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# The CAN MAKE A KINGDOM DIFFERENCE Church

**EXAGO**  
Equipping Kingdom Workers  
To Survive & Thrive

PRINCIPLES THAT BETTER ENGAGE THE LOCAL CHURCH IN  
PARTNERING WITH GREAT COMMISSION WORKERS



# How Can Local Churches Partner Well With Kingdom Workers?

Regardless of denominational affiliation or lack thereof, many local churches are often left with a “make it up as they go along” approach when it comes to supporting kingdom workers. This leads to various scenarios, many of which are less than ideal conditions for cultivating long-term, fruitful partnerships. Over an eight year period, the author personally interacted with well over 10,000 kingdom workers while regularly discussing this topic. The discussion repeatedly brought high interaction – as the role local churches play in missions work is desired, yet often confusing to many. Scripture and the feedback from these interactions highly influenced this document.

There are many different terms used to describe those who tend to be missional, apostolic, and focused on Great Commission work. For clarity, we will use the term KW to broadly refer to “kingdom workers” as people who have a clear vision for vocationally serving the Lord for the sake of the Gospel, regardless of their nationality or global mailing address.

This could cover anyone from a KW serving refugees from remote areas of Africa, to a KW graphic designer working with a Bible translation team in an office in South Asia, to a local KW serving the community of people struggling with chemical dependency and/or homelessness in the same region or city as their "sending church" in North America. In each case, the KW has purpose, direction, and real work to do in the name of Jesus Christ. Their prayer and financial needs are supported by other believers individually and collectively by church congregations, and their eternity-focused work is worth actual wages as evidenced in 1 Corinthians 9:1-12.

We believe it is part of God's strategic plan for churches to engage in a structure that "partners with," such as what we see modeled in \*Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. He expressly mentions in Philippians chapter 1, verse 5 that he was "thankful for their partnership in the Gospel." There was a relationship which included prayer and financial support (note he appears to have stopped tent-making at this time).

The primary goal of this document is to suggest a "how" that local church congregations, regardless of denomination, location, or size, might go about partnering well with KWs - and see a great eternal "Return on Investment," aka ROI.



## Common Ditches of Local Church Partnership

There are many different ways that churches can support KWs. Yet despite clear inadequacies, the following models might be two of the most commonly seen problems, or rather "ditches", that many churches unintentionally fall into. Though intended to be a blessing, unfortunately, the following rhythms and procedures can cause significant and problematic results.



## The High Control Ditch / Demanding Expectations

### Communication - Too Frequent, Overwhelming

The local church may take a posture similar to that of an employer or surrogate agency, that may appear and/or feel penalizing\* and intrusive to the KW. A tedious amount of communication is required from KWs to remain in good standing with the local church, and thus continually supported. Much time is spent by the KW in a reporting posture. Example: *"For the church to support, you must annually fill out the 17-page application, host our short-term teams at our convenience, and attend our annual missions conference. Meanwhile, our committee must approve your specific budget numbers, and you must sign this position statement and have been baptized at..."*

### Resulting Relationship - Feels Dictatorial, Burdensome to the KW

The local church may unintentionally posture itself as mostly dedicated to rules, procedures, accounting, and paperwork instead of toward relationship, prayer, and empowerment. The list of demands upon the KW grows exponentially, perhaps even into a realm demanding or restricting other outside organizational relationships. At some point, keeping the sending church happy seems like its own part-time job. Instead of freedom, the KW experiences anxiety about unrealistic demands, the possibility of misstepping, and financial support being suddenly canceled.

*\*A bigger topic is at play, but more reading is suggested via Sam Metcalf's book, "Beyond the Local Church."*

## The Indifference Ditch / Zero Expectations

### Communication - Little to None

Example: Calls, texts, and emails from the KW to the church are not returned. Meanwhile, no one initiates or reaches out to the KW on a personal level. Prayer is sparse.

### Resulting Relationship - Feels Lonely, Distant to the KW

Other than perhaps a brief interview to get things started, a trickle of financial support flows, but the communication largely ends. Though the KW appreciates the funds, there is no sense of relationship or prayer. There isn't a trusted contact to call if a crisis or other burdensome challenge occurs. It's a lifeless interaction that doesn't feel any warmer than visiting a bank ATM to check the balance. The KW experiences anxiety about isolation, the possibility of being forgotten, and financial support being limited or eventually canceled.



# Solid Ground Goal: The ABCs of Reinventing Healthy Engagement

For the sake of the kingdom, it would be wise to avoid the ditches and seek the solid ground of healthy engagement that really does feel like partnership. When done together, the following “ABC”s are a healthier model of great partnership in the Gospel.

## Advocacy

Increasingly, local churches are realizing that the institutional approach of simply having a committee is often lacking. Though some governance is necessary, they seek to find the right advocate to personally assign to each KW that the church supports. This person commits to closely keeping up with their assigned KW or KWs in a variety of ways, such as regular prayer, reading all the newsletters, and having occasional but regular 1-1 interactions. They might occasionally visit the KW on the mission field with a goal of encouragement and friendship. Typically each advocate is only doing this for 1 or 2 KWs, and the church only considers adding another KW to their partnership if there is a clear-cut advocate prepared to be the bridge in the relationship with the potential new supported KW. Each advocate is a “de facto” part of the mission committee which meets quarterly. They are able to speak up on behalf of the KW when there are questions regarding prayer, finances, vision/mission, etc. Meanwhile, prayer updates may be submitted for the church bulletin or email, and the committee will collectively provide summary updates to the church board/governance.

**Critical step:** Great care needs to go into picking an advocate. The potential advocate and the KW need to already have a good relationship. The result is greatly improved communication with the KW, a relevant and ongoing organizational relationship, and an easier pathway for questions regarding the KW’s prayer needs, time, and focus.

**Watch Out For:** If a potential advocate is unwilling or unable to put “skin in the game” with both the local church and the KW... meaning investing their own prayer and finances to both... they probably aren’t a good fit to be an advocate. Advocates shouldn’t just be spending the church’s money on missions like a budget manager. Rather, they are more likely to be truly invested if they care for the KW and personally partner with them separately from their normal offerings to the local church.

## Bucks!

*(aka financial partnership)*

The most felt need of KWs is the same thing they feel embarrassed or judged to speak about -- money. They didn’t get into vocational Great Commission work to chase the dollars, yet they have tangible needs for their family and to be setting aside funds for the future, as well as for the expenses for the work that they do. Show the KW the money, and don’t keep them guessing as to if - or when - or how the finances will arrive!

### 4 great ways to approach the finances:

- Financially support the KW in a consistent monthly amount that is part of the church’s normal budget (example: \$300-\$500 monthly).
- Encourage parishioners to consider partnering with missionaries in addition to (not in replacement of) their normal offerings.
- Don’t just think it could happen, but instead plan for occasional over-and-above gifts towards special needs (or simply to be a blessing with an end-of-year gift).

- Discourage the KW from rushing to the mission field when their full partnership team is not yet built.

**Critical steps:** Does the church have a financial and relational goal? After setting some short clear goals, some churches have realized that their partnership with KWs has been low or in a permanent “maybe next year” status. What if a first fruits percentage of all offerings received, were earmarked to go towards KWs? A good rule of thumb might be “partner generously while you engage relationally.”

**Watch Out For:** There may be some who won't say it clearly, but they want to keep KWs poor. Others might insist that KWs can only receive budget funds, or only receive funds from parishioners, but not both. Avoid these fallacies rooted in fear that God won't be able to provide enough for all.

Rather, use missions as an opportunity to educate the congregation on the joy of giving to the local church AND towards missions. Never reduce the committed partnership amount based on minor offering fluctuations or building campaigns.

## Communication

- Pray for the KWs, and if they don't send their prayer needs monthly, require at least 1 to be shared. They might not initially believe that you really are praying. Prove them wrong!
- Be sure that the advocate is checking in on KWs' mental, spiritual, and physical health on a regular basis. Encourage the KW to take their furlough and prioritize their family/marriage. Remember, they are NOT superheroes, they are people with needs.
- Do KWs the honor of being clear about the church's financial partnership headed their way and the prayer that is occurring. Don't leave them guessing.

- If you would like them to preach or attend a missions-focused event with the church, invite them long in advance. Don't expect them to always be available, they do have other responsibilities! Chances are they will want to come, but they might not have the additional travel finances set aside to make it happen, so keep that in mind.
- If the KW is going to visit, have a church representative gifted in hosting spearhead their travel needs. Make them want to come back by providing comfortable and private accommodations, transportation, food, and a calm schedule. Don't wear them out!
- If you would like the KW to possibly host a short-term mission trip, first get their sense as to how that might work before making plans and announcements. Listen, don't demand. It just might not work. It might work GREAT!
- Expect updates. A true partnership means that the church is not just praying and giving, but they are learning about the eternal ROI. How are lives being changed?
- Celebrate them! Anniversary and birthday cards mean a lot to KWs, especially for their children. Maybe gift a married couple an in-country “weekend away.” Be creative. Surprise them with honor and generosity.



# Summary.

Consider improving your church's mission plan and make a lasting impact on the world! Healthy, intentional partnerships are essential for advancing the work of the Great Commission and benefitting everyone involved. By moving towards a more holistic approach, you can show genuine care for kingdom workers and provide prayer and financial support that truly makes a difference and increases the likelihood that they will thrive for the long haul.

# What's Next?

Don't settle for the common "ditches" of missional support - take purposeful steps to build long-term partnerships that will change lives for generations. If you desire professional consulting to help your church develop a more strategic plan for your combined local and global missional efforts, contact Exago and let us guide you toward success. Your church can make a real difference - take action today!



## **Aaron J. Babyar | CEO and Founder of Exago**

Aaron has served in formal ministry in some capacity since 1990. He spent many years in youth ministry, worked as an Adjunct Professor, and helped plant two churches before launching Exago. He has trained or coached thousands of kingdom workers in biblical support raising. He loves serving with Exago, whether through public speaking, or coaching Executive Directors, Pastors, or KWs who work in the mission field.

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