



## Missions Ministry Advocacy Covenant

Missionaries are a part of the church's ministry to the world. The church and the missionaries sent out from the church should be engaged in one another's lives as they seek to further the Gospel together. Missionaries ought to expect that the church would be actively engaged in being a part of their ministry in supporting them actively and participating in their ministry from time to time. The church ought to view the missionaries as a vital part of the church body, caring for them, engaging with them, loving them and working with them to see that, as part of the church body, they grow personally and in their ministry.

### **Missionary Obligations**

- 1) Each supported missionary family unit (MFU) will be examined by the missions committee via an application process and will be set before the congregation for approval.
- 2) Each supported MFU needs to have at least two family units from AABC be support families for them.
- 3) Each supported MFU needs to draw up a ministry covenant detailing how they expect their ministry to extend the church's vision for the world, how the church will participate in their ministry, and how they expect the church to support them.
- 4) Each supported MFU will submit two reports per year to the missions committee detailing how they feel the covenant is being upheld. Communication with the church to the support families ought to be more frequent than this, though. This is merely an administration tool for quality assurance.

### **Church Obligations**

- 1) The church will provide appropriate financial support disbursed via the missions committee.
- 2) The MFU's support families will come from the congregation. There must be at least two family units to be support families for the MFU, and these two must be members of AABC (the heads of the household).
- 3) The support families will be responsible for communicating with the MFU. They are the primary point of contact and will provide holistic care as they actively participate and become a part of the ministry of the MFU. The support families' responsibilities will include, but are not limited to: informing the church body of any special needs with regard to the MFU, engaging the church body in active participation of the MFU's ministry, communicating with the missions committee if additional financial needs are to be considered, providing logistical support for the MFU when they are home-assignment in the Dallas area, and working with the missions committee to ensure that the covenant is being upheld.

**Shared Obligations**

Ministry covenants will last for two years after which time the relationship between the church and the missionary family will be reevaluated. The church and the missionary may terminate the relationship if either feels that the terms of the covenant are not met.

## Comments

### Missionary Obligations

- 1) We already have a comprehensive evaluation process by which we look at a number of factors in order to see whether or not a particular missionary is suitable for support. We should continue to use that tool and supplement this with the advocate program.
- 2) This obligation demands that the missionary understand that personal relationships are important. AABC, as a local church, does not (and should not) try to support anyone. We ought to require a personal, real relationship with our church. This will encourage the MFU to take time to get to know people. This, of course, demands that our congregation also respond in reaching out; there is a shared responsibility. AABC should not support anyone who does not have a real personal relationship with our church. If we consider ourselves a missional church it should be because our congregation reflects this, not because we support a group of cross-cultural ministers who have a tenuous personal or business-only relationship with our church.
- 3) This does not mean we should not support missionary movements such as that which the SBC supports. That is more of a decision for our leadership on how we align ourselves with the SBC. If we do consider ourselves an SBC church as part of our identity we *should* support the missional vision of this organization. This would be more of a philosophical/ideological decision which the missions committee ought to support.
- 4) A missionary covenant will basically be a document detailing the ministry obligations for both the church and the missionary. It can be as detailed as one wants; but the missions committee, and the missionary and their support families need to agree on it. The missions committee ought to draft a sample covenant and also decide, ahead of time, what some of the base-line expectations for any missionary ought to be (e.g. host one short-term trip, provide training for church members, etc).
- 5) It should be emphasized that this is not a legal agreement, this is an agreement made in good faith. The hope is that both the church and the MFU will be awesome partners in reaching the world, at the same time there needs to be an understanding that things change, which is why these covenants do not last forever (see below). Both parties should strive to keep the terms of the covenant in good faith.
- 6) We don't want to micro-manage our overseas cross-cultural ministers (aka missionaries) but at the same time we want to hold them accountable and give them a forum to respond directly to the missions committee on how they feel their support families are doing. The support families will not get this report in case there are some issues that the MFU does not feel comfortable in saying. The missions committee responsibility will be to try to encourage both parties to grow in their relationship as members of the family of God. We should also use this tool to see whether or not the support families are really holding up their end of the covenant.

### **Church Obligations**

- 1) The missions committee will disburse funds based upon the covenant and at the counsel of the support families. Support families should not feel that they need to provide for every financial need of their supported missionary. The missions committee is responsible for the stewardship portion and can choose not to disburse funds if the situation demands it (i.e. violating the agreed covenant) .
- 2) The requirement for AABC membership is one that should be discussed. There needs to be some kind of accountability, but at the same time we want to give some people the freedom to minister to these missionaries if they want to. Some people may not be old enough to be members (e.g. TUFFers) but there must be at least some who are members.. The other point that should be considered is whether or not there should be a cap on the number of people who are support families for one person. My initial reaction is to say no; don't try and bridle love and care for someone.
- 3) Support families are expected to be self-sustaining and self-sufficient; leadership and initiative ought to come from the support families. Therefore their own leadership structure needs to be decided...it can be ad-hoc or more formal, but that's up to the support families to decide. But the missionary committee should provide some suggested guidelines on how to begin interacting with and caring for the MFU.

### **Shared Obligation**

I put this in because I thought it was necessary to explicitly indicate that these covenants don't last forever. I think it provides an appropriate level of commitment at the same time allowing for the church and the supported missionary to modify their vision and their goals with the passage of time.