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| **River Hills Community Church** | Policy Number:**2007-01** |
| River Hills Policies & Procedures | Revision: **4** |
| TITLE:  | **Long-Term Missionary** | Approved: June 6, 2016 |

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| Policy Originator:**International Ministries Team** | Approved by:**Board of Elders** |

**Summary of Revision 4 Changes**

Section 3.0: Identified specific work within the USA that can be supported

Various sections: Typographical, grammatical, readability, style and format changes

# PURPOSE

The purpose of the Long Term Missionary Policy is to display the greatness of God among the peoples of the world by providing guidance to prospective missionary candidates and the International Ministries Team.

# MISSION

Our mission is to expand the declaration of the gospel of the Lord Jesus by using the resources of River Hills Community Church (RHCC) to send laborers to the peoples of the world.

# SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

We, the church, believe that Missions is the mandate of our Lord Jesus in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18) to bring the gospel to all peoples of the world, making disciples of all the nations. Because God’s plan is to save a people for Himself from every tribe, tongue, and nation (Revelation 7:9), our desire is to reach to those places where the gospel has not yet penetrated. Therefore, we intend to focus primarily on unreached people groups and restricted access nations. Because faith comes through hearing (Romans 10:17) and God’s primary means for preaching salvation through Jesus Christ is the local church, it is a priority for RHCC to be involved in church planting in the receiving country. Finally, our desire is to significantly support a few missionaries rather than support many with small amounts. We desire for our church to be involved in the lives and work of those we support by friendship, prayer, finances, regular contact, and on-site assistance as needed and as opportunities are available.

## Definitions

## Unreached Peoples

For those outside of the USA, those places and/or peoples in the world where there has been little or no exposure to the gospel of the Lord Jesus and there is no viable indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize their own people without outside assistance.

For those within the USA, unreached people are to be understood to include large communities of first generation immigrants without a viable witness of Christ because of cultural and language differences. In this case, supported RHCC missionaries will be restricted to RHCC members who have been actively involved in ministry at RHCC and who have been uniquely prepared for such ministry, as determined by the International Ministries Team.

## Restricted access nations

Those states that limit or prevent Christian ministry by expatriates as missionaries. Also known as creative-access nations where expatriates must seek secular avenues of entry.

## Church Planting

The establishing of churches that know the true God through faith in the Lord Jesus, and are made up of the indigenous Christians who are growing in their knowledge of God through the Scriptures and are reaching out to the others in their culture for evangelization.

Church planting may involve the following types of missionary outreach:

* The establishing of a local indigenous community of believers starting with evangelistic strategy, translation, and a variety of ongoing Bible teaching efforts for the building up of the body of believers. All have the goal of establishing a new local church.
* Strengthening existing churches by equipping and building up local indigenous churches that they may be able to evangelize and plant other churches. This outreach may include training indigenous Christians for church leadership and helping in evangelistic strategies but will always include living among the indigenous population.

These types of work are meant as a guide for the International Ministries Team to use in prioritizing and evaluating missions work for our prayer and financial support. The International Ministries Team will consider those who qualify for support on an individual basis. When evaluating prospective missionary candidates, preference will be given to RHCC members who have been actively involved in ministry at RHCC.

# QUALIFICATIONS

These qualifications are meant as a guideline to help the International Ministries Team decide from many good options whom to support financially. It is also meant as a standard, which we hope the missionaries we are supporting will meet. It is a safeguard for RHCC and the sent missionary.

RHCC may send missionaries who meet the following qualifications:

* 1. Have a clear profession and evidence of salvation through Jesus Christ, spiritual maturity, Christian lifestyle, continued spiritual growth, and ability to perform ministry as witnessed by other people.
	2. Share a similar (but not necessarily identical) ministry philosophy (see RHCC core values document) and doctrinal perspective with RHCC (see EFCA Statement of Faith and RHCC Elder Confession).
	3. Desire to maintain strong relationships with members of RHCC and willing to abide by any guidelines for correspondence and periodic review of ministry.
	4. Demonstrate healthy, one man-one woman marriage and family relationships, or contentment in singleness (1 Timothy 3:4-5, 1 Corinthians 7:8-9, 17).
	5. Are accepted by an agency approved by the International Ministries Team.
	6. Agree to meet with and be counseled by the International Ministries Team when considering where they will be going to serve overseas.
	7. Receive adequate training and education for the ministry they will be doing as determined by the sending agency. The training may include Bible school, seminary, language learning, and/or specific training for work they will be doing in the receiving country.

Candidates for support by RHCC will also be required to complete an interview with the International Ministries Team. This interview will include:

* The missionary’s testimony of how they came to faith in Christ and how they were called to overseas missions.
* What work they will be doing overseas and how they do ministry.
* An explanation of their current and future needs.

The missionary will need to provide a resume containing past ministry work, education, and references.

# RHCC AND MISSION AGENCIES

* 1. The policy of the International Ministries Team is to send out missionaries under the guidance and support of an established missions agency. RHCC will not support missionaries who choose to go out independently of an agency.
	2. The mission agency must be approved by the International Ministries Team and should have a similar doctrinal perspective, as outlined in the Statement of Faith of the EFCA, as well as overall missions goals as that of RHCC.
	3. The agency should work with the existing church as well as other like-minded agencies in the country to which they are sending missionaries. There should be an attitude of mutual acceptance as well as cooperation in the spreading of the gospel and church planting.
	4. If a missionary should decide to change agencies, the International Ministries Team must be given advance notification. Continuation of support for the missionary will required the International Ministries Team’s approval of the new mission agency consistent with the above points.

# FINANCIAL SUPPORT

* 1. A goal of RHCC is to be able to give 25% of the total budget to international ministries. RHCC also desires to significantly support a few missionaries rather than support many with small amounts. We desire for our church to be significantly involved in the lives and work of those we support by friendship, prayer, and regular contact and on-site assistance as needed and available. We believe this is best done by having fewer missionaries that we support but are more deeply involved with. At least eighty percent of the total budget will be used for missionary support.

After the International Ministries Team approves the candidacy and the sending missions agency, the team will determine how much monthly support the church will provide for the missionary. All approvals of both candidacy and amount of support are subject to Elder Board approval. The following criteria will help determine the amount.

A. The total finances needed by the missionary.

B. The amount of monies available in the missions’ budget.

C. The ideal range of support would be from 5% up to 20%.

Although monthly support may begin before the missionary leaves for the field, the money will be held in a fund at RHCC. The money will then be given to the missionary at the time he (she) leaves for the field as a part of his (her) start up costs. In some cases it may become necessary to help the missionary financially before they are ready to leave. These funds may be used for that as well and will be allocated at the discretion of the International Ministries Team.

In addition, the International Ministries Team may want to financially help a missionary whom we cannot support monthly because of money constraints, or because a particular missionary does not fit well into our scope and limitations. We may consider such as missionary for a one-time gift. The amount would be determined by the need of the missionary and our ability to meet the need. The missionary would have to meet the above qualifications for missionaries with the exception of items and in Section .

* 1. Missionaries supported by RHCC are free to approach individuals within RHCC with whom they already have personal relationships and to ask for the individuals’ consideration in supporting them financially. Missionaries will not be able to make an appeal through a church wide mailing. They will be able to make the work to which God is calling them known among the congregation at large with permission from the International Ministries Team and final approval from the Elder board. They will be able to do this through a worship service Mission Moment or a special missions event to which the congregation is invited.

# CORRESPONDENCE & PERIODIC REVIEW OF MINISTRY

* 1. All missionary support may be reviewed annually and support may be adjusted; again determined by the need of the missionary and monies available. Review will also take place with any of the following changes in the life of a missionary:
		1. Change in the nature or location of ministry.
		2. Change of mission agency.
		3. Intention to retire.
		4. Extended home assignment.
		5. Any problem that would interfere with the missionary’s ability to perform normal missionary responsibilities.
		6. Change in marital or family status.
	2. Missionaries whom we financially support are expected to submit an annual report to the International Ministries team. This report should include ministry highlights, both the accomplishments and difficulties in their ministry, plans for spiritual and professional development, travel plans for the year, pertinent personal information, and their financial status. If helpful to the International Ministries Team, the report may also include the political situation in the country where they serve. The missionaries may use the reports that they send to their agency, in whole or part depending on the extent of the report.

# OTHER KINDS OF MISSIONARY SUPPORT

RHCC would like to help full time workers in other ways that will be both effective in furthering the work they are involved in and will encourage the mission worker spiritually and emotionally. In most cases, this will be in addition to financial support. In some cases, if a missionary is involved with RHCC but we are unable to provide continued support to them financially, we would like to provide other kinds of support for them. These may include:

* 1. Prayer Support- This would include providing ways for our church family to pray specifically for missionary families.
	2. Communication- We will attempt to not only keep up to date on the life and work of the missionary but also keep them up to date on the life and work of RHCC.
	3. Practical Assistance- For a missionary who is on home assignment we will make an effort to help practically meet their material needs such as housing, transportation, and furniture.
	4. Team Relationship- We desire to continuously cultivate a team relationship with our missionaries so they feel that we are part of their team concerned about the work they are doing in the particular part of the world where they are serving.
	5. Meetings with International Ministries Team- Our missionaries are encouraged to meet with the team and to express concerns, relate needs and report progress when they are on home assignment.
	6. Church Events - The missionary can expect the International Ministries Team to help and assist in setting up events within the church to report on their ministry when they are on home assignment.
	7. Fund Raising within RHCC- Qualified missionaries will be provided means to help them raise support from individuals within the congregation, such as allowing them to display their prayer requests and newsletters within the church building.
	8. Short Term Missions- RHCC desires to participate in short term opportunities that are driven by the missionaries in the field. Therefore, when RHCC makes its request for an annual report, we will remind our missionaries of our intention to be field-driven per our Short Term Missions policy.

# SUPPORT OF SPECIAL PROJECTS

We may, as we have means, help support a special project of a qualified missionary. If the support is a one-time gift, the monies can be taken from any excess balance in the Missions Fund. If the support is ongoing, we will give monthly with the money being taken from our missionary budget. Examples include the monies for attending missions-related schooling, help with seminary type schools overseas in which the missionary is involved, or spiritual training centers of indigenous Christians. The support of such projects will be presented at an International Ministries Team monthly meeting and will be discussed and voted on there. When voting on said project, the team will keep in mind its scope and limitations. All approvals are subject to Elder Board approval.

# EXTENDED HOME ASSIGNMENT

Missionaries who are in the U.S. for an extended assignment may need extra help from RHCC to get them back to their ministry overseas. Extended home assignment is more than 9 months. The International Ministries Team will determine if there is a concern regarding the extended home assignment that should be addressed. If so, the following steps will be applied as necessary:

* 1. Two people from the International Ministries Team will meet with missionary to discuss the team’s concerns.
	2. One person from the team will talk with the sending agency regarding the team’s concerns.

Based on these discussions, the team and the missionary will determine the steps necessary to address these concerns and, hopefully, to return the missionary to the field.