



[www.ixotrips.info](http://www.ixotrips.info)

## The Finding Faithful Men Project

Gary & Linda Johnson tel. 334 224-2756

[garyjohnson63@gmail.com](mailto:garyjohnson63@gmail.com)

Dear Partners in the Gospel,

I am one of your missionaries that does not currently have his 'boots on the ground' on foreign soil. I am currently residing with my family in Montgomery, Alabama. I am asked how I do mission work from America. Though we are not currently living in a foreign country, As a PCA ordained minister and your missionary, I have a call from the Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley and assigned to International Xchange Organization for ministry in a large swath of Europe and in two locations on the African continent. I am the European Coordinator for the "Finding Faithful Men Project"



The effort to start a presbytery in Sweden allowed me to meet European pastors and leaders of several Reformed denominations the Free Church of Scotland, Dutch Reformed (Vrigmaakt), Czech Brethren, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales, the International Presbyterian Church. From there I have met many European nationals asking for help in church planting through sports ministry. God has given me a pastoral, discipleship ministry of young men I met through sport, who are now national leaders.

Because of rapid change in America, coupled with the new technological advances, engagement in the 'global village' is right in front of us. The world has come to our doorstep. Being a missionary does not always mean crossing *geographical* boundaries. I bring 30 years of missionary experience and relationships from my European/African network to continue the ministry I was called to as a young man. This role is not for a new missionary. My years overseas and the fruit it has borne makes it possible for me to have the trust to be a consultant and active participant in mission works around the world. Now that I am engaged on several fronts, one overseas location is not currently a necessity. SKYPE conferencing has made it possible for me to keep regular, free, visual and audio contact with friends and ministry partners around the world, from my laptop computer or my smartphone! I now direct dial anyone I need to call in the world at minimal cost. I keep teleconferencing 'office hours' that range from 5:00-7:00 AM for European 'lunch meetings', to midnight 'breakfast conversations'. The biggest effort now is staying alert and remembering the time zone differences! Moreover, by bringing foreign exchange students to Montgomery, I meet the mission field every day. I see a 17 year old Polish trainee every morning and evening...because he lives in my home!

The natural development of my role for our American missionaries and Professional Partners (Tentmakers) has become much like an MTW regional director where, the location is less important than the relationships and experience gained over the years. My daily work is more project-based than hourly based. Current examples of projects that I am consulting in include a sports ministry complex proposal in **České Budějovice**, Czech Republic, available land for a baseball field/church planting project in **Lesznowola**- south of Warsaw, Poland, The Deggendorf Dragons baseball project in **Bavaria, Germany**, the FFM sport ministry in **Illorin Kwara State Nigeria**, and a new partnership with an old friend Bles Kemp in **Stellanbosch, South Africa**, and a church planting project with the Larsons in my former residence in **Gothenburg Sweden**.

**My role with national partners has been as consultant to proposals for new ministry where they must have outside help to achieve their goals.** *My strength lies is in the initiation of new pioneer efforts to blaze a trail and hopefully break ground in new locations with just a handful of resources.* This is risky, uncertain work because we are testing a hypothesis. A sign the we should move forward is that we have located potential future leaders in-country who, in turn, would be able to teach their fellow countrymen (II Timothy 2:2). When we find potential future leaders we organize training opportunities to help them mature. My role is to help ‘fish’, to find them early in their developmental stages - most often in their adolescent years.

## ***Stateside Endeavors for Long-term International Church Planting***

### **1. International ‘Xchange’: Exchange Student Ministry**

I have entered a partnership agreement with Eastwood Christian School (ECS) in Montgomery, Alabama, where the school becomes a training ground for young internationals who come as "Xchange students". Since consulting ECS on acquiring the right to issue the I-20 for F-1 foreign students in 2013, ECS has received students from Sweden, South Africa, China, and now six students from Warsaw, Poland.

**Poland:** I have been engaged in the “Dobry Pasterz” Church of the Good Shepherd Polish Presbyterian Church of Warsaw since I met her national leaders in 1987. I have preached there several times. Over the last few years we have sent mission teams to the Polish church. We have found these potential future leaders, and now is the time to continue to develop them in our Montgomery training base.



IXO has negotiated a partnership with Warsaw Centaury Baseball Club. Last summer we sent two missionaries to help prepare the Poles for America. The club has been granted a plot of land in Lesznowola, south of Warsaw, to build a baseball complex. We aim to also plant a church there as we reach the children of the neighborhood around the field! This is the area where these Polish youth live. These Polish youth are stretched as they leave their family, friends, language, secular/Catholic culture of big city Warsaw for 6 months. They are attending PCA churches with their host families, and are receiving training by me on how to coach children in their respective sports of baseball, basketball, and soccer. We have three Eastwood students and coaches preparing for IXO short-term mission projects.



## 2. Sports Ministry Development:

**Baseball:** I began my mission career in 1984 traveling to Sweden and Eastern Europe with a baseball team. This is the sport I played at a collegiate and professional level (1981-92). Simultaneous to building my European church network, I was making connections with European sports clubs. We infiltrated clubs with Christian athletes, and brought European athletes to America for leadership training. This continues today. For example, this Spring Covenant College graduate Paul Phillips (*pictured right*) and his wife Emily left for Fussen Royal Bavarians Baseball Club. (see [www.royalbavarians.de](http://www.royalbavarians.de)) We have a German church planting partner in southwest Munich who will welcome their presence and potential future ministry together. (see [www.gospelchurchmuenchen.de](http://www.gospelchurchmuenchen.de)) We are again organizing an American youth mission team, the Montgomery Ambassadors ([www.ixotrips.info](http://www.ixotrips.info)), to support our church plant in Neuenburg, Germany ([www.neuenburginternational.com](http://www.neuenburginternational.com)) We sent 3 Covenant College baseball players to Deggendorf Dragons, and a Carson-Newman College player to Czech Republic.



This Spring I organized the Eastwood baseball program, where I have placed a South African, five Poles, and two ‘Swedish’ sons. I have recruited Christian coaches and communicate to parents about goals and practical events. ECS baseball players and coaches have been a part of our mission through baseball since 2010. Three of the Polish youth at ECS are baseball players who met ECS coaches at our evangelistic tournaments in Czech Republic and Germany. At least three ECS baseball coaches and players will take part in our summer ministry in Poland, Czech Republic, and Germany. (see [www.ixotrips.info](http://www.ixotrips.info) )



As in the last four summers, my college-aged sons Daniel and Joel will return to mission in Europe as baseball ambassadors, to teach children, compete with a German club, and join the Swedish Senior National Team. Their long term goal is to infiltrate European baseball and basketball clubs with many Christian missionary-athletes to support church planters. They assist our Professional Associate Daniel Husband in Regensburg/Deggendorf and Rev. Stephen Spanjer in Neuenburg.

Daniel and Joel are a part of the planning with Czech Christian leaders to help build an outreach through baseball in Ceska Budejovice., This ties into to their current Community Development/missions studies at Covenant College, where they study and play college ball.



**Basketball:** This December we received a 17 year old Polish basketball player, Pavel Fic, into our family home for six months of discipleship. His name is Pavel Fic, a believer from Warsaw, who attends ECS. He is currently conducting daily basketball instructional clinics for children in grades 4-6 at ECS. This is the beginning of an ongoing exchange of youth through education/basketball who will be exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in places that need Him. Our son Jan-Mikael will live with Pavel's family for a time this summer, and will attend a basketball camp in Poland July 3-14th.



**Soccer:** I negotiated an agreement between my IXO Brazilian partner Bruno Resende (*pictured right*) and ECS to start a soccer program. Bruno has a futsal training academy in Montgomery. As we equip children with soccer ability we are giving them a skill that can someday go with them to the uttermost parts of the earth as missionaries. We have mission trips to Brazil through Bruno and Briarwood PCA. Bruno has an interest in returning to Brazil with many soccer missionaries with him. *Learn more about Coach Bruno:*



[http://www.readiourneymagazine.com/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=658:bruno-resende-fcm-soccer-club&Itemid=124](http://www.readiourneymagazine.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=658:bruno-resende-fcm-soccer-club&Itemid=124)

### A Typical Day at the Office:

Linda and I are raising 12 children while hosting Pavel, our Polish "Xchange Student". I work on a project basis instead an hourly basis, but when in Montgomery my days typically start 5 or 6:00 AM with office phone hours to Europe. By 7:30 I am driving 10 school-aged children and my laptop computer in our 15 seat van to Eastwood School. I have been provided office space so that I can return to correspondence, study, planning from 8:00 AM. At 09:45 I teach one course in Hermeneutics (Biblical Interpretation) in the Fall, and now English as a Second Language (ESL) for my 6 Polish students. By 11:00 I am back to office work. I give my lunch break and some afternoons to helping with the Eastwood partnership projects.



**Finances:** My endeavors in the ECS partnership build a ministry base and help cover my children's tuition costs. I receive from IXO \$800 in salary plus ordained minister's housing allowance and reimbursement for ministry expenses for full time work. All other support goes toward ministry projects. We are over 50% in our support raising goal. We need your continued support to carry on this call, are looking for new partners. You can even donate online at [www.ixogiving.org](http://www.ixogiving.org)

*My wife Linda, our sons and daughters are "all in" this ministry, I look forward with you to what the LORD will do together with you, as He builds His Church through our call to find "faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (II Timothy 2:2)*