

sowing & REAPING

ISSUE FOCUS **Function of a Mission Board**

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Suspension Systems and the Home Office

By Dan Baker, Deputee to Australia

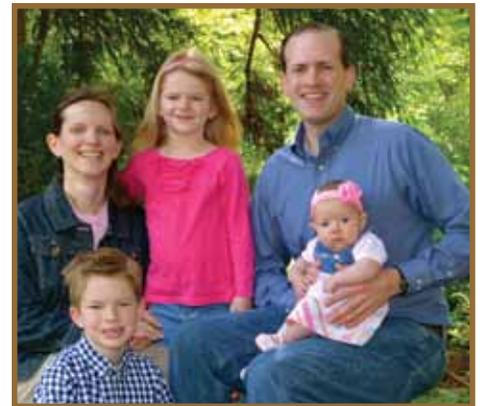
For most deputees, the GFA home office is more valuable than the suspension systems of their deputation vehicles. Yes, one could do deputation without home office support or even a mission board. One could also do deputation in a vehicle without springs, shocks, or struts. But why would you want to subject yourself to such unnecessary trauma? There are many hazards (both physical and spiritual) on deputation, and the home office plays a wonderful role helping missionary deputees both avoid potholes and mitigate damage from road debris.



Dan and Amy Baker have three children: Genevieve, Joshua, and Emma.

For almost every missionary, the first shock of deputation is getting accepted by the mission board. The second shock is the realization that the deputation process resembles the starting and running of a small business or non-profit organization. First, there is “marketing.” How does the deputee find “partners” and approach them about “investing” in a “joint venture”? How does the deputee acquire the right (i.e., biblical) mind-set about presenting his primarily invisible and spiritual “business proposal” to potential “investors,” many of whom have been culturally conditioned to be easily impressed by flashy media presentations filled with earthly images? The “presentation” wheel does not need to be reinvented every time God calls an American to the mission field, but most deputees would be forced to reinvent it without a home office to walk them through this and other deputation start-up issues.

Second, there is bookkeeping. Few deputees start deputation with up-to-date knowledge on the IRS guidelines for determining the tax-deductibility of donations from churches, individuals, family members, etc. Even fewer deputees have accounting software, much less



The Bakers are on deputation for Australia.

a package specifically designed for tax-exempt organizations, their donors, and their receipts. Most deputees also start deputation rather clueless about mileage logs, monthly work-fund reports, and parsonage allowances, but the home office is well-versed in these and a plethora of other financial matters. Because of the home office financial guidance and expertise, the deputee stays compliant with the IRS, the deputee’s tax burden is significantly reduced, all donations are properly accounted for, and the donors’ money stretches much further than it otherwise would.

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Companions in Labor

By Mark Batory, Executive Director of GFA

They came from the churches in Philippi, Corinth, Rome, Berea, Colosse, and other first-century cities. They dedicated themselves to serve Paul in ways that helped him take the Gospel to the world. They labored much in the Lord, helped in Christ, served many, and bestowed much labor on Paul.

Who were these people? Paul's companions in labor: Epaphroditus from Colosse (Phil. 2:25); Phebe from the church in Cencrea (Rom. 16:1–2); Priscilla and Aquila of the Corinthian church (Rom. 16:3); Mary, Urbane, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis from Rome (Rom. 16:6, 9, 12); and Epaphras from Philippi (Col. 1:7) to name a few. He probably had well over twenty such companions in labor working behind the scenes to keep him on the front line of the battle and focused on his task.

The rallying of the collective talents and resources of many different people from different churches served to lift from those early missionaries much of the practical and logistical aspects of their work and allowed them to focus more fully on their Gospel ministry. The Apostle Paul refers to them as his helpers in Christ Jesus (Rom. 16:3), fellow-laborers (Phil. 4:3), companions in labor and fellow soldiers (Phil. 2:25), and fellow servants (Col. 1:7).

Missions today, like missions during the first century, depends on these companions in



Dr. Mark Batory serves as executive director of GFA.



The GFA home office staff handle much of the practical and logistical aspects of missionaries' work, allowing them to focus more fully on the Gospel ministry.

labor. The task of getting missionaries through deputation, situated on foreign soil, and sustained thousands of miles from home can be daunting. Dealing with foreign cultures and governments, economic instability, political dangers, religious opposition and caring for the missionary, his family, and ministry require full-time attention by many hands. While officially organized mission-service organizations or boards cannot be found in Scripture, many of the needs performed by these organizations were done by the many companions in labor during those early years of missionary activity. So what is their biblical function?

Companions in labor help shoulder the spiritual needs of a missionary's ministry. The Gospel ministry is a spiritual work and is sustained through spiritual power and encouragement. Paul exhorted his companions in labor to strive in their prayers for him (Rom. 15:30), to pray for him to open his mouth boldly in sharing the Gospel (Eph. 6:18–19), and to pray for the Word of the Lord to have free course and be glorified (2 Thess. 3:1). Paul expresses confidence in their prayers' accomplishing safe travel: *"But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you"* (Philem. 22). So Paul's companions in labor were a source of faithful prayer.

Paul's companions in labor were also a source of encouragement. Onesiphorus often refreshed

him (2 Tim. 1:16). He mentions his gladness at the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achiacus because they supplied what was lacking and refreshed his spirit (1 Cor. 16:17–18).

Paul's companions also backed him with godly counsel. When Paul and Barnabas needed direction for their ministry, James, Cephas, and John advised them to go to the Gentiles while they went to the Jews (Gal. 2:9–10).

Scripture teaches that companions in labor helped supply practical and logistical needs of a missionary's personal life and ministry. They served as middlemen between the church and missionary, often carrying messages between the two and handling things the church found logistically difficult to accomplish (1 Cor. 16:17–18; Phil. 2:25, 30).

They assisted in the procurement of their needs for their travels and living. Epaphroditus ministered to Paul's wants (Phil. 2:25); the brethren at Ptolemais met the physical needs of an overnight stay when Paul and his coworkers arrived in town (Acts 21:7); and *"many persons"* gave of their means to supply Paul and his coworkers with gifts (2 Cor. 1:11).

Scripture records how **Paul's companions in labor provided accountability for the money given to missionaries and their ministry.** Paul tells of sending Titus and another brother so that *"...no man should blame us in this abundance which is*

continued on the back



Partnering for Effective Missions

By Marshall Fant, Pastor of Harvest Baptist Church

My cell phone rang, pulling me out of a deep sleep. Getting a call in the middle of the night can be troubling, and this time was no exception. The voice on the other end was a missionary sent by our church to the opposite side of the world. His voice was shaking as he recounted his situation: a disgruntled national who had attended his church was at his home and had threatened his life. The missionary's wife and children were locked in their home for safety. What should he do?

I was relieved to know that our missionary had already called his mission board to inform them of the crisis. Knowing his board's commitment



Mrs. Gretchen Fant taught the ladies with Carol Loescher interpreting.

to be our partner in ministry, I could rest in the assurance that help was on the way. Not surprisingly, by morning the mission board had already taken action. They had counseled with other missionaries in the same region in an attempt to determine a strategy that was both biblical and culturally appropriate. After conferring with other board members, they recommended an immediate solution to insure the safety of the missionary, as well as a long-term plan to prevent the crisis from recurring.

Partners in Identifying Needy Fields

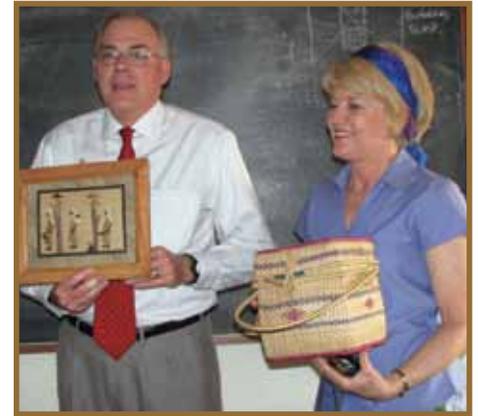
Mission boards have proved themselves again and again to be invaluable to missionaries as well as to me, the sending pastor. In addition to solving problems, they assist in other areas with which I as a pastor could not help due to my limited time or my lack of understanding of different cultures. To start, they can help young men and women who have just been called by God to be missionaries. What does a missionary do when he knows he has been called by God but is unsure about where he should serve? The mission board partners with the church to help potential missionaries identify needy fields. Mission boards know their missionaries and which fields have the greatest needs. They can be instrumental in matching a person's personality and skill set to an area or group of other missionaries.

Partners in Preparing for the Field

Once a missionary selects his field, the mission board partners with the church to prepare him for his ministry. They provide training to educate him on the culture of the people. They advise him on his financial needs. Their goal is to provide him with anything he might need to succeed in his ministry.

Partners in Solving Conflict

But a mission board's ministry does not end when the missionary arrives at his field of service. Often those who have served for years on the field find that they encounter conflict, and they need assistance. There may be conflicts with nationals or even with their fellow missionaries. Physical and financial problems, complicated by a different culture, can be



Pastor Marshall Fant and his wife Gretchen visited Cameroon to spend time with the Loeschers and Ellen Doyle, missionaries Harvest Baptist Church supports.

overwhelming. A mission board's involvement is crucial: will the ministry continue to move forward, or will the missionary give up and go home in defeat?

When our missionary called my cell phone that night, I am sure he was comforted to hear the voice of his pastor. I am also confident it encouraged him to pray with me. But he and I are both thankful for his mission board, our partner in the ministry, that offered godly, culturally appropriate solutions that helped to keep him safely ministering on the field. ➡



Pastor Marshall Fant and his wife Gretchen visited GFA missionary Ellen Doyle in Cameroon.

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Third, there is “business” coaching. While deputees usually confer first with their sending pastors and churches on most issues, questions arise on deputation that are outside the experience and expertise of most state-side pastors. In the providence of God, GFA has directors who have labored for various lengths of time in a variety of continents and cultures. The directors’ diverse, firsthand experiences of deputation and overseas ministry, combined with their deep Bible knowledge and maturity in the faith, put them in a unique position to counsel deputees. The wisdom of godly directors is the invaluable asset of the home office. A deputee can always hire an accountant and read a couple thousand pages of missiology manuals. But he cannot buy, say, years’ worth of African ministry experience on the open market. Neither can he easily purchase the insight derived from four terms of missionary trauma and triumph in the Far East. Through the Holy Spirit’s enabling, those commodities were paid for with the blood, sweat, toil, and prayers of the veterans sitting in the directors’ chairs. For the price of a humble phone call or a simple e-mail, the GFA home office daily imparts wisdom, encouragement, and expertise to GFA deputees. As a result, GFA deputees sidestep many potential setbacks in their pre-field ministries. ➤



GFA directors Mark Batory, Dale Crawford, and Alan Patterson served in Mexico, Cameroon, and Japan respectively for a total of 25 years.

➤ Companions in Labor, p. 2

administered by us: Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:20–21).

Though these companions in labor do not take the role of the local church or diminish its importance, Paul admonished believers to “...therefore acknowledge ye them that are such” (1 Cor. 16:18) and to “...hold such in reputation” (Phil. 2:29). GFA considers itself as a modern day companion in labor to the missionaries it serves. We strive to maintain a close working relationship with local churches and the messengers that go forth from them to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. ➤

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