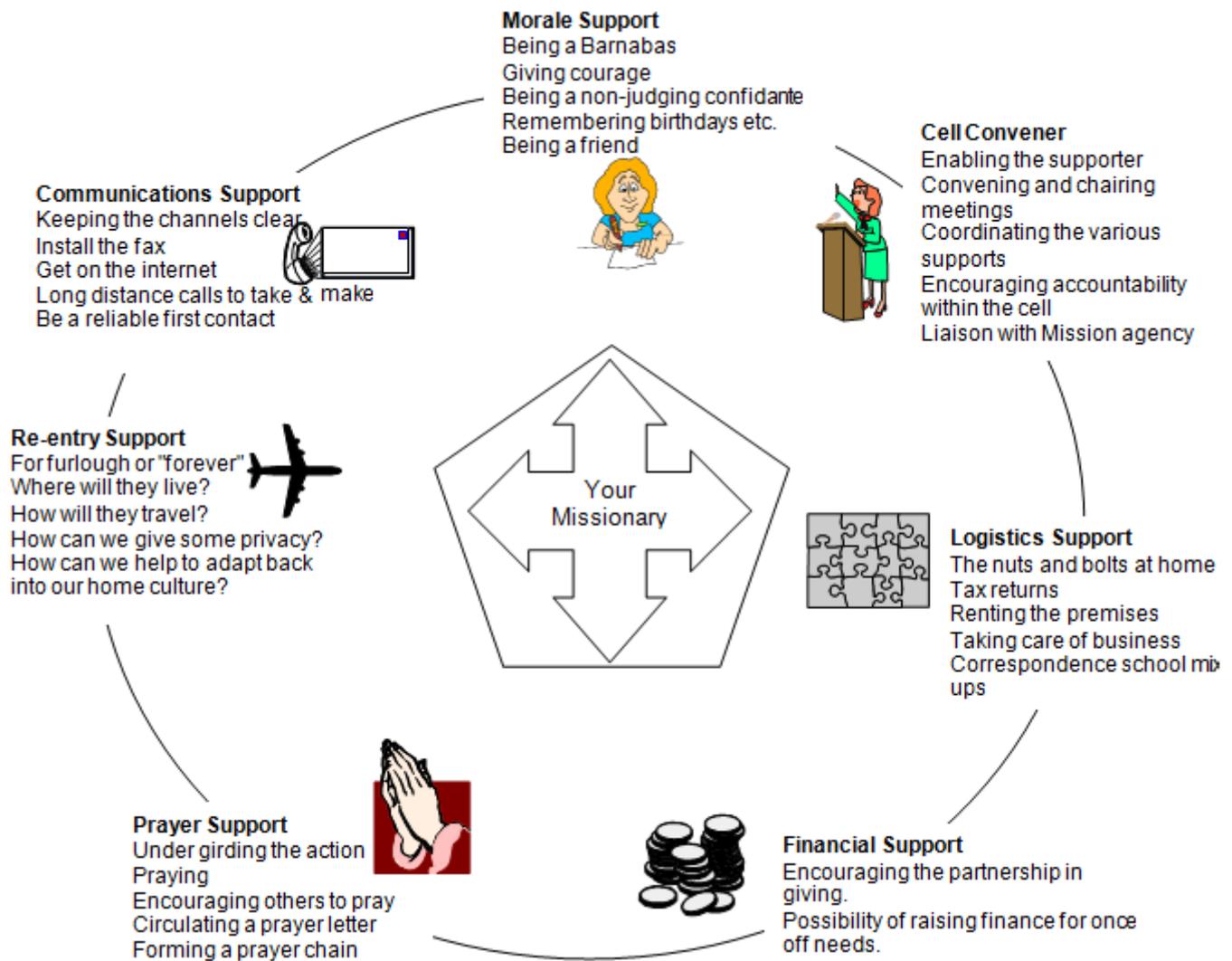


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## The Sending Cell “and How They Shall Go Unless They are Sent”



**Making your life count in God's world purpose**

## The Opportunity

There are Christians who look to the mission field with a sense of longing but also with disappointment, knowing that the excitement and adventure that awaits the man or woman of God in far off places will probably never be theirs. They sense that it is too late for them to “go.”

And for many this is a realistic assessment. For many reasons; family commitments, financial commitments, age, gifting, the great majority of Christians will not be missionaries. But this does not disqualify them from being a part of God’s global purpose and being intimately involved with cross cultural missions as a commitment for life.

It used to be that we had the choice of “going”, and being at the cutting edge, or “staying”, and praying and signing the occasional cheque according to our ability to give. But “Missions” has changed. We live in a global village where “over there” is less than 24 hours away by plane and only minutes away by email and phone. Gone are the days when news from the field comes at two or three year intervals and was one year out of date at receipt. Today the missionary can be almost constantly in contact with “home” And more to the point “home” can be instrumental in facilitating the work of the missionary in a vital and effective outreach into a people group.

Because of restrictions in communication and travel the missionary used to be isolated from all but a very select few. We would bid him “good-bye” with the thought that this is the last contact until furlough some three or five years down the track. Indeed it is not that long ago when the „good-bye” was for all practical purposes, forever, But today the world can be involved; not just in principle, but intimately and sacrificially involved in the thrust of the Gospel into the unreached peoples of the world.

## The Sending Cell

The sending cell is a group of delegates, individuals, families or couples who are engaged in the support of a specific missionary or missionary family. The Cell is limited in numbers so that each participant is vibrantly involved in the thrust to take the Gospel to every people on earth. Each member of the cell has specific duties, giving them a place of responsibility, and each is accountable to the others for the efficient operation of the cell in its functions. The Cell is not primarily seen as a resource for a missionary but a conduit of God’s provision from the partnership and the wider church and community. Missionaries are required to recruit a body of senders that would constitute their partnership; the sending cell in turn has the task of coordinating and possibly adding to this group of people.

It is our understanding that a sending cell without a partnership of people (senders) to coordinate is destined to fail.

## The Sending Cell Function

It may be helpful to state first what the cell is not.

The sending cell is not a group designed to take over the functions of a mission agency.

The sending cell is not a group to whom the missionary is accountable.

The sending cell is not in any sense a direction giving group.

The sending cell is:

1. Sacrificial in its attitude and practice.
2. Supportive in its function.
3. Fluid in its operation.

We shall look at each of these features of the Sending Cell in more detail.

## Sacrificial in its Attitude and Practice

Jesus has called all of us as servants and as such all that we own is for Him and His purposes. Just as missionaries give up much to go and make disciples of all nations, so we can, and should, give up much to facilitate them as they are doing so.

We can start to change the way we live so that we identify with our missionary. He or she has sacrificed much to be “on the field”. We can have the privilege of sacrificing much to keep him or her there and maximize his/her ministry.

In the famous “Perspectives” book Dr Ralph Winter and his wife Roberta discuss how we can live within our own culture, but in a manner that maximizes our potential to make a difference in the world. Winter, in his article “Reconsecration to Wartime, Not a Peacetime, lifestyle” (Pg...D-228) suggests the following;

We must learn that Jesus meant it when He said, “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much will be required”.

I believe that God cannot expect less from us, as our Christian duty to save other nations, than our own nation in wartime conventionally requires of us in order to save our own nation. This means we must be willing to adopt a wartime lifestyle if we are to play fair with the clear intent of scripture that the poor of this earth, the people who sit in darkness, shall see a great light.

In her article "The Non-Essentials of Life", (Pg...D-292) Roberta Winter suggests the following principles of sacrificial living:

1. Our lifestyle must please the Lord, yet it should not in small matters be so shockingly different from those among whom we walk so as to make unintelligible the message we wish to convey.
2. A simple lifestyle can still seem extravagant to most people in the world. Yet our geographical isolation does not reduce our obligation in God's eyes to people at a distance.
3. We don't really need most of the things our culture would push off on us. Once we learn to resist social pressure, it is far easier to determine what we really want or need.
4. There ought not to be any connection between what is earned and what needs to be spent. You don't buy things just because you have the money.
5. It is much easier to adopt a simple lifestyle if you join a support group which covenants together to live on less.
6. The foundation of the simple lifestyle is "the explosive power of a new affection."

### Supportive in its Function

If we miss this point we miss the whole point of the sending cell. Our missionary has others to whom he/she is functionally responsible and spiritually accountable.

The missions organization, and in some cases the sending church, will have all sorts of structures inbuilt to direct and assist the missionary in the more formal aspects of his/her work. While it is true that the sending bodies and missions organizations will be supportive towards the missionary, it is also true that this area is often the one where there is the greatest unmet need.

This is the place where the sending cell fits into the greater scheme of things. Our role is to be there for the missionary in a non-directive, non-coercive and non-judgmental role. We are the cheer squad. We are the ones with whom he/she can relax and "let it all hang out". We are not constrained by budgets or other missionaries calling for our attention. We are there firstly and lastly for our missionary.

We must be aware of the added work load we could give if we are not sensitive to his/her needs and are demanding of him/her to recognize and cater to our needs. We must see ourselves as a servant of the work and of the missionary and therefore in many ways be in submission to the missionary. Because of this the sending cell must be fluid in its operation.

### Fluid in its Operation

There are few things that change as quickly as situations on the mission field. A missionary can work for five years and see no fruit then the Lord can move in a great way and opportunities open up that are breathtaking in their potential. The missionary must be ready to adapt and so his/her sending cell must be ready to adapt. A five year dry spell can mean the only requirement is prayer and encouragement; then overnight there can be a need for money, personnel, equipment, etc., (the other factor is that, were there a large resource base available when the missionary first hits the field there might be a quicker break through).

For this reason the sending cell will be relatively quiet in the quiet time and then may suddenly be ridiculously busy, only to fall back into a time of quiet.

The function of the sending cell is very closely tied to the activity and needs of the missionary it serves and so each one will be different from every other one but each must also be ready to adapt at very short notice.

### Sending Cell Function

NB... all of the following functions are mentioned with the understanding that the sending cell will encourage the partnership to take on the tasks mentioned. It is therefore the sending cell's duty to remind/encourage the partners to get involved as much as possible. Although each role is described as an individual's function it becomes this person's responsibility to enthuse the whole cell and wider support base.

### Moral Support

This person's responsibility is to be the cheer leader. He/she is the missionary's number one fan and advocate. The encourager understands that there are enough people "out there" who will disagree with the missionary. The encourager believes in the missionary and is supportive against all odds.

Like all of us the missionary needs to be occasionally reminded of the "big picture" and needs to be encouraged by an ongoing reminder of the vision and the call of God on his/her life.

Birthdays and other anniversaries need to be acknowledged and small reminders of home should be a part of this Crucial ministry.



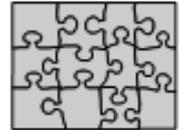
**The Model:** The relationship between Jonathan and David

**1 Samuel 18:1** After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.  
**1 Samuel 23:16** And Saul's son Jonathan, went to David at Horesh and helped him to find strength in God.

This person is as Jonathan was to David. In the face of even his father's disapproval (and worse) Jonathan was encouraging, supportive and on David's side. This is a ministry with fruit that is not easily measurable but very critical.

### Logistics Support

Missionaries do not leave a vacuum when they depart for the field. Depending on your missionary's circumstances there may be anything from family homes to rent out or maintain, vehicles to sell, goods to be stored or shipped overseas, family (including parents, children etc.) to be cared for and any number of other "at home" concerns.



Apart from personal circumstances, unless the missionary renounces citizenship of his/her native country, there will be tax forms, voting forms, personal business situations and more that will take valuable time and effort away from the "coal face" unless the missionary has a logistics supporter working on his/her behalf on the home front.

**The Model:** The Work of Carpus of Troas

**2 Timothy 4:13** "When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus of Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments."

Here is a picture of the faithful, often overlooked folk who quietly go about the "nuts and bolts" of practical ministry on behalf of others. It is in the nature of man to overlook this ministry and devalue it, but God does not overlook this work and neither will your missionary. Taking care of business is an essential ministry and will relieve your missionary of stress. Carpus obviously stored some material for Paul and made it available when it was needed. This role, amplified to include all the things that remain after the missionary has left for the field, is there for Carpus to attend to.

### Financial Support

Obviously one of the greatest stresses on your missionary will often be in the area of finances. It is often an area of great sensitivity and must be regarded as such by the cell members. There is the need for someone to understand and be trusted in knowing the budget issues with regard to their missionary. This role is described as the financial coordinator. Once again the prime responsibility of this function is to see to and be concerned with coordinating of finances towards the missionary. Usually the sending agencies will have their way of processing the finances but it is the financial coordinators duty to be aware of these and to have an update as to the consistency of the finances. He/she would also remain in close contact with the missionary on the subject of finances. Should there be any stresses that evolve from the need (international currency value changes etc) then it is this person's first responsibility to make the partnership aware of the problem as well as to negotiate with them regarding the status of their partnership and how the problem could be solved. The solving of the problem usually takes two forms, either some of the partners decide to give more or new partners are recruited. Please ensure that if new partners are brought in, a commitment is made that the partnership will be personally under girded by the missionary himself on return from the field. (All partnership is primarily made and directly strengthened between missionary and partnering individual).



There is also the possibility of raising finances through the sending cell itself yet this must and should only be seen as secondary source of income. This is especially effective for one time needs expressed by the missionaries.

**The Model:** The Philippian Church

**Philippians 4:15 - 19:** Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied for, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Paul describes the economy of God as he thanks the Philippians for sharing in the "giving and receiving"

### Prayer Support

Much can be said about prayer and its importance. Stanley said, "Prayer is striking the winning blow- service is gathering in the results of prayer." The function of this delegate apart from personal prayer is to solicit prayer from every partner, forming within them a strong group of intercessors with which even sensitive issues of prayer can be shared and prayed for. More than this is to go even wider and request prayer from any available Christian. He/she can write to denominational groups suggesting special prayer on a specific day, write and distribute prayer calendars, ensure the home church is often upholding the mission and the missionary before God, forming a prayer chain for crisis prayer and so on.



## Re-Entry Support



Much is written about culture shock and the trouble missionaries have in adapting as they go to live among a different people group than their own. But few realise that it can be even harder for the missionary returning to his/her own people. The excitement of "going home" is often quickly subdued by the fact that "it has all changed", or that there is time to stop. The missionary has come from frantic activity where he/she is a vibrant and very important tool in God's purposes to what often amounts to a back seat; only feeling useful when invited to speak somewhere. The call of the field is still very strong and the fear of "things might go wrong while I am away" is very real.

It is a confusing time for the missionary on furlough but even worse for the one returned from the field on a permanent basis. Going from a place of great usefulness and living on "the cutting edge" to what feels like redundancy is very difficult to deal with. The function of the re-entry support delegate is crucial to the missionary from the moment of his departure and for on-going effectiveness of the men and women of God who have given their lives to mission fields.

The person who has left home needs to be kept up to date with the on-going changes at home. There is an initial shock in returning home. Old buildings have been torn down; new ones have taken their place. A favorite park is now a busy traffic junction. Changes in the church community also need to be communicated - some members have left the country, while some families have increased in numbers.

Sending of newspaper articles etc. that reflect the changes taking place in the missionary's homeland e.g. new political scenarios, change in school systems, new shopping malls, new roads, price changes, football teams, clothing, new ideas etc.

A video or pictures of the changes in the home town and of key people will avoid the missionary being exposed to sudden shock on return. We often picture people and places as we last saw them and fail to expect change. The failure of reporting changes in the home front to the missionary results in the missionary returning home to a "home" which is no longer home to him.

Some details that need to be worked out prior to the missionary's arrival include:

Accommodation - both for the longer term and also for a time of retreat as soon as possible after return.

Counseling - or perhaps more accurately a non-judgmental ear.

Transport - there may be someone willing to buy a car for the missionary to use whilst in the country then take the financial loss of its resale as a gift to the missionary. Finance. Deputation program where appropriate. Children's schooling. Circumstances unique to your missionary's ongoing ministry.

The Model: The Church at Antioch

Acts 14: 26 - 28: From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

There is a sense from this passage that Paul returned home to a group of people who were very welcoming and very considerate towards him. That he stayed a long time indicates the people went out of their way to ensure he felt well come and was cared

## Communications Support

This person is a key player. One of the greatest stresses on a missionary involves keeping supporters informed and feeling like they are involved. The emergence of a sending cell has the potential to add more to the missionary's workload than it eases. It needs to be made clear to the missionary that the whole group does not demand constant communication and that this delegate is in place specifically to ensure that the cell is not a burden in this regard.



The Communications delegate will be responsible for receiving and disseminating to the proper delegate all communications from your missionary and to your missionary.

The communications delegate must firstly establish communications with the missionary and with other members of the cell. He/she should form a link with the missionary by letter, telephone and E-mail. It could be the cell's first project to install a computer with e-mail function for the missionary (and then pay the bills for their use).

All sending cell communications should go through this delegate unless they are mail items that do not require a written response (Christmas cards, gifts etc.). Even then there may be value in sending several letters etc. in one parcel or gathering a Christmas parcel and sending it with someone who is visiting the missionary.

This delegate can distribute the missionary's newsletters, and perhaps even prepare the draft letter for the missionary to modify and approve. He/she may also act as secretary for the group.

**The model:** Tertius & Romans 16

**Romans 16:22:** "I Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Paul had a communications delegate with him who took care of the letter writing. This chapter is full of Paul's personal communication to the Christians at Rome. It indicates an ongoing communication between Paul and the Christians there that caused them to be able to serve Him even though they were far away.

## Cell Convener

This delegate is both the most important and the least important. While the others are intimately involved with aspects of the missionary's life the cell convener is mobilizing and encouraging the cell members. It is he/she who facilitates group vision and unity.



He/she will be responsible for coordinating the cells ministry so that each delegate works in concert with the others. In this function he/she would chair the meetings and delegate areas of responsibility to the relevant delegate when a task involves more than one function within the cell.

The cell-convener is cast in a pastoral type role and will take some responsibility for the ongoing spiritual life of the members as it relates to the cell. He/she will bring or cause to be brought periodic teaching on related topics and devotional input at every gathering.

The cell convener will represent the cell to outside bodies; e.g. the church, the Mission Agency etc.

## Practical Considerations

Meeting together: Ideally the cell should meet monthly and function as a home or cell group with the particular focus of sending.

A monthly program could include: A meal together. Worship & Prayer. Reports from delegates. Mission Focus - people group targeted by the missionary. Bible study / teaching.

## Accountability

In the ideal situation it is recommended that there be a recognized, accountable person in both the sending church as well the missions agency with whom the missionary is working. These people have the function of monitoring relevant issues on either side of the partnership. They would be seen as the first point of contact for any strategic issues regarding said missionary. The sending cell is accountable to the church leadership.