

Having a Missions-Minded Church

LEAD Conference

Oct. 8, 2015

Presenters: Jean-Claude Noah and Wendy Tatro, Living Word Missions

www.livingwordmissions.org

Introduction of workshop presenters:

Jean-Claude Noah is from Cameroon, West Africa and is a 3rd generation disciple of Living Word Missions. Jean-Claude now serves as the Coordinator of Field Operations for Living Word Missions, overseeing the Fula Project, an outreach to one of the largest unreached people groups on earth. Jean-Claude also serves as Missions Director at International Family Church.

Wendy Tatro is the Director of Living Word Missions. LWM was founded by Russ and Wendy Tatro in 1993 after the Tatros served as missionaries for seven years, primarily in West Africa. Pastor Jonathan Del Turco has served as Vice President of the Executive Board of LWM since its founding. Bro. Russ departed in 2006, however, the ministry continues today with two mandates from the Lord: (1) to be missionaries to missionaries and (2) to help take the Word of Faith message into all of West Africa.

Having a Missions-Minded Church

I. THE CHALLENGE

1. World missions suffers from “out of sight, out of mind.”
 - Your local church departments are very present and calling for your attention.
 - Missionaries and missions work can seem very distant and irrelevant to your busy life.
2. It can be difficult for a pastor to cast vision for world missions because it is not his/her primary calling.
 - How do you motivate your congregation toward something outside your realm of experience?

II. VISION—THE GREAT COMMISSION

1. Jesus gave this mandate as His last instruction to His disciples, recorded in three Gospels plus the Book of Acts:
 - Matthew 28: 18-20 NLT—Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
 - Mark 16:15 NLT --And then he told them, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.”

- Luke 24:47 NLT-- It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.'
2. The mandate is local, regional, and global...simultaneously:
 - Acts 1:8 NLT--But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
 3. Closure of the Great Commission:

In Matthew 24:14, Jesus stated, *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the **nations**, and then the end will come.”* The word “nations” in Greek is “ethne,” translated “ethnic groups.”

Another reading of Matthew 24:14 could rightly be, *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the **ethnic groups**, and then the end will come.”*

“Jesus gave us the task of making disciples of all nations, and we know that eventually there will be people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation around his throne. Yet right now there are still over 6,817 unreached people groups in the world.

Even more astonishing, there are 3,226 people groups who are not only unreached, but no one is even trying to reach them. Mission strategists call them “unengaged.” After 2,000 years, it should be unthinkable to us as the church of Jesus Christ that there would be any unengaged people groups left in the world.

Finishing the Great Commission can be defined in different ways, but what is most important is that we start to finish the task. It will be accomplished primarily through local congregations planting indigenous churches among the people groups they adopt.” (Source: www.finishingthetask.com)

III. STRATEGY

1. Partner with a missions ministry/agency of like vision and faith. A symbiotic relationship results when churches, missions agencies, and missionaries work in partnership!
 - Partnership provides an avenue for training for those in your church called to missions.
 - Provides an avenue for accountability for those in your church called to missions...once they are on the field.
 - Provides for better missionary care when church members can lend their expertise in medical, tech support, administration, construction, music, education, writing/editing, business, counseling, financial advising, crisis management, graphics, web design, video production, etc.
 - The result is stronger missionaries...avoiding burnout and attrition.
 - The church reaps the rewards of missions vision, a focus on the Harvest, people working for something bigger than themselves.
 - Example of IFC and LWM:

- Living Word Missions draws from the pastoral care International Family Church provides our missionaries. IFC staff have provided our missionaries marriage counseling, conflict resolution, transition counseling, a home church, and a pastor who knows and cares about them.
 - Living Word Missions draws from the gifts in congregants who wish to serve in world missions. IFC members have served LWM as web designers, computer programmers, crisis management advisors, and technology trainers for our missionaries.
 - IFC has hosted numerous LWM missionary retreats, drawing from the resources a church can provide: venue, transportation assistance, food service, tech support, worship team, etc.
 - IFC, in return, benefits from the missionary spirit imparted when the missionaries are present. The missionaries make a point to visit IFC because they know they are loved and received here.
2. Make a place for missions in your church:
- Pray about selecting a Missions Director.
 - This provides someone besides you, pastor, who is responsible for keeping missions before the people.
 - Just like the other departments of your church, a Missions Department or Director needs your support and attention to flourish.
 - Invite a missionary to speak at least once annually.
 - Host a “meet and greet” for congregation members to meet the missionary personally.
 - Media
 - Gone are the days of posting a missionary photo on the church bulletin board. You need to be intentional about including world missions in your media if you want a missions minded church.
 - Monthly “Missions Moment” can include photos/brief updates of the works you support.
 - Choose one missionary/missions work to highlight each month in your media.
 - Retweet, repost the social media posts of missionaries/missions agencies you support.
 - Mention missionaries/missions agencies with whom you partner on your church website.
 - Pre-service and post-service advertisements/announcements can include missions updates, missionary bios, photos of missions work you support.
 - Prayer
 - Offer one (or more) prayer group(s) specifically to pray for “your” missionaries.
 - Mention prayer needs of missionaries during service announcements. Take time right then to pray corporately for those needs.
 - Offer prayer groups for praying for the Harvest worldwide. See www.joshuaproject.net as a resource for prayer.
 - Use current events as an opportunity to pray for the Harvest. Instead of having a defensive stance, be intentional about praying when you hear of crisis situations, political turmoil, and natural disasters abroad. Create a “World Christian” culture.

- Proactive prayer is missionary care. Urgent prayer requests will come up but ongoing prayer for a missionaries' family, safety, provision, and impact will connect hearts to the missionary.
3. Financial Support
 - Offering idea: \$5.00 a week (or an amount that suits your church culture) for missions. This allows virtually every congregant to be able to give to missions weekly. This adds up if everyone is involved, providing a steady stream of income for your church to be involved in supporting world missions.
 - Consider in-kind gifts as resources for missionaries/missions works. LWM, for example, collects flash drives, SD cards, gift cards, and tech equipment for our missionaries.
 - Monthly support is always appropriate. However, missions works always have big projects that you can “sink your teeth into.” These projects (building projects, water wells, vehicles, printing/translation, Jesus Film equipment, etc.) provide quantifiable visible results that offer Kairos moments for a congregation. “We provided for that Jesus Film projector being used in West Africa among the Fula!” Pick a project that suits the culture of your congregation. Giving to a project can create an emotional connection that goes beyond just sending a monthly check.
 - Partner with other churches in your region to target missions projects or to target an unreached people group.
 - If your church is not currently giving to missions, start with a seed and purpose to increase annually. God will bless your effort.
 4. Create a Missions Team—making a place for missions-minded people to serve and use their gift for missions.
 - At IFC our Missions Team meets monthly for updates about our missionaries, prayer, and to discuss strategy for supporting our missionaries.
 - Our Missions Team has helped to host past LWM missionary retreats, providing airport transportation, food service, tech training, in-kind gifts, and hospitality.
 - Our Missions Team procures in-kind gifts, and financial support for missions.
 - Our Missions Team has a “crafting group” that makes handmade greeting cards and other items for sale in our church bookstore. All proceeds go missions. This is an example of an interest or ability being turned into an opportunity to support missions.
 5. Encourage missions vision in every department of the church
 - Make a Missions Day part of your annual calendar.
 - Make sure the next generation of the church will have a heart for missions. Children's ministry and youth ministry can collect toys and personal items to be given to children in other nations. (Currently our children's ministry at IFC is planning to collect harmonicas for an outreach to children in Gambia, West Africa.)
 - Invite a missionary family to minister to children or youth.
 - Any department can adopt a missionary and Facetime or Skype with the missionary on a regular basis.
 - Shoebox programs allow for family involvement (see websites of New Missions, Samaritan's Purse, and Living Water Teaching as options).
 - Outreach ministry, hospitality, young adults, and senior citizens, for example, can have a role to play in world missions by praying for missionaries or taking on missions projects.

6. Make missionary care the same priority as member care in your church.
 - Russ Tatro said about missionaries, they are “Everybody’s hero and no one’s friend.” This is a major issue for missionaries. There are few “safe harbor” relationships for a missionary.
 - When you get to know a missionary personally you will be able to offer pastoral care.
 - Use your pastoral grace to help them. Every negative issue you deal with in your church happens on the mission field. Ask about their marriage, their children, their struggles. Check up on them regularly to ask about their personal life.
 - When you become aware of a personal issue consider the gifts in your church that can help the missionary. Do they need medical help, therapy, family counseling, or emotional support? Do you have professionals in your church with the expertise needed? This is where a partnership between a church/missions agency/missionary is effective.
7. Adopt an unreached people group
 - This refers to our earlier reference to Closure of the Great Commission.
 - We know of nothing that will energize a congregation more than partnering to bring an unreached people group into the Kingdom of God.
 - Purpose to hear from God about your assignment among the over 6,817 unreached people groups on earth.
 - We’re not throwing stones. We eat, breathe, and sleep missions and for years we talked about unreached people groups. In 2013, we finally stopped talking and started praying. The Lord gave us an assignment to reach the Fula in West Africa. Read more about the Fula Project on our website: www.livingwordmissions.org. Join us in reaching the Fula, or choose another people group, but partner with someone in reaching the least reached. Jesus is coming soon! It is time that every church, every Christian be involved in bringing in the final Harvest.

IV. ACTION

Choose one thing to implement this year. Choose one thing!

V. MOTIVATION

“Why should anyone hear the gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?”

–Oswald J. Smith, (1889-1986), Pastor and Founder of the People’s Church, Toronto

RESOURCES

Websites:

www.finishingthetask.com

www.joshuaproject.net

www.peoplegroups.org

www.mindthegaps.org

Article:

http://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/gods_mission_clarified

God's Global Mission Clarified

Making Sense Out of the Verbiage Surrounding Missions in an Age of Competing Information

-by Marv Newell

Books:

The Challenge of Missions

-by Oswald J. Smith

Mind the Gaps, Engaging the Church in Missionary Care

-by Trinity Church Missionary Care Team, David J. Wilson General Editor

Missions Ministry/Agency:

Living Word Missions

PO Box 687

Wilmington, MA 01887

978-258-3188

www.livingwordmissions.org

Wendy Tatro: admin@lwmcentral.com

Jean-Claude Noah: jc.noah@lwmcentral.com

The Fula Project: www.livingwordmissions.org/fulaproject