

# Passing the Baton

## to a new church missions leader

by Ellen Livingood

*Perhaps you have headed your church's missions leadership team for a number of years, and now it's time to hand the responsibility to someone else. How do you do*

*that well? Here are some suggestions designed primarily for lay leaders, but most apply to those in staff roles too.*



## 1. Choose the right time

Exhausted or frustrated leaders seldom do a good job of helping their replacement start well. Launch the transition process before you have lost the energy to invest in the success of the next leader. If you already feel depleted, ask someone on your missions team to help you orient your replacement. Sometimes sharing leadership in a co-chair approach is a good alternative or interim solution.

If your successor does not have a lot of missions background, recruit them six months prior to starting their new role. During this time they can sit in on your leadership team meetings and invest time in some of the activities described below. This will allow them to start with the confidence of being better equipped.

## 2. Resource the new leader's preparation

Ask your missions leadership team to designate funds specifically for your replacement's training. This may include

underwriting enrollment in the Perspectives course, registration at a regional conference, or attendance at a church leaders' forum held by a mission agency. Discuss with your new leader which of these they think will be most beneficial.

Suggest your replacement delve into a few key resources to help them come up to speed or expand their missions foundation. For ideas, see the list at the end of this *Postings*.

## 3. Inform your missionaries

Too often missionaries say, "I don't even know who is currently in charge of the missions leadership team of many of my supporting churches."

Don't leave your cross-cultural workers in the dark. Write a letter before the leadership transfer occurs, introducing your replacement, providing some of their personal background, and encouraging field workers to initiate direct contact with the new leader.

## 4. Collect and pass along key documentation

New leaders often lack essential information about their church's past missions decisions and commitments. While this data may be "somewhere in our minutes," it is important to gather strategic material and review it together with your successor. This is a vital service not just to your new leader but also to those with whom your church has been partnering in some way.

## 5. Visit your field partners together

Does your church have overseas partners? It is highly valuable for you and your new leader to make a field visit together, if possible before the transition takes place. Your personal commendation can build bridges for new relationships, and provide continuity in your partnership going forward.



## 6. Introduce the new leader to key mission agency personnel

Your mission agency partners have no way to know who is currently leading your missions team unless you tell them. Contact your local agency staff person or the church partnership department in the home office and inform them of the change. Better yet, invite them to meet for lunch or coffee with you and your successor for introductions.

## 7. Arrange a meeting with your pastor and your replacement

Schedule a meeting with your senior pastor and your new missions team leader. Take this opportunity to thank your pastor for past support for you in your role. Describe ways that your pastor could encourage the new leader and vice versa. This can reinforce the importance of communication and cooperation in both directions.

## 8. Debrief personnel issues

Don't allow a new leader to have to stumble into the middle of complex personnel issues without adequate background. What do they need to know about the past to deal with concerns going forward? Be honest but gracious about tensions or conflicts.

## 9. Encourage innovation

Your team's new leader should not be expected to do things just the way you've done them. Encourage both the new leader and the whole missions leadership team to embrace change. This is about God's work, not your personal legacy.

## 10. Encourage your new leader via prayer and appropriate support

Better than anyone else, you know the challenges of the job your replacement is now shouldering. Commit to being an enthusiastic prayer supporter and cheerleader. You may offer to mentor the new leader for a time. If this invitation is accepted, be careful not to exert control from the sidelines.

If your successor is new to missions, provide some good resources but don't inundate them with an avalanche of books and videos. On the next page, we have provided an example of a "best resource" list in a number of categories. You may have your own preferences. This may be a good time to purchase key materials and make them available to your whole leadership team and/or place them in your church library.

Are you a relatively new leader who feels overwhelmed? Check out our blog, "[If You've Been Passed the Baton Poorly](#)" where you can also respond to the content of this article and make suggestions for the basic resources listed on the next page.

*Ellen Livingood launched and leads Catalyst Services to help churches and agencies mobilize the body of Christ's untapped potential. She is available to help you pass or receive the missions leadership baton.*



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## Foundational Missions Resources

Suggestions of where to start in building your missions resource base

✓ **“The best” overview of today’s global scene...**

### **Western Christians in Global Mission: What’s the Role of the North American Church?**

Paul Borthwick / IVP Books

A compelling picture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century context that challenges our assumptions and builds our vision for the future.

✓ **“The best” vision builder for young adults...**

### **Radical**

David Platt / Multnomah

An in-your-face challenge to rearrange your priorities in light of God’s call to “radical” discipleship.

✓ **“The best” theology of missions...**

### **Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions**

John Piper / Baker

Published two decades ago, this book is still a powerful presentation of the biblical basis of missions. Not easy reading, but worth it.

✓ **“The best” organizational guide for church missions leadership...**

### **The Mission Leadership Team**

Dave Mays / available as an ebook on Amazon

This concise volume offers practical guidelines to organize your missions program and leadership.

✓ **“The best” guide for financially investing in global partners without creating dependency...**

### **Cross-Cultural Partnerships: Navigating the Complexities of Money and Mission**

Mary T. Lederleitner / IVP

Many people have already read *When Helping Hurts*, and this book is a very practical guide to how to do it well, replete with great illustrations.

✓ **“The best” ideas on pastoral care for workers...**

### **Tender Care**

The Seabrook Seven / Barnabas Books ([www.barnabas.org](http://www.barnabas.org))

Experienced caregivers share wonderful advice about how to minister to the hearts of “God’s scattered servants.”

✓ **“The best” book on overall sending practices...**

### **Serving as Senders**

Neal Pirolo / Emmaus Road

This classic book has recently been updated a bit.

✓ **The best training on cross-cultural principles...**

### **The Beauty of Partnership**

Werner Mischke / MissionONE

Using videos, readings, and a workbook, these six lessons cover servanthood, listening, trust, both/and, accountability, and appreciation for partners from other cultures.

✓ **The best short-term team training curriculum...**

### **Help! We’re Going on a Short-Term Trip!**

Ben Laurence Ragan / CultureLink

There are several good options of training materials for short-term missions. With a team member’s manual and a team leader’s manual, this material is laid out in easy-to-use meeting outlines and helpful worksheets.

✓ **The best book for parents on missions...**

### **Becoming a World Changing Family**

Donna S. Thomas / Baker

Here’s fun and innovative ways for families to serve and in the process to grow the next generation of world Christians.

✓ **The best resource for potential missionaries...**

### **Global Mission Handbook**

Steve Hoke & William Taylor / IVP

Here’s guidance from the initial “Should I become a missionary?” to how to finish well. For a shorter but still practical version, try their first edition, *Send Me!* or Marsha Woodard’s *To Timbuktu & Beyond: A Guide to Getting Started in Missions* by William Carey Library.

✓ **The best online missions introduction...**

### **Kingdom Expansion 101**

DualReach [www.dualreach.org](http://www.dualreach.org)

This online course provides a great overview of local and global missions.

✓ **The best online resources...**

### **Missions Catalyst** [www.missionscatalyst.net](http://www.missionscatalyst.net)

A free, weekly update about global happenings, new resources, and a mobilizer’s blog

### **Catalyst Service’s Postings** [www.CatalystServices.org](http://www.CatalystServices.org)

A free, monthly publication of practical, missions mobilization tools and other resources

### **Missiographics** <http://www.gmi.org/missiographics.htm>

A new service offering free graphics highlighting thought-provoking missions statistics