The Value of Long-Term Missions to the Local Church
by Gordon Hogan

Inward looking has its value when we do self-examination for the purpose of improving, however, inwardness in the local congregation is suffocating. The heartbeat of the church is carrying out the instructions of Jesus to “... Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” (Mark 16:15). For this to become a reality each individual disciple of Christ, and the church collectively must feel driven to fulfill the command of Jesus. Each child of God makes up, “… an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9). Carl Mitchell has aptly written in his yet unpublished book, World Christian, “The priesthood of all believers is the solution. . .the only possible solution...to the problem of world evangelism (1 Peter 2:1-12). If the Church is not rescued from the idea that a small group of highly trained experts are to do the work of the Church, it will never be able to fulfill the Lord's "Great Commission." As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus, church growth can only occur when each body part fulfills its function (Ephesians 4:16). A "paraplegic" church will not be adequate to the task!

The local church and her missionaries, whether domestic or foreign, are in partnership in the greatest work on earth.

Thirty-five years ago my wife, our three children and I traveled to Pakistan under the sponsorship of the church in Pinellas Park, Florida. I had served that church as a deacon, we knew one another and there was a great deal of understanding regarding finances and other circumstances. He says that because the home church was involved in long term missions awareness of a lost world encouraged more young people to go than they could support. What a wonderful problem.

Van Tate, Professor of Bible at Harding University and former long tens missionary to Kenya lists the following benefits to the home church that sponsored and supported he and his family.

1. The have to know us.
2. The home church had a strong commitment because the leaders planned the program, selected the field along with the missionaries, and fully supported us.
3. He and his family came back for their first furlough after four years and had ample time to renew friendships with the members of the home church.
4. So close had he become with a number of the members of the home church that until this day, many years later they have close friends in that congregation. The missions committee still seeks his input on their planning, especially for Kenya.

The Apostle Paul urged the church at Corinth and, by extension the church today to "... be steadfast, unmoving, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Without question the local church reaps enormous benefit from long-term missions.

Bible references from American Standard Version
Quotation from the unpublished manuscript World Christian by Carl Mitchell (see below).

Gordon Hogan was a missionary to Asia for 35 years. Presently he is a missionary-in-residence at Harding University, Searcy, Arkansas.
Excerpts from World Christian, by Carl Mitchell.

As partners, together with God, we saw the first churches of Christ come into existence in that country. The home church shared our joys, sorrows, successes and failures. The membership became more aware of the needs of the whole world, they prayed for us and the people of Pakistan, contributions at home increased and the spirit of unselfishness prevailed. Me served under their sponsorship eight years. They have continued their interest in Pakistan through all these years.

In 1966 we moved to Singapore under the sponsorship of the Northside church of Christ, Et. Petersburg, Florida and that relationship continues --- twenty-seven wonderful years and still counting. I believe their relationship with the work we share has helped to give the congregation a clearer perception of the world. Together we have seen our children grow to adulthood, we have communicated on a personal level with members of the local church. Because of the trust relationship I have been given the freedom to preach and teach all over Asia, Australia, Hew Zealand and many other parts of the world.

Young people growing up in our sponsoring churches have been made more aware of their responsibility to be personally involved in world evangelism.

Both sponsors made it possible for two different deacons and their wives to join us in the work for an entire year. One of our elders and his wife visited and worked with us on four different occasions. Their return to the local church after such experiences strengthened the home church resolve.

The fact that long term missions strengthens the local church is further confirmed by Bill Richardson, Professor of Bible, Harding University, and former missionary in Latin America. He and his family served under the sponsorship of a good church in Austin, Texas for fifteen years. Bill tells of the prayer bond, the letters, calls and visits that connected he and the home church. When he and his family visited the home church there was a sense of being home because of the longstanding relationship. Bill felt the sense of partnership no matter where they were located.