

# Formulating and Writing Missions Policy

## C. Philip Slate

Missions Consultant  
North Boulevard Church of Christ  
Murfreesboro, TN 37130  
E-mail: cpsmissions@juno.com

### Introduction

- A. Currently churches of Christ use various ways to make decisions about financial support of missions/evangelism.
  1. Sporadic and impulsive: missionaries make appeals for funds and the church is called upon to make a contribution. Usually a one-time gift.
  2. Faith promise: Funds for the year are pledged on a given week or month and subsequently allocated. Available money drives the support. Allocations may or may not be done strategically or according to plan.
  3. Annual Budget, distributed impulsively or piecemeal as convinced.
  4. Annual Budget, allocated by plan, but making room for contingencies.
  5. Annual Budget, totally allocated by church plan.
  
- B. A case for having a deliberate, informed missions/evangelism policy. This posture assumes a study group (Missions Committee, Evangelism Committee, etc.) has made an effort to become informed about the issues. It is futile to set policy without knowing what the big issues are in domestic and international evangelism.
  1. A prayerfully informed, proactive approach is more suitable for the kingdom of God. Planning ahead is a biblical value (Rom. 15:20-21, 28; 2 Cor. 9:2), but it is to be done with a sense of "the will of God" (Jas. 4:13-17).
  2. Helps the church to focus its energies. Much more should be involved than sending a monthly check.)
  3. Tends to reduce or eliminate impulsive and often ill-informed decisions in missions.
  4. Makes it easier to turn down more graciously and smoothly requests that do not conform to the policy.
  5. Guards the congregation against contrary-to-policy interests within the congregation. Members, especially those who move in from another congregation, may bring with them interests different from the policy.
  6. Since it should contain a statement of goals and objectives, a written policy statement provides a good basis for annual or bi-annual assessment of the committee's and the church's work in evangelism.

### Body

#### I. Formulating missions policy

- A. The options in missions/evangelism are so numerous that the church will do best to focus on a select few and do them well.
  1. Consider a partial list: Support of persons engaged in hardline evangelism and church planting, church maturation, Bible translation, training leaders, providing education for children of missionaries, missionary medicine, national evangelists and teachers, broadcasters, printers, on-field assessment of missionary families, etc. Support of institutions or endeavors by giving money to broadcast and printing works, printing Bibles and other materials, medical and other compassionate works, training institutions, construction of facilities. Many congregations are constantly approached for financial help in many of these areas. At one time the Broadway church in Lubbock received an average of one request per day.
  2. It is best for the church to be thoughtfully selective. By "thoughtful" is meant the process that takes place after the Committee has considered the biblical and strategic aspects of evangelism/missions endeavors. Prayer and study precede strategic planning and writing of policy.

3. Here are a few parameters for the process:

Personal (support workers) . . . . . Impersonal (funding media, etc.)  
Initial evangelism (church planting) . . . . . Funding training of workers  
Explicit evangelism . . . . . Compassionate service  
Work new ground . . . . . Stabilize existing works  
Train missionaries . . . . . Maintain missionaries

B. Ways of selecting emphases:

1. Context: Church may be near a needy country or group.
2. Connections: several members may have connections with a country or group.
3. Purely strategic approach: (a) determine to undertake a work because it is strikingly needed, receptive or not, or (b) decide to reach a receptive population while it is still receptive.
4. Long standing relationship with a work may argue for the church to stay with it, but to put it on a different footing.  
NOTE: The point is that once the church decides on its foci it can then work more vigorously, prayerfully, and thoughtfully on them.

- C. The policies should be proposed until they are approved by the elders in some form. Once approved, the written Policy Statement constitutes the bounds within which the Committee is to work and the goals toward which it should strive.

## II. Specifics of writing a Missions/Evangelism Policy Statement

A. Two ways to go about writing the Policy Statement.

1. Start from scratch, using helpful guidelines from sources like the Evangelical Missions Policy Handbook.
  - a. This is usually a laborious task! But it can be a good experience. Indeed, it can be a necessary experience if the church is undertaking an out of the ordinary approach to its work.
  - b. Suggestion: to hasten the process, have a couple of people to produce a draft of the document which would then be reviewed and modified by the entire Committee.
2. "Cut and paste" method, or borrowing.
  - a. Samples of Policy Statements are collected and studied. Categories and verbiage may be drawn from them, while writing the Statement so it accurately portrays what has been approved.
  - b. Note: avoid duplicating exactly what others are doing. They may not reflect what you have determined to do. They may not be as clear in their statements as you can be.

B. Leading issues to consider in writing your Policy Statement. Decisions on the following issues need to be spelled out in your document.

1. What kind of theological/biblical statement will you put in the Policy Statement? Much more is needed than quick reference to Matt. 28:16-20, important as that text is. Indeed the Committee needs to study the thrust of both OT and NT to gain insight and directives to spread the gospel everywhere. If evangelism and missions thought and planning are not rooted deeply in Scripture they will be treated as step-children, even orphans! Suggestion: work through the first three chapters of Elliston and Burris.–
2. Will this church do no more than give money and prayer? or will it qualify itself to be a good sending agent, or sponsor? Churches qualified to serve as sponsors are sorely needed in our brotherhood. Indeed, that lack is probably the weakest link in our entire missions enterprise.
3. How much will you allow for one-time gifts (e.g., helping people move to the field, participate in short-term work, build their buildings and obtain equipment, etc.)? Or will you specialize in that?
4. If you intend to sponsor and support workers, what minimal training do you expect them to have?
5. Under what circumstances will you supply financial support for non-USA personnel?

6. Under what circumstances, if any, would you help a non-USA person come to the USA to study?
7. What percentage, if any, of your budget will you allocate for short-term work which you plan and execute yourself?
8. Should you decide to support workers, what arrangements will you make for elders or missions committee members to visit them?
9. At what intervals will you assess (a) your committee work and (b) the work you support on the field?
10. You need to include in your Policy Statement the basic guidelines for the Committee itself:
  - a. Composition: How large will it be? How and at what intervals will you allow some people to rotate off the Committee and others to be added. What qualities do you expect Committee members to have?
  - b. Goals and Purposes: Just what is the Committee expected to do? It is a good idea to state both one year, two year, and five year goals--all approved by the elders/shepherds of the congregation.
  - c. Functioning: How many meetings will the Committee have per month? What will its time table be for changes in composition, evaluations, etc.?
11. What provisions will you make for keeping the congregation informed about and interested in the missions/evangelistic ministry of the church?
12. What provisions will you make for enabling Committee members to keep up in missions? Workshops, book/article reviews, videos, etc.

### **Conclusion**

- A. Determining church policy and then writing it up in a formal Missions/Evangelism Policy Statement are time-consuming efforts. But in the long run, if properly informed and immersed in prayer, they enable churches to give greater glory to God through their efforts.
- B. The Policy Statement serves both to safe-guard the church against several potential abuses and mistakes, and to enable it to focus its energies on what it decides quite deliberately to do.
- C. It is important to set times for the routine examination of the Policy. In actual use the Policy may reveal it has holes in it. Over time the composition of the congregation may change and new and unexpected situations may arise in the world which make changes in policy necessary and prudent.
- D. The church is a living, dynamic organism, not a static institution. Its approach to evangelism and missions should be living and dynamic while always using Scripture as its base of operation.

– Edgar J. Elliston and Stephen E. Burris, editors. *Completing the Task: Reaching the World for Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995).