival to the field and start of their ministry. This instrument utilized five Likert scale questions, using a strongly disagree to strongly agree scale, as well as five open-ended questions. This survey was sent to nine participants, all of whom have been sent out as missionaries by Mercy Church.

Missionary Preparation Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine whether you believe you were adequately trained for missionary work, and to evaluate how well Mercy Church has managed missionary care after deployment. This research is being conducted by Scott Urbanek for the purposes of evaluating missionary preparation and care for dissertation research. In this research, you will be asked to complete survey questions to evaluate missionary preparation and missionary care. You will also be asked to answer open-ended questions to inform Mercy Church's leadership on specific ways to improve.

Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name _____ [] I agree to participate [] I do not agree to participate

Directions: Answer the following questions by placing a check mark in the box that most closely represents your current practices or beliefs.

The scale is as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree,
AS = Agree Somewhat,

D = Disagree,
A = Agree,

DS = Disagree Somewhat,
SA = Strongly Agree.

#	Statement	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	I am satisfied with the character development I received from Mercy Church to help me love God and love others.						
2	I am satisfied with the development from Mercy Church to abide in Christ.						
3	I am satisfied with my preparation from Mercy Church to work well on a team.						
4	I am satisfied with my preparation from Mercy Church to sense God's leadership to be a missionary.						
5	I am satisfied with my preparation from Mercy Church to be developed in ministry skills.						

Directions: Please provide a written response to the following questions:

1. What did Mercy Church do well in preparing you for missionary work?
2. What could Mercy Church have done better to prepare you to face the challenges you have experienced on the field?
3. What can Mercy Church do to better prepare missionaries in the future?

APPENDIX 2

SURVEY ON MISSIONARY CARE AT MERCY CHURCH

The following survey was used to determine the effectiveness of the care provided to missionaries sent out by Mercy Church. This instrument utilized five Likert scale questions, using a strongly disagree to strongly agree scale, as well as five open-ended questions. This survey was sent to nine participants, all of whom have been sent out as missionaries by Mercy Church.

Missionary Care Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine whether you believe you were adequately trained for missionary work, and to evaluate how well Mercy Church has managed missionary care after deployment. This research is being conducted by Scott Urbanek for the purposes of evaluating missionary preparation and care for dissertation research. In this research, you will be asked to complete survey questions to evaluate missionary preparation and missionary care. You will also be asked to answer open-ended questions to inform Mercy Church's leadership on specific ways to improve.

Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name _____ [] I agree to participate [] I do not agree to participate

Directions: Answer the following questions by placing a check mark in the box that most closely represents your current practices or beliefs.

The scale is as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat,
AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

#	Statement	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	I am satisfied with Mercy Church's care for me after arriving overseas.						
2	I am satisfied with Mercy Church's frequency of communication with me while overseas.						
3	I am satisfied with Mercy Church's moral support of me while overseas.						
4	I am satisfied with Mercy Church's prayer support of me while overseas.						
5	I am satisfied with Mercy Church's logistical and financial support of me while overseas.						

Directions: Please provide a written response to the following questions:

1. What has our missionary care team done well to care for you?
2. What can Mercy Church do better in providing missionary care to you and your family?
3. What are some specific areas we can improve in missionary care?

APPENDIX 3

ROLE DESCRIPTIONS FOR MISSIONARY CARE TEAM AT MERCY CHURCH

The following appendix includes descriptions for each role on the Missionary Care Team. The descriptions include the responsibilities, time investment, and commitment for each role. These roles together would create a missionary care team to mobilize the members of Mercy Church to help missionaries be spiritually, emotionally, and relationally healthy. This care team would serve alongside the Missions Pastor.

MISSIONARY CARE TEAM MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTION

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The missionary care team exists to mobilize the members of Mercy Church to help our missionaries be healthy spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.

PREREQUISITES

1. Must be a follower of Christ who demonstrates an understanding of the gospel and the biblical mandate of mission.
2. Must be an active covenant member of Mercy Church who is committed to the vision and beliefs of the church.
3. Must have the ability to cast vision and identify, recruit, and develop leaders to grow deeper in the global mission of God.
4. Must be committed to devoting time and energy to their responsibilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Pray for your missionaries at least 30 minutes weekly, particularly after receiving update newsletters
- Text or email missionaries on a monthly basis. Phone or video call quarterly
- Stay up-to-date on your missionaries' news and events through partner newsletters, social media, local news outlets, direct communication, etc.
- Help to recruit team leaders for short-term trips to your missionary's city (if we are sending a team. We do not guarantee a trip to all of our partners).

TIME INVESTMENT

- Attend quarterly huddle with the care team and other advocates
- Pray for your care team weekly
- Attend the Mission of God class
- Mobilize others to be in prayer for your partners with you (possibly community groups)

COMMITMENT

Two or go: at least two years on our team, unless you go to the nations!

MISSIONARY CARE TEAM LEADER ROLE DESCRIPTION

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The missionary care team exists to mobilize the members of Mercy Church to help our missionaries be healthy spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.

PREREQUISITES

1. Must be a follower of Christ who demonstrates an understanding of the gospel and the biblical mandate of mission.
2. Must be an active covenant member of Mercy Church who is committed to the vision and beliefs of the church.
3. Must have the ability to cast vision and identify, recruit, and develop leaders to grow deeper in the global mission of God.
4. Must be committed to devoting time and energy to their responsibilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Pray for care team members weekly
- Oversee and organize Airtable database
- Communicate monthly via email, text, or phone with team members & Missions Pastor
- Lead a quarterly huddle with the care team for encouragement/training
- Communicate with Missions Pastor as needs arise
- Recruit new team members & leaders

TIME INVESTMENT

- Lead quarterly huddle with the care team (1.5 hour meeting)
- Pray for your care team weekly (15 min)
- Attend the Mission of God class (6-weeks)

COMMITMENT

Two or go: at least two years on our team, unless you go to the nations!

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ABSTRACT

MISSIONARY PREPARATION AND CARE AT MERCY CHURCH, IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
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The purpose of this project is to establish a program for missionary preparation and care at Mercy Church. Chapter 1 describes the context, rationale, purpose, goals, research methodology definitions, and limitations/delimitations of the project. Chapter 2 presents a biblical foundation for the role of local churches in missionary sending. Chapter 3 explains Launch Global's approach to missionary preparation through the local church. Chapter 4 shows the need for long-term missionary care and evaluates the missionary preparation and care surveys. Chapter 5 articulates the pastoral care plan to minister to the missionaries sent by Mercy Church and provides an evaluation of the overall project.

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