

Church Mobilization Priorities

Suggested agenda items for 2013

by Ellen Livingood

As we wrap up our efforts for 2012 and get ready to plunge into the new year of church mobilization, what is most urgent to accomplish? What can we do that will make the greatest long-term impact for global advance? I'm sharing my priority lists for churches and agency mobilizers and would love to hear what's on yours.

The first item below I believe needs to be central in our thinking whether we serve in the church or agency context.

Will we confront creeping pluralism?

Why have so few alarm bells sounded over the invasion of pluralism into the core belief system of Western Christians? Evangelical believers of prior generations were clearly identified by their commitment to "Jesus is the only way." But tolerance has become a central societal value in our increasingly multi-cultural environment. The conviction that there is one way of salvation is under bombardment from every direction, and a powerful change has quietly occurred.

A new normal

Millennials' faith has been described by researcher

[Christian Smith](#) as "moralistic, therapeutic deism." This new form of faith represents the view of youth in the church as well as those outside. Theirs is a Christianity without a conviction of hell, much less a belief that God would send someone there based solely on their

lack of faith in Jesus. And many of their parents—Baby Boomers and Bust-ers—also seem wobbly on their view of whether salvation is through Christ alone.

An enfeebled form of holistic ministry

In missions, this tectonic shift can result in a slide toward a form of holistic ministry that is an end in itself rather than a context for transmitting an essential message. Our witness to the world should incorporate every aspect of holistic service, but we do not serve people's needs in order to ram our truth propositions down their throats.

However, as we approach any type of missions, there is a theological watershed—Do we believe a person is lost without faith in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection? The answer to that question must dictate our ultimate goals.



Why have so few alarm bells sounded over the invasion of pluralism into the core belief system of Western Christians?

Many formal and informal programs designed to lay a biblical foundation for missions are built on outdated assumptions about what audiences believe on this essential point. For younger generations, to accept that God wants to “bless” the nations through the church may be relatively easy if they do not have to confront the truth claims presented elsewhere in Scripture. But what are the implications of sidestepping this issue? We will recruit new generations of go-ers and senders to missions with a radically different perspective of the end goal.

Do we see this invasive pluralistic worldview as a crucial issue for 2013? If so, what should we as individuals, as churches/agencies, and as a missions community as a whole do to address it?



For Churches—Other 2013 priorities to consider...

1. Create new categories of workers and funding

Opportunities are exploding around the world for high-impact, cross-cultural ministry developed within the context of international business placements, entrepreneurial endeavors, overseas professional contracts, cultural exchanges, long-distance mentoring/coaching, and a nearly endless list of other creative alternatives. Churches will need new categories for such workers or a revamped definition of “missionary” to utilize these God-given realities. New concepts of preparation, funding, on-field individual/family care, and accountability will also need to be developed and tested.

Set your 2013 priorities: Consider inaugurating a highly flexible “global worker” category to facilitate placing influential people in strategic global settings. These new roles may or may not include funding from your church, but they will include care and encouragement supplied by your congregation.

2. Make way for younger leaders

Does your church’s missions leadership team have a preponderance of folks over the age of 50, or even a majority over 65? If so, you may be asking, “How can we develop a program that attracts younger people?” Well, you probably can’t. But you can create space for younger leaders to shape new missions models that speak to their peers.

Set your 2013 priorities: Meet for coffee with a couple of sharp younger adults to find out what’s on their minds and hearts. Listen a lot and talk little. Find out what kind of service opportunities get them excited and what makes involvement difficult. Support them in launching some one-time events for their peers.

3. Reach the world from home

It’s gone—the era where it was logical to separate foreign (cross-cultural) and domestic (same-

culture) missions. In 2013 the world has come to us, so churches will need to create simple steps to help believers intentionally build cross-cultural friendships.

Set your 2013 priorities: Consider creating an ad hoc

task force to initiate ways your church could encourage cross-cultural friendship building. Make examples visible to the congregation.

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For Agencies—Other 2013 priorities to consider...

1. Boldly experiment with collaboration

In our 2013 environment, few agencies can do a good job alone. Is this the year your organization says, “Let’s work with another agency or two to pilot some new collaborative efforts so we can all serve churches better and more cost effectively”?

Set your 2013 priorities: Get together with another agency's mobilizers to brainstorm what would be possible if you combined your efforts in a geographic region, a particular type of event, or other aspect of church mobilization. Ask a church to help you test an agency/agency collaborative effort.

2. Define outcomes-driven mobilizer goals

If you are a mobilizer, how do you define success? If you lead a mobilization/partnership team, how specific and clear are the goals for your staff? Are you focused on winning the race or sometimes just beating the air (I Cor. 9: 24-26)? Without measurable goals, it is hard to know if you have the right people, if they have the necessary training and tools, and for what accomplishments you will hold them accountable. Paul Penley in [Measuring Outcomes](#) reports that non-profit leaders often affirm the importance of measuring outcomes, then insist their organization is an exception. Do we need to quit making excuses?

Set your 2013 priorities: Wrestle with defining some measurable outcomes of your church partnership efforts, especially clarifying what you envision as you serve churches with younger leaders and contemporary perspectives. Then determine if you have the right staff, sufficient training, and the best tools.

3. Value Churches for Partnership not Money

It's tragic that so many agencies still think of churches as cash cows; to them, ROI is the only thing that really counts. But churches have so much more to offer—vision...experience...relationships...time...skills!

In a recent meeting of church and agency leaders, one missions pastor pleaded, "Agencies, please ask me for resources other than just money. We have so many talented people with awesome abilities. Just ask! Please, just ask!"

Set your 2013 priorities: Analyze why you are tempted to see churches' contributions solely in terms of money. List ways you could use expertise, then brain-

storm how to communicate these opportunities within congregations.

So what's on your 2013 priority list? Check out our [Catalyst blog](#) and share your comments and suggestions.



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 your church or mission agency address the priorities mentioned here or other mobilization issues.

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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