

Sending Triangle: Going to the Least Reached

Partnership of the Global Worker, Sending Church & Encompass



A key idea in pursuing the Great Commission is partnership - the idea that no one can or even should try to go it alone. When a missionary is going to the least reached, we envision a “Sending Triangle”—a potent picture of a strong three-way partnership. This Sending Triangle is the relationship between the missionary, the mission agency (Encompass) and the sending church. The diagram above outlines major focus areas for each party.

**“A cord of three strands
is not quickly broken.”
- Ecclesiastes 4:12**

Missionary // Global Worker

Today missionaries serve a variety of functions in doing the Great Commission, so in some contexts may be called Global Workers. This working title is to be clear, but flexible. Global workers have a variety of family sizes from those who are married with children, to couples and single missionaries. In the descriptions below, we use the singular for ease of articulation, but all of the family of whatever size to embrace these concepts.

- **Learner:** The most fruitful workers are always growing and learning—in ministry, in missiology, in cultural awareness, in theology, in relationships, in wisdom, and life.
- **Cross-Cultural:** The worker who is being sent is going to be crossing cultures into a new people group so that “all the nations” have opportunity to be disciples of Jesus Christ.
- **Ministry:** The work of the missionary is discipleship, introducing people to the reality of Christ through word and deed. The ministry areas will be very diverse depending on the placement and giftedness of the worker, but discipleship that leads to spiritual communities is the goal.
- **Communication:** It is expected that the worker will consistently and honestly communicate successes, needs, difficulties and prayer requests so all the partners can participate in the ministry through prayer and support.
- **Faithfulness:** We seek fruitfulness, but that isn’t guaranteed. A worker can control his/her faithfulness and diligence to the particular assignment.

Sending Church // Shepherding Focus

The Sending Church is the local church who is directly responsible for the missionary family through being relationally and spiritually invested. This is the “home church” of the global worker, the one that the worker counts as his/her “spiritual family.” A variety of churches may be involved in the support of a missionary family, yet one local church carries the responsibility to shepherd and to send her own global worker.

- **Preparation:** the church has a key role in building relational, practical ministry, and biblical foundations for the global worker.
- **Recruitment:** the sending church leaders often recognize ministry effectiveness, cross-cultural aptitude and passion within a potential missionary and affirm that calling to consider going to “all the nations.”
- **Support:** investing prayer, relational and financial backing from the sending church for the benefit an launching of a global worker with the backing they need to be faithful to their assignment.
- **Commission:** the church officially and publically recognizes God’s call to the global worker and releases her/him to go with the blessing and favor of the church as a representative of Jesus and their church family.
- **Spiritual Care:** Shepherding and placing the “soul-care” of the missionary as a high priority in both their local church ministry and cross-cultural ministry deployment.

Encompass World Partners // Apostolic Focus

Encompass continues to focus on innovative means to share Christ with those who have not heard, gather new believers into community, and train leaders so an indigenous church planting movement will flourish. We are also committed to showing Christ’s love to those in need. Through crisis response, integrated medical care, and sustainable community development, we seek to “do good to all people.”

- **Recruitment:** Walking the journey with potential missionary candidates towards cross-cultural opportunities among the least reached that fit their gifts and passions.
- **Training:** Leveraging more than 100 years of cross-cultural experience to use the best training missiology, materials and methods to help global workers be faithful and fruitful.
- **Strategizing:** With the priority of reaching the least reached people groups, Encompass has a global leadership, perspective and initiatives. Additionally, every global worker will have a strategist to help them be an effective missionary in their role and assignment reaching the nations.
- **Coaching:** Every worker will have a personal ministry coach with the time and expertise to help the worker achieve their ministry and personal goals.
- **Spiritual Care:** We desire each of our staff to have a sustained, fruitful vitality. Three avenues of spiritual care will be in place for our missionaries: a local team, a personal ministry coach (above) and our Encompass member care team (focusing on preventative and crisis care).

Clear Roles in Partnership

Even in committed partnerships, when roles are unclear or expectations are not met, partners can be confused or frustrated. But with clear roles, this partnership can build on the strengths of both and accelerate both in making the Christ known.

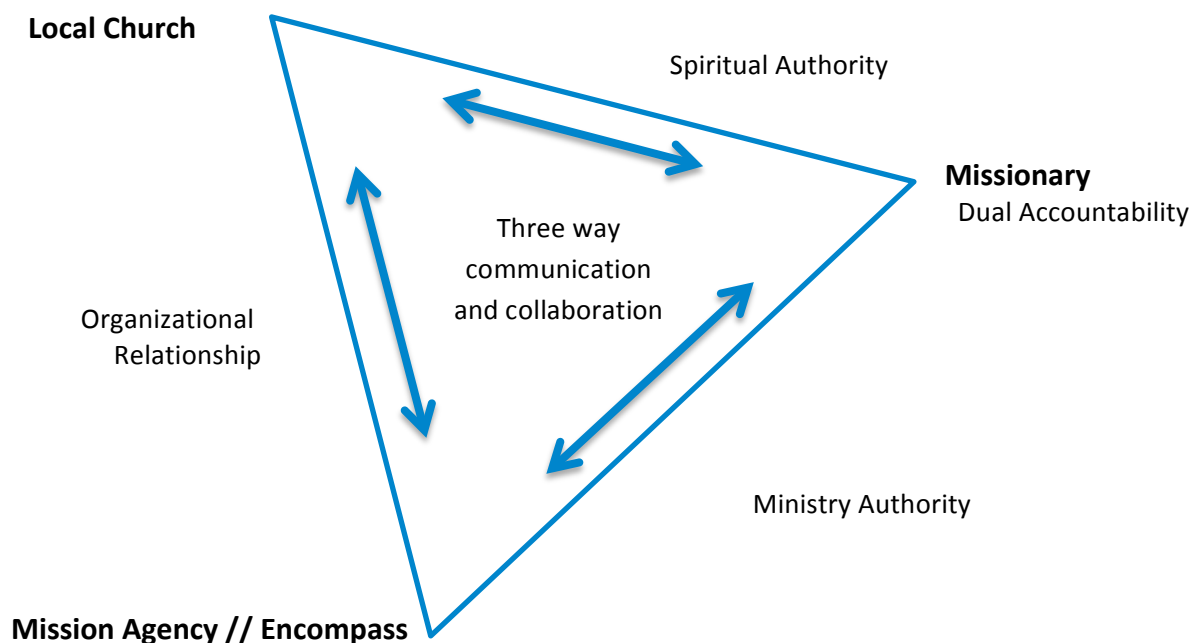
Differentiated and complimentary roles

In the Body of Christ, the universal Church, God developed two structures that focus on separate goals and ministries. The local church exists in a single location and focuses on discipleship, pastoral care, spiritual oversight, and local outreach. An apostolic (as in “sent on a mission to start something new”) or mission agency focuses on the task of making disciples and developing churches where there are none. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul calls it laying a foundation. The two structures are very different and each exercises their authority in their tasks. But they are intended to work in partnership.

The two roles strengthen each other. The Great Commission is the central “marching orders” of the body of Christ, so each local church is called to mission. The mission agency members need the spiritual discipleship and relational connection of the local church. Each is woefully incomplete without the other. (For more on the Biblical description of this relationship see [link to material at end].)

Strong commitment to communication & collaboration.

The local church and the mission agency work together to encourage and enable each missionary to be fruitful. A triangle, each side representing strong, continuing communication and collaboration, best illustrates this relationship.



Interrelated strengths

The local church and the mission agency works together as God gives vision to start a new ministry to geographically or ethnically separate people groups. This partnership is most easily seen in sending new missionaries, but extends beyond that to short term trips, strategy and more. Each entity plays an important role that the other cannot do as well. But neither role is complete without the other.

When a person explores the possibility of missionary work

Local Church

Disciples in godly character and world-view
Assures practicing spiritual and life disciplines
Disciples in basic ministry experiences
Helps to explore spiritual gifts
Encouraging first steps and helping discern
God's leading through them

Mission Agency

Vision of the many possibilities
Effective short term experiences
Encouraging first steps and helping discern
God's leading through them

In missionary preparation

Local Church

Discipling in continued spiritual growth
Mentoring in needed personal growth
Discipling in basic ministry experiences
Developing skills in working in a team
Exploring and confirming spiritual gifts
Encouragement and practical help through the
work of preparation
Broad based prayer support
Financial support

Mission Agency

Effective exploratory experiences
Encouraging steps and helping discern God's
leading through them
Specialized evaluation of match with cross-
cultural ministry.
Training in starting new ministries
Specialized structures to prepare for life in a
cross-cultural setting
Training in cross-cultural life and ministry

In a missionary's ministry

Local Church

Spiritual covering under the church's authority
Continuing care and support practically,
spiritually, emotionally
Broad based prayer support
Participation in decisions and confirmation of
God's leading.

Mission Agency

Effective leadership in ministry.
Effective international and intercultural
supporting structures (financial, care, etc.)
Assist in confirming God's leading in new
ventures.
Assistance in transitions

Biblical perspective

In Acts 13, we see the first mission team being sent from the church at Antioch. There are different Greek verbs that are translated "Send". In verse 3, the verb used with the local church means to "release" or "let go". In verse 4, the verb used of the Holy Spirit means to "send out on a mission." So the Holy Spirit sent them but the church recognized the Spirit's call and released them to pursue the Spirit's calling.

After the mission team left Antioch, they took internal authority to change leadership (compare order of names in 13:1, 2 and 7, Paul as spokesman in verses 9 and 16, and as obvious leader in 13, 42, 46, ff.). Throughout Acts, the mission team takes ministry oversight actions under the direct guidance of the Spirit like developing plans and strategies (15:36ff, 16:6-10, etc.).

When Paul and Barnabas recruited new members (15:39,40; 16:1-3) they were known and recommended by the churches, but the mission team leader actively chose them, put them into ministry and later directed them. The team leader gave orders concerning place of ministry (17:15). In the

epistles, Paul makes his plans (Rom 15: 22-29) and sends workers on specific missions (Phil. 4:19; 1 Thess. 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:5). Paul was in various locations when he made these decisions, indicating that he did not receive directives from his church of origin at Antioch or Timothy's in Lystra.

Note the changing interaction between Paul and the church at Antioch. In Acts 13, the church played a major role in recognizing Paul and Barnabas and releasing them to ministry. At the end of the journey in Acts 14, the mission team reported and spent a long time with them. In Acts 15:40, the mission team leader planned the next journey and they were "committed by the brethren to the grace of Lord." In 18:22-23, Paul returned to Antioch and later departed with no mention of church action. In Acts 22, on his trip to Jerusalem, Paul did not even stop in Antioch. While connection continued, there is no indicator of the church seeking to exercise authority to direct the mission team.

While there is differentiation, the Bible also shows patterns of partnership. Paul reported to the church regularly. In the Epistles, Paul continues to model a reciprocal partnership. He prays for churches (nearly every epistle) and asks for specific prayer (Rom. 15:30, Eph. 5:19, Col. 4:2-4). He anticipates mutual encouragement and ministry (Rom. 1:11,12). He asks for financial help (Rom. 15:24) and is very grateful for help (Phil. 4:10-19). Churches sent short term helpers, often delivering financial assistance, but also, it seems, additional help in ministry (Phil. 2:25-30). In fact, he calls the Philippians his partners in ministry (Phil. 1:3-7).

John also uses partnership language in 3rd John when he asks Gaius to help "the brothers", early missionaries who were financially sustained ("send them" in vs. 6 and "hospitality" in vs. 8 both include financial support in their meaning) by the church toward the goal that "we may work together for the truth" (3 John 8).

What is modeled in the New Testament is the local church recognizing and endorsing members, releasing them to the mission team. The mission team consults with the church on the beginning of trips and reports at the end, but the mission team leaders direct the ministry of their team members. From beginning to end, the church and the mission team practice a continual mutual interdependence, a ministry in partnership.