

Where Do We Start?

Steps forward at five ministry crossroads

By Ellen Livingood

"I don't know where to start!"

Have you ever said that? As we begin a new year, here are some starting points for church missions leaders at five different ministry crossroads:

- A. In new churches or churches with no missions program
- B. New to their leadership role
- C. Struggling with waning missions interest in their church
- D. Whose church has no clear missions strategy
- E. Who feel their missions program is good but not great



A. Where do we start... to begin missions in our church?

- A-1. Invite several leaders to help develop a **biblical definition of missions** for your church. If possible, begin by doing a Bible study together on the biblical foundations of missions. Paul Borthwick's [Missions—God's Heart for the World](#) or Jim and Carol Plueddemann's [Witnesses to All the World—God's Heart for the Nations](#) are excellent study guides.
- A-2. **Identify your church's DNA.** [Click here](#) for some key DNA markers. After you have analyzed your DNA, pray and consider what type of ministries these point toward.
- A-3. Develop a **realistic one-year plan** that includes a few tangible action steps. You may have limited financial and time resources, but just get started. [Click here](#) for a starter list of possibilities. Remember, you don't need to go it alone! Look for an experienced mission agency to help you. They can prevent you from being overwhelmed and help you avoid painful mistakes.
- A-4. Find out what **refugees, immigrants, or international students** are living in your area. What ministries are serving them? What is needed? Determine if there are ways your church can help. Begin with a one-time service event to introduce this type of ministry to your people. After they gain some experience, you can offer opportunities requiring an ongoing commitment.
- A-5. **Adopt a missionary.** One great possibility is to look for workers who focus on a people group represented by the nearby immigrant community mentioned in A-4. Even though the missionary may work on the other side of the globe, if they focus on the same people, you have much in common. Challenge your people to start praying regularly for "their" missionary.

B. Where do we start... as new missions leaders?

- B-1. Set up an **appointment with your pastor** to learn more about the passion and priorities of your church leaders. [Click here](#) for suggested questions to ask.
- B-2. Meet with **the missions/outreach pastor of a church near you**. Find out what they see as the most important aspects of mobilizing their congregation. Ask if you can observe one of their missions leadership team meetings.
- B-3. Schedule an in-person or Skype **conversation with each missionary** you support. [Click here](#) for some suggested topics to talk about.
- B-4. Take the [Kairos course](#), [Perspectives](#), and/or [KE101](#) to give you a better overall **understanding of missions**. Subscribe to [Missions Catalyst](#) and read Paul Borthwick's [Western Christians in Global Mission](#). Search our [Postings archives](#) for articles on topics you need to better understand your task.
- B-5. Take your **missions committee/team** through David Mays' [The Mission Leadership Team](#) so that you can learn together. At the end, clarify the three tasks your team thinks are most important to tackle in the coming year. Delegate responsibilities to each team member.



C. Where do we start... to ignite excitement if interest has waned?

- C-1. Invite several **Millennials** who attend your church to meet you at Starbucks for an honest discussion of how they see the world and want to get involved. [Click here](#) for some suggested topics. Just ask questions and listen. Invite them to implement at least one of their ideas in whatever way they choose.
- C-2. Introduce your congregation to a Christian **leader from another part of the world**—in person, if at all possible, or via Skype. Let them tell their story so that your people see the world from a fresh perspective. Consider how you could partner so that both sides benefit.
- C-3. Spend the next six months focusing your congregation's attention on just **one strategic ministry** or area of the world. Use compelling videos (check out the short [Prayercasts](#)) and statistics about the people/region presented in easy-to-understand graphics (see the [Operation World DVD](#) or [The Future of the Global Church](#) digital resources). Use multiple communications methods. Can you engage at least a dozen different ways to share this story?
- C-4. Develop an exciting missions project and related learning module for your **children**. Kids carry excitement home and get their parents involved.
- C-5. Agree as a missions leadership team to **stop** pouring time, energy, and funds into missions programming that isn't drawing in new participation. Instead, **brainstorm** how to create opportunities for your most passionate and "infectious" missionary to interact with your people one-on-one or in already existing small groups.

D. Where do we start... to develop clear missions strategy?

- D-1. Sit down with your missions team to define **what you believe is strategic** for your church to target in global outreach. You can use this list from Catalyst's *Your FOCUS on the World* and/or this *Postings* [tool](#) to launch your discussion. Identify your top two or three priorities.
- D-2. Ask each of your **missionaries** and supported organizations/projects to summarize their **ministry priorities**. You can customize this list to clarify what you are asking them to provide for you. Compare the answers to your strategic priorities you developed in D-1.
- D-3. Use Catalyst's *Your FOCUS on the World* to further **match your church's global profile with your best strategic opportunities**. Consider engaging a facilitator to help guide you through this process. Contact [Catalyst](#) or your partner mission agency for assistance.
- D-4. Analyze your church's greatest **untapped potential**. What gifts, passions, and expertise is unused but might be engaged for global impact?
- D-5. Set **3-5 year goals** for implementing a clear strategy. Your plan should have vision-casting, sending, financing, education, and leadership elements.

E. Where do we start... to move from good to great?

- E-1. Schedule a **retreat** with your missions leadership team. Spend some time renewing your understanding of God's heart for the world (see resources in A-1 above). Then evaluate together what you are doing that is most effective and what is not effective at all. How can you build on the best and stop wasting energy on what isn't working?
- E-2. Ask your **missionaries to evaluate you**. [Click here](#) for some questions you can ask them to respond to. [Click here](#) for guidelines on different types of missionary care.
- E-3. Set some measurable goals to grow your **global intercession**. [Click here](#) for some resources and ideas.
- E-4. Evaluate your **missionary-sending process**. If you don't have a clear pathway, prioritize developing one. [Click here](#) for some guidelines and samples. [Click here](#) for one church's approach.
- E-5. Develop a "what's next" **mentoring** system that follows up each individual when they return from a **short-term trip**.

We make one more "start here" recommendation in our related **blog**: [Need This Ingredient for Success?](#)

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