Cornerstone Congregational Church Missions Policy

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1. **Missions Policy Introduction**

This policy is intended to guide Cornerstone Congregational Church on issues relating to missions and the missions program of the church.

1. **Philosophy of Missions**

There are many reasons why missions must be done, and this list is not exhaustive. First of all, and perhaps most simply, Jesus commanded his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Second, if no one tells lost people about Jesus, they cannot know and believe. The Apostle Paul explains this systematically in Romans 10:9-15 as he asks “how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard”. Third, we serve a missionary God. God has been pursuing his people since the fall. Genesis 3:15 foreshadows the gospel promise and throughout the Old Testament one sees a God who pursues the sinful, fallen, and lost people he created.[[1]](#footnote-1) Fourth, Christians are exhorted throughout Scripture to love and help everyone, especially those who are less fortunate or forgotten. Passages such as the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 and the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46 show so clearly God’s desire for his children to show his love by meeting the needs of people everywhere. Fifth, introducing someone to Jesus Christ is good. In fact, there is no greater thing that can be done for someone. Whether it is in word or in deed, Scripture is clear that God’s people must not avoid their obligation to do good. “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them” (James 4:17). Finally, human beings were created to glorify God and to declare his praises. “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). The very reason God has given these four special names is that his people would be his witnesses and missionaries to the world.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Missions must be a mixture of meeting physical needs and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Christians are commanded both to help those in need and to make disciples. The foremost need for some is physical help while others live in opulence while remaining in desperate need of a savior. “The needs of the poor – and the rich – go beyond the physical and the psychological. They are spiritual as well. The most effective development plans meet the needs of the whole person.”[[3]](#footnote-3) God wants the love of his children to be attractive to the unbeliever, it is the love, care, and concern for others that is intended to draw others to Christ and open the door for verbalizing the gospel message. Exclaiming love and concern for someone, and telling them that God loves them, will seem very hollow to those who are hungry if the words are not accompanied by food. Likewise, providing for one’s physical needs without sharing the gospel does not demonstrate real love as their most significant need remains neglected. Faith and works are not opposing ideas but two manifestations of the same idea. As James said, “show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds” (James 2:18).

Whether sharing Jesus with people in words or in deeds, it must be done in humility. When God spoke to us in Scripture he used human language, and when he spoke to us in Christ he assumed human flesh. In order to reveal himself, he both emptied and humbled himself. That is the model of evangelism which the Bible supplies. There is self-emptying and self-humbling in all authentic evangelism; without it we contradict the gospel and misrepresent the Christ we proclaim.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Cornerstone seeks to have a well-rounded missions program that is diverse geographically, focuses on both spiritual and physical needs, and is true to the nature of our missionary God.

1. **Cornerstone Missions Ministry Team (MMT) Guidelines**

## Vision Statement

Engage with the congregation to determine Cornerstone’s heart for missions; support local, regional, and global missions/missionaries and engage with them on behalf of Cornerstone; encourage missions opportunities; and educate/inform the congregation about missions/missionaries.

## Mission Statement

Prayerfully collaborate with Cornerstone’s congregation to provide thoughtful opportunities for Cornerstone to engage in local, regional, and global missions.

## General Responsibilities

Operate according to the By-Laws, Articles of Faith, and Playbook of Cornerstone Congregational Church of Westford.

## Specific Responsibilities

The MMT is specifically tasked with many things outlined in the Playbook and as listed here:

* + 1. Selecting Cornerstone’s missionary partners
		2. Praying regularly for each long-term and short-term missionary/mission partner
		3. Maintaining regular communication with our missionary partners
		4. Educating the congregation on our missions program and missionaries
		5. Providing prayer requests, news updates, and partnering opportunities to the church
		6. Managing the financial support of the missionary partners
		7. Coordinating missionary visits and church involvement
		8. Encouraging the congregation to pray for and join with our missionary partners
		9. Reviewing, approving, and overseeing short-term mission trips

## Membership Selection

The MMT Chair (Team Lead) shall be nominated and approved according to the provisions in the church by-laws. The Chair should be one recognized by the church to have leadership qualities, administrative abilities, and a familiarity with and passion for missions.

The Chair, in conjunction with the Elder Liaison, shall select from the congregation of the church others to comprise the MMT. A minimum of three people shall comprise the MMT. The Chair shall set and distribute the agenda as well as facilitate the meetings. A Secretary shall take minutes of the meetings, keep the MMT records, and provide minutes to the church as required.

## Member Qualifications

Members are expected to maintain their spiritual lives in devotion to the Lord through prayer, personal Scripture study, regular church attendance, and living a holy life. They are expected to attend faithfully the MMT meetings, pray regularly for the missionaries Cornerstone Congregational Church supports, become educated about the work of said missionaries, and be actively involved in the programs created to support missions within the church.

## Team Decision Making

The MMT meetings shall be governed by **Robert’s Rules of Order**.

## Resignation & Removal of Members

If for any reason a member of the MMT will not or cannot fulfill their responsibilities due to lapses as outlined under Section III.6, the MMT Chair (Team Lead) will confer with that member, if feasible, to bring about a renewed commitment. If a solution cannot be reached, a recommendation may be made for the member to resign from the MMT. Every effort will be made to rectify the situation in keeping with the desire above all for unity and love to prevail. 1 Cor. 1:10, “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” (NIV) See also John 17:20-26. All resignations must be submitted in writing or email to the Team Leader, who will inform the MMT and the Board of Elders.

1. **Stewardship Strategies**

## Funding Priorities

Our Funding Priorities are driven by our Philosophy of Missions—that we glorify God by seeking to fulfill the Great Commission. To that end, we first prioritize **Frontline Ministries**; bringing the gospel to those at home and abroad who don’t know Jesus. We also support, but in a secondary manner, **Ministry to the Needy** in the name of Christ.

* + 1. **Evangelistic Ministries:** We desire to first support evangelistic ministries; including, but not limited to missions to unreached and least-reached people groups, Bible-translation work, church planting, and local evangelistic outreach programs. We also consider supporting services as part of this effort, such as pilots who provide access to hard-to-reach areas, theological training for indigenous pastors, or medical missions. **We give frontline evangelistic ministries our first priority in funding.**
		2. **Ministry to the Needy:** The Bible mandates believers care for the needy, including orphans, widows, and the impoverished (James 1:27, Proverbs 28:27). Although we still see evangelism as the church's primary missions call, we believe God also calls us to freely serve the downtrodden. In obedience to the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40), to not only love God, but to love our neighbors as ourselves, we will support Christian organizations that perform humanitarian ministry. **We will give ministry to the needy our second priority in funding.**

## Funding Considerations

There are a great deal of ministries and missionaries that fulfill the above requirements. In order to narrow our selection, we give the following order of consideration:

* + 1. A member or attendee of Cornerstone Congregational Church
		2. Individuals or organizations affiliated with or actively supported by the Cornerstone congregation
		3. Other individuals or organizations brought to our attention

## Annual Budget Process

The MMT shall review the needs of existing and new candidates and will recommend an annual missions budget to the church through the Finance Ministry Team/Deacons and the Board of Elders. The MMT will keep the Board of Elders and the Finance Ministry Team/Deacons informed of all missions’ financial support recommendations and actions to bring on new missionaries to the church budget or remove existing missionaries from the church budget each year before the Annual Meeting. The Elder Board will oversee the MMT.

1. **Cornerstone Mission Partner/Missionary Guidelines**

## Theological Stance

The theological stance of any missionary Cornerstone Congregational Church supports shall be considered before entering into a partnership. The MMT shall ensure that the missionary is in agreement with the Articles of Faith of Cornerstone Congregational Church.

## Affiliations & Accountability

The MMT may support any non-profit ministry, including missionaries, agencies, programs, or organizations. Preference is given to organizations that meet one or more of the following or similar qualifications:

* + 1. The ministry is officially affiliated with and recognized by the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association (EFMA), the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA), or the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA).
		2. The ministry is an official 501(c)(3) entity or is currently in the process of becoming an official 501(c)(3) organization within a predetermined time frame.
		3. The ministry is generated by or connected locally with our own church.

## Rules for Application Submittals

Requests for individual or organization long-term or short-term support may be submitted to any member of the MMT. The request must be submitted in writing or via email. Further information may be requested. If the MMT determines there is an interest in the applicant, the applicant may be asked to come for a personal interview to examine more detailed and personal questions about the mission, sending board, and/or the applicant’s spiritual life. The MMT shall determine the applicant’s suitability for that work and whether or not the applicant is a good fit for the church.

After a successful personal interview, the MMT may perform a candidate background review by contacting the sending board and references given by the applicant. When the MMT has all the information they consider appropriate, they will either approve or disapprove the request. The motion to approve shall include the amount of financial support.

## Short and Long-Term Missionary Support Raising

Long-term missionaries are defined as anyone serving over two-years on the mission field. Short-term missionaries are defined as anyone serving two-years or less on the mission field. Missionaries may be either full or part time, foreign or domestic. Missionaries receiving funding from the church may approach individuals within the church with whom they have a relationship to seek additional prayer or financial support, but they may not contact everyone in the church directory without MMT approval. They may not hold fundraising events for themselves at the church without approval by the MMT and Deacons.

## Hosting Missionary Events at Cornerstone

1. Cornerstone Missionaries: Any member or attender of Cornerstone Congregational Church may host official Cornerstone missionary events at the church, without MMT approval, upon securing the room reservations. The purpose of these gatherings is to give the church an update on their missions work, funding status, and prayer needs. If the event is primarily a fundraiser, the MMT and Deacons need to approve it first.
2. Non-Cornerstone Missionaries: We also allow the hosting of non-Cornerstone Congregational Church missionary events. All of these missionaries must first be approved by the MMT and agree with Cornerstone’s Articles of Faith. If there is any disagreement with the Articles of Faith, they will have to first be approved by the Cornerstone Elders. At least one MMT member should be present at the event.

## Missionary Communications & Evaluations

The MMT prefers to receive regular updates. We ask for a minimum of quarterly updates. If this poses a potential hardship to the missionary, they should contact the MMT to work out a communication plan. In the event that a missionary fails to communicate regularly, the MMT may be forced to terminate support.

Missionaries will be evaluated by the MMT on a yearly basis. All long-term and short-term missionaries should submit an annual report of the year’s ministry to the MMT each year.

When short-term missionaries come off the field, (defined as anyone serving two-years or less on the mission field), they should provide a report, debrief, or presentation within 90 days of coming off the field.

## Furloughs & Change in Missions Agency

Support will not be withheld because a missionary is on furlough or fund-raising. If the mission agency requests an extended furlough, the church will evaluate the continuation of support on a case-by-case basis. If a missionary leaves his or her missions agency, support will normally cease within 90 days. If the missionary joins another agency, support may be re-designated to the new ministry upon approval of the request by the MMT.

## Termination of Support

1. **Termination for Cause:** Termination for cause means that support is terminated for a specific reason. Acceptable reasons for termination shall include, but are not limited to: moral turpitude, misuse of funds, sloth, a felony conviction, continual lack of communication for no good reason, or other significant lapses in following the Christian faith. A recommendation for termination must be approved by the MMT. A missionary whose support is terminated for cause shall receive no severance pay.
2. **Termination without Cause:** Termination without cause is sometimes necessary due to no fault of either party. It could be due to lack of mission funds in the church or a change of funding priorities in missions. A recommendation for termination without cause must be approved by the MMT. If missionary support is terminated without cause, he/she may receive a fair severance package. Missionaries shall be notified in writing and every effort must be made for the missionary to be told the decision before the decision is known in the church.

1. **Short-Term Missions Trips Guidelines**

The *Cornerstone Missions Ministry Team* (MMT) will approve short-term mission trips to go out on behalf of Cornerstone Congregational Church to serve and share the gospel both locally and globally. We will support trips through prayer, guidance, raising awareness, and sometimes funding. The MMT will also appoint a member of the MMT to act as a liaison between the short-term trip leadership and the MMT. The liaison will actively work with the short-term team through prayer, practical helps, and guideline reminders. All short-term trips shall follow these guidelines:

* + 1. The trip-leader(s) will submit a **Missions Trip Application** (Appendix 1)for approval by the MMT. If the trip sponsoring missions organization application is comparable to the MMT's form, the MMT may choose to accept it in lieu of the Cornerstone application. The application should be sent to the MMT Chair who will then disburse it to the MMT for review. The Chair will notify the trip-leader(s) of the MMT’s decision.
			1. As some trips may occur multiple times in a single year, each trip only requires one application per year (all dates, locations, and variables should be listed). The team-leaders will notify the MMT of all upcoming trips and they should provide a report, debrief, or presentation following their return.
		2. Each potential member of the team will also fill out an **Individual Team-Member Application** (Appendix 2) or alternative application if it is approved for use by the MMT. The team-leaders and at least one member of the MMT shall review the applications, discuss any concerns, and approve or disapprove the applicants.
		3. All approved candidates are encouraged to send out at least 5 prayer/support letters for financial and/or prayer support. It is recommended these letters go out to non-Cornerstone members and attendees first.
		4. All donations and contributions must be made out to Cornerstone Congregational Church with the memo line clearly indicating only the name of the mission trip; for example Champfleuri, Haiti, etc.
		5. Financial records will be maintained by the team leader(s) or their designee(s) for each Cornerstone sponsored mission trip. Each team will record the funds raised by each team member individually before transferring for bank deposit to the Cornerstone bookkeeper.
		6. All funds raised via group activities and general trip donations will be allotted for the team members or other mission trip expenses per the discretion of the trip leader(s).
		7. All the funds required for a trip (for example all travel, room & board, locale fees such as camp costs, sightseeing, etc.), must be received by Cornerstone’s bookkeeper at least 14 days before the trip’s departure date. At that time, if there is a funding shortfall, the leader(s) of the team shall go back to the short-term members or parents of members with a final request for the remaining funds. Any team-member who is not fully fundraised, and is unable to pay for their remaining balance, may not be able to go. Total funding for the trip must be cleared no less than 5 days before the trip’s departure.
		8. Reimbursement for trip related expenses cannot exceed cleared funds available in the trip’s account.

If the short-term mission’s trip is approved by a different Ministry Team, such as the Youth Ministry Team, that team will provide guidance to the short-term trip in collaboration with the MMT. The MMT is ultimately responsible for overseeing all short-term missions trips of Cornerstone Congregational Church.

**Appendix 1: Missions Trip Application**

The Cornerstone Missions Ministry Team is pleased to investigate this missions trip endeavor with you. With this form we are seeking to gather both visionary and practical information to help us assess this opportunity. Please be as thorough as possible. We will want to meet face to face at some point. The finalized trip will need to be in accordance with the Cornerstone Congregational Church Missions Policy (see section VI).

1. Have you received, read over and agree to comply with the Short-Term Missions Trip Guidelines of the Cornerstone Congregational Church Missions Policy (Section VI)?
2. Name:
3. Contact information:
4. What is the vision/purpose of the trip?
5. To whom would you open this trip?
6. What do you hope participants will gain from this trip? How do you anticipate fostering this growth?

1. What organization are you working with? Where will you be traveling? What are the dates of the trip?

1. What is the anticipated cost of the trip? Please list out the main expenses.

1. What are your post-trip follow up plans with your team?

1. Is there anything else we should know? Please include any other applicable information here:

Upon your return, please be prepared to share about the trip with the MMT and/or the congregation as appropriate.

**Appendix 2: Individual Team-Member Application**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Trip Name/Dates: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. How and when did you come to know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? (Attach other sheets if necessary)

2. What has God been doing in your life recently? What do you do to maintain a vital relationship with God? (I.E. Do you attend church services regularly? Do you have a regular time of devotions, reading, and praying? In what ways do you presently serve the Lord, whether in or outside of the church community?) Please be as specific as you can.

3. Why do you desire to serve on this mission trip?

4. What are 2 or 3 strengths you would bring to the team?

5. What personal challenges do you think you might encounter on this trip? Are you prepared to accept help or correction if offered by your team leader?

6. Please list any physical or medical concerns that your team leader should be aware of.

7. Provide the contact information of 2 people who can provide reference. One must be an adult (relative, employer or friend) who can give an honest evaluation of your relationship to Jesus.

8. Have you served on a mission trip before? If so, please list details of previous trips, briefly.

I have answered all questions on this application to the best of my ability, have understood the nature and requirements for participation on this trip and agree to be a positive and cooperative participant on this Short-Term Missions Trip.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If the applicant is under 18 years of age, the parent or guardian’s signature is required:

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. John R. W. Stott, “The Living God is a Missionary God,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Walter C. Kaiser, “Israel’s Missionary Call,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. World Relief, “State of World Need,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 597. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. John R. W. Stott, “The Bible in World Evangelization,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)