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N A M E  
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Network of  
Australian  
Mission  
Enthusiasts

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## TOUCHING ON PRAXIS

On the last two occasions we have talked about the local church's involvement in pastoral care before a missionary departs and when they are away from the church. Pastoral care for the returning missionary is an area that has more frequently been addressed by local churches over the years, particularly for those returning for another term of service.

When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, we read in Acts 14:27 that one of the key things they did was to report 'all that God had done through them.' We then read in v.28 that 'they stayed there a long time with the disciples.' How interesting it would be to know all that they did during that 'long time.' We do know from Acts 15:35 that some of the time was spent teaching 'the word of the Lord', so it is reasonable to say that they also spent time being refreshed in the Word. In today's world, how does a local church ensure that their missionary on leave will find time and opportunity to likewise be refreshed in the word of God? Are they allowed to become a part of a small Bible study group in the church as a learner, or are they always expected to be the speaker? Does the church make available some money designated to be spent at a Christian bookstore on some helpful literature? The church might encourage them to get away to a good Bible teaching conference, but do they think of covering the travel, accommodation and registration costs? The missionary allowance just might not stretch to all these extras, however valuable the missionary knows them to be.

There are many other areas where a local church can demonstrate pastoral care for a family that is on home assignment. Here is a list of reasons why home assignment exists. Next time you have a missionary coming home, look at each item on the list and consider how the church could offer pastoral care in response to the particular reason.

1. Reporting back to senders.
2. Physical renewal for the whole family.
3. Spiritual renewal for the whole family.
4. Reintegration in their church, where much has possibly changed, including new people.
5. Reintegration in their family circle, including meeting new members.
6. Reintegration in to their culture, where so much has changed - different clothes, new technology, new 'cool' phrases the kids need to know.
7. Professional skills upgrading.

8. Long term planning for the future, including retirement.
9. Renewal of the sender/sent relationship with the church.

In every case, there are opportunities for the church to say 'we care'. It may be by sharing information, or providing designated finance, or caring for the kids, or who knows what. We just need to stop and think for a moment and be pro-active, instead of waiting to be asked. Let's show them they are loved!

#### IDEAS TO IMPLEMENT

Role plays are always an effective method of making people think and can be used effectively in mission education. They have the advantage of making the issue under discussion appear to the participants one step removed from reality, thus permitting them to be more open and honest than might be the case if they were discussing a real situation in the church. Here is a simple one that has been used with good results. It is best when the participants are in two or more small groups, so that ideas can be shared at the conclusion.

#### SOMEWHERE COMMUNITY CHURCH

The situation:

A young married couple, John and Denise, have just completed three years at Bible College and have indicated to the church that they have a deep interest in going as missionaries to Thailand with the XYZ mission agency. They are both 25 years old, John is a pharmacist and Denise is a primary teacher. They were both converted at Southeast in their mid-teens and have always been active in some area of church ministry.

A single young man, Ken, has also completed Bible College and has a burden to get involved in full time Scripture teaching in High Schools with an inter-church association set up for that purpose in a rapidly developing area about 100 kms north of the city in which the church is located. He is 24 and was previously employed in a bank. Converted in his early teens, he has always been involved in church ministry.

Your role:

You are the members of the Ministry Council at Somewhere responsible for approving, processing and assisting those moving in to full time ministry outside the church, as well as ensuring that the members of the church are fully aware of the global responsibility of the local church and the opportunities it presents.

Your task:

1. The elders have asked you to set out the steps that need to be followed in responding to and assisting these young people over the next few years.
2. The pastor has asked you to suggest what needs to be done to increase the church's awareness and understanding of world mission so that they can be fully involved with their fellow-members moving in to ministry.

3. The treasurer has asked if there are any budget implications to what you are doing.

Draw up your responses to these three requests. You should first appoint a chairman of the Council, plus a secretary of the Council to record your plans and ideas. At the end of the time (30-50 minutes) you will be asked to share your ideas with the other group(s).

NEWS OF RESOURCES

Have you seen 'One World or Many', the new book edited by Richard Tiplady and published by William Carey Library. As the subtitle indicates, the book is a collection of papers on the impact of globalisation on mission. Our world has changed. We no longer live in a world where the dominant themes are no longer 'colonial', 'industrial' and 'modern', but where the themes are 'globalisation', 'technological' and 'postmodern'. As people responsible to make Christ known in our world, we need to be aware of these changes and to have some understanding of their impact on the mission task that we pray for, support and are involved in. This is a book worth reading.

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Back issues available on request from Bruce at <info@smbc.com.au>:

- #1 Sending role of the local church
- #2 Selecting role of the local church
- #3 Partnership
- #4 Home assignment
- #5 Pre-departure pastoral care
- #6 Pastoral care while away

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