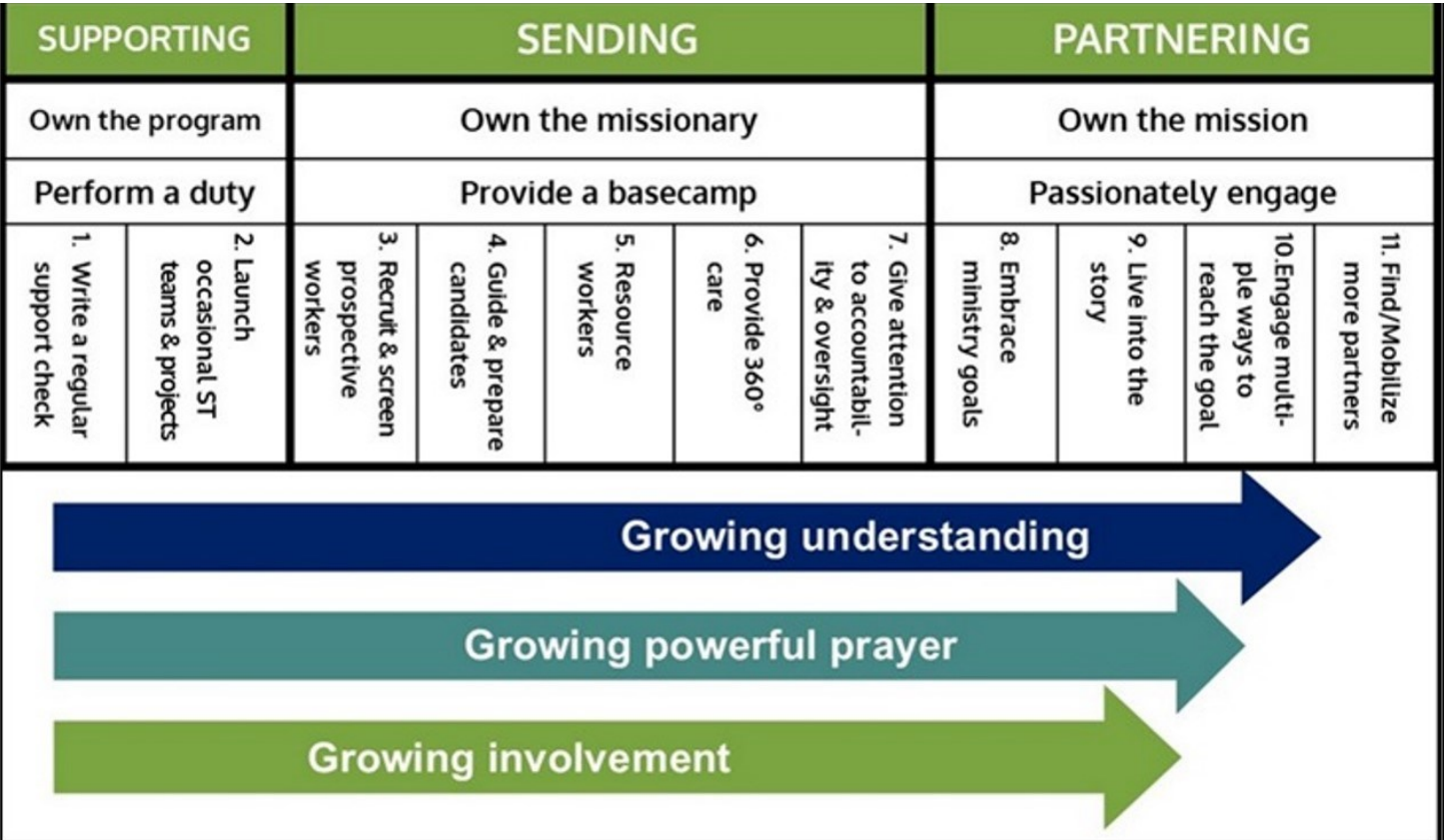




Postings Classic Issue | by Ellen Livingood

A Supporting-Sending-Partnering Continuum

Representing stages of a church's missions ownership



PARTNERING	Own the mission	Passionately engage	11. Find/Mobilize more partners
			10. Engage multiple ways to reach the goal
			9. Live into the story
			8. Embrace ministry goals
SENDING	Own the missionary	Provide a basecamp	7. Give attention to accountability & oversight
			6. Provide 360° care
			5. Resource workers
			4. Guide & prepare candidates
			3. Recruit & screen prospective workers
SUPPORTING	Own the program	Perform a duty	2. Launch occasional ST teams & projects
			1. Write a regular support check

Do you have a chart on a wall somewhere in your house with a series of lines and dates? If so, you probably have fond memories of the fun of measuring and recording how much your kids had grown, perhaps on each birthday.

As church leaders and mobilizers, we are also eager to measure a congregation's growth in missions engagement. This month's *Postings* provides something of a growth chart to help you evaluate the "height" of your involvement with your missionaries. Begin at the bottom of this list and measure how far you've grown!



First Level: Support the Missionary

Write a regular support check. Most churches begin by making a monthly or annual support commitment, signaling the start of their missions relationship. For denominational churches, being officially matched with a missionary may mark the first step.

Launch occasional short-term teams and projects. Typically the next step is to occasionally send a short-term team or give to a financial project suggested by the missionary.

Second level: Send the Missionary

Recruit and screen prospective workers. As they mature in missions, many churches want to have a role in identifying those God is calling to missions service (Acts. 13:1-3). They grow into proactive senders, developing a [series of steps](#) to recognize those God wants in more extended cross-cultural ministry.

Guide and prepare candidates. As potential workers begin moving toward missions, church leaders realize a need to be more proactive in providing mentors for those planning to go. Some also create individualized internships or other training programs to ready future workers.

Resource workers. Once missionaries reach the field, the proactive sending church keeps in regular contact to discover ways that they can come alongside their missionary and help them as an individual or family. Often they form [advocate teams](#) for each worker. They may send gifts, field regular short-term ministry teams, and provide [practical help](#) during home assignment.

Provide 360° care. At this growth stage, the church begins to interact regularly with their workers at a much deeper level. The goal is to help their missionaries stay healthy in every way—spiritually, physically, emotionally, mentally, and as a family. Sensitive to changing needs, the congregation responds quickly. They may provide appropriate [types of counseling](#), underwrite R&R trips for ministry breaks, offer scholarships for training, cover the cost of emergency trips home, etc.



Give attention to accountability and oversight.

As churches continue to grow in their sending capacity, they may require greater accountability. They work with the mission agency (if their workers are serving under an organization) to clarify expectations. While major oversight is usually delegated to the agency, proactive sending churches identify the major decisions for which they want to have a seat at the table.

Third level: Partner with the Missionary

Embrace ministry goals. As churches continue to mature in their missionary relationships, they become true partners by joining their missionaries in a passionate commitment to achieve ministry goals. This may mean they commit to seeing a people group reached, a church-planting movement started in a certain country, human trafficking stopped in a given province, a Bible translation completed, etc. In essence they say to their missionary, “We believe that God wants this accomplished, and we will join you in shouldering the task of reaching the goal in every way we can.”

Live into the story. At this point, the entire congregation begins to better understand the big picture of what God is doing. They know the difficulties of the task, the various individuals and organizations involved, and the way that various efforts are intertwined in an ongoing narrative of God’s work in this place. On-site relationships begin to go very deep.

Engage multiple ways to reach the goal. By this time, the church will be identifying additional ways that they can contribute to achieving the larger goal. Some involvements may expand well beyond what their missionaries are doing. The church may tap into expertise and resources they never before used in ministry. Together, everyone is learning how God would have them contribute to reaching the goal.

Find/Mobilize more partners. As they stretch as “tall” as possible, the church may realize that the task needs more than any one congregation can contribute. They eagerly invite additional churches to join in completing the task they believe God has called them to do.

How “tall” is your missions program? Are you growing from supporter to sender to partner church? Have you matured from seeing missions as a duty to becoming a proactive basecamp for workers, to developing the ability to be genuine field partners? Is your congregation’s understanding, prayer investment, and involvement consistently growing?

If you feel your church needs help in identifying how to keep growing your missions involvement, don’t be shy about asking for help. Contact [Catalyst](#) or ask an experienced missions pastor or mission agency for advice.

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