

# POSTINGS

*articles for missions mobilizers*



November 2024 | Vol. 19 | Issue 11 | by Ellen Livingood

## Internships

**Valuable experience on  
the journey to effective  
missions service**

A growing number of churches are considering internships to be an important early step for young adults who express interest in missions. This trend is driven by at least two factors: First, young adults are hesitant to make long-term commitments where they might fail or discover that missions is not a fit for them. Second, church leaders are increasingly uncomfortable with recommending unproven young adults as ready for the spiritual, emotional, and physical rigors of long-term, cross-cultural ministry. Internships address both of these issues.

Regardless of what title they may go by these days—internship, apprenticeship, residency, etc.—these short programs (usually a summer – two years) offer guidance in personal development, missions

philosophy and skills development, hands-on ministry experience, and a context in which to clarify future ministry fit. The greatest benefits of the internship model are the built-in training and mentoring components. While many agencies recognize that all new workers need additional development and guidance, these elements are central to an internship assignment.

In addition, some internships include professional counseling to address personal issues or family tensions that need to be resolved. Programs may also offer formal course work to address deficiencies in educational preparation. Another benefit? Internships usually require some support-raising, but budgets are stripped down without items like retirement-fund contributions, household relocation expenses, etc.

***Ryan Murphy, Global Outreach Pastor, Temple (TX) Bible Church***

In my senior year of college, I felt led to go overseas. GoCorps removed the barriers to finding the right placement by providing a coach who shared options of two-year opportunities I could do that helped me get over the hurdle of “Where do I even start?”

Today as an outreach pastor and director of college ministry, I love that GOCorps curates placements around the globe in a variety of careers/professions. It’s easy to point students toward GoCorps and explain that a coach will present overseas opportunities where the recent grad can use their passion and new skills for the glory of God and expansion of His Kingdom.

By the conclusion of the internship, leaders will have watched the intern succeed, fail, and grow. Individual counsel throughout the program, but especially at its conclusion, should provide wise advice on next steps based on this extended observation of both the intern’s strengths and areas where additional growth is needed.

***Ashley, a spring '24 GFM intern***

Global Frontier Mission’s program introduced me to many practical aspects of missions and showed me areas in which more growth will be beneficial. Serving in the community helped reveal which ministry styles seem to come more naturally to me. As I’ve grown in self-awareness, I am able to consider ways to intentionally improve in techniques that are more challenging for me.

After completing their service, interns may move on to a job or other ministry assignment, yet they usually remain enthusiastic missions supporters and engage more effectively at their local church and community level, often serving in leadership roles for their church’s missions programs. Interns who feel God’s leading to continue in missions, are matured, and better understand their individual gifting and the costs of cross-cultural service. If their internship is under the direction of a mission agency, they can determine their fit there, and many times, also their match with a specific team.

The young adult who returns from a successful internship with the enthusiastic endorsement of a field supervisor/mentor gains credibility with their church’s missions leadership. Such individuals are also better prepared to present their future ministry as they reenter the support-raising process to become career workers.

As the value of internships becomes evident, more programs are being developed so that today an internship can be customized to fit the gifts and needs of the individual intern and the preferences of the sending church.

**More programs are being developed to fit the gifts and needs of interns and their sending church.**

### ***SFL going to South Asia with Global Partners***

My two-month NEXT internship gave me the opportunity to see what long-term mission work looks like on a day-to-day basis and a better expectation of a missionary's typical schedule. It reaffirmed that I really could take the leap to long term. A mix of hard and fun growth, NEXT helped me identify specific ways I could use my skills to support the global Church and helped me recognize the importance of finding a site that would be a good fit. Now I am an appointed missionary, fundraising to move to a totally different part of the world than where I interned.

## **INTERNSHIP COMPONENTS TO BE CONSIDERED**

- 1. Length:** Internships need to be long enough to provide an extended immersion in cross-cultural life and work, as well as to develop and demonstrate the intern's maturity and fit for ministry. Some are as short as two months, but most are in the one- to two-year range.
- 2. Ministry focus:** This could be an assignment in general church planting or a role related to the intern's specific professional training and gifting.
- 3. Location and leadership factors:** The internship can be entirely overseas, entirely domestic, or a combination of both. If the internship includes an overseas component, the specific geographic location/context or particular people group may be an important consideration, or the opportunity to work with one of your church missionaries or indigenous partners may be paramount.
- 4. A specialized program exclusively for interns or one which embeds them in an established team:** Mission agency programs usually place interns in existing field teams. Other programs often develop cohort teams made up entirely of interns.
- 5. Sponsoring organization:** Some internships are coordinated by the church, but this requires a significant time commitment to provide training, mentoring, and supervision. More often, direction is delegated to a mission

agency or ministry organization, or a company that specializes in internships and training. Sometimes the sending church wants to use the internship as a time for church leaders to get to know the sending agency; this hands-on opportunity will allow both sides to “test drive” their compatibility.

**6. Family or other special needs:** Not every internship easily accommodates families. A successful internship requires that spouses and children also have a positive experience. Some interns have physical or other special needs that must be considered.

**7. Expectations of church and intern regarding training, mentoring, and concluding evaluation/recommendations:** Internship programs vary as to the amount of formal training in

language, culture, and evangelism/church planting they include as well as personal spiritual development and leadership skills. The emphasis on individual coaching/counseling/mentoring also varies as well as the level of professional expertise of those fulfilling these roles. Also to be considered, what type of final evaluation will be provided?

**8. College or graduate-level studies:** Some programs offer, or at least create space for, the completion of accredited educational courses, especially in biblical studies or missions. A few programs may be run in conjunction with an educational institution that will offer credit for the internship itself. Medical students often want to identify an internship that qualifies as one of their residency rotations.

## VARIED INTERNSHIP MODELS

### Profession-oriented programs

- **GoCorps** handpicks agency-provided internship opportunities and serves as a placement service for two-year apprenticeships that allow recent college graduates to use their degree overseas. Their challenge to young adults: Tithe your career by giving two years of missions service. GoCorps has created a streamlined application process, and their staff serve as “connector, coach, and catalyst.” They also provide some financial assistance for college loan payments to those successfully completing the program.

While GoCorps seems to be fairly unique in this model of aggregating openings, other agencies also offer profession-related opportunities.

### Overseas programs

- **Café 1040's Oversees Missions Mentorship** is a 12-week program offered in three locations—Central Asia, Europe, and North Africa. Cohorts of up to 15 people spend some of their time learning the biblical basis of missions, cultural and religious background, language-

learning techniques, etc. Mentees are exposed to a broad spectrum of methodologies for reaching the unreached. The majority of their time is spent engaging with locals under the guidance of a team of experienced missionaries. Virtual pre-field preparation and post-field debrief/mentoring components round out the experience. The concluding evaluation is available to the sending church.

- **Radical's Training** is an eight-month program in Western Asia for interns recommended by their church who sense God's calling to pursue long-term service among the unreached. Two days per week are spent in classroom study of biblical theology and missions, focusing on evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development leading to the formation and multiplication of healthy, national-led churches. Three days per week are committed to language and culture acquisition in the community and in discipleship groups led by Radical mentors. Trainees also develop a business-platform proposal that could provide future access into a restricted-access country. A care coordinator from each person's local church stays in regular contact to provide support.

### US programs with immersion in diaspora ministry

- *Global Frontier Missions (GFM)* offers a **"Train and Go,"** apprenticeship in collaboration with mission-agency partners. The year-long program begins with GFM's five-month missionary training school in Clarkston, GA, one of America's most diverse immigrant communities. The training involves classroom instruction, life-on-life discipling by long-term

These are only a sample of the organizations that provide valuable cross-cultural experience via some type of internship.

missionaries, and hands-on, cross-cultural service among refugees. The second phase is offered at GFM's ministry hub in South Asia or with one of several agency partners who place interns in teams serving unreached peoples.

- **International Project's Equip Program** is a 10-month internship among immigrants in New York City. Their program focuses around four areas of worker development: (1) missiological and church paradigms, (2) character, (3) biblical knowledge, and (4) ministry and team skills. Each intern participates in training sessions, works with a coach on ministry skills and team dynamics, and has a mentor who serves as a personal discipler/counselor/life coach. Eighty percent of each intern's time is dedicated to outreach and discipling new believers. During the second half of the program, interns develop their own philosophy of ministry that will guide their future ministry focus, choice of agency, etc.

### Mission-agency run programs

- **Beyond's Phase 1** is an internship that forms the first of three steps designed to prepare workers for effective long-term field ministry. In what Beyond calls, "communities of practice," they learn biblical principles of how to make disciples of the lost and apply what they learned in

actual discipling situations. Following Phase 1, participants spend roughly two years overseas in Phase 2 learning the language and culture and being mentored in making reproducing disciples in that context. In Phase 3 they join or form a long-term team focused on an unreached people group.

Many other agencies and denominations offer internships. Some are primary short-term ministry assignments with limited training and mentoring. Compare carefully.

### Denominational programs

- Global Partners and The Wesleyan Church offer **NEXT**, a mentored, cross-cultural internship aimed to assist young adults to strengthen their connection with God and discover their place in the world. Interns spend two to four months at one of 11 diverse sites. Each site has its unique ministry, but all focus on four formational essentials for their interns: immersion in Culture, nurturing Character, building Community, and refining Calling. There's a balance in emphasis between growing in self-awareness and making a meaningful impact as they serve alongside an ongoing ministry team.

### Church-based programs

- **Elmbrook Church**, Milwaukee, WI, runs a hybrid apprenticeship program that combines a twice-a-month Cultivate Group (Bible study and missions books discussion) followed by an on-field ministry assignment where they work with an Elmbrook partner organization or supported field workers. During their months in the Cultivate Group, apprentices are mentored through a process to discern where God may be calling them; this mentoring continues during the field ministry portion on a less intense level. Since 2011, over 75 have participated in apprenticeships, and today 12 couples and two singles who completed apprenticeships are on the field as long-term workers.

---

These are only a sample of the organizations that provide valuable cross-cultural experience via some type of internship. Why not research some of the above and ask agencies you already know and trust what they might offer. With a short list of options that fit your church's criteria, you are ready to launch discussions with college juniors, seniors, and other young adults whether God is calling them to invest the next phase of their life in missions.

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 [catalystservices.org/postings](https://catalystservices.org/postings).  
READ past *Postings* articles at [catalystservices.org/postings-gallery-of-archives](https://catalystservices.org/postings-gallery-of-archives).