

Guiding Principles for Local Church Missions Development

In today's environment of economic challenges and proliferation of strategic options for our support in local church missions, it's a good thing to step back and revisit foundational principles to any decisions for support or partnership. Here are some good ones, gleaned and genericized from our consultation with churches:

1. **DOCTRINAL ALIGNMENT:** Because we have a high view of the Bible and its authority in all the ministries of our church, we will support ministries and missionaries who are in substantial agreement with our own doctrine and distinctives.
2. **LOCAL CHURCH CONNECTED/FOCUSED:** Because we believe the Bible teaches that local churches are central to God's purposes and have a central role in a mature and fruitful Christian life, we will support ministries and missionaries who are themselves active members in an evangelical local church and seek to encourage those who benefit from their ministry to be likewise committed to active participation in a local church. Where no such church exists, we support ministries and missionaries which have the planting of Bible-believing local churches as one of their primary ministry goals.
3. **MISSIONS TEAM AIMED AT ENABLING INVOLVEMENT:** Because we seek to disciple and equip our congregation for involvement in all areas of ministry, our missions committees will seek to serve the congregation: equipping, informing, inspiring, and enabling them to become personally involved in the ministries we support through all aspects of praying, giving, sending, and going. This principle changes the orientation and activities of the missions committees toward serving the congregation, rather than simply acting on behalf of the congregation or on behalf of the individual interests of missionaries or committee members.
4. **RELATIONAL PRIORITIES:** Because we believe that our missions commitments are an extension of our own church ministry, we give priority to supporting people who have grown in ministry from among our own members. Second priority will be given to ministries or missionaries which have a reasonable and natural potential for developing a sustained relationship to and with our church congregation. We will give little or no priority to those ministries which have no prior connection to our church and similarly low potential for our church to have an ongoing personal involvement in their ministry.

5. **EMPHASIS ON PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT/INVOLVEMENT:** Because we seek to disciple and equip our congregation for involvement in all areas of ministry, we will give preference to supporting ministry partners which create opportunities for our own people to be directly involved in those ministry. e.g. - Choices for short term ministries should enhance ministry relationships and goals of those we already support. We recognize that there may be some exceptions to this principle in certain high-risk, high-security situations.
6. **FEWER GET MORE:** Because we seek to be good stewards of finances and relationships in our church ministries, we will support fewer ministries at a higher level of support, rather than more ministries at a lower level of support. We want the congregation to develop a depth of involvement, ownership, and investment.

It is understood that these will be our guiding principles from this point forward. Where present missions commitments do not fit these principles, we expect the missions committees involved to develop a plan of implementation which will over time, with gracious communication, generosity of spirit, and natural attrition, bring those commitments into alignment.