

# **SUGGESTIONS ON WAYS OF BUILDING A MISSIONARY AWARENESS IN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION**

1. Get members to make a pledge that they will follow the teaching of Jesus and pray daily to the "Lord of the harvest" that He send laborers into the vineyard.
2. Introduce the concept of "prayer warriors" inviting members to to pray regularly for specific missionaries and their needs.
3. Encourage young people to be "pen pals" of other young people their age who are on the mission field.
4. Urge families to "adopt" a missionary family as their own project offering prayer support, correspondence (especially e-mail), sending money or gifts as the occasion merits, offering hospitality when they are on furlough, and if possible, visiting them on the field.
5. Build a missions emphasis into all of the Sunday School and Bible Class curriculum so that repeatedly, at all ages, this underlining of Christ's "Great Commission" is given.
6. Charge whoever preaches to weave a recurrent missions theme into his lessons to the congregation.
7. Invite as guest speakers persons involved in missions. Treat them as heroes of the faith.
8. Create a missions bulletin board with news from the mission fields attractively and interestingly displayed. The materials displayed should be changed regularly. Name your most creative people to this process.
9. Include in the church library good books and periodicals in the field of missions and encourage members to read them.
10. Circulate pertinent missions reports and articles to elders, deacons, and missions committee people with a sign off list to make sure they actually read the materials they are given.
11. Assign missions committee members the task of reading mission books and then giving an overview or a "book report" to the committee, or to the congregation.
12. Have special emphasis days where a specific part of the world is pinpointed with, displays, lessons specifying the spiritual need, the progress of the church, etc., Where feasible, a potluck could be enjoyed where the food of that part of the world is featured.
13. Feature great missionaries (past or present) in biographical sketches of their lives.
14. Work toward dedicating half of your budget to evangelism and to benevolence.
15. Support fully as many missionaries as possible. If you cannot afford full support, then do partial.
16. Originate a yearly special contribution for world evangelism. In some instances, the need to "seize the moment" may be so pressing

that it would be good to borrow money for evangelism much as we do for real estate.

17. Work to create a sense of partnership with missionaries you support as Philippi did with Paul. This included visiting him on the field.

18. Labor to share the concept that evangelism is one piece of cloth. It begins with the efforts of individual members in the context of "their" world, and spreads to the whole world. This will involve a big dose of the Biblical case for the ministry (priesthood) of all believers, and for the fact that the Lord has gifted every Christian to be a worker in His vineyard.

19. Emphasize that with God, availability is more important than ability. He can add whatever we lack, but He cannot use us if we do not volunteer.

20. Emphasize that the task of the church is to sow, and to reap. It is the Lord's task to give the increase.

21. Work to disabuse the idea that the only criteria for a ripe field is the number of converts. Sometimes a field with fewer converts who themselves become leaders and catalysts may in the long run prove to be the most ripe.

22. Educate members to the necessity of sometimes clearing out the rocks and doing extensive preparation of the soil before a fertile harvest can be gleaned.

23. Appoint your most enthusiastic, dynamic members (male and female) to the missions committee.

24. Encourage your members of all ages to participate in "short term" missions, either nearby or abroad. This can begin in US missions that are near to home, using your junior high young people. High school young people can participate in works that are farther away, even in countries outside our borders. Families and adults of all ages can have a part. This is a sure way to build missions awareness in a local church.

25. Make it the goal of your local congregation to become known as a church which educates and sends out missionaries. Two groups should be targeted. Encourage parents to give their children to the mission fields of the world. Encourage members to say to you could be a missionary." The other major group (without excluding anyone in between!) is your people getting ready to retire. Encourage them to become evangelists. Training programs are available.

26. Start a summer missions camp for teens, as some are doing, where the whole experience is centered on missions.

27. Create an album with a variety of activity type pictures, and a journal with short articles and reports for each missionary family that you support. Keep these updated, and place them in conspicuous places in your building.

28. Antioch, perhaps the first great missions oriented church, sent its own members. There are churches who tell their members that if any of them equip themselves to go to a missions field, they can count on being supported by their local church.

29. Send your leaders to special workshops, seminars, or other educational programs regarding missions.
30. Other good things to do could include: a large map showing where your workers are located, a collection of news articles of the general happenings in the part of the world you have targeted, naming a missionary of the month, creating a web page with information about your evangelistic activities, featuring appropriate missionary films, and occasionally, including the "live" voices of your missionaries in your assembly with a statement, or a prayer, by phone.
31. In short, do everything possible to turn the attention of your local church out away from self, and toward the lost and suffering world that surrounds us. Encourage it to be a church which gives more than it takes, that serves more than it seeks to be served, and that makes pleasing God and others more important than pleasing self. If these things happen, it will be a mission minded church.

NOTE: My thanks to some of my colleagues in the Bible department at Harding who made some of the suggestions mentioned above.

Carl Mitchell