

OVERSEAS MISSION POLICY

At TWCF, we believe that the whole world needs to hear the Gospel and we are therefore committed to supporting the mission of Christ, not only locally and nationally but also internationally. This policy aims to establish a clear sense of direction and momentum for overseas mission support and provide a framework for decision making along with the funding allocated for areas of local and national mission.

We pray that those at TWCF will be energetic and active in their support of global mission. This will be encouraged across the spectrum of our church.

Overseas Mission

1. DISCERNING THE CALL OF GOD

Overseas mission service involves a partnership between:

- An **individual** called by God with the individual's **local church** confirming the call.
- A **mission society** linking workers in an area in fellowship together.
- And/or a **receiving church** who first identified the need in their own area.

The sense of call may begin at any one of these points, but it must spread to all of them if there is to be confirmation that the call is genuinely from God. Our Leadership Team, together with the Missions Support Team (MST), has a responsibility to exercise discernment at each of these points. Our mission in this is to co-operate in God's purposes for transforming people into committed mature followers of Jesus Christ.

A. The Individual: Whom should we send?

Our aim is to send out obviously gifted and faithful people who are already exercising a valuable and fruitful ministry in the life of our church, ideally for at least one year.

Criteria for evaluating an individual's sense of call would include the following:

- A deep personal conviction.
- That their statement of faith would conform to our own doctrinal position.
- A developing vision and spiritual burden.
- Spiritual maturity and stability of character.
- Evidence that God is already using this person in Christian service.
- Ability to accept authority, work with others and be flexible.
- Appropriate training and/or gifting for the post.

B. The Society: With whom should they work?

Our aim is to guide prospective missionaries towards societies in which TWCF has a high level of confidence. For this reason, members considering some form of full-time service should discuss the possibilities with MST and the Senior Pastor at an early stage.

Criteria for evaluating a society would include the following:

- A doctrinal position that is in agreement with that of TWCF and has aims and objectives that reflect the primary emphasis of the Great Commission.
- Responsible direction, organisation, administration and financing.
- Missionary methods that are appropriate to its fields of activity and its size.
- Proper care for the missionary shared in partnership with the sending church.
- A serious commitment to communication between the society and TWCF MST team.
- An understanding attitude towards the missionary's family responsibilities.

While there may be occasions when it is appropriate for TWCF to send out missionaries without involvement from any society, this would only happen where:

- there is no suitable society working in the area;
- or special local situations make this option the most appropriate;
- or there can be adequate provision for fellowship, support and accountability.

In the event of a missionary being sent out in these circumstances, MST, along with the Senior Pastor, will make special arrangements for their pastoral care, direction and supervision.

Section A and B would still largely apply when considering supporting missionaries who are not currently members of TWCF but have been in the past but only when this is practically achievable.

Where TWCF is not the main sending church the MST should seek out and obtain the same assurances as are set out in Section B about the missionary society, either from the sending church or from the society itself.

C. The Work: What should they do?

In the light of the Great Commission, the emphasis of our mission policy is on evangelism, church planting, teaching and discipling whether in the UK or overseas. We recognise that in some countries practical humanitarian service may be the most appropriate way in which these objectives can be met. We also recognise that a variety of skills and abilities can be used in ministries that support frontline mission.

Criteria for evaluating the needs and opportunities in various parts of the world include:

- How significant is this need in the geographical area or field of work?
- What level of importance does the mission society attach to this request for help?
- Does the applicant have gifts that could be used in a wider and more direct gospel ministry?

2. GIVING PRACTICAL SUPPORT

TWCF will usually consider the support of those who are engaged in full-time Christian service in the UK or overseas with an approved mission society (or directly commissioned by the church) and are in satisfactory communication with TWCF.

The names of such people are brought before the Senior Pastor, Leadership Team and the MST. Subject to their approval, these members will be added to the list of Mission Partners (MPs).

The support of the church towards MPs is expressed in 3 ways.

A. Prayer

- Each MP will have a link member of MST who is responsible for the support network for that missionary, possibly sharing responsibility with a close friend or relative of the MP.
- Some Life Groups are keen to establish ties with MPs. Where this is the case, MST, under guidance of the Leadership Team, will encourage Life Groups to identify/adopt MPs to provide prayer support.
- Each MP will be encouraged to ensure that there is an adequate communication of information and prayer needs.

B. Pastoral

- We seek to encourage occasional pastoral visits from members of TWCF visiting the area.
- The church accepts a pastoral responsibility towards MPs on furlough and through transition on returning home.
- MPs receiving regular financial support from TWCF will be expected to provide an annual report of their work, together with a plan of their main goals and priorities for the coming year so that the MST can be informed and involved in the work and seek to encourage and guide as appropriate.

C. Financial

TWCF aims to support to the greatest possible extent those serving with an approved mission society where the call has been confirmed by the church. The Fellowship will be refreshed in the teaching behind Faith Promise and this will be promoted, along with brief updates on those we support, on the second Sunday of each month.

Priority will be given to those going into full time Christian ministry, who have been involved in a fruitful ministry with the church for at least one year.

Allocation of financial support:

MST will submit a request to Council for funds each year based on an understanding of each MP's targets/requirements when a shortfall in giving is anticipated, despite communicating the need to the church as a whole unless Council decides a percentage of annual general giving to be given to overseas mission.

In allocating funds, the MST and the Council will take the following factors into account:

- The requirements and guidelines of the mission society with whom the MP works, which will include family circumstances, ministry expenses, travel costs and the cost of living in the country of service.
- The financial support that the MP receives from other churches and friends. TWCF will encourage all MPs to seek to develop a broad base for prayer and financial support.
- The extent to which the MP conforms to the criteria set out in the basis for financial support.

The extent to which the contribution rises each year will, in part, depend on whether the number of MPs rises. TWCF undertakes to ensure that the commissioning of new MPs does not diminish the necessary contribution made to existing MPs and is committed to the prayer-filled aim of ensuring the 'call' of our MPs is not held back by a lack of financial provision. The church also recognises that money may be allocated to other mission projects associated with TWCF and in response to special needs. Funds will be allocated only to the extent that those projects conform to the general principles of this policy.

Termination of financial support

Financial support will normally cease:

- Six months after the end of a period of service with a mission society.
- After a six-month period of leave due to ill health where there is no immediate prospect of the MP returning to full time service.
- If a normal home assignment is extended beyond a period of 12 months.
- If communication between the MP and TWCF becomes unsatisfactory.
- Through a decision of the Senior Pastor, Leadership Team and MST.

- If a mission society changes its doctrinal position or revises its policies on care for its missionaries in a way that the MST and Leadership Team find unsatisfactory.
- If a mission society does not exercise responsible direction, organisation, administration and financing.

In the event of a fundamental change in circumstances for the MP, such as a change of place or country of service, society, then this matter should be discussed, and action agreed by MST as soon as possible.

D. Short term service

Short-term work is often of greater benefit to those being sent than to those to whom they go. Therefore, it should be primarily considered as training by providing a cultural experience upon which it is hoped the participant may build in the future.

We seek to encourage those who attend the church to be involved in mission projects that express our values and priorities. Consequently, we actively encourage people to become involved in short-term assignments.

While there may be some obvious benefits to a church member being sent and commissioned for a short-term trip, requests for funding will be scrutinised carefully, and early, to ensure the wise and strategic use of our funds. Normally it would be the leader of such trips that receives financial support from the church.

Some of the criteria in assessing a proposal can be expressed as follows:

- Sending and/or receiving agencies have a responsibility to provide debriefing support, and then to give feedback to TWCF on unresolved personal issues, or future possible directions in discipleship and service. This will move the project more securely away from 'tourism' to personal and spiritual development.
- A short-term programme should have clear aims and written objectives, which are serving the long-term purposes of the host partner organisation or church. Thought should be given to 'How can we know if these are being achieved?'
- Procedures covering healthcare and insurance, security and evacuation, stress management, misconduct, appropriate personal behaviour in cross-cultural situations, and grievance procedures will have been established and communicated before travel begins.
- Financial support from TWCF should go more readily to those already visible in ministry and service within the church and leading a short-term mission team. It is questionable whether we should support someone abroad to do what they have shown little inclination to do already at home.
- Certain physical tasks, (such as building work, painting, decorating, digging ditches, etc.), can be done more cheaply and efficiently by locals.

As a result of these general principles we would encourage those thinking about getting involved in a short-term assignment to consider:

- What are the aims and objectives of the programme? Does this serve a long-term aim?
- Does the ethos or focus of the programme marry with their (and TWCF's) priorities in Mission?
- What will their responsibilities be as a participant? Does this develop their gifts and interests? Is training given for the role?
- What is the process of application and selection? Is there a clear time scale?
- What are the financial costs? How are these to be met?
- How is the involvement of TWCF encouraged and expressed?
- How will they receive feedback during and after the programme that will help their spiritual growth?

For overseas trips we additionally suggest that people consider:

- Does the programme serve the objectives of the mission in the area in a manner that is cross-culturally appropriate?

- What cross-cultural orientation is given? Is this prior to departure or after arrival?
- Who is leading the team? What are their responsibilities? What are the expectations of team life?
- What does the 'fee' cover? Are there any additional costs that are not included? (e.g. insurance, vaccinations, visas).
- Are there appropriate procedures for health care, medical contingencies, security and evacuation?
- At the end of the programme what are the processes for (a) debriefing, (b) feedback to TWCF, (c) feedback to the mission agency and leaders.

Applications, explaining the nature of the work being considered, may be made in writing at any time of the year but at least 2 months prior to the expected date of departure. A decision regarding each application will be made by the Leadership Team and MST on the merits of each case.

E. Missionary training

Where the Lord is clearly calling a person into full time service, and this is confirmed by the church, assistance may be considered towards the cost of fees and living expenses at an approved college.

F. Mission Accountabilities/Responsibilities

See table on page 6.

3. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This document should be kept under review by the Leadership Team and Council in conjunction with MST continuously but will be subject to a more formal review and amendment at least every 5 years.

Mission Accountabilities/Responsibilities

	Missionary	MST Link person	Mission Support Team
Prayer	To support TWCF in prayer and to pray for the ministries he/she is involved in. To keep the Church informed of issues for prayer.	To ensure that prayer letters are circulated to the church, and provide information for prayer meetings, PowerPoint presentations, leadership updates etc. as appropriate	To mobilise prayer and disseminate prayer requests.
Information	To correspond with church members, particularly his/her link person, and to send a prayer letter no less than once per quarter.	To ensure that the missionary is kept up to date with TWCF's activities and forward any relevant church communications.	To organise annual reviews of missionaries' work to provide a means of accountability and evaluation.

Communication	Missionary: To discuss with the MST details regarding any change to his/her work assignment, church affiliation, proposed marital status, length or extension of service, any major health problems or other significant issues affecting him/her.	MST link person To maintain a regular link between the missionary and the MST/church. Forward prayer points, updates and concerns to the MST/leadership as appropriate. Ensure that the missionary is kept up to date with TWCF's activities and forward any relevant church communications. Encourage others at TWCF to communicate with the missionary	Mission Support Team To provide feedback on the prayer letters/reports that the missionary has sent. Support him/her with regular correspondence. To respect confidentiality.
Home Visits	To report back to TWCF whilst on home leave. Establish a programme which allocates appropriate time to family, fellowship, rest/relaxation, home church, mission agency.	To ensure that the missionaries needs are brought to the attention of the MST/leadership.	To assist the missionary in preparing a home visit programme. Where necessary seek to provide practical support in respect of housing, schooling, transport.
Finance	To encourage financial support from churches and groups outside of TWCF by regular correspondence and visiting when on home leave.	To highlight financial needs to the MST.	To ensure that committed support funds are sent on time. Ensure that the missionary's financial support requirements are reviewed regularly.
Commitment	To be a good steward of time, gifts, skills, and money which have been entrusted to them. To take opportunities to present the Gospel through word and life.	To be the link between the MST and the missionary.	To be the link between the church leadership and the missionary. Aiming to see the missionary growing in Christ. To provide pastoral support, debriefing and help in readjusting to UK life.