

# Simplified Small Church Missions

Many in smaller congregations around the country wonder if missions work is feasible, or even possible, for a tiny church such as their own. True, the missions arena can be challenging for small churches because of the resources that traditional programs demand. However, all churches, no matter how small, can “do missions” – coming together around, and acting upon, a purpose outside of and larger than ourselves, demonstrating the Father’s love to a broken and hurting world.

Following is a simplified approach to church missions that recognizes the constraints faced by small congregations. This approach avoids over-committing limited resources – time, talent, and treasure – by relying on the **expertise** of the “parachurch” (Christian humanitarian organizations such as World Vision) and the **flexibility** of donor-directed giving. If you would like to see your small church begin a missions program, consider how straightforward the process could be:

## 1. Identify Organizations / Choose Programs...

- a. Gather input from your church’s members as to the issues or causes (both local and int’l) that they feel are most important for *their* church to become involved with; this step helps to create a broader and more enthusiastic buy-in.
- b. Choose organizations with expertise in the causes you have selected. Parachurch organizations (e.g., specializing in clean water or human trafficking) typically have the most expertise in the international arena; hometown agencies (e.g., homeless shelter or food bank) can be ideal choices for local involvement.
- c. Smaller churches often find it helpful to bear two thoughts in mind in this process. The first is a focus on *depth* (that is, fewer causes/organizations) rather than breadth, since deeper, focused involvement serves to facilitate relationship building which God uses to the benefit of all. The second thought to bear in mind is the adage “Volunteer Locally / Contribute Internationally.”

## 2. Establish Flexible Frameworks for Involvement...

- a. For local (volunteer) efforts, this means finding that person who is willing to act as volunteer liaison, providing information about the chosen agency’s current needs and opportunities for involvement, organizing volunteer activities, and generally promoting your church’s involvement with the agency.
- b. For international (financial support) efforts, this means asking the person who handles the church’s finances to keep records of gifts designated for the chosen parachurch organization and to then disburse contributions in like amount to the organization on a monthly basis. A separate individual(s) may be chosen to promote the project and to keep the congregation up to date with results and special opportunities.

## 3. Create a Culture of Involvement...

- a. One goal of the small church missions program is to build external focus while nurturing a *culture of involvement* within the congregation. Involvement has many expressions, including an overall sense of engagement and ownership, financial and/or volunteer support, prayer, small group study, and advocacy.
- b. Consider crafting a kick-off event to announce the new programs. Presentations can include information about the need or problem, the scriptural basis for responding, a simple description of the new program, opportunities for involvement, and a question/answer period.
- c. Consider how you will nurture and support involvement over the longer term, including references to the program(s) during sermons, periodic announcements, and regular newsletter space for program needs, opportunities, updates, and celebrations.
- d. As your program matures, considering inviting other churches in your area to partner with you to magnify the impacts you are having both locally and around the world.

Small churches can indeed act on our Father’s call to do justice, mercy, and care in a hurting world. The churches in Macedonia, though poor, did so with enthusiasm and generosity (2Cor 8:1-5); though they could not, by themselves, solve the problem of poverty in Jerusalem, they took great joy in *simply helping...* and became a light to the poor and an example to generations of Christians to come.

What can your church do?

