

# **ST. CHRISTOPHER'S CHURCH POLICY ON POTENTIAL VOCATIONS TO SHORT OR LONG TERM MISSION SERVICE**

## **A. Biblical Fundamentals**

1. The local church is the primary context in which an individual's sense of call to mission/ministry is to be tested. Once identified within the local church, the wider church also has a role to play in confirming this sense of call.
2. God confirms any individual call through His Church (local and universal).
3. The recognised leadership of the local church takes responsibility for this on behalf of the church. At St Christopher's this takes place through the vicar, churchwardens, the Mission Steering Group and the PCC. It is recommended that a shared and collective decision is preferable to the view of one leader.
4. Individuals are called by God and his Church to accept the counsel of the leadership.

## **B DISCERNMENT PROCESS**

If an individual believes they may be called by God and wants to be sent and supported by St Christopher's, the following process is recommended:

1. An individual should already be demonstrating a relevant gifting and commitment to mission in and through the local church.
2. S/he would pray privately for a reasonable time asking the Holy Spirit to confirm the call, giving signs of confirmation. When possible s/he would make a record of these signs or events leading to the call.
3. S/he will approach one or more of the leadership of St Christopher's (usually the vicar and churchwardens) to share what God is doing in her/his life and how this relates to the sense of call.
4. S/he will ask their homegroup/small group to pray. If anyone in those small groups has concerns around the sense of call they should be shared sensitively with prayer and love, but not avoided.
5. The Mission Steering Group will meet to pray and listen to God. If they agree a recommendation will be made to the PCC to support this call.
6. The PCC have the chance to meet, discuss and approve this decision.
7. In one of the services, there will be time set aside to hear from the person involved about their sense of call and how and where God may be leading them. If possible, the person will also be encouraged to share with the congregation again when they are back on leave or their service has come to an end.

## **C FINANCE**

1. The leadership will look for evidence that an individual is doing as much as possible towards her/his own support.
2. A 'tent-making' approach is generally encouraged in the case of shorter term missions.
3. In order to provide the best possible support for those exploring a call to mission, we would encourage people to see St Christopher's as one potential source of support amongst many.
4. Normally financial support will not be given to individuals with less than two years membership at St Christopher's.
5. Rushed decisions should be avoided whenever possible. Therefore at least six months notice is preferred before financial support will be offered.
6. Allocation of support will be sensitive to the needs and circumstances of the Mission Partners concerned.
7. Support given is to be reviewed periodically, with a fixed period of no longer than 3 years.
8. Missions/Projects/individuals outside St Christopher's may be supported. This will result from the liaison between the Mission Steering Group and the PCC in response to recommendations from the body of the Church.

## **D OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Individuals are encouraged to work with a mission agency rather than "going it alone" due to the experience, support and accountability which a mission agency brings.
2. Because of its commitment to the local church, St Christopher's prefers to partner with mission agencies who have a proven track record in working with and through the local church and would encourage those exploring a call to mission to work through a mission agencies.
3. A calling to mission/ministry is never a solely personal calling.
4. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Mission Steering Group and the results of that review brought to the PCC.