

# The Missions Committee in the Local Church 103

## The Goal



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We normally teach this chapter on the third Missions Saturday to a smaller group of people who have fully caught the vision for cross-cultural missions. Rather than just another teaching, this chapter is designed to help the emerging missions committee get to work. You, the mobilizer, will find that your role is changing; to this point you have been the teacher, but now you will act more like an advisor to the church and to the new committee. On this third Missions Saturday we hope:

- That everyone will be convinced of the urgent need to form a missions committee,
- that they will understand the nature of the committee, its activities, and how it works within the context of the church,
- that committee members will be identified,
- that short, medium, and long-term goals be made, and
- that they can identify a model of cooperation with the missionary community that will be effective in this early stage of their development.

The vision of the cross-cultural missions committee can be summarized by the following statement: [Slide #1 of the PowerPoint]

**For the local church to have an effective missions program, resulting in the sending out of missionaries who can count on the sustained spiritual, moral, and economic support necessary to reach the unreached ethnic groups of the world.**



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Why do churches lose their initial enthusiasm to evangelize the world's unreached ethnic groups? The greatest obstacle is **not knowing how** to implement an effective missions program. There is a desire to evangelize the world, but the local church does not know how to get involved to have any impact.

Here we have an important paradigm change, the creation of a new structure or, in other words, a new ministry, called the **cross-cultural missions committee** of the local church. We will assume that some of the people who continue through the third Missions Saturday are willing to form part of this new committee.

## I. The Identity of the Missions Committee [2]

The missions committee of the local church is a crucial link in God's strategy to reach the ethnic groups of the world. We urgently need to understand what this committee is and how it works in order to develop an effective missions ministry.



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## The Missions Committee – a Window to the World

**A. What is the missions committee?** - The missions committee is a select group of members from the local church, of 2 to 10 people, that promotes the missions program in the church. It is important to distinguish this group from other groups in the church such as the evangelism team, the worship team, or Sunday school so as not to dilute its vision and goals. This committee works under the guidance of the pastor and in cooperation with the other ministries of the church.

**B. What is the goal of the missions committee? [3]** - Besides the vision presented on the previous page, the goal of the committee is to help the church discern its particular role in evangelizing the unreached ethnic groups and to help each member of the church become informed and actively involved. The committee serves as the window through which each Christian views the world and does his or her part to fulfill the Great Commission.

**C. Why is this committee so important? [4]** - Once we see all the missions committee does, you will agree that it would be impossible to accomplish all that through a sub-committee of some other ministry. God is calling us to form this new structure in our churches. We must set aside the time and talents of this select group in order to reach the ethnic groups that are still awaiting a Christian messenger.

In talking about the identity of the committee we mean that the members should be selected, recognized, and commissioned just as those in any other ministry of the church. There should be a public recognition so the congregation is aware of this new ministry and who is involved.

**D. What does the missions committee do?** - We will treat this question in more detail on the next page, but in general the committee has the responsibility to:

- Learn and teach about missions,
- be the church's link to the missionaries and the missions community,
- organize missions activities to promote missions,
- promote prayer for world missions, and
- collect the missionaries' support.

For many churches, the word *committee* is too dry and formal, so the terms *team*, *brigade*, *commission*, or *ministry* could be used instead.

## II. The Activities of the Missions Committee

We will now look at possible activities of the missions committee, and later plan short, medium, and long-term goals for each of these activities. These activities serve to **personalize** the missionary vision (see the text box on page 103) for each member of the church.

**Learn and be informed. [5]** - The committee is constantly studying the Bible, statistics, missions books, and missions publications to learn what God has done, is doing, and what still needs to be done.

**Network. [6]** - The committee stays in contact with **COMIMEX** and other mission institutions to learn about needs, opportunities, missions events, and materials.

**Seek a vision from God. [7]** - Together with the pastor and the congregation, the committee tries to discern the unique role this church has in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. An example of a vision could be: "God has called us to plant churches in the 10/40 Window." Another could be: "God has called us to support Bible translators among the indigenous people of **Mexico**." A vision can be broad or focused, but the church needs to know where it is headed.

**Recommend a missions policy for the church. [8]** - This will answer many questions like the following: "Whom should we support? Which theological tendencies do we support? How will we raise funds? What requirements will we look for in the missionaries we support?" Just to name a few!

**Determine God's will in choosing an ethnic group to adopt. [9]** - This is the logical consequence of the previous four steps. The church's missionary vision will be continually fine-tuned until God says, "I want your church to reach this particular ethnic group." Even before receiving such a clear vision a church can advance greatly in its missions program, but reaching a specific ethnic group should always be the goal.

**Investigate. [10]** - One church leader wrote, "Do your homework!" In other words, start researching your ethnic group. Contact various mission agencies to determine who is working or willing to work among them. Write to other organizations that can tell you where to find more information about your ethnic group. Check the internet for more information. Ask a computer expert in your congregation to investigate for you. **COMIMEX**, Adopt-A-People, and Etnopedia ([www.etnopedia.org](http://www.etnopedia.org)) have materials that can help your church find more information and a profile of your ethnic group.

**Promote prayer. [11]** - Using the available materials, the committee looks for a way to saturate the church with prayer for missions during the worship service, prayer meetings, cell groups, Sunday school, special meetings, and the members' personal devotional times. See "Praying for the World" (pages 91-96).

**Educate and raise awareness. [12]** - The committee keeps the church informed about the basic concepts of cross-cultural missions, testimonies about the advance of the gospel on the field, their adopted ethnic group, and prayer requests from the missionaries the church supports. To do this, the committee could organize an annual missions conference, decorate the church with maps and flags, or make a bulletin board with updated information. It could also write up a missions newsletter for the church bulletin, have a missions moment during the worship service, place missions books on a table near the exit, organize a missions service, or plan a missions prayer meeting, etc.

**Collect missionary offerings. [13]** - The missionary finances must always be managed according to the financial policies of the church and with all honesty. Some congregations include an account for their ethnic group in the church budget. Others make it part of their Faith Promises. Some take up a regular collection to finance ministries to the unreached. Many use a combination of these. You can also have special campaigns for specific projects. For example, one church asked for contributions to translate the *Jesus* film into the language of an unreached ethnic group. The idea here is that the more you involve your church, the more they will participate economically in the missions program. These models are described in more detail on page 102.



**Organize an annual missions conference. [14]** - This is an event to dedicate an entire weekend to missions. You can invite special speakers, missionaries from the field, mission agencies, etc. The members of the committee can prepare themes from *Your Church* to share during the conference. Decorate the church with flags from different countries and pictures of ethnic groups. Prepare special foods from other cultures. Choose worship songs that talk about missions. All this creates a great sense of victory. Some churches close this event by asking the members to register their Faith Promises for the coming year.

**Morally support the missionaries. [15]** - Missionary life entails many struggles and pressures that are not felt in one's home country. With letters, phone calls, and, if possible, some small gifts from **Mexico, the Mexican church** can minister to its missionaries on the field. They should also minister to the missionaries when they are home on furlough.

**Plan short-term mission trips. [16]** - They say the younger generations need to experience things before contributing to a cause. You can plan short-term trips to your unreached ethnic group as part of your mobilization strategy in the church. Those who go will return and influence others with what they saw. You can also plan short-term trips within **Mexico** to confirm the missionary call of prospective candidates. Look for more information from mission agencies and with the **Department of Youth Mobilization of COMIMEX**.

**Organize activities for children. [17]** - Give a missionary emphasis in Sunday School or Vacation Bible School. Recently, the "Children's Missionary Adventures" of **COMIMEX** have been quite fruitful. For more information, see [www.aventuramisionera.com](http://www.aventuramisionera.com).

**Look for missionary candidates. [18]** - The greatest honor a church can have is for one of its own members to become a missionary. The missions committee must pay special attention to following up these disciples and helping them in the long process of preparation for going to the field (see the chart on page 88).

### III. Goals and a Working Plan [19]

Now it is time to bring all these new concepts and missionary vision together with a well-organized team and a good working plan. It is important that everything the committee recommends be under the pastor's direction.

- By this time, the prospective members of the new missions committee are coming forward. Here we need to pause and make a plan to elect and recognize this group. It should be done according to the policies and customs of the church and its leadership style.
- Identify a committee chairperson. In some churches this must be a deacon, in others an elder, or in some a member of the board.
- Establish a schedule and place to meet.
- Review the list of activities above. Brainstorm about goals for each activity. (A "brainstorm" is a special creative time where there is the freedom to mention any idea, no matter how crazy it might seem, without immediate evaluation or the fear of criticism.) This is an opportunity to dream big and hear God's voice.





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- Establish short-term goals (to complete within two or three months), medium-term goals (a year), and long-term goals (up to 5 years). The goals should be attainable so you do not get discouraged.
- Form strategies to reach each goal. Divide the strategies into specific, measurable steps that are easily achieved. For example, if the goal is to include missions teachings in Vacation Bible School, some steps for a short-term goal could include having coffee with the person in charge to explain the idea, looking for materials in Christian bookstores, proposing some fun activities with a missions message, or studying the *Children's Missionary Adventure* website.
- Present the goals and strategies to the pastor and governing body of the church for revision and approval. They will make sure everything is integrated into the other ministries of the church.

#### IV. Some Important Considerations about the Work [20]

Since the missions committee is a new and different ministry, it would be fitting here to mention some special considerations.

The person in charge of this ministry should have an insatiable passion for the Great Commission. It is not an assigned position or one that is frequently changed. The most appropriate description for this kind of person is the **missions champion**. This person does not tire of reading books about missions, is always talking about missions, wears clothes and neck ties with maps and flags on them, and can even seem a bit crazy to the rest of the church! This is not a ministry that can be carried along by a bureaucracy. It can only be done by someone with a passion for missions in their heart.



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#### The Missions Champion

This is a **long-term** task. Although the church can catch the missions vision and get involved on the same day, the real work takes years and even decades. This book you are holding in your hands has evolved over 25 years, and we are just getting started! Work in an unreached ethnic group takes years; so does the work in the church that sends missionaries.

Finally, we need to be very careful with regard to the **safety** [21] of our missionaries, especially those who are working in countries that are closed to the gospel. We should not display any sensitive information in public, much less on a website. The enemies of the cross of Christ are computer experts; they look for Christian references on the internet and forward the information to their governments. Be careful!



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**The goal is to score goals!**

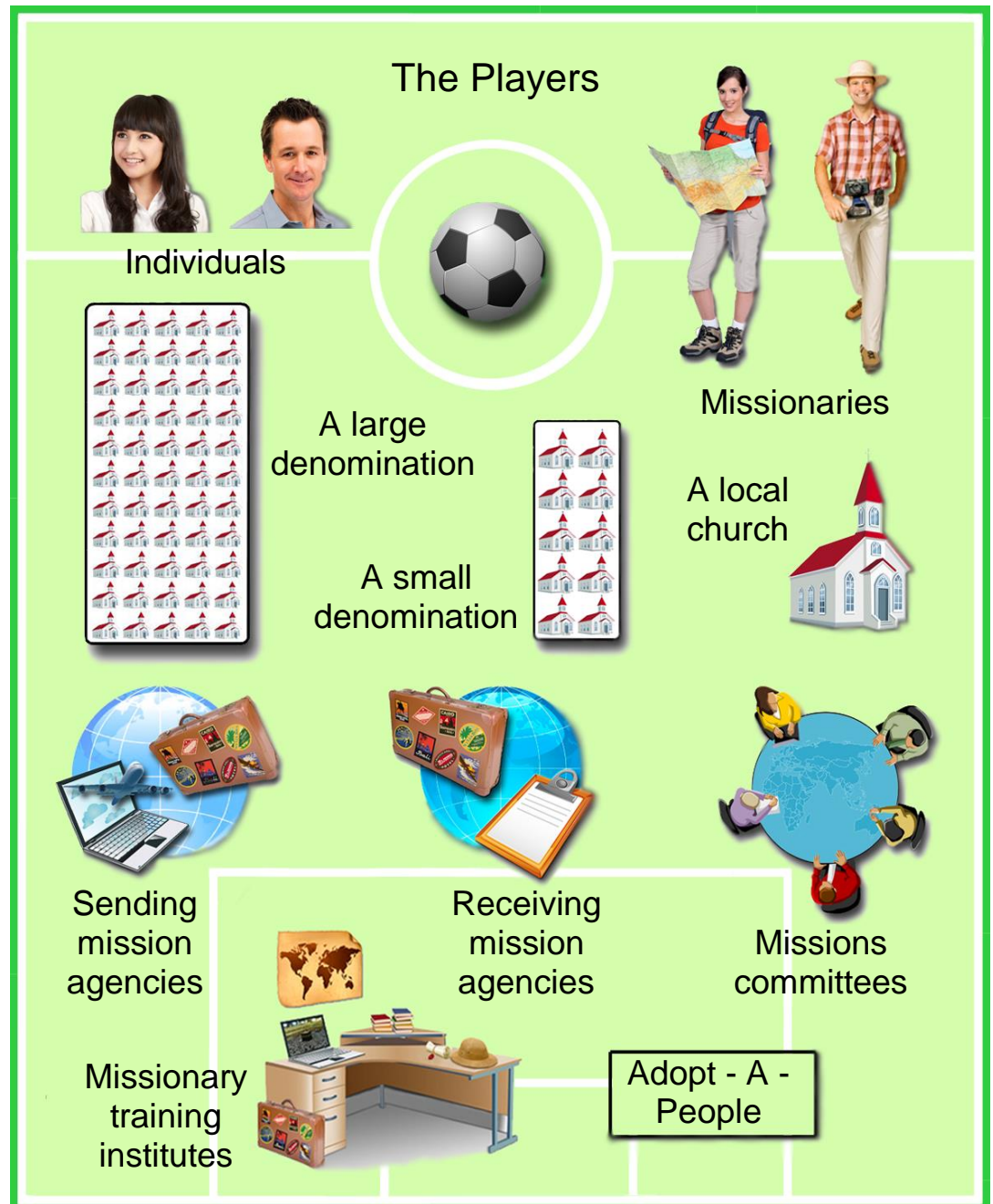
These symbols represent the entities which cooperate to help the local church send and maintain missionaries on the field. They combine in different ways depending on the factors present in each situation. We will call these combinations the “plays” and they begin on the next page. The size of the symbol in each diagram indicates its level of importance in that particular model.

[24] The three final elements, the committee, the Adopt-A-People program, and the Missionary Training Institutes, are present in all cases, so to make the diagrams simpler, we have not included them.

As you think about the different models, try to get a feel for which one is best suited for starting a missions program in your church.

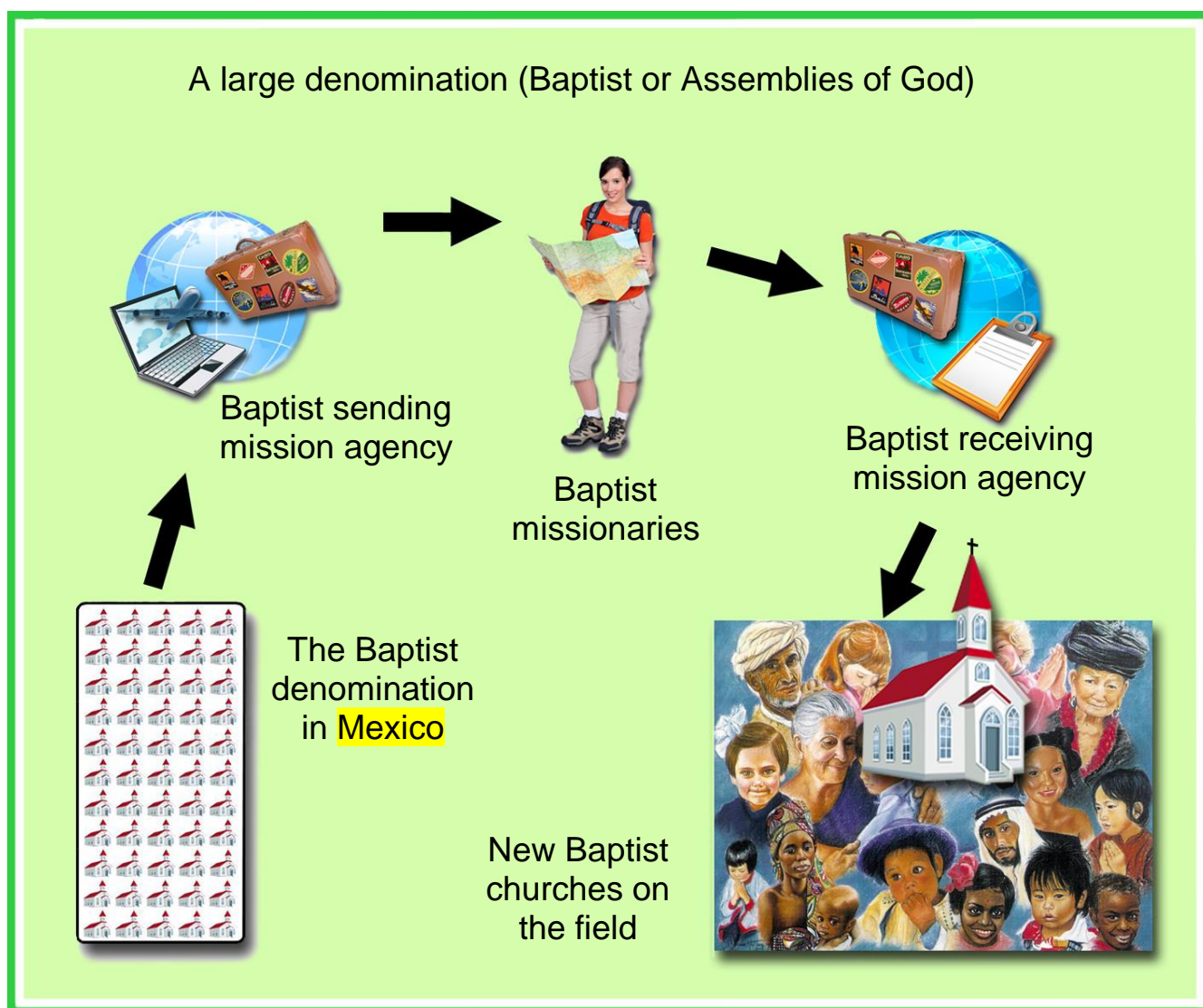
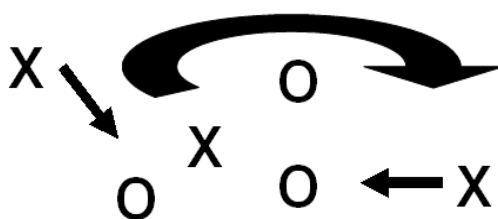
## V. Models of Cooperation with the Missions Community [22]

The cooperation network shown on page 88 is an ideal case with which many churches cannot identify. In **COMIMEX** we have seen working many different models of cooperation, and we present them here with the hope that one or two of them will work for your church. We use the football (soccer) metaphor, since it is something exciting that we all understand! The goal of the game is to score goals, and for us this represents reaching an unreached ethnic group! First, we will get to know the players on our team [23] [Slide #24 corresponds to the text box on the bottom left.]





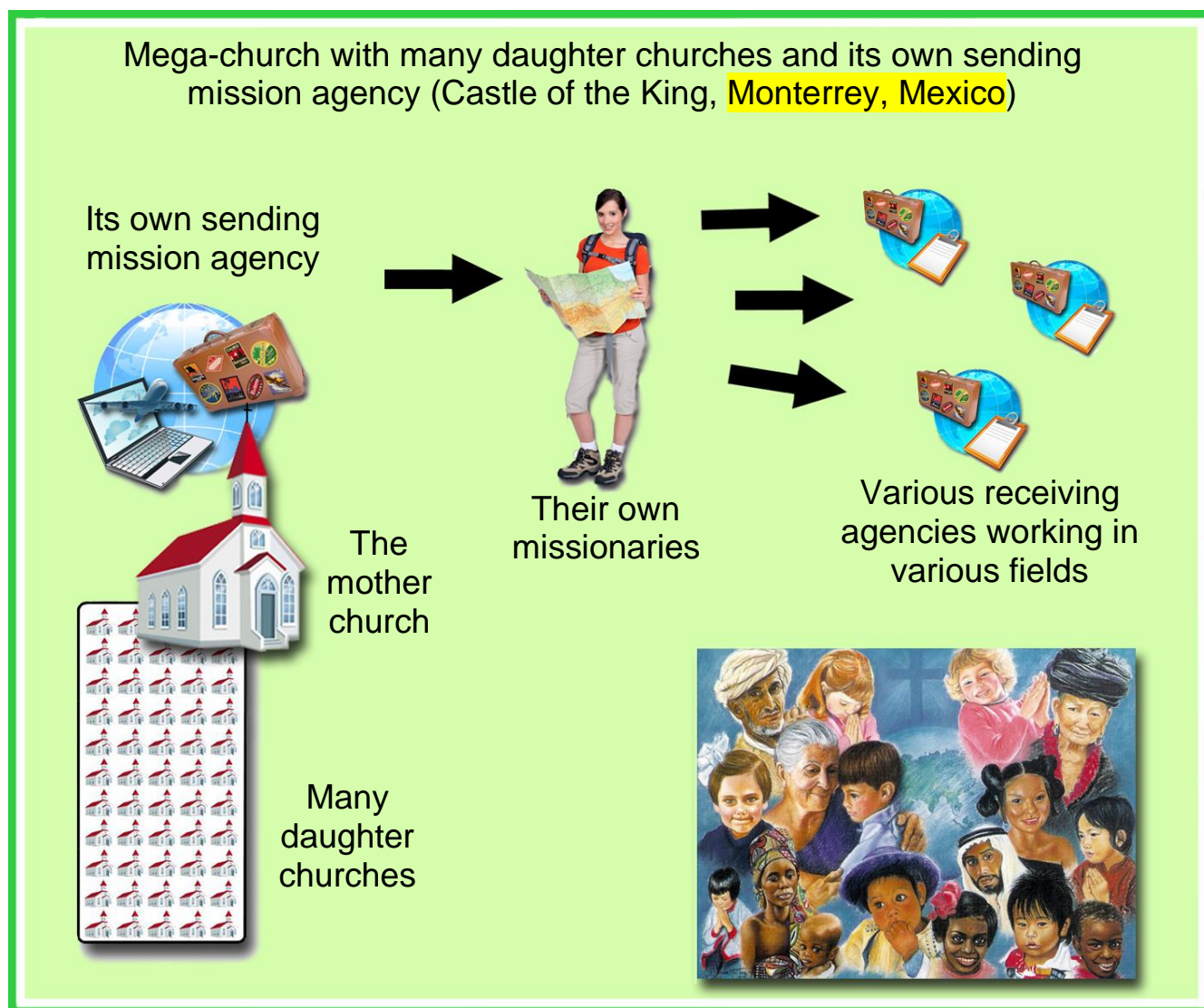
## The Plays [25]



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The first model [26] shows a large denomination such as the Baptists or the Assemblies of God. They have their own mission sending agency which sends their own missionaries from Mexico. They are received on the field by the receiving agency of their same denomination. The newly planted churches will be of their denomination.

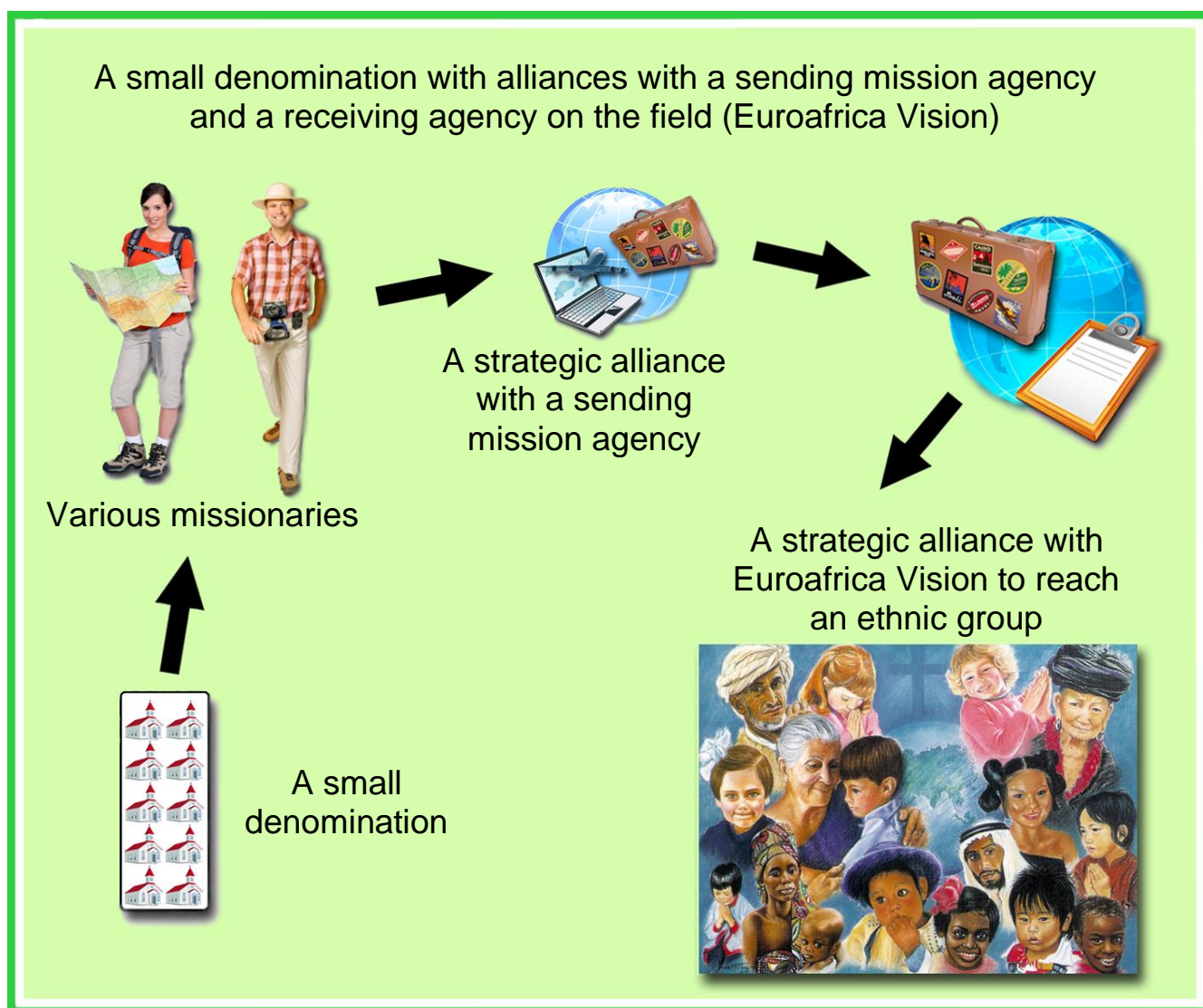
Your church may be part of a large denomination which has a model similar to this. The easiest thing for you, then, is to investigate the structures and resources of your own denomination. If you discover they do not have anything, you can look at other models so your local church can get right to work. A more daring option would be to speak with the denominational leaders to help them get their own mission agency started in your denomination.



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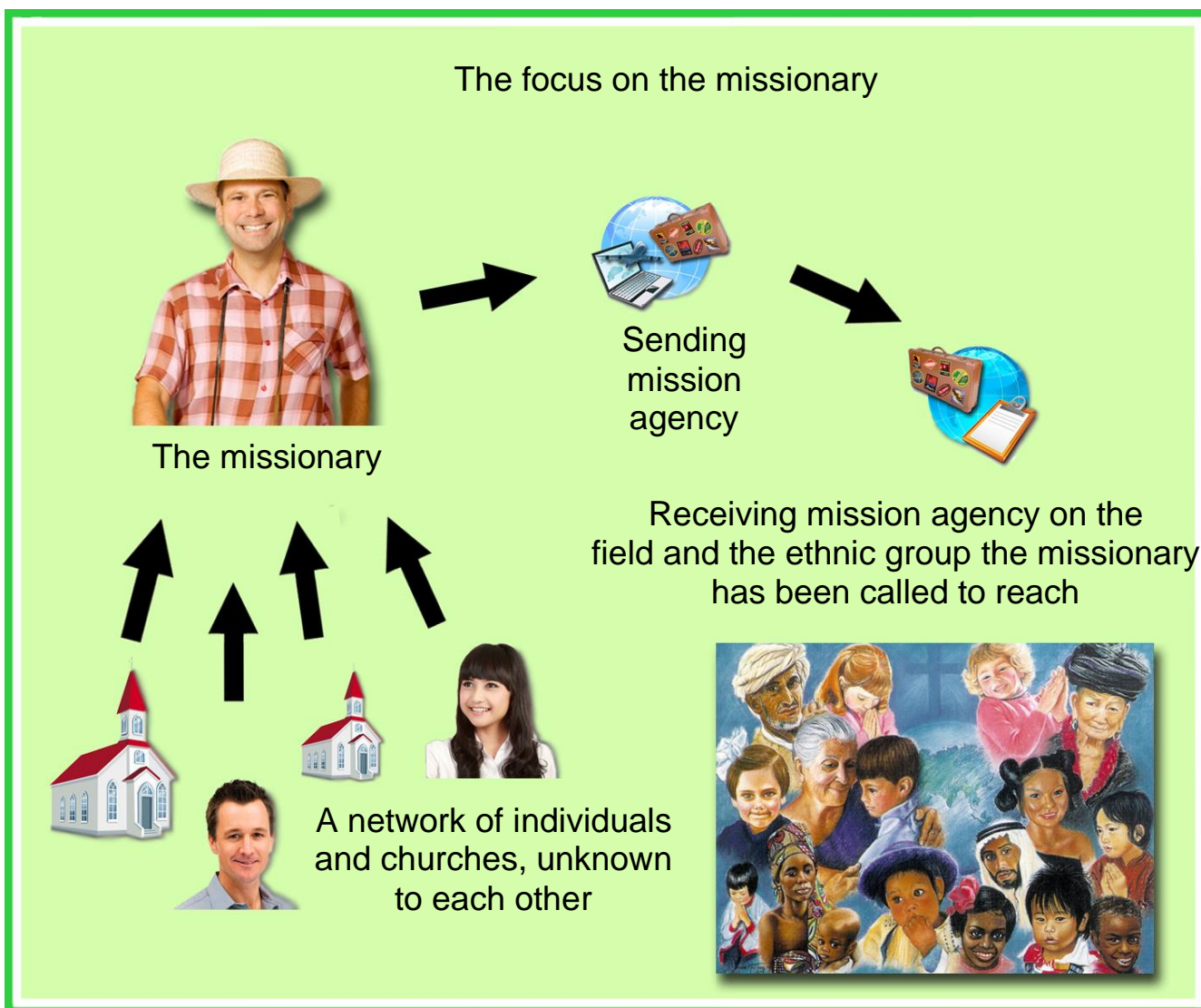
In this case, [27] we see a mega-church and many daughter churches. They have sufficient resources to have their own sending mission agency, but not enough to maintain a receiving mission agency on the field. They make strategic alliances with various mission agencies on the field for the care of their missionaries.





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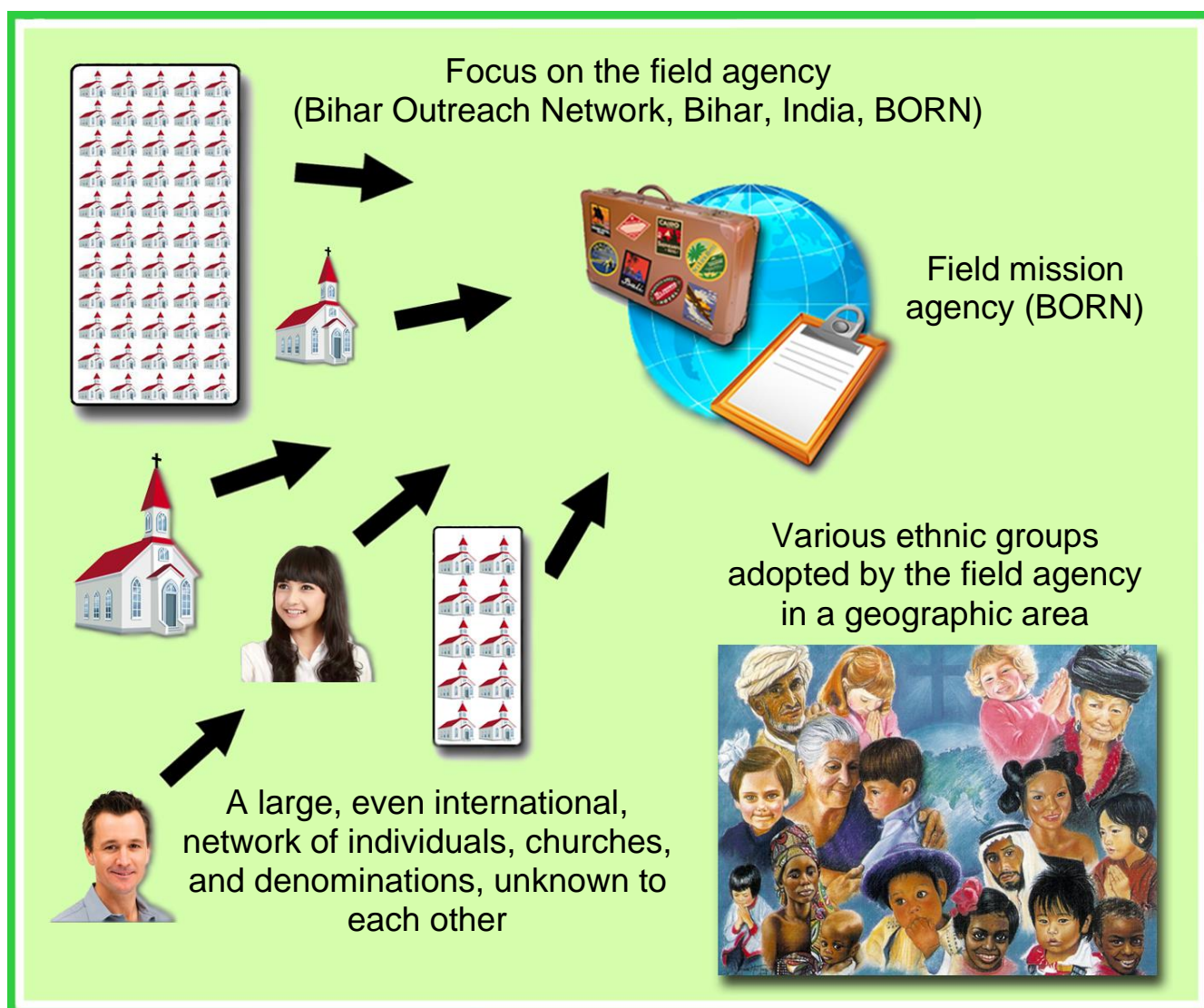
This is the case [28] of a denomination which is too small to have sufficient resources for its own mission agency, either in **Mexico** or on the field. They can form a strategic alliance with a mission sending agency that will be responsible for the logistics of sending their missionaries. They can also form another alliance with an agency on the field that is trying to reach specific ethnic groups. This could be described with this example: “Our denomination of 15 churches is sending two missionaries with **Latinoamérica al Mundo (Apizaco, Tlaxcala)** to work with **Visión Euro África (VEA)** to reach the ethnic group they recommended to us.”



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Many churches and individuals that want to support cross-cultural missions can take their first steps with this model. [29] Here the focus is on the missionary. He receives the vision from God to work among a certain ethnic group, then looks for a receiving mission agency on the field that can help him get established there. He looks for the sending mission agency that serves him best and starts looking for economic support through an informal network of family, friends, and churches. In many cases, the individuals and churches in their support network do not even know each other.

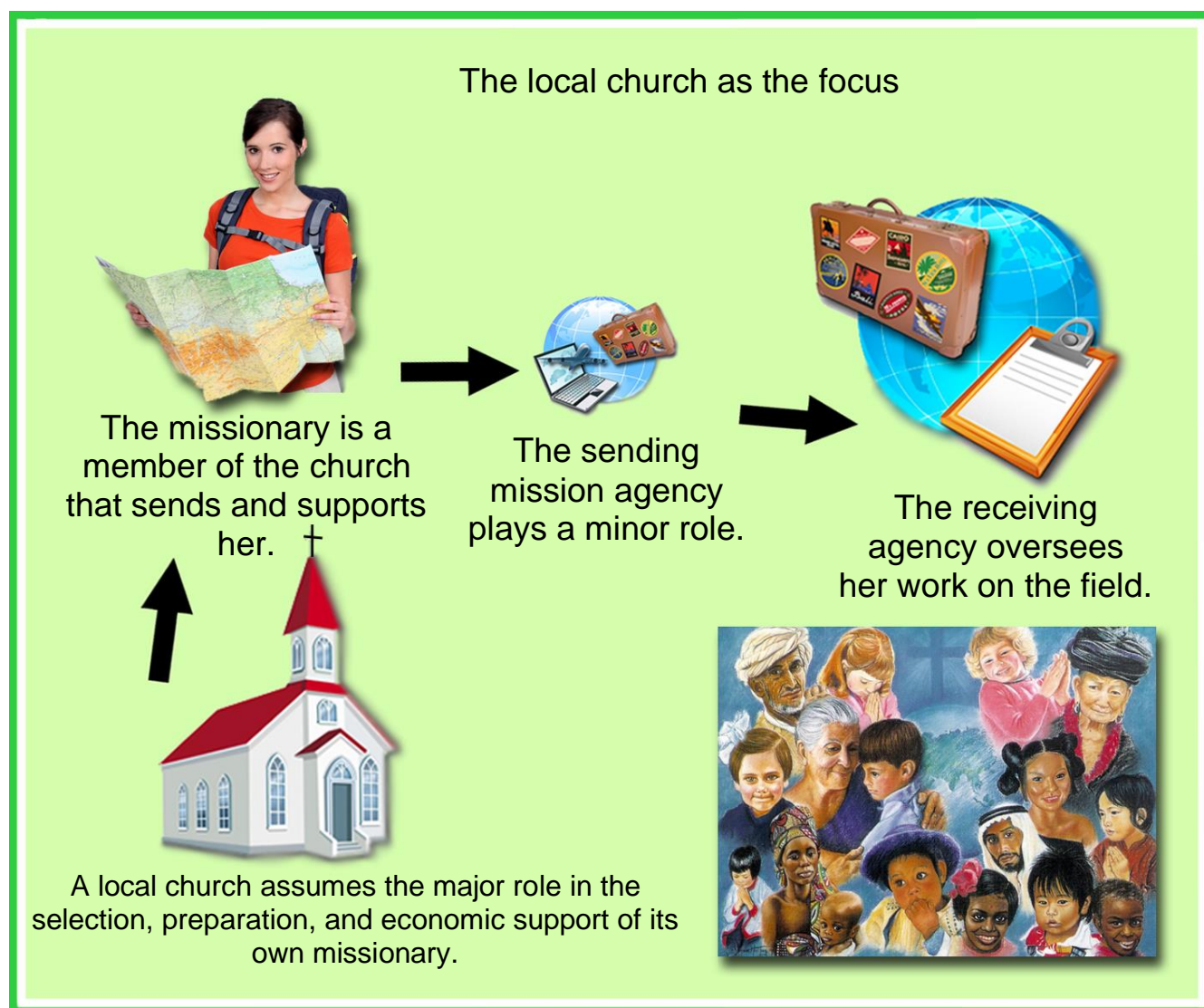
This model allows for involvement in missions without having done all the research into the ethnic groups. It is a good start, but churches should continue to learn and participate so that one day they will receive a specific vision from God for an ethnic group.



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This model [30] revolves completely around the mission agency on the field. They focus on certain ethnic groups in a specific part of the world. One clear example is that of the Bihar Outreach Network (BORN), in India. Anyone can collaborate with them from any part of the world by sending missionaries, offerings, short-term teams, or offerings in kind. They are in Bihar coordinating the efforts of more than 60 organizations (churches, denominations, and agencies). This allows a church to participate in ministries that are working in the heart of the 10/40 Window.





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This model [31] reflects the philosophy that the responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission falls primarily on the shoulders of the local church. The local church assumes the role of the mission sending agency and, in some cases, even supervises the missionaries on the field. Although this works for some churches, others see it as too great a responsibility and become discouraged. In almost all cases in this model, the missionaries are members of the sending church.

Each of these models is an attempt to visually describe what is happening currently in the missions movement from **Mexico**. None of these models is the rule, and of course, there are probably other models which are not included here. These models can also be combined in different ways. The purpose of this was to show that any church or individual can find a way to work within its current circumstances. Having said this, we are not relieved of the responsibility of looking for better models of cooperation which would yield better results.

There are models that help the 5,000 churches of a large denomination work together. There are models that allow a single believer to send his or her offering to a missionary working in an ethnic group in the 10/40 Window. No excuses! We can all play a part, beginning today!