

Missions Strategy Sample - Church #10

Background: Being wise stewards of missions finances includes having a sense of how God wants to use OUR CHURCH to impact the world. In order to respond to frequent requests for funding with purpose and integrity, OUR CHURCH Missions Policy needs both a definition of missions and an identification of mission priorities. We then can apportion the budget to reflect those priorities. Our budget shows there is considerable progress to be made before our proposed priorities are accurately reflected.

We will implement this strategy in considering future missions budgeting and expenditures. We do not plan to cut existing ministries. These priorities are not a rigid standard, but provide a well-conceived and understandable strategic framework.

There are also values related to the strategy. These values have entered into consideration of missions funding in the past, but have not been formally written until now. It is appropriate to place these values alongside the priorities for missions spending.

Reasons for Evangelism/Church Planting as #1 Priority (30%):

a) The ultimate goal of missions, winning the nations to worship God, requires evangelism and church planting. A strategic approach to reaching the world for Christ focuses on planting a witnessing church in every unreached group. According to Todd Johnson in the March '99 issue of *World Christian* magazine: during the last century, 90% of new missionaries went to work where the church already existed. The 1900s started with 15% of the missionary task force working among the least evangelized. By the mid 1970's, less than one percent tilled new ground. Of all the spending categories, the current CHURCH mission budget is furthest from this proposed priority with just 11% of our funds committed to this area.

Reasons for making Evangelism and Church Planting among Muslims our #1 goal:

1) Size: Islam is the most pervasive world religion after Christianity. In the year 2000, 21% of the world's population was Islamic, according to Operation World. This figure is up from 17% in 1992. Christians of all kinds are 33% of the world's population. Evangelicals and charismatics in 2000 were slightly less than 15%, down somewhat from the mid '90's.

Buddhists and traditional Chinese religions were about 13% of the world's population. Hindus, centered in India, comprised almost 14% of the world's population.

2) Responsiveness: Globalization and human emergencies are evangelistically impacting the Islamic world. Despite efforts of Islamic leaders to the contrary, Muslims are responding to the Gospel. More Muslims have come to Christ in the last twenty-five years than in the previous 1400 years combined. Frontiers, a mission agency that began in 1982, has planted over eighty churches among Muslim people groups, thirty of which are developing their own leadership and reproducing other churches. According to Dudley Woodberry, "We're seeing breakthroughs today we have never seen before." Wen Evans of Arab World Ministries recognizes that

other fields may be more responsive, but says the positive difference from earlier Muslim work is obvious.

3) Global vision: Islam is “aggressively expansionist worldwide,” according to Christianity Today (1993.) “While the Muslim world has many fault lines...it’s missions movement is surprisingly unified. Fueled with abundant oil money, this movement is making up ground lost by the graying and still splintered Protestant missionary establishment in places such as Central Asia.” Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world due to a combination of conversion and explosive population growth in Muslim countries. It is growing at a rate one-third faster than Christianity.

In Islamic dominated countries like Niger, West Africa (98% Muslim) where evangelical missionaries are free to minister and are making some progress, Islamic missionaries are also very active. In addition, Muslim leaders from other countries are exerting significant pressure on the governments of countries like Niger to become officially Muslim.

Bob Sjogren states in Unveiled at Last that in the predominantly Muslim countries throughout the world, there has either never been a church established, or the church is too small and inward to influence Muslims, or it is extinct. The Muslim world does not have a single country where the evangelical church is making serious inroads with the exception of Indonesia.

Operation World states that sixty-six countries in the world have significant restrictions on religious belief. Forty-two of these are Muslim nations.

In the United States, Islam is the fastest growing religion, according to the National Conference of Christians and Jews (1997.) There are over 4 million Muslims in this country, almost half of them native-born. They outnumber Presbyterians. In Chicago, Islam claims the third largest number of followers after Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

For every dime that the evangelical church spends on missions, Islam spends a dollar. Thus, it should be understood that in prioritizing Islam we are not simply seeking to convert people who await the message of the Gospel. We are seeking to counter an aggressive religious and cultural force that is seeking to destroy the Christian church.

4) Lack of missions investment: Over 80% of all Muslims have never heard the gospel, yet regard Jesus as a key prophet. Less than 3% of the Protestant missionary force works among Muslims, according to Dudley Woodberry, dean of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary. The ratio of Protestant missionaries to Muslims is a bit higher than one in a million.

Of the 80 active CHURCH missionaries, only 7 work with Muslims. considering the worldwide evangelical missionary force, there are more than twice as many missionaries working among Hindus as among Muslims. There are almost three times as many missionaries working among Chinese/Buddhists as among Muslims.

Commitment of financial resources for Muslim missions is also very low. Less than 1/10 of each penny of every dollar given to the local church in North America goes to the Muslim world. Approximately 7% of the current CHURCH missions budget is devoted to Muslim ministries, up from less than 2% in 1998.

5) Communicating to our CHURCH: Islam became the most recognizable religious force in the world on September 11, 2001. The majority of Muslims do not want to wage a violent Holy War of terrorism. However, the majority of Muslims do believe they follow the only true religion, and that the rest of the world must submit to Allah. People in the Wheaton area are increasingly confronted with Islam in school, the work place, and in the World Relief ESL classes held at CHURCH.

Reasons for Support Ministries as #2 Priority (25%):

Effective evangelism and church planting ministries require good support systems. The schools, literature and health care provided by support ministries make it possible for evangelists and church planters to do their job well.

Reasons for Training Nationals as #3 Priority (15%):

There is a Christian revival of great magnitude in Latin America, Central and Southern Africa, and parts of Asia. However, unless the millions of converts resulting from this revival receive trained leadership from their own people, syncretism and heresy will destroy the advances that have been made. Each culture needs to develop an evangelical theology that reflects the uniqueness of that group. Churches need leaders from their own cultures that are properly trained despite the lack of economic resources to do so.

Innovative initiatives are being taken by U.S. based mission agencies to address this need. Maturing national churches have developed over 80 outstanding seminaries around the world committed to assuring that the church of tomorrow in these developing lands is theologically sound.

Reasons for Nationals as #4 Priority (10%):

CHURCH missionaries who are established in their overseas work often develop assistants from the nationals with whom they work. This is a positive result of good missionary work. While the fervor and preparation of these nationals may be exemplary, the economies of most countries where missionaries serve simply don't allow for national workers to be supported by the national church.

Our CHURCH wants to stand by capable CHURCH missionaries who develop national co-workers. We want to support these co-workers when their own churches cannot.

CHURCH also wants to support nationals who have unusually effective ministries. It is not unusual for nationals to succeed in places where Western missionaries can't serve at all or can't serve effectively.

Reasons for Domestic Cross-cultural as #5 Priority (5%):

In California, over 225 languages are spoken according to the most recent census figures. New York, Washington and Texas host about 175 languages each within their borders. Today there are more Buddhists in America than there are Episcopalians, though this Protestant group began in this country before George Washington was born.

OUR CHURCH has seen first hand the influx of immigrants coming into the United States. The International Friendship and ESL Ministries we help sponsor advance the concept of the “world coming to us” past statistics to real people with real stories. We want to continue to develop our financial support of ministries to people from other cultures in our country, as well as encouraging our own people to be directly involved as “contagious Christians.”

Reasons for Domestic Outreach as #6 Priority (5%):

A number of CHURCH members feel called by God to address needs in our community and region. We want to support these people because they are part of our congregation and have a valid call to ministry. As is true of #5, we hope direct participation of our people will characterize this aspect of Church missions involvement as well as financial support.

Reasons for Mobilizing CHURCH as #7 Priority (5%):

A relationship with CHURCH missionaries is the most strategic approach we can take to help CHURCHers embrace the part of our mission statement that says we will share “Jesus Christ with others everywhere.” Thus, we need to fund ministries through which those friendships can be developed. The Missions Festival, ACMC Conferences and children’s mission education are vital to this process.

Experience is another vital means through which people can embrace the Great Commission. So, we will continue to develop short-term missions that will give our people the experience they need to identify with God’s heart for the world. Short-term projects will involve CHURCH missionaries to build relationships with them. Missions budget funding pays expenses for trip program materials only. Each participant will be expected to provide or raise personal financial support.

Funding the mobilization of CHURCHers for cross-cultural ministry is truly an investment rather than an expense. Besides influencing our people towards a world Christian perspective, mobilization provides an environment conducive to career missionary commitments. Sending CHURCHers into career mission service is part of our biblical mandate. It is also one of the most effective means through which to encourage a personal interest of our congregation in world evangelization.

Currently mobilization spending is significantly above the strategic goal of 5% of the total budget. This is the result of including the cost of a missionary-in-residence in this category that provides invaluable staff assistance to the cross-cultural ministries pastor.

Reasons for Retirees as #8 Priority (5%):

The financial provision for the average missionary reaching retirement today is not adequate. It is our responsibility to stand by these servants, many of who have served God to the exclusion of adequate financial provision for their later years.

We should also influence mission agencies so that retirement funding is adequate in the future. Today mission agencies are more realistic about retirement than in the past. We should make retirement policies part of our consideration when recommending agencies to CHURCH missionary candidates.