

Host a Send North America Church Planting Team at Your Missions Event or Global Impact Conference

Churches frequently conduct a time of missions emphasis during the year, showcasing several ministries with which the church is involved. For instance, a missions fair might bring in Southern Baptist missions organizations and their missionaries as well as para-church groups involved in ministry. In some churches, there might be included a number of other church-sponsored faith-based ministries. This missions event can be a wonderful time to personalize the activity of God among your church's members.

When churches participate in Send North America cities and work directly with a church planter and the team focused on that city or plant, there is a special opportunity that needs to be shared with all the church members. Others from the Send North America emphasis may be available upon invitation such as the church planter's family members, a regional mobilizer, city coordinator, local pastors from that city, directors of missions, and other leaders such as "faith and work" missionaries or even interns that can help multiply the effort of a team. Who should you invite? Just ask them! Each strategy varies according to available people and the city's strategy.

Due to communications technology and travel ease, church planters or others in the Send North America effort that are involved with a church plant can interact in the life of your church. One of the easiest times to connect is during an annual missions conference, and On Mission Celebration (OMC), Acts 1:8 Conference, or a Global Impact Conference.

Suggested checklist to use prior to your church's missions event:

Budget appropriately so that your church covers the total cost of the church planter, his family, and any team members and their family that need to participate. Work with the church planter or team to estimate the amount of money needed for transportation, lodging, meals, etc.

Invite the church planter at least three months prior to the event. This is not only considerate, it provides time for planning and smoother logistics.

Request personal information on each Send North America team member who plans to make the trip: email, snail mail, cell phone, photograph, and short bio. If his family is able to accompany him, request their names and ages. A family photo is helpful.

Generate a bio sheet and folder on each team member, especially the church planter and his family. Make multiple copies and always keep one copy in a file that is not distributed.

Establish exactly what you would like the church planting team to do and then negotiate those options with the church planter. Allow for feedback and be flexible.

Request information on any special needs that individuals on the team might have. For instance, is there a baby or young child that has special needs? What about food allergies?

Transportation? Language translation? Identify these logistics well in advance to minimize surprises and last minute changes, which can be stressful.

Ask what each team member is equipped to do to help your church connect with them. Here are some ideas for breakout sessions (See “Conducting an Send North America Sunday in Your Church.”)

- Life of a Missionary Kid, etc. (focusing on the church planter’s family)
- Join us prayerwalking in the city with the church plant
- Becoming a Church Planter (or Church Planter Intern)
- Students in church planting – Promoting The Parachute Project and PowerPlant
- A day in the life of a church planter or “Meet our church planter”
- Why are new churches needed in “our” Send North America city?
- Understanding urban America or Canada
- Understanding our Send North America city—challenges and opportunities
- Working among an unreached people group
- 7 Forces Reshaping America (Immigration, Migration, Technology, Secularism, Anti-Christian Behavior, No longer a melting pot, and Urbanization)
- Practical Ways You and Your family Can Help a Church Planter

Identify any other expectations that your church would appreciate, such as using a specific translation of the Bible, the need to pray with the pastor or deacons prior to a worship service, wearing a tie or not, etc.

Suggestions to try during the missions event:

Recruit a full-time host dedicated to each person on the Send North America Team that is visiting your church campus. These hosts serve as liaisons who should be gracious, servant-hearted, and solution-oriented. It helps if they not only know people in order to make introductions, but understand the purpose of the church planting team’s visit. Give each host a folder with the church planter’s bio, photo(s), and contact information. Having information on each team member is helpful.

Establish a special room in your church where the Send North America Team can relax. This is similar to a “Green Room” that television studios use for their stars. It should be chosen close to a restroom. Include snacks, bottled water, and other refreshments on a table in the room.

Meet the team at the airport and usher them to a hotel or the place where they will be staying. If they will be renting a car or van, make sure they have accurate directions to your church.

Arrange for PowerPoint projectors and speakers in advance. If this is not possible, be sure to communicate that ahead of time.

Print a special schedule sheet and review it with the Send North America Team members. Note times, locations, and short descriptions for each event. Expect last minute changes; now is the time to note them.

Make sure the Send North America Team knows mealtimes and locations from the minute

they arrive to the time they depart for home.

Check in periodically with each team member and anyone assigned to escort them– at least hourly. Expect to encounter changes. Listen to needs or stressors. Dispatch people to resolve specific problems.

Suggestions to consider after the missions event:

Write a handwritten note of appreciation to each person on the Send North America Team. Address them by name and be as genuine as possible.

Solicit feedback from the church planter by phone or email to resolve any problems so that when this is done in the future, you can better understand the event from his perspective.

Arrange a meeting with the Send North America Team's hosts and evaluate the experience. Listen to what is said and work together to improve the experience.

Keep notes and pass them along to next year's event coordinator, hopefully it will be you!

If the church planter is scheduled, but unable to attend at the last minute even if others on the team can make the trip, explore the possibility of using the telephone, Skype, or other web-based video to give the church planter a "face" with the church members.

