

Missions Commission Summary & Chair Description

The International Protestant Church has always had a very strong missions tradition which dates back to the end of the First World War when American Missionaries founded the church. IPC's missions activity is coordinated by a **Missions Commission**. The Commission operates with a set of general guidelines approved by church council. Given the changing local and global environment which creates often unexpected needs, these guidelines do not demand strict adherence, but rather they offer direction to the Commission.

Purpose of Missions Commission

It is the purpose of the Commission to encourage the membership of the IPC to provide support for outreach programs having special impact on needs best served by Christian churches. The Commission searches for projects and programs with which the congregation will relate, i.e. programs which will touch the hearts and minds of our church membership.

Commission Composition

The Commission is made up of a chairperson plus 4-6 active members who should represent a cross-section of church membership. Every effort should be made to include long-standing members as well as church members relatively new to the congregation. An appropriate mix allows for continuity of tradition to be blended with "fresh" ideas. In addition to 4-6 members, the pastor is an ad-hoc member of the Commission.

Primary Responsibilities of the Missions Chairperson:

- (1) Chair meetings of the commission.
- (2) Represent the Commission to the IPC Council.
- (3) Ensure that the Commission is operating within the "Guidelines for Mission Giving".
- (4) Prepare an annual budget to be present to the IPC Council. Ensure that expenditures are monitored such that Commission related expenses are within budgeted guidelines. With Commission approval, make modifications as necessary to the budget when requested by church council.
- (5) Act as a point of reference for internal and external mission enquiries.
- (6) Encourage a mix of tradition while at the same time challenging Commission and the IPC membership to identify local and global mission opportunities.
- (7) Coordinate with the church pastor and the worship commission such that a monthly project is highlighted to the congregation.

- (8) Act as a liaison between the IPC and selected local organizations sponsored by the IPC and funded as a line item in the annual church budget. Although this responsibility may be delegated to another Commission member, the chair and council shall remain informed of activities and changes within the selected organizations.
- (9) Speak on behalf of the Missions Commission during the annual stewardship campaign and at an annual "Mission Sunday" worship service.
- (10) Other mission related duties as requested by church council and/or the church pastor.

Frequency of Meetings

The Commission shall meet regularly during the year. The Commission generally does not meet in the summer months or in December. Meetings are typically scheduled 1-2 weeks prior to church council to enhance coordination of activities. Depending upon agenda items, Commission meetings may be held at a designed time, date, and location off site, or may be scheduled following a Sunday service.

Revenue

Revenue from Church Budget: This is most often used to fund projects that are local in nature, and projects which rely on a steady source of income to operate efficiently. These projects are identified prior to the start of the church fiscal year and communicated to the congregation during the stewardship campaign and again as part of the budgeting process. Although individuals may elect to designate part or all of an annual pledge to any missions project, most often annual pledges are undesignated and pooled with other pledges to fund the general operations of the church. Included within the general operations of the church is traditionally line item support for 2-3 local organizations. However, due to the budget cuts in 2009 no local projects are supported in the general church budget. Previously (through March 2009) the local mission sponsored projects funded from revenue generated through the annual stewardship campaign included: Le Refuge (providing a home for children who are temporarily or permanently unable to stay with their families) and the Protestant Social Center (focused upon homeless, refugees, ex-prisoners, and families in need).

Revenue generated via monthly collections, which usually take place on the second Sunday of each month although they can take place on another Sunday if necessary. On that Sunday, the Missions Commission makes a presentation to the church for the project of the month. Throughout the month, church members (or anyone else) may designate a contribution to the highlighted projects. Projects are agreed upon by the Missions Commission 1-3 months in advance based upon past experience, current needs, and previously identified guidelines. Most revenue generated for the monthly projects is received through a weekly offering. Clearly identified envelopes are

provided to the congregation such that individuals can be assured a contribution made to a monthly project is forwarded in its entirety to the designated project.

Special offerings: From time to time emergencies are presented that are outside the scope of the annual pledge or identified monthly project. In these instances, the Commission may approve of a special offering that is considered a designated offering in response to an unexpected need. Disaster relief and replenishment of the pastor's discretionary fund are two examples of where special offerings have been solicited. Special offerings are not encouraged as the monthly project format of the program generally allows for a response to such emergencies.

Mission Guidelines

Congregation members are encouraged to bring mission related projects to the attention of Commission members. A focus is placed upon balancing the need for "bread as well as Bibles" recognizing that there is a real need for physical as well as Christian nourishment. There is also a focus placed upon projects that support a greater number rather than an individual. A basic summary of guidelines used for project selection follows:

- An approximately equal blend of local (Belgian) and international projects in developing countries.
- IPC support should be a meaningful part of the project funding. If the project is large, it should demonstrate the ability to gain necessary remaining funds from other sources.
- We should endeavor to fund projects where administration costs are minimal.
- Our contributions are intended to help meet high priority human needs, with special concern for poorest, neediest people.
- Projects should have good chance of success meeting the needs addressed.
- It is preferred that Christians should be involved in the organization and delivery of services.
- Given our church tradition, where possible, funds should flow to end users via Protestant organizations.
- Where possible, we should fund projects where we have had personal involvement w/ the users of the funds and/or where we are relatively certain we will obtain a timely, accurate progress report from those involved.

Linda Danielson
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