

CBCGB Missions Policy

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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1. Strategic Priorities: Missions, Culture, and Unreached Peoples

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1. Strategic Priorities: Missions, Culture, and Unreached Peoples

- 1.1. How is 'cultural distance' measured by our missions policy?

Please see missions policy p. 2, under 'missions priorities' (including chart).

- 1.2. What is the difference between unreached people groups (a.k.a. 'unreached peoples') and the unconverted in general?

'Unreached peoples' describes those who have no feasible access to the gospel within their culture or sub-culture. Not only have they not come to Christ, they have not even been evangelized; worse still, they cannot hear the gospel because there is no gospel-preaching church within their culture.

- 1.3. Has our definition of unreached peoples changed from last year to this year?

No, the definition remains the same, and is based on widespread international consensus. We have shifted our emphasis from quantitative definitions to qualitative descriptions to better communicate the concept. New people groups have come into consideration, however (e.g., working class in Taiwan). Moreover, as we explore some of our missionaries' ministries in more detail, we may on occasion shift a designation.

- 1.4. Why does missions policy prioritize the unreached over the unconverted evangelized or over the discipling of Christians?

For two reasons. First, the unreached are in a more desperate position than the unconverted: the unconverted are those who have heard the gospel but not yet responded in faith; the unreached have not even heard; indeed, they cannot hear unless someone comes from another culture to speak to them. Secondly, despite the more desperate position of the unreached peoples, the majority of missionaries and missions funds still go toward evangelizing the reached and discipling the converted.

As of 2002, USCWM estimates that 10,000 people groups remain unreached, comprising 50% of the world's non-Christian population; only 26% of Protestant missionaries serve among the unreached. Of worldwide missions funds, 87% go toward Christian people groups; 12% go toward evangelized non-Christians; only about 1% goes for work among unreached groups.

As of year end 2005, over two-thirds of CBCGB's supported long-term missionaries work among unreached people groups. We are encouraged by this pattern, but we recognize that this distribution is to some extent by coincidence (and providence), rather than due to a consistent long-term, explicit, strategic focus on the part of the committee. In our effort to model wise stewardship and provide clearer leadership in the missions work of the church, we formulated the latest policy update to provide such consistency and long-term direction.

- 1.5. What percentage of mission funds is allocated for missions in mainland China? Does the emphasis on unreached peoples (or a cross-cultural emphasis in missions) mean a shift away from evangelization of Chinese?

As of 2005, approximately 40% of our supported missionaries, and a comparable amount of funds, go toward work in mainland China, or among mainland Chinese in the diaspora. No drop in percentage is likely for the foreseeable future; in fact, several of those from CBCGB who are preparing for vocational missions intend to go to China.

The priorities of CBCGB's missions policy do not undercut the possibility of missions to Chinese people. The issue of cultural distance, for example, is not primarily a question of the cultural distance between missionary and audience, but of distance between intended recipient culture and a viable, evangelizing church among that people group. Most demographics in China are still considered unreached, and will likely continue to fall under this category for the foreseeable future. Even once the church is well established among, say, urban intellectuals in a particular region, there are many more unreached people groups throughout China.

The emphasis on unreached peoples is not intended primarily as a shift away from missions to Chinese peoples, but rather as a broadening of our efforts to include non-Chinese unreached people groups, and in particular a sharpening of our focus on unreached people groups as a whole, both Chinese and non-Chinese.

- 1.6. CBCGB has a number of workers engaged in evangelism among Chinese intellectuals. Is this people group considered reached or unreached?

This demographic is still considered an unreached people in most areas, with restricted access to the gospel.

- 1.7. Taiwan is 2% Christian and campus evangelism is important; shouldn't we support campus evangelism in Taiwan?

This question provides an excellent opportunity to clarify the concept of 'unreached peoples.' According to at least one major missions agency working throughout East Asia, about 10% of Taiwan's university graduates are Christian; consequently, this demographic is considered statistically reached, though the task of evangelism remains great. In comparison, less than 1% of Taiwan's working-class workforce (which makes up 70% of the population) are Christian, so this group is considered unreached (as are many of the immigrant laborer groups in Taiwan).

As a result, it is consistent with missions policy to prioritize missionaries specifically serving among blue-collar workers or foreign laborers in Taiwan, so that missions fund support could be as high as 50% (funds permitting, and as actually needed). Among college students or among the college-educated in Taiwan, we are led to believe that the indigenous church is well-situated to evangelize these individuals, so support for CBCGB missionaries would be capped at 25% (again, funds permitting and with demonstrated need).

- 1.8. Will our emphasis on unreached people groups and our interest in non-Chinese peoples override God's will for those whom he calls to serve among reached peoples or among the Chinese?

First, regarding the perceived emphasis as stated here: it bears reiteration here that there are many Chinese people groups which still are considered 'unreached,' so a focus among unreached people groups is not simply a focus on non-Chinese peoples. An emphasis on unreached peoples, however, may broaden the missions vision of our community to include non-Chinese peoples as well, and this honors God's concern for the whole world.

Secondly, regarding the call of God, our emphasis on unreached peoples does not undermine God's calling for individuals, for at least two reasons. First, the call and priorities of God are disclosed not just by subjective individual impression, but also by Scripture (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 15:20) and by the church collectively (Acts 13:1-3). Thus, God's emphasis on reaching the unreached, and CBCGB's advocacy of this priority, are two factors which legitimately guide our members in discerning God's call. Secondly, the emphasis on the unreached is not absolute: policy continues to provide for the support of missionaries to reached people groups, though at a lower level than for those who go to unreached people groups.

- 1.9. Does our prioritization of pioneer evangelism and church planting preclude our support of workers doing other work such as Bible translation, relief work, missionary training, etc.?

Our prioritization of church planting and pioneer work is meant to prescribe a general

emphasis in our missions sending: that is, not primarily political or social work, nor theological education, though those have a place, but the planting of churches among those people groups where Christ is not yet known. We understand that this critical beachhead requires missionaries in many different roles, however, so we do not mean to prescribe tasks as much as intended ends. So, for example, Bible translation might fit quite well within our priorities, provided it is a work genuinely needed (as it often is) before church planting work among a particular people group can be effective.

1.10. Are missions administrators eligible for support under the revised missions policy?

Yes, provided the main thrust of their personal ministry and their organization's ministry is toward evangelism and missions, missions administrators are eligible for support. Their actual level of support would also take into account the question of personal and organizational focus on unreached peoples, rather than simply their particular day-to-day responsibilities.

1.11. Do mission funds support discipleship training for overseas Chinese people (i.e., assisting lay Christians to grow in their faith)? If so, what percentage of funds go toward such ministries?

The answer varies according to the strength of the church in any given area. Where no viable church exists among the particular people group, the group is considered unreached, and discipleship training would be considered a normal part of the missionary's task. Where a viable church exists among a particular people group, the group is considered reached, and discipleship training would be considered a normal part of the local church's task, and thus, not prioritized by missions policy; still, a CBCGB missionary working among a reached people, doing discipleship training, could still be eligible for up to 25% support, funds and need permitting.

Since discipleship training is a normal part of a missionary's broader ministry, it is not possible to calculate which particular percentage of support goes to this particular form of ministry.

1.12. Are our short-term missions teams required to serve among unreached people groups in order to receive financial support?

Short-term missions teams fall under the short-term missions policy, which does not exclude ministry among reached people groups.

2. Financial Priorities: Missionaries from CBCGB

2.1. Will our 'home-grown' missionaries see a reduction in their support under the revised policy?

No. Currently 'home-grown' missionaries typically receive 10-15% of their support from CBCGB. Under revised policy, they will receive 25-50% support. Most will see their

support double; some will eventually see their support level triple or quadruple, though this process will take several years.

2.2. Is it selfish or exclusive to support only our own missionaries?

We look at this from the opposite angle: Is it responsible not to support our own missionaries? Under current practice, we are able to provide for no more than 10-15% of the financial need of any of our own missionaries. Consequently, they must then go around the country, trying to find other churches and individuals willing to support them. But this is not how we treat our own children: giving them a small portion of what they need to live, and sending them out to beg for the rest from neighbors and strangers. Similarly, as a church, we commit ourselves to provide for the financial needs of our own missionaries, while making provision – as funds permit annually – for one-time support of other missionaries whose ministry is in line with our missions priorities.

We would also note that we are not withholding funds from the Christian missionary enterprise by our move, but rather redistributing our use of funds; the increase in our support for our own missionaries would also logically free the funds of other churches and/or individuals to support other missionaries, whether from their midst or from elsewhere. While church missions consortium efforts may be appropriate in some contexts, we believe that for CBCGB, responsibly supporting our own missionaries is a higher priority at this time than nominal fiscal cooperation with other churches in supporting missionaries with whom we have only a passing resemblance to relational partnership.

2.3. This policy channels support to a reduced number of missionaries because they come from our midst and we know them well. Once they have been serving overseas for many years, however, our members will feel much less attached to them, and will be less inclined to support them; won't this mean a decline in support at that point?

The disconnect between CBCGB and its missionaries was one of the main problems which led to the revision of practice. Under current practice, we support most missionaries at no more than 10-15% of their budget need; consequently, when they are home on furlough, they cannot spend more than a week with us before moving on to visit other supporting churches and individuals. As a result, we never establish a bond with outside missionaries, and gradually lose whatever connection we originally had with our own missionaries. Under revised policy, sponsored missionaries will receive as much as 50% of their support from the church, so they can spend proportionate time living in the area, serving in the church, and renewing relationship with CBCGB.

2.4. Many missionaries no longer take year-long furloughs. How will we renew relationship with them?

We will negotiate this with the missionary and missions agency case-by-case, depending on their exact circumstance. For instance, many missionaries now take three-month furloughs each two years. In that case, we would likely expect the missionary to spend the entire three months at CBCGB once in four years. Other circumstances may warrant other

arrangements, but whatever the arrangement, we will look for supported missionaries to maintain strong ties and extended presence with CBCGB.

- 2.5. If our missionaries do not serve at CBCGB for a proportion of their home assignment, will their support be reduced?

If they had opportunity to serve, and chose not to do so, then typically, yes. We are offering varying levels of support, so that our missionaries have a range of options. We also take into consideration what is actually feasible in any given situation. No one will have their support reduced if they were simply unable to serve here during home assignment. At the same time, high levels of contributions are unsustainable without our missionaries forming relationships with our members, and given normal rates of turnover, this requires extended visits every few years.

- 2.6. Why do we cap missionary support at a maximum of 50%?

The maximum 50% support is actually a substantial increase over current rates of support, which run between 10-20% of need. So this is more an increase than a cap.

- 2.7. How will our missionaries raise the other 50% of their needed support?

CBCGB offers a maximum of 50% support from the missions fund because we recognize that people also prefer special connection with particular missionaries whom they support personally, in addition to their giving to the CBCGB missions fund.

- 2.8. What will happen if the missionary is unable to raise the remaining 50% support?

Missions committee will address this on a case-by-case basis. We are committed to ensuring that our own missionaries are sufficiently supported, however it happens.

- 2.9. If 50% of a missionary's support comes from a single church, what will happen if that church suffers conflict or hardship, and is unable to meet its commitment?

CBCGB has never defaulted on its commitments to missionaries, not even in the aftermath of a church conflict. Those who left fulfilled all their missions pledges; those who remained behind increased their giving to ensure that the missionaries were provided for.

- 2.10. Why do we advocate a combination of centralized and individualized support? Is missions committee recommending that members give less to the missions fund so that they can give more individually to particular missionaries?

Missions fund supports 50% of need in order to provide stability. Individual giving is an important supplement to build close personal ties between the supporters and the missionary. Where our treasure is, there our heart will be also: giving to the central pool alone can create a disconnect between supporters and missionaries. Individual giving encourages individual concern, connection, prayer, and affection.

Given the urgency of the missions task, missions committee encourages members to forego some of the many luxuries we enjoy in prosperous America in order to maintain giving to the missions fund, while digging a little deeper to provide for the needs of individual missionaries.

- 2.11. The most effective way to support missions is to support seminary students. Do we support seminaries for missionaries (in HK, Taiwan, US or China)? If so, what percentage of funds go toward such ministries?

Only a small percentage of seminary graduates – whether in the U.S. or overseas – go into vocational missions, so supporting seminaries is actually *not* the most effective way to support missions. Moreover, seminaries typically exist among reached – rather than unreached – peoples, so in keeping with century-old missions principles, the major source of their support should be the indigenous church.

CBCGB scholarship policy does, however, provide substantial scholarship to CBCGB members enrolled in missionary training programs at evangelical seminaries, whether in the U.S. or overseas. This support comes from the scholarship fund, not the missions fund.

Each year, CBCGB typically also offers one-time annual support from end-of-year surplus to a few select seminaries in East Asia, which adds up to 1-5% of our overall budget.

- 2.12. Why did we drop some organizations that we have been supporting for a long time?

Organizations were dropped (from fixed annual support) years before the revision of policy, in the aftermath of a church split in 2002, when attendance – and, therefore, financial giving – dropped precipitously. CBCGB still supports organizations through annual gifts from end-of-year surplus, funds permitting. For specific organizations supported and amounts, please consult the respective annual missions report.

CBCGB supports organizations through annual gifts, from end-of-year surplus, because the ministry support needs of our missionaries are a higher priority and a more urgent need. Some of our current missionaries have seriously inadequate support: inadequate health care, inadequate life insurance, no disability insurance, no college funds for children, no equity for down-payment on a home, no retirement funds, etc. Our highest priority is to provide adequately for those who have been sent out from our midst and minister on our behalf.

- 2.13. If churches like CBCGB do not support organizations, how will they be funded?

As mentioned above, we do support organizations, but through end-of-year surplus, rather than through annual gifts budgeted at beginning of year.

Missions organizations typically take a percentage of the support we give our missionaries serving with them, ranging from 12% to 30% of the personal support which a missionary

raises. So direct support of a missionary already provides indirect support to the agency.

Missions executives typically receive support from their own churches, as well as from their agency overhead charged to individual missionaries.

Many, if not all, organizations also receive significant funding from individual contributors.

3. CBCGB Missions Leadership and Participation

3.1. Who has the final say regarding which missionaries our church will support?

No one body or individual makes the decision unilaterally:

- the Church Council approved the missions policy
- ultimately, the policy determines who qualifies for support (see policy pp 1-3, 6-7)
- the bylaws puts missions committee ‘in charge of’ the actual allocation of funds (Article 7.2)
- the bylaws requires the missions committee to allocate funds in accordance with the policy (Article 7.2)
- the missions committee reports annually on funds allocation to both council and church
- if the missions committee fails to allocate funds in accordance with the policy, that may be brought to the attention, first, of the committee, and then, of the elders or council.

3.2. How are committee members selected? What are their terms? What channel do church members have to them? Are church members welcome to attend committee meetings?

In accordance with the bylaws (Article 7.2), the BoE appoints the chair of the missions committee. Missions committee members are selected from among those who fulfill the qualifications set out in missions policy (see policy, p4). So far, everyone who fulfills these qualifications and is not overloaded with other responsibilities has been invited to join. Regarding terms, please see the policy, p4.

Church members are welcome to speak with any of the committee members. Church members are welcome as observers at missions committee meetings. Typically, time and business does not permit observers to make extensive contribution at a meeting.

3.3. What is the approximate proportion of missions committee members from English ministry to members from Chinese ministry? What is the proportion of Sunday worship attendees? Missions fund contributions? Should we increase CM representation on the committee?

missions committee members from English ministry : Chinese ministry: *1:1*

worship attendees from English ministry : Chinese ministry: *1:2*

missions funds from English ministry : Chinese ministry: *1:3*

The church has no standing practice regarding committee quotas. Some committees in our church are quite diverse; others, not. We are grateful to be able to note that the missions committee today is among the most diverse and representative in the church, with members

coming from both congregations, from two of our three core ministries (youth ministry is currently unrepresented), and from our primary demographics: Taiwan, mainland China, Hong Kong, and the U.S.

Thus far, in keeping with long-standing precedent, missions committee has worked on a replacement basis: when a member steps down, a qualified candidate from the same congregation is invited to join the committee. The committee is always on the lookout for other qualified church members who are not over-committed to other ministries, whatever congregation or ministry they come from.

3.4. Are missions funds used to support local ministries of social service and social justice?

Social service and social justice agencies properly come under the purview of social concerns committee. While oversight of our involvement with local ministries like ACCESS has been shifted to the social concerns committee, no financial structures have been established for similar shift of financial support. As a result, funds continue for the time being to come from the missions budget until such a move should occur under the leadership and guidance of the Church Council.

3.5. As a relatively large Chinese church with a significant missions budget, CBCGB is looked to as an example in the way that independent Chinese churches “do missions” – is it our intention to set such a precedent for other churches?

While we recognize that others will surely examine our policy closely when considering their own (just as we have consulted other churches’ policies during our revision process), we do not unilaterally recommend other churches follow our example per se. Our policy reflects a multitude of factors necessarily unique to CBCGB: our age as a church, our overall missions budget and history, our capacity to support multiple missionaries, the reality and potential of missionaries from our own midst, and the current state of missions in the world today. As a result, though our policy may have something to commend to other churches’ missions efforts, we do not perceive or intend it as a one-size-fits-all solution.