

**Missions
Policy
Handbook**
of the
Reformed Churches
of
New Zealand

Missions Policy Handbook

Prepared by the Overseas Mission Board of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and Operation SPROUT.
For use within and by member churches.

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Foreword – by Rev. Murray Capill

At the heart of the Church's mandate is the call to make disciples of all nations, to spread the Word, to glean in the fields that are ripe for harvest, to call in the full number of God's elect, to preach the gospel of the Kingdom in the whole world as a testimony to all nations for His glory.

It is a grand task. One that should excite us, stir us, humble us, move us, and challenge us to greater faithfulness in proclaiming His most precious salvation to a sinful and lost world. One that will demand much of us as we labour in prayer and planning, expending our energies and resources, and directing those called through Gods people into avenues of service. It is a task in which we should spare nothing, for ultimately it has to do not only with the saving of individuals (a most wonderful and high calling in itself), but the advance of the Kingdom of God and the hastening of the day of our Lord's coming.

As a denomination we share a desire to take this task seriously. Over the years we have supported missionaries and mission works in a number of different ways and have established various guidelines and directives for the work of mission. The purpose of this Handbook is to pull some of that work together and enlarge on it, in order to give as much direction and encouragement as possible to churches and individuals.

In the pages that follow you will find a range of material: statements from our Acts of Synod; practical suggestions for the development of mission awareness in our churches; guidelines for Sessions as they promote the work of mission in the local church; practical help and advice for those that receive the call to Mission work; information on finances; information on training; short-term mission work, and so on.

This Handbook therefore goes out with the earnest prayer that it will be a very useful tool for churches, sessions and individuals. We pray that it will stimulate mission consciousness and faithfulness, as well as challenge sessions, committees and individuals alike to a greater heart for missions, to the glory of God.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 The Command

Jesus commands the church to be engaged in mission work!

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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 28:18-20).

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

1.2 Objectives of Mission Work

1. That the one true and living Triune God be glorified, praised and worshipped.
2. That the gospel of God's salvation be proclaimed in its fullness to "every tribe, language, people and nation" (Rev 5:9), in order that the unbelieving be warned of eternal punishment and by God's grace repent, believe, be baptised and disciplined to live redeemed lives.
3. That along with the primary focus - gospel proclamation, we seek to minister to the totality of human need (Matthew 25:31-46)
4. That, where appropriate, a result of our missionary endeavours should be that indigenous reformed churches be established or assisted.

1.3 Purpose of a Missions Policy

1. To help achieve a clear sense of direction in the church's mission involvement.
2. To avoid making important decisions on an emotional, or haphazard basis.
3. To provide an outline of the direction of mission work for prospective mission candidates and new mission committee members (if a missions committee is in place).
4. To maintain consistency within session (and missions committee) and between churches of the RCNZ.
5. To aid session's efforts to be good stewards of the missions budget.
6. To guide the local church as it seeks to fulfil its role in carrying out the great commission.

The OMB will revise the Missions Handbook every three years.

1.4 Mission Strategy

The OMB priority for missions is partnership with Reformed Churches and their mission agencies worldwide in equipping, establishing and training local churches and their leaders.

In 1998 Synod decided (Acts of Synod, Article 63.5) 'to affirm that the primary (though not exclusive) focus of our interest in developing opportunities within the ICRC should be in the Asia Pacific region.'

Section 2: Denominational Organisations and their tasks

2.1 Overseas Mission Board (OMB)

The OMB is an agency of Synod that acts on Synod's behalf in supervising and regulating the mission work of the RCNZ, particularly by carrying out synodical decisions pertaining to overseas missions. To do this, the Board is authorised to hold and convey property, take charge of offerings and expenditure and control all moneys raised for, donated or bequeathed to it. The board consists of members from one presbytery, together with a liaison from the other presbyteries.

2.2 Sending and Supporting Missionaries

The OMB organises the sending of long-term, denominationally appointed missionaries. These missionaries are financially supported by the churches by means of the OMB quota (see Section 10.6).

The OMB works jointly with other reformed mission agencies, in supporting the works of these agencies or in sending members of our denomination as missionaries with them. Long and/or short-term arrangements can also be made with non-denominational agencies that are not explicitly reformed (see Section 7 on Secondment), though the Board's main focus will always be towards agencies of a Reformed persuasion.

2.3 Promoting Missions

The OMB acts to promote mission news and needs. The board has contact with a variety of Reformed denominational mission agencies as well as mission fields and workers, enabling it to:

- 1.** Make known and sponsor needs on the mission fields.
- 2.** Provide news and insights into various aspects of overseas mission work through various publications (e.g. newsletters and *Faith in Focus*).
- 3.** Investigate and advertise fields and openings for mission workers, especially within the family of confessional reformed churches, via agencies such as the International Council of Reformed Churches.

The churches are encouraged to communicate with the OMB. There may be opportunities, or needs you may wish to communicate.

2.4 South Pacific Reaches Out (SPROUT)

SPROUT is a Synodically-recognised organisation that seeks to promote a missions consciousness among the youth of the denomination, through:

1. The *Growing Sprouts* magazine, and other publications.
2. Holding regular missions conferences.
3. Encouraging young people to get involved in various forms of mission opportunities
4. Supporting young people who undertake short-term mission work.
5. Providing mission resources.
6. Encouraging youth clubs to fundraise for mission projects.
7. To use their youthful vigour as a means of enthusing others, working alongside their missions committee (if there is one.)

The OMB supervises the work of SPROUT through an OMB liaison/advisor who attends most SPROUT meetings

Section 3: Responsibilities of the Local Session

The initial steps of the missionary enterprise occur in the context of the local church. Is the session aware of these steps and prepared to take the initiative?

3.1 Fostering Mission Awareness

It is the responsibility of each local session:

To inform, educate and inspire the church on matters relating to cross-cultural missions, and to draw attention to the existence of the general missions pamphlet, the churches' missions policy and other helpful resources on missions, and to be proactive in advertising mission openings with Reformed churches or agencies.

3.2 Guiding Potential Candidates

When a person or family makes it known to their elder or session that they desire to serve the Lord on the mission field, it is exciting! The spiritual leadership of the church will want to both nurture and test this desire, to see if it proves genuine.

It is the responsibility of each local session:

1. To guide and encourage, with due discernment, those who show a desire to go to the mission field.
2. To counsel prospective candidates in regard to suitable training (see Section 6).
3. To help evaluate suitable opportunities for service, steering them towards openings with Reformed churches/agencies wherever possible.
4. To serve as liaison between the church and related mission agencies and works (with the OMB's assistance).
5. To be prepared to recruit and send out (in liaison with OMB) suitable individuals from the local church.

6. To arrange, together with the OMB, financial support for those they are sending out.

Sessions are encouraged to seek any necessary assistance from the OMB with respect to these tasks. It is recommended that sessions appoint an individual or small group (e.g. missions committee member(s) plus an elder and a deacon, with one person as the key contact) to support members involved in missions. Every effort should be made to ensure continuity in the support group throughout the entire process.

It should be noted that the OMB's ability to support candidates is constrained to an extent by its mandates and its resources. The OMB does not and cannot support individuals without the backing and request of the local church. Several criteria must be met before the OMB can second personnel to non-reformed mission agencies or mission agencies (see Section 7), noting also the RCNZ focus and OMB priority (Section 1) for overseas mission.

To this end the OMB seeks to advise the churches of short-term and long-term mission openings with Reformed agencies. Sessions should encourage and assist the OMB in this task.

Individuals (through or after advising their session) are encouraged to contact the OMB at the earliest opportunity if considering mission work.

3.3 Before They Leave

The process of getting to the mission field can be complex and frustrating . Sessions should be proactive in monitoring or managing (as appropriate) the arrangements. Candidates should be made aware that obtaining visas or information from the field can be a slow process; in particular information relating to the work on the field can be vague or incomplete. While the need for the candidate (or a valuable training/experience opportunity) should be defined, sessions should note that vague or incomplete information is not an unusual situation.

It is the responsibility of the local session to ensure there is an agreed-to and signed Secondment agreement between the sending church and the mission agency (including job description) prior to the missionary departing for the mission field. If OMB support is provided, the OMB will draft a Memorandum of Understanding between the sending church and the OMB; this will cover (amongst other things) relevant synodical guidelines, financial support arrangements, handling of gifts, reporting requirements, and any deputation requirements. Please refer to check list in Section 11.

3.4 Commissioning the Long-term Missionary

All long-term missionaries should be formally sent off with a commissioning service, conducted by the (appointed) sending church.

The missionary (with spouse and family, if married) remains under the spiritual oversight of the sending church. If ordained, he is considered an office-bearer in that church. The missionary (family) in that way represents the local church in serving the wider body of Christ overseas.

The commissioning service assures the missionary that he has been sent, and puts the congregation under obligation to support the missionary enterprise fully.

3.5 Supporting Workers on the Field

It is the responsibility of the session of the sending church to:

- 1.** To ensure that adequate levels of support are being given to those sent out from the local church, and to coordinate such support. (Support includes intercessory prayer, regular communication, specific encouragement of missionaries - see also the Appendix 'Serving as Senders'). At least annually, the session of the sending church should discuss with the missionary any changes in circumstances which may affect the amount of financial support needed. A clause to this effect should be included as part of the MOU between OMB and the sending church.
- 2.** To ensure that spiritual oversight for the missionary on the field is provided insofar as possible.
- 3.** To keep the OMB up to date with developments on a local level.
- 4.** To work in liaison with OMB where appropriate and feasible.
- 5.** To set priority areas for any local funds allocated to missions (over and above the OMB quota), and administer these funds accordingly.
- 6.** To arrange furlough - see section 3.6
- 7.** To ensure spiritual, moral and practical support is given to the missionary in adjusting after returning from the field, either on furlough or on cessation of overseas assignment.
- 8.** To arrange, or assist the missionary in arranging, suitable deputation meetings upon his return from the field. Such promotion of mission work through personal contact with those who have been on the field benefits other reformed churches as well as the sending church.

Please refer to check list in Section 11

Note: Session may see fit to delegate or share some of the above responsibilities with a local missions committee (see Section 4).

3.6 Guidelines on Furlough

Furlough here refers to a break from missionary service on the field at the end of a specified term of service. The missionary will usually return to his home country for a period of rest and usually some home assignment activities among the supporting churches.

3.6.1 Frequency of Furlough

In the case where our local church sends out a full-time missionary independent of another "umbrella organisation" or sister church, the furlough should be taken every 2-3 years and should be agreed upon before departure.

In the situation where the missionary is on loan or associated with another mission agency, the furlough should be taken in accordance with that recommended by the agency (see Section 7, on secondment).

3.6.2 Organisation of Furlough

The OMB, together with the sending church have a responsibility to organise the furlough activities. The secondment agreement must include specification of furlough frequency etc. Activities should include: adequate rest and refreshment, renewing and establishing relationships with the sending church, and deputation work to foster understanding and support of the missionary's particular ministry and the wider task of missionaries (see section 7.1 (5), in the situation of secondment).

3.6.3 Missionary Resettlement

The sending church has a responsibility to help and counsel the returning missionary through the resettling period (See the Appendix: 'Serving as Senders').

3.7 Returning Home

Sessions are encouraged to provide close pastoral oversight of missionaries (including members having returned from very short mission-experience trips) on their return and for some time after. They will normally come back with enthusiasm for the work and often will have experienced increased fervour in their faith during their time away. In large or subtle ways they and/or their attitudes will have changed and sometimes they perceive (gradually or otherwise) an apathy on the part of themselves or others on their return — 'the need is so great, what am I or others doing about it?' Other members will 'slot back in' to their regular way of life, having no expectation of further service, though they may be slightly unsettled for a time. Differences in cultures can be stark, some find it difficult re-adjusting to their own culture.

It is important to encourage members returning from the field (and all congregation members) to serve the Lord as He wills. While not stifling any desire or enthusiasm for service by the returning member it is important, should there be a desire for further service, to allow a 'cooling down' period to wait upon the Lord for his guidance. There are also many practical matters to consider including the member's suitability for further work (and what type), the amount of training and preparation required, the resources available to the member, family, church, and OMB; and the priorities of the session and OMB. Therefore, for members who may desire to do further service (immediately or in the near future), it is important to counsel them that the Lord will open the way to His

work in His time, and to encourage them in local service and equipping themselves.

Section 4: Proposing a Missions Committee in the Local Church

We live in an age in which "specialists" (people dedicated to specific roles) are a common element in the workforce. The task-force of God's Kingdom on a local level could certainly benefit from the dedicated services of a missions committee. It could become the missions "hub" of the local congregation.

4.1 Purpose of a Missions Committee

Section 3 represents an awesome task for sessions, one for which they may not have the personnel resources to handle. A missions committee, appointed and under the oversight of session, would free up sessions from much of the work load. We would suggest that sessions consider forming such a committee, especially if the church membership has some highly motivated and capable people in their ranks. It is suggested that this committee act in an advisory and support role and could include members from SPROUT as well as someone from Session (such as a missions elder - see section 4.2). They are encouraged to communicate with the OMB

The following sections are suggestions as to the make-up and tasks of such a committee.

4.2 Missions Elder

Session may consider appointing a "missions elder" to be part of the missions committee. He must have a genuine interest in missions and would provide oversight, guidance, and encouragement to the committee on behalf of session.

4.3 Responsibilities of the Convener of the Missions Committee

- 1.** Schedule regular meetings of the committee.
- 2.** Set an agenda for each committee meeting.
- 3.** Ensure that a committee member acts upon the decisions of the committee.
- 4.** Ensure communication with session, including giving minutes of committee meetings to the minister and missions elder.
- 5.** Bring enthusiasm to the task, and set aside time for this role.

4.4 Members of the Missions Committee

The members of the Missions Committee should be familiar with the RCNZ missions policy and mission activity of the RCNZ, and should have a desire to learn about mission work in general.

4.5 Responsibilities of the Missions Committee

1. To help sessions, as directed by them, in some of the responsibilities outlined in Section 3.
2. To act as advisers to session on mission matters.
3. To research opportunities and mission fields.
4. To keep in contact with similar mission committees within our denomination.
5. To keep up to date with general mission news from around the world through various publications.
6. To encourage the local SPROUT liaison or representative if there is one.
7. To contact SPROUT about any suitable opportunities that arise through research.
8. To meet on a regular basis.

Section 5: Policy on Selection of Long-term Missionary Candidates

Who should be sent to engage in mission work on the church's behalf? Should we be happy with anyone who offers himself/herself?

Good missionary personnel are hard to come by and not many make themselves available. Did not the Lord Himself say "*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few*" (Matthew 9:37)? That's still true! So we should follow our Lord's advice to pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he may send out workers into His harvest field. Also it is biblical to have sound requirements for such workers.

5.1 Requirements of Candidates

1. Commitment to the Lord

The candidate for missionary service should be a person of character beyond reproach, having spiritual maturity and with a deep personal commitment to the Lord. He/she should be a person of prayer, who feeds daily on the Word of God, and who displays a servant attitude.

2. Commitment to the Reformed Faith

The candidate must be committed to the Reformed faith and have a working knowledge of that belief.

They should express faith in the teachings of grace, with a matching gracious spirit.

They must evidence a Christian world-view encompassing all aspects of life.

3. Commitment to the local church

The candidate should be a communicant member of his church, and be respected in the church as one who has a zeal for evangelism, proven Christian service and involvement, and who contributes financially to the church and missions.

They should evidence gifting in one or more areas of local church ministry.

4. Commitment to further training and wider ministry

The candidate must be willing to be trained adequately for the specific aspects of mission work he will be engaged in. While experience in cross-cultural interaction will be helpful, there should be a willingness to learn a new language and adapt to a new culture.

The candidate should be prepared to go to an approved sister church mission field (or other approved organisation) and work under supervision of others. This preparedness also extends to regular reporting to home church and OMB.

Note: The word "approved" as used in the above paragraph denotes the fact that the local session must be able to be supportive of the proposed mission work.

5.2 The Missionary Call Defined

While difficult to define, there can be some strong indicators that God has placed a call on somebody's life. Reformed churches believe the Bible teaches that a call to such a ministry is made up of two components.

1. God impresses His call on the person's life by the Holy Spirit through Scripture, the person's conscience, and circumstances (although these and other means may be also used to test the validity of a call).

2. God works through the rest of the congregation and leadership of the church in recognising this call and affirming it. The missionary is then sent out by the local church.

Section 6: Policy for Missionary Training

Training as a missionary is not to be seen as a mere formality. They are ambassadors for Christ with the message of reconciliation for the world. The apostles of Christ received practical training throughout the three years of our Lord's ministry on earth. After that their training continued under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit the Counsellor.

Just as proper qualification for secular vocations is expected, the church should no less should emphasize the need for suitable training by missionary personnel.

6.1 Initial Training at the Local Level

Sessions shall encourage those that express an interest in cross-cultural mission to begin training locally. This training can occur in two main ways.

1. The candidate should be encouraged to begin their missionary preparation by becoming involved in a similar type of work to that which they intend to be doing on the mission field. This may involve being active in community work in a poorer part of town, or becoming involved in some part of the church's ministry or the ministry of a suitable organisation within the city.

2. The general preparation for missionary work depends very much on the type of mission work to be undertaken, and the locality of the field. It will be helpful to be in consultation, where possible, with the relevant mission board or agency regarding this.

It is essential to know the message of the gospel and how to communicate it, as well as having an awareness of the cultural/ethical/religious context of the people approached with the gospel. We recommend getting to know people of the "target" culture/nationality while still at home. In our larger towns, there may be chances to meet students/migrants/refugees from the intended nation. There are ways to do this, such as tutoring English or taking part in some of the friendship schemes available (e.g. Operation Friendship with overseas tertiary students). This is quite important, as sometimes people will have a rather romantic view of mission and the people they are going to, which can be corrected by contact with real live people from their chosen field.

Further, basic first aid knowledge and practical "handyman's" skills are valuable.

6.2 Full-time Training

In order to be effective in communicating the gospel, long-term missionaries should generally undertake an accredited course of Bible training, even if they are "tent-making" missionaries, working in professional positions such as teacher, engineer, technician, medic etc. Candidates specifically involved in Bible translation require a knowledge of linguistics, as well as a sound knowledge of the biblical languages. Those candidates who are called to help establish or assist indigenous churches should undertake a theology or divinity degree, and experience in pastoral work is to be recommended.

6.3 Financial Support for Missionary Training

Candidates generally pay for their own training. Any problems in this regard should be discussed with the local session. Financial assistance is usually decided on an individual basis according to the particular needs and circumstances of the individuals.

Section 7: Policy on Secondment

Secondment is the channelling of the RCNZ mission workers into mission projects or fields not directly supervised by the RCNZ. Our mission workers would be seconded to the church or mission agency which supervises the project or field to which they will be sent.

It means that our people will be available to a far wider range of mission work than that organised by the OMB, whilst not totally outside OMB jurisdiction.

Where possible, secondment will be to sister churches or other ICRC churches, in line with OMB's clear preference for working with Reformed churches and their mission agencies. Where it is not possible or practical to channel members into these areas they may be seconded to work with another mission organisation or church under the conditions in section 7.1.

Bear in mind that missionaries working for non-reformed agencies may encounter difficulties due to differences in world and life views and the practice of their faith.

The following regulations were adopted by Synod 1995 of the RCNZ, specifically to lay out guidelines to be followed for the OMB and session of the sending church in the case where a person is to be seconded to a non-reformed mission agency. However, they are also largely applicable to any secondment arrangement.

7.1 Regulations for Arrangements for Secondment to (Non-Reformed) Mission Agencies

- 1.** That for the sake of the spiritual supervision of the missionary, he/she shall have dual membership status with both the RCNZ and the mission organisation.
- 2.** That his home congregation in New Zealand be the sending Church.
- 3.** That his appointment be subject to the approval of both the mission and the OMB in accordance with the standards established by each agency.
- 4.** That the missionary participate in all necessary candidate training programmes run by the mission.
- 5.** That during times of furlough, the missionary is expected to do deputation work in the RCNZ to be organised by the OMB. Alongside the deputation work or speaking engagements he may be asked to do for the mission organisation. Furlough planning is to be arranged mutually by the missionary, the OMB and the mission. (Note: During this time, their holistic support continues to be the responsibility of the sending church.)
- 6.** That the home congregation provide as much financial support as it is able to provide, the remainder being sought through the OMB. In the case of short term (probationary) mission workers, the extent of the support of the missionary be considered on the merits of each case. (Specific details relating to the finances and support are to be mutually agreed on by the mission, the OMB and the home congregation).
- 7.** That the home session retain responsibility for pastoral care and spiritual oversight, and where possible share this with a suitable church in the area in which the missionary will be working. This oversight is to be shared to a lesser degree with the field director of the mission. In the absence of a suitable church

in the area, or supplementary to it, the OMB should consider other means to provide spiritual counsel, such as missionaries or ministers passing by on their way to or from the RCNZ or their sister churches.

8. That a missionary not be expected to undertake any activities or teaching that would be in conflict with the Scriptures or the Reformed confessions, and that he have complete liberty to present the Gospel as expressed in the confessional standards of the RCNZ.

9. That final oversight and discipline with respect to the missionary's doctrine and life rests with the appropriate church courts of the RCNZ.

10. That the mission be responsible for directing the activities while on the field, and that while working there the missionary is to be subject to the policies and stated aims of the mission, and that in matters in which the missionary feels aggrieved, the OMB may be called upon to seek clarification from both parties.

11. That in all matters concerning the re-assignment or function, furlough, or termination of the work of a missionary, no decision be taken by any party without prior consultation and agreement.

12. That a regular confidential report be forwarded to the home session providing at least an annual assessment of performance together with any recommendations for further service.

We as an OMB believe that these guidelines as they stand:

A. are sufficient to guard the integrity of reformed mission work in a faith mission or interdenominational mission (operating on a faith mission principle) context;

B. open doors of opportunity which otherwise would remain closed;

C. safeguard our missionaries from perils which often face faith or interdenominational mission workers (such as lack of finance, lack of accountability, lack of communication with the sending church).

(These regulations are current as from October, 1995)

7.2 Assessing (Non-reformed) Mission Agencies

1. If a person desires to enter a specific mission work administered by a (not overtly Reformed) mission agency or organisation, they should supply to the home session sufficient information for it to be able to make an informed assessment of the mission and the work the applicant would be involved in. Such information should include:

- Justification for involvement.
- Statement of the mission agency's aims and purposes (where applicable).
- The mission agency's statement of faith (where applicable).
- Present field and areas of ministry of the mission agency.
- A job description of the work the applicant would be doing.

2. The local session should investigate and evaluate the mission agency, the specific field, the job description, and the suitability of the candidate. If they are satisfied, they may make a recommendation to the OMB requesting financial support, supplying the relevant documentation, including a copy of the candidate's application to the mission.
3. The OMB should also evaluate the mission and the applicant and if deemed necessary, conduct interviews with the applicant, the session and the mission. It will also ensure, as a secondary precaution, that there are no apparent anomalies that would compromise the worker or jeopardize the agency.
4. If satisfied with the applicant and the mission agency, the OMB will, on behalf of the RCNZ, approve the candidate for the particular work of service.

Section 8: Policy on Short-term Missions

Not every person can be committed to long-term mission work. Jesus also sent disciples on specific short-term missions (e.g. the sending of the seventy in Luke 10).

Short-term work, rightly motivated, is a valid expression of the church's commitment to missions. In fact, this option could multiply the number and variety of workers considerably, and could well add to the number of long-term workers eventually.

8.1 Definition of a Short-term Mission

A short-term mission is usually considered to last anywhere from one week to two years, although it is typically considered to be from three to six months.

Apart from the time duration of a short-term trip, the very nature and aims of a short-term trip may vary considerably.

Obviously the requisite finance, preparation time and general commitment of the missionary will vary considerably depending on the nature of the mission work.

8.2 General Policy on Short-term Missions

Sessions will encourage and counsel those who express an interest and desire for short-term mission, and, at their discretion, give them practical aid. Sessions will guide the individual to choose a suitable mission project. Sessions should consider, as part of their pastoral care for the members of the church, the spiritual benefits that may result for the one who participates in a short-term mission project. This is a strong reason for sessions to give pastoral consideration to encouraging and supporting this type of mission work.

Sessions will also encourage short-term missionaries by ensuring that the congregation is informed of that person's needs, and by encouraging prayer for the short-termer leading up to, and during, the short-term mission.

8.3 Criteria for Selecting Candidates For Short-term Service

Candidates that wish to be endorsed by their local church in short-term mission work should:

1. Be committed to the Lord and to the Reformed faith.
2. Display zeal for Christian service and evangelism.
3. Have a sincere interest in world missions.
4. Be equipped for the role they are wanting to fill, and be prepared to use their skills for the furthering of the gospel on the mission field.
5. Be prepared to use their experiences to encourage and inform others on their return.
6. Be willing to receive guidance from their session as to an appropriate church or mission organisation to serve with.
7. Have parental support or approval, where applicable.

8.4 Additional Support

SPROUT is equipped with resources and information for those contemplating short-term mission, including information about openings and opportunities.

Section 9: Encouragement of Mission Awareness

It is essential that the church remains "tuned in" to the Master's call to the harvest field (Matthew 9:37, 38). All too easily the church's first love can grow cold (Revelations 2:4). Rekindling that love will also stir greater mission awareness in our hearts.

9.1 Active Support of RCNZ Missionaries by Local Churches

Regular news from the field keeps church members informed about the needs of the missionaries and the indigenous people they are involved with. Response could come in the form of support in prayer, giving or going.

Mission news put before the congregation may also stimulate a greater willingness and desire for local outreach.

Sending parcels for both missionaries and native believers is a practical way of showing Christian love and mercy.

9.2 Prayer for Mission Workers and Organisations

The OMB will, on a regular basis, communicate with the sending churches and receive information from them regarding their missionaries. The OMB will include

news and prayer requests of a general nature in its information bulletins to all churches.

The churches, via its sessions, missions committee, or individuals are encouraged to seek contact with the OMB when appropriate, in their efforts to promote awareness of missions among their members..

9.3 Training and Recruitment

Those that have an interest in missions should be encouraged to

1. Make their mission interest and desire known to their local session.
2. Fellowship with others that have an interest in cross-cultural mission
3. Become involved in cross-cultural groups such as Operation Friendship and Overseas Christian fellowship (OCF) to gain cross-cultural experience.

Section 10: Policy on Financial Support

10.1 Priority Support List

The following priority list for financial support (in addition to the OMB quota) is suggested as a general guideline for sessions to work from.

1. Members of the local church
 - a) being sent out as missionaries.
 - b) undertaking theological study with a view to long-term mission work.
 - c) endeavouring to prepare themselves for full-time, long-term mission by participating in short-term mission or other practical training.
2. Specific project funding for:
 - a) Projects associated with long-term missionaries who have been approved by the OMB and sent out from the RCNZ.
 - b) Overseas students, "adopted" by the RCNZ and undertaking theological study with a view to returning to their home country as missionaries or pastors.
 - c) Long-term missionaries who are not from the RCNZ but are regularly supported by the RCNZ or sister churches.
3. Short-termers on specific project trips.
4. Members going to a mission field in a professional capacity, but with a commitment to evangelism as far as possible ("tentmakers").
5. Others

10.2 Funding of Missionaries

The general principle for OMB financial support is that the sending church commits itself to paying as much as it is able, and the OMB will provide the remainder. Unforeseen costs are paid jointly by the local church and the OMB. If increased support from the OMB is required for an existing missionary, this should normally be advised five months before the start of the next financial

year. While it is within the mandate for the OMB to support short-term missionaries, this is on an exception basis and should not generally be expected.

10.3 Financial Support of Long-term Missionaries

1. The degree of denominational financial support will depend on alternative sources of support (e.g. support from oneself, family, the local church, other organisations), the cost of living of the place where the candidate is going, their status as married or single and with or without dependants.

2. It is the responsibility of the local sending church to ensure that financial support is sufficient, whether it comes from the local church, OMB, other sources, or a combination of the three. The OMB may be able to offer assistance in assessing what funds are needed.

Prior to the missionary's departure a comprehensive and workable budget is to be drawn up, which is to include such items as health insurance, currency fluctuations, increased costs, provision for retirement and travel funds.

3. The sending church is to regularly inform the OMB of the missionary's financial support levels. The sending church and/or OMB (where appropriate) reserves the right to review support levels if the candidate's circumstances change.

4. Such financial arrangements as those above are for the purpose of responsible stewardship. The church must consider that the worker is worthy of his/her wages and those sent out by the church are ultimately the responsibility of the church. In all these things the church and missionary exercise faith in a gracious, providing God.

Please refer to the check list in Section 11

10.4 Finance of Short-term missions

Normally short-term missions will be funded entirely by the individual wishing to go. Any further financial support required will be discussed and decided upon, on an individual basis, by the local session and/or the local missions committee. Such a decision will be made in line with Section 10.2 above. Where the short-term trip is undertaken as a training ground for long-term service the OMB may be able to assist.

10.5 Donations to missionaries

Donations to missionaries, unless specifically marked for a given purpose, are to be passed directly to the missionary for their work, and may not be used by the sending church to meet ongoing, pre-budgeted costs such as stipend etc. This issue should be addressed in the MOU between the OMB and the sending church.

10.6 OMB Quota

The "quota" is the amount which the churches as a whole covenant to contribute for overseas mission work. The amount is decided on at each Synod, usually on the basis of estimations and calculations projected by the OMB. Once the amount is established, each church contributes a percentage as determined by the number of communicant members.

OMB quota is received for mission works established and maintained by the denomination. Decisions as to who, what and how much are made together at each Synod and thus function as the "mandate" according to which funds are raised and distributed.

Variations in the amount of quota must either be allowed for by the synod itself or, if necessary, can be asked for by contacting all of the churches and seeking the "go ahead" from the majority.

10.7 The Church's Tithe to Missions

Local churches are encouraged to set aside a fixed percentage of their annual budget (suggest at least 10%) in addition to the OMB quota, to use in supporting and promoting the cause of the gospel of Christ in mission work. For sending churches, this tithe, and adherence to the guideline in section 10.2, will demonstrate that they take their responsibilities in this regard seriously.

Section 11: Practical Help for Sessions and Missions Committees

The following information has been included in the RCNZ Missions Handbook as a practical guide to mission work for a sending church.

11.1 Practical Check List

Careful preparation needs to begin well in advance of departure (suggest 9-12 months)

1. Approval and Costing

- Proposal and endorsement of project through the correct channels.
- Clear justification for the sending of those chosen, the field, and the agency.
- Would include realistic budget and (proposed) means to meet the costs involved.

2. Cultural preparation

- Familiarity with the workings of the Mission and the indigenous people.

3. Language preparation

4. Insurance — Medical and Travel

- Comprehensive package that suits the customer and the geographical location.

5. Geographical preparation

- Climate, basic knowledge of the country and area to be visited.
- Needs to be met like vaccinations, medicines required, other items.
- Specific needs, or things to be aware of (HIV, polio?)

6. Health

- A medical check-up will normally be required.
- Correct vaccinations (be sure) and sufficient time to receive them.
- Additional required on the field? (e.g. if travelling to other destinations as well).

7. Airfares Travel and Transfers

- Best ticket options allowing most flexibility and best value (e.g. Open ticket).
- Book tickets well in advance.
- Transfers, taken care off ?

8. Transport required en-route and/or upon arrival (International drivers licence?)

9. Communication

- Do you have adequate communication with all parties?
- Communication channels need to be set up. Test them.
- Is there any equipment required? Laptop computers, faxes, phone (mobile?) etc.

10. House Sitting

- Proper care for belongings back home in place
- Financial commitments to consider (mortgage etc)

11.2 Official Requirements

1. Letter of 'Call' or 'Invitation' from the governing body, or Mission, or both.

- Session to draft and send formal letter.
- Letter of Release required if from another congregation?

2. Secondment Letter

- Sessions responsibility to ensure this is finalized prior to departure.
- Letter of release required?

3. In most cases, a **secondment agreement, between the sending church and the mission/agency to which the missionary will go, must be finalised and signed by all parties before the missionary leaves. It must include a clear description of the lines of accountability, and procedures to be followed in resolving disputes.**

4. An MOU between the sending church and the OMB must be finalised and signed by both parties before the missionary leaves.

5. Job Description

- Includes a clear mandate for the task(s) required.
- Who is he/she responsible to on the field?
- Disputes procedures?

6. Visas and Work permits

- Applied for well in advance, checked for sufficiency of time & accuracy etc.
- Using a letter form agency in the country required may help.

7. Support Group

- Form dedicated support group and be prepared for ALL possibilities.
- Nominate dedicated contact and back up contact person as part of the support group.
- Set up channels for passing on communication e.g. to OMB, churches etc

8. Finances and Banking

- Detail for the forwarding of funds. Have you tested it works ?
- Some funds should arrive before the personnel as their support is our responsibility (unless otherwise arranged)
- Support finalized for the entire period as well as any unexpected contingencies.
- Ideally, additional (underwritten) funds be made available to meet any unplanned emergencies, or needs.
- Stipend to be paid ?
- Deacons to take note.

11.3 On the Field

1. Oversight by the Elders

- Would require regular nominated contact via e-mail, fax and telephone where possible.
- Are things going well on the field, and back home? Send church bulletins from back home and ensure others also contact them regularly.
- Reports to who and how often?

2. Requirements of the Missionary

- Do you know what is going on, are there regular reports?
- Is there good two way communication between you (support group)?
- Is the work progressing to plan?
- Is there anything required?
- Are there any problems that require addressing?

3. Requirements on the Field

- Are the requirements of the field being communicated by the Missionary?
- Are these requests necessary?
- How can you appropriately meet these needs?
- How and when can we meet them?

11.4 Assessment and Return

1. Re-entry into their own country (See also the Appendix – ‘Serving as Senders’)
 - What to expect (possible culture shock, deflation after a high).
 - Regular contact from support persons and others.
2. Evaluation of the Work
 - Request a full report of the work, asking for specific information pertaining to all aspects of the field.
 - Invite the Mission, or agency to furnish a report on your personnel.
 - Could and should you recommend this work?
 - How could further involvement in this mission be implemented?
 - What can we learn to be better equipped for (DV) next time?
3. Finances
 - Have the 'books' been updated?
 - Are there any reimbursements required?

11.5 Draft Secondment Letter

The Secondment Agreement which requires completion and signatures prior to departure to the field. This is an example of the kinds of matters to be included in such a document.

Official Secondment Agreement

between the Reformed Church of _____ and
(Mission Agency, Country and Location).

The Reformed Church of (church) with the knowledge, blessing and support of the Overseas Missions Board of the RCNZ does hereby agree to the secondment of (name) and his (wife/family) to the (Mission) in (Country and location) for a period from (date) through to (date) This is by call/invitation of the (Mission) for:- (State the official call/invitation from the Mission).

-
1. The Reformed Church of (church) as the calling church, agrees to seconding (name) and (Wife/children where applicable) to (mission) of the (organisation) The secondment being scheduled to begin (date) and end (date) or Lord willing, continue till (year).
 2. (Missionary/s) will work under the authority, direction, and leadership of (name/s) of the (Mission Station/Organisation).
 3. The Reformed Church of (church) as the sending church will have spiritual oversight over the (Missionary/s) during the "Tour of Duty" in (country) We request the, (mission agency) where applicable, to voluntarily exercise professional oversight over them as additional edification, comfort and direction. Included in the oversight should be a dedicated support group consisting of various people, including elders, and a deacon, as well as a representative of the OMB.
 4. That the (Mission) will take responsibility for the physical, emotional and professional well being of the (Missionary/s) and provide resources, direction, and assistance to enable

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them to fulfil the task(s) required of them. This would include suitable accommodation and daily needs.

- 5.** Should a dispute arise, the (mission) or missionaries on the field shall not take any action without consulting the missionary's home session or the OMB of the RCNZ.
- 6.** In the case of the sending church being a different congregation. That the congregation of (Missionaries church) grant them leave of absence, along with their full blessing and wholehearted consent (please attach formal letters of request and consent).
- 7.** The (sending church), with the knowledge and co-operation of the OMB will provide the finance required for the full term of service. This would include all insurance, visas, travel to/from and on the field, medical expenses and vaccinations, taxes, full medical insurance as well as all general living expenses. (Please attach a full and accurate itemized budget) What amount of financial support are you asking of the OMB and for how long? For full time personnel please include (with discretion) details of the stipend, any savings policies, or any other details required. Furloughs will be taken every (?) years for a period of (?) or as required when necessary.
- 8.** The sending church (with support from the OMB) will promote prayer and interest for the (Missionary/s) and the (Mission) within its own members, the OMB and the RCNZ. This would include regular reports from the field. The sending church being responsible for the distribution of this information. This could include a 'half way' report for the purposes of any detailed field evaluation.
- 9.** Diaconal support monies will be directed to the (Missionary/s) to be distributed through the Mission as they deem fit.

Signatures

On Behalf of the Reformed Church of _____ (Church)
Session Members (2) _____ (names)

On Behalf of the Mission Agency _____ (Mission)

Closing Comments

The forward-going thrust of the gospel into every corner of this world is one of the most exciting happenings in the 20th Century and continues as we begin the 21st Century. It is happening despite enormous opposition from secularism, humanism and other religions. Moreover, it is happening in spite of the lukewarmness and worldliness of many sections in the world-wide church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a great testimony to the fact that "the gates of hell" cannot overwhelm the church which Christ Jesus is building! It is a powerful assurance to Christians world-wide that it is still worthwhile to life up a banner for the only Hope of mankind, even when the church is slighted in today's society.

It is vitally important that we encourage each other to become more mission-minded. We need constantly to pray that God would give us a 'heart' for the world He loves, and a burden to see it won for Christ. But we cannot pray "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done" without also being prepared to put our lives on the line for our Saviour, Jesus Christ. As his disciples, we must obey when he calls us - and for some of us that will mean following his call to an overseas mission field.

For the local church, obedience to the Great Commission is an indication of spiritual health. Apart from having a commitment to see its members become established in the faith and taking up responsibilities in the local church, there must also be a commitment to challenging those same saints with God's call to make disciples of all nations. We need joyfully to embrace the task of training our best (as well as seeking to provide opportunities for them), in order that they may be sent out to work full-time in God's Kingdom, in that place to which He calls them.

Hopefully, this handbook has given some direction to these great tasks, sowing a few new ideas and providing a clear framework within which our churches can work together in their missionary endeavours. May God help us to have a vital part to play in reaching every people group in the world with the Gospel, so that ultimately that mighty chorus might be raised in honour of His Beloved Son:

*"You are worthy.....because You were slain,
and with Your blood You purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation..."*

Revelation 5.9

Appendix

Serving as Senders

This appendix is a review of a book of the above title by Neal Pirolo. This book contains some useful information for prospective missionaries, session members and support team members alike.

“And how can they preach unless they are sent?” Romans 10:15.

It is clearly shown in the Bible that missionaries do not go out on their own initiative with no support from a fellowship of believers and with no accountability towards this group.

A Biblical Foundation

In Romans 10 the apostle Paul established the vitality of cross-cultural outreach on the following two levels of involvement: Those who go and those who serve as senders. A cross cultural worker needs the support of a team of people while he is preparing to go, while he is on the field and when he return home. Session and missionary together decide on: Particular jobs that the support team need to do and who will do them (see “Areas of Support”), who will lead the team and liase with session (preferably a session member).

The team must be made up of people committed to support for the whole term of the mission work. The support team regularly reports to session, and always works under the direction and authority of the session, since it the church which is responsible for sending the missionary.

AREAS OF SUPPORT

A. MORAL SUPPORT

Solid Moral Support can be given by actively listening to what your missionary is saying. This involves really putting effort into trying to understand the issues and deep down feelings of your missionary rather than just responding to what the surface words are saying. Just being there to listen.

B. LOGISTICS SUPPORT

Logistic support deals with handling the nuts and bolts.

Areas that need to be covered are:

- a) managing business affairs
- b) attending to personal details
- c) confirming and encouraging spiritual growth
- d) maintaining accountability in ministry.

C. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Lord has most certainly been merciful to us in New Zealand and has blessed us in abundance, also financially. The question is, what are we doing with these blessings to make His salvation known among the nations?

D. PRAYER SUPPORT

Paul in Ephesians 6 identifies two major weapons of our warfare: The Sword of the Spirit and Prayer. Paul, as a missionary of the first century was continually calling on the churches for prayer support. Paul simply stated in both 1 & 2 Thessalonians and in Hebrews “Brethren, pray for us.”

The following is a list of prayer needs which will help Christians to pray effectively for their missionaries.

1. Adjusting to the new language, different foods, new customs etc.
2. Protection in travel, health, accidents, dangerous situations.
3. Parents' concerns for their children's health, schooling, friendships.
4. Housing accommodations, lack of privacy, differences in living standards, lack of accustomed conveniences.
5. Loneliness, homesickness, lack of accustomed fellowship with others.
6. Interpersonal relationships
7. Depending on the faithfulness of others to meet one's financial needs.
8. Effectiveness in ministry, whatever the assignment.
9. Functioning of the tools of ministry.
10. Lack of visible results; the “ploughing, planting and watering” stages can go on for years!
11. The people being ministered to, the national Christians, the leaders of the country.
12. Need for stability, wisdom, compassion, self discipline, boldness, power, love, to be filled with the Spirit of God.

E. COMMUNICATION SUPPORT

When a person or family arrives on the field to establish their new routine, real loneliness can set in - a feeling of isolation, of being out-of-it.

Communication support can be done in many different ways. Children should also be encouraged to write to the children in missionary families. This will also encourage them to become aware of and involved in missions.

F. RE-ENTRY SUPPORT

This is the support given to help your missionary and his family integrate back into the church fellowship, work and society. Re entry can be the hardest part of an overseas experience. There is an initial shock in returning home. Attitudes have changed; technology has changed; the pace of life is so fast. Even the church isn't how you remember it. The re-entry support person or team needs to prepare a number of logistical details prior to the missionaries home coming.

This is the full circle of support you can offer to your cross cultural worker as you express your love and concern for him while he is preparing to go, while he is on the field and when he returns back home.