



SGBC MISSIONS PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR MISSIONS

The Purpose of the Local Church

The ultimate purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ps 96:3; Isa 48:9–11; 1 Cor 10:31; Eph 3:21). As Christ was given one mission by the Father (John 17:4), He in turn gives only one mission to His church (John 17:18; Matt 28:19–20; Acts 1:8). The church exists in the world for the same ultimate purpose for which Christ came—to reveal the glory of God to all men (1 Pet 2:9). This is also the Great Commission, the mission of the church, to see God’s glory declared among all nations, continuing to manifest His glory to a dark world (Eph 3:10)—until He personally returns to the earth to extend His kingdom and His glory throughout the whole earth (Ps 2; Rev 19).

The means by which every local church accomplishes this ultimate purpose on earth is threefold:

- 1) By *exalting* God in worship (John 4:23–24; Rom 12:1; Eph 3:21);
- 2) By *evangelizing* the world (Acts 1:8) with the end goal of making disciples (Matt 28:18–20) through the planting and establishing of God-centered, Christ-exalting, Spirit-empowered, Bible-expositing, indigenous local churches among all the peoples of the earth (Acts 14:21–23; Rom 15:14–29).
- 3) By *edifying* the body of Christ through the faithful preaching and teaching of God’s Word (Eph 4:11–16; 2 Tim 4:2), the cultivation and training of church leaders (Acts 14:23; 2 Tim 2:2), and the mutual employment of each member’s spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7; 1 Pet 4:10–11)

The Mandate and Focus of Outreach

The Great Commission given by the Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations is not an option but rather a biblical mandate that is binding upon His church until the end of the age (Matt 28:18–20). Therefore, it is both the privilege and responsibility of every local church body to zealously carry out this commission by faithfully proclaiming the gospel in the power of the Spirit to every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Acts 14:21; Rev 5:9), baptizing new converts into the name of the triune God (Matt 28:19), teaching them to obey all that Christ commanded (Matt 28:18–20; cf. Acts 14:22), and gathering them into indigenous (self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating) churches (Acts 14:21–23; Rom 15:14–29) able to fulfill their Christian calling among their own people.

The Great Commission is more than “evangelizing;” it is “discipling” (i.e., disciple making) with the end result always being the establishment of a local church. This is not only the mandate, the privilege, and the responsibility of every local church but also the primary focus of missions in the church. The church today is being pressured on many sides with many tasks, all in the name of outreach. Therefore, the church should be focused on the understanding of its disciple-making mission as the utterly unique task of the church, and all its outreach activities should be constrained by the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

MINISTRY PRIORITIES

Missions Ministry Priorities

Church planting is the target of the Great Commission. The disciple-making demands of the Great Commission explicitly include more than simply evangelizing the lost. Making disciples involves baptizing them (Matt 28:19; cf. the pattern in Acts 2:41–42 where people are baptized and then added to the number of the church) and teaching them to observe all that Christ commanded (Matt 28:18). Both baptizing and teaching are intimately connected with the local church.

The pattern of missions in the book of Acts is evangelism, incorporation into a local assembly and then devotion to the teaching of the apostles. This pattern was evident in the establishment of the local church (Acts 2:14-47), and additionally in the church at Antioch (Acts 11:9–26, cf. 13:1–3). Noting the pattern at Antioch: People turned to the Lord (11:21), those same people were considered a church (11:26), then Barnabas and Paul taught them for an extended period (11:26). Acts 14:21–23 makes it clear that establishing churches with elders was the norm and not the exception (cf. Titus 1:5).

It is essential that the church consistently seeks to bring their missions effort in alignment with the emphasis that the Scriptures lay on church planting. In other words, the more closely a ministry is connected with this ultimate aim of seeing churches planted, the more it is deserving of missions support. To do missions biblically is to have a missions' effort that reflects the same emphases the New Testament does. Therefore, missions at SGBC will be prioritized in the following order:

1. **Church planting:** Church planting is the establishing of local, indigenous churches characterized by true worship of God, effective biblical nurture of believers, and evangelization of unbelievers, to the end that these churches will reproduce themselves. Church planting efforts will require an initial evangelistic strategy and a strong, ongoing gospel witness and teaching ministry for the effective building up of a living body of believers. Although many servants aide in a ministry of this nature, the primary means God uses to bring a church about is a resident, fulltime, pastor/teacher and qualified elders.
2. **Leadership training:** Churches cannot be planted unless there are pastor/teachers and elders to plant and grow them. Therefore, training men to be those who can handle God's Word effectively as they lovingly shepherd God's sheep is essential to missions. Involvement in leadership training includes training pastors at home to be sent out to plant churches as well as sending out teachers with the specific goal of training nationals for the work of the ministry.
3. **Strengthening Existing Churches:** Strengthening ministries are those involved with equipping and building up existing local, indigenous churches so that they can evangelize and reproduce churches among their own people in an effective way. Efforts to strengthen local churches may include such activities as shepherding, preaching, teaching, discipleship, and partnering with Christian nationals in evangelism and outreach ministries.

The Biblical missions mandate has a three-fold geographic focus. Jesus describes this in Acts 1:8 when He commands His disciples to "... be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." In our modern context, we define Jerusalem as the immediate geographic area and our cultural context (i.e. language and customs); we define Judea and Samaria as beyond the immediate geographic area, yet still within our cultural context; and the remotest parts of the earth as both geographically "far" and, more decisively, cross-cultural. Geographic focus at SGBC will be prioritized in the following order:

- 1) Cross-cultural and geographically “far” (i.e. the remotest parts of the earth) church planting, leadership training, and church strengthening ministries to unreached people groups in non-English speaking areas beyond our national borders.
- 2) Cross-cultural church planting, leadership training, and church strengthening to unreached, non-native English speaking communities in our local area.
- 3) Cross-cultural church planting, leadership training, and church strengthening to unreached non-native English speaking communities beyond our local area, but still in our cultural context.

This is not to ignore local evangelism directed to native English speakers in our cultural context, but rather to assert that this responsibility lies with every local church as a normal part of its church life and should not be “outsourced” to supported missionaries. Likewise, as local churches in “Judea and Samaria” fulfill this fundamental responsibility as a part of their philosophy of ministry, this should diminish, or eliminate, the need to support missionaries in our cultural context beyond the local area.

QUALIFICATIONS OF SUPPORTED MISSIONARIES

Attributes of Missionary Candidates

It is the responsibility of the local church not only to pray for God to raise up workers (Matt 9:35–38), but also to identify those whom God is raising up in the local church body (Acts 13:1ff). Missionary candidates should be evaluated by their:

- 1) *Calling* – evident giftedness and desire (1 Tim 3:1–2; 1 Pet 4:10– 11);
- 2) *Character* – the Spirit’s work in producing a life of holiness in the potential candidate (1 Tim 3:1– 13; 2 Tim 2:21; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet. 5:1–3);
- 3) *Creed* – the candidate will clearly demonstrate faithfulness in both doctrine and practice (1 Tim 4:16); and
- 4) *Confirmation* – the church leadership, along with the congregation, will affirm the candidate (Acts 13:3; cf. Acts 6:6).

Competence of Missionary Candidates

We strongly desire and recommend that all candidates for SGBC missions support have completed seminary level training (at an SGBC-approved seminary) and have demonstrated a clear competence and commitment in the following areas:

- 1) Biblical exegesis and hermeneutics including capability in the original languages;
- 2) Biblical exposition and homiletics;
- 3) Systematic theology;
- 4) Apologetic (i.e. contending for the faith) methodology;
- 5) Pastoral leadership and shepherding;

- 6) Biblical counseling;
- 7) Bible knowledge (OT/NT introduction and survey); and
- 8) Intensive language and cross-cultural training so that they are properly equipped to enter the field.