



zambesi mission
and His church in Malawi and northern Mozambique

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE ZM-OP-001

SHARING GOD'S MISSION WITH HIS CHURCH

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Sharing God's Mission with His Church

Preface:

Colin Cresswell's paper "Sharing God's Mission with His Church", first written in 2004, was reformatted as a policy in 2016. It describes the way that representatives of the mission should relate to supporting churches today.

Aims:

Though we will usually visit churches and individuals under the banner of **zambesi mission (zm)**, it is so important to keep in mind that we are not primarily representatives of **zm**, or of 'mission' but of the Living God whose mission was to send His Son into this world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) and build them into His Church (Ephesians 5:25; Matthew 16:18).

Nor are we primarily trying to persuade people to support **zm** or go overseas but to worship and obey the Saviour. "Worship is mission" (John Piper: note Matthew 28:17/19 - i.e. true worship results in mission).

Authority:

Our grounds for making God and His world mission known come from the Lord Himself through His Word. It is often noted that Genesis 1:1 is the first 'mission' verse in the Bible and every book adds to the detail of who God is and what His purposes are for His people in this world.

Therefore to be a mission 'representative' is first and foremost to present Christ and preach Him in all the Scriptures. Not all such representatives will consider themselves preachers, of course, but we must all seek to use the resources and information at our disposal to show that there is only one God and Saviour (Isaiah 45:5), He is the God of the whole earth (Isaiah 54:5), He is calling out a people for His glory (Romans 9:23-4; 1 Peter 2:9-10) and they are all to be involved in fulfilling His purposes in this world (Luke 10:1-2).

Attitudes:

Whilst we must take care not to start from a negative position bemoaning the lack of vision in the Church and blaming everyone else for it, it is wise to acknowledge some underlying factors in order to approach our role in a positive way.

- Many, if not most, churches have 'mission' as an extra to the main programme; even in evangelical churches it is often confined to a special Sunday, weekend or prayer meeting. A pastor might therefore welcome a 'specialist' to do a job for which he feels ill equipped. In these situations God's mission in this world is not part of the regular Biblical preaching, pattern and practice of the Church.
- We have to admit that mission agencies, for the most part glad to accept opportunities 'to get in somehow', have contributed to this state of affairs by –
 - giving a poor presentation which has not stimulated or left a desire to be more deeply involved, or even to attend further such events. It should be noted that some churches and individuals these days can be 'turned off' as easily by the modern super flashy multi-media presentations as was the earlier generation by the missionary dropping slides across the floor and chatting about unknown people and situations for hours on end;

- focusing so much on their own agency and field of activity that people are presented with no overall picture or challenge, much less any awareness of the Biblical perspective and where they fit into God's plans for this world;
- failing to show that the Church is God's missionary society and the national people the key to reaching out to their nation with our encouragement and support;
- giving the impression that too many resources are being used on promotion and administration 'at home'.

Approach:

1. Mission is not built on meetings and donations but upon RELATIONSHIPS exemplified by God's care for, and coming into this world for, us (Exodus 3:7-8; Isaiah 43:1-5; Luke 2:10-11). As mission representatives we are not promoters of projects or pushers of papers but simply people linking people with people so that all might experience God's love more deeply and demonstrate it more effectively as He works out His purposes in this world.
2. Relationships are only effectively built in the way God builds them - by caring enough to come where people are.
 - CARING involves giving before receiving. Many churches have needs, frequently in areas we would label 'mission', e.g. pastors feeling inadequate to teach the subject properly; mission secretaries taking on the job no one else will do with little guidance, few ideas and virtually no resources. Similarly every time we share God's Word or give a presentation there are individuals in front of us with much need of a personal touch from the Lord. They are likely to respond more readily to a word of reassurance - perhaps about God's control, compassion - than to a rip roaring get-up-and-go challenge!
 - COMING where people are involves considerably more than taking an annual **zm** meeting! We should aim:
 - to have personal contact with the pastor/leaders whenever appropriate with visits centred mainly around their needs, not ours. Personal notes, letters and phone calls are always to be preferred to the efforts of the computer and printer!
 - to provide resources e.g. leaflets, pictures, display materials, ideas which will help the Fellowship to extend its world view and not just promote **zm**. It's good to remember that a meeting lasts for 90 minutes per year at the most but mission secretaries and other Church leaders/members we are able to assist are there all the time!
 - to report back whenever possible on projects with which the Church or individuals have been involved. No one expects a report on every gift but these reports should not be considered as optional extras; they are a crucial part of building relationships and deepening interest. We must be careful to respond where it is appropriate and possible regardless of the size of the gift. Funds used in this way are never wasted;
 - to always show that mission is about people and particularly about the national people God is building into His Church. Many churches and individual Christians in the UK still fail to look beyond the traditional 'missionary society' or, even worse, the occasional 'famine lunch'. Missionaries are still western and white and very expensive! For many the thought of giving prayer, support and encouragement to a churchplanting evangelist, student, key worker, Bible College, pastor's bookset conference etc has never occurred. Nor has the idea of investing in a project that is small enough for them to have a personal interest.

Without being negative about the practices and performance of others, we have a priceless opportunity to bring mission thinking into the 21st century and get our folk beyond the idea that mission is about having a few prayer cards attached to a map with all the money going into a big pot for a large organisation to distribute;

- to speak the language people understand. This is a difficult one (!) but terms like 'missionary' and 'supporters' do come from an earlier generation and so easily lend themselves to some of the concepts from which we are trying to move on. We need to use them carefully and in the right context if they have to be used at all. Such words as 'workers' and 'partners' may be more helpful but, like everything else they can become overused and misunderstood.
- CARING and COMING where people are will be most fruitful when we work on the basis that God frequently takes small things with which to perform miracles (Zechariah 4:10; Exodus 4:2; 1 Samuel 17:40). Therefore in representing **zm**, we should remember that...

....every church is important. Too often mission agencies, representatives and writers bemoan the lack of involvement in mission whilst overlooking the responsibility they must carry for failing to convey the principles and present the work of mission adequately to all churches whatever their perceived potential;

....every meeting is important. Whilst we must avoid being 'pulpit fillers' we should never underestimate the opportunities God Himself gives. Ladies groups, house meetings, youth events, children's classes often give valuable initial contacts with a church fellowship, quite apart from being potentially fruitful occasions in their own right;

....every presentation is important. A congregation of six matters as well as one of 600, bearing in mind that in any group of 600 there may be only six who are really listening and ready to obey the Lord (Judges 7:2-7). We must give our best in preparation and presentation on every occasion however unpromising it might seem;

....every person is important. Only Heaven will reveal what God has done through the prayers and commitment of seemingly insignificant people (2 Kings 5:2; John 4:39; Luke 7:44-48; 21:3).

....every gift is important. With God a little goes a long way. Every contribution is small compared to the overall need (Matthew 14:17). **We must help every person to see that if they are obeying the Lord, nobody is more important in mission than they are.**