

Diagnose Your Church's Health

Is the Church Both Locally and Globally Minded?

By Chuck Lawless

This article is the sixth in a series dealing with questions to ask when consulting with a church. Previous questions were:

- “Is the church’s teaching based on the Bible?”
- “Is the church a praying church?”
- “Is the church driven by a Great Commission focus?”
- “Is the church reaching non-believers?”
- “Is the church keeping new believers who join?”

This month’s question seeks to determine if the church is a “glocal” church, a term popularized in Christian circles by author Bob Roberts. The term is defined in different ways, but I use the term here to refer to a church that recognizes its responsibility to reach its local community while simultaneously accepting its mandate to reach the people groups of the world (Matt. 28:18-20).

Fulfilling both of these callings is never easy. In some cases, churches focus solely on their local community, as if the world beyond their immediate environment does not matter. After all, “missionaries are called to do *that* work.” In other cases, churches emphasize international missions so much that local needs go unmet. The stories of missions are powerful and captivating, but “the dirty work of ministry in our city is not exciting.” The healthy church, however, strives to be faithful to each of these mandates.

Here are a few ways to determine if the church is committed to both local and global outreach:

1. *Review the church’s calendar of outreach events.* If a church schedules an annual international mission trip, but plans no local or North American events, might that latter omission reflect a lack of balance? Or, what might you determine if the church plans local outreach, but no missions studies or trips? Look to see if the church’s short-term and long-term plans reflect a commitment to be an Acts 1:8 church—committed to outreach in its Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Anything less demands the consultant’s critique.
2. *Examine the church’s budget.* The budget usually says something about a church’s priorities. Is there a specific line item for international missions? for local outreach? Many churches have a budget line for international missions (or at least an annual offering for missions)—that is, designated dollars that typically support missionaries and/or underwrite mission trips—while “everything else” in the budget is assumed to support local outreach. Much of the remaining budget does indeed support local outreach, but the strongest churches have specific line items dedicated to intentional local outreach. For example, is there a budget for evangelism training? for servant evangelism projects in the community? for outreach among the needy and homeless? for training deacons/elders/teachers to do outreach and discipleship?

3. *Determine if the church offers specific studies reflecting a local and global perspective.* Several churches with whom I have consulted offer annual churchwide mission studies on a North American and/or international context. Hence, everyone from children to senior adults learns more about the world we are called to reach—and more members are thus intentionally involved in local and global mission endeavors. Missions education should lead to a church to be more globally minded.
4. *More specifically, analyze the church's membership class materials.* Members are usually most excited to learn about the church's vision and direction *when they first join the church.* If so, the church committed to local and global outreach must cast that vision in the membership class. New members should quickly learn about the opportunities and privileges of influencing the world for Christ through the church's outreach efforts.
5. *Review the percentage of attenders involved in local and global outreach.* Determining the latter is usually easier, simply by noting the number of attenders participating in international mission trips, supporting international missionaries via prayer, and/or undergirding missions with financial support. Means to evaluate the former percentage might include noting:
 - the number of attenders involved in a scheduled weekly or monthly outreach program
 - the number intentionally trained to do personal evangelism
 - the number praying specifically for non-believers
 - the number who share their faith at least monthly
- While we do not assume that a healthy church must be perfectly balanced in these percentages, both percentages should be continually growing as new members are encouraged to join the church's glocal efforts.
6. *Ask church leaders about people groups represented in the local area.* If you have conducted a demographic study of the region, what people groups are represented in the church's ministry area? Are church leaders aware of the various groups? If not, help them to understand that ministry that ultimately might affect the world can often take place in the shadow of the church's building. The world really has come to North America.
7. *Review the church's prayer list.* Is the church praying for non-believers by name? Are they praying for local ministries? for missionaries serving throughout North America? for missionaries serving throughout the world? Because a prayer list often reflects a church's passions, consultants can learn much by this simple exercise.

Of course, the best consultants must themselves be locally and globally-minded. Church leaders who might review your life should see that your call to be "glocal" is not just a consultant's strategy; rather, it must be a reflection of your own heart. That may be the starting point for you.