Cover Letter to Budget Team - REVISED 9/1/19

Mission Council

September 1, 2019

As a part of our submission of the mission budget to the Session, we ask that you consider the following:

**God’s call to mission and FPCE Mission Council:**

Considering the mission of FPCE***, “First Presbyterian Church of Evanston exists to know Christ and to grow in him as we serve and make disciples in Evanston, the Chicago area, and around the world.”,*** we embrace the full meaning of that through the following:

* Dr. Daryl Guder remarked during an interview, “Any person who is living in a relationship with Jesus Christ and responding to His claim upon one’s life should understand to know Christ is to become a part of Christ’s mission, is to be sent out….’You shall be my witnesses.’”[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Our mission partner, Christopher J.H. Wright stated, “The mission of God is to redeem the whole of creation, broken by sin and evil, into the new creation, populated by the redeemed from every culture, through the cross and resurrection of Christ.”[[2]](#footnote-2)
* We affirm Tim Dearborn’s quote, “The church of God does not have a mission in the world, but the God of Mission has church in the world.”[[3]](#footnote-3)
* Therefore, mission is owned by God, fulfilled in Christ, and neither singularly owned or fulfilled by a council, or church, or a person.
* We have always been a council seeking to be a part of Christ’s mission here and in the world.

**Primary role of FPCE Missions Council and Categories**

Missions Council’s primary role is discerning how God is using our church in Evanston, Chicago and the world in His work of redemption. Following Jesus’ description of His ministry in Luke 4:17-19, we developed the categories:

1. *Justice and Mercy* – Focusing on the outcast, and the vulnerable, remembering widows, orphans, prisoners, refugees and more;
2. Education and Training – Including but not limited to theological training. Remembering underserved areas and women and girls’ access to education;
3. *Unreached People Groups* – Focusing on church planting, Bible translation, and evangelism, primarily in the persecuted areas - Middle East/North Africa and the Gulf, Central Asia, India, and Nigeria currently
4. *University Ministry* – Focused primarily on campus ministries, with FPCE history and proximity to Northwestern, the presence of professors from numerous universities, and the impact on the global church through leaders developed at universities.
5. *Sister church* - a relationship grown over many years with the Evangelical Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Palestine. It is time to invest more deeply in them.
6. *Other singular “categories”* - Tumekutana, The Great Commission, and refugee grants - not a part of the missions budget but fall under the supervision of the missions director and assistant with consultation from the missions council.

**Focusing on Our Strengths**

Chris Wright quoted Hugh Palmer, Rector of All Souls, London saying: “The mission field is wherever faith meets unbelief, wherever the kingdom of God in a believer’s life encounters the kingdom of the world.”[[4]](#footnote-4) In the same booklet, he stated everything can be called “mission.” But, if everything is mission, then Everything is mission. And not everyone can do everything.

Therefore, knowing that every council and ministry at First Presbyterian is “mission” in faith, our missions council will focus on our unique strengths by:

* Giving the majority of our funds to those serving on the front lines in our primary categories while developing and nurturing our partnerships with them;
	+ We have funding guidelines and a review process for each partner/ministry (attached) which help us and our own missions budget team discern and alter funding faithfully, and with grace.
* Building mutually reciprocal relationships with our partners while following Christ;
* Focusing on outreach ministries that are relational, cross-cultural, in areas of disparities with vulnerable people groups, and outside our church;
	+ As FPCE’s Visioning Plan was launched nine years ago, one charge was to build our relationship with the city.
	+ We established ministries benefiting the homeless.
	+ We agreed to the use of our building for service opportunities with and for Evanston, such as: First Night Evanston; the overnight shelter; a one year after school program with Junior High students; Rebuilding Together; and First Friends to Syrian refugees;
	+ Our outreach ministries are relational in nature, allowing for lasting connections and growth, cross cultural, and focused on community outside of First Pres
* Inviting our church family to service where they can grow in love for God and neighbor;
	+ All of our outreach activities are lay led, and most are locally focused, i.e. Good News Partners/New Life Shelter is one mile away
	+ Exploring small group volunteer opportunities to serve, or be created for this purpose
* Mobilizing, preparing, and training volunteers for service and/or short-term mission, and dedicating funds when possible;
* Mentoring individuals exploring their “call to mission;”
* Leading relationally focused trips with our mission partners;
* Providing education that is relevant and equipping in nature.
	+ Adult Education program started 10 years ago to communicate God’s mission in the world, and since then growing exponentially in substance and participation;
	+ pool for volunteer engagement
	+ The 2019 winter/spring program
		- a training and orientation class for our Holy Land travelers
		- opportunity for our congregation to know our partners in the Holy Land
		- innovative approach by Skyping our mission partners in Bethlehem.
	+ The 2019 fall program: Messengers of Hope (with global leaders of the church worldwide).
* Empowering and igniting passion for our partners and service in God’s Kingdom;
* Continuing to be open to the Holy Spirit’s leading as opportunities come to our council and church.

**Missions Council’s Future**

Our council will be reviewing our strengths and goals in order to engage with and further the church’s mission and recently developed goals. Currently we are stewards of a portion of the pledged monetary income, and of the gifts and talents and time people offer in service with us. We affirm the generosity of our church family and believe the Lord uses us uniquely because of that generosity. Yet we feel our church is moving away from safeguarding the once 30% of our entire church’s giving that was directed towards missions. Our missions council desires to intentionally recapture this vision and move back over time towards that 30%, knowing God will honor this goal. We give not out of fear, but out of the abundance of God’s faithfulness to us now and in the future. God’s mission is an adventure in faith and relationship with Jesus. We are excited to continue His mission in engaging our members and attracting others to His work in this world.

Thank you for your work on this budget. We are available for questions!

The Mission Council of FPCE

Co-Chairpersons: Cam Traut and Susan Wilkins

Elders: Dick Warnecke and Sharyn Wilson-Woods

Staff: Caryl Weinberg

Members: Ron Ehresman, Dave Ivaska, Pastor Younan Shiba, Peter Steffen, Richard Taiwo

Mission Budget Team: Renee Cox, Ron Ehresman, Bill Floyd, Susan Wilkins, Richard Taiwo

1. Guder, Daryl, *No Soloists in The Kingdom, Young Life Podcast October 8. 2018.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Wright, Christopher J.H., *The Mission of God and the Task of the Church* (Fellowship of Evangelical Students, Singapore, 2014) 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Dearborn, Tim, *Beyond Duty: A Passion or Christ and a Heart for Mission* (Monrovia 1997) 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Wright, *The Mission of God and the Task of the Church 56* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)