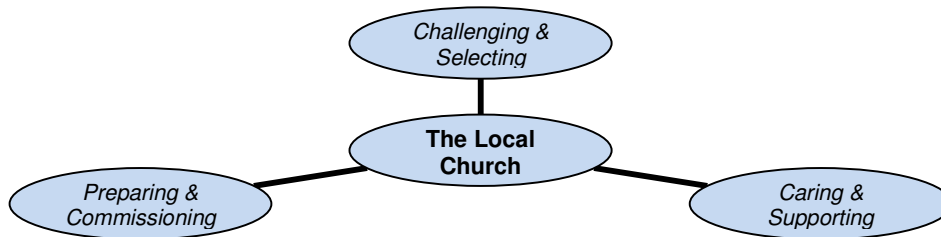


## WORLD FOCUS TEAM

### Assisting Local Churches and Christians in World Mission



## Resource Paper 8

### Good Practice for Churches Commissioning Members for Long-term Missionary Service

This statement of good practice is designed to assist churches commissioning members for long-term cross-cultural missionary service.

❖ **The aim of this statement is to:**

- ensure that a church member's call to missionary service is tested and supported
- ensure that commissioning for long-term mission service is undertaken well by churches and agencies working together
- enable all participants and partners in the programme to find the experience fruitful
- assist in increasingly placing mission at the heart of the church in the UK and beyond.

❖ **The commissioning church should:**

- seek to encourage members of the congregation to be involved primarily in mission projects that demonstrate a commitment to Bible-based cross cultural mission.
- Identifying members whose gifting is appropriate for mission service and challenging them to consider long-term cross-cultural service.
- have a clear, and transparent, procedure whereby members of the congregation can make known to the appropriate leader(s) their interest in long-term mission service.
- evaluate the participant's calling and emotional and spiritual condition to ensure that they can cope with a potentially challenging cross-cultural experience.
- recognise that it has a responsibility to serve all participants and partners to a high standard.

Missionary situations vary and not every element of the following guidelines will necessarily apply in all cases.

❖ **Underlying Values that should undergird the process:**

***The importance of a call to, and suitability for, missionary service:***

In recognition of the testing nature of cross-cultural ministry there is a compelling need for the church leaders to validate a participant's calling to, and emotional and spiritual condition robustness for, such service.

***The importance of partnership:***

The partners in a long-term mission programme all have a significant contribution to make. They are:  
the missionary  
the commissioning church and/or sending agency  
the host church, and/or host agency

*See Resource Paper 7 in the World Focus section of this website.*

There may also be other interested parties involved who should be recognised and included as appropriate. These include the missionary's family, supporting friends and, possibly, another Christian community to whom they relate, for example their Christian Union.

***Evidence of ministry gifts:***

Selection by, and support from, the commissioning church should be focused primarily on candidates who are already involved in ministry in the church and/or other Christian community to whom they relate.

***Adequate preparation:***

The challenges of long-term cross-cultural service require full attention being given to appropriate pre-field training and orientation for candidates for such missionary service.

***Discipleship of the participant:***

In recognising the significant impact of missionary service on the missionary's faith and personal development, the need for pastoral care and positive discipleship during the service is important.

**❖ General Considerations:**

- Missionary service must have clear aims and objectives that are realistic, measurable and compatible with the long-term objectives of the partners.
- Through consultation between the senders and hosts, there should be shared ownership of the missionary service. This must respect the commissioning church's responsibility for the pastoral care of the missionary and the host's responsibility for the on-site project.
- The benefits to, and responsibilities of, all the partners should be clearly identified.
- A suitable, transparent selection process always involving face-to-face contact should be followed. A pastoral component must be included, regardless of the outcome of selection. Where the proposed service is with a Mission Agency the selection process should involve both commissioning church and the Agency.
- There needs to be a clear commitment to disciple and develop the missionary through the mission experience.
- Initial information should be obtained early and should be as comprehensive as possible including the pre-assignment training required and financial responsibilities.

**❖ Training and orientation:**

Cross-cultural missionary work is very demanding. It involves learning a new language and understanding the culture of the people amongst whom the missionary is to live and work. Adequate training and orientation is an essential pre-requisite for missionary service and needs careful attention by the commissioning church. Where the placement is with a Mission Agency decisions about the training programme should involve both commissioning church and the Agency.

Candidates need to have had significant Christian and church experience and to have demonstrated leadership potential and a desire to develop leadership skills and to pass those skills on to others. Essential components of a pre-field training programme will include biblical, doctrinal and cross-cultural training. Specialist training will be required in certain situations e.g. ministry in the context of other religions, literacy skills, et al.

*Useful resources for identifying appropriate training institutions are to be found:*

- *for long-term courses - in the Affinity "Survey of Bible and Theological Colleges" in the Theological Advocacy part of the Teams section of this website*
- *for short courses – in Resource Paper 9 in the World Focus section of this website.*

It is important, also, that adequate orientation prior to the placement be given to all missionaries by the commissioning church and/or by the sending Mission Agency if the placement is with an agency. The host church and/or agency should ensure that satisfactory induction at the start of the project is also provided.

Orientation and induction should cover the following aspects:

- the location and description of the first term project
- the cultural context of the project
- the religious context of the project
- the short-term and long-term objectives of the project
- the provision of adequate opportunity for language learning
- the expected tasks and the lines of accountability
- guidelines on behaviour and relationships
- team dynamics and conflict resolution
- communication policy with home
- health and safety, child protection, security and risk assessment
- financial procedures and insurance requirements
- expectations regarding re-entry and debriefing.

Where missionaries will be working with children and vulnerable adults, police checks must be made prior to placement.

❖ **Support by the Sending Church:**

As close to departure as possible, the sending church should incorporate into its main Sunday service an act of commissioning of the missionary.

The commissioning church should appoint a link person to maintain good two-way communication with the missionary. News from the missionary should be shared in the church's services periodically.

The church should establish a prayer / care group to meet periodically in support of the missionary.

❖ **Placement and Care during the Assignment:**

Responsibilities of all partners regarding practicalities, job descriptions and supervision need to be made clear and agreed prior to placement.

Placement decisions should be clear, transparent and made with integrity and should be communicated to all involved, including if and when changes are made.

Pastoral care, support structures and opportunities for personal and spiritual development of the missionary should be established and implemented.

The need for good communication with, and an annual review of the missionary service by, the commissioning church should be recognised.

If the missionary service is with a Mission Agency, there should be clarity concerning the appropriate contact person in both the commissioning church and the mission agency.

❖ **Periodic Guidance and Re-entry Support:**

Periodic advice and guidance should be offered to missionaries to find progressive steps in their ministry. If the missionary service is with a Mission Agency, this should be done by the Mission Agency in liaison with the participant's home church.

When a missionary returns for home assignment (furlough) the commissioning church should convene a 'welcome home' meeting to enable the missionary to report on his/her term of service.

Debriefing and support for the missionary through periods of home assignment are an important part of the programme and the process needs to involve all partners as appropriate.

The commissioning church can have a special role in aiding returning missionaries in the provision of accommodation and transport facilities, the provision of any special re-settlement financial needs and in advising on and facilitating children's education needs.

There now follows **four check lists** which are designed to:

- assist churches in monitoring the above processes
- form a basis for churches to periodically review their practice in commissioning members for missionary service.

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#### **Four check lists to facilitate good practice in commissioning members for cross-cultural missionary service.**

What follows are check lists briefly describing processes to be undertaken, or factors to be considered, by the elders and/or the church's Missionary Committee (or equivalent) when commissioning church members for long-term cross-cultural missionary service. There is a separate check list for each of four phases of the process.

Each check list describes the relevant processes/factors, and poses questions for consideration, for the phase under consideration. A chart is then given summarising the factors to enable the elders and/or the church's Missionary Committee to monitor the whole process.

The focus of the process is to ensure that, as far as is possible, due care is taken for the welfare of church members commissioned for long-term missionary service.

#### *NOTES:*

1. *Hereafter, the elders and/or Missionary Committee (or equivalent) will be referred to as the 'leadership'.*
2. *The numbered Resource Papers referred to in the charts below are to be found in the World Focus section of the this website.*
3. *Inevitably this list of processes and/or factors is generic and will need to be adapted for the purposes of any given church or each specific situation.*

#### **Check List One: Early Considerations.**

1. Was the church leadership involved before or after the member's decision to pursue options for service in cross-cultural mission?

*Did the member make the decision and then inform the leadership OR was guidance sought by the member prior to making the decision?*

2. Testing of the member's call to mission service.

*This is critical – an example of how this works well is when the leadership meet with the member to, (a) discuss the development of the sense of call and examine the indicators that have been evidenced, (b) agree to pray consistently for a period of time and then (c) meet again to confirm or otherwise their sense of the validity of the member's call.*

3. Evaluation of the member’s spiritual and emotional condition.

*This is critical – certainly, testing times will come ‘on the field’. Time needs to be taken to sensitively ‘explore’ the member’s spiritual and emotional robustness . Fragilities should not be glossed over in fairness to all concerned. If fragilities are recognised, help should be given to work through the issues or the member should be guided to some other less stressful service.*

4. Evaluation of the evidence for the member’s ministry gifting and experience and their correspondence to the service under consideration.

*As far as is reasonable we want to see ‘round pegs in round holes’, thus, relevant experience and/or gifting is a positive factor to consider. Although a flexible person will stretch the leaders should be aware if a member demonstrates rigidity and help the member recognise this and work towards a more flexible approach.*

5. Consideration and guidance given concerning service with a mission agency vs independent service.

*This is an important one. How pro-active a part is the leadership playing in advising, guiding and preparing the member for overseas service? As a general rule the first-term of service will benefit from the support of a recognised agency. Independent service is more demanding and tends to attract the ‘maverick’ type. Therefore, if the proposal is for independent service, the leadership needs to be sure that the member is mature enough to handle this and will accept accountability requirements agreed between church and member.*

6. Consideration of whether the proposed service is with one individual missionary or as part of a team.

*This is an important one. As a general rule first-term service will benefit from the support of a team. Serving exclusively with one other individual is more demanding and, therefore, the leadership needs to be sure the member is mature enough to handle the intense interpersonal relationships involved.*

7. Evaluation of the member’s plans for, and progress toward, developing an adequate prayer support team.

*This is often neglected. A prayer team cannot be recruited too soon! The member’s commitment to good communication with the prayer team should be explored. See Resource Paper 11 in the World Focus section of this website.*

**Questions to consider:**

- *How did the sense of call develop and what indicators have been evidenced thus far to confirm the call?*
- *Are there issues emotionally, spiritually or physically that should shape the decision? How robust is the member?*
- *What gifts and skills do they want to use / develop? What areas of work / service are they already involved with that might shape their choice?*
- *What preferences are they sensing in location? Duration? Nature of ministry?*
- *What aims and objectives do they want the programme to have? How are they determining these? Does this reflect the church’s priorities in mission?*
- *What agencies should be considered?*
- *How are they going to draw a team of people around them to pray? How are they going to communicate to them?*

<b>Process or factor</b>	<b>Person(s) responsible to oversee this</b>	<b>Resource (if any)</b>	<b>Dealt with satisfactorily</b>
1. Was the leadership involved prior to decision to pursue options?		Resource Paper No. 7	
2. Testing of member’s call to mission service			
3. Evaluation of spiritual and emotional condition			
4. Evidence of match of ministry gifting / experience			
5. Adequacy of guidance re agency vs independent service			
6. Adequate consideration of placement with an individual vs a team			
7. Development of adequate prayer support team			Resource Paper No. 11

### **Check List Two: On contact with a Mission Agency.**

1. Extent of the leadership's involvement in the discussions with the agency and in the candidate selection process.  
*This requires church and agency meeting together and having a part in the selection process. If the proposed service is for independent service then the church should seek advice from a recognised agency as to good practice in a selection process.*
  
2. Clarity re the roles and responsibilities of the various parties - member, church, agency - and adequacy of communication between the various parties involved.  
*Agency, church and member need to be on the same page and open communication is essential.*
  
3. Adequacy of the member's pre-field preparation, training and orientation.  
*The church should understand the agency's pre-field preparation programme and be satisfied of its adequacy. As a guideline, service of up to 6 months requires, say, 3 weeks training / orientation. Longer service requires, say, a minimum of 3 months, training / orientation. If the proposed service is for independent service then the church should accept full responsibility for ensuring adequate preparation is undertaken and the church should seek advice from a recognised agency as to appropriate preparation. See Resource Paper 9 in the World Focus section of this website.*
  
4. Adequacy and extent of the pastoral care for the member.  
*Both church and agency have a part to play here and communication should be open – if issues arise they should be addressed at an early stage in a spirit of mutual trust and help should be given to work through the issues or, if solutions cannot be found, the member should be guided to some other appropriate service.*
  
5. Consideration of the potential financial needs for the service envisaged, the contribution the church can make, and the assistance available to the member to develop a support base.  
*Both church and agency have a part to play here and communication should be open. It is helpful to the member to have the church demonstrating significant financial support and also to develop a wider support base.*
  
6. Extent and consistency of prayer support in the church for the member.  
*This is often neglected. In addition to a prayer team, the church congregation and Home Groups need to be a part of the process. Creativity is needed!*
  
7. Extent of the leadership's involvement in the candidate's placement process (future role).  
*Agency, church and member need to be in accord and open communication is essential.*

#### **Questions to consider:**

- *What is the process of application and selection? Is there a clear time scale? How is the involvement of the local church encouraged and expressed?*
- *Is there a clear understanding of the respective roles of the church and mission agency? Is there clarity about the provision of on-going pastoral care for the candidate?*
- *Does the programme serve the long term objectives of the mission in a manner that is cross-culturally appropriate?*
- *Who will be leading the work? Who are they responsible to? Are there appropriate procedures should there be difficulties in relating to team members or supervisors?*
- *Is adequate training given for their role in the project? What orientation is given? Is this prior to departure or after arrival? To the country, culture, language, agency, work?*
- *What are the financial costs? How are these to be met? How are they going to raise funds?*
- *What practical issues need to be dealt with before departure? Are there appropriate procedures for health care, medical contingencies, security and evacuation?*
- *How are their family handling their plans?*
- *How and when will they be profiled to the church?*
- *Is there a prayer team supporting the candidate already in place?*

Process or factor	Person(s) responsible to oversee this	Resource (if any)	Dealt with satisfactorily
1. Extent of leadership's involvement in selection process		Resource Papers Nos. 7 & 9	
2. Clarity re the roles and responsibilities of parties			
3. Adequacy of pre-field preparation, training & orientation			
4 Adequacy of pastoral care - pre-field			
5. Consideration of financial needs and support raising			
6. Consistency of prayer by church - pre-field			
7. Extent of leadership's involvement in placement process			

### **Check List Three: During Overseas Service.**

1. Adequacy of communication between the various parties involved.

*All communication channels should be used – phone, email, video, et al should be employed on a regular basis.*

2. Adequacy and extent of the pastoral care for the member.

*Both church and agency have a part to play here in a spirit of mutual trust and open communication. If pastoral support is needed for any reason a dialogue between church, agency and member should take place at an early stage in order to address the situation adequately.*

3. Adequacy of follow-up process re issues arising from the annual reporting process.

*On receiving an annual report from the member, the leadership need to be discerning - sometimes by reading between the lines, sometimes by asking follow-up questions - to ensure there are no issues 'beneath the surface' that need to be addressed.*

4. Evaluation of the development of the member's giftings.

*Purposeful enquiry of the member needs to be made from time to time by the leadership and suggestions concerning the development of the member's giftings explored by agency, church and member.*

5. Evaluation of the maintenance of spiritual vitality.

*Purposeful enquiry of the member needs to be made from time to time by the leadership and action needs to be taken to provide any necessary help to the member in this vital area.*

6. Evaluation of handling of difficulties experienced by the member.

*This requires a sensitive, but pro-active stance – 'glossing over' won't help. It requires open communication between agency, church and member in a spirit of mutual trust and a desire to help the member work through the issues.*

7. Extent of the leadership's visits with the member.

*This is often neglected. However, the benefits are many for all concerned. It is important that the visitor de-briefs with the leadership after the visit takes place to reach agreement on how best to respond to any matters that arise out of the visit. It is equally important to report back to the church congregation for their encouragement and on-going prayer support. See Resource Paper 12 in the World Focus section of this website.*

8. Extent and consistency of prayer support in the church for the member.

*This is often neglected. In addition to a prayer team, the church congregation and Home Groups need to be a part of the process. Creativity is needed!*

#### **Questions to consider**

- *How is ongoing contact being maintained? Agree a regular pattern of updates between member and church on progress*
- *Are their pastoral needs being adequately met?*
- *How do they feed themselves spiritually? What fellowship is available? Do they know what R&R they need to keep energised?*

- How will they receive feedback during and after the programme that will help their spiritual growth and continue to develop their giftings?
- Do they know who to contact if difficulties arise?
- Can a schedule of visits be arranged?
- Is prayer support being maintained?

Process or factor	Person(s) responsible to oversee this	Resource (if any)	Dealt with satisfactorily
1. Adequacy of communication - during overseas service		Resource Paper No. 12	
2. Adequacy of pastoral care - during overseas service			
3. Adequacy of follow-up re issues arising from annual reports			
4. Development of giftings - during overseas service			
5. Maintenance of spiritual vitality - during overseas service			
6. Handling of difficulties - during overseas service			
7. Extent of the leadership's visits - during overseas service			
8. Consistency of prayer by church - during overseas service			

#### **Check List Four: On Return to the UK.**

1. Adequacy of communication between the various parties involved.

*Agency, church and member need to have a common understanding concerning home leave plans and requirements and open communication is essential.*

2. Adequacy and extent of the pastoral care for the member.

*Both church and agency have a part to play here and communication should be open – if difficulties arise they should be addresses at an early stage in a spirit of mutual trust.*

3. Evaluation of handling of difficulties experienced by the member.

*This requires a sensitive, but pro-active stance – ‘glossing over’ won’t help any of the parties concerned. This situation impacts both the member and the whole church congregation so much wisdom is needed in handling the situation. There needs to be a genuine desire to help the member work through the issues.*

4. Extent and consistency of prayer support in the church for the member.

*This is often neglected. In addition to a prayer team, the church congregation and Home Groups need to be a part of the process. Creativity is needed!*

5. Practical assistance given to the member on re-settlement into the UK.

*The commissioning church should have a special role in aiding returning missionaries in finding accommodation, transport facilities, children’s schooling and in meeting any special re-settlement financial needs.*

#### **Questions to consider:**

- Are all the partners agreed on the Home Leave plans?
- Has a debrief discussion been arranged?
- Is the member ‘carrying’ negative feelings about their term of service overseas?
- Has feedback to the Church been arranged?
- How can their gifting / skills be expressed in life in the UK and in the ministry of the church during the time at home?
- Can prayer support be sustained for their re-settlement period?
- Are their practical needs being met?

<b>Process or factor</b>	<b>Person(s) responsible to oversee this</b>	<b>Resource (if any)</b>	<b>Dealt with satisfactorily</b>
1. Adequacy of communication - prior to return			
2. Adequacy of pastoral care - on return			
3. Handling of difficulties - on return			
4. Consistency of prayer by church - on return			
5. Re-settlement assistance given			