

West Congregational Church

— Missions Policy —

Revised December 1, 2008

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MISSIONS STATEMENT

The Missions Leadership Team (MLT) aims to love and obey God by reaching outward through promoting missions awareness and participation at West Congregational Church (WCC). We are committed to mobilizing our people, gifts, talents and resources to bring others closer to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Our desire is to work in partnership with the leadership of existing churches or ministries in the United States and abroad. Our ministry of missions will increase our Christian worldview, enabling us to better see the needs at home and abroad.

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I. PURPOSE

A. Scriptural Basis of Missions

1. To fulfill the Great Commission.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19, 20)

2. To bring men and women to salvation and the knowledge of God.

“For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (Romans 10:13-15)

“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” (I Corinthians 9:19-23)

“. . . to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (Ephesians 4:12)

3. To obey Christ by confessing Him to the world.

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32-33)

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” (Matthew 25:41-46)

4. To minister to the totality of human need in partnership with the local church.

“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:42)

“I tell you the truth, anyone who gives a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.” (Mark 9:41)

5. Reflecting the above scriptural principles, our philosophic goals will require that missionary applicants be
 - a. theologically sound,
 - b. economically responsible,
 - c. cross-cultural in nature,
 - d. geared toward equipping local leadership to do the work of evangelism, church planting, and discipling.

B. Definition of Missions

Any endeavor outside our local congregation to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ by proclaiming the gospel of Christ, making disciples and relating to the spiritual and physical needs of mankind.

C. The Purpose of Our Missions Policy

1. To help achieve a clear sense of direction.
2. To avoid making important decisions on an emotional or haphazard basis (for example, based on the charisma of the speaker, the “connections” of those seeking support, the mood or time a decision is made).
3. To help us be good stewards of each missions dollar.
4. To help bring new members up to date, allowing them to quickly familiarize themselves with the issues to be faced within the scope of our Missions Policy.
5. To maintain consistency as leadership teams change membership.
6. To develop a loving accountability in our missions ministry.
7. To work in better harmony with the church-wide leadership.

D. Flexibility of Interpretation

1. It is intended that the missions policies be generally followed.
2. Counsel should be sought when an issue comes up that would be contrary to policy.
3. Exceptions can be made at any time, but these must be cleared with proper authority, i.e., the majority agreement of the MLT and the pastoral staff.
4. Exceptions, along with accompanying rationale, should be carefully documented to avoid establishing irreversible precedents and to accumulate a basis for policy revision.

E. Revision of the Missions Policy

1. The Missions Policy should be reviewed and revised every five years or as needed.
2. Subject to pastoral approval, the MLT has the sole responsibility of revising the Missions Policy and approving revisions.
3. All modifications require the same approval as the original policy.

II STRUCTURE

A. Authority of the MLT

1. The MLT is authorized to act in accordance with the stipulations of the church Missions Policy.
2. To insure accountability, all meetings and actions of the MLT will be recorded in minutes and submitted to the pastoral staff and made available to church members as requested.
3. The MLT will have the authority to
 - a) evaluate missionaries, agencies, and policies,
 - b) oversee all missions education in the church,
 - c) develop and administer the missions budget and make recommendations to the Finance Team and Leadership Council,
 - d) approve all short-term projects and teams,
 - e) oversee the preparation of candidates for long- and short-term service,
 - f) approve and/or establish missions ministry teams as needed according to church policy.

B. Selection of the MLT

1. The leader of the MLT is recruited by the pastoral staff in accordance with the West Church Management Team policy.
2. Members of the MLT will be appointed by the MLT leader.
3. Members will be recruited on the basis of their potential contribution to the missions ministry.
4. Team members will be appointed for one year (renewable) terms. The MLT leader will conduct annual reviews to hold team members accountable to policy standards.

C. Criteria for Selecting Members

1. An interest in missions.
2. A desire to learn more about missions.
3. Past experience or knowledge preferred but not required.
4. Demonstrated communication and leadership skills.
5. A willingness to undergo initial and continued training in missions.

D. Responsibilities of the MLT Leader

1. Appointed by the Senior Pastor for a one-year (renewable) term, in accordance with church policy.
2. Coordinates the missions ministry of the church.
3. Appoints MLT members.
4. Serves as the chair of MLT meetings.
5. Adds wisdom, knowledge and maturity to the final decisions of the MLT.
6. Trains new team members on church Missions Policy and missions in general.
7. Periodically follows up and annually evaluates MLT members.

E. Responsibilities of Individual Team Members

1. Is a consistent witness for Christ. Prays regularly for church leadership, team members, the missionaries and ministries that WCC supports.
2. Attends all meetings of the MLT (usually monthly). Works to make all team members effective.
3. Meets periodically with the MLT leader.
4. Assists other team members with events and projects.
5. Works with other team members to set forth a vision for missions at WCC, including setting Missions Policy, selecting ministries to support, developing the budget, etc.
6. Remains aware of the status and needs of assigned missionaries and ministries.
7. Is alert to pass on new information to the MLT.
8. Helps educate and inspire the congregation in the field of world missions through
 - a) Missions Moments,
 - b) website,
 - c) posting prayer needs in the bulletin and/or prayer chain,
 - d) special events.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MISSIONS LEADERSHIP TEAM

A. Training of MLT members

The MLT will

1. provide a packet for each new MLT member that will include a copy of the Missions Policy, a list of our missionaries and email addresses, the last three meeting minutes, the current budget, a reading list of latest developments in missions, plus phone numbers and email addresses of team members;
2. encourage (and pay for) attendance at missions conferences;
3. annually commit as a team to at least one training activity, such as a book discussion or bringing in an outside speaker.

B. Goal Setting/Strategy

The MLT will

1. set goals that are measurable but that involve a step of faith, i.e.
 - a) the number of people who participate in short-term trips or who are involved in missions,
 - b) how high to raise the support level of all our missionaries before adding additional missionaries.
2. One day shall be set aside annually for team goal setting/missions strategy for the following year.

C. Developing Prayer Concerns

The MLT will

1. endeavor to develop among church members an increasing awareness of the necessity of intercessory prayer for world evangelism and for our missionaries;
2. present news and needs from the pulpit, in the weekly bulletin, in Mission Moments, in Sunday school classes, on the church website, and through the prayer team;
3. encourage interaction between missionaries and the congregation through letters, email, recordable media (church services & sermons), by visits from missionaries on home assignment, and by assigning missionaries to stay in WCC members' homes during home assignment;
4. promote an adoption program whereby other ministry teams and church families concern themselves with the spiritual and practical needs of a particular missionary family;
5. encourage church leadership to pray for God to raise up people to support and/or serve as missionaries.

D. Missions Education at West Congregational Church

The MLT will

1. hold an annual missions event,
2. have a missions-emphasis Sunday once a month, utilizing a Missions Moment,
3. promote interaction with missionaries,
4. devote an adequate amount of the budget to new and creative ways of educating the church body concerning missions and our missionaries.

E. Missionary Recruitment at West Congregational Church

The MLT will

1. specifically watch for young people with interest and promise for a career in missions,
2. offer counsel and guidance for these prospects during their discernment process,
3. encourage participation in and provide support for attendance at missions conferences (Urbana, National Short-Term Missions Conference, etc.),
4. provide whatever financial support we can for church members who desire to train for missions service,
5. continually challenge the church body to focus on the unreached world and the unfinished task,
6. encourage and provide opportunities for intercultural ministry in the local community.

F. Selecting Missionaries and Mission Agencies

1. Missionaries and mission agencies selected by West Congregational Church shall adhere to evangelical doctrine and shall not hold doctrines inconsistent with the West Church statement of faith.
2. The MLT will evaluate and select missionaries and mission agencies according to the philosophy stated in I.A. Findings in these areas shall be kept on file.
3. The church shall support only those persons and agencies that have been screened/evaluated by the MLT and are either:
 - a) members of a West Church-approved mission agency, or
 - b) a member of the congregation whose calling and training are judged satisfactory by the MLT and pastoral staff.

G. Evaluating Petitions for Support

The MLT will

1. evaluate applications for missions support, based on the purposes, strategies, and financial policies articulated in the WCC Missions Policy,
2. evaluate any potential missionary seeking church support prior to any public presentation.

H. Caring for WCC Missionaries on the Field

The MLT will

1. maintain regular contact through letters and email and other forms of communication,
2. encourage church members and ministry teams to meet the practical needs of our missionaries,
3. establish an adopt-a-missionary program with other team ministries and church families,
4. encourage personal visits (home or field) by missions leadership and church staff and will support these visits as financial resources allow.

I. Caring for Visiting WCC Missionaries

The MLT will

1. be alert for opportunities for missionaries to visit us,
2. host visiting missionaries and provide an opportunity for them to share on a Sunday morning at the discretion of the senior pastor,
3. provide an informal time of fellowship for guest missionaries and the MLT, church staff and congregation, with the opportunity to share their current ministry in greater depth,
4. provide a financial gift to visiting missionaries upon their visit to help defray travel costs.

J. The Ongoing Education of Missionaries

1. When a missionary desires advanced study, the MLT will continue his/her support for up to one full year on return from the field, upon recommendation of the MLT.
2. The MLT will evaluate each case on its own merits, in lieu of a standard policy on this issue.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MISSIONARY TO THE CHURCH

- A.** Each missionary is expected to communicate regularly with WCC and to provide updates and report major changes in ministry, as well as in needs and assignments.
- B.** Missionaries from North America are expected to visit WCC when on furlough. Foreign nationals are encouraged to visit if possible.
- C.** Missionaries are expected to refrain from direct solicitation of funds from individuals at WCC.
- D.** Any requests for funds over the allotted amount must be submitted to the MLT for approval.

V. WCC SHORT-TERM TEAMS

A. Philosophy of Short-Term Missions Programs

1. Keeping with the principles practiced by Jesus, West Church will send out short-termers only as a team or in pairs. (Luke 10:12).
2. Short-term projects will be under the supervision and direction of the national leadership, or in the case of local missions, under the direction of a leader from that community.
3. Short-term projects will not be viewed as vacations or retreats, but rather as an opportunity to minister alongside, with, and to the members of our host community. Teams are there to serve the recipients' agenda, not our own.
4. Financial support will be raised by the candidate/worker or through group fundraising. Special appeals for additional funds should be made through the STMT group leader to the MLT.
5. Each candidate/worker will sign an agreement to accept financial responsibility for their own financial shortfall.

B. Approval Procedure of Short-Term Programs and Projects

1. The MLT will approve all short-term placements, including ministry site, mission agency and short-term project leaders. Applications for short-term missions projects are available from the MLT or pastoral staff.
2. Criteria for placement selection must include a viable vision of ministry by the local leadership. Every effort must be made to work in partnership with local ministry leaders, without creating a sense of dependency.

C. Approval of New Mission Teams or Projects

1. All new mission teams or projects will be approved by the MLT with pastoral staff input.
2. Anyone desiring to form a new project team must provide a written proposal to the MLT, which shall include:
 - a) the purpose/goal of the ministry team (Mission Statement),
 - b) the need(s) this team will address,
 - c) the leader(s) of the team,
 - d) the projected cost of this ministry, along with a plan for fundraising,
 - e) research that demonstrates that no other WCC or other evangelical ministry is addressing this need; otherwise, the ministry already in place should be supported,
 - f) adequate team members to meet this need.

3. Leaders of mission teams or projects must:
 - a) possess a sincere interest in missions,
 - b) be an active participant in the life of West Church and complete all necessary study or assignments for consideration,
 - c) possess sufficient spiritual maturity and proven responsibility,
 - d) evidence faithfulness in ministry, cooperative spirit, submission to authority, and fruit of the Spirit,
 - e) have talents and gifts necessary to provide leadership and the ability to oversee this ministry.
4. New team projects must demonstrate that this new ministry is required to meet a proven need.
5. The MLT will interview the member(s) wishing to start this ministry after their proposal has been reviewed.

D. Criteria for Selecting Candidates for Short-Term Service

1. Short-term candidates will complete an application form, be interviewed by the short-term leaders and MLT leaders and by the pastoral staff. In the case of young people, advice of youth leaders will be sought. Prior to the final team selection, the STMT leaders will provide a list of potential team members to the MLT for review.
2. Those desiring to serve on a short-term mission project should:
 - a) have a sincere interest in considering the call of God to serve on the particular STMT,
 - b) be an active participant in the life of West Church,
 - c) complete any necessary study or assignment for consideration,
 - d) possess sufficient spiritual maturity and proven sense of responsibility,
 - e) have adequate funding, including an appropriate contribution by the candidate,
 - f) show evidence of faithfulness in ministry, cooperative spirit, submission to authority, and fruit of the Spirit.
 - g) actively pray for the project and for the people among whom they will minister.

E. Local Intercultural Involvement

The MLT will

1. expose church members to opportunities available in our area,
2. encourage people to seek out cross-cultural ministries.

VI. FINANCIAL POLICIES

A. Financial Support for the Missions Ministry

1. The financial support of missionaries and ministries will be raised through the “faith promise” system. One hundred percent of “faith promise” giving will be used to support our missionaries and ministries.
 - a) We will strongly encourage giving to the general Missions budget.
 - b) In the event of a designated gift, the donor will be encouraged to send gifts directly to the mission agency. Exceptions for designated giving for a specific, one-time project may be approved by the MLT.
2. A percentage of the total church budget will be given to Missions for administration costs.
3. Monies received in excess of the annual Missions budget will remain in the missions account and will be disbursed in accordance with policies described in VI-C—Undesignated Funds.
4. In the event of lack of adequate support for deserving ministries, the church body will be encouraged to increase its support. In the event of a funding shortage, priorities will be assigned to each item in the Missions budget.

B. Preparation and Approval of Missions Budget

The Missions budget shall be set up by the MLT according to the priorities that reflect our Missions Policy. Our annual Missions budget will be based on past budgets and future opportunities. The MLT shall periodically review existing ministries with a view toward increasing, decreasing, or terminating support. Future opportunities will be evaluated as they arise.

C. Undesignated Funds

Undesignated funds shall be used for but not limited to the following:

1. Unforeseen or emergency circumstances of a missionary family, i.e., a medical problem, evacuation, or fund shortage.
2. Special opportunities that might come up during the year, for which money has not been budgeted.

D. Strategy for Stewardship

1. One hundred percent of the “Faith Promise” giving shall be used in direct support of missionaries.
2. Administrative costs and Missions education will be paid for out of the percentage received from the church operating budget.
3. Expenses of MLT members, church staff, and appointed church members to attend regional, national, or international conferences dealing with missions shall be paid out of the percentage received from the church operating budget.
4. Honoraria for missions speakers, etc., shall be paid for out of the percentage received from the church operating budget.
5. Support for missionary activities around the world shall be used in an effective manner to fulfill the Great Commission. Priority will be given to activities in the following order, which reflects our stated philosophy in I.A.5:
 - a) Evangelism and Church Planting
 - b) Support ministries for evangelism and church planting
 - c) Christian education
 - d) Other ministries
6. WCC members will normally receive priority over other missionaries.

E. Missionary Support

1. Each missionary will be supported according to the strategy set forth in section D (above). If a missionary decides to separate from a mission agency or has a change of initial focus, a re-evaluation will be made by the MLT and a decision made as to the continuation of support. The decision will be based upon the total strategy outlined in section D.
2. The support for a missionary will begin at an amount determined by the MLT. An annual evaluation will be made for adjustments. Criteria to determine the amount allotted may include but are not limited to: alternate sources of support, years of WCC membership or association with our missions program, active church service, amount needed, number of people in family, type of work done, the fruitfulness of the ministry, and location of work. Provision for general insurance, education of missionary children, and retirement shall be the responsibility of the individual missionary.
3. The MLT has the responsibility of making timely, regular payments to all missionaries.