NOT BY MISSIONARIES ALONE

Posted on January 21, 2014 by Eddie

Category: Bible & Mission

I reckon that the Church in the West places too much emphasis on missionaries.

Before I get dragged before the mission-leaders' trades union, let me quickly point out that I have argued on numerous occasions that the Church in the west should still be sending missionaries out into the world; try this series for size.

In one of those earlier posts, I wrote this:

> *The Church is called to be a witness to Jesus (Acts 1:8) and to make disciples (Matthew 28:19). These commands are universal and apply to all Christians everywhere and in every time. The two passages from Matthew and Luke also assume that Christians will bear witness and make disciples in all parts of the world. So, all Christians everywhere are to make disciples and bear witness to Christ to all people everywhere. You canâ€™t argue with that: seeÂ Sergeâ€™s commentÂ on an earlier post.*
>
> *However, we should not make the mistake of assuming that sending missionaries is the same as bearing witness to Christ and making disciples. We are very apt to confuse our own cultural expressions of the Christian faith with the deeper reality of the faith itself and this is a case in point.Â The modern missionary movement is one response (among many) from the Church to Godâ€™s call to serve him. (If you want more on this theme, see theÂ following post.)*

I would add to this, that in the current situation in the UK, not all churches have the human or financial resources that would allow them to send people across the world; but that doesn't absolve them from the call to make disciples. So, what are the alternatives to sending missionaries?

The World Has Come Here

Whatever we think about the economics and social impact of immigration, as Christians we have to recognise that it provides us with an unprecedented opportunity to share the Gospel with people from around the world without needing to visit a travel agent or buy malaria tablets. English language classes, overseas students' cafÃ©s, providing help to navigate British bureaucracy, are all meaningful and useful ways that Churches can serve their local international community and provide opportunity to share the message of Christ.

Going Without Going

There are many ways in which a congregation can become involved in world mission without actually sending a missionary of their own. I'll give examples from Wycliffe, but there are plenty of other options out there.

Support a Missionary Anyway

There are many missionaries who struggle to raise adequate financial and prayer support who would be grateful if a Church were to get behind them and encourage them.

Pray for a Project Overseas

Prayer is really important; ***really important***! Even if a church doesn't have a lot of people or money, they can pray. There are a number of good websites which will provide you with information for praying for different needs around the world. However, many of us find it difficult to pray for lots of different countries or situations; it is easier to concentrate on one thing. A programme such as First Gospel prayer can be a real help to many. First Gospel Prayer involves a group committing themselves to pray for the translation of the First Gospel (hence the name) for a people group. This normally involves a time period of 1-4 years, during which the group will be provided with regular prayer and praise updates to encourage and motivate them.

Get Involved With A Church or People Group

There are many programmes that help churches in the UK partner with Churches or groups around the world. In Wycliffe we have a thing called In FocusÂ whichÂ will 'introduce' your church to one group so that you can:

- pray for the Lord to break through into their lives
- build meaningful relationships with national workers ministering to this group
- prayerfully consider the financial needs of the programme
- praise God as scripture becomes available and has impact
- celebrate as the kingdom expands as a result of your involvement

There are lots of other ideas out there. The important thing is that we need to realise that changes in the demographics of the Church, new technologies and the ease of travel mean that we have many more opportunities to obey Christ's commands to make disciples than were available to previous generations.

We have to be involved in mission work; but that may well not involve missionaries!