

MISSIONS POLICY

ARMAGH BAPTIST CHURCH

(Adopted September 2009)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Church recognises that each member of the body of Christ is called to mission and to live for God wherever He has placed us. For most of us, that will mean a commitment to live and witness in our home community.

This policy sets out the mission principles and objectives of Armagh Baptist Church. Its purpose is to guide the Church in the recognition of those called by God into missionary service and to oversee the practical and prayer support for mission and missionaries. It also seeks to define the relative roles and responsibilities of the church, the missionary and the mission organisation in the partnership of mission.

This policy shall be reviewed at least every five years by the Elders and amended if necessary. A copy of this policy shall be given to all Church members.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1. Mission. As stated in the Great Commission which the Lord Jesus Christ gave to his church, (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John. 20:21; Acts 1:7-8), mission refers primarily to being witnesses and includes the activities of evangelism, church planting, teaching, discipling and caring.

2.2. Missionary. For the purposes of this policy the term “missionary” (full time or part time) is broadly defined as a member of this church, called and gifted by the Holy Spirit, whose aim is to exercise his/her gifts through a church or mission organisation to facilitate the fulfilment of the Great Commission, having had that call accepted and confirmed by the church. Under this definition missionaries may be: directly involved in evangelism, church-planting, teaching and discipling, using gifts of administration, medical, agricultural or other academic or practical abilities.

2.3. Baptist Missions. This is the missionary department of the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland, which facilitates mission work carried out under the auspices of the Churches.

2.4. Missionary Organisations, Societies and Agencies. For the purpose of this document these are the mission organisations with which our church missionaries are serving: The promotion of other evangelical mission organisations within the church shall be approved by the Elders and Missionary Committee.

2.5. Tent making. For the purposes of this policy tent makers are defined as those called by God to live and work:

- Either in secular employment in other locations with the specific aim of being witnesses to Jesus Christ and/or supporting a local church while

remaining a member of Armagh Baptist Church or where the Elders agree, in membership of that local church.

- Or in the special category of those serving as professionals in nations where missionaries are not granted permission to work directly in Christian ministry (sometimes referred to as Creative Access Nations) while remaining a member of Armagh Baptist Church.

3. AIMS

3.1. Education

- To stimulate interest in mission in the light of the Great Commission by presenting the challenge and needs of world mission as an integral part of the Church's programme.
- To encourage all members to be active in mission – in regular prayer, financial support and direct involvement.

3.2. Personnel

- To identify those called and gifted for mission at home or abroad.
- To offer opportunities to explore God's Call upon their lives.
- To offer advice prior to and during training and throughout the period of missionary service.

3.3. Support

- To seek to support those called into missionary service through counselling, pastoral care, prayer and finance.

4. MISSIONARY COMMITTEE

4.1. Structure

- The committee shall consist of a minimum of five people, two of which shall be elders.
- These appointments, including the chairmanship, shall be made by the elders. Before consideration for chairmanship, the person shall normally be a member for 2 years in Armagh Baptist Church. The chairmanship will be reviewed by the elders after 3 years and may be renewed for a further 3 years.
- Appointments shall be for a period of five years and members shall be eligible for re-appointment after this period. The committee shall have the authority to co-opt, for a limited period, as and when required, other Church members whose experience would be of benefit for specific tasks.
- Two elders, plus half of all committee members, must be present to form a quorum when major decisions are to be taken.
- All decisions shall be ratified by the elders.

4.2. Objectives

Recognising the Church's responsibility to fulfil the Great Commission the objectives of the committee shall be:

- To maintain regular contact with our missionaries and their organisations.
- To encourage effective financial, prayer and practical support, fellowship and pastoral care of our Church missionaries.
- To encourage and support the work of other mission organisations as directed by the elders.
- To encourage, by instruction and example, a continuing and increasing interest in mission through the various Church meetings and in liaison with the existing Church departments.

- To organise an annual event focused on mission.
- To support Church members who may meet in smaller groups to pray for our missionaries on a regular basis.
- To initiate a regular review of mission activity including an annual report presented to the church.

4.3. Roles

4.3.1 Stimulation of Missionary Interest. The committee shall:

- Have responsibility for co-ordinating the setting up and regular updating of the Church missionary information boards and the missionary section of the Church website.
- Have responsibility for our Church missionary family - maintaining regular contact with the missionaries and liaising with the prayer letter co-ordinator and distributor for each person or family.
- Have the responsibility for the promotion of prayer for those missions approved in section 2.4.
- Promote the availability of missionary literature.
- Maintain contact with those engaged in tent-making ministries through correspondence and prayer.

4.3.2 Committee members shall assist:

- In regular prayer/news items at Sunday services and midweek prayer meetings.
- In the organisation of farewell and welcome meetings.
- In the organisation of an annual event to focus on mission.
- In the organisation of the home visits of church missionaries if needed.

4.3.3 Finance. The committee shall:

- Liaise with the Church missionaries and missionary organisations regarding their financial position to determine the needs of our missionaries. Any matter of concern shall be communicated to the elders.
- Advise and make recommendations to the elders regarding other expenses as appropriate.

4.3.4 Missionary Candidates. The committee shall seek to receive periodic progress reports from all candidates in training and from their training organisations.

4.3.5 Pastoral Care. The committee shall:

- Maintain regular contact with all our church missionaries, whether in training, in service or on home assignment, through the sending of letters, emails, CDs, gift parcels etc.
- Church members will also be encouraged to maintain frequent contact with all our Church missionaries in these ways.
- Encourage pastoral visits to Church missionaries while in service.
- Welcome missionaries on home assignment into the fellowship and arrange opportunities to speak and report on their service.
- Be responsible for ensuring that reasonable educational welfare and pastoral care of Church missionaries' families are in place.
- Ensure that care of missionary personnel does not stop on retirement.

5. PRAYER SUPPORT

As up-to-date information is essential for informed prayer, all our missionary personnel and those in training will be expected to co-operate in the regular supply of such information and news by prayer letters, e-mail, or other forms of electronic media.

5.1. Regular information for prayer will be provided as follows:

- Regular prayer letters made available in either electronic or printed format.
- Regular updates of prayer news and information posted on the Church notice boards.
- Specific prayer requests during the Sunday services and midweek prayer meetings and other church activities.
- Regular reports and visits from missionaries on home assignment.
- Distribution and use of literature from missionary organisations associated with our Church missionaries, Baptist Missions and other evangelical mission organisations as approved under 2.4.
- Regular and consistent prayer for our Church missionaries will be stressed in interviews with those applying for Church membership.

5.2. Opportunities for prayer. Regular prayer for our Church missionaries and their associated organisations, Baptist Missions and other approved evangelical organisations will be arranged at:

- The church prayer meetings.
- Fellowship groups.
- Sunday services.

6. CARE OF OUR MISSIONARIES

6.1. While on home assignment the missionaries will be welcomed into the fellowship with opportunities given to speak and report on their ministry. Every effort will also be made, in close liaison with the mission organisation involved, to ensure that when on home assignment the missionary's rest period is assured and guarded.

6.2. The Church, in consultation with the mission organisation, will seek to ensure reasonable educational, welfare and pastoral care of our missionaries' families.

6.3. Care of missionary personnel will continue beyond their term of missionary service. This will vary with circumstances, so the Elders, in consultation with the missionary committee, will make recommendations to the church in each case.

6.4. During home assignment the church will take account of missionaries' needs by:

- Providing opportunities in public and private sessions to report on their work and experiences.
- Assisting as appropriate in the practical arrangements in relation to accommodation, transport and children's education.
- Encouraging church members to extend friendship and hospitality to missionaries.
- Involving missionaries in service opportunities in the life of the Church.

6.5. Those who serve with home-based mission agencies shall be given an opportunity, at least annually, to report on their work at a church prayer meeting, or Sunday Service. They will also be required to meet with the Church Missionary

Committee at least annually to report on their work, enabling the Missionary Committee and elders to deal with any difficulties as they arise and to review their ministry role in consultation with their agency.

7. MISSIONARY CANDIDATES

7.1 General - Potential candidates for missionary service shall normally be in membership of Armagh Baptist Church for at least 2 years. They should indicate their interest in missionary service to the elders as early as possible. The elders will seek to give advice regarding any application process.

7.2 Categories of Service – Potential candidates will be treated under 3 categories depending on the length of their proposed period of service:

- Summer Workers – anything from a one week team to 6 months of service.
- Short-Term Mission Service – anything from 6 months to 2 years.
- Long-Term Missionary Service – anything more than 2 years of service.

7.3 SHORT-TERM MISSION SERVICE

This should be for a period not exceeding 2 years and in partnership with a missionary organisation.

7.4 Members of the Church wishing to participate in short-term missionary work, either overseas or at home are advised to seek the advice of the elders. Persons under the age of 18 years shall normally have parental approval.

7.5 The committee will also be available to provide appropriate literature regarding suitable opportunities for service.

7.6 The elders shall take into consideration the person's involvement in the life of the church and their interest in mission.

8. COMPLETION OF MISSIONARY SERVICE

When a missionary completes their service whether on retirement, moving on to employment or awaiting further guidance for future service, their integration into home, family and Church life will be a major readjustment physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially. The elders, missionary committee and Church family in conjunction with the mission organisation will need to be involved in making this transition as smooth as possible. Financial support under the terms of the missionary policy may continue for a period after returning from the field. The length of this period will be determined by the Elders and the Missionary Committee.

8.1 Retirement. When a missionary retires from full-time missionary service their various needs will be assessed by the missionary committee and reported to the elders for consideration.

8.2 Awaiting employment. Discussion with the elders and missionary committee will normally take place to assess needs and help required.

8.3 Awaiting further guidance for future service. Ongoing consultations with the elders and missionary committee will be available to explore future direction – either in further training or service in line with the recommendations set out in this policy.

8.4 De-briefing Procedure. When a missionary completes their term of service and returns home either for Home Assignment or permanently, the missionary committee will de-brief the person no later than three weeks from arrival home

and report to the elders. Contact with the missionary will also be ongoing for the first year of arriving home.

9. RESIGNATION FROM ARMAGH BAPTIST CHURCH

When a single missionary or missionary family resigns from the Church and continues in their existing ministry the elders may at their discretion discuss the transfer with the new Church and the possible support of the single missionary or family for an agreed period of time, depending on their circumstances.

10. GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS IN TRAINING

10.1 Introduction

The procedures set out below shall normally be followed for the counselling and guidance of those entering training for Christian ministry whether as missionary candidates or candidates for pastoral ministry. Before going through these formal procedures, potential candidates shall normally be in membership and actively involved in the life and work of the Church, for at least two years.

Training may be understood as:

- Preparation at a mission training college or Bible college
- A period of practical or other Christian service in a Baptist Church or other evangelical organisation
- Short term service overseas or at home, as preparation for long-term service.

10.2 Procedures

- Potential candidates shall indicate their interest in training to the elders. The candidate shall then be interviewed by the elders for the purpose of enquiring into spiritual issues, to hear details concerning the applicant's sense of call and to assess general suitability for training and ministry.
- The needs of students in training shall be assessed by the missionary committee on an individual basis and reported to the elders. A recommendation on the level of financial support shall be brought to the Church for endorsement.
- The missionary committee shall seek periodic reports from all candidates under training and from their training organisations. Any matters of concern shall be communicated to the elders.

11. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MISSIONARIES

To facilitate the implementation of this policy those requiring Church support shall:

- Be proactive in building a support base for prayer and finance.
- Discuss with the DHSSPS their position regarding National Insurance and state pension provision and if possible join a mission organisation pension scheme.
- Invite a friend to act as prayer secretary to receive, duplicate and circulate letters.
- Establish an email facility for sending news.
- Communicate regularly with prayer letters for general circulation, prayer points for fellowship groups, the missionary committee or their designated contact on the committee.
- Alert the elders immediately when problems arise.

12. FINANCE POLICY *(Adopted at AGM - Jan 2010)*

12.1 Missions to be supported –

- As part of the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland, and in accordance with the Missions Policy adopted in September 2009, Armagh Baptist Church will support the work of Baptist Missions as one of its mission agencies whether the church has a member serving with Baptist Missions or not.
- The missions committee in conjunction with the elders will draw up the list of Mission Agencies and individuals whom the Church will seek to support (See 2.4).
- This list will be reviewed annually.
- This will include Mission agencies where Church members are involved and approved by the elders.

12.2 Financial Support –

- A Mission Support Fund will be established to finance all missionary giving through the church. Offerings from Missionary meetings will be allocated to this fund as well as specific fund raising events. An amount equivalent to the average of the Sunday offerings for each calendar month will also be allocated to the fund.
- The missionary committee will recommend a missionary budget to the elders for approval for the year ahead and then present this to the church at the AGM.
- The Committee will seek to put measures in place to ensure that those resources are raised and will be disbursed to those agencies or individuals concerned on a quarterly basis throughout the year. The final quarterly disbursement will ensure that no funds remain in the account at the end of the year.
- If a budget short fall occurs, the elders may reallocate funds from other church accounts to make up the shortfall, at their discretion.
- All designated giving will be honoured, and forwarded to the Mission concerned, even if it goes over the budget allocation. However, each Mission will receive the minimum budget allocation annually.
- A proportion of the costs of short-term workers will be included as part of the Mission Support Fund budget. Levels of grants will be at the discretion of the elders.
- A proportion of College fees may be paid by the Church to those in training for missionary or pastoral work. This will also be included in the budget.
- A figure will be set in the budget for local mission and evangelism which the church plans to carry out in the course of the incoming year.
- Contingency Funds will be made available from the Mission Support Fund budget as required to meet the following costs:
 - Publicity, including distribution of prayer letters within the church family.
 - Costs relating to missionary events within the church.
 - Christmas gifts and cards for missionaries and their families as approved by the elders.
 - Expenses for pastoral visits as agreed by the elders.

12.3 Deputation Opportunities –

- Mission agencies on the agreed list (2.4) will be given opportunity for deputation at least once each year.
- Deputation opportunities may be given to other agencies not on the list at the discretion of the elders and the missionary committee.

12.4 Pensions –

The missionary committee will consult with full time missionaries who are members of the Church, to ensure that they have taken all necessary steps with regard to their personal pension provision for the future.

Appendix 1

Some useful reading material if you are thinking of missionary service:

Serving as Senders (Neal Pirolo) - This handbook tells you how to become a "sending" Church and how to care for your missionaries. Very helpful information.

The Re-entry Team (Neal Pirolo) – Written as a follow-up to *Serving as Senders*, this book deals with how to care for missionaries when they return home to their sending church.

God's Call to Mission (David Shenk) - A missionary on the field amongst unreached people claims that this is one of his all-time favourites. It is wonderfully written, gentle and stimulating.

Don't Waste Your Life (John Piper) – God created us to live with a single passion... to joyfully display His supreme excellence in all spheres of life. The wasted life is the life without passion. God calls us to pray and think and dream and plan and work not to be made much of, but to make much of Him in every part of our lives.

Mentoring for Mission (Gunter Krallmann) – Gunter Krallmann has captured the essence of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. That is - he has focused not on just the message of Jesus, but on an equally important truth – how Jesus imparted His life to others.