Missionary Partnership Team (MPT)

Orientation Guide

For Missionaries Appointed Before 2004

International Ministries, ABCUSA
800/ABC-3USA (800/222-3872)
Missionary Partnership Team (MPT)

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Angela and John have served in Thailand for eight years. Most of their ministry has been in the inner city of Bangkok among prostitutes, drug addicts, and the poorest of the poor. Through persistence and prayer, they have recently seen God transform many people’s lives. Wanting to share their excitement, they call a member of their MPT. They share several personal stories and indicate that they can send digital pictures to accompany the stories. Their MPT decides to organize a special mission presentation to share their recent experiences, to enlighten church members about the ways God is working among them, and to specifically pray for the new Thai Christians. The MPT becomes excited too! The next week they organize a potluck after Sunday worship and share John and Angela’s stories. Those who attend experience renewed passion for mission as they encounter God’s power at a global level.

Letisha is a single missionary doctor ministering in a remote part of central Africa for twelve years. She works primarily with AIDS patients. Her days are long and exhausting. She is often tested to the brink of her spiritual, emotional and physical limits. And yet she finds the strength to go forward, to bring the light of Christ to those who are suffering. From where does she draw her reserves? She is renewed by the members of her MPT. One woman e-mails her every week with encouraging Bible verses. Another man arranges to call her once a month just to listen. Yet another person is organizing her women’s circle to make special quilts to send to the AIDS patients as a message of hope from across the globe. Letisha feels connected to people who care about her patients and colleagues, and who also care about her as a person.
Each of the missionaries mentioned in this guide live and minister in different circumstances, in countries all around the globe. But they all have one thing in common: they each have an MPT...a Missionary Partnership Team. What is an MPT? The following pages of this booklet will explain the concept in detail. However, in essence, it is a small group of people who have a passion for mission and who choose to partner with a missionary in all aspects of his/her life and ministry. An intimate bond is formed. The members of the MPT, the missionary, and God are all intertwined. It is a cord of three strands not easily broken.
Table of Contents

I. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
   A. Missionary Partnership Teams (MPTs) and Go Global ........................................... 1
   B. MPTs in a nutshell .................................................................................................. 2
II. How can we get involved in the mission and ministry of American Baptist missionaries? ............................................................... 3
   A. What is a “Missionary Partnership Team” (MPT)? .............................................. 3
   B. What role does International Ministries, ABCUSA play? ................................... 4
   C. What is the “Network of Partner Individuals, Congregations and Regions?” ............................................................... 4
   D. What role do American Baptist churches and the wider Body of Christ play? ........................................................................... 5
   E. How do you build a missionary partnership? ........................................................... 5
III. MPT background and rationale .............................................................................. 7
   A. Go Global and empowering the local church ....................................................... 7
   B. Biblical background ............................................................................................... 7
   C. Missiology ............................................................................................................. 9
IV. What are the benefits of an MPT? ........................................................................ 11
   A. To the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) ..................................................... 11
   B. To missionaries: .................................................................................................. 12
   C. To partner congregations ..................................................................................... 12
   D. To International Ministries/ABC .......................................................................... 13
   E. To ABC regions .................................................................................................... 13
   F. To American Baptist Women’s Ministries (ABW Ministries) and American Baptist Men’s Ministries (ABMen) ..................................................... 13
   G. To international partner(s) ................................................................................ 14
   H. To other interested individuals and congregations .............................................. 14
V. How is an MPT formed? ......................................................................................... 15
   A. Who is responsible for forming the MPT? ........................................................... 15
   B. Where do you find MPT members? .................................................................... 15
B. Priority will be given to partner congregations.............................................37
C. Outreach to new congregations.................................................................37
D. How often should a missionary return to the U.S. or Puerto Rico to visit key partner congregations?............................................................................38

XII. Financial support guidelines.......................................................................... 39
A. Basic guidelines for missionary financial support ........................................39
B. How does the MPT target goal relate to the World Mission Offering? ..........41
C. How can an individual or a church support an IM/ABC missionary with gifts over and above current giving?.............................................................41
D. How is the financial support level maintained? What happens if the support level exceeds the target? What happens if the required support level drops?....................................................................................................42

XIII. Appendices: Relationship Building Resources (separate document) ..........45
A. Sample MPT covenant ..................................................................................45
B. MPT checklist................................................................................................45
C. Sample letter from missionary to local church in Network .........................45
D. Sample faith commitment letter (from MPT to partner contributors).........45
E. Ideas and suggestions for developing a relationship with a missionary.......45
F. Ideas for developing relationships with local congregations......................45
G. Information on building a prayer network ....................................................45
H. Ideas for pastoral care of missionaries..........................................................45
I. Creative financial support-raising ideas..........................................................45
J. Sample ABCUSA mission giving report form .............................................45
K. Sample scripts for talking with congregational/individual partners about financial support needs.................................................................45
L. FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) and answers .......................................45
M. Sample skits and other creative group activities to build awareness of what missionaries are experiencing. .............................................................45
N. Information on helpful communication practices........................................45
O. Go Global Strategic Plan...............................................................................45
I. Introduction

A. Missionary Partnership Teams (MPTs) and *Go Global*

Missionary Partnership Teams (MPTs) are a dynamic step forward in living out the vision of *Go Global*, International Ministries' strategic plan for 2000-2010. Here's why the MPT effort is especially exciting: It is one of the ways that IM's experience in mission is leading us deeper into the *Go Global* vision, even beyond the original forty goals contained in the plan.

When International Ministries (IM) asked God to renew our vision for mission in the 21st century, a crucial part of what we heard was the need for IM to partner more broadly and effectively with American Baptist congregations and regions. IM responded in many ways: placing volunteers and short-term mission teams in record numbers; assisting churches and regions to form Sister Church/Convention relationships; and developing creative partnerships with churches and regions for evangelism and Christ-like mission all around the world.

Working closely with congregations, International Ministries has heard American Baptists express their eagerness to develop closer, more personal relationships with international missionaries. We discovered that churches in other denominations share this desire to build strong personal relationships with their missionaries. Several years ago, Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) began to develop “missionary support teams” for each of their missionaries. EMM graciously shared their vision and experience with IM. Using EMM’s idea as a starting point, IM sought advice from our own missionaries, regional representatives, pastors, host country partners, and staff to tailor a relational support model to meet our specific needs.

As we develop MPTs, IM is embracing the desire of local churches to form personal relationships with missionaries, making that relationship the very foundation for the way we provide spiritual, emotional and financial support for our missionaries.
B. MPTs in a nutshell

Missionary Partnership Teams (MPTs) and Networks are an opportunity for all American Baptists to become personally involved in the mission and ministry of American Baptist missionaries. MPTs will help build closer relationships between churches, missionaries, and regions committed to sharing the whole gospel with the whole world.

An MPT is a small group of people from one or more churches, gathered by missionaries themselves, who will provide reliable spiritual, emotional, and financial support to a missionary or missionary family. Missionaries may choose to enlist the help of a specific individual, church or region as they form their MPT.

The main task of the MPT is to build a Network of individuals, congregations and regions to come alongside the missionary to pray for, participate in, and financially support their ministry. International Ministries staff will play a key role in helping to form, coach, and support the MPTs as they build their Network.

MPTs will be phased in over the next several years. This new direction does not require missionaries to single-handedly raise their own support. Rather, missionaries will form and work with their MPTs to build relationships that can provide the various kinds of support needed to continue in ministry.
II. How can we get involved in the mission and ministry of American Baptist missionaries?

American Baptist missionaries are sent and supported through the cooperative efforts of Missionary Partnership Teams (MPTs), local congregations and individuals, regions, International Ministries, and the wider Body of Christ. (See diagram below).

A. What is a “Missionary Partnership Team” (MPT)?

An MPT is a team of at least three people and as many as ten who covenant with one another, God and the missionary/ies to engage in international cross-cultural mission through the mission and ministry of an American Baptist missionary or missionary family. (See Section VI, “What are the roles and covenant responsibilities of MPT members?”) These team members could all be from one church or from a cluster of churches. There might be two MPTs per missionary unit if the partner churches are geographically dispersed. (See Section V, “How is an MPT formed?”)

The main task of the MPT is to build a support “Network of Partner Individuals, Congregations and Regions.”

Although only a relatively limited number of churches will be able to participate directly in an MPT, ALL churches will be able to form a closer relationship with missionaries by participating in the Network (see below).
B. What role does International Ministries, ABCUSA play?

IM assists missionaries to form and train their MPTs and mobilize a Network of partner regions, congregations and individuals. IM also provides ongoing supervision, pastoral care and support of missionaries during their ministry in host countries and their U.S./Puerto Rico assignment. (See Section X. A., “IM responsibilities.”)

C. What is the “Network of Partner Individuals, Congregations and Regions?”

The “Network” refers to individuals, churches or regions who come alongside missionaries to pray for, participate in and financially support the ministry (similar to the church in Antioch that set apart Barnabas and Saul for ministry in other lands in Acts 13:1-3). The Network could also include friends or family members outside the American Baptist family. Financial support given to support the ministry of a missionary should be above and beyond the regular support given through local church, regional, and denominational offerings. Regions, congregations and individuals who partner with a missionary form a support network that can do far more together than any one church or individual could do on their own.

Smaller congregations could form a cluster of churches that develop a close relationship with a missionary. They might jointly sponsor mission-focused worship, mission dinners or other inspirational and educational mission events.

Missionaries also minister to their U.S./Puerto Rican partners through mutual prayer support, encouragement, and providing practical opportunities to participate in global mission. (See Section IX, “What are the missionary’s commitments and responsibilities?”)

A congregation may form a relationship with more than one missionary or missionary family; however, it may be most effective to focus on a limited number of missionaries.

All those who support the missionary through prayer, correspondence, or financial gifts become part of the “Network of Partner Regions, Congregations and Individuals.” There is no limit to the number of individuals, congregations, or regions who may participate in the Network.
This Orientation Guide focuses on the development and ministry of Missionary Partnership Teams as they respond to the Great Commission. However, some of the information may also be helpful to the individuals, congregations, and regions in the Network.

D. **What role do American Baptist churches and the wider Body of Christ play?**

American Baptists are committed to mission. We constantly seek ways to apply our faith and share the whole gospel with the whole world.

American Baptists join with other Christians in advancing the cause of Christ locally, nationally, and around the world.

E. **How do you build a missionary partnership?**

Members of the MPT and the Network have a common goal: they want to develop closer, more personal relationships with international missionaries so that they can participate in God’s mission in the world. How do you build such a relationship? There are five basic steps (see illustration on the next page).

**Step 1** – Affirm your common commitment to Jesus Christ and to responding to Jesus’ call to mission.

**Step 2** – Begin “growing” a relationship. Write to one another, visit the missionary, invite the missionary to visit your church, pray for one another.

**Step 3** – Build trust. Exchange visits, e-mails, take a personal interest in what God is doing in each other’s lives.

**Step 4** – Develop a common vision for ministry. Identify practical ways that you can get involved in one another’s ministries.

**Step 5** – Respond with personal commitment. Form a prayer network, provide pastoral care for the missionary, when appropriate send a team to support the ministry of our brothers and sisters in the host country, make a financial support commitment.
Five Steps in Building Missionary Partnerships

Step 1 (roots) – Rooted in Christ

Step 2 (trunk) – Begin “growing” a relationship

Step 3 (branches) – Build trust

Step 4 (leaves) – Develop a common vision for ministry

Step 5 (fruit) – Respond with personal commitment

MPT Illustration…

John and Meg welcomed a pastor from their home state six months after they arrived in their host country. He returned to his church with a renewed commitment to help the congregation reach beyond their four walls. Members of the church began exchanging e-mails and prayer requests with John and Meg. Soon afterward, the church’s praise and worship team visited John and Meg and began exchanging songs and ministry ideas with the worship team they met in the host country. Now they are excited about the possibility of producing a tape of multicultural praise and worship songs that could be used in either country!
III. MPT background and rationale

A. Go Global and empowering the local church

The movement to develop MPTs is a natural continuation of the work IM/ABC has been doing to empower local churches to engage in global mission as we live out the vision of Go Global (IM’s strategic plan for 2000 to 2010. See Appendix).

Many local congregations are enthusiastic about having a closer relationship with missionaries and their ministries. They are not satisfied with just sending money – they want to be personally involved in mission on many levels.

B. Biblical background

The concept of the Body of Christ sending and supporting missionaries is rooted in Scripture. Jesus’ followers helped to support his ministry and Paul often thanked God for the prayer, financial, and emotional support he received from local congregations. One possible way of contextualizing the support group concept in God’s world today is the “Missionary Partnership Team.”

Luke tells us that Jesus' own ministry was sustained, at least in part, by a support group of Galilean women who provided for his ministry's needs through their own resources.

*Luke 8:1b-3 – The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources. (RSV)*

Those called by God to serve as cross-cultural ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ are sent by the Body of Christ.

*Romans 10:14-15 – How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (NIV)*

Cross-cultural missionaries are not to be “Lone Rangers;” rather, they should be in partnership with the sending community of faith.
Philippians 1:3-6 – I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (NIV)

Partnership in ministry connotes a long-term relationship characterized by loving fellowship, honest communication, and mutual sharing of needs and encouragement.

Philippians 4:14-19 – Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

We know that for contextual reasons Paul was very careful in his dealings with the Corinthian believers to avoid any appearance of (mis)using the service of the gospel to meet his own needs. But with other congregations Paul speaks much more clearly about his desire to receive support from them:
- emotionally or spiritually – Romans 15:32
- in prayer for his ministry – Romans 15:30-31

Reflections on these Scripture passages…

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C. Missiology

God is the source of life and mission. God continues to call American Baptists into mission, together with our sisters and brothers in Christ around the world. We are committed to witnessing to Jesus Christ in word and deed by the power of the Holy Spirit. We give thanks for the leading of God that has given American Baptist churches a rich heritage and a worldwide reputation for balanced and sensitive mission outreach.

God sends the worldwide Body of Christ to engage in mission to, from and within six continents. International Ministries/ABC joins with other members of that Body to form a network that multiplies cross-cultural mission efforts in all directions. The core of that network is the local congregation.

God calls and empowers individuals and congregations to respond to the Great Commission in practical ways locally, nationally, and internationally. We are committed to respond faithfully and with humility.
Notes:
IV. What are the benefits of an MPT?

MPT illustration…

John and Sue attend the Cornerstone Baptist Church, located in the suburbs of a large U.S. city. Although the church has been associated with American Baptist Churches for the past sixty years, John and Sue feel no close affiliation with International Ministries; in fact, they view the denomination with an air of suspicion, since someone once told them that ABCUSA was not evangelical – a point they’d always remembered.

The regional Minister of Mission Support arranged to meet with the congregation at Cornerstone and brought with him George, an American Baptist missionary who is serving in Africa. George shared the incredible stories of people whose lives have been completely changed by the saving power of Jesus Christ. John and Sue were thrilled to know that their denomination is deeply evangelical! They felt connected for the first time to their region and to the denomination. John and Sue, along with the rest of the congregation at Cornerstone, decided to contribute toward George’s direct support so that he could continue his ministry in Africa. They also asked the Minister of Mission Support to let them know how their congregation could participate in the ministry of the region.

Local congregations and individuals are exhorted to be good stewards of the gifts God has given them, to do their best to extend God’s kingdom. They are encouraged to maintain their regular tithes and offerings for local, regional, and denomination-wide ministries. The MPT program should NOT draw funding away from regular support of the local church, United Mission, regional offerings, or the World Mission Offering. MPTs are strongly encouraged to seek financial support for the ministry of American Baptist missionaries that is “over and above” regular giving to other important ministries.

MPTs (and their support Network) benefit the Body of Christ on various levels. The benefits of an MPT are listed below.

A. To the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40)
   • Increases our potential to mobilize and support more International Ministries missionaries than ever before.
• Increases revenue sources that determines how many missionaries can be sent.

B. To missionaries:
• Sense they are part of a larger team
• Know they are not alone in their ministries
• Receive pastoral care as needed
• Can rely on their MPT to raise prayer and financial support
• Provide opportunities for others to get involved in global mission

C. To partner congregations
• Enriches the life of the congregation
• Increases global awareness and connection
• Enables the church to participate in God’s mission in another part of the world
• Provides a healthy relationship with a global mission organization ministering in nearly seventy countries around the world
• Sparks renewal and revitalization

Benefits to my congregation (e.g. to our youth, men, women); benefit to other churches in my area, my region:

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D. To International Ministries/ABC

- Missionaries receive needed prayer, personal and financial support
- More directly involves local churches in global mission – one of the goals of *Go Global*
- Enables ABCUSA to respond to requests for more missionaries and partnerships

E. To ABC regions

- Fosters understanding of the region as a mission facilitator enabling local congregations to get involved in local and global mission
- Generates increased excitement and commitment to local, regional and global mission initiatives
- Expands the region’s ability to provide valued service to local congregations

F. To American Baptist Women’s Ministries (ABW Ministries) and American Baptist Men’s Ministries (ABMen)

- Enables ABW Ministries to fulfill their goal: “To provide opportunities for each woman to study issues of concern in our nation and God's world, become an advocate in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of others, engage in mission education, and be involved in American Baptist mission outreach…”
- Strengthens relationships between ABW Ministries groups and missionaries
- Enhances the Special Interest Missionary (SIM) program; opens the door to introducing the SIM program to the whole congregation
- Enables ABMen to live out their theme: "Masculine Spirituality With A Mission: pass it on..."
G. To international partner(s)
   • Provides opportunities to develop relationships with U.S./Puerto Rico congregations
   • Promotes the sharing of ministry stories of international partners with a wider audience
   • Opens the door to two-way mission
   • Provides opportunities for local congregations and American Baptist missionaries to nurture interdependent partnerships as they engage in ministry together

H. To other interested individuals and congregations
   • Provides opportunities for friends, family members and others to support the ministry of American Baptist missionaries
   • Enables congregations in the wider Body of Christ to get involved in the mission and ministry of American Baptist missionaries
V. How is an MPT formed?

MPT illustration…

Newly appointed missionary candidates Manuel and Sarah, have begun to pray about those whom God might be calling to serve on their MPT and to make a list of people who have encouraged them in their Christian journeys and call to ministry. A number of names immediately come to mind from those living near them in Ohio. These include members of their local church where Manuel serves on the staff, family, close friends and colleagues from the hospital where Sarah works as a nurse. But they realize there are a number of people that they also want to consider in Southern California, near Manuel’s hometown and where he attended college and seminary. Talking with the MPT Coordinator from IM, Manuel and Sarah determine that they should form two MPTs in these separate areas, with each MPT providing a portion of their prayer and financial support.

A. Who is responsible for forming the MPT?

The missionary extends the invitation to serve on the Team. Once formed, the MPT will participate in orientation led by International Ministries staff. (See Section X. A. “IM responsibilities.”)

Currently-serving missionaries will begin forming their MPTs as soon as possible, no later than their next U.S./Puerto Rico assignment after 2003. Missionaries are expected to form and participate in the orientation of their MPTs before returning from U.S./Puerto Rico assignment to the country of service.

The missionary may either invite individuals to serve in specific roles (See Section VI. A. “The core group”) or encourage the MPT to determine role assignments after they have met for the first time.

MPTs are encouraged not to compete with one another or with other ministries.

B. Where do you find MPT members?

They are usually friends, family members, or colleagues from the missionary’s home church or other churches (both American Baptist and others) who covenant with one another and with God to enlist support for the missionary and her/his ministry spiritually, emotionally, physically and financially.
C. Where is the MPT located?

Ideally, the MPT members should live within driving distance of one another, but if they are further away, coordination can be done by conference calls, e-mail, etc.

D. How long does someone serve on an MPT?

Ask for an initial commitment of one full term. For a current IM missionary, this would be a five-year commitment. Many people will remain faithful team members for as long as the missionary is in ministry.

E. What happens when an MPT member leaves the team?

The MPT, in consultation with the missionary, should seek God’s direction and then invite someone to serve in the role vacated by the former MPT member.

F. Could a missionary have more than one MPT?

Yes. There may be two MPTs per missionary unit when partner congregations are clustered in more than one geographical area. A missionary unit is a single person or married couple with or without children. IM recommends a maximum of two MPTs per missionary unit.

Each MPT is responsible for developing a Network to provide spiritual and emotional support along with a target goal for financial support. The target goal could be equally divided between two teams or divided at different levels.

IM Mission Finance will send reports to each MPT tailored to their particular financial target goal (e.g. gifts from all partner churches and individuals in one geographic area are reported to Team A; all others are reported to Team B).

G. How can smaller congregations be a part of the MPT program? Could members of a congregation participate in more than one MPT?

A missionary may invite representatives from several smaller congregations to jointly form an MPT. In this model, the MPT represents that cluster of churches.
A congregation may have representatives on more than one MPT. However, it may be most effective to focus on one, two, or a maximum of three missionaries. Note that an individual should serve on only one MPT at a time.

**Important note regarding the Network of Partner Individuals, Congregations and Regions:** a congregation may choose to be in the support Network for several missionaries, especially if they do not have members actively involved in an MPT. However, it may be more effective to focus on just a few missionaries rather than offering minimal prayer, emotional, and financial support to a large number of missionaries.

**H. How is American Baptist diversity represented?**

Our denomination has a rich tradition of multi-ethnic diversity. International Ministries is committed to promoting strong cross-cultural support for global ministry (i.e. Euro-Americans supporting Hispanic-American missionaries, African American churches supporting Asian-American missionaries, etc.). Some ideas for encouraging ethnic diversity in MPTs and the Network of partner individuals, congregations, and regions include:

1. The MPT Coordinator and MPT Facilitator from International Ministries will work with and through the regional representatives to refer missionaries to partner congregations of diverse ethnic backgrounds. (See Section X.A., “IM responsibilities” for role descriptions.)

2. Solicit advice from ABC caucus leaders.

3. Contact pastors of supportive American Baptist churches (from a variety of ethnic backgrounds) and ask them to consider making a commitment to support an IM missionary.

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*My ideas for reaching out to diverse congregations...*
I. How does a missionary with no close U.S. connections form an MPT?

Current missionaries who have been serving overseas for a number of terms may need the help of the MPT Coordinator, MPT Facilitator (see Section X.A., “IM responsibilities”) or others to identify people who can serve on their MPT. A natural place to begin would be with those churches and individuals who are already directing their prayer and financial support toward that particular missionary. God will raise up team members as there is need.
VI. What are the roles and covenant responsibilities of MPT members?

MPT illustration…

Rachael and Fred’s ministry has been to develop a theological education program for lay leaders in Latvia. Their Latvian Baptist colleagues have found and purchased a run-down building in an old section of the city. It needs a tremendous amount of work. They send an e-mail to the members of their MPT asking that they challenge people in the local congregations to offer some concrete solutions. Within two weeks, they have two churches that want to organize work teams to come and assist in the cleanup and rebuilding of this new project. They will also raise funds to help buy construction materials and tools needed to complete the job. Rachael and Fred are overwhelmed! And their Latvian partners call a special worship service to simply praise God for his bountiful goodness and grace.

The MPT members covenant with one another, God and the missionary/ies to engage in international cross-cultural mission through the mission and ministry of an ABC missionary or missionary family. The main task of the MPT is to build a Network of partner individuals, congregations, and regions (See Section II. C. “What is the Network?”).

The role of the MPT is supportive, not supervisory. IM Area Directors will continue in their supervisory, pastoral, and administrative role with regard to IM missionaries. IM has final decision making authority regarding appointment, support level, ministry assignment, termination, and legal liability.

MPT members could be called on to make mission presentations on behalf of and in coordination with the missionary.

MPTs and missionaries should encourage partners in their Network to continue to support ongoing ministries and/or missionaries as they are led. Discourage contributors from simply shifting support from some other ministry; rather, ask God to provide new avenues of financial support.

MPTs will not be in the business of handling money. Rather, their goal is to mobilize prayer and financial supporters. IM/ABC will continue to receive and disburse funds received directly or through the regular ABC mission giving system.
A. The core group

There should be a minimum of three or four persons on the MPT (a typical MPT has five to ten members). Their main task is to build a Network of partner individuals, congregations, and regions that can provide foundational spiritual, emotional, and financial support to the missionary. The MPT should determine who will be their leader/coordinator.

The core member roles are listed below. The MPT should feel free to adapt or adjust them to fit their particular needs.

1. **Prayer & Communication Advocate (May be two separate roles).**
   a) Circulate prayer requests to supporting churches/individuals in the Network as necessary. Share answers to prayer as well.
   b) Produce printed newsletters as needed to be shared with current and potential partner congregations and individuals in the Network.
   c) Work with IM to prepare and distribute prayer reminders and other promotional materials. Be creative!
   d) Communicate regularly with the Region about the missionary and their ministry.
   e) When possible and appropriate, visit the missionary every two or three years.

2. **Pastoral Care Provider** – a trusted spiritual advisor, mentor, or friend
   a) Commit to communicate with the missionary/ies on a regular basis (via e-mail/phone, letter, etc.). Encourage the missionary to maintain personal devotions, prayer and Bible study. Encourage them to set aside time for personal renewal.
   b) Listen carefully to the missionary and pray for his/her specific needs, e.g. emotional, family, spiritual, physical.
c) Discuss theological questions/issues raised by missionary.

d) Provide pastoral counseling or referral as needed.

e) When possible and appropriate, visit the missionary every two or three years.

3. Financial Advocate

a) Develop a financial support-raising strategy with the help of the missionary and other MPT members, e.g. contact potential partner congregations and individuals who would like to join the missionary’s support Network and explain the ministry support needs of the missionary.

- MPTs for currently serving missionaries are expected to reach 50% of their financial target goal by the end of the first year that the missionary returns to their country of service. (See “MPT Ministry Goals” chart in Section XII). The MPT should reach 75% of the financial goal by the end of the second year in the missionary’s host country and 100% by the end of the third year.

- MPTs are encouraged to work with regional representatives to identify and reach out to churches not currently participating in denominational ministries.

Creative ideas for raising support:
b) Coordinate the distribution of a faith commitment letter to potential contributing partners (see sample letter in Appendix).

c) Track giving based on monthly reports from IM’s Mission Finance Team.

d) Send thank you notes to contributing partners on a regular basis.

e) Follow up with contributing partners who miss two consecutive months.

f) When possible and appropriate, visit the missionary every two or three years.

4. **MK Advocate** (for missionary families with children) – a mature Christian who understands and/or has experience with children/youth.

   a) Establish and maintain consistent personal contact with the missionary kids (MKs).

   b) Connect children and youth in supporting churches with the MKs.

   - Encourage U.S. and Puerto Rican children and youth to establish personal contact with MKs and share mutual interests (school, sports, trends, etc.) in order to help keep MKs up-to-date on U.S. and Puerto Rican culture.

   - Provide creative ways to engage U.S. and Puerto Rican kids in ministry with the MKs.

   c) Create a prayer support network specifically for the MKs.

   d) Provide guidance and help identify appropriate mentors when an MK is in the U.S. or Puerto Rico.

   e) Keep partner churches updated on the needs of the MKs. Help educate partner churches regarding MK issues.
f) When possible and appropriate, visit MKs in their host countries along with some U.S. or Puerto Rican youth from supporting churches.

g) Coordinate with IM’s MK Care and Concern Coordinator on how to best support and encourage the MKs.

B. Additional members might include:

1. Regional Mission Representative

   a) Approach pastors and/or congregations about making a commitment of prayer and financial support. These supporters become part of the missionary’s support Network.

   b) When possible and appropriate, visit the missionary once per term.

2. Mission Involvement Energizer

   a) If appropriate to the ministry situation and in coordination with the missionary, encourage partner congregations to visit the missionary. Work with the missionary to determine best times, size of group, focus of trip, etc. Refer to IM’s Short-Term Mission Trip Leader’s Training Guide for more information and inspiration.

   b) Coordinate short-term mission trips as needed in cooperation with the missionary and the IM Volunteer Coordinator.

   c) Promote “Sister Church Relationships” if possible. Refer to IM for more information on how to develop and nurture Sister Church Relationships.

   d) When appropriate, visit the missionary every two or three years.

3. Ministry Specialist (as needed) – e.g. medical person, educator, church planter, musician, community development specialist, computer expert, etc.
4. **Website Technician**
   
a) Develop and maintain a website for the missionary and the MPT.

b) Include a link to the ABC International Ministries website.

c) Include a link to the international partner’s website.

5. **Video Production Specialist** – Design and produce a short video highlighting the ministry of the missionary and the international partners.

6. **International Partner** – Could serve in any capacity on an MPT.

7. **Relocation Manager** – U.S./Puerto Rico
   
a) Help and enlist others to help with packing, storing.

b) Help the missionary unit find a place to live; arrange for furnishings as needed.

c) Assist the missionary in finding a car.

---

*My gifts and experience could be used in the following MPT roles:*

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________
VII. How is an MPT trained and maintained?

A. What is included in the initial MPT orientation?

1. The two to three hour orientation is ideally done in person by the MPT Coordinator (or deputized trainer); however, if the team is geographically scattered, it might be done by conference call. If possible, the missionary’s Area Director and a regional representative should participate in the orientation.

2. The topics listed in this outline are covered with special emphasis on “MPT background and rationale” and “What are the roles and covenant responsibilities of MPT members?”

3. During MPT orientation the team begins to develop a covenant outlining their commitments and responsibilities. The covenant should include a commitment to raise financial support over and above the current giving of congregations and individuals (i.e. support should not simply be shifted from current ministries to the ministry of a missionary).
B. Who is responsible for maintaining the MPT?

1. The MPT members decide who will convene the team and oversee the group’s work to make sure there is follow-through on commitments.

2. The MPT Coordinator should keep in contact with the MPT and provide assistance or further training as needed.

3. The Area Director (IM) will also work with the MPT, providing ongoing support as needed.

Other information I/we need to be fully equipped for this ministry:

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________
VIII. How do MPTs apply to various categories of missionaries?

A. Appointed Missionaries

Missionaries will form their MPTs during their first U.S./Puerto Rico assignment beginning with those missionaries returning in 2004. See MPT Guide, particularly "MPTs in a nutshell" (p. 2); "How is an MPT formed?" (pp. 15-18) and "What are the roles and covenant responsibilities of the MPT members?" (pp. 19-24).

B. Jointly Appointed Missionaries (employed by IM)

Jointly appointed missionaries employed by IM will form their MPTs during their first U.S./Puerto Rico assignment beginning with those missionaries returning in 2004. See MPT Guide, particularly "MPTs in a nutshell" (p. 2); "How is an MPT formed?" (pp. 15-18) and "What are the roles and covenant responsibilities of the MPT members?" (pp. 19-24).

C. Jointly Appointed Missionaries (employed by another appointing body)

Jointly appointed missionaries employed by another appointing body will either form an MPT or use the support structure approved by the other appointing agency. See MPT Guide, particularly "MPTs in a nutshell" (p. 2); "How is an MPT formed?" (pp. 15-18) and "What are the roles and covenant responsibilities of the MPT members?" (pp. 19-24).

D. Missionary Intern

Missionary interns are encouraged to form support networks but are not expected to develop a formalized MPT.

E. Volunteer Missionary

Volunteer missionaries are encouraged to form support networks but are not expected to develop a formalized MPT.
IX. What are the missionary’s commitment and responsibilities?

MPT illustration…

What an incredible first year it has been! Ben and Susan are overwhelmed by the loving support they have received from their MPT as well as from the wider Network of contributing partners. When a personality conflict between two of their colleagues threatened to destroy the urban evangelism and development ministry where they served, Sarah sent a prayer “S.O.S” to their MPT contact who shared it with the Network. About a week later, the chair of the deacons at Community Christian Church (CCC) asked Ben and Susan to pray for their church during a particularly difficult pastoral transition. This was the beginning of a strong mutual partnership between Ben and Sarah and the church. Next year, they are hoping to facilitate a mission exchange between CCC and their host country church. These sister churches hope to identify ways that they can “build each other up” (1 Thess. 5:11).

A. During the missionary’s first U.S./Puerto Rico assignment after 2003

1. Create the MPT.
2. Participate in the MPT orientation.
3. Pray with the MPT about their ministry.
4. Share the vision of their ministry with the MPT and partner congregations and individuals who become part of the missionary’s support Network.
5. Orient the MPT to their ministry and country of service.
6. Keep MPT up to date on prayer, emotional, physical and financial needs and praises.
B. During a term of service, how can a missionary minister to his/her U.S./Puerto Rico partner regions, congregations and individuals?

Partnership is a two-way relationship. Missionaries can bless, encourage, and inspire their U.S./Puerto Rico MPT and Network in many ways.

1. Correspond regularly with the MPT regarding prayer, ministry and resource needs and praises. Communicate with the MPT about answers to prayer.

2. Keep a record of prayer requests from partner churches and individuals (the Network) and answers to prayer. Pray for specific needs of partner congregations and individuals as needed.

3. Show appreciation to those who pray and give. Acknowledge financial gifts with a thank-you note. Keep a record of partner churches and individuals in their Network; keep track of thank-you notes sent.

4. Develop closer friendship with MPT members and partners.

5. Promote or suggest opportunities for hands-on involvement in ministry, e.g. short-term mission trips, etc. Host visits from MPT members and individuals from their Network.

Creative ideas to help build relationships between the missionary, the MPT and those in the Network:

- ___________________________
- ___________________________
- ___________________________
- ___________________________
- ___________________________
- ___________________________
- ___________________________
6. Provide information about local, national, and global issues related to the country of service. Share ideas on evangelism, service, worship, etc. Provide examples of how U.S. military and economic policies affect the country.


C. During their next U.S./Puerto Rico assignment after the MPT is in place

1. Devote significant time to visiting with the MPT and partner congregations and individuals in the Network.

2. Reach out to new congregations and individuals to begin building relationships.

3. Document effective methods for building relationships between congregations, individuals and the missionary.

Gloria a Dios!
X. ABC family commitment and responsibility

MPT illustration…

The MPT for Paul and Barbara became concerned when they heard from two financial supporters that they were not going to be able to fulfill their promised financial commitment to Paul and Barbara’s ministry. They immediately informed their prayer network and contacted the MPT Coordinator for advice. The Coordinator shared this information with the Area Director and the IM Treasurer so that they could evaluate the situation. Together the IM staff were able to figure out how to cover the support for Paul and Barbara for the immediate future so that there would be no disruption in their ministry. The MPT also asked the regional Minister of Mission Support for help in identifying potential contributing partners. The support they received from the American Baptist family gave the MPT the confidence they needed to continue their ministry with Paul and Barbara. Working together, they met the financial challenge and now have a testimony of God’s faithfulness and provision.

A. IM responsibilities

IM endorses, appoints, commissions, and supervises missionaries and has primary responsibility for missionary care. IM reserves the right to final decision-making regarding appointment, support level, ministry assignment, termination, and legal liability.

1. MPT Coordinator – train, sustain, and encourage MPTs

   a) Conduct individualized orientation for each new MPT. The Coordinator will train MPT regional coaches in various parts of the country to assist in MPT orientation and care.

   b) Identify resources for ongoing training in specific topics (e.g. pastoral care, readjustment issues, communication skills).

   c) Keep IM Area Directors up to date on MPT-missionary relationships.

   d) Maintain close communication with regional representatives about the formation and impact of MPTs and Networks in their region.
e) Facilitate meetings and/or communication between MPTs as appropriate.

2. MPT Facilitator

   a) Work with MPT Coordinator to set up orientation sessions for new MPTs.
   b) Answer questions when churches ask about MPTs and Networks.
   c) Coordinate U.S./Puerto Rico mission speaking schedule.
   d) Communicate with MPTs and missionaries about creative ideas for building relationships with one another and members of their Network.
   e) Facilitate meetings and/or communication between MPTs as appropriate.
   f) Monitor missionary financial support levels.

3. Special Assistant for Prayer and Pastoral Care

   a) Assist MPT Prayer Advocate to form a prayer network as requested.
   b) Ensure that the missionary/ies receives regular pastoral care.
   c) Serve as an additional resource person for pastoral care as requested.

4. IM Mission Finance Team

   a) Maintain monthly financial giving records.
   b) Send thank you notes to contributing partners.
   c) Send monthly list of contributing partners to MPT Financial Advocate.
   d) Send monthly list of contributing partners to missionary.
5. **Area Directors** - IM Area Directors will continue in their supervisory, pastoral, and administrative role with regard to IM/ABC missionaries.

   a) If possible, participate in the MPT orientation for missionaries under their supervision.

   b) Continue to supervise missionaries and provide pastoral care as needed.

   c) Maintain accountability for ministry, relationship with host country partners, accounting, etc.

   d) Provide ongoing support to MPTs in coordination with the MPT Coordinator and Facilitator.

6. **Coordinator of Volunteers in Global Mission**

   a) Work with MPTs, missionaries, and international partners to organize short-term mission teams to visit the missionary as appropriate.

   b) Provide cross-cultural orientation resources to prepare group for trip.

   c) Provide travel insurance and limited financial support to teams and individuals.

**B. Responsibilities of American Baptist regions**

1. It is crucial to keep the link to regions lively, respectful and effective. Participation will vary depending on the region’s staffing and emphasis. Involvement in the MPT program should assist the region to reach its global mission promotion, education, and support goals.

2. Identify and nurture potential missionary candidates through the discernment, application and, preparation process.

3. Consult with IM’s MPT Coordinator to select an MPT Regional Coach for the region.

4. Help missionaries and local congregations connect with one another to strengthen individual and denominational relationships that provide the foundation for effective gospel ministry. In other words, help missionaries expand their Network. (See the following MPT illustration).
C. Responsibilities of International Partners

[to be developed]
XI. Mission Speaking assignments

MPT illustration…

As they begin planning for a year of U.S./Puerto Rico assignment, Alex and Maria determine to visit the many churches and individuals who have been faithful partners in supporting their ministry in Haiti. Since many of their partners are from one region, Alex and Maria talk with their MPT and the MPT Facilitator about creative ways to set up a mission speaking itinerary that would help meet their goal. They invite MPT members to accompany them on visits whenever possible. Regional staff help to make arrangements for Alex and Maria to share their testimony at local churches. The Area Minister also schedules them to speak at cluster events where people from many different congregations can hear Alex and Maria talk about their ministry in Haiti. As a result of these meetings and a growing interest in Haiti, the region hopes to help coordinate mission work tours to help with projects related to Alex and Maria’s ministry.

A. How are speaking assignments arranged?

The MPT Facilitator works with the missionary, the MPT and in consultation with the region to schedule assignments.

MPT members may be called on to make mission presentations on behalf of and in coordination with the missionary.

B. Priority will be given to partner congregations

The majority of time on U.S./Puerto Rico assignment will be devoted to visiting partner congregations and individuals in the missionary’s Network.

C. Outreach to new congregations

The MPT should work with regional and IM representatives to identify churches not currently involved with IM/ABC ministries and missionaries. A special effort should be made to reach out to churches of different ethnic backgrounds.
D. How often should a missionary return to the U.S. or Puerto Rico to visit key partner congregations?

If possible, a continuing appointment missionary should try to schedule a visit in the middle of a four-year term of service. Such visits should be planned in consultation with international partners and the Area Director. All travel expenses should be covered by partner individuals, congregations, or regions.

An MPT or partner congregation might invite a missionary to speak at a special mission event. All travel expenses should be covered by the inviting church or region.

How our MPT could help a missionary prepare for and plan a mission speaking schedule:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
XII. Financial support guidelines

A. Basic guidelines for missionary financial support

1. IM/ABC bases its missionary support on what the average American Baptist church pays its pastor. This sets the standard for salary (what we call “living allowance”), medical insurance, and retirement.

   a) The MPT’s financial target goal (the “MPT goal”) is the actual cost of the missionary’s living allowance (adjusted for the country of service), medical plan, and retirement benefits (Social Security and Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board). (Special consideration is given to those missionaries serving in countries with a high cost of living.) This makes the MPT goal equivalent to the base salary and benefits a local church provides its pastor.

   b) Is the World Mission Offering (WMO) still important? Absolutely yes! In addition to the basic costs outlined above, International Ministries also provides for the unique costs* faced by a missionary in his/her host and home countries (see below). Unrestricted gifts from churches and individuals to United Mission, the World Mission Offering, Flexible Stewardship Plan region gifts to International Ministries, and portions of IM’s endowment provide for this support. (See Section B below for further information on the importance of the WMO).

*Missionaries live in two “worlds” at the same time: they have financial responsibilities in the U.S./Puerto Rico, in their host country, and in moving between the two. A missionary’s host country living allowance is adjusted to the cost of living in their country of service and to changing foreign exchange rates. In addition, missionaries are faced with expenses such as:

- Transportation to the host country
- Setting up and maintaining a household in the host country
- Host country taxes and visas
- Children’s schooling in the host country
- Ministry funds for projects
- Language study
- Transportation back to the U.S. for mission speaking assignments
• Setting up and maintaining a household in the U.S. during home assignment
  c) The MPT will make every effort to generate new money to reach its financial target goal. Contributing partners are asked not to simply transfer current gifts supporting other important ministries to the support of a missionary.

2. Active International Ministries missionaries commissioned before 2004 are expected to form their MPTs during their first U.S./Puerto Rico assignment, beginning with those missionaries returning to the U.S. and Puerto Rico in 2004.

3. During the first year that a missionary has returned to his/her host country, the MPT is expected to develop the spiritual and emotional support network and raise at least 50% of the MPT’s financial target goal needed to support the missionary. By the end of the second year of the missionary’s service in the host country, the MPT is expected to further develop the spiritual and emotional support network and raise 75% of the MPT’s financial target goal. 100% of the MPT’s financial target goal should be reached by the end of the third year of the missionary’s service in the host country.

### MPT Ministry Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year and ministry location of missionary</th>
<th>Year of U.S./Puerto Rico Assignment</th>
<th>Year 1 – Return to host country</th>
<th>Year 2 – Continue ministry in host country</th>
<th>Year 3 – Continue ministry in host country (ongoing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal by the end of the year</td>
<td>Missionary Goal: Build relationships, form and orient MPT</td>
<td>MPT Goal: establish spiritual &amp; emotional network, raise 50% of financial target goal</td>
<td>MPT Goal: further develop spiritual &amp; emotional support network; reach 75% of financial target goal</td>
<td>MPT Goal: continue spiritual &amp; emotional support network; reach and maintain 100% of financial target goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. How does the MPT target goal relate to the World Mission Offering?

The purpose of the World Mission Offering remains unchanged. The WMO continues to be the largest single source providing basic support for IM’s missionaries and for mission projects undertaken by global mission partners. One hundred percent of every WMO dollar received goes to support global mission including missionary living costs, housing, work funds, transportation, language study, school costs for missionary children, and grants for projects of the global partners.

The financial support generated through the work of MPTs adds to that received through the WMO to underwrite missionary living allowances, medical and retirement costs. This support is crucial both to maintain the work of current missionaries and to enable the appointment of future missionaries.

What my church or I could commit toward the support of our missionaries:

__________________________________________________

C. How can an individual or a church support an IM/ABC missionary with gifts over and above current giving?

Churches should continue to give generously to United Mission and to their region. Funds raised through the MPT should be over and above regular tithes and offerings to ABC ministries. Also, these funds should NOT take the place of the regular World Mission Offering (WMO) given by congregations or individuals. MPT raised funds should be “new money” – not simply a reassignment of current giving commitments.

There are four ways to contribute toward the support of a missionary.

1. Monthly contribution (e.g. $50/month)
2. Lump sum contribution (e.g. $2000/year)
3. Church budget – incorporate your church’s financial commitment into your annual budget and send your gift through the regular denominational giving program.
4. One time gift (e.g. $500)
Individuals may send gifts through their church, region or directly to International Ministries, ABCUSA (P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851). If you have questions, call 800/222-3872 and ask for “International Ministries – Mission Finance.” Note in the memo line of your check that the money is “for the ongoing support of __________.” If you would like your local church or region to receive credit, be sure to include a note with the church name and address.

For Church Treasurers: Support given to IM/ABC for your missionary can be entered on the mission giving form in the following places:

- For United Stewardship Plan Regions: "Targeted" gift for the ongoing support of __________ (name of missionary)
- For Flexible Stewardship Plan Regions: Line C -- "Missionaries, Ministries, and Institutions" for the ongoing support of __________ (name of missionary)

D. How is the financial support level maintained? What happens if the support level exceeds the target? What happens if the required support level drops?

1. The MPT monitors the missionary’s financial support level in close communication with the missionary and the MPT Facilitator. International Ministries will supply the MPT and the missionary with monthly reports of support gifts received so that they are aware of this. The MPT Facilitator will keep the MPT Coordinator and Area Director informed as needed.

2. When a missionary’s support gifts regularly exceed the MPT goal, the missionary and the MPT will ask contributors to consider shifting their support to other missionaries who are under-supported.

3. If a missionary’s financial support level drops below 90% of the financial target goal for three consecutive months, the MPT Coordinator and MPT Facilitator will work closely with the MPT Financial Advocate to contact contributing partners in the missionary’s current Network to encourage faithful giving. The MPT Coordinator and MPT Facilitator will also work with the MPT to identify other potential partners, i.e. to expand the missionary’s support Network.
4. If a missionary’s support level falls below 75% of the financial target goal in a given quarter, the MPT Coordinator will work with the MPT, the missionary and the Area Director to intensify support raising strategies. This process should include concerted prayer, an assessment of the effectiveness of the MPT, an assessment of the missionary and his/her ministry, and development of a detailed plan of action. The bottom line is that missionaries whose funding is consistently under goal deplete reserve funds and may jeopardize IM’s ability to adequately support other missionaries.
XIII. Appendices: Relationship Building Resources (separate document)

A. Sample MPT covenant
B. MPT checklist
C. Sample letter from missionary to local church in Network
D. Sample faith commitment letter (from MPT to partner contributors)
E. Ideas and suggestions for developing a relationship with a missionary
F. Ideas for developing relationships with local congregations
G. Information on building a prayer network
H. Ideas for pastoral care of missionaries
I. Creative financial support-raising ideas
J. Sample ABCUSA mission giving report form
K. Sample scripts for talking with congregational/individual partners about financial support needs.
L. FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) and answers
M. Sample skits and other creative group activities to build awareness of what missionaries are experiencing.
N. Information on helpful communication practices
O. Go Global Strategic Plan

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Rev. ab 4/16/04