

The Missionary Preparation Triangle

Meshing the efforts of church, school, & agency to ready workers

How do we give future global workers the best possible preparation? Traditionally, training occurred in Bible colleges and seminaries. More recently, mission agencies and churches have begun to play a vital part. Meanwhile, global ministry roles have diversified. And training delivery options have multiplied too. So how do churches, schools and agencies collaborate?

In this *Postings* and accompanying podcast, we explore just a few aspects of the relationship of church, school, and agency in the missionary-preparation triangle. Contributing to this dialog are Jeanette Yep and John Jordan representing churches, Ed Scheuerman and Mark Naylor who teach in the Bible college/seminary setting, and Nathan and David Rofkahr who speak from the agency perspective.

Postings: We all want to send out workers well prepared. What is the benefit of interaction among the three stakeholders in the triangle?

John Jordan, Village Church: One reason is to prevent redundancy. We all have limited resources, and we don't want to duplicate efforts but rather contribute to the overall process. So we want to ask how we can do what we are best at without duplicating each other's efforts.

Ed Scheuerman, Lancaster Bible College: Sometimes we don't collaborate as well as we should because we don't know who wants to take the lead. In my opinion, it probably should be the church, but each of us may be looking to others to coordinate preparation.



Jeanette Yep, Grace Chapel: A lot depends on where the individual develops their sense of call to missions, e.g. local church, parachurch ministry, missions conference. Who is helping them process this decision? No one side of the triangle "owns" the candidate—we need one another. One thing that frustrates me is when I get invited into the process **after** the candidate has already completed their preparation and they come to the

September 2016

church just to ask for money to fund their call. Sometimes this is the very first time I've ever met them! To me, this approach does not lead to genuine partnership.

Mark Naylor, Northwest Baptist Seminary: The key word here is partnership. I don't think it matters who leads it.

Postings: How do we identify the areas of preparation that each stakeholder is best equipped to provide?

Nathan, agency staff: I am concerned that too much of our preparation has been academic. When I look at the model of Jesus, it was much more hands on—come walk with Me and learn from Me. I'm not sure where that life-on-life preparation best fits. But I've formed an internship which fills the church and the training-institution role to try to provide this life-on-life experience before workers go to the field.

Ed: Hybels talks about character, competence, and chemistry when you are hiring staff. The same is true when you are sending someone to the field. As Mark was saying, no one entity has sole responsibility for any of these things. It is more a sliding bar as you pass the candidate from church to academic institution to agency. It's hard to come up with a "best" formula because it isn't going to fit everybody.



Mark: NBS's Immerse program starts with a partnership between church, agency, and school. The school provides the framework or pathways. The outcomes are defined by the agency, which is also involved in the training.



Church, agency, and school together place candidates into a North American cross-cultural ministry context. Each partner provides a mentor to work with the student throughout the program. The focus is on the mastery of competencies as assessed by all the mentors.

Postings: Is the preparation that people get, or need to get, from their church changing?

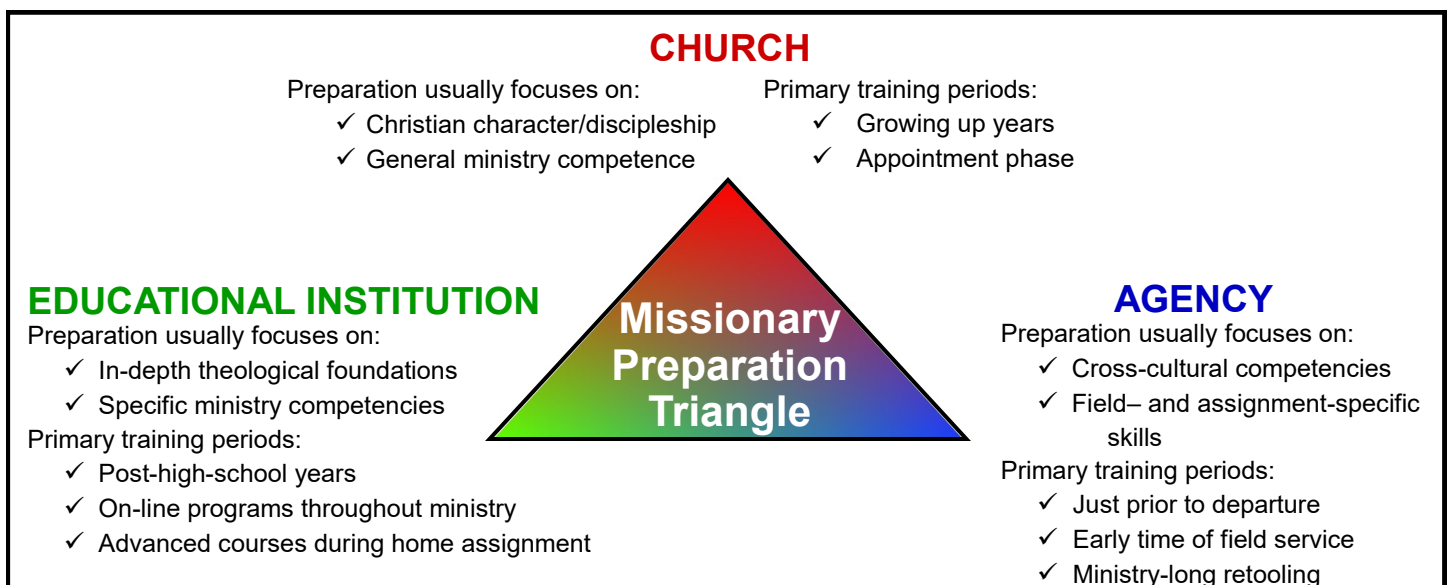
John: More people are coming to our church lacking an understanding of Scripture. We are having to give some very foundational preparation in the Word of God to help them develop

character and spiritual disciplines. We also need to lay the foundation for their passion for the world.

Usually before they go on to university or contact an agency, we have several years to get to know them, to spend time with them, to understand what God is doing in their lives. We believe we have a fundamental role to continue to guide and coach them in the right direction—to plug them into the right academic situation, and the right mission agency.



Ed: One of the challenges for finishers, people who sense God's call to missions a bit later in life, is taking their competences cross cultural. They may be experts in their field but they may not know how to work cross culturally. That's where they probably need to get some training.



September 2016

Postings: What about school debt? How and when should triangle stakeholders address this problem?

Jeanette: I encourage people to find a good educational program but not necessarily choose a “brand-name” school, unless it will specifically help them in their future ministry. The cost of the debt load for a prestigious program should be weighed against the context of the ministry they hope to pursue. So, if they will be support raising, do they want to incur such a debt load that it increases the amount they will need to raise before serving? But if they are planning to teach at the university level, they will likely need the best academic credentials possible, especially to enter a restricted-access country. [Med-Send](#) has covered some of the debt payments of our professionals who have gone into missions.



Ed: Gordon Conwell has a program for graduate students where their church or individual donors can participate in a matching grant. Many years ago, our church took my wife and me on for support when we went to Bible school to get training for the field. Such efforts help future workers avoid crushing amounts of debt.

Postings: The diversity of those we send is growing—not only ethnic diversity but also age, length of planned service, etc. How does that impact preparation?



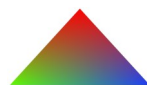
John: Village is a multi-cultural church with many first-generation immigrants. We ran into the challenge of having people who wanted to go into missions but had a hard time communicating in English. Where do we send people like that for preparation, and what agencies do we send them with? Over the years, we have sometimes constructed our own training or found online learning as an alternate solution.

Jeanette: I'm Asian American and there are all kinds of cultural issues that relate to parents and parental expectations if their children sense a call to something besides doctor, lawyer, engineer, etc. The church must provide a lot of pastoral care and encouragement, coming alongside people working through those issues before they can move into full-time ministry.

Postings: How does a church help those considering missions to make wise preparation choices?

John: First, what is the individual planning to do? We have several people moving toward missions aviation, and there are a few, clear training options. But then we also want to look into where they are going to get their intercultural preparation. We need to help them develop a multi-year plan in order to make the right decisions. Schools and agencies are a part of this process. Right now, we are launching a Next Steps group for high-school students interested in long-term missions. The goal is to start early with them.

Jeanette: My role here as missions pastor is not only to send the right people, but also to have difficult conversations that stop people or slow them down. I talk to them about serving here in our church context first so that we can get to know them. We want them to know and be known by our church community. The local church needs to be part of confirming their gifting and calling.



Preparation Triangle Questions for Churches

1. Have you developed methods for identifying potential global workers early in order to walk with them throughout the preparation process?
2. Have you and your youth staff discussed how to counsel students to keep educational debt to a minimum?
3. Are there several colleges and seminaries/graduate schools that your church is comfortable recommending as providing excellent preparation for cross-cultural ministry? If not, do you have questions you would ask the directors of international studies programs to discern their strengths and match to your expectations? See our list [here](#).
4. Are you comfortable stopping/slowing individuals expressing interest in missions whom you feel are not qualified or ready for cross-cultural ministry? Do you have specific recommendations as to how to discern God's leading and/or timing?
5. Does your church have or recommend internship programs to prepare future workers inside your church or in other local, cross-cultural ministry settings?

September 2016

Postings: What is the view of the agency? Do you feel as if you are brought into the preparation process later than you would like?



Dave Rofkahr, ReachGlobal: Since most of our workers come out of our churches, I already know who they are, and what their bent is before they join us. And honestly, we don't look to the school to give the cross-cultural training; we expect to do that ourselves in their

first four years of service. Before they come on staff with us, they have multiple short- or intermediate-term experiences on our cross-cultural teams. We want to see their character, competence, and chemistry long before they join us long term.

Nathan: When I was a pastor we sent many young people to the field. But I struggled because few of the agencies were providing the hands-on, life-on-life training that these people needed. I would like to see the local church take back its role of equipping people. Even though I'm part of an agency now, I encourage megachurches to start their own internship program right in their church.

Ed: I tell my freshman that it's important to *involve*, not simply *inform*. I ask them, "Who are the people who you need to be involving in your life decisions?" It's their church, their family, the agency. Some churches have preferred agencies; I would hope that they would also have preferred educational institutions. And schools and agencies should have developing relationships.

Postings: What does best practice look like in connecting the triangle, especially when we have churches with very different amounts of capacity?

Mark: There needs to be education for the partners as well as the students. As the mentors are tied in with the training of the person, all three partners need to be involved in an ongoing process of development.

Nathan: The more mentors you have, the better it is. But I'm concerned because so often it's not really mentoring in cross-cultural ministry skills. When do we model for the next generation what it is like to disciple Muslims who are right here with us? Where are the people with ministry experience in the Third World who, like Jesus, will pour themselves into future workers?

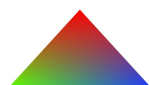


Dave: I would encourage investing in intermediate-term (2-yr) missions like what [GoCorps](#) does. We consider these two years on the ground as still a time of recruiting for us. Our leaders work right there alongside these intermediate-term workers to provide both an academic and a practical mentoring piece.

Postings: What are some models where the three sides of the triangle are working together well?

Mark: There has been significant research in identifying fruitful missionary practices. This information can help us prepare others effectively. If people engage in those fruitful practices during their training, they will be able to continue them when they get to the field.

John: Some years ago here in the Northwest, we started a weekend conference called [Mission ConneXion](#). It brings churches, schools, and agencies together and gets them dialoging. Increased long-term sending has been one result.



Preparation Triangle Questions for Agencies

1. Redundancy is a concern for churches that are proactively preparing future workers. Do you have clear standards for evaluating where church-based preparation fulfills your requirements? Are these churches aware of how they can help candidates meet your requirements most efficiently?
2. Have you brought together a prospective worker, their church, school, and appropriate staff from your agency to consider preparation questions? In what situations would the effort to work together be worthwhile for all?
3. Do you have preparation options you can recommend for the growing number of churches looking to prepare non-English speaking prospective workers?
4. Do you have educational institutions/programs that you recommend to prospective workers for specific training needs?
5. Do you have internship models that you could share with churches interested in better preparing prospective workers within their own church or local, multi-cultural setting?

September 2016

Nathan: One of my colleagues has created Studio, a three-month internship. Candidates live together, and great people come in to do the training. It's all in the context of doing life together.

Ed: We have a Lancaster Missions Fellowship luncheon once a month where church leaders, agency representatives, and people from LBC come together for interaction. I know that Pioneers runs a Church Partner Forum to further discussion between churches and agency.

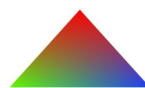
Listen to the [Preparation Triangle podcast](#)—a dialog among these six leaders that expands and illustrates the ideas shared here.

John Jordan has been the world outreach pastor of [Village Baptist Church](#) in Beaverton, OR, for 22 years. He also oversees Villages' multicultural, multi-church, and multi-generational ministries, and cares for 45 long-term workers.

Mark Naylor coordinates an MDiv program for cross-cultural workers through [Northwest Baptist Seminary](#) (BC, Canada) and in partnership with Fellowship Int'l and Fellowship churches. He holds a DTh in missiology from UNISA.

Ed Scheuerman and his wife served with Pioneers for 23 years. In 2010 they relocated to Pennsylvania where Ed directs the intercultural studies major at [Lancaster \(PA\) Bible College](#). He holds a D.Miss. from Biola University.

Dave Rofkahr has served in campus ministry, cross-cultural church planting, and BAM. He has also been a pastor and



Preparation Triangle Questions for Educational Institutions

1. How does your school/program relate to the other organizational stakeholders in the missionary preparation triangle? What are the implications for function? For communication?
2. Are church missions pastors/leaders aware of what makes your program one to recommend to their prospective workers? Are they clear on your strengths?
3. Can you give church leaders a list of questions to help them guide teens in selecting a school that will prepare them specifically for cross-cultural ministry?
4. Are your programs adaptable to second-career workers? Are churches aware of these options?
5. Do you have internships that could utilize the strengths of the sending church and the agency?

int'l director for Asia for [EFCA ReachGlobal](#). Currently he is ReachGlobal's US executive director for recruiting.

Jeanette Yep has been pastor of global and regional outreach at [Grace Chapel](#) in Lexington, MA, since 2007. Previously she spent three decades in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and directed staff training globally for IFES.

Nathan is the founder of [TOAG](#) internships and consultant/instructor for the training department of a mission agency. He served as a pastor for many years before launching TOAG in 2000 to train those focusing on the least reached.

Read our related *Worth Considering* blog entitled, "[What Schools Should We Recommend?](#)"

Interchange Postings

Catalyst's *Postings* e-newsletter is a free, monthly publication of practical articles highlighting what churches and agencies are doing to mobilize untapped potential for global impact.

SUBSCRIBE at www.CatalystServices.org/postings/.

ACCESS all of our past *Postings* at www.CatalystServices.org/postings-gallery-of-archives/.

© 2016 Catalyst Services, Inc.