

Mission Policy Document

Our church will aim to engage in mission in and beyond our local area by forming and nurturing a realistic number of committed gospel partnerships

This policy document is designed to be a guide rather than a list of strict rules that must be followed. Partnership is a relational term and should not be governed by legalism. However, to ensure any partnership flourishes, guidelines are helpful so each partner understands and appreciates the other. This policy covers ongoing mission partnerships and doesn't address any one off gifts the PCC may give to organisations such as Engage or the York Road Project.

These guidelines are useful for those within St John's & Emmanuel Church. God has given us much and we need to use what he's given us in the most focussed way possible. This is true of all we have and are, but in the area of mission support it is vital. There are almost an infinite number of good causes so we need guidelines to assist in narrowing down the options.

General Principles:

1. There is great poverty and social deprivation in the world and we, as Christians, should be greatly concerned to alleviate poverty and fight injustice. However, the greatest need in the world is to hear the unique gospel of salvation found exclusively through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In light of this any mission partner we support needs to have the clear aim of gospel proclamation within their role. This may not be the only aspect of their role, but they need to clearly show how gospel proclamation is enabled by their role.
 - A question to help discern this – For this particular role would they be able to obtain support from a secular organisation? If so it is likely that their primary role is one of aid relief, which is of course extremely important, but is not the best use of our finite resource.
 - There needs to be some flexibility on this point as there are some parts of the world where it is almost impossible to enter unless the primary role is one of aid relief or development. The people of those places need to hear the unique gospel of salvation and, as such, it may be prudent for us to support a mission partner where their gospel proclamation is not clearly stated on their role. For instance, a number of missionaries operated in China and their primary function was teaching English to Chinese students. This gave them the opportunity to use the Bible as the key text book, thereby allowing them to proclaim the gospel.
2. We are commanded by Jesus to go and make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:16-20) Therefore, as a guide, we should seek to support mission partners across the globe and not solely concentrated in one continent. The role and function of missionaries we support will vary from country to country and continent to continent. Each place has different needs and requirements so we need to be flexible in whom we support. For instance, in Africa, there is a great need for pastors to be theologically trained, whereas in Europe, there is a desperate need for evangelists and church planters. This will mean we need to consider the contextual situation of each mission partner to see how they are advancing the growth of God's Kingdom.

3. We want these partnerships to continue over many years, decades even, but as wise stewards of what God has entrusted to us we need to regularly review who we support and how. This review should happen every five years. A review would automatically be triggered upon any change of location or role by the mission partner.
 - The underlying assumption of any review is to affirm the mission partner and to continue supporting them. However, roles change, people change and therefore we need to ensure we are being wise stewards.
 - A key aspect of the review will be how our relationship with the partner is growing. An aspect of this will be the frequency and nature of communication between the mission partner and us. We want the church to feel part of this process and to have a level of enthusiasm for each partner.

4. For the sake of our mission partners, and our own good stewardship, we want to ensure they have support and encouragement from a mission agency which is in accord with our priorities for mission support. This will mean that we can mutually encourage and focus on the need for God's message of salvation to be clearly heard around God's world. We would also expect the mission agency to be conscientious in planning for the future needs and requirements of our mission partners, not least in the provision of pension and retirement planning.

5. As much as we would like to support dozens of missionaries this is not possible if we want to make a substantial contribution to each of them. Therefore we can financially support 5 mission partners who would each receive an equal share of total giving which will not be less than 12.5% of our income (excl restricted funds). This figure is distinct from any one off collections or other individual donations for them.
 - In addition to these five mission partners there are a number of others who have gone out from St John's and whom we pray regularly for. Each year there will be a Sunday set aside as a one off gift day to give the congregation the opportunity to specifically support those they know and love.

6. The growth of God's kingdom is solely down to God. He has tasked us to use what he's given to us for his glory. Therefore, we should strive to be wise with what we have, but unless we humbly approach him in prayer and rely on his sovereign power and oversight then all of our planning is pointless and irrelevant. So, for each mission partner we commit to pray for them, corporately as a church and individually. To this end we expect regular updates for prayer which highlight the role the partner is doing and the needs for prayer. Additionally we want to know of what God has done so we can thank him. For this to be a true partnership we would also expect our mission partners to receive our prayer letter and commit to regularly pray for God's work here in St John's and Emmanuel.