

# South Valley Baptist Church - Missions Policy

Missions is not the ultimate end of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. In missions we simply aim to bring the nations into white-hot enjoyment of God's glory. Psalm 67:3-4...***Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!***" John Piper: Let the Nations Be Glad

## The Purpose of Mission

Mission is what God is doing in the world through His Church, and even without the Church, to bring His creation to its consummation, unity, and fullness in Jesus Christ. Missions at South Valley is defined as the sending out and supporting of equipped missionaries who cross barriers of distance, culture, and language in order to participate in God's mission in places beyond the normal sphere of influence of our members, both within and outside of Australia.

## The Purpose of South Valley's Missions Policy

This Missions Policy has been prepared by the elders and reviewed by the Missions Group with the view of providing clarity and direction to South Valley's missions enterprise. This policy is a statement of principles, not a rigid set of rules. Occasionally, exceptions may need to be made and will be done only with the approval of the elders and Missions Group. This policy will be reviewed and revised as often as needed, with a thorough review every two years. All revisions will have the full support of the elders and Missions Group.

## The Role of the Local Church in Sending Missionaries - A Biblical Perspective

Some of the key Biblical principles regarding sending missionaries is found in Acts 13 and 14. These two chapters set forth a number of important principles concerning the sending of New Testament missionaries.

### Acts 13:1-4

1. The first missionaries sent in the New Testament were seasoned veterans: prophets and teachers. This underscores the importance of spiritual maturity in the lives of missionary candidates.
2. The call to *send* came to the leaders of the church. The call to missionary service must be confirmed by the leadership of one's home church. The current popular notion that missionaries are individuals who are called to *go*, with or without the full support of their local churches to *send*, is unbiblical.
3. The call to *send* (and the call to *go*) comes while "*ministering to the Lord*" in the local church. This underscores the importance of worship and prayer as a part of the process of receiving the call. It also points out that a missionary candidate should be fully involved in serving in a local church before being sent.
4. There is no indication regarding the time frame covered in verse 3, but the fact that they fasted and prayed, even after having received word from the Lord, indicates time elapsed while seeking the Lord before acting. God is seldom in as much of a hurry as we tend to be, even when it comes to ministry.

5. The words "*set apart*" indicate a time of preparation for service. The call to missionary service is at least as important as the call to eldership.
6. The missionaries were "*sent*," they didn't just "*go*." Being "*sent*" indicates that the one(s) being sent: a) received a commission from the local church. b) remained responsible and accountable to the senders (the local church.)
7. Being sent by the Church was equated with being sent by the Holy Spirit.

### **Acts 13:5-14:21**

1. The primary responsibility of the missionary is to "*preach the gospel*."
2. The fact that not all members of the team were the preachers affirms the fact that there is a need for support personnel. Not all are preachers and the non-preaching members of the team are as important to the mission as the preachers.
3. The fact that the team was a great distance from the home church and was, therefore, unable to be in constant communication, instructs us that missionaries on the field, while responsible and accountable to their sending church, must be "field led." It is impossible for the sending church to direct every aspect of the missionary enterprise. The Holy Spirit will guide and direct the missionary while on the field as to the daily details of the work. This is another reason that missionaries must be mature Christians whose relationship with the Lord and ability to hear and follow His leading must be without question.

### **Acts 14:21-28**

1. The goal of New Testament missionary enterprises is planting churches, not merely calling individuals to salvation. Only those who have a solid understanding of New Testament ecclesiology are in a position to establish churches and appoint church leadership.

Freelance missionary enterprises that are disconnected from the church will not, and cannot, establish that of which they are not a part. While on the field, unless in a region of the world in which there is no opportunity for Christian fellowship, missionaries should seek to be in fellowship in a church. If there is no church, missionaries should participate in a house church, even if it is no bigger than their own family.

2. The missionaries returned to their home sending church to report on the work they had done. This reporting on the fruitfulness of the ministry is important for two reasons: a) It is a means of determining the effectiveness of a missionary. This is important in deciding whether the missionary should be sent on another term. b) Hearing from missionaries encourages the senders that, though they are not all "goers," they have an important stake in the work as "senders."
3. The missionaries stayed in their home church for a "long time." This points out the following: a) The missionaries recognized the sending church as their base of operations. b) The missionaries needed to be ministered to by the members of their home church after serving selflessly for a period of time on the field. c) The missionaries needed to minister in their home church so that the senders would know them well and be ready and willing to support them when they were ready to be sent out again.

## **The Missions Group**

The basic purpose of the Missions Group is...*'To inform, challenge, and mobilize God's people to be creatively and strategically involved in His global mission.'* The Missions Group will continually adopt, evaluate, and revise specific goals for the most effective missionary outreach. They ensure that SV missions is based on Biblical principles, keep the church aware of global needs, educate and nurture a deep commitment to missions, to serve as a liaison between the church and the missionaries, as well as their respective mission organization, and to stimulate intercessory prayer for world evangelism.

Those who serve on the Missions Group should reflect the following qualifications. First, they should be a World Christian. This means they should exhibit a Christ-like life and give evidence of having caught the vision of God's global redemptive purpose, and responded to that vision in practical ways. Second, they should be committed to the local body of believers. They should be in active fellowship with South Valley and demonstrate an understanding of South Valley's philosophy of ministry and missions. Overall, their heart for seeing the unreached peoples of our world reached with the message of Christ should be transferable to others within the Body of Christ.

The size of the Missions Group will vary, with one of the members an elder. It is desired that every member would be willing to serve on the Missions Group for at least three years. The whole group will meet once per month and other meetings may be called for specific purposes as needed. Some of the specific areas of oversight which the Missions Group will be responsible for are:

- Educating oneself about missions through the reading of books, periodicals, websites, attendance at conferences, seminars, and taking short-term mission trips where practicable.
- Promoting, encouraging, and communicating missions to the Body of Christ at South Valley.
- Ongoing missionary care which may involve supplying practical needs of missionaries, spiritual and educational development, regular correspondence, arranging hospitality for visiting missionaries, and any other means of support that may be helpful.
- Strategic planning for the long-range goals of the missions enterprise here at South Valley.

## **The Priority in Career Missions**

The most measurable goal Scripture provides us for accomplishing the Great Commission is that of discipling 'peoples'. We are commanded to disciple all the peoples of the world - Matthew 28:18. We are promised that the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to the whole world as a witness to all the nations and then the end will come - Matthew 24:14. It has been revealed to us that when all is said and done there will be men and women worshipping the Lamb from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues - Revelation 7:9...because Christ has purchased for God with His blood individuals from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation - Revelation 5:9. Therefore, although we must wholeheartedly continue to multiply churches within people groups where an evangelizing church has already been planted, we must also be vitally concerned about planting churches where Christ has not yet even been named in a culturally relevant manner - Romans 15:20.

## Types of Missionary Outreach

**Church Planting** - The establishing of local, indigenous churches characterized by a true worship of God, effective Biblical nurture of believers and the evangelization of unbelievers, to the end that these churches will reproduce themselves.

**Strengthening Existing Churches** - Equipping and building up existing local, indigenous churches so that they are able to evangelize and reproduce churches among their own people in an effective way.

**Support Ministries** - Providing support services to aid those engaged in church planting and equipping ministries. This may include such activities as translation, caring for orphaned and relinquished children, serving those infected with HIV/AIDS, refugee relief, administration, teaching missionary children, medical work, aviation, community development, and a variety of other services.

These categories are not meant to convey inferiority or superiority among types of missionary work. We trust under the Holy Spirit's direction, a healthy blend of diversified ministries will be supported and encouraged. At the same time, we will seek to plan and strategize so as to focus on areas of missionary activity which seem to be critical from the perspective of world missions at this time in history. For this reason we will seek to devote more and more of our missionary activity to the planting and equipping of churches in both *unreached* and *critically needy* areas.

## Qualifications for Missionary Candidates

1. A clear profession of faith and evidence of God's saving work - spiritual maturity - consistent Christ-like lifestyle - evidence of the fruit of the Spirit - continued spiritual growth - and the modeling of the servant life of Christ.
2. Member of South Valley Baptist Church and actively involved in the life of the church for a minimum of two years.
3. Adequate education and training to carry out effectively the proposed ministry. This includes Bible training and cross-cultural preparation and whatever professional training that may be required.
4. A background of proven ministry experience, including active involvement in evangelism and discipleship and ideally to include some kind of short-term overseas experience and/or cross-cultural experience in Australia.
5. Desires to maintain a strong relationship with South Valley's members and leadership, and will abide by any guidelines for correspondence and periodic review of ministry.
6. Reflects the qualities of 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9.
7. Full acceptance by an approved mission agency or the sending church.
8. Physically, emotionally, and mentally fit. Successful completion of any testing which the approved mission agency may require.
9. Strength of marriage and family relationships or acceptance of singleness.

## **Our Relationship With Mission Agencies and Para-Church Ministries**

Mission agencies and Para-church ministries are Christian ministries that, while Christian in every other way, do not meet the accepted criteria to be churches. The New Testament knows nothing of either ministry. While not mentioned in the New Testament, mission agencies and Para-church ministries are not unbiblical. They are often helpful. They exist to assist the work of local churches. They came into being because the church needed assistance, primarily because the church was falling short in a number of areas of ministry, especially missions.

When these vital ministries remember their role, they will not consider candidates for missionary service who are not fully involved in the ministry of a local church and who do not have the full recommendation and support of the leaders of that local church. This means that before making any plans regarding an applicant's ministry, the individual is referred back to the local church for counsel. This is more than asking a pastor to fill out a personal reference form that may or may not have any bearing on the acceptance of the individual into the program. It means seeking the counsel of the spiritual leaders who are responsible to God for, and have the greatest personal knowledge of, the applicant. Only after being commended for the work by the local church should these ministries accept the individual as a missionary or worker.

At South Valley, we will work with mission agencies and para-church ministries in varying degrees. The fact that we support missionaries who are connected with such ministries is not an endorsement of all aspects of those ministries, their beliefs, or practices.

## **Our Role in Supporting Those Missionaries We Send**

There is a difference between being a *sending* church and being a *supporting* church. Most missionaries receive financial support from a number of sources, both individuals and *supporting* churches. In addition to providing financial support, *supporting* churches pray and write letters, keeping the relationship with the missionary in the field alive.

The *sending* church, on the other hand, is the missionary's home church and the base of his or her missionary support while on the field. Antioch was the sending church for the first missionaries in Acts 13-14. *Sending* churches have a far greater responsibility to the missionary than a *supporting* church. Both kinds of churches provide financial and prayer support, but the *sending* church should also act as the "home team" for the missionary while he or she is on the field. The *sending* church should responsibly oversee that the missionary's needs (spiritual, personal, financial and otherwise) are being met.

The *sending* church may be the channel through which the missionary's support funds flow. The *sending* church may establish a "support team" for the missionary, dividing up the various tasks connected with the missionary's support, to ensure that every aspect of the missionary's needs are being met. The leaders of the *sending* church continue to be spiritual "elders" in the missionary's life. The *sending* church is usually the base of operations when the missionary is home on furlough.

On the other hand, the missionary is responsible and accountable to the sending church. The missionary should remain in close contact with, and seek counsel from, the leaders of the sending church, remembering that they are shepherds over his or her soul (Hebrews 13:17). When home on furlough the missionary should not only view the sending church as the base of operations on the home front, but as he or she is able, the missionary should be involved in ministry in the local church when home (Acts 14:26-28).

## Supporting Missionaries: Who and When?

Every missionary should be supported by his or her home church. In addition, other churches and individuals who desire to partner with the missionary should be encouraged to do so. Historically, one of the ways of discerning whether God is guiding a person to be a missionary is to see if God is providing the necessary financial support. Missionaries who will not, or cannot do the work to raise support are not usually good candidates for missionary service. The local sending church should be involved in the fund-raising, or *deputation* process. Para-church mission agencies are also helpful in guiding missionary candidates through this process.

Generally, people pledge to support a missionary once he or she goes to the field. During the deputation process, most missionaries continue to work in whatever field of employment they were in when they were called to be missionaries. During the final weeks or months before it is time for departure the missionary will often stop working at other employment and begin to live on the support that is given.

The first months of missionary service (possibly up to a year) are often dedicated to training. General training about the missionary work and culture and language are often needed. This period of training is a part of a missionary's service. While on furloughs and once on the field from time to time, missionaries will benefit from additional training. As long as this training is associated with the missionary's service, the missionary should be supported during such training. Other training, and training that precedes one's missionary service, such as Bible College or vocational training, is generally not considered a part of the missionary's service.

When a missionary comes home from the field, if he or she does not plan to return to the field, or if his or her plans are unsure, the supporters should continue to support the missionary for a reasonable length of time to help with "re-entry." This support should not be prolonged, however, since the responsibility of the church is to support only those who are actively involved in ministry. The missionary should begin supporting him or herself as soon as reasonably possible.

## Our Role in Caring for Our Missionaries - What a missionary can expect from us

1. **Prayer Support** - we will continually and creatively encourage our people to pray for our missionaries.
2. **Financial Support** - we will pay our promised support every month for the duration of their term. At the end of a given term an evaluation will be made by both parties to see if we want to continue in this relationship. If there is a change in ministry and/or location, an immediate evaluation will be made if we want to continue to support this ministry.
3. **Consistent Communication** - we will attempt to keep our missionaries up to date on what is happening at South Valley.
4. **Practical Assistance** - if a missionary needs housing, transportation, furniture, etc., while he/she is in our area or other kinds of need while on the field, we will attempt to meet those needs in some way.
5. **Team Relationship** - we want to be viewed as part of the team behind our missionaries. They can expect us to have a concern for them and for their ministry. We desire an openness on both our parts. We want to continually develop the attitude of a team ministry that results in a closer relationship.

6. **Report to Missions Group** - our missionaries can expect to meet with the Missions Group whenever they are home on report ministry.

### **What do we expect from our missionaries?**

1. We would like to have a close communication with our missionaries. We believe we should hear from them at least monthly in one form or another (email or hardcopy updates). It is our desire to know how their ministry is progressing as well as how they are doing personally.
2. As part of the team, we would like to be informed of any changes in plans for ministry and/or location.
3. In order to help us better plan for a missionary being in our area, we would like to know as soon as possible when he/she will be with us.

### **A Word About Short-Term Missions**

Short-term missions are similar to long-term missions in most respects. Most of what is contained in this Mission Policy applies to both. One difference, however, is that short-term missions are exploratory in nature, not requiring specific calling to become a vocational or career missionary. For this reason, a person interested in short-term missions still needs the support and endorsement of his home church while investigating his future in missionary service.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has been prepared to clarify the position of South Valley on some of the issues related to missionary service, for both those who go and those who serve as senders. It is the sincere desire of the elders of the church that this paper be helpful. Please feel free to contact the elders of the church if you have any questions. We are here to serve Jesus Christ, His church and you.

## Being Sent As A Missionary From South Valley Baptist Church

The following is written to give encouragement, guidance and direction to those who think God may be calling them to serve as foreign or cross-cultural missionaries.

**1. Pray privately.** Pray regularly for a period of time (several weeks or months) about your desire. Refrain from talking to people about your desire during this time of prayer. You may want to fast during some of this time. If God is calling you the desire will increase, not diminish, during a period of concentrated prayer. Continue praying throughout all other steps.

**2. Inform yourself about ministry and missions.** Read all you can about missionary work and about the place or type of missionary service in which you are most interested.

**3. Seek counsel and prayer support.** Talk about your desires with a respected Christian friend. If you are a young person, speak with your parents.

**4. Speak with the elders of the church.** Speak with any of the pastors or elders. Set up a time to speak with all the elders together, asking for their prayers and counsel. Secure a copy of the instructions about seeking God's will about missionary service written by J. Oswald Sanders.

**5. Understand the counsel of the elders.** Acts 13 instructs us that missionaries are not to go out as free-lance workers. The need to be endorsed and sent out by the local church, even if they are going to be working with a para-church organization. The elders' counsel will likely fall into one of three categories: **a) Wait.** This may be due to your need to mature in your faith, or because the elders believe the timing is not right. **b) Limited Endorsement.** Depending on the type of missionary service and/or the candidate's relationship to the church, the elders may extend a limited endorsement. This is an encouragement to go forward, but not as one "sent by South Valley Baptist Church." **c) Full Endorsement.** This is an encouragement to go forward as one "sent by South Valley Baptist Church." Those sent by South Valley will receive a number of different kinds of practical and spiritual support. Some who receive a full endorsement may also receive financial support.

**6. Formulate a plan.** According to the elders' counsel, formulate a plan concerning your particular desire for missionary service. This plan will include, *where* God is leading you to go, *what* God is leading you to do, *with what* organization you are going to go, *how long* you plan to be gone, and *how much* financial support you will need to raise.

**7. Implement the plan.** With the help and advice of the elders, begin sharing your vision, formulating a prayer support team and raising your financial support.

**8. Raising financial support.** This is a crucial phase. Missionary work requires people to be self-starters who will do things that are difficult. Those who do not have the motivation to raise support are not likely to be effective on the mission field. Expect that you will have to raise 100% of your financial support. If the Lord directs the church to help with your financial support, it will only be a portion of the total budget. One of the ways to be sure God is guiding you is that He will enable you to raise the necessary support.

**9. Go.** Whether you go with limited or full endorsement you will have a life-changing and challenging experience. Go expecting God to minister to and through you.

**10. Communicate with your home team.** While you are away, it is imperative to communicate with your sending church and your supporters. This will help insure that your home team continues praying for and supporting you. It will remind you that they are a part of your ministry and that you are an extension of theirs.

**11. Return.** In the tradition of the Apostle Paul, when you return, you will have much to share with those who sent and supported you. By doing so, you will reinforce the fact that they are a part of your ministry and that you are an extension of theirs.