



GETTING STARTED

How to Plan a Mission Support Program for your Church

Why Have a Plan?

We plan because God has a plan.

God's plan spans the universe. Paul tells us about it in Ephesians 1: "God made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good purpose, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." (Ephesians 1.9-10 NIV)

We plan so that we can conform our lives to his plan. In the rest of Ephesians Paul helps us understand how our lives, both individually and corporately, are to be conformed to our Lord's plan. By its very nature, it makes us look out from ourselves to the world which is 'dead in transgressions and sins'. Because God has a plan, we will plan to see the gospel of Jesus made known to our world.

How Do We Plan?

Planning can be as simple as making a decision to 'pray for missionaries on Mondays', and as complex as a 3 year plan to move our church from being a 'mission supporting' church to being a 'mission sending' church. Below is a simple process to help you develop a plan for growing your church's partnership in world mission.

To develop our plan we need to ask ourselves 3 basic questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be in the future?
- How are we going to get there?

The planning sheets which you will find on the CMS Resource DVD will help you answer these three questions for your church.

If possible, get together a small group of people to go through this planning process. When you work together, you will each have your horizons expanded by other members of the group, and you will spread the load when you put your plan into action.

Through it all - remember Jesus is Lord and pray, pray, pray...

Seeing the Big Picture

Pray - Care - Give - Go

Before we begin, we need to grasp the breadth of the mission partnership. At CMS we sum it up under 4 words: PRAY - CARE - GIVE - GO.

PRAY - building active and consistent prayer for missionaries and gospel ministry across the world.

CARE - has two sides: supporting missionaries' physical, emotional and spiritual needs - and growing in our own understanding of why and how world mission should take place.

GIVE - providing the financial resources needed to enable world mission to happen and helping churches and individuals build godly attitudes to their financial resources.

GO - building a 'mission sending' attitude in the church and providing a supporting environment to help church members consider the possibility of going in mission.

As churches, we want to build a growing commitment in each of these four areas.

Individuals - Small Groups - Churches

We also need to remember that people relate in different ways within churches: as friends relating together, in small groups (whether small Bible Study groups or special purpose groups) and in the larger church meeting.

A good mission support plan will seek to build support in each of these different areas.

The Different Cultures in your Church

Don't forget that your church is made up of people from different cultures - these may be related to age (baby boomers, gen X, gen Y), ethnicity, stage of life (youth, young families, empty nesters...). Each of these cultures will relate in different ways, so don't expect to create an event that will suit everyone. Be ready to run different events focussed towards different groups - while still making them available to everyone.

Where Are We Now?

Planning begins with knowing where we're starting from.

- Print out one of the 'Mission Planning Sheets' - you will see the year is divided into the 4 school terms, and within those terms divided into Pray - Care - Give - Go, and into the 3 'relationship' areas of churches.

On this sheet, write in the mission support activities your church is involved in (remember an activity may span more than one of the Pray - Care - Give - Go areas).

- For each of these activities ask yourselves the questions: Why are we doing this? and, Are we achieving our goals? Who are we reaching (and who are we expecting to reach)?

Where Do we Want to Be in the Future?

Once we know where we're starting from we can ask the question: Where do we want to be?

- Think about the four areas: Pray - Care - Give - Go. How do you want to see your church or small groups grow in these areas over the next three years?

At this stage - keep your thinking to the big picture, rather than the specific details of how you're going to make it happen (ie 'we want to see 50% of the congregation praying regularly for mission', rather than 'we want have a new missionary prayer meeting on Tuesday night')

- Write down your thoughts under each of these areas.
- Bring your ideas down to reality! Go through your list and prioritise what you want to see happen.

When we make a list like this we usually put down far more than is realistically achievable. Don't throw away your ideas but decide which are foundational and which might remain on the 'wish list'.

How are We Going to Get There?

Once you know where you want to go, you need to put those hopes into concrete ideas.

- Work out what events or activities you need to provide to enable you to achieve these goals. The CMS Resource DVD contains ideas and resources to help you do this.

How does what you are already doing fit into this new plan? What should continue? What needs to be reinvigorated? What needs to change or be brought to an end?

- Don't try to do too much. We don't have to achieve everything in one year - in fact if we try to move too quickly we may wear people out and achieve nothing. Time out your changes over a full 3 years.
- Once you know what you want to achieve in the coming year, spread your activities across the year. This will keep a world mission focus before people over the full 12 months.

- Print out another 'Mission Planning Sheet' and write in your program for the coming year. Check that you are not trying to do too much (if you have something written in every box you probably are!)
- For each of the events or activities decide: who is going to make it happen, what resources are needed, how are you going to let people know about it?
- Finally - put your ideas into action.