



Ready...

Set...

GO team!

Find out how a church in California revitalized their commitment to missions

Dawn Kruger

“We are clear in our purpose, more intentional and strategic. We are less *inward-* and more *outward-* focused. We ‘own’ the fact that the Great Commission is the responsibility of the local church. We have become a praying church and, interestingly enough, the giving has skyrocketed in all areas of church life.”

Does this sound like a church from a book entitled, *In Your Dreams*? Actually, it is a direct quote from Carl Sweatman, Cross Cultural Outreach Administrator for Golden Hills Community Church in Brentwood, California. But five years ago, Carl wouldn’t have described the church this way. In fact, Carl said the mission work of the church five years ago consisted of a committee of six volunteers meeting in a home, deciding where to send the “missions piece” of the budget pie.

So what caused the dramatic change? The same thing

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that has turned other churches upside down in mission zeal—focusing on an unreached people group. “God has shown me the absolute need for this group to know Him, and He has given me a deep love for a certain people and country. As I make repeated trips to this country, I see it not as desolate and forsaken but full of life and having a beauty that is spectacular,” says Global Outreach Pastor Tom Jenkins.

In sharpening their focus on one unreached people group, worldwide mission has penetrated the hearts of the people at GHCC. Rather than being a broad concept, too big to grasp (reaching the whole world), mission has now become something tangible (reaching this group.) Missions is real; it has a face and a specific need that can be met. It is people, not a program.

For the people at Golden Hills Community Church, change began in 1995 when an associate pastor attended a conference about the least Christian regions of the world. He inspired the church to participate in the “Pray Through the Window II” movement. Sweatman says, “Those prayer journeys served to enroll each of us in God’s advocacy school for the nations, which meant that we would never be the same again.”

With fresh inspiration and insight the mission committee attended an ACMC conference where workshops taught them the importance of clearly written purpose and vision statements. Willing to start over, the committee sat down with a blank sheet of paper and struggled to



In partnership—Golden Hills Community Church provided the funds to repair a medical dispensary in Chad (photo on p. 33).

A prayer group (left) sends off a team to establish relationships with mission organizations like Wycliffe who work in the same area.

write each word. “We remember the day we couldn’t define the word ‘missions,’ so we sat around the speaker phone and asked our ACMC director for help in learning how missions was different from evangelism,” Carl said.

A year later a team of people from the church attended the Antioch Network Conference to learn more about how a local church can be used of God to bless an unreached people group. There they were impressed with the need to focus and to establish criteria for selecting such a group; God led them to concentrate on Africa. They began collecting profiles of unreached people

groups and eventually committed themselves to focusing on one.

The mission committee changed its name to the Global Outreach Team, which they soon shortened to the GO Team!

Since December 1977 the church has sent teams of people to Africa once or twice a year, establishing good relationships with mission organizations, the government and the local people. The church provided funds to restore a medical dispensary and to conduct a linguistic survey. GHCC also began giving toward the work of a young Wycliffe family with the hope that one day the Bible could be translated into the language of these people.

But GHCC’s involvement goes beyond finances. The staff has worked hard to include mission education into Sunday school classes, care groups, sermons and prayer meetings—virtually every aspect of church life. The result? Pastor Larry Adams says: “It has heightened awareness of God’s love for all peoples and has ignited an interest in our people to be involved.” Tom Jenkins adds, “As missions has come into focus, the church body has taken a giant growth step spiritually. The most dramatic has been in financial giving and in the number of individuals and couples coming forth to serve in cross-cultural mission.”

Carl Sweatman sums it up this way. “Being an instrument of God’s blessing to an unreached people group has provided our church with an ultimate reason to exist—to worship our Lord in such a way that we carry out what is on His heart. His desire is to display His glory for the enjoyment of the redeemed from every ‘tongue, tribe, people, language and nation.’”

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The Impact of Perspectives

The Perspectives course offered by the U.S. Center for World Mission has had a significant impact on the church presented in this story. Golden Hills has hosted Perspectives for the benefit of its own members and others. Here is what one leader at Golden Hills had to say:

“The impact of Perspectives at GHCC actually began well ahead of it actually coming to our facility. It helped to educate our key people in leadership of the ‘GO Team’ and enhanced their vision. After bringing the course to GHCC in 2000, we have had several people in the process of disconnecting from their present lifestyle in order to ‘go’. Some of these individuals had a calling and were moving through the process but Perspectives either enhanced the experience or got it started.”

Notice from the list on pages 38-39 that Brentwood is the site for one of 120 Perspectives classes anticipated in the USA and Canada during January-May 2002. Is Perspectives happening in your area?