

Missions Policy

First Evangelical Free Church

Revised July 2014

PART 1: PURPOSE AND VISION

The primary purpose for missions at First Free is to further the mission of the church into places and people groups not directly reached by First Free. Thus, missions at First Free exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ who glorify God as the grace of the gospel grows deep in God's people and goes wide to all peoples. The gospel is the center of everything we do, and therefore the gospel is the center of our missions.

First Free has been deeply committed to missions for decades, and this continues today with our commitment to dedicate 25% of the total church budget to missions.

VISION FOR *UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS*

First Free believes the primary thrust of missions is to take the gospel to every tribe, tongue, and nation. We use the term "unreached people group" to describe people with a common language and sense of ethnic identity that is less than 2% evangelical Christian. This means they do not have a viable, indigenous church or expression of the gospel that is adequate to spread to the majority of their people.

Because of this vision, First Free dedicates 50% of our missions budget to ministry among unreached people groups.

VISION FOR *LOCAL MINISTRIES*

First Free believes we are called to serve Wichita and Kansas. In doing so, we want to make the gospel known to as many Wichitans and Kansans as possible. As a result, we dedicate 30% of our missions budget to partner ministries in Wichita and Kansas that serve demographics of people and ethnic groups that First Free doesn't directly reach.

VISION FOR *OTHER DEVELOPMENT MINISTRIES*

The remaining 20% of our missions budget is dedicated to "Development Ministries" that are not among unreached people groups or in Kansas. We want to develop spiritually-mature, healthy disciples in a gospel-centered way, particularly in under-served parts of the world. Christian orphan care, medical care, relief work, and education all serve the worldwide Body of Christ and develop mature disciples of Jesus Christ.

PART 2: CORE VALUES

WORD AND PRAYER

First Free's philosophy of ministry is "The Word does the work in the power of the Spirit." Therefore, the Word and prayer are central to all of our ministries. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, the Bible will not be effective, and our missions efforts will be fruitless. Missions partners should have knowledge of the Word and be active in prayer. We start every Missions Committee meeting with a time of prayer, and we are committed to communicating missions partners' prayer requests to the congregation.

LOCAL CHURCH

First Free prioritizes the role of local churches in missions. The local church is the primary vehicle in which disciples are made. We prioritize missions partners who are planting local churches and/or strategically partnering with local churches in their ministries.

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

First Free believes the best leaders of churches and ministries are the local people who are most familiar with local culture and context. We want to partner with missionaries and organizations that seek to train and empower indigenous leaders as pastors, elders, theologians, missionaries, and Christians in everyday life, rather than creating dependency on outside sources.

PARTNERSHIP

First Free is committed to active, healthy relationships with our missions partners. It is important that our relationship be a mutually encouraging partnership. As First Free provides partners with financial, prayer, and other support, we expect them to partner with us through good communication, prayer, and visits when possible.

TRUST

First Free trusts our missions partners. While we certainly expect accountability and hard work from them, we generally trust that our partners are diligent for the sake of the gospel. We will not be looking over their shoulders to watch their every move. Instead, we trust God to bear fruit in and through them. If, however, concerns arise over a partner's diligence, morality, theology, or strategy, we will investigate more thoroughly.

HEALTH

First Free believes that when missions partners are spiritually, emotionally, relationally and physically healthy, they produce the best fruit. We care most that a partner is walking closely with God, growing in the grace of the gospel. We do not expect our missionaries to be perfectly healthy all the time, and we know they will face spiritual, emotional, and physical trials. However, if we see partners neglecting their health or consistently struggling in the above areas, we will act as we deem appropriate to help restore their health.

TEAM

First Free believes that the best ministry takes place when different people with different gifts are working together for a common mission. We do not encourage "lone ranger" missionaries, who work without a team, organization, or general accountability. Missions partners need fellowship, authority, accountability, and encouragement.

PART 3: PROCESS FOR DETERMINING PARTNERSHIP

BEGINNING A PARTNERSHIP

We evaluate missions partner candidates on a case by case basis based on their answers to the following questions, which match up with our purpose, vision, and core values.

1. **Gospel-Centeredness.** Do you agree with First Free's statement of faith? Do you support First Free's church mission? Any disagreements must be discussed with the Pastor of Missions.
2. **Vision.** Does your ministry focus on unreached people groups, local missions, or other development ministries?

3. **Word and Prayer.** What training do you have in the Bible? What is your prayer life like right now? What other disciplines or activities are a part of your walk with Christ?
4. **Local Church Planting.** How closely is your ministry involved with raising up local, indigenous churches and leaders? How are you serving in your local church right now?
5. **Partnership.** What is your relationship to First Free? Are you asking First Free to be your primary sending church, or a secondary supporting church?
6. **Health.** Are you generally in good health, physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually?
7. **Team.** Are you going with a team or joining a team that can provide adequate leadership and fellowship for you? What accountability do you and your ministry have?

In addition to matching up with our vision and values, the following factors are also considered to help determine partnership:

8. **Experience, Skills, and Training.** What experience and skills do you have in the areas you plan to serve? What training do you have in preparation for your ministry?
9. **Sending Organization.** Is the organization you will be/are serving with one we consider reputable? How closely aligned is it with First Free's vision and values?
10. **Length of Term.** How long are you planning to be on the mission field?
11. **Financial Need.** How much money do you need at this time?

PROCESS FOR APPLYING

Step 1: Contact the Pastor of Missions or Committee Chairperson and let them know of your interest.

Step 2: Complete the "Application for Missions" and submit it to the Pastor of Missions.

Step 3: The Pastor of Missions and Committee Chairperson will set up a one-hour interview to hear more about your ministry.

Step 4: Attend a Missions Committee meeting for 20-30 minutes to share with the whole committee about your ministry.

Step 5: The committee decides if and how First Free will partner with you.

Each step is based on completion of the previous step and approval of the Pastor of Missions to move forward.

ENDING A PARTNERSHIP

Termination or decreases of financial support for a missions partner is permissible at the discretion of the Missions Committee. Reasons for termination may include failure to meet the expectations stipulated in this policy. The Committee will generally try to give three months advance notice that a partnership is ending or decreasing, though some situations could merit an immediate change.

PART 4: EXPECTATIONS FOR MISSIONS PARTNERS

COMMUNICATION

We expect to receive an update from all of our mission partners at a *minimum* of once a quarter. We love to hear from our partners often, with highlights and trials! Email is the preferred method of communication, sent to the Pastor of Missions. Updates do not necessarily need flashy graphics or

miraculous stories. We simply want to know how our partners are doing and how we can be praying for them and serving them. We are happy to receive hard-copy letters or phone calls as well.

If we do not hear from a partner for three months, the Pastor of Missions will contact them asking for an update. If there is no response, we will connect with their sending agency to check in. Lack of communication is grounds for withdrawing or decreasing support.

MINISTRY CHANGES

All changes in location (except for moving within the same city), sending organization, primary ministry focus, or ministry strategy must be communicated as early as possible. The Missions Committee may change support levels based on any ministry changes.

HOME ASSIGNMENT

If First Free is the primary sending church, we expect the partner to inform us of their time in the States and visit us during that time. We will try to help with anything we can while they are in the Wichita area.

If First Free is a secondary supporting church, we expect the partner to communicate their plans for their home assignment with us, and we can communicate together about a possible visit to First Free. We expect the primary church to take care of most of the needs while on home assignment.

Generally, we continue support during home assignment within the parameters of 2-3 months per year served since the previous home assignment. Support for home assignments beyond these parameters is provided only with committee approval on a case by case basis.

SPECIAL REQUESTS

Some years, First Free has excess funds at the end of the year for year-end missions giving. All missionaries can request a portion of those funds for special projects or needs. These requests must be made by October 31 of the current year to be considered.

Other requests can be made by contacting the Pastor of Missions at any time. We expect most travel expenses to be budgeted in the partner's regular support needs.

The Pastor of Missions, with approval from the Executive Pastor, Lead Pastor, or Committee Chairperson, has the authority to approve an expenditure of up to \$1,000 for an urgent request.

ANNUAL REVIEWS

If First Free is the primary sending church, we expect the partner to complete an annual review. If First Free is a secondary supporting church, we will contact the sending agency or sending church for reviews as needed. If there are not adequate reviews in place through the agency or sending church, we expect the partner to complete a First Free review.

PART 5: THE ROLE OF THE MISSIONS COMMITTEE

APPOINTMENTS

1. The Missions Committee is under the authority of the Elders.
2. Committee members are recommended by the Pastor of Missions and appointed by the Elders.
3. Committee members are to be church members in good standing.

4. Committee members are to demonstrate a passion for missions, knowledge of missions, and discernment.

MEETINGS

1. The committee meets monthly, usually on the second Sunday of the month at 2:00 PM. Meetings usually last until 4:00 or 4:30. Occasionally we will agree to meet at a different time if there is a scheduling conflict for several members.
2. Committee members are expected to attend a minimum of 9 of the 12 meetings in one year. If a member attends less than nine, the Pastor of Missions and Committee Chair can request that the Elders remove that person from the committee the following year.
3. Meetings will generally follow the following pattern:
 - a) Prayer for missions partners
 - b) Interviews of candidates and partners
 - c) Discussions and decisions
 - d) Missionary care items
4. Voting is to be done through the following process:
 - a) A committee member will make a motion, which then must be seconded.
 - b) Discussion of the motion and a call to vote
 - c) Verbal vote on the motion. A majority vote passes a motion. A majority of the committee present will constitute a quorum. In the case of urgent situations between meetings, voting by email or phone is allowed.
5. A member of the committee is to record the minutes of the meeting and send them to the Pastor of Missions and committee. These minutes will then be approved by the committee at the following meeting and saved in church records.
6. The Elders have access to the minutes and ultimately have the final authority on any decision. This includes any amendments to this policy, which the Pastor of Missions and Missions Committee may propose as needed.

TERMS

1. Committee members are appointed to two-year terms.
2. A committee member may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms, for a total of four years. After four years, he/she must take a one year break from the committee before being considered again.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Read partner updates and pray for as many partners as possible.
2. Attend committee meetings.
3. Help promote missions in the church, specifically helping with Missions Sunday.
4. Help make decisions about missions strategy, education, trips, and budget.
5. Help with care and accountability for missions partners.
6. Help serve partners when they are in Wichita.

PART 6: SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

First Free prioritizes missions partners and organizations that are in missions for the long-term. However, short-term missions trips can play an important role in missions by serving long-termers, exposing people to missions, and building passion for missions. Terms less than one year are considered short-term.

STRATEGY

1. We prioritize trips in direct conjunction with First Free's long-term missions partners. Short-termers should serve, submit to, and encourage the long-termers.
2. Non First Free trips should be with respected sending organizations.
3. Trips should expose participants to a real picture of what long-term missions looks like.
4. Participants should be matched with trips that utilize their specific gifts and talents.
5. Trips should increase the faith, boldness, and passion for missions in participants' lives back home.

PROCESS

1. If interested in a First Free trip, contact the Pastor of Missions or Team Leader.
2. If going on a trip not connected with First Free, fill out the short-term missions application and return to the Pastor of Missions.
3. The Missions Committee will support First Free missions trips at a minimum of 10% of the trip cost per person, and will consider supporting non First Free trips on a case by case basis.
4. Once the Missions Committee has approved a short-term trip, the participant is allowed to raise financial support from the congregation.
 - a) Every short-term participant is required to pay a portion of their own trip.
 - b) Children under the age of 13 will not receive financial support or missions status from the Missions Committee. Children aged 13 to 15 must have a parent or approved adult accompany them on the trip.
 - c) No one may raise missions support through First Free ministries without approval from the Pastor of Missions or Executive Pastor.

PASTORS AND STAFF

First Free's commitment to missions includes sending our ministry staff on missions trips.

Ministry staff trips will be approved by the committee based on the short-term missions strategy. As the missions budget allows, the Missions Committee will cover 100% of a ministry staff's missions trip, after the portion they decide to pay themselves. Pastors and staff should submit their trip requests to the Pastor of Missions by November 30 for the following year.