

**Grace Church of Tallahassee
Missions' Policy**

Effective January 1, 2010

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I. Why have a mission's philosophy and strategy?

First and foremost, we want **to glorify God in effectively doing our part in fulfilling the Great Commission**. Every Christian and every church is called to make disciples, and we want to be faithful in fulfilling this calling. A philosophy and strategy will give us guidelines for planning and a way to measure what we are doing so that we can be faithful in this high calling.

Secondly, we realize that **we must be good stewards of the resources God has given our church**. We want to make sure that our resources are being directed in ways that reflect our doctrine. We also know that our resources are not endless, so we must use them wisely. A philosophy and strategy will help us be good stewards in allocating our limited resources by providing a guide for decision making.

Thirdly, a philosophy and strategy will **help provide leadership to the congregation in the area missions giving and praying**. We want to help the members of Grace Church by providing evaluations of those who would seek individual financial support from them. This is a way to guard the flock. We also want to consciously be encouraging this body to pray for missions.

Finally, this policy will help our church **provide oversight and encouragement to those seeking to go on the mission field**. We want to be involved in training them, praying for them, and affirming them in the call to missions. As a church body, we want to help them determine whether or not they are called to full-time missionary service. This will allow us to provide these individuals with confirmation, preparation, and encouragement in their pursuit of full-time missionary work.

II. Biblical Principles of Missions

Before developing a philosophy and strategy for missions, it is necessary to examine the biblical texts and principles. Since we uphold the Bible as God's infallible and sufficient Word, we want our mission's policy to be in line with the biblical teaching on missions.

1. *Biblical principles regarding the purpose of doing missions*

To fulfill the Great Commission

The Bible is clear at this point- we must be about the work of going into all the world to *make disciples* (Matt. 28:19-20). This command means we must do missions. Every Christian must either be involved by going as a missionary or by being one who sends (and supports) missionaries.

So that God will be glorified by some from every nation

Also, God himself is passionately committed to his name being spread to all the nations. Isaiah clearly speaks of God's desire to have his name exalted among the nations (Is. 66:19, 12:4, 49:6). The teaching from the beginning (Gen 12:3) to the end (Rev. 5:9) of Scripture is that God is committed to redeeming for himself a people from all the peoples of the world. It is important to note that God is perfectly glorious and self-sufficient within the Trinity and has no need of praise from men and women, but, in his love, he has a profound desire to share the beauty of his glory with people from every nation so that they may joyfully know and worship him (Acts 17:25). What an encouragement to know that God will fulfill this purpose and that one day people from every tongue, tribe, and nation will be gathered around the throne to praise the Lamb (Rev. 7:9).

For the establishment and strengthening of churches

Throughout the New Testament, we see the priority of the church. Ephesians 5:25 tells us that Christ died for the church. While this passage speaks of the universal church (believers from all times and locations), it is certainly also true that the universal church is made up of local congregations of believers. Paul sought to establish churches wherever he went (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). It is in the context of the local church that believers are disciplined (Titus 2), equipped for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-12), able to practice the biblical "one anothers," and be held accountable (Heb. 10:25). Since the local church is where God intends disciples to be made, the primary way we are to fulfill the Great Commission is through the church. Therefore, the main purpose of missions is participation in evangelism which results in the establishment of churches that glorify Jesus Christ and the strengthening of biblically sound, indigenous churches which are seeking to make disciples.

2. *Biblical principles regarding sending missionaries*

Not only does the Bible tell us about the purpose of doing missions, it also speaks about the way we should do missions.¹

The local church sets apart qualified individuals to send as missionaries

In Acts 13, we see Paul and Barnabas being set apart for missionary service. Up to this point in Acts, we have seen that Paul and Barnabas have already been devoted to doing the work of the ministry wherever God placed them. They were mature believers who were trained for the rigors of missionary service.

Next we note that it is in the context of a local church that they are set apart. Their calling comes while they are in the church at Antioch (v. 1). The leadership of the church is led by the Spirit to set these men apart (v. 2). Being sent by the

¹ Much of this is taken from Acts 13-14. We realize that Acts is primarily descriptive and not necessarily prescriptive. However, it is still helpful in determining some general biblical principles regarding the sending of missionaries- especially since this is one of the main thrusts of the book.

church indicates that these men: 1. Received confirmation of their calling from the church (ie. The church recognizes that the Holy Spirit has called them to this ministry) and 2. Remained responsible and accountable to the sending church. This does not mean the sending church had to approve each decision made by the missionaries on the field in advance (for that would be impossible). It does mean that the missionaries needed to report back to the sending church to inform them of what had happened. This is what happens in Acts 14:26-27 when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and “began to report all the things that God had done with them.” Then we are told that “they spent a long time with the disciples” in Antioch (14:28). This gave them time to be ministered to by the local body and to serve in their home church. It provided an opportunity for the church to know them and their character well.

Missionaries are sent primarily to proclaim the gospel

Throughout Acts 13 and 14 we see that this missionary team proclaimed the Word of God (13:5, 16, 44, 49; 14:1, 7, 21). We also see that they were not just sharing the gospel and then leaving the new converts on their own. Instead, they encouraged and taught them (discipled them) and established churches (14:23). We also see that not *all* members of the team functioned in the exact same role. This is demonstrated in Acts 13:5 where we read that as Paul and Barnabas preached “they also had John as their helper.” So it seems that while the primary task of missionaries is the proclamation of the gospel and establishment of churches, there is also a need for some to serve in a supporting capacity. It should be noted, however, that the majority of those on the team were not classified as “support staff.”

3. *Domestic ministries verses frontier missions*²

There is often a tension between those who have a desire for ministering in our own local and needy culture and those who want to take the gospel to areas where there is no church and the name of Christ is not known.

By domestic ministries, we mean all the ministries that we should do among the people in our own culture such as evangelism, helping the poor, caring for widows and orphans, promoting life in the midst of a culture of death/abortion, etc. There is certainly Scriptural warrant for these forms of ministry. The church and individuals within the church are to be involved in local evangelism (Acts 1:8), caring for widows and orphans (James 1:27), and loving neighbors (Matt. 22:39, Luke 10:25-37). This means that domestic ministries are a part of the overall mission of the church.

² Much of this section is adapted from John Piper and Tom Steller’s article “Driving Convictions Behind Foreign Missions. Accessed online at www.desiringgod.org.

By frontier ministries, we mean the effort of the church to take the gospel to unreached people groups and establish an indigenous, ministering church there. Seeing God's name spread to the nations is clearly on the heart of God and, therefore, must be on the heart of the church.

The tension that exists between those who favor one over the other may be caused by the fact that we have limited resources and must make choices about what areas to invest what God has given us. However, we must not neglect either part of the overall mission of the church. In fact, we must realize that there should not be a tension between these two aspects of the church's mission. As we are salt and light in our own communities, we impact our own culture with the gospel of Christ and develop a healthy, cross-driven form of ministry that is worth exporting to the world. We also should see that domestic ministries provide a training ground for frontier missions.

4. *Para-church organizations*

So how do para-church organizations fit into a biblical theology of missions? First, we must define a para-church organization. It is a Christian ministry that does Christian work but does not function as a church.³ Although para-church ministries are not specifically mentioned in the Bible, they are not unbiblical. In fact, they can be quite helpful if they do not ignore the clear biblical focus on the church as God's central avenue of the ministry of the gospel. Para-church organizations are helpful to the degree that they see themselves, in philosophy and practice, as providing assistance to the church. Any attempts to undermine the centrality of the local church or to deem it as unnecessary is unhelpful at best and unbiblical at worst.

Therefore, it is legitimate and even helpful to partner with para-church organizations that help the church carry out domestic ministry and frontier missions. However, individuals and churches should beware of and avoid para-church ministries that do not work closely with local churches or that do not insist that their workers be involved with a local church.

It is also important to note that individuals seeking to be involved in para-church organizations as missionaries (whether here in the US or in another part of the world) should seek the counsel of their local church's elders. As discussed above, it is the church that should affirm missionaries in their gifts and calling to the mission field.

³ The church is distinguished from a para-church organization in that a church is overseen and protected from false doctrine by a group of elders (Acts 20:17, 28-31), practices church discipline (1 Cor. 5:1-5, Matt 18:15-20), oversees baptism and the Lord's supper (1 Cor 11:23-26, Matt. 28:19), and has regular preaching of God's word.

III. Grace Church's Philosophy of Missions

The above theology of missions lays out the biblical foundation for missions. With that foundation laid, it is now time to construct Grace Church's philosophy of missions. Just as with any building, it must fit within the parameters of the foundation upon which it is built.

Our Goal

Since the Great Commission is our mandate from Christ, Grace Church desires to use our resources (time, money, prayer, gifts, and abilities) to make disciples throughout the world (Acts 1:8). We believe every Christian and church is called to either be a missionary or help send others.

Our Priority

To that end, our priority will be supporting and participating in evangelism which results in the establishment and/or strengthening of biblical churches.

Our Domestic Ministry

We also see the importance of supporting and participating in domestic ministries. By domestic ministry, we mean all the ministries that we should do among the people in a culture to fulfill Jesus' command to "love our neighbor." This includes things such as local evangelism, helping the poor, caring for widows and orphans, regional disaster relief, and promoting life in the midst of a culture of death/abortion.

Our Partnerships

We see the benefit of partnering with like-minded churches (and missionaries sent out by them) and some para-church organizations (and individuals commissioned by a local church who serve in these organizations) as we carry out our mission. The closer the task is to evangelism which results in the establishment and/or strengthening of biblical churches, the more similar in doctrine and practice we must be with those we are cooperating with. (See Appendix 1 for a list of primary doctrines and practices)

Those we partner with must be qualified to be a member at our church. If they are not even qualified to serve in our church, we cannot support them in ministering to others. Here, we look to the qualifications for deacons and elders to determine if the person is qualified for missionary service (1 Tim. 3:1-12, Titus 1:6-9).

Our Resources

We believe the majority of our resources should be devoted to planting and strengthening churches with a smaller amount allocated to other mission work.

Planting churches means evangelism that is striving to win people to Christ and then organizing them into a self-replicating body of believers (a church). This is the primary model of missions in the New Testament.

Strengthening churches means providing theological training, practical resources, and other help needed by already formed, biblical churches which are in need of this help as they seek to reach their community. We must guard against letting a church become overly dependent on us as the goal is to have strong, self-sustaining churches.

Some of our resources can be used for funding and helping those who function in a supporting role. This would include mission workers who function in an administrative role, field support role, or who help develop evangelistic resources for field workers (including Bible translations).

The goal is to be biblically balanced in our support. The Bible indicates that the majority of those who serve as missionaries are to be involved in actual gospel proclamation with a fewer number of support staff.⁴ This does not mean that support staff is less important or less glorifying to God. It does mean that we if we seek to be biblically balanced in the allocation of resources we will use the majority of them to support those who are on the field, sharing the gospel. This is analogous to a company in which the majority of the staff is actually involved in the daily operations while there are relatively few involved in administration. Both are needed, but the proportions should be kept in proper balance.

IV. Grace Church's Strategy for Missions

Now that our philosophy of missions has been built on our theology, we can begin to see what this means in our actual practice. In other words, what does this philosophy look like in the life of Grace Church? The answer to this can be seen in our practical strategy for missions.

1. Ensure orthodoxy and orthopraxy in those we partner with

Since we believe that those we support must be biblically qualified for leadership, in character and doctrine, we will seek to evaluate the doctrine and practice (practical theology) of those we support. This will be done in two ways:

Questionnaires- We will send a questionnaire to missionaries we already support each year to gather information about their lives and doctrine (see appendix 1) and

Interviews- We will interview potential candidates who want us to be their sending church or who are sent by another church and want our support.

⁴ See section II, subsection 2, paragraph 4 above for the biblical grounding for this claim.

2. *Financial support*

We realize that we have limited resources and cannot support every worthwhile missionary endeavor. In an effort to use our resources faithfully in fulfilling our philosophy of missions, we have developed various categories of support. In order to receive support, individuals should submit either an *Application for Long-Term Missions Support* (appendix 2) or an *Application for Short-Term Missions Support* (appendix 3)

Level One- These are individuals who are involved in the establishment of churches in areas that do not already have a faithful church and those who are involved in supporting local churches. Some support/administrative mission workers may fall into this category too, especially if they are supporting this type of field work. Those who are in this category will receive on-going, significant financial support and help with special projects until a self-sustaining church is in place. These individuals should submit an Application for Long-Term Missions Support to the board.

Level Two- These are individuals who are serving in support roles or para-church organizations that serve the overall mission of the church, but are not directly involved with the tasks of establishing and strengthening churches to do the work of the ministry. These individuals may be involved in evangelism or discipleship, but it is not aimed at developing a church in an area where a church does not already exist or at strengthening a church that needs help in order to become self-sustaining and self-replicating. This category would also include individuals and ministries that help Grace Church in its domestic ministries. Those in this category can receive on-going, less-extensive support and help with special projects, although they may also just receive a onetime gift. These individuals should submit an Application for Long-Term Missions Support.

Level Three- These are individuals from within our own church body (or who are commissioned by their own church which is similar to us in doctrine and practice) who have applied to the Grace Church's board to receive financial support for a short-term mission project. These individuals can receive a one-time gift from the church. The extent of the gift will be determined by the amount available and the nature of the work they will be doing. These individuals should also seek to raise support from family and friends.

Level Four- These are individuals who want to raise support by requesting financial assistance from individual members in our congregation (either because the church has no more budgeted money for missions or for other reasons). These individuals should seek to meet with a few of the board members who can interview them. The board will then decide if the individual should be endorsed with board approval to ask individuals from the church for financial support. If approved, they will be asked to include a statement on their support letter stating that they have been endorsed by the

board in their effort to raise support. These individuals should submit an Application for Short-Term Missions Support to the board.

There may be some exceptions to these categories of support but they are the exception and not the rule.

3. *Prayer, encouragement and service*

We realize that financial support is not the only type of help we can or should offer to our missionaries. We can and must also offer support through prayer, encouragement, and service.

Prayer- The leadership of the church will keep the missionaries before the congregation for prayer. This will be accomplished through:

- Public, corporate prayer for missionaries during morning and/or evening services
- Including the missionaries we support on an on-going basis in the prayer directory
- Making the congregation aware of specific prayer request the missionaries have.

Encouragement- The leadership of the church will seek to encourage our missionaries by:

- Maintaining open communication with them(through email, letter, or phone) regarding the joys and struggles in ministry.
- Recruiting members to send gifts or notes of encouragement to missionaries.
- Sending a member of the pastoral staff occasionally to minister to them and better understand the nature of their ministry.

Service- At times our missionaries may need help in the field. If it would be helpful and desired by the missionary we would seek to serve them by:

- Sending a small short-term mission team to help with special projects

4. *Congregational engagement*

Since missions is the work of all churches and Christians, we want to develop a culture of missions at Grace Church. This can be done in several ways.

Preaching on missions- As we preach expositionally through Scripture, we will inevitably come across texts that deal with missions and domestic ministries. These times will provide opportunities for biblical instruction on the topic.

Praying for God to raise up missionaries from among us- We will pray that God would raise up missionaries from our midst.

Training and equipping those who think they are called to missions- This will be done through our various teaching ministries and discipleship relationships with those who believe they may be called to missions. We want to focus on developing their character and theology so that they can meet the scriptural qualifications for ministry.

Short-term mission work- This will involve mission trips and local community outreach events. We want to ensure that these trips and service opportunities are actually helpful in serving kingdom purposes. Also, they will provide opportunities for those who participate to see God at work in various places. Additionally, they will allow those interested in the possibility of long-term missions work to see if they are indeed gifted and called in the area of missions.

Appendix 1:

Primary Doctrines and Practices of Grace Church

The following is a list of major doctrines and practices which we must have agreement on with those we partner with for evangelism and establishing and strengthening churches. These doctrines are further elaborated on in our Church's statement of faith.

Doctrines:

- The gospel message
- The doctrine of salvation
- The person and work of Jesus
- The person of God
- The inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture
- The doctrine of sanctification
- The priority of the local church

Practices:

- Sign gifts are not for the church today
- Only men can be elders
- The emerging church movement is not an acceptable form of ministry
- Measuring success should be on the basis of faithfulness in ministering God's Word and not simply numbers

Appendix 2:

Current Missionary Questionnaire

Name and Title of Missionary _____

Please help us better understand your current ministry and spiritual life:

What is it that you do on a regular basis?

What do you think the primary purpose of your ministry is?

In practical terms, how do you carry out this purpose?

Describe the types of resources (for evangelism, discipleship, etc.) you use in your ministry. Give some examples.

Explain your involvement in a local church.

Explain how your ministry fits into the work of the local church.

Describe the current spiritual state of you and your family. How and in what areas are you growing? What areas are you struggling in?

Explain how you are using God's Word on a daily basis for ministry.

How do you define "success" in your ministry?

Please Indicate Your Position on the Following Topics:

Literal Six Day Creation of the heavens and the earth.

_____ Fully Embrace

_____ There are other credible views

The 'Sign Gifts' are for today, ie...tongues, healing...

- Yes
 No
 Possibly

Your Views of the Emerging Church/Emergent Movement.

- An attractive new approach
 Do not embrace tenets of this movement
 Not informed concerning this movement

Women in Authority in the Church

- The Bible teaches that women are not to have authority over men in the church
 Accommodations need to be made at times

Biblical/Theological Questions

Explain your beliefs and convictions on the Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture.

What does Paul mean when he says, “**I have become all things to all people**, that by all means I might save some,” in 1 Corinthians 9:22?

Explain your beliefs and convictions concerning “dreams and visions” and their application to Christians today.

Explain your beliefs and convictions regarding Roman Catholicism and its association with the Evangelical Church.

Explain your beliefs and convictions regarding spiritual gifts (tongues and healing) and the Charismatic Movement.

Explain your view of the local church. What is its role in missions? How important is it for a Christian to be involved in a local church?

Explain your beliefs and convictions regarding God’s sovereignty.

Explain your beliefs and convictions concerning what happens to those people of other religions who do not repent and turn to Christ as Lord and Savior.

Explain what a person must do or believe to be saved. How would you explain the gospel?

Explain how a person grows in their walk with God.

What is your definition of marriage and does it include "Same Sex Unions?"

Please provide us with feedback

In what ways can Grace Church better serve you in the work of the ministry?

Do you have any particular needs that we could consider helping with?

What is the best way for us to contact you (email, snail mail, phone, skype)? Please provide your contact information.

Would it be beneficial to your ministry for us to consider sending a team to help in a specific project (a short term trip)? If so, please tell us how.

Are other churches supporting you? How much?

Are individuals supporting you? How much?

Appendix 3:

Application for Long-Term Missions Support

Name: _____ Birth date: _____.

Phone: _____ Email: _____.

Describe where you plan on working, what type of work you will be doing, and when you plan on beginning in this ministry position:

I have been attending _____ church for _____ year(s) and have been a member since _____.

Who is your sending church (If it is not GCOT please provide us with their contact information)?

Are you going through a para-church organization? If so, what organization?

Please describe your areas of service within the congregation of your church:

How does this current opportunity for missionary service fit in with the local church?

What are your long-term vocational/career/ goals?

Please describe some of the reasons motivating your desire to participate in this area of service:

Please describe ways that you think you are currently growing as a Christian:

Do you have concerns about participating in this ministry (if so, please describe):

Have you done any missions work before this? If so, please describe it.

Have you received any training for the ministry you will be engaging in? If so please describe it.

Do you have any medical conditions that might affect your participation (if so, please describe)?

Biblical/Theological Questions

Explain your beliefs and convictions on the Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture.

Explain your beliefs and convictions concerning “dreams and visions” and their application to Christians today.

Explain your beliefs and convictions regarding Roman Catholicism and its association with the Evangelical Church.

Explain your beliefs and convictions regarding spiritual gifts (tongues and healing) and the Charismatic Movement.

Explain your view of the local church. What is its role in missions? How important is it for a person to be involved in a local church?

Explain your beliefs and convictions regarding God’s sovereignty.

Explain your beliefs and convictions concerning what happens to those people of other religions who do not repent and turn to Christ as Lord and Savior.

Explain what a person must do or believe to be saved. How would you explain the gospel?

Explain how a person grows in their walk with God.

What is your definition of marriage and does it include “Same Sex Unions?”

Support Requested

What do you estimate your monthly expenses will be?

How much support have you already raised?

How do you intend to raise any additional support that is needed?

Appendix 4:

Application for Short-Term Missions Support

Name: _____ Birth date: _____.

Phone: _____ Email: _____.

Shortly describe the logistical details of your trip (i.e., location, dates, what you will be doing/nature of your involvement, name of sponsor organization, etc.):

I have been attending GCOT for _____ year(s) and have been a member since _____.

Please describe your areas of service within the congregation of GCOT:

What are your long-term vocational/career/ goals?

Please describe some of the reasons motivating your desire to participate in this trip:

Please describe ways that you think you are currently growing as a Christian:

Do you have concerns about participating on this trip (if so, please describe):

If this is an overseas trip, have you traveled overseas previously? If so, please briefly describe those experiences:

Do you have any medical conditions that might affect your participation (if so, please describe)?

The total cost for the trip is \$_____. I expect that I can provide \$_____ through my own resources and through support from close friends and family.

Please Check the option(s) that fit your situation:

___ I am requesting financial assistance from the church board.

___ I am requesting an endorsement from the board as I seek to raise support from individuals within GCOT's congregation.

(Feel free to attach an additional sheet of paper if more space is needed for any questions).