



040: Well Sent: What is the Church's Role in Sending Missionaries? – Steve Beirn

Steve is the Global Ministries Pastor at Calvary Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. His focus is to mobilize the local church to recruit, prepare, send and sustain cross-cultural workers in unreached areas of the world. Steve has served in local church ministry for 40 years and is married to Lorraine. Together they have 3 children and 5 grandchildren.

Tell us a little bit about yourself and how you came to be passionate about missions.

- It began with a church that heavily emphasized missions, so I was blessed to be raised in that environment. In addition to that I had the blessing of a good Bible education.

You've written a book – Well Sent: Reimagining the Church's Missionary-Sending Process. What is the church's role in sending out missionaries?

- The church leadership needs to understand that this is a key thing for them to participate in and challenge their church family.
- The church should also be a part of equipping and sustaining sending missionaries.
- This is a broad task that can be broken down into manageable parts.

What are some of the benefits that you see for a church when they send workers?

- Sending is a transformative experience for the church – it personalizes the Great Commission and it presents the church with a fresh set of challenges and opportunities – you have a local body that is being stretched in their faith.
- When the church goes to the nations, their perspective on life changes. They have an acute sense of spiritual darkness and a greater understanding of people and other cultures.

You talk about three kinds of churches – can you please describe these:

- *Inactive* – it has no vision cast for missions; characterized by missions ignorance
- *Reactive* – it has an old vision cast for missions; characterized by missions procedures



- *Proactive* – it has a new vision cast for missions; characterized by missions objectives
 - The goal is to be a proactive church.

You have spoken about distractions – what are some of the things that can distract a church from missions?

- *Danger of Mission Drift* – wandering from original priorities
 - You know you are seeing drift in the church when the time and attention and direction of a church ministry regarding missions begins to shrink. It's not reflected strongly in their list of priorities.
- *Danger of Mission Creep* – expanding beyond the original goals and diluting the process.
 - It dilutes something so extensively that it becomes meaningless. For example, using the word missions too broadly.
- We have to guard ourselves from both of those.

What are some of the key questions that churches should be asking themselves?

- If every local church in the world modeled their missions efforts after your church's missions efforts, would the Great Commission ever be completed?
- When was the last time your local church sent out a church member overseas vocationally? This speaks a great deal about understanding what we're called to do and moving the gospel across cultures.
- What is your church's relationship to the remaining, unfinished task? What are you attempting to accomplish in regards to the Great Commission?

What are some of the things a church should be doing to become a healthy sending church?

- The church leadership needs to explain to their local body that sending is to be a part of their regular ministry.
- Having testimonies of those who have been sent out shared in the church. This models being sent and it can be a powerful and healthy thing.
- Pray to the Lord of the harvest that He will send out laborers. It is something a local church needs to follow up on and how they apply themselves to this Matthew 9:38 text is up to them.
- Just getting others overseas – these are normal healthy things. We see in the New Testament that the early church was a mobile church.

An important part of a church's role is to help workers get ready for going overseas. How can the church help missionaries prepare?

- It is important for a church to understand that it is an effective learning laboratory for potential missionaries. There are a lot of schools and organizations that emphasize credentialing. The church needs to focus on competencies – can a person adequately execute the ministry?



- There are four basic building blocks to build competency:
 - *Assessment* – developing a strong sense of self awareness
 - *Spiritual growth* – does a person know how to effectively share their faith? Are they praying for the world?
 - *Ministry Experience* – helping them get their feet wet in the kind of work they’ll be doing overseas.
 - *Mentoring* – having people who have some spiritual wisdom to speak into their lives and to be a help and encouragement to a future missionary.

How big does a church need to be to participate in this process?

- One of the misnomers that needs to be dispelled is that big churches can do these things because they have the budget and expertise, but the truth is that any church of any size can be a part of this process.
- Smaller churches can also work together and collaborate.

A church shouldn’t stop when they adopt a missionary worker. They also need to adopt the work that the missionary is doing. What does this mean?

- There was a family that was sent overseas to West Africa – they labored for 10 years before having to return because of health problems. When they went to their supporting churches and asked how many of them were praying for the unreached people group they had been working with and the answer was, ‘We weren’t praying for the people. We were praying for you.’
- Our prayer needs to be focused on the worker and the work.

You talk about how churches can cooperate with sending agencies. Would you describe what this triangle of the church, the agency and the missionary looks like? How do these relationships fit together?

- It is helpful to make distinctions and boundaries between these three entities in order to create a healthy triangle.
- The church is the sender of missionaries and the agency is the facilitator. This helps the worker understand why they relate to both organizations.
- The expertise of the three entities must be harnessed for the kingdom of God.

Are there other resources that you would recommend that churches consider as they go about this work?

- [Serving as Senders](#) – Neal Pirolo
 - [Listen to our episode with Neal Pirolo](#)
- [To Timbuktu and Beyond](#) – Marsha Woodard
- [Mission Smart](#) – David Frazier



If our listeners would like to learn more from you, how might they do that?

- Email me – sbeirn@calvarychurch.org

