



The 18.26 Network



Vocational Missions FAQs for Christian Leaders

Why is vocational missions needed?

As people respond to Christ's Great Commission, some wonder, "How can I use my profession in my desire to serve?" They may not see how their vocation is part of God's missional plans. Others are hesitant to become full-time missionaries because of the support-raising aspect involved. The 18.26 Network helps Christians use their God-given professional gifts and talents by connecting them with missions teams, particularly with Mission to the World (MTW) teams, or with global partners. Vocational missionaries will partner with missionaries and/or local churches while using their vocations as their missions' platform.

Are 18.26 Network members also MTW missionaries? If not, how does that work?

18.26 Network members are not MTW missionaries. Vocational missionaries' first ministry is to be faithful to their employer, or if they are self-employed to their clients and customers. Coupled with that is the importance of being good colleagues and good neighbors both at work and at home. The U.S. State Department estimates that there are over 9 million Americans who live and work internationally. Perhaps 3 million of them claim to be Christians. We want to see that claim lived out in intentional incarnational ways in service to Christ's kingdom.

What role does the church play in supporting vocational missionaries?

Through the teaching and preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, the encouragement of fellowship and even in the administration of discipline, the church equips and sends members into the world to be instruments of the Holy Spirit's effectual calling. In that regard, the church prepares people to serve wherever they are. Today a church in Pittsburg may send a godly single, couple or family to Singapore, or Berlin, or . . . just about anywhere around the world.

When someone applies to go out as a vocational missionary, we look to pastors and missions team members as their first point of reference and the voice of agreement that they should go. Once approved, we want the church to continue to be engaged with them in their spiritual journey. That would mean continued interest in their welfare, prayer and pointing to their missions call just as the church would for a traditional missionary they support and perhaps developing church-to-church relations with their "new" home church.

What can the church do to better promote vocational missions calling among their members?

If you are sincerely interested in promoting a greater understanding of how vocational missions is part of God's Kingdom plan for your church members, you can begin to focus on preaching and teaching a theology of faith and work that extends beyond the borders of your community.

Promoting books like *Visions of Grace* by Steve Garber, or *Every Good Endeavor* by Tim Keller, *Kingdom Calling* by Amy L. Sherman, and *Work: Its Purpose, Dignity and Transformation*, by Dan Doriani is also helpful for church members. A good theology of vocation for the entire church is foundational to sending out vocational missionaries.

You might want to consider that your missions team studies *The Future of Missions* published by Barna Resources. An 18.26 Network leader is willing to visit your church to speak with your pastoral staff, your missions committee, or with small groups that might have a special interest in vocational calling.