

Four Common Misconceptions Hamstring Mission Effectiveness, Says Leading Organization

The Mission Society Helps Churches Reshape Missions Ministries; Innovative Church Training Programs Help to Increase Missions Giving by Up to 400 Percent

NORCROSS, Ga. – Regarding missions as a one-off or occasional project or as optional are two of the top misconceptions driving church ineffectiveness at missions, according to Stan Self, senior director of church ministry at The Mission Society.

While many churches may be aware of Christ's mandate to share the gospel with other people, both locally and globally, most set out to do this without regard to their own unique calling and purpose, which should shape the missions ministry. This lack of a clear plan for outreach often stunts the growth of missions ministries, fails to facilitate effective leadership and narrows the focus of the ministries, preventing them from helping the least reached.

"The inwardly focused church without a strategic mission cares little about what's going on outside and is living a stunted life, rather than a full, vibrant one," Self said. "Churches should be proactive in prayer, in discerning God's will, and in going where those needs are. They should be intentional about going outside the walls of that church."

More than a decade ago the staff of The Mission Society, which sends Christian missionaries worldwide on ministry assignments, recognized a void in mobilizing local churches as a force for missions. In the process, the agency saw common misconceptions that hamstringing the effectiveness of churches, large and small.

The top four misconceptions held by church leaders include:

- Missions is a project or event
- Missions involvement is optional
- Congregations should get involved in missions only in response to specific needs
- Missions funding is all about economics

To help combat these misconceptions, The Mission Society provides training, mentoring and resources to assist churches in effectively launching or extending their global outreach. These programs were built on the notion that God calls churches to be the primary means of conveying the gospel to the world. Among the offered programs include the Global Outreach Workshop, Global Outreach Leadership Workshop and the International Mobilization Conference. The ministry also offers workshops on Developing a Global Outreach Plan, Global Impact Celebrations and Equipping Short-Term Missions Leaders.

Self and his leadership serve as a strategic partner for churches, helping them to identify their direction, outline essential strategies and map a route to achieve specific goals. In the process, the team helps to reshape churches' global outreach strategies, and teaches them to be intentional -- the opposite of reactive -- when finding where to plug in and serve.



Self recalls one church's downtown ministry, a soup kitchen open three times a year. "The church feeds hundreds but never gets into the lives of those people," Self said. "The members go away feeling great, but they make little impact for the Kingdom of God." He describes such as "doing missions with tongs -- you don't have to touch or feel, get emotionally involved or make physical contact with anybody."

The Mission Society's training programs also emphasize that funding for missions is about faith, not economics. "Churches are irrationally focused on numbers," Self said. "But missions not about anything other than Jesus. Many, however, believe it entails impossible formulas the church can't work with, that there's a finite pie that can only be divided so many ways.

"They don't realize God's resources are infinite. It's not a matter of economics, but faith. Aligning ourselves with God's priorities will typically result in him honoring our efforts with provision."

As a result, The Mission Society's programs can result in dramatic change in a congregation. Trinity on the Hill United Methodist Church's missions budget increased from \$10,000 to \$400,000 with assistance from The Mission Society.

Stan Self and The Mission Society staff are available for trainings, speaking engagements and interviews. These services are free of charge but love offerings are welcomed. To learn more about these visionary church ministry programs, visit www.themissionsociety.org/go/churches.

Founded in 1984 in the Wesleyan tradition, The Mission Society (www.themissionsociety.org) exists to mobilize and deploy the body of Christ globally to join Jesus in His mission, especially among the least-reached peoples. To that end, the Mission Society recruits, trains and sends Christian missionaries to minister around the world. It develops diverse programs and ministries in keeping with its missionaries' unique callings and gifts, ranging from well-drilling and the arts, to more traditional ministries, such as teaching English and church-planting. Its church ministry department provides seminars, workshops and mentoring for congregations in the United States and abroad, helping equip churches for outreach in their communities and worldwide. Its vision is for the Kingdom of God to advance among all peoples, bringing about redemption and reconciliation through Jesus Christ. At present, The Mission Society has more than 200 missionaries in 32 countries.

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To schedule an interview with Stan Self or an executive from The Mission Society, or to connect with church leaders that have participated in the agency's programs, contact Ty Mays at 770-256-8710 or tmays@inchristcommunications.com.

Note to Journalists: To help churches determine if they could be mobilized in a greater way for outreach and missions, The Mission Society has developed "10 Questions about Outreach in Your Church." Copies of the worksheet are available upon request, and can serve as a tip sheet.

