**WMG: Pathway to Mission**

The purpose of this document is to provide an understanding of how a member of All Saints Crowborough, who expresses a sense of calling to cross-cultural mission work, would move towards that goal with the support and supervision of the WMG. Whilst the WMG recognises and supports mission partners in the UK who are working within their own culture, that tends to be a simpler pathway with fewer barriers for entry (i.e. language learning). Therefore, this document will focus primarily on candidates who wish to pursue cross-cultural mission (although some aspects would be transferrable for those who wish to work within their own culture).

To that end this document will contain sections outlining who is involved in the pathway to mission, what is involved in the process, how long a potential candidate can expect to be on the pathway, and some additional appendices.

**1. Who’s involved?**

The process of moving a congregation member from consideration to sending necessarily involves three institutions; the local church, the mission agency, the theological/mission college. Each agency has different strengths, all of which are desirable in the pathway to missions (see appendix 1). Therefore, it would be advisable to see the process as a collaborative effort between all three institutions, albeit one instigated by All Saints.

**2. What’s involved?**

The pathway to mission involves three distinct aspects; exploring, preparing and training. It is important to note two things before those areas are expounded. Firstly, these areas do not necessary happen sequentially. Whilst we would expect the process to begin with the candidate for mission exploring his or her sense of calling with the local church, it is likely that aspects of preparation required by the mission agency and training provided by the college would occur concurrently (see diagram in appendix 2). Secondly, this has to be flexible. There are significant variables between candidates, countries, cultures and agency requirements. For example, a single candidate working for an international company who is able to request a transfer to a foreign nation which God has placed on his/her heart may require less input from agencies and colleges and could potentially move quickly. A family who want to move to the Arab World may find the process considerably longer as they plan the nature of their platform in the country and undertake language learning before going. Whilst this outline provides a general structure it is important that the WMG and the candidate are prepared for some variation.

**2.1 Exploring**

The first step in the process would be a member of the congregation talking to a member of the ministry staff about their sense that God is leading them to cross-cultural mission. If this interest was deemed serious (developing over a period of time rather than a fleeting interest) the WMG would become involved.

A support panel comprising of two members of the ministry staff and two members of the WMG would be formed in order to support the candidate and begin exploring certain criteria with them. It would be expected that the support panel and the candidate(s) would have a minimum of 5 initial exploratory sessions. These sessions would cover:

* Calling: The aim is to explore the sense of being led by God to overseas mission and how far along in their thinking they are.
* Character: The aim is to explore how Jesus makes a difference in their lives, how committed they are to spiritual disciplines of prayer and personal bible reading, and whether they are striving for godliness.
* Conviction: The aim of this meeting would be to explore their understanding of the gospel, what the Bible teaches about mission and to establish whether they can affirm both the WMG’s *Biblical Vision of Mission* and the *All Saints Core Convictions* documents.
* Competency: The aim of this meeting would be to find out whether they have experience of evangelism or discipling someone, in what capacity they are currently serving at All Saints, and whether they have ever received any ministry training (whether formal or informal).
* Suitability: This session would give the support panel the chance to explore how practically suitable they are. Questions of language aptitude, health, diet etc.

A full list of questions for these sessions can be found in appendix 3.

**2.2 Training**

Following the exploration stage, and presuming that the support panel are happy to recommend the candidate for mission work, preparing and training stages will begin in earnest. Although they will occur concurrently we will treat the separately for the sake of clarity.

**2.2.1 Initial Training**

Following the panel’s support for a candidate it would be advised that an introductory course on cross-cultural mission be taken. This initial course would provide basic training in mission and the relatively short duration means they could neatly run alongside the selection of a mission agency. This course would have to be provided by an organisation or college which is in agreement with the WMG’s Biblical Vision for Mission; a suggested list of suitable courses is provided in appendix 4.

 **2.2.2 Further Training**

Depending on the mission agency, the candidate may be require to “have a theological degree or some bible teaching training.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Whilst recognising that further training may not be necessary in all cases the WMG would want to encourage candidates to pursue as much training as they felt necessary. Some agencies provide accredited in-house courses, such as CMS; others would look to mission colleges such as All Nations Christian College or theological colleges such as Oak Hill to provide the requisite training. There will be additional flexibility depending on the level of training candidates pursue as many colleges offer certificates, diplomas, bachelors, and masters level qualifications. As above, the training institution would need to be in agreement with WMG’s Biblical Vision for Mission and a list of suggested institutions is provided in appendix 5.

**2.3 Preparing**

Alongside training will be the process of choosing an appropriate mission agency and then working with them to prepare the candidate for the mission field.

 **2.3.1 Which Agency?**

There are a plethora of mission agencies which the candidate could approach, choosing the right one is vital. There are a number of considerations to bear in mind when considering which agency to approach including convictions and beliefs; pastoral care of mission partners; relevant cultural expertise; and the practical support offered. Appendix 6 suggests 5 key questions to consider when selecting a mission agency. It would be the job of the support panel to work through those questions with the candidate as they explore possible agencies.

**2.3.2 Practical preparation**

Once an agency is selected then practical preparation can begin. This may include language learning, fundraising, further training, visa applications etc. It’s important for the WMG and the candidate to be aware that at this stage the mission agency will likely take the lead, with the WMG offering support as and when required.

 **2.4 Commissioning**

Once training and preparation is complete, but before the candidate boards the plane, they would be commissioned by All Saints in a church service. It would be important to set aside enough time in the service for them to explain why they are going and what they’re going to be doing (if possible); be commissioned by the Vicar of All Saints and a representative of the WMG and be prayed for. It would be preferable if the service was followed by a church family lunch thereby giving members of the congregation a chance to offer encouragement and say their goodbyes. *(Need to have a list of prayer partners willing to support them)*

If possible a representative of the mission agency and mission college could be invited to symbolise that the this has been a multi-institutional process.

**3. How long?**

Whilst there are too many variables to be able to suggest how long the process should take it is estimated that in the majority of cases it will take between 18 months and 3 years. For a breakdown of how long it’s estimated to take see appendix 7.

**4. How much?**

Although there is no direct cost to the WMG there are two questions we may want to consider:

1. Can we offer financial support with their training?
2. Should we offer financial support for them once we send them? Do we have a moral proximity to them? *(What does this mean?)*

**Appendices:**

1. **Three Different Institutions; Three Different Strengths**
2. **Diagram of Pathway**
3. **Support Group Questions for Candidate**
4. **Short Courses**
5. **Preferred Theological/Mission Colleges**
6. **5 Key Questions to Consider when Selecting a Mission Agency**
7. **Timeframe for Pathway to Mission**

**Appendix 1: Three Different Institutions; Three Different Strengths**

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|  | **Exploring**  | **Preparing**  | **Training** |
| **Church** | Local Churches have a unique insight to a potential mission partner’s character and convictions. They are well placed to assess suitability and servant-heartedness. | Local church can help with some aspects of preparing such as fund raising and practical duties such as selling a car and collecting mail.*(Prayer partners?)*  | The local church’s role is to disciple people and give them opportunities to serve, grow in their gifting, *calling and commitment?*.  |
| **Mission Agency** | Mission agencies will naturally want to assess a candidate’s suitability for the mission field. Ideally this will be done with reference to local church leadership. | Mission agencies have particular expertise in preparing candidates for a particular mission field including knowledge of specific cultures, contacts in language learning, and mechanisms for sending. | Mission agencies will offer some form of basic training and most will require some more in depth theological and cross cultural training (whether that’s on an ‘in-house’ accredited course like CMS or an ‘external’ course at a mission college).  |
| **Mission College** | Mission colleges will have input on a candidate’s suitability, particularly in the area of their convictions, following a period of study. They may well feed back to the mission agency in question. | Mission colleges may well have wisdom concerning practicalities, but the majority of their input is in preparation for living in a different culture. | Mission college such as All Nations have programmes and faculties designed to equip people for cross cultural mission. Their ability to equip is indispensable.  |

**Appendix 2: Diagram of Pathway**

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**Appendix 3: Support Group Questions for Candidate**

**Session 1: Calling**

Q1: Why do you want to be sent overseas as a mission partner?

Q2: How have you sensed God leading you towards overseas mission?

Q3: Have you discussed this sense of calling with anyone else (i.e. sort wisdom from a close Christian friend)?

Q4: Have you ever been on a short-term mission trip or had exposure to the mission field? If so what struck you from your time there and what did God teach you through that trip?

Q5: How do you think ministry would differ in another culture?

Q6: What excites you about the prospect of living cross-culturally?

Q7: What makes you apprehensive about living cross-culturally?

Q8: Relationally dependent:

Single – What specific things do you think that you need to consider as a single person before going overseas?

Married – How does your marriage glorify God and what pressures might full-time mission work place on your marriage?

With Kids – Have you discussed moving with your children? What was their reaction?

**Session 2: Character**

Q1: Could you tell us how and when you became a Christian and then explain the difference that Jesus makes in your life?

Q2: As you look back on your Christian life could you tell us about 2 or 3 individuals that have been particularly significant in your walk with the Lord and how?

Q3: How consistent is your prayer life?

Q4: How committed are you to regular personal Bible reading?

Q5: What 2 or 3 Christian books have had the most impact on your Christian life? How?

Q6: What has the Lord been teaching you over the last 12 months?

Q7: Can you identify any aspects of godliness that you feel you need to grow in?

Q8: Relationally dependent:

 Single – how do you find being single? What struggles does it present? Do you see it as a gift?

 Married – how do you help one another love Jesus more? How do you deal with conflict within your marriage?

 With Kids – what are the struggles and joys of parenting? How do you disciple and discipline your kids?

**Session 3: Conviction**

Q1: What is the gospel?

Q2: Could you please give us your understanding of what the Bible teaches about mission?

Q3: Could you explain the Trinity to us?

Q4: What do you believe about the Bible?

Q5: If someone asked you who Jesus is what would you say?

Q6: What is the place of repentance in the Christian life?

Q7: What do you think the importance of the local church is?

Q8: What is the work of the Holy Spirit?

**Session 4: Competency**

Q1: When was the last time you shared the gospel with someone face to face?

Q2: Can you name someone that you’ve been involved in discipling recently?

Q3: How are you currently involved in serving at All Saints?

Q4: What ministry are you involved in outside of All Saints?

Q5: Have you ever done any kind of formal or informal ministry training (this would include church lead training session)?

Q6: If you were to reflect on the ministry you’ve been involved with how have you grown as a teacher and leader?

Q7: Can you identify any areas of ministry you’d particularly like to grow in?

Q8: What’s the biggest encouragement you’ve had in your ministry?

**Session 5: Suitability**

Q1: What’s your aptitude for language learning?

Q2: How willing would you be to learn a foreign language?

*Accept different way of doing things - adaptability*

Q3: Do you have any health issues which could be a concern going overseas?

Q4: Have you ever struggled with your mental health and if so how do you cope?

Q5: Do you sleep well? How quickly are you able to settle and sleep in new locations?

Q6: Are you a fussy eater? How would you cope with eating new foods and/or a repetitive diet?

Q7: How do you deal with disappointment, or when things don’t go to plan?

Q8: How quick are you to be thankful to God for little things?

Q9: Do you have any experience of fundraising? How does the prospect of fundraising make you feel?

Q10: Are there any practical concerns you have which you’d like to raise with the support panel?

**Appendix 4: Short Courses**

***Explore* – All Nations Christian College**

*Explore* is a 13-week online programme covering four modules;

* who am I?
* what is mission?
* culture and living in community
* integral mission

The course in designed for those considering cross-cultural mission and is both flexible and affordable.

More information can be found here: <https://www.allnations.ac.uk/courses/en-route/explore-online>

 ***Perspectives* – Frontier Ventures**

*Perspectives* is a 15-week course looking at the Biblical and Historical basis of mission, and Cultural and Strategic considerations surrounding mission. It’s a well-established, widely recognised course which can either be taken in local cohorts or online.

More information can be found here: <https://www.perspectives.org>

 ***Explore Mission* – International Missions Board**

Six-part course produce by the Southern Baptist Convention’s International Missions Board in the US. The course is free, can be taken as an individual or in private groups. It covers:

* Mission and the Old Testament
* Mission and the New Testament
* Being a Disciple of Jesus
* What do Missionaries do?
* Our Family Story
* Mission in the World today

The content is of a high quality and in agreement with the WMG biblical definition of mission.

**Appendix 5: Preferred Theological/Mission Colleges**

 **All Nations Christian College**

All Nations is an evangelical college which trains people for cross-cultural mission. Owing to its specialism and variety of courses it should be considered in any discussion with a mission candidate about further training.

*“The purpose of All Nations is to train students in cross-cultural mission. Today, All Nations is one of the largest Colleges of its type in Europe and welcomes students and their families from all over the world. Our international teaching staff have a wide range of mission experience and cross-cultural expertise.”*

 **Oak Hill College**

Oak Hill is a conservative theological college in North London. Its undergraduate courses feature a number of modules on cross-cultural mission and global Christianity. It is less flexible than All Nations in the number of courses offered and covers a wider range of student types (ordinand, youth ministers, free church elders etc.). It should be considered an option for anyone coming from a conservative evangelical background who wants to invest three years in studying before going.

 **Cornhill**

Cornhill is not a theological or mission’s college, but it does provide excellent training in Bible handling skills. For some agency, such as Crosslinks, Cornhill is an accepted place of study for their mission partners and it does represent a quality, affordable, part-time option for training. Done in conjunction with one of the short courses it represents an eminently viable option.

 **CMS Pioneer Mission Leadership Training**

Church Mission Society runs a fully accredited training college offering Certificates, Diplomas, BA, MA, and DTh degrees. It would be worth bearing in mind that if a candidate decided to go with CMS further training is likely to take place through Pioneer.

**Appendix 6: 5 Key Questions to Consider when Selecting a Mission Agency**

**1. Convictions and Beliefs**

*Does this agency share my understanding of what mission is and do they share the same core beliefs as me?*

Most agencies have this information readily available on their websites.

**2. Experts**

*Does this agency have the relevant experience and expertise in the type of mission I want to do or the type of culture I want to go to?*

Many agencies specialise in particular areas of the world and cultures (i.e. Latin Link or Arab World Mission). Other agencies specialise in particular aspects of mission (i.e. MAF focuses of pilots and Crosslinks places a high premium on Bible teaching and training). Approaching the right agency is key to not wasting time.

**3. Pastoral Care**

*How does this mission agency support its partners in the field? Does it have a good track record of pastorally caring for its missionaries?*

What support do they advertise and offer? It may be possible to talk to one of their workers currently on furlough or recently returned from overseas to candidly chat about the pastoral care offered before, during and after mission work.

**4. Spiritual Support**

*Does this mission agency offer spiritual support to its workers through prayer, visits and mentoring?*

Most mission agencies frequently prayer for their missionaries and produce prayer letter for supporters. Some may organise mentoring for someone’s first stint overseas.

**5. Practical Support**

*Does this mission agency offer to assist with practical issues such as fund-raising, language learning, and advice on educating children?*

Whilst it is common for a mission agency to help and advise candidates with practical aspects it is worth exploring exactly what support an agency is able to offer.

**Appendix 7: Timeframe for Pathway to Mission**

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| **Explore** |
| 5 support panel meetings (1 per month)  | 5 Months | No variables |
| **Training and Preparing** |
| Initial training and search for an agency | 3-5 Months | Depends on the chosen course and how long it takes to pick and agency. |
| Preparation and further training | 10-30 months  | Depends on the level of qualification they choose and the extent of practical prep required. |
| Commissioning and sending | 1-3 months  |  |
| Total | 18-43 months (1.5 – 3.5 years) |  |

1. Crosslinks, *Become a Mission Partner*, online: <https://www.crosslinks.org/get-involved/go/become-a-mission-partner/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)