

# How to Begin and Maintain a Missions Committee

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Why should your congregation begin a missions committee and, if you already have one, why should you make certain that it remains a vital force in the life of the congregation? Experience teaches us that the churches with the greatest affect on the world's lost are those that appoint a qualified group of people to coordinate the missions outreach of the church. Based on this fact, how can you begin a vital missions ministry?

## **First, secure the blessings of the elders and preacher.**

- Share your concern for the lost with the elders and communicate to them your vision of a functioning missions committee, preferably in a brief written proposal.
- Offer your services to the elders in helping to set up the committee. Be one who encourages them by offering to serve, rather than just suggesting ideas.
- Share your dreams with the preacher and enlist his support. He can play an important role in making this ministry succeed.
- The committee may be highly structured or loosely organized, depending on the situation in your congregation. Whichever form you choose, make certain that the elders agree and that the committee communicates regularly with them and is submissive to their leadership.

## **Second, determine the purpose and scope of the missions committee. You may want it to perform all or part of the following:**

- Carry out and evaluate the overall mission work of the congregation and integrate missions activities into the life of the church.
- Encourage intercessory prayer for world missions in general and for the congregation's missionaries in particular.
- Educate the congregation in the biblical and pragmatic features of world evangelism.
- Encourage members of the congregation to volunteer for missionary service and provide counsel and direction for them during their preparation.

## **Third, once its purpose and scope are approved, organize the committee.**

- Determine the working relationship that the committee will have with the elders and other ministries. Experience has shown that many committees are given responsibility but have no authority to act. If the elders have approved a missions policy, a set of goals and specific projects, then they need to give the missions committee the authority to see that these tasks are accomplished.
- Determine the size of the committee. Consider the membership of the congregation, the program you envision and the number of qualified people who are available to serve. Develop subcommittees for various facets of your missions program. These can include: Policy: Develops and reviews guidelines to facilitate wise decision-making by the committee. Goals and Finance: Proposes annual goals for the committee and periodically revises them. Prepares the missions budget and administers it under the guidance of the elders. Missions Education: Keeps world missions before the congregation by means of the church bulletin, displays, posters and Bible school curricula at all age levels. Administers an annual missions emphasis period, missions dinners and special prayer sessions on behalf of world evangelism. Missionary Recruitment and Selection: Receives and screens requests for oversight or support,

- directs interviews and submits its recommendations to the full committee. A special function of this subcommittee is to identify potential missionaries from within the congregation and see that they receive appropriate encouragement and training.
- Regional Interest: Develops expertise in one region of the world and coordinates the work there. Communicates with missionaries in that region and ministers to them.
- Provide for stability on the committee. Continuity is more important to this committee than to most other ministries, because it must learn the complexities of missions in other parts of the world. A minimum of three-year staggered terms seems to work best, with an additional minimum three-year term for the chairman.

#### **Fourth, appoint qualified people who see this work as their primary ministry.**

- Choose committee members who are willing to limit their involvement in other areas of church life, in order to dedicate themselves to the rigorous demands of this ministry.
- Decide on the kind of people needed to serve in this ministry. What abilities and interests should they possess: Evangelism? Travel? Concern for and willingness to learn about missions? Furthermore, what segments of the church should be represented: Men? Women? Senior citizens? Youth? Preachers? Singles? Couples?
- Select a chairman who is a proven servant and administrator and who has a growing understanding of missions.
- Visit the mission works that the congregation is supporting. This is especially important for the chairman and his spouse, but would also be helpful for elders, preachers, committee members and their wives. Seeing the country, experiencing what the missionary faces daily, and meeting some of the nationals will keep one from being an "armchair general" in missions understanding.

#### **Next, begin meeting on a regular basis as a committee.**

- Prayerfully assign responsibilities to each committee member and ask God to help you be good stewards of your opportunities.
- Schedule your monthly or weekly meetings a year in advance. Allow time on the calendar for subcommittees to meet and carry out their assignments.
- Maintain a high level of prayer on the agenda of this ministry.
- Schedule the seminar, "Missions Power for Your Local Church." In this seminar you will assess the present level of your church's missions involvement, propose basic missions policies and goals, and then develop the first draft of a two-year Missions Plan for the congregation.

#### **Then write a clear mission policy.**

- A well-written missions policy, agreed upon by each member of the committee, will facilitate more consistent decision-making.
- These guidelines need to be approved by the elders and then communicated to the whole church and your missionaries.
- Assistance in preparing your missions policy can be provided by the Missions Policy Handbook available from Missions Resource Network.
- Allow for flexibility in your policy, leaving room for the Lord to use you to meet special opportunities that may arise and to adjust to changing world conditions.

#### **Finally, nurture the members of the committee.**

- Insist that this ministry grow in its understanding of the world's needs and of the missions task. There are many ways in which to stimulate such growth. One is through reading important mission books.

- Attend missions courses at Christian schools. For instance, Abilene Christian University has an annual Summer Seminar in Missions for missionaries on furlough, those in training and those leading missions ministries in their respective local churches. Contact the Missions Department at (915) 674-3711.
- Prepare an orientation notebook for the missions ministry. It should consist of your policy statement, definitions of terms, a review of the mission work and goals of the church, and basic readings on missions. Require new committee members to pass a test on the notebook before they begin voting on matters that come before the committee.

In our complex world, with its multiplicity of cultures and languages, hundreds of major cities and billions of lost souls, we cannot afford to leave to chance our world outreach. For this reason, all congregations need a thoughtfully and prayerfully developed missions program coordinated by a dedicated committee. Such a group deserves the full support of both the elders and the congregation, for its task has truly global and eternal implications.