

WORLD

t h e G L S • c o n n e c t i o n

reviews



A ministry of
the GARBC

New Initiatives

For almost 200 years, local churches have sent Americans as missionaries to foreign soils to proclaim the gospel and plant churches among the nations of the world. The practice finds a solid Biblical basis in various New Testament expressions of the Great Commission. As Jesus' followers we are charged with making disciples of all nations. Jesus challenged His disciples to be "witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The Great Commission contains a going clause. Though it doesn't require every individual Christian to cross geographical, political, or cultural barriers to be obedient, the scope of the task is worldwide. How are we to reach the nations unless some are willing to go? Local churches have been privileged to send and support their members who obediently have answered God's call. God has been pleased and continues to use this army of soldiers who sacrifice life in their homeland to carry the life-changing message of Jesus Christ to individuals and the masses who are destitute of the truth.

Calling and training church planters

In recent years church leaders and missiologists have put forth another approach to reaching the nations. This alternative is not intended as a replacement but, rather, as a supplement to the sending of American missionaries. In many countries the gospel is bearing much fruit, and nationals are obeying the Great Commission. They realize that the Great Commission was not given to Americans, but to the church. Church members are responding to the call of God to make disciples and organize local churches.

This global missionary movement faces gigantic but not insurmountable challenges. What is insurmountable to the omnipotent God? While every Christian is to be a witness, certain individuals are called of God to formally prepare for a life devoted to reaching the nations and leading local churches. These people are called pioneer church planters. God is no respecter of persons as to whom He might call to this divine task. In both urban centers and remote villages in far-off places, men of God are responding to the need.

Where are these men to receive training to rightly understand God's revelation, to teach it in a culturally relevant way, and to conserve the results in local churches? How are they to understand the need to plant reproducing churches? American missionaries have had the benefit of Bible college and seminary. Similar training must be offered to nationals. Missionaries fill this role through resident Bible colleges similar to stateside schools, or through evening classes and modules in various venues. Online training or distance learning has emerged as an alternative to residency. In

a few notable examples, missionaries are traveling to different sites and rotating teachers among two to four geographical regions so they can offer a full curriculum over a set period of time. Missionaries engaged in training are investing in the next generation of church planters. "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Supporting church planters financially

The most urgent missionary challenge today relates to economics. "The average cost to support a missionary from North America is approximately \$6,032 per month. However, support needs range from a low of \$1,895 a month up to \$12,000. Factors which influence this variation include: the cost of living on the field of ministry, number of family members, children's educational options, ministry expenses, and start-up costs" (www.efca.org/files/document/reachglobal/understanding-missionary-support-8-08.pdf). At the same time that economic conditions abroad require more support, the churches in the States are experiencing budget shortfalls. Many churches are cutting all discretionary spending from their church budgets. Churches are evaluating their missionary budgets and in some cases are cutting by a percentage to be equitable. Others are trimming agency support first so they do not have to cut the support of missionaries who are on the field. Missionary committees and congregations face difficult and emotional issues when it relates to adjusting missionary support.

Questioning who should plant new churches: missionaries or nationals

If sending American missionaries overseas targets specific missionary work that the national people are not yet ready to undertake, the argument for sending missionaries is valid and the practice is justified. The justification however begs the question, Can local church planters more effectively fulfill the Great Commission in their culture and at much less expense? This question is prompting an emerging practice of supporting nationals to do the work of church planting. Should such a practice require the same level of accountability from the national as the American church planter? Should the American church inspect and receive reports from nationals? Some nationals regard accountability as evidence of a lack of trust. The challenges are not insurmountable, but at the same time, they cannot be dismissed as if nonexistent. We need the wisdom of God as we explore initiatives to effectively fulfill the Great Commission.

What Is an International Church-Planting Fund?

Mission agencies, missionaries, pastors, and churches have pondered the deputation or pre-field dilemma. When a family or individual answers the call of God to communicate the gospel cross-culturally, the challenge of raising the financial support is daunting. Every missionary recognizes that God uses the pre-field ministry in numerous ways, both in his

degrees of success, but the concept is worth exploring.

Nationals can minister in their own country without any cultural or language barriers. The need to spend a year or two in language study is eliminated. The cultural understanding, which can never be fully comprehended by a foreign missionary, is inherent in the national. He understands his own

ported for \$100–\$150 a month. He may need additional funds to buy a motorbike, or the national congregation may need some additional help when it comes to building a place of worship. However, the national church planter who is locally trained can be fully functioning in a short time with a minimal amount of support.

The nitty-gritty

A church-planting supply network will function as a fund supported by American local churches out of which national church planters from several countries will receive support. The church planters will be accountable to their local church association, which in turn will provide reports of the progress of each church plant. An approach of yearly evaluation and a planned termination will hold the church planter responsible for growth and teaching Biblical stewardship. Contributors to the fund will receive periodic reports from the country of their choice. To qualify for support, the church planter will have to be approved by a partnering association of the International Partnership. In addition to regular support, projects approved by the national associations will be promoted through the network.

An alternative

When we contemplate an initiative to address these issues, we must also structure our plan within the framework of Biblical truth. No one is calling for a moratorium on the sending of American missionaries. No limitation in Scripture restricts missionary involvement to Americans. But consider the formation of an American church-planting support network to help support national church planters.

A network is a group of individuals or organizations that are tied by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as values, visions, ideas, financial exchange, or friendship. In a church-planting network, the focus and vision of the group are directed toward the unified purpose of church planting in a number of countries. The network of churches and individuals pool their resources in a way that is more effective than each one supporting their own chosen ministry.

The international ministries of the GARBC—which include the International Partnership of Fundamental Baptist Ministries and Gospel Literature Services—encompass a network of about 9,000 churches. The opportunity to enable these churches to send out their own church planters to reach their own people exponentially multiplies the number of church planters in the world. The number one hindrance to national church planting in developing countries is finances. How can we as Americans, a financially blessed people, not partner with our international brothers in our common God-given mission?

Praying about it for your church

In a time of economic decline, the church must continue to creatively fulfill its mission. The national brings his native culture and an entire lifetime of in-country experience to enhance his efforts. While God is the One Who brings the increase of souls, the local church in the States can assist the one who plants and waters.

Nationals have an enormous advantage in reaching their own people. Why not enable nationals to plant churches by supporting their families in their own country? Economically it makes sense; culturally it makes sense. It fits the Biblical example that one part of the Body coordinates with another part of the Body (Ephesians 4:11–16).

For some churches, considering supporting a national church planter rather than an American missionary is a paradigm shift. But, based on our understanding of the Body of Christ, this approach should be considered. Pray for God's

direction and His prompting. You can begin support of national church planters by monthly support payable to the IPFBM and designated Church Planting Network. Together we can accomplish more!



own life and in the churches, but the road before him seems to have no end, especially given the amount of money needed for support and the current economic climate that is affecting churches.

Some churches are supporting individual national church planters, and many of them think their missionary dollars are being leveraged in a more cost-effective manner. This practice has met with varying

people and can more effectively strategize ways to reach them. The issues of outfit and passage and even furlough disappear. The thousands of dollars spent in deputation or pre-field ministry are not needed. The amount of money to support a national is pale in comparison to the amount needed to keep an American family on the field. In many developing countries a national church planter can be fully sup-



Expanding The Influence Through GLS

The rapid spread of Islam should not only alarm us; it is a call to the church of Jesus Christ to marshal its resources to expand the influence of biblical truth. Gospel Literature Services is exploring a new initiative to help meet that challenge.

GLS came into existence in 1973 for the purpose of supplying Regular Baptist Press Sunday School curriculum to missionaries around the globe. The goal of the missionary is to plant a reproducing local church. Ideally those churches become independent and indigenous as the missionary focuses his efforts in a new geographical area. Early in the history of GLS it became apparent that these new indigenous ministries also needed resources to effectively disciple new believers and build the body of Christ. GLS supplies biblical resources worldwide to enable developing Baptist ministries to fulfill the Great Commission. Its target is not only the ministries of missionaries but also the national churches that stand for the truth.

Gospel Literature Services is an extension of and a partner with Regular Baptist Press. The Press intentionally prints more materials than it will sell and makes the excess available for free international distribution through GLS. Each quarter GLS sends between three and four tons of materials into 25-40 countries. Vacation Bible School materials are also sent out each fall for children's ministries the following summer. Our national brothers repeatedly express their appreciation and desire for more materials. An example is a note from a partnering ministry in Northeast India:

I am so thankful to you and the ministry of GLS around the globe for the Vacation Bible School materials and other Sunday School materials. In my

ministries the materials I received freely from the GLS is a blessing on a blessing, though the materials are very limited. These last two years I have conducted the Vacation Bible School in the churches. Next year 2010 I am praying to conduct it in a School to reach the Good News to all the students regardless of caste and creed and religion. Kindly send 100 copies each for Primary, Junior and Youth for 2010.

Last April, 2009 Fellowship of Baptist Churches India conducted the Vacation Bible Class in a School of Jiribam, Manipur. 33 students accepted the Lord Jesus as their savior. I was present on the last day of it. The school authority was amazed to see the value of such ministry. Praise the Lord.

In His field,
Tomba Singh

Notice the statement in the first paragraph, "though the materials are very limited." He means he could use a lot more material, but we are only able to ship him a limited number of student books, etc.

What are the limiting factors of Gospel Literature Services? As expected, one is finances. Two years ago the larger shipments were reduced by 50% in order to contain costs. Since support for shipping costs has never been fully raised, the director, Chris Hindal continues to issue the challenge as he presents the ministry in the churches. The Formula 300 Team is an entry-level giving program which allows families, churches and small groups to underwrite the costs by com-



mitting \$30.00 a month. One-by-one God is assembling this team of faithful supporters. During this same period of time, the cost of shipping has risen by one-third. National churches in about forty countries are waiting for families and churches to step up and help.

The second limiting factor is the amount of material made available to GLS. Regular Baptist Press faces the same economic challenges to be solvent as does any other ministry. Christian Publishing is a competitive market as churches regularly assess their options. RBP carefully determines its print-run to supply its customers and also provide additional materials for GLS. The reality is that when RBP has a good selling quarter, fewer materials are available for free international distribution. Given that scenario, the ministry of GLS is limited by its supply of materials.

A new initiative on the horizon will create a new scenario. What if GLS could print Regular Baptist Press materials in another region of the world? The print-run or supply could be based upon the demand. While some of the foreign churches currently contribute toward the shipping costs, few are able to cover the cost of their own shipment. A regional printer would greatly



reduce the cost of shipping. Regional printing would have to be self-sustaining or subsidized to the level of fiscal solvency. The cost of printing could be greatly reduced by the lesser print-quality demanded by the culture. Churches could purchase the material for a price consistent with the local economy. Such an initiative would require the development of a distribution process and a RBP/GLS representative to present the materials to the churches. The challenges are big, but GLS is poised to seize the opportunity to impact the world with biblical truth.

Your concern about the spread of Islam should translate into personal involvement. Support the spread of biblical resources worldwide through the ministry of Gospel Literature Services.



Attention, Kids (and parents too)



God is pleased when you want to help share His Word with kids in other countries. In far-off places like India and Africa, many children come to church to learn about God, but their teachers don't know what to teach them. They really need Sunday School books!

Here is a way to help them. It's called Kids for GLS. If you e-mail Chris Hindal at chindal@garbc.org and include your name and address, you will receive a bank like the one in this picture.

Fill up your bank and then have your parents send a

check to:

Bank Project
Gospel Literature Services
1300 N. Meacham Road
Schaumburg, IL 60173

Your money will send Sunday School books to children in far-off places.

IPFBM Conference in Bangkok, Thailand



No matter the profession, conferences are held to sharpen people's skills and develop a sense of camaraderie within an organization or field. Such conferences boost morale and refocus people's energies towards common goals.

The International Partnership organized in 1999 has never yet had a gathering of its partners.

The partnership list continues to grow, but meaningful interaction is not possible as long as the partners remain anonymous to one another. With that in mind, the first-ever IPFBM conference is scheduled for November 4-7, 2009, in Bangkok, Thailand.

You're invited

We live in times that require strategic thinking about how believers can partner for Great Commission work. Every GARBC pastor is invited to attend this conference. It offers a tremendous opportunity to meet national pastors from several countries and to hear the challenges they face in ministry.

Get the details

Details are available online at www.garbcinternational.org. Attendees will want to note the two-day, add-on trip which includes a tour of the city of Bangkok (viewing the Grand

Palace, temples, and other cultural icons) and a worship service at a Thai Baptist church. To include this trip, the return flight should be scheduled for Monday, November 9.


Consider helping

For those who can't attend the conference, please consider the opportunity to help an international pastor by sponsoring his registration fee of \$150. Any amount given will help. Please make your check payable to IPFBM and designate it IPFBM Conference. The address is GARBC, 1300 N. Meacham Road, Schaumburg, IL 60173.

World Reviews — distributed quarterly
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of Regular Baptist Churches

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