

The Church/Agency/Missionary Sending Triangle

What are you asking a church to do when it sends missionaries to serve with your agency? What are the church's expectations of their sending role? Not every sending congregation can, or wishes to, fulfill all possible sending functions, nor to the same degree. It is mutually beneficial to sit down with the leaders of a missionary candidate's sending church to discuss their long-term role in the ministry of the person they are commissioning to serve with you. Together you can clarify the roles and responsibilities each member of the triangle—church, agency, missionary—will seek to fulfill.

The following lists are starting points for a healthy, three-way dialog about the interrelated roles. After the responsibilities are confirmed or adjusted, each party needs a copy of the finalized list. Due to leadership transitions and shifts in viewpoint, it is wise to review and evaluate these roles at the beginning of each home assignment during an in-person (preferred) or phone conversation involving the church, agency, and missionaries.

THE CHURCH'S ROLE AS SENDER

- ▲ Recruits and carefully screens potential cross-cultural workers.
- ▲ Develops future missionaries' gifting, godly character, and ministry readiness by providing varied service opportunities inside and outside the church context.
- ▲ "Owns" not only the missionaries, but their ministry goals, i.e. the church is not focused just on their missionaries as people but also highly committed to achieving the purpose for which the workers are sent.
- ▲ Works to increase the congregation's vision and passion for global outreach, educating the people regarding their biblical missions responsibilities.
- ▲ Commits a generous amount of financial support to their missionaries, commensurate with the congregation's financial resources.
- ▲ Volunteers on-site assistance, expertise, and other resources whenever possible in order to provide missionaries with all they need to accomplish the task for which they have been sent.
- ▲ Disseminates information from missionaries to the congregation, and intercedes fervently and specifically in both corporate and private prayer sessions.
- ▲ Maintains a steady stream of communication to the missionaries in order to foster a continued sense of their membership in the local body of Christ.
- ▲ Provides pastoral care throughout the workers' ministry in cooperation with the agency.
- ▲ Delegates on-field supervision to agency administration, but, with prior agreement with the agency, may take an active role in helping to determine ministry priorities and strategies.
- ▲ Works with the agency to address on-field problems based on healthy, open communication and mutual respect.
- ▲ Shares responsibility for major ministry decisions related to the missionaries' location, ministry focus, and continued service.
- ▲ Works closely with the agency to resolve crisis situations such as health emergencies, evacuations, physical attack, etc.
- ▲ Assists missionaries with home-assignment logistics.
- ▲ Helps to provide renewal and "retooling" as well as appropriate service opportunities during home assignment.
- ▲ Assists missionaries with family concerns.
- ▲ Works with the agency to make sure that missionaries are provided with adequate health care, pension, etc.
- ▲ Informs other supporting churches of the missionaries' needs and ministry, as appropriate.

THE AGENCY'S ROLE AS FACILITATOR

- ▲ Recognizes the centrality of the local church in missionary sending.
- ▲ Is committed to insuring that church, missionary, and agency are communicating regularly.
- ▲ Requires that potential missionaries be enthusiastically recommended by their local church which affirms their maturity, missionary call, gifting, and experience prior to appointment.
- ▲ Develops with the sending church a clear agreement regarding the church's involvement in strategy and field priorities.
- ▲ Provides quality leadership and spiritual care for the missionaries on the field.
- ▲ Serves the missionaries from the home office to free them as much as possible to focus on ministry.
- ▲ Provides quality pre-field training and opportunities for life-long learning throughout service in order to maximize missionaries' ministry impact.
- ▲ Consults with the sending church when problems arise.
- ▲ Involves the sending church whenever major decisions regarding location, ministry focus, or termination of service are considered.
- ▲ Reports regularly to the church regarding the effectiveness of missionaries' ministries and their personal well-being.
- ▲ Cooperates closely with the sending church to maximize the benefit of home assignment for the missionaries and the church.
- ▲ Provides assistance to the sending church in global vision development and mobilization.

THE MISSIONARIES' ROLE AS "SENT ONES"

- ▲ Actively participate as much as possible in the ministry and body life of the church.
- ▲ Recognize that the affirmation of the sending church is a critical ingredient of God's call to missionary service.
- ▲ Understand and accept the sending church's expectations and requirements for service.
- ▲ Believe that they are to be accountable to the sending church, even though direct supervision has been delegated by the church to the agency.
- ▲ Facilitate the investment of church resources (time, finances, gifts, and other expertise) to achieve ministry goals, recognizing that the whole church, not just missionaries, are called to the missions task.
- ▲ Report to the church regularly and honestly regarding goals, ministry accomplishments, and personal and family well-being.
- ▲ Consult with the sending church throughout the process of major decision-making (regarding location, ministry focus, agency, resignation/retirement, etc.).
- ▲ Do not attempt to put church and agency leaders in an adversarial relationship in order to serve their own ends.
- ▲ Inform the church regularly of prayer requests and answers as evidence that they believe ministry results are dependent on intercessory prayer.
- ▲ Involve the sending church in setting priorities for home assignment and reserve significant time for face-to-face contact with the sending congregation in order to minister and be ministered to.
- ▲ Recognize that part of their task is to assist in the global vision casting and mobilization of the church.

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