

# Why bother with short-term mission?



When Jesus told his disciples to 'ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers' (Matt 9:38), his first step was to send them on a short-term mission to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' as training for their long-term calling

Boys in Manila



In the last thirty years short-term mission has boomed. Today, some agencies have more people serving short-term than all their long-term career missionaries put together. This is not always well received. Long-term missionaries devote themselves to living cross-culturally, learning the language and blending into the culture, trying to avoid giving offence as ignorant foreigners can so easily do. It takes time to be accepted, to suffer with those you are seeking to reach, and above all for people to respond to the gospel. Relationships have to be built up over time as people understand the gospel, and reflect on the cost of following Jesus. This needs a career missionary willing to invest their life in the people to whom God has called them. Indeed that sense of calling is crucial to what drives so many missionaries to be willing to make the sacrifices that are involved. Short-term mission service seems to fly in the face of all these considerations.

So, why bother with short-term mission? Wouldn't it be better for GBM to focus entirely on helping the churches only to support and care for long-term missionaries? That is our primary aim, but I believe that there is a real value in investing time and effort in short term mission, for a number of reasons.

Short-term mission has become possible because the world has shrunk. Today (volcanoes permitting!) any part of the globe is reachable in 24 hours at affordable cost. Young people are available, keen to take a gap year before university, and world mission presents a much more worthwhile time than lounging in a backpacker hostel in Bali. Why not use that opportunity for the Lord?

Young people have time free from the constraints of family commitments, and life costs less. They are passionate about wanting to make a difference in God's world, and we need to harness that enthusiasm for the gospel. Once they are in their twenties, the commercial 'handcuffs' of career, student debt, and a mortgage will tie them down. They need an experience of

life in the developing world, to see Christian contentment among poorer Christian brothers and sisters, and to put their privileges in context.

Life in the UK militates against mission at every turn. The media limits our awareness of the world to life inside the British media bubble, and we are made to fear people from other nations and religions. Churches want to 'keep people here' rather than learn the joy of sending. Mission is often an add-on in the local church, something for the keen few, the 'differently called'. Short-term mission is subversive, overcoming these obstacles by throwing young people into another culture, seeing missionaries at work close up, so that they feel part of that work for the rest of their lives.

Short-term mission connects. If a team of young people go to spend three months in Peru, when they return each one will be an advocate in their home church for that work, and earnest in the work of prayer. At the same time through the short-termers the career missionary connects with life back home. They learn how life has moved on since they left, keeping them connected with those who sent them. The short-termers may also have gifts to use that the long-termers lack. Not everyone is brilliant at music, or DIY, or computers, or reaching teenagers.

Short-term mission must serve long term mission. Among a team of short-termers God is at work, calling into long-term service. If one in ten goes on to serve the Lord long-term that is a huge step forward. We need to provide people with the opportunity to test their gifts, to hear what God is saying to them, and to see where he wants them to serve. When Jesus told his disciples to 'ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers' (Matt 9:38), his first step was to send them on a short-term mission to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' as training for their long-term calling, being sent as apostles ('sent-ones' – missionaries) into the whole world.

**Jim Sayers**

# Envision goes live



Arequipa

## Envision Teams

We plan to send our first *Envision Team* to work with the Church in Simon Bolivar, Arequipa Peru for ten weeks in early 2011. Aimed at gap year students, there are eight places, plus two leaders (one male, one female). After two weeks studying Spanish, and helping with a Church camp and a Holiday Bible Club, they will help with the growing number of youth and children's clubs that the church runs as well as some practical projects. They will also have their own daily discipleship programme together led by the team leaders. This is a great place to grow in Christ during your gap year.

## Envision Apprenticeships

In the last ten years church-based apprenticeships have taken off across the UK, giving young adults an opportunity to try ministry at the sharp end and to test their calling. Supervised by a pastor, they are given significant ministry responsibilities and also spend some time following a local training course. Many apprentices go on into full time gospel ministry.

*Envision Apprenticeships* operate on the same principles, but in a cross-cultural context. If you think God is calling you to missionary service long term or to ministry in the UK, this is a great way to test your calling and use your gifts. *Envision Apprentices* will work alongside Missionaries supported through GBM, typically for one year. If you speak a European language that gives you a great advantage, but working through English gives many opportunities in a number of European cities.

For example, you could work with Malcolm and Ruth Firth in Riga, Latvia. Many Latvians want to learn English, so you would teach a TEFL based English course, as well as meet, encourage and mentor fellow-Christians. You would also lead evangelistic Bible studies and be involved in a possible new church-plant. You could also give time to GAIN, a Christian aid organisation seeking to help the poor in Latvia. You would also follow evening classes at Riga Bible Institute.

## Envision Placements

If you are 18 or over and would like to spend some time working alongside a missionary, why not try an *Envision Placement*? This can be for anything from four weeks to nine months. You could be a young person taking a gap year, someone between jobs or taking early retirement. Each placement is tailor-made to suit you and the missionary that you work with.

For more details or an application form, please contact Jim Sayers at Mission Centre on 01235 520147 or email jamesds@gbm.org.uk

Riga, Latvia



Our vision is to see a new generation of Christians who are passionate about reaching all nations with the message of God's grace

## Team Leaders

Could you be a potential team leader? If you are in your twenties, have had some Bible training and leadership experience and are keen to lead an *Envision Team*, then please contact us. You would be investing in the lives of young people and preparing them for University and maybe a lifetime of gospel mission.



Andie and Lucy at school

Jason and Andie Murfitt, working in Manacapuru in Brazil, are looking for someone to work alongside them short term, helping with the home schooling of their daughter Lucy. You would also be able to join them in evangelism along the tributaries of the River Amazon. You would need experience of working with children and an aptitude for teaching. The first placement is needed from January 2011.