



Global mission giving

TN116 Training Notes series: Planning

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Christians are part of God's global Church. Christ's final command was to go into all the world. These notes assume your church believes it is right to support worldwide Christian work and aims to do so.

Here I consider how UK churches can go about this by providing two seven-point lists of possibilities. Whatever the current practice in your own church, it is worth keeping all of these in mind.

What / who to support

First, here are seven ideas for the kind of global mission work that a church might support.

1 **Christian mission agency**

This is how most church giving has been organised in the past. Your church decides it wants to support a particular mission agency and so sends funds on a regular or an ad hoc basis. The reason for the support will usually be either because of a long-term link with the society concerned, and/or through church members' personal contacts with and knowledge of people serving, in particular when a member of the church joins the society as a mission worker.

2 **Individual mission worker**

But over the past two or three decades there has been a shift of practice towards the direct support of individuals. A number of well-known mission agencies expect all their workers to raise their own funds and so have no pay-roll. The point is that the funds go to the worker, not to an organisation then paying a fixed salary or stipend. This may also be the way that gap-year students from your church are funded for short-term mission assignments.

3 **Specific worker within a society**

This is another practice that has grown in recent years. Here the worker is paid by the society but will only be taken on if they can themselves raise a certain percentage (such as 80%) of their costs. Your church's giving then goes to the society but is earmarked for the specific worker. This is another way in which gap-year students from your church may be funded.

4 **Global South projects**

Here your church might want to finance a project that is independent of any UK agency, usually because you have a personal link of some kind. So your church might finance the cost of building a school or church through direct links with those concerned. There will usually be an expectation for some accountability through church members visiting the project or even sending work parties to help with the building.

5 **Global relief work**

This will be one aspect of most churches' portfolio of mission giving. Your church may give to organisations such as *Tearfund* or *Christian Aid*, perhaps for a particular project or into general funds. Some of this may be for emergency need and so arranged hurriedly, some for ongoing work and so part of your church's planned mission giving. There are also specific projects such as 'Toilet twinning' and 'Christian Aid Week'.

6 **Link church or diocese**

You may have a natural link with a church in a different country so that there are regular exchange visits. This arrangement may include financial support. Alternatively, there may be a diocesan or other denominational scheme linking churches in the UK with others abroad, with financial support built in.

7 **Child sponsorship**

There are specific organisations that link churches or individuals in the UK with children or young people in Third World countries to encourage both giving and exchange of letters. These may be linked with relief work or with educational support. This may be organised centrally through your church with co-ordinated giving.

Issues to consider in each of these cases

- **The level of personal involvement**

Churches that support agencies or individuals where there are personal links, exchanges and correspondence are more likely to succeed. Giving to individuals sent out from your church is perhaps the best example of this.

- **The time-scale for the support**

Longer-term links are often to be preferred to ad hoc giving that lacks the commitment of prayer and a growing understanding.

- **The number and the amount of the gifts**

It is generally to be preferred for a church to support a small enough number of projects, individuals or agencies so that amounts can be realistic, paying for a significant proportion of a salary or project cost.

- **Support not only in finance but in other ways**

Giving that backs up personal visits, congregational involvement and linked projects has greater meaning than historic giving to a mission agency that lacks such features.

Most churches will probably be operating in two or more of the above ways, but why not reconsider what you are currently supporting and by what means if you have not done so recently.

How to give

How might such funds be collected and distributed within your church? Here is a second list of seven ideas.

1 **Direct giving by individuals**

This is included here for completeness but funds will not be going via your church account at all. So your church wants everyone to support a member now working for a global mission agency. The church then encourages everyone to give directly to the individual or the agency as appropriate, usually by means of Gift Aid or perhaps through a *Charities Aid Foundation* or *Stewardship* account. You can even ask people to submit anonymously amounts given so that a total of the church's giving is known. You may also want to promote other means of individual giving such as legacies.

2 **Earmarked mission fund giving by individuals**

This can be organised through an annual stewardship scheme. Everyone is asked to show the amount they are intending to give (usually by standing order) and then to split that total between the church's general fund and other named mission funds. The church collects all the money given through the year and then sends on the total for each mission agency.

3 **Earmarked giving to a general mission fund**

As for 2 above but the allocation is to a general 'mission fund' rather than specific agencies. This means that the church then has a specific amount given to this fund which it can allocate in any way it wishes. The individual church member has no direct say over the allocation, although may well be aware of its likely shape because of past experience.

4 **Percentage of annual income**

This has become a common means of allocation which simplifies the level of internal organisation. Here your church has a policy to give away a fixed proportion of its unallocated income year by year. A normal percentage is 10% but some churches go higher than this. This ensures a regular flow of money into the mission fund but as it is handled behind the scenes, it may do little to teach individual members about mission support.

5 **Percentage of project giving**

Some churches, when raising a capital sum for their own benefit, feel it right to set aside a percentage of the total raised for mission work, usually a specific Global South project. So the target for a £500,000 building project cost becomes just over

£555,000 so that 10% of the total can be put towards the global mission project. Again, 10% is a typical percentage but a few churches make this 15% or more.

6 **Mission Gift Day or project**

This idea is not as common as it used to be but here your church would have a specific Gift Day in each year when funds are collected for mission work, either a general mission fund or for a specific project. This would normally not be part of church members' weekly or monthly giving to the church. You might organise an emergency Gift Day or retiring offering for a sudden disaster appeal. A similar idea is to set up an annual mission project with a challenging, target sum to be raised over the year.

7 **Fund-raising events**

The above has focused on direct giving but as part of 6 or in other ways there may be specific fund-raising events (concerts, sales, etc.) or sponsored activities, perhaps allowing children and young people to raise mission funds through their completing some challenge. This may well be included in an overall mission fund strategy with the aim of allowing those who cannot themselves contribute much financially to still be part of your church's giving for missions.

Issues to consider in these cases

- **The level of administration required to run the system**
Some of the above require more central organisation, and hence time, than others.
- **The level of control each church member has over the allocation of their giving**
Again some of the above allow donor control but several mean the donor has to trust the church's decision.
- **The level of prominence given to teaching mission giving**
Some of the above function almost invisibly behind the scenes with little scope for teaching Christians to give.
- **The level of percentage given to a mission fund**
If you teach that Christians might allocate about equal amounts to their church and to mission work (which is often taught in stewardship literature) and the church gives just 10% of its income to missions, this is hardly going to support that teaching.

There are also other points to note. For example, consider the following possible situations.

- The church's general fund runs into deficit and an easy way out would simply be to stop the mission fund allocation from within it or cut it back.
- A capital project raises enough to pay the building costs but not enough for the additional mission cut that has been agreed.
- Church members indicate that they withhold giving to the church if they have no say in the allocation of mission funds from their own giving.
- The committee allocating mission funding is seen to be supporting personal preferences.

- Mission work has a low profile in the church because there is no direct involvement by the congregation.

Again, is this a moment when your church might reconsider the way it seeks and then handles giving for global mission work?

In context

These notes have looked only at practical aspects of a church's financial support for global mission. But this topic hardly makes sense on its own and should be seen in a broader mission strategy that includes:

- biblical teaching about global outreach;
- biblical teaching about finance and giving;
- a focus on church prayer for global mission;
- the challenge to get everyone involved in various ways with worldwide Christian work;
- the need to create living and meaningful links with individuals, societies and projects supported;
- the value of appointing a global mission 'champion' rather than doing everything through a faceless 'committee'.

You will find further ideas in this broader context in Training Notes TN42, *A review of global mission strategy*, on this website.

So what does your church currently do to promote giving to global mission? Is your methodology the one best suited to what you need, or might it be worth considering other options listed above?

Over to you!

These notes are available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index> then TN116. See also Training Notes TN42, *A review of global mission strategy*.

Contact John if you would like him to help devise a global mission giving strategy.

Cartoons are by Micki Hounslow for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication and Administration. File TN116 under Planning (with a link to Administration).

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