

PARK STREET CHURCH MISSIONS

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MINISTER OF MISSIONS

History¹

The roots of Park Street's mission program can be traced to the wider movement of God through the religious revival that occurred in North America from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth as well as to the development of mid-twentieth century evangelicalism. Edward D. Griffin, a recognized leader in the Second Great Awakening, was Park Street's minister from 1811-15. He played a prominent role in the ordination of America's first foreign missionaries (Adoniram Judson, Gordon Hall, Luther Rice, Samuel Nott, and Samuel Newell), the founding of America's first foreign missionary society (the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions), and his advocacy of world-wide evangelization. In 1819 Park Street launched a successful mission to Hawaii that led to the translation of the Bible, thousands of conversions, and several churches and schools all established within two decades.

Later, in the mid-twentieth century, Harold J Ockenga (minister from 1937-69) along with Billy Graham became a recognized leader of the national evangelical movement. He launched annual missionary conferences and established world missions as Park Street's first financial priority. Ockenga stated that "missions make the church" not its buildings. He noted that though Park Street was where William Lloyd Garrison spoke against slavery, where "America" was first sung, where the Handel and Haydn Society, the Prison Reform Society and other organizations were begun, it was its world-wide missionary commitment that was most noted. In its two-hundred-year history, Park Street has sent out over 440 missionaries to 98 countries overseas. Park Street has not only gone to the nations but also has welcomed the nations streaming into our city. In 1972, the church launched a ministry to international students and scholars which is one of the oldest and most vibrant outreaches of its kind.

Local mission has also played a vital role in the church's strategy to reach the world next door. The founding of Park Street School (2002), Park Street Kids (1999), and Boston Trinity Academy (2002), among many other organizations, reflects our commitment to the city.

Theology

Our theological vision of mission understands mission as our participation, at God's invitation, in his own mission for the redemption of creation. The Bible both informs and validates our mission, but it is

our theological vision that provides the connection between our doctrine and our practice, gives us a faithful restatement of the gospel with rich implications for life, ministry and mission at our moment in history, and our define vision and values, our ministry DNA, our philosophy of mission, and our emphases. It has three components, like a three legged stool: Scripture, Christ, and the Church.

ALL SCRIPTURE: Our understanding and assessment of mission is informed by all of Scripture rather than a few choice texts (2 Timothy 3:15-17). God's covenant people in the Old Testament were elect, redeemed, and called to unique ethical standards and exclusive worship of YHWH in the midst of many nations. The Law, Prophets and Writings have implications for mission in areas such as creation, cultural engagement, apologetics, justice, and human dignity. In the New Testament, God's covenant people confess Jesus Christ is Lord of all (Colossians 1:15-20). Similarly, this has implications for missions for creation, culture, politics, law, business and so forth.

CHRISTOLOGY: Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of our mission. Because Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament promises for the Messiah, his life has missiological significance for all creation. Through his life, death, and resurrection, he has fulfilled the Law, Prophets and Writings of the Old Testament. Repentance and forgiveness are now proclaimed in his name to the Jews and to all nations (Luke 24:25-27, 44; Acts 26:22-23).

ECCLESIOLOGY: Our model for mission, particularly our full support policy, is based on initiatives taken by the early church in the New Testament. The congregation, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, initiates, consults, selects, and sends missionaries (Acts 11:24, 14:22). Missionaries, in turn, are known well by the congregation, report back to them, and spend time with them (Acts 16:3, 14:27-28).

Our theological vision for mission is shaped by Park Street's DNA as characterized by leadership, innovation, intellectualism, and internationalism. Furthermore, this vision comes alive when we do missions that is biblical, bold and practical. We seek to submit to the Bible as it directs, informs, validates and assesses the work of missions. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that we proclaim. We seek bold mission initiatives that inspire and motivate people, but are also characterized by faith, humility, and reliance on the Holy Spirit. We seek mission initiatives that are logistically practical, repeatable, effective, and sustainable. These should also be synergistic, fitting within our larger global mission vision and within current structures.

¹ See also Exhibit A: 200 Years of PSC Missions by W.J. Hanna

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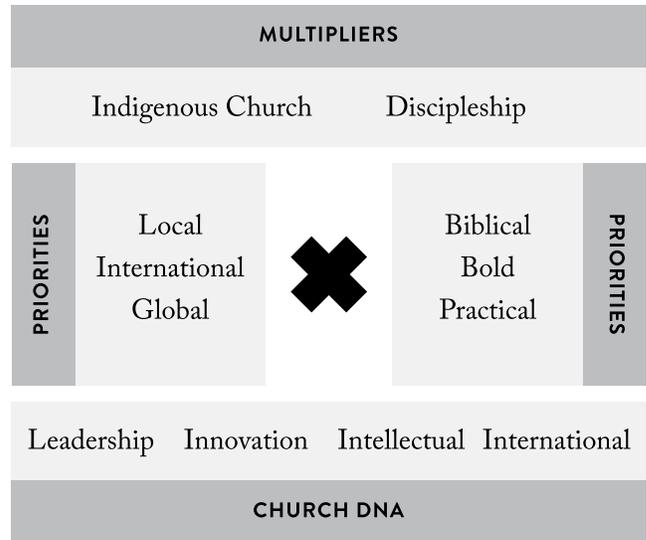
Priorities

As we apply these principles within our theological vision for mission, we identify three priority areas: local, international and global.

1. Local mission in Boston: As a church, we want to serve the city of Boston (Proverbs 11:10-11, Jer 29:7). Bostonians in politics, education, media, business, as well as disadvantaged groups such as the homeless (approximately 6000), need to experience Park Street's energetic, sacrificial, and long-term involvement in building up the city to know God's shalom. In addition to college ministry by Cru and Intervarsity, Park Street partners with local ministries such as Arabs for Christ, Alive in Christ, and Mass Family Institute.
2. Internationals in Boston: As a church, we want to equip international students and scholars: About 30,000 international students (and 10,000 scholars and dependents) come for academic or professional reasons to Boston each year. For the past decade, the number of internationals studying in the US has been increasing. Many return to their home countries where the gospel is restricted or where the church is marginalized. Park Street's International Fellowship ministry (about 100+ each week) is structured to reach out to internationals, to train them through intensive discipleship, and to send them back to their home countries as disciple-makers, and to reconnect with them on after their return. The ESL program (about 300+ per year) also plays a vital role to international families and immigrants. Our newest initiative to refugees is a collaborative venture with the Greater Boston Refugee Ministry and World Relief.
3. Global: As a church, we have prioritized the evangelization of the world's unreached peoples in their local language and culture as a primary goal of our mission's outreach. An unreached or least-reached people is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group. Using the Joshua Project's definition of unreached people as a group with less than 2% evangelical Christians, we know that 41% of the world's 16,585 people groups remain unreached (7,165 groups). Despite 40 years of outreach amongst the unreached since Lausanne (1974), many groups still have no church planting efforts of any kind amongst them. The vast majority of Christian resources today are focused on Christianized countries and not deployed amongst the least evangelized people groups.

We have divided our missionaries into several groups. Our staff missionaries receive 80% of their financial support from Park Street and serve unreached people groups. These are career missionaries serving in a variety of ways through Bible translation, church planting, training, sports and family ministries. Staff missionary associates are apprentice missionaries who receive 50% of their funding from the church. Mid-term missionaries receive designated support and seek innovative, entrepreneurial solutions to complex issues in either unreached or more reached countries. Global professionals receive minimal financial support as they use their job overseas to do cross-cultural discipleship

in the marketplace. Short-term missionaries serve alongside our staff missionaries or mission partners on projects directed from the field and are eligible for minimal financial support. For example, in 2016 we commissioned short term teams to Japan, Haiti, South Africa, Maine and Revere Beach.



The Future

By 2020, 65% of all Christians will live in Latin America, Africa and Asia. This is a big increase from 41% in 1970. If Park Street wishes to remain relevant to what God is doing globally, then the church will seek ways to be increasingly aligned with the global south. We have identified two multipliers that can assist us in aligning our missions program with this global trend. The first is to partner with indigenous church planting movements in the global south. We wish to have two-way relationships that go slow, go deep, and are sustainable. The other multiplier is to use short term mission service as an opportunity for mentoring, on-going discipleship, and as a pipeline for future missionaries. These two multipliers have already come together in a powerful way through two short-term teams, one made up of Park Street Church leaders and another mainly of international students, who worked alongside sister churches in China and Japan which are led by nationals who were trained at Park Street.

We look to the Lord to raise up workers for his harvest field and to supply the generous financial support that is required to partner with him in his mission to the ends of the earth.

J. Linnell
2016

200 YEARS OF PSC MISSIONS

William J. Hanna

STAFF MISSIONARY

Park Street Church was founded in Boston in 1809. Among the Congregational churches of New England at that time there was a movement to deny the trinity and to say that all religions lead equally to God. This led a group of concerned believers to hold weekly prayer meetings, and in 1809 this group banded together in faith with this commitment, *“we covenant...to give up ourselves until the Lord...to unite together into one boy for the public worship of God...exhorting, reproving, comforting and watching over each other, for mutual edification; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our Savior Jesus.”* Within a year these twenty six people built the building that presently stands on the corner of Park Street, and set themselves apart as a Trinitarian church.

In the following year several members of the new Park Street Church helped to found another organization: the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, one of the earliest American missionary organizations. Three members of the church, Jeremiah Evarts, Samuel Hubbard and Rufus Anderson were early directors of the ABCFM. There were close contacts between Park Street and the ABCFM from the very beginning, and many voices within Park Street who encouraged the church to support missionaries and to send their own members overseas.

It is sometimes hard from the records to know which of the early ABCFM missionaries should be considered as true “Park Street Church missionaries”. During the 19th century churches sent money to the ABCFM for general missionary work without designating it to the support of a particular missionary and Park Street Church was a generous under of the ABCFM. At that time the docks (along present day Water Street) were close to the church and many ABCFM missionaries were commissioned at Park Street before they went to board a ship. It is clear that the church sent several of its members overseas and took a deep interest in missionary work.

Members of Park Street Church in its early years would have been familiar with the Worcester family, missionaries to the Cherokee. Samuel Worcester was ordained at Park Street Church in 1825 and he and Ann traveled to Georgia, in those days a fifty-two day trip in a horse-drawn wagon. They learned the Cherokee language and translated the Bible into Cherokee. They also helped the Cherokee people in their struggle against the state of Georgia which wanted to remove them to the west. Worcester helped the Cherokee nation in their appeal to the US Supreme Court and during the 1830’s over 16,000 Cherokee people were deported to Oklahoma in the notorious “Trail of Tears”. The Worcester’s moved to Oklahoma and continued their ministry, helping the Cherokee to resettle and planting several churches.

One couple who were commissioned in Park Street Church in 1812 were Adoniram and Ann Judson, the famous missionaries to Burma. However, during the ship passage on the way to Burma the Judson’s became Baptists and resigned from the ABCFM. To this day most of the Christians in Burma identify with the Baptist church.

A major focus of the mission’s interest in the church since the early 1800’s has been the Woman’s Benevolence Society. The women of the church banded together to help poor people in Boston and to form Sunday Schools. Over time they turned their attention to supporting missionaries. Their sewing circles sent boxes of clothing and other goods to the frontiers of the USA and to many countries overseas. For over two centuries the WBS has continued to serve God in creative and changing ways. They have provided for school and hospitals, and written to and prayed for missionaries. In 1951 the WBS sponsored the first women’s World Day of Prayer.

At the start of the 20th century missions giving by Park Street Church slowed down. In the period from 1900 through 1939 the church sent out only eight new missionaries. One of the most colorful of these was Eleanor Wilson. Since the 1860’s the ABCFM had sponsored a series of ships to the Caroline Islands under the name of Morning Star. These ships served churches and mission stations on scattered islands in the South Pacific, Starting in 1925 and continuing after World War II, Eleanor Wilson was the captain of the Morning Star VI and Morning Star VII. She was apparently a real character and a vivid storyteller and her visits to Park Street Church would have been one of the major ways that church members heard about missions during this era.

In 1940 a dramatic change came to Park Street Church missions. The new pastor, Harold Ockenga, held a missions conference, beginning an annual tradition that continues to this day. That year the church sent 15 new missionaries overseas; this despite the stirrings of WWII. During the 1940’s there were 119 missionaries, and during the 1950’s there were 96 more. For the first time missionaries were sent to work under missions other than the ABCFM, many of them with “faith missions” such as Sudan Interior Mission and Overseas Missionary Fellowship, which proliferated in this period. They worked in all continents and introduced the church to medical missions, radio broadcasting, literature ministries, theological education, ministry to children and college students, and Bible translation, in addition to evangelism and church planting. Many of these new missionaries had seen service in WWII or the Korean War. They brought a fervent discipline and a broad vision for the world to their work, and served in the vigor of American post-war expansion.

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Typical of these new missionaries was Richard Webster who worked in Taiwan from 1947-1996. Working with The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) he and Lucille started a student ministry in Taiwan universities. In 1963 Lucille died and Richard married Florence. Their work expanded to church planting in rural parts of Taiwan, at that time almost untouched by the gospel. In almost 50 years of ministry they saw the church in Taiwan grow tremendously, and planted a vision for missions in these churches.

In the 1940's Park Street Church gave full financial support to each new missionary. Over the years, as the church supported an increasing number of missionaries, this slowly changed, and it was expected that missionaries would find their support from a number of churches. The dramatic growth of the 1940's and 50's did not continue, but the church continued to commission substantial numbers of new missionaries (38 in the 60's, 29 in the 70's, 31 in the 80's, 26 in the 90's). In 1997 the church returned to a policy of giving full financial support to their long-term missionaries. Missionaries were considered to be part of the staff of the church, and were asked to spend their furlough time living in Boston and working at the church.

W.J. Hanna
2016

DID YOU KNOW

- Park Street Church missionaries have worked in 98 different countries. Twenty-four missionaries have served in India. Other countries that have received many missionaries are China, Haiti, Nigeria and Japan.
- Elias and Martha Riggs, the longest-serving Park Street Church missionaries, were in Constantinople for 69 years, from 1832 to 1901, doing evangelism and Bible translation work. Elias translated the Bible into Bulgarian and Armenian.
- In the two centuries of work, 28 PSC missionaries have died overseas; eight of those within the first four years of their work.