CHURCHES LEARNING FROM AGENCIES

Posted on March 22, 2022 by Eddie

I'm often quite critical of mission agencies, but (for the most part) they take the business of supporting and caring for their people very seriously. Churches and church leaders could learn from them.
Category: Observations

I was most amused by this blog post which poses the question of what it would look like if western churches hired their staff with the same priorities that they choose overseas missionaries to financially support.

> *First of all, a **Childrenâ€™s Pastor** would definitely be out. Not strategic enough; heâ€™s only supporting the children of believers. **Youth Pastor**? Also out, unless he targets neighborhood kids...*
>
> *How about a **Preaching Pastor**? Wellâ€¦thatâ€™s if-y, but he probably doesnâ€™t make the cut either. After all, heâ€™s only feeding the Body. Most of the time, heâ€™s not actually reaching the lost.*

There is a serious point to the blog post and it's well worth giving it a read. However, I thought that I would turn the question round and see if there is anything that we Church leaders can learn from the way in which missionaries are recruited and supported.

Prayer: before we could go to Africa, we had to be able to demonstrate that we had a cadre of people who were committed to praying for us. We also have to send out regular letters (emails, these days) to keep our supporters up to date with what we are doing and what our needs are. Though the supervision is fairly light touch, Wycliffe continue to monitor that we are doing our bit to encourage people to pray for us. There are people who have been praying regularly for us for almost 40 years; it is an immense privilege to have this sort of support network.

In my experience, many church leaders don't have this sort of prayer backing. I'm not sure how they cope. To complicate things, I have heard that if ministers admit that they need prayer for one reason or another, it can be used against them by members of the congregation who don't believe that Christian leaders should show weakness.

Member Care. I must admit that I really dislike this term; basically it means pastoral care for missionaries. Most agencies have a member care department that looks after the wellbeing of their staff. There are also national and international member care networks which allow for the sharing of information and best practice. I have greatly benefitted from the emotional and spiritual support that has come through the member-care people who have had input into my life. Being able to talk to a counsellor when things were particularly stressful, or even just for a chat has been incredibly beneficial at times.

Again, for many church leaders, these sorts of structures are simply not in place. Some denominations do have support networks for clergy, but many ministers are on their own, or need to find or create peer-to-peer "member care". One resource which is out there to provide encouragement and refreshment to church leaders is Living Leadership. Can I strongly encourage any church leaders who feel the need for support and care to look them up and perhaps join the fortnightly Refresh Network Online or perhaps attend one of the conferences.

I'm often quite critical of mission agencies, but (for the most part) they take the business of supporting and caring for their people very seriously. Churches and denominations could learn from them.