



# COMPLETE GUIDE TO A COMMISSIONING SERVICE

When a brand-new ship is ready to set sail, it is “commissioned.” The event is arranged by the ship’s builders and shareholders, and serves as a public declaration that the vessel is seaworthy and ready for voyage. The commissioning is the launching point of the ship’s active service.

**When a brand-new missionary is being deployed for service abroad, it is also important that they be commissioned.** A commissioning service is an important time for both a missionary and his or her sending church. It can be a stand alone service, or a part of a Sunday morning worship time, but every commissioning service should aim to:

- ▶ Affirm missionary’s calling to full time service
- ▶ Cement church’s commitment to engage in this missionary’s ministry
- ▶ Lead congregation in rejoicing and thanksgiving for what God has done and will do
- ▶ Help church and missionary say goodbye to one another well

Commissioning services can vary widely from church to church, but accomplishing these four goals can help make the service meaningful both for your congregation and the missionary.

## LEGAL PURPOSE

A commissioning service, and specifically a commissioning certificate, is also important for legal purposes. Long-term missionaries are recognized by the IRS as self-employed ministers, so a record of a church’s commissioning is required to be on file so the missionary can participate in certain tax provisions. Because of this, most agencies like TEAM ask each sending church to print the commissioning certificate (provided at the end of this packet) and submit a signed copy to keep on file.

## ROLES

There are likely a lot of people from your church who have poured into these missionaries as they’ve sought God in their calling to global ministry, and the commissioning service can be a great



place to include those people. There are also some representatives from your church you would probably like to involve. Here are the roles of the main people involved in a commissioning service:

**Pastor:** Publicly affirm both the missionary and the church's calling to the work missionaries will be doing

**Missionaries:** Engage the congregation in global missions by being their hands and feet on the mission field

**Elders/Deacons:** Represent the church in laying hands on the missionary/missionaries

**Congregation:** Commit to support of, prayer for, and connection to the missionary and their work

**Agency Representative:** If available, many agencies would have representatives interested in attending or participating in the service.

## ELEMENTS

### Music

Many commissioning services include music as a way to praise God for what he's doing in the lives of the missionaries. It can be helpful to ask the missionary his or her favorite worship songs; this can help make the service personal.

### Scripture Reading

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible points us to the mission and heart of God. Here are just a few passages you could use:

- ▶ [Exodus 3](#)
- ▶ [Psalm 107](#)
- ▶ [Isaiah 6](#)
- ▶ [Matthew 28:19-20](#)
- ▶ [Luke 10:1-2](#)
- ▶ [Acts 1:6-11](#)
- ▶ [Romans 10](#)

### Sharing about the Missionary and their Ministry

You may be from a small church where everyone knows one another, or a large church where many members have not met the missionary. No matter the size, it is important to introduce the missionary and share about the work God has called them to. There are many ways you could do this, and we encourage you to find a method of sharing that makes sense for the missionary's gifting and your congregation. Some churches record a video of the missionaries,



some may interview a missionary on stage, and still others might want the missionary to share their story on stage.

### Affirming the Call

Why is your church enthusiastic about sending these missionaries? It is helpful for a representative of the church, like the pastor, elder, or missions chair, to encourage the missionary and the congregation by sharing what gifts, passions, and experience you have seen in the missionary that have equipped them for this ministry. As you talk about the qualities you see in the missionaries, share, too, about why the particular work they will be doing is exciting to the congregation.

### Charge

The charge of the commissioning service is the point in time where, responsively, the congregation declares they will support and care for the missionaries, and where the missionaries declare they will be the hands and feet of the church in the field. Many times this occurs through a responsive reading.

### Prayer

Missions work is a battlefield, and missionaries will need your prayers throughout their time on and off the field: as they say goodbye to their family and friends, as they begin to learn language, as they meet people seeking the Lord and as new churches form and grow. The commissioning service is a great time to both publicly pray and commit to continued prayer for the missionaries and their work.

## TIPS

- ▶ **Make it personal.** Whether the commissioning is ten minutes in a longer service, or on its own, ask the missionaries to speak into the program as much as possible by picking songs, Scripture readings, or inviting important people in their lives to join the service as participants.
- ▶ **Involve the whole church.** By commissioning these missionaries, the whole church is making a commitment to engage in this ministry, so it is helpful to have them involved in the program. For example, they could participate through a congregational reading, lay hands in prayer, or people from different ministries could share about the gifts of the missionaries.
- ▶ **Host a reception.** Both the missionary and members of the congregation will want to personally say their final goodbyes and offer encouragement face-to-face. Consider holding a post-commissioning reception, which is usually held at the church directly after the commissioning service. This can be anything from a casual, informal time to say goodbye in the lobby to a good old-fashioned potluck – whatever fits your occasion!
- ▶ **Raise an Ebenezer.** In the Bible, an Ebenezer was a stone that was set upright as a memo-



rial after the Lord had done a mighty act on behalf of his people (1 Samuel 7:12). The point of the stone was to be a visual and physical reminder that the hand of God brought them to that place. Find an item to represent the sending of your missionaries, such as a Bible, picture of the congregation, or plaque, and present it to them publicly as a part of the commissioning service to tangibly remind them of the day they were commissioned for service.

## EXAMPLE ORDER OF WORSHIP

[Sojourn Community Church Commissioning Service](#)

[Baptist on Mission Example](#)

[Youth in Mission Example](#)

## RESOURCES

### **Customizable Printables:**

[Commissioning Certificate](#)

### **General Missions Videos:**

[Go Be](#)

[Time Lapse of Christianity's Spread](#)

[The Great Commission for Kids](#)

### **TEAM Videos:**

[History of TEAM](#)

[TEAM: How We Serve](#)

[Ministry Area Specific Videos](#)