

POSTINGS

articles for missions mobilizers



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Disrupt Your Missions Budget Thinking

How to approach your missions budgeting with fresh perspective

Disruptive forces are changing many areas of life, and your church's missions budget may be feeling the impact. For some churches, societal disruption is creating a climate where their missions investment is increasing, while other churches report that their overall church income is down and/or their missions budget is being reduced. Still other churches are aware that they should adapt but they consider all their missions funds to be locked into "forever" commitments.

DISRUPTION CAN BE HEALTHY

Regardless of the upward or downward trend of your missions budget, disruption can be a good thing. In Scripture we find that God specializes in using major disruptions to challenge His people to take faith-stretching action. Disruption for Noah was a flood. For Daniel, a king's life-threatening edict. For Peter, a call to leave all to follow Jesus. Each became an influential man of God because of how they responded.

As your church functions in times of major ministry and generational upheaval, missions budgeting is one place to look for God's invitation to faith-stretching change. *Postings* offers these suggestions and downloadable tools to help your team rethink your missions budgeting process in light of these disruptions.

SHIFT YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Shift from a "giving" to a "generosity" mentality

One of the best ways to understand this reorientation is through the resources on the [Generous Church website](#). Learn what this shift is all about and then meet with your pastor to discuss how you might be able to implement more of this whole-life generosity approach to giving—it is a perfect fit for missions!

Shift from a "limited" to an "expandable" resources mentality

Very few churches have maxed out their giving potential. During the war,

Syrian believers had no money to give but were committed to supporting their missionaries. Instead of money, pieces of their precious jewelry were placed in the offering to send out workers. What a model of sacrificial giving!

In the Western church, giving has usually come from our abundance. Today God may be calling a new generation of believers to give out of more limited financial resources. Despite college debt and a sometimes difficult job market, we must be bold in challenging a new generation of

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God's children to follow the biblical command to give liberally. Along with that challenge to radical obedience, we as church missions leaders must model giving at a level of sacrifice.

CRITIQUE YOUR CURRENT BUDGET

Analyze your current missions income

It's easy to assume that we know who is giving, why they are giving, and how they are giving. Take some time to study the various streams of missions income and changes over time. Especially key is understanding the motivation and habits of giving that set apart younger generations from their parents and grandparents. [We have provided some tools.](#)

Analyze giving by category. The tools include a chart designed to help you analyze the various income streams that make up your church's overall

missions giving. Do you see trends in your missions income over this five-year period? Can you identify the reasons? Talk to others in your church about your conclusions.

Analyze giving by age. Has your church assessed giving patterns, particularly of younger generations (20s, 30s, 40s)? You may want to gather representative groups from each of these decades to discuss the giving patterns they see in their peers at your church. [Here](#) is a list of discussion questions. Welcome their honest

opinions—listening well without being defensive.

Analyze your current missions allocations.

How well do your budget allocations

match your current missions priorities? [We have provided several tools to analyze where your missions funds are going.](#) Choose one or two that are most important to you, perhaps ones that you have not previously used to analyze your allocations.

RETHINK PRIORITIES

Invite younger church members into the budgeting process

People give to what they are excited about and committed to. Ask representatives of the 20s and 30s age groups to participate in your budget decisions. Help them understand why you have supported certain workers and ministries. Listen to what they are passionate about and what they believe your church should support. How can you incorporate at least some of what they are proposing? [Here's](#) how one church engaged younger adults.

Fund activities that promise greater future impact

All successful businesses invest back into their company because they know that it is critical for future health, maybe even for their survival. Yet many missions teams fail to consider the strategic question of what they need to spend in order to continue to sustain and increase their global impact into the future.

Consider these high-potential, future-oriented investments:

- 1. Fund internships.** More and more churches are recognizing the value of intensive [global internship programs](#) to develop the maturity and ministry-readiness of potential global workers. Funding scholarships for young-adult interns allows you to identify those serious about cross-cultural ministry, affirm that you value their personal development, and expand their perspective of God's global purpose that can impact the rest of their lives.
- 2. Fund training for your missions team.** Every church should consider setting aside funds to send members of their team to mobilization training events, hiring consultants/trainers, buy training resources, or fund retreats where their team can bond and plan together. Investing funds to expand the missions understanding of new/younger team members is particularly valuable.
- 3. Fund survey trips for qualified prospective workers.** Help those seriously considering extended service in a particular location to make a survey trip. A [well-designed trip](#) will help confirm God's leading

and the process of choosing the agency and team where they best fit.

- 4. Fund pastoral staff trips to the field.** There may be no quicker payback for a missions investment than sending your pastor and spouse to see firsthand what God is doing. Don't wait for your pastor to ask—set aside funds and ask your leaders to make sure this is not taken from vacation time.
- 5. Fund continuing education for your global workers.** Paying for ongoing education of your workers produces high dividends for global impact. Regularly ask how your missionaries are continuing to learn; offer to help underwrite online or in-residence studies that are applicable to ministry.
- 6. Fund global workers' renewal.** Workers often live and minister under great stress. Time away for spiritual, physical, and emotional refreshment is essential. Yet these

respite can be costly. Set aside funds to assure that your workers can get the breaks they need to function at their best.

- 7. Fund children's missions education and involvement.** Purchase missions materials for teachers to use with their classes. Send your children's ministries director on missions trips. Set aside funds for local missions projects that involve families.

- 8. Fund unanticipated opportunities.** Urgent needs and unexpected open doors may present opportunities that were unknown when you were developing your budget. Check out our previous [issue of Postings](#) on this topic.

DEFUND WHAT'S NO LONGER CONNECTED OR EFFECTIVE

Yes, you can. In fact, in some cases, you must take people and/or organizations out of your budget. Missions teams cannot refuse to reallocate funds just because they fear the reaction of others in the congregation. Nor can a church continue funding someone just because that worker expects them to. Your church may have begun supporting that person or ministry in an era when financial commitments were open-ended. But in our contemporary, fast-changing context, neither

Intensive internship programs develop the maturity and ministry-readiness of potential global workers.

missionaries nor supporting churches deem it wise to be locked into a lifetime commitment. Your responsibility is to invest your church's funds to achieve what you believe God is calling your church to do today. This may require you to stop supporting certain entities. Remember, God is responsible, not you, to provide for His workers in the harvest field.

When you choose to stop funding a global worker, if at all possible wait until they are on home assignment to

Find a way to take on support for at least one individual or family from the Millennial or GenX generation.

take them out of your budget. It is hard for missionaries to replace lost support while on the field. It may be wise to decrease support over a couple of years, especially if your giving represents 10% or more of their support.

FIND NEW WAYS TO ENCOURAGE GIVING

There are good reasons to fund missions as a part of the overall church budget. However, younger generations have far less commitment to the institution of the church and therefore have less sense of responsibility to support the general fund. Their giving habits often need to be developed through challenges to give to special projects and to get involved hands on. If you introduce projects as a way to expand your overall giving, remind your congregation often that project support cannot replace their regular giving.

Establish the discipline of reporting regularly on results. Nothing encourages generous giving as much as hearing and seeing the results produced by prior gifts. Yet it is easy to launch the next “ask” before presenting an update about how God used a recent project. Make it a habit to always report before asking again.

Choose one or two budgeted items to be funded instead as a project.

For example, if you support a school overseas, you might take the month of September, when the children in your congregation are returning to school, to communicate about the school ministry and raise the needed funds. Or you might ask one of your small groups or Sunday school classes to adopt that ministry and provide the related funding.

Support younger workers. If the missionaries you support are all over the age of 45, find a way to take on support for at least one individual or family from the Millennial or GenX generation. Connect them personally to your young adults class or a small group that includes people in their age bracket. Help the group understand that these young workers need monthly support from your church and challenge them to begin to give regularly to cover this financial commitment.

Launch a GoFundMe campaign.

Experiment with funding a budgeted project that is particularly attractive to younger generations through this method.

Sponsor a funding event. Fund a worker’s support through a community event such as a 5k run, a golf outing, a flea-market day, etc. Recruit a team of younger adults to run the event and involve their peers.

Use Advent Conspiracy. This [program](#) asks families to forego expensive Christmas gifts and instead invest the funds for eternal impact. This challenge can generate a significant amount of new giving.

Challenge adults through kids. Get the children of your church excited about a project and they will recruit their parents to give too. For instance, if you support local organizations, ask them about one aspect of their ministry that is funded by general donations such as yours, especially something tangible and kid-friendly. Then make it a project rather than a budget item.

Encourage teens to set giving goals. Businesses are taking seriously the spending power of Gen Z (the generation following the Millennials) and the church must too. Many in this generation are looking for a challenge worth committing to. Dialog with them about a cause that they consider worth sacrifice. Challenge them to set their own financial goal that requires faith.

Have you used other methods to stretch your congregation’s giving, especially younger generations? Please [share your ideas](#) with us. We also welcome your questions.

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