



Paulo Moreira was a missionary to Eastern and Central Europe, training national pastors. After returning to Brazil, he served as Pastor of Mission and Social Witness. Recently he started a project specially aimed at postmodern groups of the city.

Paulo Moreira

IS IT A BIRD! IS IT A PLANE!: IT'S SUPER-MISSION-PASTOR!

As a Protestant from an emerging country, I've lived through a lot of change in the church. My grandparents were born in the twilight of the nineteenth century, when missionary work in Brazil was a pioneer on horseback job. I'm a post WWII boomer-like kid from Rio, who grew up attending a mainline church. Foreign missionaries were still planting urban and rural churches in my country when I was a teen, but the greatest spiritual impact upon my generation was from YFC, Word of Life, CCC and OM, ministries that focused primarily the youth.

Later on, a ministry called SEPAL added the ingredient of leadership development to my formation. In God's sovereignty, most of the crucial input in my early development as His servant came from sources outside the local church. A breakthrough came when I joined a new church plant in the city of São Paulo. A former professor of mine was targeting an unreached upper-middle neighborhood, and asked me to come along. Some of my best memories and lessons learned stem from the ensuing years.

Now I look back after almost four decades of Christian ministry in roles that include shepherding, church planting and cross-cultural missions. Out of my experience and biblical conviction I sustain that, for the

missionary on the field, the kind and quality of his or her bond to the home church can dramatically make or break their impact as missionaries. I was privileged to have roots in a church that understood this even before I did.

After my years of missionary service, I returned to serve my church as missions pastor. Soon the gigantic size of my task unfolded before my eyes. How can a missions pastor continually spot potential candidates in the local church (though at times it feels more like we are being stalked by some of them)? Figure out the true motivation of their calling? Set them out on a course of solid spiritual formation as opposed to rushing out to the field? Guide them through the forest of missionary training schools and programs? Wise them up to choose a matching mission organization? Fan their emotional flame when raising financial and prayer support? And, on top of all this, there is the hard road of developing and expanding a missionary vision and policy for the church, and working with the church leadership to materialize the vision into the yearly budget to keep all of the above running.

In New Testament times things appeared more simple. Able and growing followers of Christ were recognized and appointed by their churches for the mission of making disciples of all peoples. Then, they walked alongside experienced missionaries to learn the ropes, and at some point were released to be on

their own and do the same to others. Timothy is a prime example of this cycle. In those days, the worldwide church experienced a strong sense of cooperation in the mission of God, amazingly without airplanes, cell phones and e-mail. There was no need for networks or alliances to facilitate the task, because such was the essence of church.

So, a few years ago we became proactive and decided to start a program at the church that combined guidance and personal development. The program is geared to those who have a sense of calling to vocational ministry, and special attention is given to those who desire to serve as cross-cultural missionaries. Rather than putting out horrendous fires later on (and fires do erupt in the ministry!), our goal is to strike preemptively by providing early on a road map to the mission field and stations along the way. The program is heavily based on mentoring, readings, group discussions, supervised service in local ministries, mission trips, etc. In all cases, acquiring a comprehensive biblical knowledge is required, and in some cases a full seminary degree is encouraged. The pastor who currently heads the program is a seasoned missionary himself with many years of field experience as a leader and trainer of missionaries.

But he is not alone! A small army of mentors, church ministry leaders and volunteers work hard to keep the ball rolling. A web-based system helps to

monitor the progress of each mentored participant, thus reducing the hours spent on traffic and meetings for those involved.

The people in the church are keen to see leaders being developed for cross-cultural ministry at the same time they are serving in the church. Feedback and evaluation has led to improvement in the program, and the church has matured in its ability to partner in the Kingdom with mission organizations, networks and other churches.

Last, but not least, new missionaries are going off with a stronger sense of preparedness and stronger spiritual ties with their sending church.

Our hope and prayer is that more churches may realize and joyfully fulfill their role in developing Christians for the world. And may a new generation of cross-cultural servants rise up who will consider their life worth nothing to them, if only they may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given them—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace ●

GLOBAL DIALOGUE, Responses from churches and leaders of mission movements:

What can the missions-minded local church do best in the global mission task? How has this changed over the last 20 years?

Piers Vander, Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, USA

The church has the ultimate responsibility for mission, but it needs the structures God has established (i.e. mission sending structures) to fulfill that responsibility. These structures are able to focus on aspects of mission that a single church can't. That said:

- The church is in a unique position to mobilize members to go out as missionaries..
- Globalization, modern communication and transportation technologies, and the growth of the two-third world church now allow the local church to play a more active role in the work of mission itself ...
- The church is still an important source of funds for mission.
- I do not believe the modern short-term mission is a substitute for the long-term missionary.

Paul Ng, Pastor, Singapore

The mission minded local church is best at acting as a model in regard to how community is achieved. ...

Today, even smaller local churches are discovering that they can church plant, engage in social development, etc. at costs within their means.

Marina Prins, Member Care Consultant, South Africa

The missions-minded church is a vital partner. They can form a support team for missionaries. They have resources of people with hearts for missions, willing to invest their time and effort in supporting missionaries with their skills and gifts.

The missionary, the local church, the organization and the support structure on the field are all part of the missionary endeavor... all should be involved and play their unique role.... The missionary should be seen as an extension of his local church.

Bruce Huseby, Calvary Church, USA

First, from a theology in missions, churches can develop a vision that reflects the heart of God for the nations and what they can do to be part of God’s global heart... Second, churches can deeply influence ministry in a region by fully engaging in partnerships that involve expats and nationals.... Third, globally-minded churches can mobilize short-term workers where they have long-term workers. This creates a critical mass of people within the church that pray for, give to and be involved in key areas of the world. ...

Decio de Carvalho, COMIBAM, Latin America (as leader of a Mission Movement)

Churches form Bible believing, mature and mission minded Christians, willing to do anything for God. ... The task is too big for churches to send a few missionaries out, every Christian must assume his or her role.

Steve Moore, The Mission Exchange, USA (as leader of a Mission Movement)

Churches have a much more direct line connection to Christ-followers and therefore are better suited to engage with them. ...Churches and church leaders are in a much better position to help grassroots leaders connect with the larger body, avoid duplication and enhance their cross-cultural sensitivities. ...Churches, even mega-churches, are generally more agile than agencies, which means they can seize windows of opportunity more quickly.