

# MOBILIZER

A Publication of ACMC (Advancing Churches In Missions Commitment)

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## In Our Next Issue... The Changing Landscape of Church/Mission Agency Relationships

**See, I Am Doing a New Thing** by George Miley. An analysis of how the church-mission agency landscape is changing.

**Why Churches Are Looking For New Models** by Ellen Livingood. An analysis of the factors that are encouraging some churches to “think outside the box” in their missions ministries.

**A Partnership Made For Heaven** by Mark Struck. How one agency is rewriting how it invites churches into partnerships.

**We Found That We Need Agencies** by Porter Speakman. A church of 8,000 in Charlotte, NC describes the process of attempting to send missionaries without agencies’ assistance...and why it chose to abandon that model.

**We Started Our Own Sending Structure** by Mike Pollard. A profile of how and why one local church decided to start its own sending agency.



**The Road to the Field:**  
**Local Church-Based**  
**Missionary Preparation**

## In This Issue

Isaiah 40:3-4 says, "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.'"<sup>1</sup> While this specific verse refers to the coming of Jesus, this metaphor of making paths straight for the coming of the gospel is frequent in the Bible.

Local churches have a role in making straight paths so that the good news can travel. One way that they do so is by preparing their future missionaries well, and giving them guidance down the sometimes-difficult road to the field.

This issue of *Mobilizer* is dedicated to helping your church smooth your future missionaries' paths to the field.

<sup>1</sup>The New International Version, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

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## Issues and Trends In Missionary Preparation

*by Woody Phillips*

In the early 1980's, a number of factors converged that heightened the importance of missionary preparation in local churches. APMC was arguably the primary catalyst that encouraged churches to make the leap from supporting church (where a church primarily sends money to mission agencies and prays for its missionaries) to sending church (where a church takes a more proactive role in screening, preparing, caring for and evaluating missionaries). More and more churches began hiring missions pastors, professionals who directed their missions ministries either full- or part-time.

I was one of those missions pastors at that time. As a network of pastors we developed a system of gauging candidates' readiness by sending them through a series of increasingly intense phases of preparedness. It varied from three to four stages from church to church, but essentially the pathway to the field covered the phases of 1) initial interest, 2) declared intention to pursue missions as a career, 3) acceptance by a mission agency, and 4) final preparation for overseas service. At each stage, a profile described the skills and character qualities that should be forming in potential missionaries. Candidates were required to read certain books, take specific classes, participate in ministry and church leadership, and develop spiritual disciplines.

In retrospect, it was a helpful model to many churches. And missionaries most certainly left for the field far better prepared. Yet, while the plans always looked good on paper, they rarely worked out as well in real life. People are far more individual than such plans, and our messy hearts defy categorization. I believe that our methods were somewhat mechanical, and our emphasis centered on ministry skills and cross-cultural ministry experience. And because these are more measurable areas, this methodology can lead to a very fleshly approach to ministry, one that assumes that because a missionary has read a certain number

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of books and served in a number of ministry opportunities, he or she is fit for the field.

Were I starting over in drafting missionary preparation programs, I believe that I'd prefer to look for milestones occurring in a candidate's life rather than passage through more artificially-contrived stages. And while cross-cultural experience and ministry skills are still important, I have become far more concerned about a candidate's heart and character,



*Woody Phillips*

and his or her answers to questions such as, "Have you learned to trust God and walk with him? What is your story of grace? How have you battled with sin and learned to receive and give out God's grace in that process?" If a candidate's heart and character are solid, then it's relatively unimportant where he's been or what he lacks, because he can learn the cross-cultural and ministry skills.

I am encouraged by the landscape of missionary preparation in the local church today. Compared to 15-20 years ago, more local churches, especially larger ones, have acknowledged needless missionary attrition due to lack of pre-field preparation, and are assuming their rightful responsibility in this critical process. Yet I am concerned about the number of churches that still do little to nothing in missionary preparation. These churches seem to believe that preparation is primarily the responsibility of the mission agency, and they hope that agencies will pick up the slack. As a result, we are seeing that many of the qualified men and women who come to mission agencies prepared to serve have received most of their encouragement and training through parish ministries.

As I wave the banner for better missionary preparation, my calls are met largely by sympathetic ears in agencies and churches alike, yet the process of upgrading missionary preparation is slow. I continue to believe that it's worth the struggle. The complexities of world evangelization, the increasing plurality of senders, and the lack of healthy, whole North American candidates demand that we pay more, rather than less attention to this critical arena.

The appropriately-increasing popularity of the partnership model has spilled over into missionary preparation and has produced several encouraging trends. Cooperative training models such as The Next Step and the Center for Intercultural Training demonstrate that churches and agencies are discarding needless suspicion of one another and are drawing on each others' resources. The result is a much higher grade of training quality. **[ed. note—these organizations are profiled beginning on p. 15.]**

An emphasis on partnership has also produced more regional cooperation among local churches. Together they are uniting in cities and regions to conduct joint training for short-term and local cross-cultural ministries.

The issues surrounding missionary preparation are far more complex than twenty years ago when it began to gain attention. An example is the rise of "Finishers" who are becoming available for service. These early retirees who are choosing to spend the rest of their careers applying their lifelong skills to needs on the field, expect and need different training than their "Buster" counterparts (the generation now in their twenties). Busters want to train and serve in teams and are looking for an experience of God through their service. They also usually come from more broken backgrounds than Finishers. If they can mature beyond their past brokenness, they emerge with great hearts for hurting people and prove to be quite effective missionaries. My point is that if your church finds itself sending out both Finishers and Busters, it requires much thought and energy to prepare them both well.

How, then, can our churches begin to prepare missionaries better? Not surprisingly, what we should be passing on to missionaries are essentially the same things that any church will be doing to disciple the entire congregation well. We need to focus on training and shepherding people's hearts. Scripture is so accurate: we are naturally foolish, wayward sheep who need to develop a grace-based world and life view. We must train people to live and work in the context of Christian community, thus helping them learn to connect with others. That is essentially the work of missions.

Whether your church has long prepared missionaries for service, or is beginning to understand missionary preparation's importance, I would encourage you to take your next steps in growing in this area of ministry. Without their churches' clear plan for preparation, missionaries will most certainly not make a maximal contribution. But with solid preparation under their belts, they will be primed for more mature and skilled ministries that can make a tremendous difference in a world needy for the gospel.

*Woody Phillips passed away on July 10, 2001. He served as a missions pastor at Grace Church in Edina, MN and Church of the Saviour in Wayne, PA, and finally as the President of United World Mission, Charlotte, NC. Woody became actively involved in the APMC Network from its beginning, serving as a Board member and frequent speaker at APMC events. He is deeply missed by his wife, Nelda, their three children, and the entire North American missions community.*



## What We're Seeing

*An interview with several mission agencies' personnel administrators*

**H**ow well are local churches preparing missionary candidates? We recently posed that question to five people who should know. Each works in a mission agency, evaluating applications for missionary service and coaching missionaries to the field.

Lauren Helveston serves as Personnel Director for the Mission Society for United Methodists in Norcross, GA. Don Linsz serves as the Director of Selection and Training for SIM International in Charlotte, NC. Alan Chantelau is the Candidate Coordinator for Pioneers in Orlando, FL. Jim Riddell is the Team Leader for the Personnel Consulting Team with the Southern Baptists' International Mission Board in Richmond, VA. And Mike Downey works as a Personnel Administrator with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Orlando, FL.

**Mobilizer:** Compared to ten or twenty years ago, how have local churches improved in their preparation of missionaries?

**Lauren Helveston (LH):** Churches are exposing wider numbers of people to missions through short-term trips. And I see churches availing themselves to more opportunities outside the church for preparation, such as the *Perspectives* course.

**Mike Downey (MD):** Yes, and churches are taking advantage of resources for helping people stay accountable spiritually, such as Promise Keepers and small groups.

**Don Linsz (DL):** I see churches encouraging their candidates along the way better. Some are asking how they can get more involved in their candidates' lives. Many are helping their candidates in practical ways, such as providing the finances to attend an agency's candidate school. In general, I see churches trusting their candidates more.

**Alan Chantelau (AC):** They are becoming more involved later in the sending phases in areas such as Bible training (as opposed to telling candidates to go to a Bible college to “get more Bible”).

**Jim Riddell (JR):** I see churches generating more excitement about missions. They are helping their people see a larger variety of options for involvement. In general people are far more exposed to the mission field, through short-term trips and also personal business travel.

**Mobilizer:** What weaknesses do you commonly observe in local church missionary preparation?

**DL:** Candidates come to us with far more psychological baggage. Many need counseling. When candidates leave our candidate school, more often than not we urge or require them to read one of several good books about processing past woundedness. Candidates usually readily admit that they need counseling to some extent. I'd like to see churches help them deal earlier and better with these crippling issues.

**AC:** They're definitely coming with more baggage—divorced parents, addictions, and so on—that must be processed before they ever will be able to work cross-culturally.

**JR:** Most of our society's ills are present in churches as well. I don't think that many local churches are sufficiently helping people persevere and mature through crises such as divorce, abuse, dysfunctional families, and sexuality issues. They need to help candidates put the past away. People are reluctant to deal with their past, but these skeletons creep up at the worst possible moments on the mission field if they're left untreated. These sorts of past problems don't disqualify people from missionary service; we just want to be sure that people have healthily moved past such issues.

**MD:** I remain surprised how simple Biblical knowledge has declined. We give our candidates a general assessment of their Bible knowledge and many don't know facts that would have been considered standard

knowledge a decade or so ago.

**AC:** Sometimes it seems that basic discipleship is not occurring consistently. We recently invited twelve churches to our headquarters and this issue—how to disciple missionary candidates—was a major issue.

**MD:** Some candidates seem very inflexible and cannot work with others who differ in nonessentials of the faith.

**LH:** Too many missionaries apply for service with us who have had to come completely through their own initiative. Their understanding of missions, and preparation for ministry, have occurred outside the church too frequently. Their churches have not been the impetus to get them there.

**Mobilizer:** What could local churches do to prepare future missionaries better?

**JR:** Through planned discipleship, they need to give all of their people a thoroughly Biblical world and life view. I see missionary candidates who find it difficult to think through ethical and moral decisions Bib-



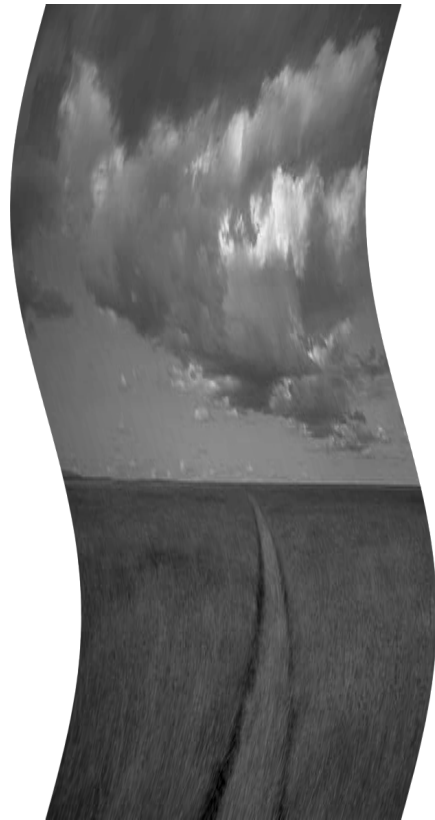
**“The wise church is one that knows its people well and provides multiple ministry opportunities that will accommodate the increasing number of smaller steps on the way to the field.”**

lically, because we have become so influenced by the media and our culture.

**MD:** I think that churches have emphasized their missionaries developing many specific competencies, and that is good. But specialization can lead to people who refuse to work outside their specialties. We need

people who foundationally are servants and will pitch in where they're needed as team players.

Also, students are graduating with large debts. I'd like to see churches either help future missionaries make choices that will avoid such large debts, or help them pay off those debts.



**LH:** I'd suggest that churches determine a plan for moving people at all levels of interest, along toward the field.

**Mobilizer:** What issues and trends do you see coming around the corner that should affect how churches prepare missionaries?

**DL:** Once local churches peel back the superficial, outward appearances of Gen X'ers, they will find that X'ers are actually looking for help and are quite open to it. See their heart and encourage them, even with a brief word. They are greatly attracted to people with experience—mother and father figures who will listen and relationally mentor them.

**AC:** People are taking more interim steps to the field. It's far more typical to see missionaries who first went on a two-week short-term trip...then a 1-2 year assignment...then into a career assignment. Whether it's good or bad, people are easing into missions careers. The wise church is one that knows its people well and provides multiple ministry opportunities that will accommodate the increasing number of smaller steps on the way to the field.

## ...So That We May Work Together For the Truth

by Tom Steller

**T**hird John 7-8 has always been an important passage to us at Bethlehem Baptist Church: "...they began their journey for the sake of Christ, accepting no support from nonbelievers. Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we may become co-workers with the truth."<sup>2</sup> As this pertains to candidate preparation, this passage highlights two key principles. First, those who went out were God-centered people, existing and serving solely for God's pleasure and glory. Second, "such people" indicates that they were of a particular sort. There is an appropriate place for looking for specialized criteria in missionary candidates. And the local church is the entity that is primarily entrusted with the task of raising up "such people".

This is precisely the reason that we started the Bethlehem Nurture Program. We realize that it is the church's responsibility to recruit and equip some of our best people in order to send them out as missionaries. We want to do what we can as a local church to equip them to communicate the love and justice of Christ in cultures where there is no indigenous evangelizing church yet planted or where the indigenous church does not yet have sufficient resources and personnel to evangelize its people in an effective way.

Missionary recruitment has both individual and corporate dimensions:

**1. Individual** - God communicates his will to praying and biblically-saturated individuals in a variety of ways, such as through a God-given desire arising in a person's heart and mind (Phil. 2:13), or a persuasive appeal from a godly person (Acts 11:25,26), or a clearly perceived vision (Acts 16:9,10).

**2. Corporate** - The leaders of the church (whether lay or ordained) should take the initiative with individuals of unusual potential for vocational Christian ministry to approach them and encourage them to

<sup>2</sup>The New Revised Standard Version, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

seriously consider such ministry (Acts 11:25, 26; 16:3). God confirms his will for an individual through the consensus of a local church (Acts 13:3). The church must agree with the individual that he or she is indeed called and equipped for a specific mission before it can lay hands on the individual and send him or her out with the church's blessing and support. Thus the church plays an essential role in the recruitment of vocational Christian workers through prayer, personal appeals by lay and ordained leadership, and corporate confirmation of an individual's call to ministry.

According to Eph. 4:11ff., the leadership of the church is responsible to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Bethlehem's Nurture Program simply reflects the training that we as the sending body are able to provide, and which we deem as important for the missionaries whom we will send out. In no way does the Nurture Program take the place of or compete with the training program of individual mission agencies. We encourage all of our candidates to participate wholeheartedly in the training programs of the agency to which God leads them. It is our hope that this Nurture Program will provide the mission agencies with God-centered, compassionate, well-prepared and highly motivated candidates.

We believe that there are five important dimensions to a well-prepared missionary. We call them dimensions rather than stages because we believe that they are areas of lifelong development; we never "graduate" from any of them. These dimensions are as follows:

**Dimension 1: A Growing Maturity—Spiritually, Emotionally, and Relationally.** By far the most important dimension of preparation for the mission field has to do with one's relationship with God and conformity to the character of Christ. We want our missionary candidates to be men and women of the Word and of prayer. We want to encourage them toward a regular and satisfying devotional life of prayer, Bible study and memorization. Our deep concern is that our missionaries are gripped by a biblical vision of God—a God who is sovereign over the universe and who is intimately concerned for the deep and lasting happiness (as defined Biblically) of the individual.

The Biblical prototype of the missionary is that of a wounded healer. God has placed His treasure in earthen vessels so that "the surpassing greatness of the power will be from Him and not from ourselves" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Historically God has used broken people to bring the gospel to other broken people both near and far. Our aim is to do what we can to help missionary candidates deal with their own brokenness and to experience whatever degree of healing they need in order to minister the gospel to others in a healthy and effective way. Though we do not require every missionary candidate to go through an in-depth counseling process with a Christian counselor, we value that process very much and regard it as a significant aspect of discipleship for many people.

Most mission agencies will give a prospective missionary a battery of psychological tests before appointing him or her to serve on the mission field. This usually takes place at the orientation school of that particular agency. Our conviction is that some kind of evaluation should also be done earlier, so that if issues emerge which need counseling attention, there is ample time to deal with them in the supportive and healing environment of the local church.

Within six months of joining the Nurture Program the missionary candidate is asked to take the Preparedness Questionnaire. We designed it to encourage our missionary candidates to look honestly at their own lives, their relationships with God, their understanding of themselves, their relationships with others, and their awareness of impending cross-cultural issues. The questions are frank because we believe these things need to be discussed in a loving and supportive atmosphere. This is not a screening device. We are committed to working with anyone who senses God's call to missions no matter what past difficulties a person has encountered.

Among the list of qualifications for Christian leadership are attributes that relate to how the family functions. So in addition to the Preparedness Questionnaire we use a communication tool called "ENRICH" for married couples.

The Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory has proven helpful in preparing missionary candidates for working in team relationships on the field. We give it periodically at Bethlehem in a group setting and use it to illustrate the wide variety of personalities that missionaries will encounter, and how they tend to relate to each other.



**“We are committed to working with anyone who senses God’s call on his or her life to missions no matter what difficulties a person has encountered in the past.”**

Instead we want them to be part of the body life of our church—both on the giving end and on the receiving end. We want our missionaries-in-training to be “secret agents” disseminating missions vision throughout the congregation and developing relationships with those who will stay behind as part of the sending base. So we ask our missionaries to join the church, worship regularly and become a part of a small group.

**Dimension 2: A Growing Commitment to the Life and Ministry of the Local Church.** The aim of missions is to plant the Church of Jesus Christ where it doesn’t exist or to strengthen it where it cannot yet thrive on its own. How can we know what we are trying to plant or strengthen if we have not experienced it for ourselves? Thus our desire for our missionaries is that they have a positive and fruitful experience with the local church.

Our philosophy is for our missionaries to be in the mainstream of the life of the church as much as possible. Though we very much want a group identity and camaraderie among the missionary candidates (which we seek to achieve through periodic get-togethers, seminars, and retreats), we don’t want them to be cloistered. In-

**Dimension 3: A Growing Knowledge of God’s Word.** At Bethlehem we value very highly the life of the mind and the clear understanding of Biblical truth. We don’t expect every member or every missionary candidate to be a Bible scholar, but our desire is that each of us will joyfully obey the Biblical admonition in 2 Timothy 2:15—“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.”<sup>3</sup> We thus ask our candidates to take courses on Bible study methods, the unity of the Bible (especially from a redemption perspective), practical theology and spiritual leadership. We also require the *Perspectives* course.

**Dimension 4: A Growing Application of God’s Word through Ministry.** An old adage says, “if you’re not doing it here, what makes you think you’ll do it over there?” We want to provide our missionary candidates with relevant ministry experience for the mission field. We realize that there are significant methodological differences, for example, between street evangelism in Minneapolis and evangelism among the Muslim Fulani of Cameroon. But the similarity is also significant. Both situations are cross-cultural and both provide the experience of depending on God’s empowerment to move out of one’s comfort zone and communicate the gospel understandably. We want our candidates to go to the field with enough experience of God working through them that they leave with a well-grounded confidence that He will continue to do so in the future wherever they go. Therefore, we ask our candidates to be regularly involved in ministry on two fronts: ministry directed toward building up believers and sustaining the church, and ministry of building redemptive bridges to unbelievers.

**Dimension 5: A Growing Relationship with the Senders.** A “sender” is anyone who helps a missionary on his or her way “so that they are lacking in nothing” (Titus 3:13; III John 1-8). We want all of our missionaries to have significant and healthy relationships with a network of senders. The aim of these senders is to be of substantial help to the missionary. We have established intentional ways for our candidates to develop relationships with an Accountability Partner (who provides the candidate regular and direct encouragement to-



<sup>3</sup>The New Revised Standard Version (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 1989.

wards meeting the Nurture Program goals, and upholds her in prayer throughout the process), the Missions Committee, her mission agency, a support team, and the pastoral staff.

Our aim in the Nurture Program is not to overwhelm candidates with things to do or hoops to jump through. This is simply what we regard as foundational training for their future ministry. We are open to considering any adjustments that candidates might suggest. We emphasize the fact that each dimension of preparation is a continual process toward Christ-likeness and effective missions service.

Many readers may say, “That’s great for Bethlehem Baptist. You’re a large church with plenty of resources. We’re not ready for missionary preparation.” Yet in many ways missionary preparation is easier in the smaller church. Such churches know their future missionaries in-depth, and don’t have tons of candidates at once. Much of what we use is easily accessible to all churches, such as the *Perspectives* class.

It’s important to remember that missionary preparation is the process of passing on to future missionaries what is precious about the faith to your church. It’s primarily a function of asking, “What do I want this missionary to take away to the field, in order to represent our church?” Then it’s a function of serving as Barnabases to Pauls—coming alongside them, seeing their promise and potential, and helping develop it.



*Tom Steller serves as the missions pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN.*

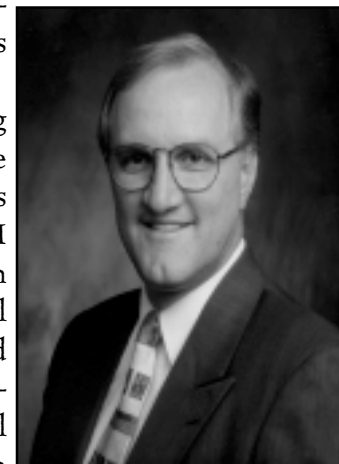
## Partnering in Training

*by Mike Pollard*

**S**troll the aisles of any Christian bookstore and you will find a plethora of tools, books and courses ready for use in the task of discipleship. Local churches adhere to a number of discipleship programs and mission agencies likewise have each developed their own pre-field missionary preparation plans. The typical American evangelical church has access to enough missions resources to reinvent the wheel of missionary preparation should it choose to do so.

Yet when churches, agencies and other formal training institutions partner together, seeking to draw on each others’ strengths and resources for missionary training, the results can be no less than astounding. Such is the case in two networks dedicated to bringing churches and agencies together for synergistic missionary preparation.

In 1988 United World Mission was becoming increasingly convinced of two realities. The first was the need for churches to reclaim their Biblical place in the missionary sending process. The second was the importance of agencies partnering to avoid needless duplication in their common tasks. UWM relocated from St. Petersburg, FL to Union Mills, NC in 1989, purchasing a large rural campus with the desire that it be used jointly by many evangelical mission agencies for missionary preparation. Its School of Intercultural Studies (SIS) emerged in order to extend quality training as a gift available to any mission agency.



*George Schultz of the Center For Intercultural Training*

**What type of church is ready to partner in its missionary preparation? What is necessary is neither a large size, nor a long history of sending missionaries.**

Yet UWM quickly found that few mission agencies were eager to send their missionaries to another agency for training. Upon reflection, UWM also realized that a genuine partnership is steered jointly, not unilaterally. The agency relocated its headquarters to Charlotte, NC for a number of reasons, including the fact that the training center

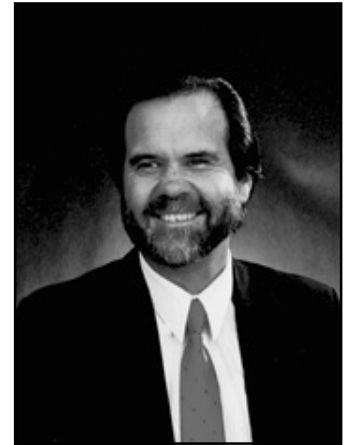
might become a place of joint leadership and shared decision-making. UWM openly courted active partners to come and build a common training center back in Union Mills. Partners accumulated and in 1998 the retooled Center for Intercultural Training (CIT) was born.

George Schultz, a missionary with InterAct Ministries, moved to North Carolina to direct the center in 1995. Schultz had previously served as a church planter, director of a Bible Institute, and a field director in Alaska. He had also presided over InterAct's expansion into Russia. He had long been convinced of the urgency of improved missionary preparation and had worked extensively to insure that InterAct's new missionaries to Russia were well prepared.

Today CIT ([www.citi.org](http://www.citi.org)) offers a wealth of training opportunities year-round at its Union Mills campus. Training opportunities include language acquisition, Bible, teambuilding skills, contextualization, spiritual warfare, interpersonal skills, theology, church planting, transition skills, culture shock, family preparedness, strategic ministry planning and ethnomusicology. Some 15 mission agencies and churches, primarily located on the east coast, are partners in this venture. Costs of training are held to a minimum, as partner organizations lend their personnel to teach the courses. Last year 33 mission agencies sent candidates from as far away as California and England to CIT training.

As the SIS/CIT model emerged on the east coast, churches and agencies across the U.S. recognized the potential of such a partnership that

was more easily accessible to their regions. So in 1998 The Next Step (TNS) began operating as a network for missionary preparation. TNS differs from CIT in that TNS owns no property, employs no staff, and offers no courses for missionaries-in-preparation to take. Rather, TNS primarily offers conferences at which issues and trends in missionary preparation are discussed. The president of TNS, a volunteer position elected annually, is currently Richard Lewis of UWM. Today approximately 125 partners belong to TNS. 25% of the partners are local churches, 15% are mission agencies, 50% are non-formal training program organizations, and 10% are formal training institutions such as Bible colleges.



Richard Lewis of The Next Step

CIT and TNS would love to see more local churches become partners. Yet several common factors seem to deter them from doing so:

- Larger churches often believe that they can provide all of their own training.
- Many churches still believe that missionary preparation is primarily the responsibility of mission agencies and seminaries, and thus delegate this responsibility.
- Some churches are concerned about theological purity and prefer not to expose their missionaries to training that, while thoroughly evangelical, is outside of their system of theology.
- Other churches are concerned that their philosophy of ministry and organizational ethos, which they have passed on to their missionaries, might become diluted.
- Still other churches fear a loss of control over the training process.

In his doctoral dissertation, Schultz examined the effectiveness of three models of missionary preparation. He divides preparers-of-missionaries into three categories: 1) **Providers**, who conduct all of their own

training; 2) **Outsourcers**, who conduct none of their own training and send their missionaries to other organizations, and 3) **Partners**, organizations that prepare their missionaries in collaboration with other training providers. Schultz' studies seemed to support the belief that the partnership model of missionary preparation is most effective for many agencies and churches for seven key reasons:

1. Partnership training exposes missionaries to a wider range and deeper well of trainers and experts, providing them with a higher quality of preparation.
2. Partnership training is conducted in larger groups, which produce more feedback, interaction and discussion. Learning that is interactive, with a variety of people, is more effective.
3. Partnership training demonstrates Christian unity.
4. Partnership training offers a wider range of opportunities and electives than an individual organization can offer.
5. Partnership training shares and thus reduces costs of training.
6. Partnership training can offer more training available more frequently, thus allowing far more flexibility.
7. Partnership training, if done in genuine cooperation, still allows for careful control and input from all partners. It leverages the strengths of all of the important stakeholders in the preparation process—churches, schools and agencies.

What type of church is ready to partner in its missionary preparation? What is necessary is neither a large size, nor a long history of sending missionaries. Rather, it requires several convictions. First, says Schultz, is a conviction regarding the necessity of excellent training and an understanding of what will likely occur without it. He cites William Taylor who wrote in *Too Valuable To Lose*, "Mission agencies report that there is a correlation between the amount of pre-field training required, and the attrition rate. Agencies and churches that experience lower attrition rates have, on average, 50% more pre-field preparation requirements." Lewis adds, "When a church sees the results of a failure to train, it wants to be part of the solution."

Second is the conviction that the local church cannot provide all of the necessary training at a high-quality level. And third is a trust and commitment to work with fellow partners toward quality training and missionary preparation.



How, then, might a church become involved in the CIT or TNS? In the case of CIT, which operates a facility and offers actual training, Schultz urges a church to interact with CIT partners on the phone or by visiting them. Next, it could send a staff member or missionary to sample a course. The church should contact other churches that have sent missionaries to CIT and ask for references about the quality of training. Once a church opts for partnership, it builds the partnership by sending missionaries for training. But churches can also help by sending a work team to help in facility upkeep, or sending a staff member to teach a course. Some churches have partnered with CIT even when they have no missionaries to send, by contributing financially to CIT's ministry.

In the case of TNS, a church could first visit the website ([www.thenextstep.org](http://www.thenextstep.org)) and locate partners to interview for references. The TNS website also features a schedule of upcoming training events around the country, and a church could attend an event as a guest. Eventually a church can become a full partner for a modest annual fee.

Is cooperative training beneficial and worth the energy that such a partnership requires? Ask Rick Chiesa, a CIT grad and an SIM missionary to Niger, Africa, who says, "We know that this training has made all the difference in our thriving in Niger.... This training has helped us in many ways personally, spiritually, and cross-culturally. I think that we would not have not made it through the first few months on the field without the education we received. It forced us to wrestle with several tough questions and it accelerated our personal refinement."

## It's How You Know

*A collaboration by World Team staffers Susan Best, Kevin Cain, Ginny Crapster, Julie Neel, Kevin Riley, Chuck Sutton and Tim Smith*

**O**ur local paper, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, has a catchy slogan found at many train and bus stops: “The *Inquirer*: It’s how you know.” In one brief phrase, they claim their paper is the definitive source for news and information in Philadelphia. If all you read is the *Inquirer*, you are supposed to be confident that you know what you need to know today.

Evaluating missionary candidates is not so easy. However, the *Inquirer*’s slogan does raise an important question for agencies and churches: How do we *know* that an individual or couple is ready to leave for the field? World Team is actively recruiting teams to move into limited access countries to establish reproducing churches. In these contexts



*Ginny Crapster and Tim Smith discuss the schedule format for a typical RACE session.*

the adjustment and stress levels only increase. How do we know our selection process is effective in choosing those who have “the right stuff” not only to survive, but to thrive in inter-cultural ministry?

Is formal theological training sufficient to guarantee effectiveness? One wise mission leader reminds us that credentials do not guarantee competency. The sobering reality of missionary casualties haunts both the church and agency and should drive us to reexamine our evaluation process. Concern for the well being of the missionary appointee is paramount; add to this the damage to missionary team and national relationships when

failure occurs, and the approximate investment of over \$250,000 for the first term of service. Good stewardship demands we do all we can to be sure appointees are ready to go. This starts with a thorough assessment at the beginning of the process.

We at World Team understand that while we must equip our new missionaries with effective cross-cultural training and on-field oversight, we are not psychological experts. We are generally not trained to recognize subtle signs that may reveal potential future problems. For this reason, we work with the Center for Organizational and Ministry Development (COMD) to increase our confidence that we are carefully selecting missionaries. Since 1983, COMD has conducted over 100 assessment centers for church planters, involving more than 2000 candidates, on behalf of nine denominational groups, twelve mission agencies, and six churches. COMD subscribes to the Lausanne Covenant. How does COMD fit into our selection process in candidate school?

We invite candidates to attend one of three annual candidate orientations after the normal application and screening process. Each orientation (which begins on a Thursday) consists of a ten-day period we call RACE, an acronym for Reciprocal Assessment and Candidate Evaluation. Here candidates and World Team examine each other and assess whether we are a good fit to engage in a serious partnership for the sake of the Gospel.

During the first three days of RACE we try to answer the following questions:

- **Who are we?** World Team leaders seek to provide in-depth answers to questions such as, Why do we exist? What are our convictions and priorities? We discuss how our commitment to core values such as teamwork influence our mission to establish reproducing churches among unreached peoples.
- **What are the opportunities that God has set before us?** We explore together ministry needs in each area around the world as reported by field leadership.

- **What is the reality of 'missions' today?** We challenge candidates to move beyond the romanticism of missions to better understand the realities of intercultural ministry, such as adjustment, stress, and what it really means to communicate the gospel to people in another culture.

After Sunday services, COMD staff members arrive and enjoy a picnic with the World Team staff and candidates. Formal assessment begins on Monday morning. We begin seeking to answer these questions:

- **Who are you?** Together we discuss candidates' character, gifts, abilities and skills as they relate to effectiveness in intercultural ministry.
- **Should we walk together?** We seek to determine together if there is a good fit regarding shared philosophy and strategy.

Tom Graham, the founder of COMD, originally developed his assessment approach for the Peace Corps. They asked him to help determine why many workers went unprepared or as an ill fit for their assignments. As Tom's methods proved fruitful, he realized that Christian organizations could benefit from a similar assessment.

The next four days of assessment are an intense combination of several activities. Candidates present both their testimonies and the gospel. They divide into teams commissioned to develop a hypothetical plan based on World Team's strategies for moving into an unreached people group. Assessors observe how each team forms itself and functions. This process provides insight into how people relate to one another, especially under pressure. One group was full of so many "D's" (a strong, opinionated leader, per the DISC profile) that it spent its entire first session deciding on who would be the team leader!

COMD and World Team staff comprise the team of assessors. At times a staff member from a partnering church will join us when one of its candidates is present. Candidates are evaluated in regard to their pre-



*Mike Riley and Susan Best of Worldteam*

paredness to be part of a team of church planters and whether that candidate will be a church planter or a support team player. Each night after the day's activities, the assessment team discusses observations gleaned from the day's activities. COMD assessors process this information in light of prior psychological testing administered confidentially. Personal interviews with candidates also take place.

COMD has established a scale of missionary readiness based on a continuum that reflects its observations over the years. All assessors prepare a confidential and personalized assessment for each candidate in categories similar to those which follow:

1. Readiness, including spiritual maturity, giftedness and abilities, which leads to appointee status and permission to move directly into partnership development and cross-cultural church planting.
2. Qualified readiness to serve based on the fulfillment of certain requirements such as further education, ministry training and experience, counseling, or more life experience (maturity). The candidate is appointed at this time.

3. Potential to serve, pending several requirements that must be successfully fulfilled. After meeting these requirements, the candidate may be invited to another RACE for further assessment.

4. Either cross-cultural ministry, or World Team, is not a good fit for this person or couple.

Is every candidate accepted? The difficult answer is no. Reasons vary from a difference in philosophy to instability because of factors such as family of origin issues. We see these issues as a pastoral opportunity to speak into the lives of people who desire to serve the Lord but need further development before continuing their journey in missions.

We ask all appointees to develop a mentoring relationship with a person who will help them move toward their goal of intercultural ministry. The final days of RACE help prepare our appointees for partnership development. We also discuss field placement for those who are not yet allocated. We conclude with a special banquet celebrating God's faithfulness and the receiving of new missionary appointees.

RACE is an expensive and very intensive event. We think it is one crucial factor which contributes to our low attrition rate of 3%. We continue to work at improving our assessment process. It is not perfect. But the partnership with COMD has given us much more confidence in our selection process.

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*[ed. note: We asked World Team to describe its assessment process because so much is at stake. Too often inadequate missionary evaluation creates a vicious cycle. The home church may be unsure about a candidate's readiness for service and so it recommends the candidate to the agency, hoping that the agency will turn the candidate down if (s)he is unprepared for service. The agency, seeking qualified workers and depending significantly on the local church's positive recommendation, assumes that the church would not send unfit candidates. As a result, unprepared candidates sometimes find their way to the field and become casualties that are part of climbing attrition rates. What is your church's plan for evaluating your future missionaries? How do you*

*know when your candidates are ready to go? If you are highly dependent upon mission agencies for such evaluation, have you investigated your agencies' assessment approach? Are you satisfied with what they are doing?*

*Until you're satisfied with both your evaluation and your agencies' assessment plans, you're not ready to send missionaries confidently. Once you have thoroughly determined your evaluation plans, you're ready to give candidates the green light. It's how you know.]*

## **R E S O U R C E S**

**The following are several resources for missionary preparation:**

Center For Intercultural Training, P.O. Box 250, Union Mills, NC 28167; phone 800/887-1786; email [citinfo@compuserve.com](mailto:citinfo@compuserve.com); website [www.citi.org](http://www.citi.org). (*featured on p. 15*)

Center For Organizational Ministry and Development, 120 E. La Habra Blvd. #107, La Habra CA 90631; phone 562/697-6144; website [www.comd.org](http://www.comd.org). (*featured on p. 21*)

Mission Training International, P.O. Box 50110, Colorado Springs, CO 80949; phone 800/896-3710; website [www.mti.org](http://www.mti.org). MTI provides a number of quality training opportunities for language learning, cross-cultural entry, and more.

The Next Step. email [NextStepTraining@aol.com](mailto:NextStepTraining@aol.com); website [www.thenextstep.org](http://www.thenextstep.org). (*featured on p. 15*)

*Mobilizer* magazine is published quarterly for those in the ACMC Network, which helps churches mobilize their resources for effective involvement in world evangelization. *Mobilizer* brings together a wide range of views that will challenge your perspective about how your church does missions. *Mobilizer* may present views and models that are not necessarily the opinions of ACMC. We welcome your response.