



Your Sons and Daughters



John Easter

**AS THE
FATHER HAS
SENT ME,
EVEN SO I AM
SENDING YOU.**

John 20:21 (ESV)

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Assemblies of God World Missions

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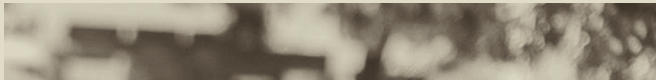
Layout & Interior Design: Tohlen Creative

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What Is Our Responsibility?



What is our responsibility regarding missions in the twenty-first century? Early in our Fellowship's history, our forebears articulated one major goal: to carry out the greatest evangelism the world had ever seen. Is that commitment still valid today? And if so, how do we pursue it in our ever-changing world?

Despite the volatility around us, despite news headlines that distract and captivate us and instill doubt about what is occurring, I want to remind us that God is threading another narrative. He is always working, and we are seeing a harvest of souls in nations around the world.

Many factors contribute to the fruitfulness of Assemblies of God World Missions—from the generosity of our people to the incredible resiliency and character of our missionaries who serve in places that may be

challenging—but I would like us to focus on some vital truths about the connection between God’s mission and the local church.

First, we observe the sending nature and activity of God in the world. Second, God’s people reflect His sending nature through the agency of the local church in ongoing sending and being sent.

God’s very nature and plan are expressed by the church’s sending of missionaries and in missionaries being sent. ■

Questions for reflection:

Is the commitment to global missions still valid today? Why or why not?

Are you encouraged or discouraged by what you see happening in the world?

How can you become more aware of God’s activity among the nations?

GOD’S PEOPLE REFLECT HIS SENDING NATURE THROUGH THE AGENCY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IN ONGOING SENDING AND BEING SENT.



The Local Church and the Mission of God



I wonder if we ever stop to think how important the local church is to God's mission. The Bible speaks from Genesis through Revelation of His redemptive work in the world. He's intentional, He's active, and He's intimately involved in redeeming creation. This work flows out of His nature through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This mission isn't marginal for God; it's at the very heart of His concern for the world. You came to Christ because you became aware that, through His mercy, He graciously extended His love to you. When we respond by accepting Him as our Savior, we not only become recipients of His grace, but we also become participants in His grace by giving witness of it to a broken and fractured world.

God reveals himself to us in many ways, but the primary method is through the testimony of others who came

to know Him and are now part of His church. Through that agency, He introduces all peoples everywhere to His love, His mercy, and His plan for their lives. That agency, that instrumentality of the Church, is essential to every follower of Jesus.

This individual and corporate missional identity is not simply a part of your life but is the heart and center of who you were called to be as a Christ follower. You were called individually to be saved through His grace, and when you heard the gospel, the Holy Spirit began to work in your life. You came to know Jesus by the hope of the gospel, putting your trust in Him. You became a son or daughter of God the Father through the work of the Spirit, but not in isolation; you now are grafted in as part of the family of God.

So, we enjoy salvation individually, but we worship and identify corporately. We are dedicated to serving our Lord in and through the local church, God’s primary instrument to bring others to himself. He works through the agency of His people to tell others about redemption and restoration.

The local church plays a pivotal role in growing and developing the family of God across the street and around the world. Whether you have been a believer for years or have just come to faith in Christ, you are part of His family—the Church. You are participating

in something larger than yourself and larger than your local congregation.

Not only is this participation in God’s mission much farther reaching and impactful than the individual believer and local church, it has deep, rich roots in our history. Our churches benefit from the continuity of 2,000 years of Christian mission from the time Christ first sent His disciples to preach the gospel. The Assemblies of God is further blessed and instructed by over 100 years of commitment to missions. ■

Questions for reflection:

Who introduced you to Jesus? Reflect on God’s graciousness in reaching out to you when you were turned away from Him.

How have you joined in God’s mission through the local church? Ask Him to reveal the specific role He has for you in His family.

The Mission of God



The Mission of God



The Mission of God



You are participating in something called *missio Dei*, Latin for “mission of God.” This speaks to the motive and direction of God’s redemptive activity—centered around the person of Christ as Savior and King. Jesus gave us insight into what this means for believers when He said to His disciples, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you” (John 20:21, NLT). He helps us understand that as the Godhead has been actively reaching out to redeem the world, He now incorporates His people into that nature and activity.

What a powerful and profound concept: God, who is always active, calls His people into action. This idea is so endearing to us as a Pentecostal church because it highlights the inclusivity and participation

in God's redemptive work. The call to join God on His mission is both corporate and intimate. He extends His invitation to the entire Church and to each one of us individually.

This sending nature and activity of God was demonstrated when He sent His Son into the world and again when He and His Son sent the Holy Spirit upon the Church. The Triune God then began sending His church to share the message of His redemptive grace with a lost and broken world.

The sending nature of God is intrinsically incarnational, which is why AGWM and our Fellowship have held that our greatest commodities in world missions are not projects or initiatives. These have their place, and they are valuable, but our greatest commodities are our sons and daughters called by God and sent as incarnational cross-cultural workers to the fields of the world.

We have the ability to participate in what the Triune God, by His nature and activity, already modeled for us. And this sending nature of God speaks of two actions: sending and being sent.

It's interesting that the words *apostle* (from the Greek) and *missionary* (from the Latin) carry the sense of "one who is sent" or "emissary." When we

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as the Church understand our identity in this light, we begin to embody our apostolic function: We send and incarnate the message of the gospel beyond our local environment to people who are different culturally, geographically, and linguistically.

As sent ones, then, we engage in the mission of God in two ways. First, we participate as individuals. Whether working on a construction site or as a teacher, student, plumber, or electrician, whatever our responsibilities, we are incorporated into the Church, into God's family. We understand that no matter who or where we are, God can use us. We participate in His nature and His activity.

Second, we participate in the mission of God as part of the life and ministry within a local church. Acts 13 describes the Holy Spirit as giving life to the local church at Antioch in ancient Syria to send its members to tell others the good news of Jesus. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the newly formed local church was directed by the Holy Spirit to take the gospel beyond its city and nation—to other places and peoples. ■

Questions for reflection:

Scripture declares that we are God's sent ones, His emissaries and ambassadors. How does this identity affect your daily life and priorities?

Do you believe God has the desire and ability to use you right where you are? How can you participate in His global mission in your present location?



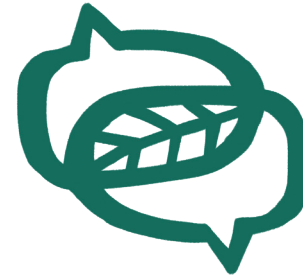
Planted in Antioch



A Church Planted in Antioch



A Church Planted in



How did a church come to be in Antioch? After the resurrection of Christ, His followers established the first church in Jerusalem within the nation of Israel. What Jesus foresaw in Acts 1:8 began to occur as the Spirit empowered these first believers to take the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, the gospel—propelled by the Spirit and carried by the followers of Jesus—made its way south to Alexandria in North Africa and into Jordan and Saudi Arabia in the Near East. The early evangelists then began to move northward with the message of the gospel, and on this trek they planted a church in Antioch.



How did that happen? Believers began to participate in the nature and sending activity of God: They shared their faith, and individuals came to know Jesus Christ. These new believers gathered together, and the Holy Spirit gave birth to a local church. But God's plan for Antioch did not end there. The Spirit did what He always does: He spoke, He enlivened the gathering, He empowered the body, and He gave it purpose.

In Acts 13, we read that the Spirit spoke to the congregation and leadership of this local church, directing them to separate Barnabas and Saul (who became the apostle Paul) to a work the Spirit had for them. As a result, the first apostolic team recorded in the New Testament emerged in Antioch.

**...SO AFTER THEY HAD
FASTED AND PRAYED,
THEY PLACED THEIR
HANDS ON THEM AND
SENT THEM OFF.**

ACTS 13:3 (NIV)

Notice that this calling came in the context of the local church. God's mission was nurtured in the local church, celebrated in the local church, supported by the local church, and released by the local church. The church in Antioch continued this sending nature by cultivating a spiritual environment whereby individuals within the congregation discerned and embraced the call of God as sent ones.

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Both the leadership and the congregation heard the call of God and responded in obedience by sending this first apostolic team. This missionary band set out from Antioch for Cyprus and then made its way up into the provinces of Galatia in modern-day Turkey. Later, these men returned to give a report to the church in Antioch.

This journey was not an anomaly. What we see in Acts 13 is a pattern, a model for future missionary enterprise. ■

Questions for reflection:

Read chapter 13 in the Book of Acts. What are some of the things you notice about the role of the Holy Spirit in the work of this church-planting team?

What are some practices you can incorporate into your life and the life of your local church that can attune you to the leading of the Holy Spirit, especially as it relates to God's mission in the world?

The New Testament



The New Testament Model of Missions



Antioch and Acts 13 become a model for the sending of missionary teams today. Teams are sent out from local churches. They are supported through prayer, finances, and advocacy. They are comprised of sons and daughters from local communities of faith. When they come back after their time of service, they give reports of what God is doing through the church in another part of the world. What we do in our Fellowship today is not just a denominational model; it is the New Testament model.

Within this model are two structures that informed not only the actions of the church at Antioch but also how we do missions today, both locally and globally. These two concepts are called *modalities* and *sodalities*. As we look closely at the life of the church in Antioch, we see these structures expressed in their scope and focus.

Modality refers to the mode or method of doing something. This speaks to the broad, overarching concern of the Antioch church to focus on the mission of the Church. Our churches today have a similar focus. They steward the mission of the Church through several structures. This is reflected in the local church, our networks, and our Fellowship. We can refer to these together as our modality.

The second structure was a sodality. Sodalities are narrower in focus and scope. They are structured and commissioned with specific ends in mind. An example is when the Antioch church sent out the apostolic team of Barnabas and Saul. They were commissioned by the local church to take the gospel where it had not yet been announced, where Christ had not yet been named, where the church had not been planted, and where no community of disciples had been established. The sodality is narrow, with a specific focus and a structure designed to be flexible and agile, able to adapt quickly to different times and cultures and language groups.

When the church in Antioch began to send emissaries from within—when it began to send its own sons and daughters—these sent ones were entering a new frontier. They were leaving the familiar behind. As they moved into Cyprus and Galatia and other new territories, they encountered different languages,

different cultures, different settings, different traditions, different histories and standards and practices. These differences required the sodality, the missionary team, to be flexible. The sodality needed the adaptability to change not the message of the gospel but the methods to convey it. And from that model, this flexibility is what AGWM missions teams employ today.

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The sodality receives its commission and its members from the modality, the church. It doesn't operate separately from it. Its mandate comes from the church and its leadership. We see this in Antioch and in other apostolic missions teams of the New Testament church. It presents, for us, a stream of continuity that is represented by our Movement and our churches today. ■

Questions for reflection:

The New Testament model for church planting centers around teams. What are some of the benefits and challenges you might associate with (or have experienced within) team-based ministry?

The church in Antioch sent its missionary team to a frontier area, a place where the gospel had not yet been proclaimed. What activities do you think pioneering teams should prioritize?

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The Continuity of Missions



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The Continuity



Our continuity with the New Testament model defines us today. In many ways, it explains and provides the lifeblood for our missions endeavors. How amazing to be part of this enduring stream of continuity, linked to that Antioch movement dating back to the first century, obeying and participating in the sending activity of God.

Not only do we share 2,000 years of continuity with the New Testament church, but we also share the continuity of 110 years since our formation as the Assemblies of God. Why is that important for us today? Its value is seen when we recognize that our ongoing mission is so much greater than what is happening in the present. It's greater than just one church. Continuity occurs as local churches begin to understand the significance of who they are in God's

plan to reach people in their communities and around the world. This powerful concept reflects a consistent view of the Assemblies of God family from our origins: We didn't see ourselves as an institution but as a missions agency. This continuity is our strength.

Just think about the state of our mission today in the Assemblies of God. After just 110 years, we have 2,641 missionaries ministering worldwide. You will find them in more than 150 countries throughout Africa, Eurasia, Asia Pacific, Europe, and Latin America Caribbean. We have contributed to the exponential growth of the Assemblies of God worldwide, with 383,736 local churches reproducing themselves after the New Testament model. On average, from our efforts today, every 30 seconds someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ, and every 66 minutes a church is planted somewhere around the world.

This continuity has now yielded over 55 million people worldwide whom we call the Assemblies of God family. This has been the result of continuity, of following the Antioch model and keeping the focus on proclaiming the gospel and planting the church.

Growth like this does not happen by accident. It happens when every local church throughout our Fellowship intentionally becomes an Antioch. The modality and sodality do not function separately but

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symbiotically. The Holy Spirit is animating this concept, prophetically speaking and challenging us to look at both our neighborhoods and nations. We—in the footsteps of those who have gone before us—and the generations to come will continue the Antioch model and follow the New Testament pattern.

My personal story bears this out. I was raised in a rural East Texas town and was part of a very small church. I remember going home from Royal Rangers one night when I was 5 years old. I was in Straight Arrows, and somebody in the local church that night had told me about Jesus. I got home, and although I had school the next day, I begged my mother to let me stay up until Dad got home. She gave in, and I sat on the couch waiting for him. It was after 9 o'clock, and I can still see those drapes in my mind today, the kind of lighting in our living room. When my dad came home, he asked why I was still up, and I began to explain what was happening. He had enough discernment to filter through a 5-year-old's language and know that God was dealing with his son's heart. He led me to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That night, on that couch, I was born again.

At 8 years old, I went to church camp in Jacksonville, Texas. I remember seeking God at the altar, like so many of our kids, at a Thursday evening service. I watched other kids walk away with the infilling of the

baptism of the Holy Spirit, and I refused to give up. That night, the Lord powerfully baptized me in the Holy Spirit. At 8 years old, I didn't have the theological framework to articulate what was happening to me or why, but I knew that God was doing something profound. I was transformed. Then, as a young teen, I sensed His call to ministry. During those teenage years, I began learning how to trust God, walk with Him, and anticipate what He had in store for me.

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I became an Assemblies of God missionary—and now serve as executive director for AGWM—because of the local church. In that little East Texas church, when they began to see God’s hand at work in my life, they surrounded me. Spiritual mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers would put their arms around me and pray, “Lord, we see what You’re doing in John. We see Your hand on John. Lord, use John. You can use John. We believe in what You’re doing in John.”

In those moments, my local church was becoming my Antioch. The pastor and others in leadership created the culture, but the entire congregation had an expectation and belief that God would call sons and daughters—their sons and daughters—into full-time vocational ministry. They created that environment through the gifts of the Spirit, through prayer, through encouragement and affirmation and exhortation. I was young and raw, but they gave me a chance. They nurtured me; they cultivated me; they empowered me. Then they began to support me as they released me and celebrated me.

For more than 2,641 AGWM missionaries, this is what happened for them.

Here is what we all need to remember. Assemblies of God World Missions and Assemblies of God missionaries are not parachurch or subsidiaries of the church. We are the church! We are you! We are your

sons. We are your daughters. By the thousands, we have sent missionaries around the world to break through the frontier, plant the church, train emerging leaders, and demonstrate the compassion of Christ. This occurred because local churches intentionally fostered environments for sons and daughters to be called and sent out for ministry. We released them for missions in the same way the Antioch congregation released that first apostolic team. We are you!

But what about the future? Today, 42 percent of the world’s 8 billion people remain unreached with the gospel. That’s nearly 7,300 unique, distinct people groups. Of these, 3.4 billion have never heard the gospel in a meaningful way! They have little or no access to encountering followers of Jesus in proximity because a life-giving local church does not exist. There is no one proclaiming the gospel, no missionary presence, no church reproducing itself, bringing redemptive life and transformation.



These people have been made in the image of God, but their representation of Him has been fractured—distorted, marred, and wounded to the point that finding any semblance of God’s image is difficult. Yet we know that because they are made in God’s image, they are valuable to Him and are the object of His love and desire to save, to restore from brokenness into the beauty of His original intention.

They may not be aware of it, but God has designed them uniquely with the capacity to respond as they hear the good news of His love and grace. He will make them new and place within them the beauty and power of His mission. That is what compels you and me as influencers of hundreds upon thousands of local churches in our worldwide Assemblies of God family to continue participating in the mission of God. ■

Questions for reflection:

From its inception, the Assemblies of God has seen itself not as an institution but as a missions agency. Do you think this is still our identity? Why or why not?

Forty-two percent of the world has little or no access to the gospel. As you reflect on this number and the reality it represents, what is the Holy Spirit speaking to you? What is He asking you to do about it?

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Three Strategic Missions Principles



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Three Strategic Missions



I want to leave you with three principles.

The first is this: Only in God's economy can you plant seed in another person's field and reap a harvest in your own. This begs the questions: *How generous are you with that seed?* And, *What kind of seed are you sowing?*

Any project or initiative that cannot trace a direct line to the planting, establishment, and reproduction of other churches should be called into question. What we've learned from the mission of the church is that Christ will build His church, and through the local church we participate together in establishing healthy local churches from our Jerusalem, from our villages and townships and cities, throughout our

world. Both modality and sodality, the local church and the apostolic team, must bring glory to Christ and reproduce each other.

The second principle relates to the first: When we release workers to sow in another field, we trust God to multiply workers in our own.

In the last year, in the last five years, how many workers within your local church have you nurtured? Have you affirmed the call of God on their lives, and have you released them to ministry? When you give a missionary offering, intercede for missions, or advocate for missionaries, do you open your hands and say, “Lord, even if You call my son or daughter or my grandchildren, they are Yours”? Because the only way a local church can have an Antioch life is by opening its hands, saying, “Lord, we release our own sons and daughters and believe that You will raise up others for the needs of our spiritual community here at home.”

Pastor and church leader: What would be the collective impact of hundreds or thousands of Assemblies of God churches beginning now to pray that God would raise up their own sons and daughters to reach the nations? Imagine what God would do as we seek Him, set sending goals, and intentionally disciple our own to be among the sent ones.

1

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2

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3

**We must intentionally
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which the voice of the
Spirit and the call of
God are expected.**

We ask you to do that very thing. Pastor, the next time you collect faith promises or Kingdom Builder commitments, would you also, in a step of faith, determine the number of workers—your sons and daughters—your church will, with God's help, give to the harvest? We ask you to send your best, believing that God will meet the need for workers in your own churches as you do.

When Cheryl and I first sensed God was calling us to Africa, our three boys were young. We had never been to the nation we were about to live in. We'd never seen it, never visited, hadn't taken a short-term trip. This wasn't going to be a vacation. We were going to live there. This was our new home and new life. But before that happened, we had to sit down with my father-in-law, who had just come to Jesus. I had to tell him and his wife, "We sense that God is calling us out of pastoral ministry, and we really believe He is calling us to Africa. I will be taking your daughter and your three grandbabies to Africa." I wish you could have seen his face when I said that. It was important for me to walk through that moment, and I realized how much he was giving up—not just as a grandfather, but as someone who was part of the local church.

We live in a time when both internal and external voices are calling into question whether the local church in the Western world should continue to send

missionaries. These voices suggest that we withdraw from this sending nature and activity and simply redirect funding and resources from sending missionaries to financing projects, leaving the future of this work to the majority world.

The inherent danger in this view is that it derives its logic from the world, not Scripture. We have no right to diminish the opportunity for any daughter or son of the church to fully participate in God's redeeming work, including the ongoing ministry of apostolic mission as sent ones.

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This view also robs each local church from participating in the sending nature of God. There is a spiritual correlation between the sacrificial sending of our best offspring as an aroma of Christ to the nations and the level of praying and giving from the local church. The hard data supports the idea that

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missions-minded churches that prioritize sending missionaries also give generously and typically have more impact in their local setting.

You may have the right to abdicate your opportunity to participate in God's sending activity, but you do not have the right to abdicate that opportunity for your sons and for your daughters.

Our family of local churches has been blessed by the continuity that links us back not just to a denominational model but to an amazing biblical pattern. My challenge to you at this moment is to build a culture in your congregation and local church that continues the stream of continuity from Antioch to this current era in missions history and God's redemptive work. Give your church's sons and daughters the same opportunity that built our Movement and that links them with the Great Commission of Christ, the pattern of the New Testament church, and the immeasurable need of humanity. Encourage and release this generation of spiritual offspring from your local church to reap a harvest in their generation.

The third principle relates to the culture of our local Assemblies of God churches. As pastors and church leaders, we must intentionally engender cultures in which the voice of the Spirit and the call of God are expected.

Your Antioch, your local congregation, must be a place that embodies a heart for the nations, ears attuned to the Holy Spirit, and eyes ready to recognize those who have been set apart by God for missions. Those who are called, particularly the young, must have spiritual fathers, mothers, and grandparents. They need spiritual aunts and uncles who pray for them, believe in them, and encourage them as they grow into the ministry.

Pastors, church leaders, and church members alike must determine that they will not hold back those who are called. Instead, they will recognize, affirm, nurture, support, and celebrate the privilege of surrendering their beloved and best to the God who will bring the nations to himself.

The most practical step toward cultivating this kind of culture within your local church is to intentionally create moments for the congregation to seek God, hear His voice, and discern His direction. Create moments to connect your church with missionaries, specifically planning opportunities for missionaries to speak to your children and youth. Create moments for mature and godly saints to pray with and affirm the young. Allow Acts 13 seasons in your church schedule. Create moments of time and space for your Antioch to grow into a body that cares, nurtures, guides, and sends. ■

Questions for reflection:

This section includes the following statement: "Any project or initiative that cannot trace a direct line to the planting, establishment, and reproduction of other churches should be called into question." Do you agree? Why or why not?

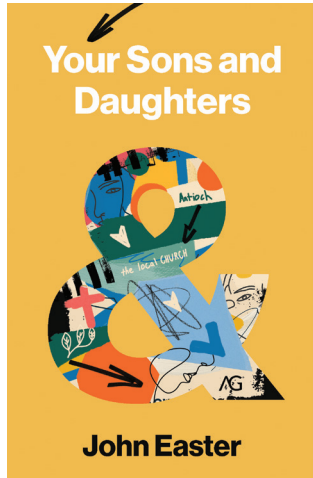
How do you think you would respond if God called your children or grandchildren to serve Him on the other side of the world?

What specific steps can your local church take to create an atmosphere in which people can seek God, hear His voice, and discern His direction?

PRAYER RESOURCES

For more copies of

Your Sons and Daughters

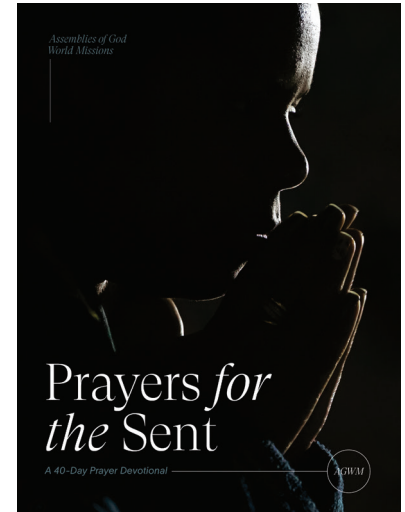


Assemblies of God World Missions and its missionaries are extensions of our local churches. You have nurtured, disciplined and equipped us for ministry. We are you. Executive Director John Easter urges pastors and churches to build this vital missions mind-set, so that we continue sending workers and establishing the Church among all peoples everywhere. Share this book with others so they hear this important message.

AGWM

Prayers for the Sent

Jesus sends us with the mission to bring the gospel to all peoples everywhere. Prayer is the foundation of that mission; it is the heartbeat of what we do. This prayer devotional from AGWM contains 40 specific topics of intercession to help in your prayer journey.



Please scan the QR code to visit the website for more Prayer Resources

To further engage in prayer, join AGWM's weekly newsletter, *The Call to Prayer*, for God's church around the world at agwm.org/pray.

John Easter

Executive Director, AGWM

As executive director for Assemblies of God World Missions, John Easter oversees 2,640-plus global workers serving in more than 150 countries and territories around the world.



Dr. Easter is committed to growing AGWM in frontier missions and stewarding God's call in people's lives. His heart is for the well-being of the missionary family and their longevity in the field of their calling. Developing the next generation of missionaries and missions supporters within the U.S. local church will be a continued priority.

John and his wife, Cheryl, were appointed as career missionaries to Malawi in 2000. While in Africa, they trained men and women for church-planting efforts, facilitated missions mobilization, and equipped missionary educators to multiply healthy church leaders.

In 2011, Easter was appointed as a strategic leader with AGWM Africa and director of Africa's Hope, a resourcing organization that supports educational initiatives for church leaders in 46 African nations. In all, he served as a missionary educator for 22 years.

In 2021, Easter joined AGWM's Executive Committee as director of Partnership Development. In this position, he came alongside church leaders and ministry networks to align God's people with the mission of establishing the Church among all peoples everywhere.

Easter earned a Ph.D. from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, Missouri. Prior to God calling his family to Africa, he pastored in the United States for 10 years. John and Cheryl have three sons: Kevin; John-John, with his wife, Calissa; and Mitchell, with his wife, Alyssa, and their four children.

Dear Friend of Missions:

Jesus told His disciples in John 20:21, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (ESV). This idea of being sent is key to facing the challenges of our world today. Just as Jesus lived out God’s sending nature on earth, proclaiming freedom and healing the broken, the Church is compelled to participate the same way.

Our redemption and salvation come through the incarnated Jesus—the cross He bore, the pain He endured, the death He died, and the life He lives. Now, Jesus is sending us as Spirit-empowered witnesses to reveal His love and grace to the lost in our world.

AGWM and Assemblies of God missionaries are extensions of our local churches. You have nurtured, disciplined, and equipped us for ministry. **We are your sons and daughters. We are you.**

I urge pastors and churches to keep building this vital missions mind-set. Create a missional church culture in which the sons and daughters of your church will continue to have the same opportunities that have built our Movement. Continue sending workers to the nations and furthering our mission of establishing the Church among all peoples everywhere.



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