

OCCG-038 Short Term Missions

Gary Smith, Pulpit Minister, Fifth Ward Church of Christ, Houston, Texas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: How do you define “missionary work?” Most immediately think of efforts to evangelize on foreign soil.

In this article we suggest a different approach to mission work. The mission field is redefined, and the time commitment is reduced to attract more willing workers.

KEY WORDS:

Mission, Workers, Involvement, Ministry, Missionary, Evangelize

The Mission Field

Thank God for men, women and church leaders who see the need and respond to the call to go into all the world to make disciples. I have discovered in personal ministry and conversations with several members that many have a burning desire to do foreign mission work, but lack resources, or support. The question arises, do those who are sent, or choose to travel to faraway lands to share the gospel of Jesus love God more than Christians who stay close to familiar territory. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians emphasizes the diversity and necessity of all member’s contributions to the body, and discourages comparing love for God based on abilities or works. All are equally important.

God’s mission remains the same, making and maturing disciples, but the mission field is anywhere there is a need to fulfill God’s mission, Domestic, or Foreign. Mission workers wear several hats when attempting to meet the many needs of disadvantaged individuals. The list is exhaustive and includes literacy, food, water, clothing, medical, shelter, social,

mental, psychological, and of course spiritual.

Another question arises. Do you see anything listed that cannot be found in our own back yards to some degree? An often repeated reason for lack of evangelistic efforts in the U.S. is the market is saturated. Most individuals already know about Jesus. Perhaps they do know about Jesus, but have they seen him. Have they experienced him?

Have we mislabeled the mission field?



“Mission Work” Re-Defined

In preparation for the 2014 Campaign for Christ in Houston, Texas, a nuts and bolts planning committee identified a specific area in Houston to focus the efforts of several churches of Christ. They pondered over a name to energize and unite the workers. They decided to call the effort, “Mission Aldine, Day of Good Works.” What an empowering phrase to make missionaries of every member that participated in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of over 1500 community residents. Several workers expressed the immense joy and satisfaction of being used as instruments to make a true difference in the lives of real people.

Could it be that simple? Could re-labeling, creating, or identifying local short-term works jettison many more members off the pews and into the heart of carrying out God's mission?

While identifying works in our Domestic fields may require a little more diligence and creativity, let us not be guilty of lacking the desire to be domestic missionaries or of underestimating the size of the field around us.

Below are just a few ideas:

➤ Mission Visitation

Form visitation teams to visit every delinquent, sick, and new member on the church role in a specified short period of time (perhaps in one day).

➤ Mission Neighborhood Clean-up

Choose a day to beautify, or clean up in your local community. If your congregation is small, team with area churches of Christ, committing to rotate to all participating congregation's communities.

➤ Mission Educators Support

Offer support to the local schools in your community. Provide supplies, tutors, readers, helpers, etc.

➤ Mission Clean Pets

Set up bathing stalls on your church parking lot to bath community resident's pets. You will meet people who would never enter your gates otherwise.

➤ Mission Emergency Response / Disaster Relief

Natural and unnatural emergencies provide unique opportunities to let our lights shine for the Lord. Much preparation is needed to be ready when tragedy, or emergencies arise, but the effort can produce fruit for the

Kingdom that is priceless.

➤ Mission Children's' Homes

Day or weekend taking/storing canned goods, clothes, etc. or repairs to the facilities and work with the children

➤ Mission Native American (Indian) Reservations

Weekend campaign focused on alcohol / drug abuse and suicide

➤ Mission McAllen (South Texas)

Weekend or week for building/repairing houses and Bible studies

➤ Mission VBS/Campaigns

Weekend or week at congregations across US. You can take your prepared program and repeat it at another location

➤ Mission inner city congregation

Day or two working with various needs, weekend distributing fliers, weeklong support of VBS

➤ Mission LiveBeyond (Haiti)

Week of working in Medical Missions or with Ke Pou Temon children and visiting / feeding villages in the near vicinity

➤ Mission Honduras

Week working with school of preaching and the poor of the area

➤ Mission Southern Africa Bible College (SABC)

Ten day trip to work with preaching students at the college, working with missions to squatter camps, and encouraging the brethren

➤ Mission Let's Start Talking (LST)

Various week or more trips to Eastern Europe teaching English through the Bible and having Bible studies

What this would mean is your “short term mission” would be the time you dedicate to Jesus to do a service and/or acquainting others with Jesus which is out of your regular schedule. It would provide specific project which could be addressed at a time and accomplished.

Mission Possible

In the year 2000, I implemented a layman’s Preachers Class to encourage brothers to study and get involved in ministries of the church. I explained to the brothers the format of the class would be active involvement and on the job training. Most classes consist of one hour study sessions, ministry assignments and practice sessions. We meet about six times a year.

The highlight of the Preachers Class is a two day domestic mission trip. We contact one of the smaller congregations in another city within driving distance that needs help in evangelizing their community. In seven years, not one congregation has turned down our help.



Approximately 20 brothers drive up on Saturday morning. We mobilize with the local members to pass out flyers in the community inviting them to a free lunch meal at the church building, or free health services, depending on the need of the community. While eating, fellowshiping and ministering, we invite the community to worship on Sunday morning. Every mission trip has produced fruit to the Kingdom of God. Praise the Lord!

Reviewed by Philip Bailey, Memorial Church of Christ, Houston, TX