

# POSTINGS

articles for missions mobilizers



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## Missions Events

### What speaks to congregations today?

An annual, weeklong missions conference was once a staple of church life and a key to people's commitment to global ministry. Some churches still hold successful conferences or all-church events, but the challenge is greater due to packed schedules and conflicting demands. In this issue, *Postings* reports on fresh ideas church missions leaders are using to engage 21st century congregations.

Has your church found creative ways to engage your congregation in missions through church-wide events? [Tell us](#) and we will share them in a future issue.

## FEATURE PERSONAL CONTACT

Regardless of the schedule or design of the event, every church we interviewed tied success to the amount of personal interaction between missionaries/global partners and members of the church.

### Home potlucks

Our best interaction happens over meals in various homes. Ahead of time, we develop a hospitality questionnaire to identify those who will house a missionary, loan them a car, or host a potluck dinner. For these dinners, the hosts invite 10-12 adults plus kids. The workers share and then the group prays over them. These home fellowships are the highlight



of our conference for both the congregation and our missionaries. *Steve Scoffone, Church of the Saviour, Wayne, PA*

## One church plans a joint staff/missionary outing each year.

### Meet-ups with staff

Multiple churches make sure that their missionaries and visiting partners have time with their church staff. Some have workers participate in the weekly staff meeting. Others schedule one-on-one meetings of missionaries with specific staff they think would have common interests. Still others host a breakfast or lunch with staff, or at least a coffee time. One church plans a staff/missionary outing each year; one year it was kayaking.

## PLAN WELL

### Goals and evaluation

Several churches emphasize the importance of setting specific goals for each year's conference and afterward request an evaluation from multiple perspectives—including the conference team, the missions leadership team, and the pastoral staff. One church also develops a survey for congregational feedback.

### A multiple-Sundays approach

Instead of a week-long conference, our church has a missions focus on four consecutive Sundays, usually in February. Our pastor preaches at least one of these Sundays, assuring that our people hear a missions challenge from their own church leader. It also means that our



people hear about missions even if they don't attend worship every Sunday. *Wanda Slack, Ellerslie Road Baptist, Edmonton, AB, Canada*

### Three consistent elements

Our conference has a different theme every year, but to keep an emphasis on our overarching missions priorities, we always include three things:

1. some focus on the unreached,
2. at least one event focused on Muslims,
3. something creative that engages people under the age of 40.

This third element is always partially addressed through a very extensive children's program that runs three evenings of our conference. Because kids beg their parents to bring them, it increases adult involvement too. Also, we

always make sure that we include at least one speaker from the Millennial generation.

*Steve Scoffone, Church of the Saviour*

## Workshops

While all churches feature their missionaries' ministries in various speaking contexts, some churches also incorporate sessions designed to provide information to help their people engage personally. Topics include things like "The World of Missionary Kids," "How to Begin Moving Toward Missionary Service," and "Ways You Can Assist Our Missions Program."

## Epilogue on vision

The Sunday following our conference, our senior pastor or I share a message that launches our missions vision for the coming year. We also encourage people to sign up for our sending teams—a commitment that runs



for one year and concludes at conference time next year. *Allen, Heritage Baptist Church, Lynchburg, VA*

## SERVE THE MISSIONARIES

### Ministry to global partners

Monday-Friday morning we have a program just for our missionaries. Each morning begins with a continental breakfast at 9:00. After that, on Monday morning, we always divide up into a men's group and a women's group for sharing. This is a "safe setting" where they can be honest with peers they trust to understand and be empathetic. This sharing opens doors so

that they can minister to each other throughout the rest of the week. The other four mornings our format varies. There are worship, testimonies, and prayer. Some mornings our missionaries share, but we also have staff lead interactive discussions on various topics we believe are of broad interest. Each day we conclude with a lunch provided by volunteers.

*Steve Scoffone, Church of the Saviour*

## INVOLVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### Children's missions project with a twist

Our third- to sixth-graders adopt a missions project each year and are challenged during the month prior to our conference to contribute each week. Then they bus tables at our missions dinner on the Sunday of our conference. We explain that all the tips they receive go toward their project. The kids compete to see who can do the best job of clearing plates and earning tips toward their project. Everyone enjoys helping the kids reach their project goal.

*Allen, Heritage Baptist Church*

### Scavenger hunt

Each classroom in our church is named for a country, and they are geographically grouped so that there is a North African wing, a South American wing, etc. Last year we gave each participant a map that assigned them to visit various "countries" around our campus and included a list of questions. Outside each of these classrooms we posted a paper with a QR code. Scanning that code with their smart

phone brought up information about that country or a missionary who serves there. The information would answer one question on their sheet. Following the event, candy bars were awarded to those with right answers.

*Allen, Heritage Baptist Church*

**Global missions nights several times a year feature a live simulcast or video.**

## THINK BEYOND THE CONFERENCE

### Birthday Gift for Jesus Campaign

We hold this campaign each November, and it creates a global context for our own Christmas celebration. We choose a significant project related to one of our partners. Sometimes we fly the partner in to help our people understand the strategic nature of the project. Or we may send a videographer to shoot a mini-documentary that is shown in our services. One year a panel of our people who had been involved with that partner introduced the project. Everyone gets excited about reaching the goal; it's a highlight of our church year.



We like to invite the worker back afterward to report on the impact of the gift. *Drew McClary, First Christian Church, Springfield, OH*

### Global missions nights

We hold these special evenings several times a year featuring a live simulcast of something like Secret Church or a video of a powerful message from a program such as the Cross Conference. It's an easy event for a smaller church like ours to pull off because it doesn't require us to



develop a lot of programming. We watch the message, discuss it, and pray. *Gary Eberly, Brandywine Grace Church, Downingtown, PA*

### Wall of the Unreached

Many churches rent this traveling wall (available from [Unleashed for the Unreached](#) in three sizes) and use it as part of their missions conference or a separate event. Some churches set up the wall in their sanctuary and during worship services focus prayer on the unreached peoples. Others set it up in their foyer and encourage people to linger at the wall to pray individually or in groups for the various peoples listed. Supplemental materials can be made available to encourage ongoing prayer for the unreached.



### Field trips

Many churches report that they organize visits to local mosques or temples, or tour local ministries. Going together (churches provided transportation in vans or busses) makes the visits less intimidating and more fun. In some cases, hands-on ministry or ministry training

is part of the day. In other situations, diaspora hosts provide an ethnic meal or even entertain their guests with native dances. Participants are encouraged to consider how they could return to assist these ministries and/or reach out to internationals in their own context.

### 30 Days of Prayer

Another congregation-wide prayer initiator many churches use is the [30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World](#) published each year to coincide with Ramadan. Now there is also a [15 Days of Prayer for the Hindu World](#). These tools are far more effective if there is an effort to include specific requests in corporate prayer during worship, small-group prayer times, and prayer in Sunday school classes and as families (there is a children's version of the Muslim guide). During worship services showing a [Prayercast](#) video that highlights a people group mentioned in the booklet increases the impact.

## ADOPT ONE OF THESE IDEAS

### Personal missionary banners

Every missionary or partner who participates in our missions conference has a booth in our foyer area during the conference. Prior to the conference we ask each of them to provide us with an up-to-date photo. We make a 2x8-foot banner including a large replica of their photo and appropriate information about

their ministry location and focus. After the conference, they can take the banner and use it when they visit other churches. It creates a powerful visual message for our conference and serves our workers too. *Allen, Heritage Baptist Church*

### Giant inflatable globe

Several churches reported that they display a large, inflatable globe (6-20 feet diameter globes are available online) during or ahead of their missions event. Some attach signs indicating the location of each of their workers.



### Engaging speakers already in the area

We schedule our missions focus to coincide with Missions Fest Alberta which happens annually in our city. This allows us to have major speakers in our pulpit who are already going to be in our area. You can piggyback in this way on any missions event being held in your geographic vicinity. *Wanda Slack, Ellerslie Road Baptist*

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