



July 2019

## **Are your assumptions correct about North American ministry?**

*This month's Serve was written by Mike Vanek. Mike and his wife, Sherri, serve at Faith Baptist Church and Community Center in inner-city Cleveland.*

While the Great Commission is the command we follow in any full-time missions endeavor, it's important to be prepared for common false assumptions that can affect the deputation and ministry process for missionaries at any level of service in North America.



***First assumption: It is easier to raise support for North American fields of service.***

Many people believe that North America has been completely evangelized.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In inner-city Cleveland, for example, churches are on every corner (many of them Baptist in name). However, you'd be hard pressed to find more than one or two that preach the gospel. The fact is, North America has not been *effectively* evangelized. My advice for appointees to North America? Develop and share with churches not only the urgent need but also a ministry plan that conveys specific, concrete, and realistic things you will do to grow your church plant. We have received a very positive reception to our *Jobs for Life* program. It is a program that encourages employment and teaches work as a form of worship. We have seen church growth (in both number and depth) as an outcome of this specific ministry.

***Second assumption: The actual work of missions is easier on North American fields of service.***

Ministry has its special difficulties in any place; however, one of my missionary colleagues who previously served in South America found some shocking differences in working with Brazilian children vs. inner-city Cleveland children. While the Brazilian children were excitedly interested in hearing about Jesus and were respectful and compliant overall, the inner-city Cleveland children tend to be more challenging behaviorally, socially, and spiritually. Whether combatting modern idolatries, challenging false beliefs, or confronting post-modern philosophies, every North American ministry field has ministry challenges too.



***Third assumption: Everyone in North America has heard the gospel message.***

Recently, another missionary colleague was teaching a Sunday school class when a young boy raised his hand and asked, “Who is Jesus?” How many more in North America have never heard? It’s hard to tell. The fact remains ... there is still much more mission work to do in North America. I remember, as a child, on the inside doorpost of our church building was a sign that read: “You are now entering the mission field.” On the other side of that door was Elyria, Ohio...not a foreign field in the traditional sense but very much so in a figurative sense. North America needs to be reached for Christ. So do the foreign fields. Jesus didn’t discriminate between domestic and foreign missions. Neither should we. Go where He calls you, wherever that is, and serve Him with zeal and passion!

Mike Vanek

Baptist Mid-Missions missionary in Cleveland, OH

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