

FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF MAINE
MISSIONS POLICY
UPDATED MARCH 2016

I. Purpose

A. *Definition of Missions*

1. First Evangelical Free Church of Maine in Westbrook, Maine affirms the definition of Missions to be any endeavor to fulfill the Great Commission by proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, making disciples and gathering these disciples into local congregations, while relating God's love to the spiritual, physical, emotional and social needs of people.

B. *Purpose Statement*

1. Scriptures teach that we are to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). This is accomplished as believers fulfill their role as ambassadors of Christ (II Cor. 5:20) and as local churches recruit, train and send some of their constituency into the world (Rom. 10:13-15).

2. The goal is to win people to the Lord, equip them in the faith and establish churches that have the same goal in every tribe, tongue, people and nation (Acts 14:21-23, Rev. 5:9). The Missions Committee shall seek to guide First EFC of Maine in light of this purpose statement.

C. *Missions Policy*

1. Purpose: The purpose of the Missions Policy shall be to:

a) Develop, promote and implement Missions strategies for the FEFC,

b) Provide focus and direction in decision making related to Missions strategies,

c) Promote Missions-related education, financial support, and personal involvement by FEFC members and adherents,

d) Maintain consistency as committee membership changes,

e) Insure good stewardship in the allocation of church resources including financial support, buildings and other assets, and human resource.

2. Exceptions: This policy is a statement of principles, not a rigid set of rules. Occasionally, exceptions will be indicated. When this

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occurs, two-thirds of the Missions Committee should be in favor of the exception. The exception will also need to be approved by the designated Missions Elder.

3. **Revisions:** The Missions Policy shall be reviewed and revised as often as needed, with a thorough review every odd numbered year. All revisions must be approved by the Elders before implementation.

II. The Missions Committee

A. *Size and Selection:* *The Missions Committee shall consist of three Missions Teams. They are the International Team, the Domestic/Internationally-focused Team and the Local Ministries Team. The names of the members shall be approved by the Missions Committee before they are asked to join a Mission Team. A voting Missions Team member must be a member of the church.*

B. *Term of Office:* *The term of office for team members will be variable as the Spirit may lead.*

C. *Missions Committee Chair:* *The Chair will be appointed by the Elders and will serve at the will of the Elders. This individual is responsible for the proper functioning of the committee.*

D. *Expectations and Responsibilities of Missions Committee members*

- 1. Attend meetings, which generally will be held at least monthly,**
- 2. Take an active role in the decision- making process in reviewing the mission program of the church and making changes where necessary,**
- 3. Continue to learn about world and domestic evangelism and assist the congregation to add to their knowledge,**
- 4. Commit to furthering the Missions program at First EFC of Maine through setting goals and assisting with projects consistent with the Missions Policy described in Part I C,**
- 5. Pray and be personally involved with missionaries and supported ministries,**

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6. **Support missionaries prayerfully, financially and emotionally during their term of service and provide practical assistance as possible,**
7. **Finances: prepare a missions budget and oversee the allocation of funds. This includes recommending additions to or deletions from the support list which includes career missionaries, projects and organizations. Final approval for any of these changes will be voted by the church membership. Input from the congregation regarding missionaries, projects or organizations to support is welcomed by the Missions Committee.**

III. Policies for Giving and Support

A. *Principles for Giving*

1. **The Missions Fund will be part of the General Fund of the Church.**
2. **Members may designate gifts to the Missions Fund and when that is done, such gifts will be used to fulfill the church's Missions budget commitments. Designated gifts will only be accepted for approved missionaries, agencies and ministries. Should designated gifts exceed the current period budget commitments, they can be carried forward for future needs or the Missions Committee may choose to expend the funds in a manner beyond the current period budget.**
3. **The Missions Committee shall prepare an annual budget that is to be submitted to the church membership. Priority will be given to increased funding to currently supported missionaries who have financial need. Consideration will then be given to supporting additional missionaries, organizations or projects.**
 - a) **Monthly support should be a significant portion of the missionary's total need.**
 - b) **Support for a missionary shall be remitted on a quarterly basis.**
 - c) **The Missions budget will include a discretionary fund to be used as needed to fulfill the goals of the Committee. Examples might include: missionary conferences, travel of church representatives to Missions fields, books, short term projects, etc.**

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- 4. Missionary support money will be channeled only through approved Missions boards and agencies. Money will not be forwarded to individuals working independently of Missions agencies unless there are unusual circumstances. Exceptions to this policy can only be made by unanimous agreement of the Missions Committee and the designated Missions Elder.**

- 5. The Missions Committee is responsible to ensure that missionaries and agencies associated with FEFC of Maine maintain high standards in the areas of doctrine, personal and institutional integrity and stability, and clearly defined management principles and goals. Agencies must meet the following guidelines before missionary support will be considered:**
 - a) Theological stance: The agency's doctrinal statement must be consistent with that of FEFC of Maine**

 - b) Financial responsibility: The agency must be open to complete financial disclosure and follow the standards of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability or similar standards.**

 - c) Care of missionaries: Agencies must adequately provide for the needs of their missionaries in the matters of medical insurance, life insurance, retirement, home assignment, children's education, pastoral care for the missionary, etc.**

 - d) Local church accountability: Agencies will provide current information to churches regarding missionaries' activities/ ministries and will allow missionaries to spend time with supporting churches during home assignment.**

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B. Priorities for Giving and Support

1. The FEFC Missions Committee works to provide support to International and Domestic Missions. International Missions are supported primarily through financial and prayer support, while Domestic Missions will also include significant use of local resources including church buildings and other church and member assets, and the time resource of members and adherents.

a) The International Team shall endeavor to maintain a balanced International world-wide perspective in its strategy of support.

b) The Domestic/Internationally Focused Team shall endeavor to maintain a focus on Internationals living in Maine in its strategy of support.

c) The Local Ministries Team shall endeavor to maintain a focus on promoting evangelism to the local communities surrounding FEFC and its members.

d) Recognizing that there will always be more needs than we can fulfill, the following guidelines will establish our priorities for support.

(1) Association with FEFC of Maine

(a) Active members of FEFCM of Maine who become missionaries with approved Missions boards will receive priority consideration for support. They must have demonstrated a pattern of faithfulness and active involvement in their commitment to FEFC of Maine.

(b) Non-FEFCM members will be considered for support based on their personal testimony, call to ministry and place of missionary service with an approved Missions agency. Support will be considered in accordance with our strategy to maintain a balanced worldwide Missions program. Those who are serving with the Evangelical Free Church will be given special consideration.

(2) Types of Ministries Supported Listed in Order of Priorities

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- (a) Church planting, discipleship, Biblical teaching
- (b) Supportive ministries (i.e. medical, educational, relief)
- (c) Missions/Evangelism administration

(3) *Geographic Region/People Group*

- (a) Priority will be given to "bypassed peoples" (bypassed peoples are those segments of society who cannot hear the gospel and worship in a church in their own language and culture).
- (b) Priority will be given to Domestic Internationally Focused Ministries with cultural diversity living in Maine.
- (c) Priority will be given to Local Ministries in the areas surrounding FEFC and the home areas of its members and Adherents.

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C. Responsibilities for Support

1. FEFC of Maine's Responsibilities to Our Missionaries

- a) Pray for the missionary**
- b) Communicate at least every three months**
- c) Promote the work of the missionary within the church**
- d) Encourage the missionary**
- e) Remit support payments in a timely and orderly fashion**
- f) Meet physical needs, if possible**
- g) Work toward a partnership relationship with the missionary and his or her agency, particularly for those ministries in the local area.**

2. Our Missionaries' Responsibilities to FEFC

- a) Communicate with FEFC at least every three months (preferably every two months) to share prayer requests and current work on the field.**
- b) Advise the Committee of any significant changes in ministry and/or location**
- c) Spend quantity and quality time with the church during home assignments in order to deepen relationships between FEFC and the missionary.**
- d) Provide the Committee with goals and an appraisal of the last year's activities.**
- e) Provide updated support figures for each year as needed to assist in budget planning. The revised amount should be documented by the mission agency.**
- f) Provide opportunities for FEFC members to participate in the ministry, especially for those ministries in the local area.**

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D. Termination of Support

- 1. Support may be terminated upon retirement or resignation. The Missions Committee may choose to continue support after retirement on a transitional basis and may choose to continue support for missionaries transitioning to other ministries or activities, on a transitional basis. The individual circumstances and guidance of the Spirit will guide these decisions.**
- 2. Failure to follow the guidelines previously noted in Section III-C-2 may be grounds for termination of support. Such a termination would only follow a careful consultation with the mission agency involved.**
- 3. If there is a major change in ministry, location or Missions agency, then the**
 - a) Missions Committee will immediately re-evaluate its commitment to the person.**
 - b) Advance notice is requested of any significant changes in the ministry of the missionary.**
- 4. Support may be terminated, modified or transitioned out if a missionary takes a leave of absence or an extended home assignment.**
- 5. When financial support is to be terminated, both the Missions Committee and the Elders must be in favor of the decision with subsequent communication to the church membership. When support is to be terminated, the committee will provide the missionary and agency with as much advance notice as circumstances permit and the rationale for why the support is being terminated.**

IV. Requirements for Missionary Support

A. Qualifications of Candidates

- 1. All applications must be in agreement with First EFC of Maine's Statement of Faith.**
- 2. Candidates must be serving under an agency approved by the Committee. Tentmakers and nationals may be an exception in special situations.**
- 3. Those individuals and families we support should be willing to spend quality and quantity time at First EFC of Maine in order to develop and maintain a meaningful relationship with us.**
- 4. Candidates must have a proven track record in ministry.**
- 5. They must demonstrate the qualities found in I Timothy 3:1-10.**
- 6. Their home church must be in agreement with their candidacy.**

B. Procedures

- 1. Submit background information and personal testimonies to Missions Committee**
- 2. Spend time at First EFC of Maine developing relationships**
- 3. Meet with the Missions Committee. If the Committee approves supporting the missionary, the Committee will approve support. Continuing support to missionaries will depend on continued approval of annual Missions budgets by the Congregation.**

V. Short Term Missions

A. The First EFC of Maine Missions Committee encourages pastors, church members and attendees to participate in short term missionary service (both within and outside of the USA) with approved boards and organizations. We value short-term Missions as beneficial both to the participant and the people who are served by the participant. A short-term Missions experience is defined as one lasting from 1 week to 2 years. The Missions Committee will provide guidance and information to congregational members as needed and desired. The Committee will assist in helping to formulate a strong network of prayer support for participants in short term Missions-regardless of whether or not they are seeking funding from the church. It will also provide suggestions on ways to raise funds within the church body, if the participant so desires.

B. Application Process for Assistance in Short-Term Missions

- 1. The short-term missionary will assume personal responsibility for the financial obligations of the short term service and will be expected to raise as much funding as possible from personal and family sources.**
- 2. The Missions Committee will be notified as soon as possible when applicant is requesting assistance from the church body.**
- 3. Support will only be considered if applicant is performing the short-term trip under the umbrella of a sending agency that is approved by the Missions Committee. Applicant will submit a letter outlining place, length of service and type of work to be performed along with information about the sending agency. If applicant is less than 18 years of age, parental support or approval must be submitted.**
- 4. Applicant will show evidence of a true conversion experience, emotional maturity, effective Christian life, service to the church and regular attendance at FEFC.**
- 5. Applicant will share plans/goals with the church body and/or small groups before leaving and upon return in order to build prayer support.**
- 6. Any funds that are donated through church offerings will be sent to the sending agency. If funds are to be used for travel expenses that**

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are not arranged through the sending agency, receipts for those expenses must be submitted before the funds will be released. If contributions through church offerings are in excess of funds needed by the applicant, the excess funds will be donated to the project or the sending agency. If the trip does not occur for any reason, any funds donated through church offerings for the trip will be donated to the sending agency.

7. There may not be a specific line item in the Missions budget dedicated to short term Missions. There may or may not be discretionary funds available to contribute to any specific short term Missions trip. If funds are available, the support may only be given when all of the application process has been followed.

8. Priority will be given to those who are older than 18 years of age and are a church member. Regular church attendees will be considered next in order of priority.

VI. Website Guidelines

A. The church's website will be utilized as a tool to inform our congregation about the ministries and missionaries supported by First Evangelical Free Church of Maine. The Missions Committee wishes to make this a useful and safe method of assisting our missionaries and do not wish to harm their ministries in any way. If there is any question, we will err on the side of caution. In light of this, the following guidelines will apply to the Missionary portion of the church website.

B. Written permission will be sought from missionaries before posting any information

C. Only first initials of any nationals/people who are being ministered to will be used

D. The website will direct inquiries to the missionaries' ministry websites when available.