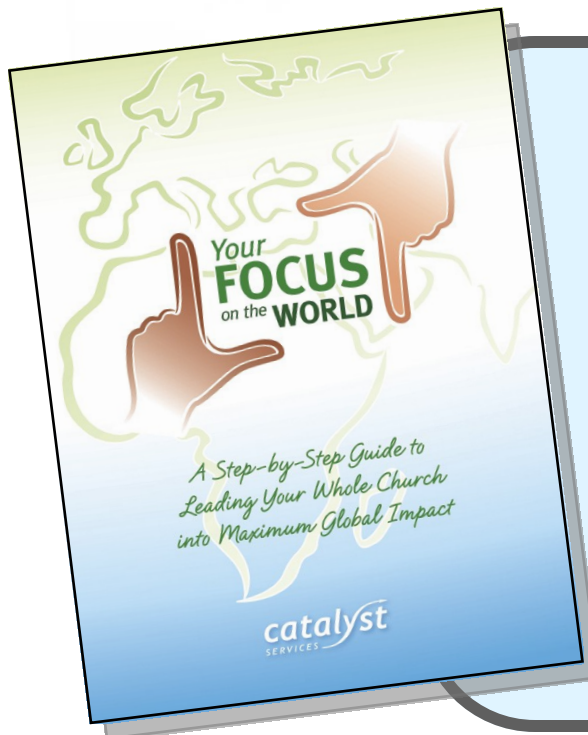


Your FOCUS on the World

Chapter 12 — Mobilize the Congregation



Diverging from *Postings*' usual practice of bringing you a complete article, this month we are providing another taste of the information compiled in the new book, *Your FOCUS on the World*.

The *Your FOCUS on the World* manual is designed to:

- ✓ Lead churches to **DISCOVER** their missions potential, **SELECT** the right partners, and **IMPLEMENT** a successful, cross-cultural initiative (referred to as a **FOCUS: First priority, Objectives oriented, Cooperative, Unleashed resources, Strategic**).
- ✓ Help churches already involved in a global initiative to strengthen their partnerships and their church's excitement and involvement.
- ✓ Serve as a practical tool mobilizers can use to guide churches in expanding cross-cultural effectiveness.

In this issue, we have chosen highlights from chapter 12 on how to mobilize the congregation. The manual is full of real-life stories of churches, and we begin with part of the story of Midland Free Methodist Church. We are also sharing a small section of the practical guidelines, and a sample of potential FOCUS goals.

See the end of this article for ordering information for the manual and related resources.

Midland Free Methodist Church

The Perspectives course helped to launch this Michigan church of 300 people toward a FOCUS in the mid-'90s. After the missions team leaders took this highly motivational class, they challenged the church to adopt an unreached people group (UPG), and a group in Southeast Asia was eventually selected.

The missions leaders knew that the congregation had a steep learning curve ahead of them. They began by answering some key questions for their people: What is an unreached people group? Why are they important? How is this new FOCUS different from what we have done before?

Tight security restrictions made publicity more difficult, but visits by a number of field workers early in the life of their FOCUS were strategic in building relationships that helped to integrate a passion for this UPG into the DNA of the

church. Then the pastor took a prayer journey and came back convinced that God was calling the church to help reach this people; his support was crucial.

Providing a constant flow

Now a dozen years later, Midland is still involved in reaching "their" people. The FOCUS team leader, a busy working mom with young children, is eager to see vibrant churches established among their FOCUS people. She understands that Midland's long-term involvement will hinge on personal contact with workers and constant reinforcement of the challenge.

One reason for frequently repeating and reinforcing the message is the tremendous amount of turnover in this community, transience which is reflected in a rapidly changing congregation. The leadership team constantly has to remind themselves that the majority of the congregation was not a

part of the church when the original adoption took place. The continual influx of newcomers means there are always people who need a FOCUS introduction.

A regular flow of information targeted specifically for children, youth, and adults keeps people engaged. Each February, Midland celebrates an emphasis on praying for their people using different methods including a 30-day prayer guide or Sunday bulletin inserts.

They have also distributed an annual prayer calendar with photos and requests for their UPG. Occasionally an entire weekend of activities features their people group. Virtual prayer walks and concerts of prayer have sparked new interest when not used too often. A monthly FOCUS table in the foyer may offer a taste of a traditional food of their adopted people one Sunday; another week it will feature a particular worker or a video.

Advocating for the on-site partners

Many of the field workers laboring among Midland's UPG have been adopted by an individual in the congregation who has become that particular worker's advocate. This advocate keeps in touch with the person on the field, and collects and disseminates prayer requests and information about practical needs.



“Involve people in their area of passion.... Use any method to draw people in.”

Midland's FOCUS Coordinator

Some advocates are members of a small group which also has committed to special involvement with this particular on-site worker. The advocate and small group communicate regularly with the worker and occasionally do a 2-3 minute presentation to the entire congregation, inviting those who want to know more to contact them individually for details which cannot be shared publicly. These frequent mini-reports are part of the constant flow of information.

Whenever a worker is available to visit, her advocate arranges a meeting with the small group and if possible sponsors an event—such as a barbecue or breakfast—open to the entire congregation. They try to

make the most of whatever time the field worker can spend with them.

Involving every age and interest

“Involve people in their area of passion,” the leader advises. “We have several people who were passionate about working with children, although they weren't passionate about missions. Through teaching our kids about the needs of our people group, their hearts were touched, too. Another woman was willing to use her accounting skills, even though initially she had minimal interest in our FOCUS. Use any method to draw people in.”

...Find the rest of Midland's story in the FOCUS manual!

Mobilization Guidelines

YOUR FOCUS LAUNCH

Use four engines to power your vision

There are four primary motivational engines that will launch your church's FOCUS passion:

1. Capturing attention with a clear, doable, global undertaking.
2. Developing personal relationships with partners.
3. Discovering opportunities to make a significant difference in individual lives or the entire community.
4. Seeing and celebrating when God miraculously changes people and situations.

For maximum impact on your congregation, you will want your FOCUS to ignite all four engines. If you faithfully pursue the first three, God will do the miracles for number 4!

You probably have already begun to think of ways to involve your people. It's time to start listing specific things you want to do. On page 163 you will find a worksheet titled, “**FOCUS Goals for Our Church**” followed by a sample presenting some ideas (pages 164-165).

Where your goals will touch on other aspects of your church's ministry, make sure you consult with the leaders before finalizing your list.

When your goals are clarified on paper, recruit one person to take the lead in achieving each goal.

Establish your launch timeline

One mistake churches make is announcing their new FOCUS too soon. Members of the team get excited and naturally want to share that enthusiasm with the entire church. But a premature launch without immediate ways for the congregation to participate means that the excitement of a new effort is followed by months of behind-the-scenes preparation. During this time, the congregation loses interest. When action plans are finally rolled out, church members' enthusiasm has lagged.

Let suspense build in your congregation during your preparation for launch. Increase the anticipation by holding off on sharing details until you are ready to present a wide variety of ways in which people can participate.


You want to launch your FOCUS to your congregation with some exciting, vision-casting activities involving all age groups relatively quickly. This means completing substantial planning before the announcement.

Plan your timeline (sample provided in the manual) so that you don't lose strategic momentum due to other events. For example, in many churches it is difficult to build congregation-wide involvement over the summer months, and December is also a time when people often are overextended. Lay out a full 12-month calendar, adjusting your deadlines by the realistic assessment of what is feasible for your congregation.



How will you stimulate your congregation's excitement right from the beginning? Start large!

Hold a big celebration

You may want to launch your FOCUS with a whole weekend of events or concentrate things on a Sunday morning. Regardless, make sure you have an opportunity to introduce the FOCUS to every age group in your church. Make a big enough splash to get everyone's attention. Do whatever it takes to let people know that missions is now taking bold, new dimensions. Communicate excitement! Use balloons, games, contests, decorations, etc. See  **online resources** for ideas.

Bring people from the field

Include on-site workers as part of your launch celebration, if at all possible. If this is not feasible, have a video presentation by them, and perhaps patch them into your worship service via phone or Skype to share their enthusiasm about the potential impact of your FOCUS. Invite your partner agency to be represented too.

Present the vision of what you are trusting God to do

Paint the picture of the difference your church will make, by God's grace. Talk about why you feel God is calling your congregation to do this. Describe the journey you have been on over the past months.

Share lots of specific ways people can get involved

Lay out as many opportunities as possible. Invite people to come along and help you figure out what needs to be done (this will attract your entrepreneur types), and present other, very specific ways to get involved (this will attract those who volunteer only if the whole job is spelled out clearly).

"Start with mobilization and it will become motivation," Claude Terry of First Baptist Church of Modesto, CA, advises. "We used to try to motivate people in order to mobilize them, but we realized we had it backward. And always remember that relationships create synergy."

Clarify your "two-train systems" approach

Make sure everyone understands that you are not abandoning long-standing, valuable outreach and missions involvements (as explained in the two trains metaphor on pages 41-42). Suggest that if people have questions about how old and new programs will intersect, they come and talk to you.

Don't expect everyone to jump on board immediately

A new concept is initially welcomed by a few people, then the majority get on board after they get used to the idea and see some of the early impact. Some people never do adapt to new paradigms. Don't let this discourage you. Keep moving forward and momentum will build.

INFLUENCE THE INFLUENCERS

The tipping point

Name three people in your church who, if they caught the FOCUS vision, would be most influential in getting the rest of the congregation excited. What would pique their interest and challenge their involvement in your FOCUS? What passions has God already instilled into their lives that relate or could relate to your FOCUS? Make gaining their ownership a prayer priority and ask God to show you exactly how to approach them.

One missions pastor knew she needed the enthusiastic endorsement of one particular elder. It took three years to

get that leader to agree to visit the FOCUS work overseas. The Sunday he returned, this influential leader stood on the platform and gave a powerful testimony of what he had experienced.

"His words did more to promote our FOCUS than anything else I had done in the previous years of work," the missions pastor reported. Her persistence paid off!

Ownership deep and wide

The buy-in of many leaders in all aspects of church life is what will integrate your FOCUS into

the heart and soul of your congregation.

Make a list of your leaders. Include the people who hold key roles, but also individuals who may not have the title of leader but who are highly respected people who sway others' thinking. Your list will include your pastor(s), elders/deacons, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, women's/men's Bible study teachers, worship leaders, and others who influence the congregation.

These are the people who need to "own" the FOCUS. You want them to be excited about how it can be incorporated into the areas in which they lead. Soon after your launch, you will want to meet with them. You may do that one-on-one, in small groups, or as a whole leadership group. Your meetings may include their spouses too.

Make your influencers' meetings fun. Consider...

This "Mobilize the Congregation" chapter goes on to cover more about getting leaders on board as well as:

- Give everyone ownership
- Preserve passion
- More ministry opportunities
- Security matters
- Missions program integration
- FOCUS funding



"Our FOCUS has truly gone church wide. Doctors and nurses are going on medical teams. Another team is investigating how to provide clean water. Our efforts have sprouted into this holistic approach where everyone is asking, 'What can I do?'"

Tim Ray, Desert Springs Church



"Start with mobilization and it will be come motivation."

Claude Terry, First Baptist Church of Modesto

"FOCUS Goals For Our Church" Sample Ideas

FOCUS Communication

- Bring every person in our congregation to the point where he/she can identify our FOCUS and describe its key goals.
- Develop 3 five-minute video clips which present the FOCUS and show each to the entire congregation.
- At least once a month, have a display or activity in the foyer which presents some aspect of our FOCUS.
- Incorporate an introduction to our FOCUS into every newcomers' class.
- Add one or more pages to our church website featuring our FOCUS (*with sensitivity to security concerns*).

FOCUS Ownership Development

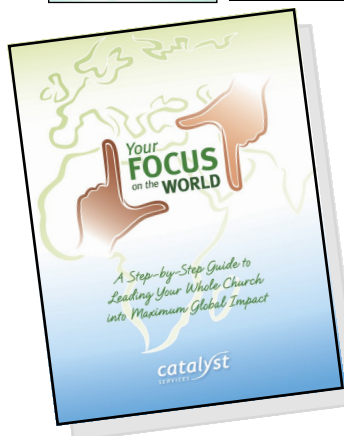
- Take at least 50% of our pastoral staff to experience our FOCUS on-site.
- Involve at least 2 of our elders/deacons in an on-site FOCUS ministry trip.
- Meet with each of our ministry leaders to brainstorm ways their group could integrate a FOCUS involvement.

Prayer Mobilization

- Launch an email prayer communiqué that circulates at least one FOCUS request/answer each week.
- Recruit all small groups to include prayer for our FOCUS each time they meet.
- Establish a schedule where each month one of our elders will call our facilitator, pray with him/her, and report back on requests and answers.
- Incorporate one specific FOCUS request in our pastoral prayer each week.

See the in-manual sample for FOCUS mobilization ideas in a number of other areas.

Ordering Information for *Your FOCUS on the World*



The *Your FOCUS on the World* manual is currently available at a special introductory rate of \$19.99 plus \$6.50 S/H to US addresses, \$12.95 to Canada. Included with book purchase is access to a host of **ONLINE RESOURCES** for use in your church. These resources include informative articles, samples from churches, and customizable forms.

Once you have purchased the *Your FOCUS on the World* manual for the leader, you will have the option of purchasing **DOWNLOADABLE COPIES** for your church's FOCUSing group or a **CHURCH RESOURCES PACKAGE** including personalized phone coaching for your leader. An **IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE** including the second half of the manual will be available soon for those looking to improve existing global initiatives.

Interested in becoming a **FOCUS FACILITATOR**? Training workshops provide extensive facilitation resources. Sessions are scheduled in Chicago and Denver in June. Contact us at 215.579.4346 about other future locations.

For more **INFORMATION** about *Your FOCUS on the World*, as well as details on **ORDERING** the manual and related resources, facilitator training, etc., follow the link on the [Catalyst Services](#) home page.

Interchange Postings

Catalyst's *Postings* e-newsletter is a monthly publication designed for mission agency personnel and local church leaders involved in collaborative global efforts. The practical articles highlight what churches and agencies are doing to mobilize believers, especially those of younger generations, to expand the Kingdom.

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