

choosing a mission agency

Checkpoint asked David Crowe, the State Director of Interserve NSW, how someone thinking about missionary service should go about choosing a mission agency.

I say to people thinking about mission that the first decision is not “where do I go?” or “what will I do?”, but “who will I trust my future to?”. In other words, they need to choose an agency. The aunty of one of our long-term missionaries said to her, “You find the organisation and let God find the place.”

I think that is very sound.

One of the things I say to someone before they start this process is: who is on this journey with you? Do you have a team of pray-ers? Early on, you should have a sense that this is something that you are doing with your local church standing with you.

When choosing an agency, try and narrow your choice down to about three and then give yourself a time frame – maybe six months – to go to work finding out about them. Of course, you need to see if there are any doctrinal issues that would disqualify an agency. But let’s say the three are standing alongside each other in terms of doctrine. How do you narrow it down?

Mission agencies are a people business and you need to find out about their values – what is important to them and how they manage their people. These are not necessarily areas you will find out about on their website. I give people a list of questions and say go and meet with a representative from the agency, a mobiliser or recruiter, and ask the questions that are most important to you. You could ask about:

- The structure, history and strategy of the organisation



When choosing a mission agency try narrowing it down to two or three options. Then go to work finding out about them. Photo: Toomas Järvet

- Training requirements
- Who decides what a missionary will do, where they will go and if they get called home?
- Can a ministry change when a missionary is on location and who decides that?
- How is conflict resolved?
- How are finances raised?
- How does the agency handle scenarios like: pregnancy, cancer, mental breakdown, ministry not going anywhere, family members dying?
- What are the arrangements for Home Assignment, children’s education, pastoral care, further study, holidays, superannuation and insurance?

As well as asking the rep your questions, get involved in the agency. Get their publications and literature. Go to functions and conferences and hear their missos speak. Meet the people who are on the field and ask them what it has been like. Why did they choose this particular agency? Ask them if there are things about the agency they have found uncomfortable or awkward. How have they adjusted their expectations of the agency?

I also ask people early on – who is a missionary that you are praying for now? Build a relationship with them. There may be someone from CMS who is a link missionary with your church. Focus on those people and that will help you

get a sense of what CMS does. Connecting with a misso gives you a sense of the agency too.

Agencies will also want to know things about you. I would ask about what is motivating you. What involvement do you have with mission? Right now you can have a strategic role supporting missionaries and praying, whether we find that God leads you overseas or you stay as a sender or equipper. I would want to know if you have some sense of paternalism in your thinking. Some people think that the world view and paradigm of other cultures is not as well developed as ours. There is a danger in this. You will need to be able to work in partnership with the local church.

I would ask – have you talked to your minister or youth leader about going? Your local church should be involved from the start. Are you discipling people now, because the ministry you do when God takes you across cultures will come out of the ministry you have had here. When you come back and see me again I will ask how the ministry has been going since our last conversation – not to discourage you but to nourish you and keep you moving forward. I am looking for people who are willing to journey. The role of a good mission agency is to journey with you over the six-eight-ten years it sometimes takes to go, to help you find God’s leading and help keep your heart warm to mission.