

MISSIONS COMMITTEES LEAD THE CHURCH

Theme: Missions Committee

THE PURPOSE OF THE MISSIONS TEAM

The main tasks and responsibilities of the missions team are to:

- Establish a thoughtful missions vision and develop the ministry in accordance with that vision
- Serve as the church's experts on missions by studying biblical and missiological issues and learning about particular areas of the world
- Elevate the church's awareness of the biblical basis for missions, the need for world evangelization, and current events in missions
- Increase congregational participation in world missions
- Aid members of the local church in responding to God's call to missions
- Stimulate prayer for missionaries and world missions
- Care for missionaries on home ministry assignment
- Ensure that pastors, staff and officers participate in mission projects
- Recommend missionary candidates according to set guidelines
- Oversee the missions conference(s)
- Prepare the annual missions budget and present it to the elders for approval
- Correspond with missionaries
- Visit areas of priority or focus of the church
- Develop policy and procedures related to the ministry

THE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE

The missions committee should feel free to develop a structure that best meets their needs. Most committees adopt one of two primary ways to organize the committee, either by geography or function.

Option A: Geography

Organizing by geography offers the advantage of allowing people to become experts on a particular area, which is especially helpful if they have an interest in certain people groups. It can also allow them to develop deeper relationships with missionaries, as they handle all the functions related to supporting missionaries within their region. Communication with a particular missionary goes through a single member, which can make it easier for the missionary to know who to communicate with. In some ways, this focus on a region mirrors the missionary's sense of calling to a field.

While a chairperson oversees the entire ministry, as much of the work as possible is delegated to regional teams or committees. Some churches use the following geographical divisions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Muslim World. These are the same divisions used by Mission to the World.

Regional teams take the lead in developing the ministry within their area. Churches will list these functions in various ways, but they may include some or all of the below. It may be

helpful to appoint a person to take primary responsibility for each of the following:

1. **Missionary Care**
This responsibility includes encouraging prayer on behalf of missionaries within their region, communicating regularly with missionaries, providing them supplies and resources, and addressing needs upon their return.
2. **Member Education**
This responsibility includes arranging opportunities for members to learn more about the missionaries, the spiritual and physical needs of people living within a region, and how the missionaries are seeking to address those needs.
3. **Research**
Regional team members are encouraged to learn more about cultures within their area, in order to gain a better appreciation of the diversity of God's world and how the gospel can be expressed among different peoples.
4. **Projects**
Organizes and promotes short-term projects to sites within their region, especially to any partner sites.
5. **Partnership**
If the missions team has adopted specific sites for emphasis, the regional team would coordinate opportunities for members to more deeply engage in ministry.

Option B: Function

Organizing by function allows people to work according to roles that suit them best, such as planning events or demonstrating hospitality. It also allows them to have a broad level of contact with all the missionaries. Subcommittees may be organized around many of the following roles:

- **Chairperson** (consider whether this will be an elder)
- **Vice-chairperson** (consider whether this person will succeed chairperson)
- **Secretary**
Keeps minutes of meetings and handles correspondence.
- **Treasurer**
Maintains the budget, produces financial statements and processes disbursements.
- **Prayer Coordinator**
Receives prayer requests from missionaries, coordinates prayer within the church for its missions ministry, missionaries, missions conference, Day of Prayer for Persecuted Church, etc. May organize teams and/or regular prayer meetings.
- **Missions Conference Chairperson**
Oversees all aspects of missions conference, primarily by coordinating subcommittee chairpersons.
- **Hospitality Chairperson**
(for missionaries who are visiting and/or on home assignment) Stays in regular contact with missionaries to know when they are visiting the U.S., coordinates any lodging, transportation, or other needs.
- **Short-term and Missions Project Chairperson**
Drives, plans, promotes short-term trips for the congregation.

- **Assimilation Coordinator**
(into every ministry of the church) Focuses on moving missions and the Great Commission from a program status to the driving force for all the church's ministries.
- **Candidate Coordinator**
Funnel opportunities for supporting new candidates to the missions team and session; is aware of the team's and session's goals for new candidate support.
- **Representative from the session**
Serves as a channel of communication between the session and the missions team, to ensure unity in purpose, plans, and goals.

MISSIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Qualifications

The primary qualifications for serving on the missions committee include a heart for world evangelization and faithfulness to follow-through with responsibilities. Knowledge and experience should not be a prerequisite to serve on a subcommittee, but they are vitally important for those in leadership. The missions team will have a wide variety of responsibilities and will therefore require a diverse set of skills, gifts and experience. The criteria listed below describe some of the most necessary prerequisites. Few people will exhibit all of these qualities, so temper idealism with realism.

The individual should

- Practice a faithful, personal relationship with Christ
- Be interested in world missions
- Consider missions as one of the primary roles of the church
- Have a desire to learn more about missions
- Be willing to undergo initial training
- Possess gifts supportive of the missions team's efforts
- Be committed to prayer
- Be willing to serve on a subcommittee
- Be willing to be a project leader
- Understand and support the policies of the church's missions team

Length of service

Determining how long people serve in leadership roles will set proper expectations and avoid a great deal of confusion. Common possibilities include:

- One-year term
- Two-year term
- Three-year terms, with one-third rotating off each year
- Chairperson (or missions pastor or administrator) has longer term or is permanent
- Pastor or church board representative serves indefinitely

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

While no ministry should be overly bureaucratic, thoughtful policies and procedures will help organize the complexities of the missions ministry. It is important to distinguish between the two, as confusing procedure with policy decreases productivity and creativity. Policies provide guidance in decision-making and promote consistency in applications; policies should not be very flexible and generally be as few as possible. Procedures allow you to build a set of best practices to most effectively develop your ministry. These should be considered fairly flexible and open to revision.

Examples of Policies

1. The range of support for non-member missionaries serving in our focus sites will be 1.5 times that of our base range. The range of support for member missionaries serving in our focus sites will be 2 times that of our base range.
2. Missionaries will be expected to provide a yearly report of their ministry roles, accomplishments, challenges, needs and goals for the upcoming year.

Examples of Procedures

1. Missionaries will be contacted prior to their Home Ministry Assignments to determine how our church can best care for them while in the United States.
2. The financial sub-committee will contact missionaries during the conference to process their conference related reimbursements.

As you develop your policies and procedures, consider these questions:

1. What is your relationship to the session? For example, do they require approval of support decisions?
2. How often will the missions team and subcommittees meet?
3. Will you have annual planning sessions?
4. Will there be a larger advisory team or elder that meets to advise the missions team? How often will they meet with the team? What is their level of authority?
5. Will you have an executive team? If so, what will be their responsibilities?
6. How can you be sure to support missionaries most in line with your particular vision?
7. Will there be permanent subcommittees? Will they be organized by function or geography? What are their specific duties?

8. What are your ranges for missionary support? Do members receive more than non-members? Do missionaries going to your focus sites (if any) receive more support?
9. Is there a missions director/pastor? If so, what are the duties and relationship to the team?
10. Is there a missions administrator? If so, what are his/her duties?
11. Will the ministry fund project expenses for certain church leaders (e.g. senior pastor, missions chair person)? If so, which leaders, how much and how many trips per year?
12. Who makes support decisions for missionaries? Is it the entire committee or a certain group?
13. Will the ministry help fund members going on projects? If so, which projects and how much?
14. Can members who are missionaries serve on the committee? If so, are there any restrictions to their responsibilities, such as financial support decisions?
15. What are your expectations from missionaries?
16. What is the application process for missionaries?
17. What are your requirements or expectations for approving missionary support, e.g. experience, preparation, agency affiliation, theological convictions, role, destination?
18. What will be your connection to the presbytery MTW Committee?