

## WORLD MISSION POLICY

### 1. BACKGROUND INTRODUCTION

Our vision at Above Bar Church (ABC) places mission at the heart of what we all do. The foundational promise to Abraham that he and his offspring would be blessed by God and that through them the nations would be blessed (Gen.12<sup>1-3</sup>), along with background on what the blessing means (e.g. Gen.1<sup>28</sup>) and how it can be worked out (e.g. Gen.39), provides the beginning of the biblical mandate to view mission as both **holistic** (i.e. concerned with the whole of creation – both spiritual and physical) and **integrated** (i.e. it is the calling of *all* of God's people). This is often called the mission of God (his purpose for creation) and it is this which defines our mission as his people. Our underlying **Mission Statement** could thus be expressed as:

**'We, the people of Above Bar Church and thus part of the worldwide church, are committed to playing our part in taking the whole gospel to the whole community in which God has placed us and to all other communities to which God calls us.'**

We aim to work this out on the basis of our specific core values:

- to be **Bible-centred** is to see that God's plan has always been to bring His blessing to all the nations of the world and to rejoice to play a part in what He is doing;
- To be an **authentic community** of Christians is to recognise that we are joined to the worldwide church of Christ and share both in its suffering and in its calling to mission;
- To be **God-dependent** is to know that we not only pray for mission, but that in praying we participate in the work of mission;
- To be **mission-focused** is to help every member of the church to find their role in responding to the call of Christ, who sends us into the world to work with Him in sharing the good news and building His Kingdom.

As a church we recognise with gratitude and awe the privilege and responsibility that are ours as we are sent by the Lord Jesus Christ into the world just as he was sent by the Father (John 17<sup>18, 20<sup>21</sup></sup>) in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the coming of God's Kingdom (Matt.4<sup>17</sup>). The Lord Jesus commands His church to make disciples of all nations (Matt.28<sup>18-20</sup>, Phil.2<sup>10,11</sup>), to call all peoples to the obedience of faith in Christ crucified and risen for our salvation (Rom. 16<sup>26</sup>), and to share the good news of reconciliation with God (Rom. 5<sup>9,10</sup>) and the certain hope of the renewal of the whole of creation (Rom.8).

**All of us** are called to be involved in this mission, and in that sense we are all mission partners. However, in this

policy document we reserve that term specifically for those ABC members who, while part of our church family at Above Bar, have a role in God's wider purposes that takes them beyond the local mission focus of the church in and around Southampton. These are our 'Sent Mission Partners' and 'Exploratory Mission Partners' (i.e. SMPs and EMPs, see section 5 for full definitions). It is when we recognize that the lives of each one of us are to be shaped by God's purposes that we can best support our mission partners, recognising that their work is part of our mission as a church.

Furthermore, the membership of Above Bar Church affirms its commitment to world mission in the fullest (i.e. holistic) and widest (i.e. integrated) sense, so we should seek to address both spiritual and material needs by engaging in both evangelism and social action in whatever sphere God directs, as we seek to be disciples and to make disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### 2. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MISSION

Above Bar Church is committed to:

- a. encouraging all church members to view all they do as part of their spiritual calling and opportunity for mission;
- b. promoting mission locally, nationally and across the world, and teaching that it is an integral part of God's will and work;
- c. providing opportunity for members to become directly involved in world mission in its fullest sense;
- d. participating in the support for members in approved mission work in the UK or overseas, members in training for such work and members on approved short-term assignments;
- e. identifying church members whom God may be calling to be involved full-time or part-time in approved mission work;
- f. providing pastoral care and other support to our mission personnel in partnership with their mission agencies and local Christians as far as is possible.

The final responsibility for mission and its development within Above Bar Church lies with the eldership. They will delegate some of their functions to working groups or committees made up of church members. Details of current structures can be found in Appendix 1.

### 3. MISSION EDUCATION and PRAYER

Teaching about world mission both locally and across the world should be an integral and ongoing part of the church's teaching programme. It should feature regularly in the teaching ministry on Sundays, as well as in the regular mid-week programme of activities and on special

mission focus occasions. The programme should be such that ABC mission partners are encouraged to contribute to the life of the church when they are available. This enables direct feedback from the mission partners themselves as well as encouraging support.

The church is committed to praying for its mission partners. Corporate prayer for world mission (both locally and across the world) should take place during Sunday services as well as on other occasions when members of the congregations meet together to pray. Also, each member of the congregation is actively encouraged to pray consistently for at least one of our mission partners.

#### 4. PRINCIPLES OF MISSION SERVICE

There is an appreciation that individuals within the church may feel a sense of calling to either short-term or long-term mission. It is, however, important that such callings should be recognized by the church eldership and membership before anyone embarks on mission partner service. For the individual there should be a deep sense of personal responsibility to God to fulfill the task, but one tempered with humility. The person may be willing to go but the church should be involved in deciding if that individual is suitable. It has to consider the needs and the opportunities that exist, in consultation with mission agencies, and be asking God whom he would have us to send. We should expect that God will call us to set apart those he is already using in the local church here. As a church we also believe that we should not just wait for people to come forward but rather we should challenge members to consider mission opportunities and nurture their interest. From time to time, as God leads, the church eldership may decide to promote certain types of ministry and/or parts of the world and encourage future development and consolidation in those areas.

In the light of the church's commitment to holistic mission (e.g. involving projects addressing practical and social needs as well as more direct Christian ministries like evangelism, church planting, theological training, etc.), we also encourage the development of partnerships with Christians in the UK or overseas in which we work together to bring God's blessing to both their community and our own. This will involve identifying from time to time specific projects which may be appropriate for additional Above Bar Church involvement, whether financial and/or otherwise. When appropriate we wish to develop such partnerships through our mission partners (in collaboration with their mission agencies) but there may from time to time be other avenues for such work. The criteria which need to be considered in determining whether such projects can proceed with ABC support, are outlined in Appendix 4. Recommendations for support should normally be brought by the elders to the church for approval and, if the proposal involves financial support,

would normally be expected to form part of the annual budget provision for world mission (see Section 6).

Supporting structures and accountability arrangements for these projects are outlined in appendices one and four.

#### 5. SELECTION OF MISSION PERSONNEL

There are two categories of mission partner.

##### 1. *Sent Mission Partners (SMPs)*

It is the church's duty, through its leaders, to identify those members whom God is calling to specific mission work. Before an individual can be recommended to the church as a sent mission partner it would be normal for that individual to:

- have been a church member for at least three years and be active in church life for at least two years;
- display consistent godliness and Christian character along with appropriate gifting for the role;
- be in full agreement with ABC's basis of faith, vision and values;
- be associated with an agency committed to an evangelical basis of faith and (normally) a member of the Global Connections family;
- have an agreed focus of ministry for a specified period of time;
- have a clear sense of calling.

In addition, there should be in place a partnership agreement (usually through a Memorandum of Understanding) with the agency and also, where possible, with a local church in the area where the individual will be working.

Church members who believe God may be calling them to mission service will be invited to meet with the elders and/or those to whom they delegate such tasks (see Appendix 1). In the early stages these meetings may be quite informal and they may take place over a period of time. Discussion will also be held with the relevant mission agencies or other bodies where appropriate. It should be stressed that positive approval from such agencies does not automatically constitute accreditation as an ABC Sent Mission Partner. Such approval and accreditation will only occur when church members have voted by a 75% majority on a recommendation from the elders.

There may be situations where individuals or a couple became involved in mission work prior to their membership of Above Bar Church and continue such involvement thereafter. Provided their situation fulfills the appropriate criteria from the above list, it would be normal practice for them to be recognised by the church as SMPs, with a suitable partnership agreement put in place where possible.

## *2. Exploratory Mission Partners (EMPs)*

Part of the process of an individual, together with the church and a mission agency, discerning God's call to become an SMP may in some cases involve a short-term assignment of some kind, or may include specific training (typically, perhaps, theological training). The church leaders may in such circumstances seek approval from the church to designate such an individual as an Exploratory Mission Partner (EMP). It is recognised that, in the case of the development of new and pioneering ministries, this exploratory period may last for a considerable period. Recognition as an EMP does not guarantee later recommendation as a Sent Mission Partner.

In addition to these two categories, there are other ABC people who may work abroad, as either:

### *(i) Short term workers*

We recognise that every year some members or worshippers at ABC go on short-term mission assignments for limited periods. These may be either abroad or in the UK and would ideally involve a team and be linked to a current Sent Mission Partner. The Elders and MPSG (see Appendix 1) encourage all those considering such trips to engage with them for advice and guidance as early as possible, enlisting also the church's prayerful and (where appropriate) financial support. Short-term opportunities are communicated to the church more widely as they arise, seeking participants as appropriate.

or:

### *(ii) Members Abroad*

From time to time individual members of Above Bar Church who are not mission partners and are not linked to mission agencies may move abroad for a period of time, for work or personal reasons. It would usually not be appropriate for them to be recommended as mission partners (whether SMP or EMP), but if they remain members of ABC such individuals can expect to receive continuing support in prayer and other ways, usually through their home or cluster groups primarily, just as these are provided for all ABC's membership.

## **6. PERSONNEL SUPPORT**

The church recognises its duty to continue to give pastoral advice and care to its serving mission partners, in consultation with the mission agencies where appropriate. Our aim is to follow scripture's encouragement to send our partners "in a manner worthy of God" (3 John 6). Appropriate structures are provided to enable a frequent two-way flow of information and to bring particular needs of the mission partners to attention of the eldership (see Appendix 1).

Church mission partners and their agencies will be expected to keep in regular contact with the church and to provide regular information about their ministry. They will be expected to involve the eldership in major decisions regarding a change of ministry. Under some

circumstances, this may have to be reaffirmed by a church members' vote as in Section 5 above. Where mission partners become full-time workers in other churches, any financial support given by ABC would normally cease.

There must be regular review for all Sent Mission Partners. This will be normally at least two-yearly but may need to coincide with a period of home leave where applicable. Such review will provide an opportunity for both the SMP and the eldership (or those to whom they delegate such responsibilities) to re-evaluate their commitment to the project. This will enable ongoing accountability as well as updating the church of all the needs of the SMP.

## **7. GIVING and FINANCE**

The church recognises its responsibility to provide financial support for world mission, whilst also recognising that the exact mechanisms for this are not entirely clear in scripture. We currently make a contribution towards the ministry and living expenses of many, though not all, of our mission partners but a substantial part of their support comes from other sources. Our long-term aim is to ensure that all our Sent Mission Partners are adequately and fairly supported, with appropriate allocation of funds based on physical and situational needs. SMPs are not automatically guaranteed an allocation of ABC funds; each individual's case will be considered by the elders (or those to whom they delegate such responsibilities) and a statement on whether or not an allocation is appropriate should be made to the church when recommending them as an SMP. If it is not initially appropriate but at a later date becomes so because of a change in circumstances, the leadership may return to the church to seek approval for support. The 'share' system for allocation of funds is outlined in Appendix 2. When SMPs reach normal pensionable age considerations regarding continuing support will be made under the criteria detailed in Appendix 3.

The world mission budget will be approved annually by the elders. In advance of each financial year they will receive a request for funds to support the 'share' allocation (Appendix 3) and provide limited additional support for emergency or other special needs. This will enable them to establish the budget for the year ahead. Administration of all funds will rest with the church treasurer.

Our major charge as a church is to support ABC's Sent Mission Partners and their mission agencies. Giving will be directed to that end. Exceptions may be made in the case of well defined finance-intensive aid ministries or Christian nationals. Only approved SMPs may have regular financial support from the church, but grants may also be made to Exploratory Mission Partners.

Biblical teaching on giving should be an integral part of the church's teaching programme and the allocation of funds to world mission will be a significant part of church expenditure.

## APPENDIX 1

There are essentially four major areas which require ongoing, organised commitment by appropriate groups in order to facilitate the outworking of the World Mission Policy. These tasks can be summarized as:

- (i) the pastoral support of all existing Sent Mission Partners, in conjunction with their Mission Agencies and their local representatives;
- (ii) communicating SMP, EMP and other global mission work to the wider church and facilitating coordinated and specific prayer;
- (iii) encouraging and overseeing the development of community projects;
- (iv) encouraging individuals into short- and/or long-term global mission, generating appropriate support bases and ensuring any necessary training.

It is also important to keep abreast of the wider (world-wide) church's thinking regarding global mission and the corresponding developments in mission agencies, both in the West and elsewhere, and to consider how these should be reflected in ABC's own world mission activity.

These various tasks are undertaken by the following groups, under the direction of the full-time Minister who has specific responsibility for ABC's world mission involvement (hereafter 'the Minister'). He ensures that the outworking of the World Mission Policy by these groups, or alternatives he may wish to institute from time to time, is satisfactory and in line with the World Mission Policy.

Covering tasks (i) and (in part) (iv) is the role of the MPSG –

### **Mission Personnel Support Group (MPSG)**

It has responsibility for:

- a. all ABC's mission personnel (whether SMP or EMP) who exercise a ministry which is distinct from the local ministry of the church;
- b. providing personal and pastoral support to all ABC mission personnel and ensuring an active sense of 'connection' between them and the whole church family, via the MCG (see below);
- c. liaising closely with the treasurer in relation to the administration of the agreed mission share and the processing of specific requests for financial support of EMPs and SMPs;
- d. liaising with the mission agencies who facilitate the ministries of ABC mission personnel, establishing (where necessary) and maintaining appropriate partnerships with those agencies;
- e. counseling and advising those considering mission service (whether long-term or, in partnership with the MPG, see below, short-term) to think through what this might involve and to work towards an agreed path for them;
- f. Operating the 'Buddy' scheme, providing liaison between MPSG and the mission partners through

their Link Persons. (See the Addendum below for the generic roles of Links and Buddies.)

Membership should normally include the Chair (appointed by the elders, from WMSG), the Minister, a lay elder (who also sits on the WMSG) and at least five others, one of whom sits on MCG (see below) and one on MPG (see below). It should normally meet monthly.

Task (ii) above is the responsibility of the

### **Mission Communication Group (MCG)**

Its remit is:

- a. responsibility for providing on-going mission partners (both SMP and EMP) and other global mission information for prayer to the church, including services, prayer meetings, other prayer networks and specifically organized occasional prayer days. This requires close links with the MPSG;
- b. maintaining ABC's web pages related to global mission (SMPs etc), developing and maintaining appropriate email prayer lists, exploring possibilities for SMP 'chat-and-information-area' on the web site, etc.;
- c. Developing cross-cultural mission engagement by:
  - i. enabling the church to develop a clear understanding of its role and approach in relation to such ministries;
  - ii. increasing awareness of and active engagement with these ministries within the wider church family;
  - iii. bringing the challenge of cross-cultural mission to the wider church family in a compelling and engaging fashion.
  - iv. Using the opportunities for short-term mission to the maximum possible effect;
  - v. Liaising constructively with other teams in the church in order to help carry these aims forward.
- d. responsibility for an educational programme within the church that has a particular focus on mission, especially cross-cultural mission. Such a programme may be incorporated in Sunday services and regular mid-week meetings but may also involve separate 'mission focus' events.

Membership should include one the Chair (from WMSG), a lay elder, one from MPSG, and three others at least one of whom should be IT-literate. It should meet at least bi-monthly.

Tasks (iii) and (in part) (iv) above are the responsibility of the

### **Mission Project Group (MPG)**

Its remit is the:

- a. encouraging and overseeing development of community projects with Sent Mission Partners and others;
- b. ensuring such projects follow the criteria laid down in the WMP document (Appendix 4);

- c. in association with the MPSG, working with those ABC members considering short term mission activity, identifying possible work and helping to establish appropriate teams.

Membership should include the Chair (from WMSG), a lay elder, one from MPSG and two others with interests and expertise in appropriate areas of secular activity in, for example, the business, educational or health sectors.

Ensuring coherence in and appropriate interactions between all three of the above Groups, whilst maintaining global awareness and overseeing general policy is the work of the

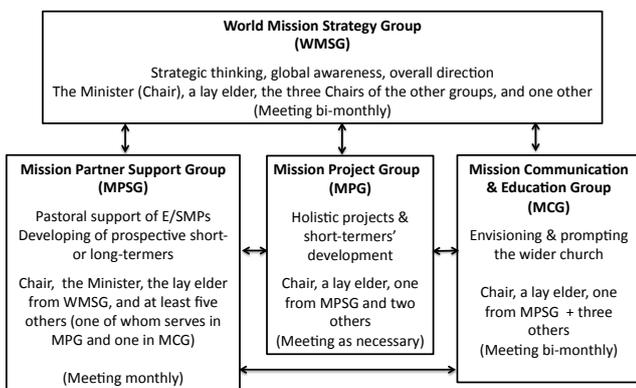
**World Mission Strategy Group (WMSG)**

Its remit is to:

- a. maintain awareness of the general thinking and development of the world-wide church in its world mission vision and practice (e.g. via ongoing relationships with Mission Agencies);
- b. consider whether and how that strategic thinking should be encapsulated in ABC’s own policies and practice;
- c. maintain an awareness of the work of the MPSG, the MCG and the MDG, ensuring coherence and effectiveness;
- d. develop methodologies for identifying those whom God is calling the church to set apart for mission service, whether short- or long-term.
- e. ensure that the ABC Leadership Team is kept informed of the work of all four groups, requesting agreement for specific actions or policy changes as appropriate.

Membership includes the Minister as chair, the Chairs of the other three groups (MPSG, MCG and MPG), the lay elder from MPSG, and one other. It meets as necessary but at least quarterly.

The overall structure of the work of and interactions between these groups is summarized diagrammatically below:



**Appendix 1 – Addendum: Links & Buddies**

Each Sent Mission Partner (or SMP couple) have a Link person, who has the specific role of representing the SMP to the wider church and to the MPSG (through the Buddies). A separate document outlines the essential features of the role, expanding on the words providing the acronym (L.I.N.K. for Liaison, Integration, Nurture, Knowledge). Links are expected to work out the detailed nature of their role with the SMP.

It is the overall role of the Buddy personally to represent an SMP to the MPSG and in particular to bring to the attention of the MPSG any pastoral, financial or other needs that may arise. Each Buddy works out with their own SMP (and the Link person) the specific responsibilities within this remit. Each member of MPSG is expected to act as Buddy to a number of SMPs, so that all the latter are covered by the whole MPSG.

**APPENDIX 2**

**The Current ‘Share’ System for SMP funding**

- a. Single SMP – 1.00 share
- b. Married SMP couple - normally a 1.65 share. However, this can vary on a case by case basis depending on individual circumstances (including but not limited to couples operating essentially as two distinct SMPs, couples who do not need the full 1.65 share, or couples of whom only one is a member of ABC).
- c. Each dependent child – 0.4 share. Up to three per family to the end of full-time education (first degree). Where SMP’s children take a gap year prior to entering higher education, during which they remain dependent on their parents, the mission partners may, at the discretion of the MPSG, continue to receive a children’s allowance during this period.
- d. Where only one member of a married couple is an ABC member they will normally be treated as a single person, though they may also qualify for children’s allowances.

The value of the share will be published annually in the church budget and accounts.

In addition to the regular support of mission partners through the share system the church aims to provide limited additional support for emergency or other special needs. Allocation of funds from the special needs budget shall be at the prayerful discretion of the Chair of MPSG and at least one elder, with all members of the MPSG being informed in due course. Where possible such allocations shall be prayerfully discussed in a MPSG meeting beforehand. Administration of all funds will rest with the church treasurer.

## APPENDIX 3

### Suggested Appendix 3: Retirement of (SMPs)

1. This appendix addresses points relevant both to those Sent Mission Partners who receive financial support from ABC through the share system and to those who do not.
2. However the SMP is funded, it is assumed that part of their income will cover the usual National Insurance payments, ensuring that on reaching retirement age they will automatically receive the full state pension, wherever they have been domiciled during their time as an SMP. In addition, all SMPs are encouraged to consider, with their Mission Agency, appropriate (additional) pension arrangements, whether *via* that agency's own contributory pension scheme or, if it has none, in some other way.
3. SMPs who, on retirement, return to Southampton to live would, if they remain ABC members, normally be expected to continue active lay involvement in ABC's mission for as long as they are able, just as is expected of all members.
4. SMPs satisfying 3 above would expect to receive the level of pastoral support and encouragement usually afforded to all ABC members. Unless they continue their full-time mission activity (see 6 and 7 below), they would not normally remain part of the specific responsibility of the MPSG for review and support, after an initial one-two year transition phase while they settle back into ABC life.

#### *SMPs funded partly through ABC's share system.*

5. When reaching state pensionable age it is normal for the share allocation to cease.
6. Contrary to 5, if the SMP proposes to continue full-time mission activity with the same mission agency, consideration will be given concerning whether or not the ABC financial support should continue and, if so, at what level (but not beyond that of the usual share system). It is envisaged that this would be discussed on a case-by-case basis by all three parties (ABC, the SMP and the Mission Agency) in the year prior to reaching state pensionable age. The outcome would depend partly on the degree to which other support is likely to continue and the timing of maturation of other pension arrangements if they exist.

#### *SMPs not funded through ABC's share system.*

7. If, as under 6 above, mission activity with the Mission Agency is to continue, the necessity for and possibility of some share allocation will be considered during the regular review of the SMP and in the year prior to reaching the state pensionable age.

## APPENDIX 4

### Draft Criteria for Holistic Mission Projects

As outlined in Section 4, there will be occasions when one or more ABC mission partners identify a specific project which they feel would be worth developing but which does not lie within the remit of their usual work programme. Through appropriate discussion with their Mission Agencies, their relevant local community and church leaders, and the MPG, the latter may wish to recommend such a project to the ABC leadership, suggesting the levels of additional finance and/or manpower that the project would need. The criteria normally required before a project could be accepted by the leadership and recommended to the church should include:

1. a clear partnership agreement, which should ideally include the local church or churches – i.e. those within or close to the SMP's own community where they work;
2. the lead partner church or other group of local Christians should ideally have a basis of faith which is consistent with that contained in the ABC handbook;
3. a clear understanding, shared by all partners, of what is important, what is priority and what might be mutually valuable;
4. a clear budget set against estimated costs and timescales. This should include a business plan containing, *inter alia*, statements outlining the responsibilities of each partner and whether, and if so how, the project will be sustainable in the longer term;
5. opportunities for two-way blessing. Consistent with ABC's understanding of mission, it is expected that not only those for whom the project is initially undertaken, but also ABC itself will experience God's blessing as a result of the project work. Facilitating this will, at the very least, require establishment of appropriate communication channels;
6. safeguards against long-term dependency. It is crucial that the project-related aspirations of the community local to the SMP's work and with whom the project is to be implemented, should be clearly specified and should not include unrealistic hopes for future long-term support.

As noted in Section 4 of the main policy document, such holistic mission projects might occasionally be prompted by ABC members other than SMPs. For them to be pursued with the approval of the MPG and ABC leadership, similar criteria to those listed above would need to be addressed.