

maximum thrust

Churches That Know How To Launch Their Missionaries Into Orbit!



the shuttle

Riding a Space Shuttle into orbit is a wild and exciting ride! It would have been sad and shortsighted indeed for NASA to build a Space Shuttle while never thinking about how it would get the craft into orbit. It is well designed to accomplish its mission, but it would struggle to get up into orbit on its own. It needs something called “solid rocket boosters” to get it off the ground and give maximum thrust until it reaches its breathtaking momentum.

the missionary

For a missionary, the sending/commissioning church is the solid rocket booster. As a church equips one of its families for vocational ministry in missions, one of the most meaningful steps it can take is to launch and push what is commonly called the “deputation process” – when missionaries raise prayer and financial support from independent churches. Often missionaries without this boost take months to get off the ground and years to get up into orbit. The reason many families don’t even try to go into missions is the trauma of the deputation process. A sending church can make a huge difference. How can church leaders help?

obtaining fuel

- **No Fuel Without Familiarity.** People and churches really get behind people they know. If the missionary has been trained in your church, this is not a problem. If the missionary was trained elsewhere, bring him onto your staff for an apprenticeship lasting at least 6-12 months. This will give him experience in ministry, expose the congregation to his strengths, and build enthusiasm as the church prepares to send one of its own to serve the Lord overseas.
- **Conserve Fuel For Your Mission Lineup.** What missionaries are you planning to send out in the next five years? In order to give them a meaningful boost, you may have to decline support to new missionaries whom you don’t know. When your own people are ready, you can pick up a greater percentage of their support because you haven’t been giving out fuel to every shuttle passing by.
- **Develop A “Missions Fuel Co-Op.”** Spearhead a mission consortium of like-minded churches in your area (within 50 miles). A missionary’s travel costs, time, and fatigue during deputation and furlough will be greatly diminished, and the pool of churches will actually see far more of the missionary family since they’re not out on the road all the time.
- **Call On Known Fuel Suppliers To Get Help.** If you don’t want to start a co-op, a pastor can write to as many contacts as he has and recommend the missionary. A church can also throw a get-acquainted luncheon for area pastors to meet the couple.

the stromberg mission

By way of illustration, we would refer you to Covington Bible Church in Covington, Virginia. After Fred and Cindy Stromberg completed their Bible college training, Pastor Howard Merrell asked Fred to serve as an intern at the church. The couple was clearly committed to missions, and in July of 2002 Fred and Cindy joined Biblical Ministries Worldwide bound for our church-planting ministry Honduras.

Covington Bible Church then created the position of Assistant Pastor/Missionary On Deputation, in which Fred began to serve. Pastor Merrell almost immediately sent out letters to a number of area pastors inviting them to a luncheon on October 5, 2002, explaining Covington Bible Church's vision for reaching Honduras and introducing the Strombergs to those who attended. They provided a booklet enclosing relevant materials with the cover letter below.



Thank you very much for attending our lunch today. On behalf of the Strombergs and our entire congregation let me assure you that it means a great deal to us to have you present with us. It has been good to work with you folk over the years in reaching out with the Good News about Jesus Christ.

We are blessed beyond our ability to express by the opportunity of reaching out to the people of Honduras through the ministry of Fred and Cindy. After visiting with this couple you will discover what a fine couple they are. I am praying that you will be able to join this ministry team targeting Central America. We planned this meeting today as the beginning of building this team.

Fred and Cindy have been a part of our ministry for about sixteen months. Our only regret about sending them to Honduras will be the hole they will leave behind in our ministry. In keeping with Acts 13, however, we believe that we should choose from the best that we have to enter into the endeavor of reaching the unreached. In sending Cindy and Fred we are doing that.

Let me list a couple of our church's goals for the Strombergs:

- We would like for the Strombergs to be supported by a reasonable number of units, each making a sizable commitment to their ministry so that they can have a solid relationship with their support team.
- We want to see them leave us, for language study early in 2004. In order for this to take place the bulk of their support will need to be in place.
- We hope to be able to provide the Strombergs with housing when they are on furlough, so it will be easier for them to maintain contacts with supporting churches.
- We intend to maintain a close relationship with Fred and Cindy when they are on the field. As their pastor, I am already making "back-burner" plans to visit them on the field.

We realize that if [our churches are] going to become committed to this ministry in the way that I describe above, you will need to take some time to allocate resources. That is why we are involving you in this process more than a year before the Strombergs will leave for the field. At present Fred is on the pastoral staff of Covington Bible Church. He and Cindy's needs are being met through his salary and that of Cindy, who teaches at Seneca Trail Christian Academy.

We are asking you to plan now, so that you will be able to begin to support this couple when they leave for Honduras early in 2004. Any support that they receive prior to their departure for the field will accumulate to provide for their out-going expenses.

Fred, Cindy and I have attempted to assemble materials in this booklet that would answer many of your questions. I am sure we have missed something. If you ask, we will try to get it for you. Please feel free to talk to me about any way that I can be of assistance in working with you in this project.

Again, thank you,
Howard Merrell

By April of 2003, the Strombergs had raised well over half their support, and in that month, Pastor Merrell again called on area pastors to examine Fred and ordain him for the ministry. The Strombergs intend to leave for their language training on the field in early 2004. With the boost their church and its leaders have given them, they are well on their way.

Churches are solid rocket boosters for missions. What might your church do a little better in its missions program to provide maximum thrust for your people that God calls to the mission field?

