



Mission Strategy

“Giving Help, Offering Hope”

(Approved and accepted by unanimous vote of Church Council- 9-20-2010)

We could say with John Wesley that the entire world is our parish. While that is true, a more focused strategy enables us to more effectively fulfill our mission purpose. A Strategy is ... an intentional plan developed and implemented by a local church that seeks to maximize its impact on the world.

Giving Help, Offering Hope, as we engage in mission in Jerusalem (local), Judea (regional), Samaria (cross-cultural woven through all we do), and to the ends of the earth (international) – Acts 1:8.

We embrace and express a great commitment to both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment as we participate in missions. We will **give help** to the needy (Deuteronomy 15:7-11, Isaiah 58:5-11, Isaiah 61:1-2, and Mathew 25:31-46), and we will **offer hope** (Genesis 12:1-3, Mathew 9:35-38, Mathew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, and John 20:21). One is not more important than the other and each suffers without the other.

As a church, our stated purpose is to “Make Disciples of Jesus Christ, for the Transformation of the World.” In this church, mission is broadly defined as all ministries that reach out beyond the local church in evangelism, ministry and service. Missions include local, regional and international ministries. However, it does not include ministries within the church and service or ministry that predominantly serve our congregation.

The Mission Strategy will enable AFUMC to:

- stay on course, be focused as we stay true to our missions purpose, which ensures any missions done in the name of AFUMC will in fact have the approval/support of AFUMC
- all of our various groups (youth, choir, Sunday schools, etc.) would be in unity toward AFUMC’s mission efforts;
- avoid making important decisions or commitments on an emotional, or haphazard/random basis;
- maintain consistency of mission efforts as individual participation, team membership and church staff changes;
- ensure good stewardship in the allocation of missions funds, and investment of people’s time and energy;
- provide a framework for increased participation in mission projects and trips from the active church population; and
- through experience in mission opportunities, encourage the congregation to become more mission focused thereby further developing their Christian walk and enlarging their missions worldview.

The Mission Strategy is a statement of principles, or framework, by which our church can move forward in missions, building on the success of what we are already doing. With focused, strategic, relational mission partnerships, we will be more effective. While this policy is a statement of principles, it should not be interpreted as a rigid set of rules.

Global/Local Mission Opportunities

Strategic Partnerships: These ministries are more encompassing than merely providing financial support and/or prayer support. In these cases, our church commits to be an active partner in a particular ministry.

Strategic Ministry Support: This category includes those opportunities where we can make a difference for the kingdom of God, regardless of any relationship or benefit to our church. We assist because it is strategic. This support could be for people or projects.

Mission Priorities

- **Issue: “Focus”**
 - “Why” – Currently, some of our efforts are scattered among a broad range of ministries. This can sometimes lessen the impact of our efforts to make the most significant contribution.
 - “How” - We desire to develop a major emphasis and make a major impact in two or three key mission themes while maintaining support of our current ministries. Recognizing that there will always be more needs than we can fill, this strategy is meant to assist AFUMC in its decision-making.
- **Issue “Involvement”**
 - “Why” – In the past we have trained and sent some of our people into the mission field. We hope more of our people will get involved in ministry outside the church.
 - “How” - We seek to provide opportunities to send believers beyond the local church, with local, regional, and international mission projects and trips to complement what we have already been doing.

Three major themes for missions have been identified that AFUMC has been doing in the past. These three themes would inform our current mission partnerships, focus our priorities, and more effectively guide future partnerships. The three themes:

Improving living conditions – might include: feeding, clothing, shelter, clean water, construction, or homeless ministry.

Medical care – might include: health checks, funding needed medical care, providing actual medical care, or medical clinics.

Training/Evangelism – might include: training leaders, VBS-type teaching, Bible studies, preaching, or leading people to Christ (efforts to persons outside of our church membership).

For example, the mobile food pantry is an *improving living condition* theme mission activity, but we could expand/broaden by adding some type of medical care/checks or evangelism component(s) to it. We could further broaden it by providing education on proper nutrition for new mothers or general nutrition information. In this way, all three themes would be woven into a current mission program. Not all current partnerships lend themselves to this, but where it makes sense, we can seek to do so.

Geographically speaking (Acts 1:8), we would try to have one partnership per area. Example: Costa Rica is partner for Central America. We would focus our efforts there and do our part there, and necessarily refrain from establishing other partnerships in different areas of Central America, despite a possible individual connection to another area. Being focused increases effectiveness and deepens relational partnerships for the entire church.

Currently we have established the following partnerships and ministries:

Local: Athens Urban Ministries(Our Daily Bread), Blood Drives, Bigger Vision Shelter, Interfaith Hospitality Network, International Student Ministry, Mercy Health Center, Mission Latino, Mobile Food Pantry, Project Safe, Sparrow's Nest, UGA Wesley Foundation, Stop Hunger Now, Special Projects (e.g., Souper Suppers, Christmas Meal, Angel Tree, Sack Lunches, etc.)

Regional: Appalachia, Gulf Coast, Epworth/Brunswick

Central America: Costa Rica

Caribbean: Cuba

Europe: Bulgaria

Far East: Philippines

Mexico: Tijuana

So, to fulfill Acts 1:8 we still need to seek and establish new partnerships in the Middle East, Near Asia, North Africa, South Africa, South Pacific, South America. This may take several years. We have the responsibility and priority to Offer Hope to those most unreached, and Give Help to those most in need. We go as servants, not to burden the host culture or perform unsustainable projects, but to be resources at our host's disposal, deployed as guided by the Holy Spirit.

Establishing these international partnerships may take a few years or more, but will enable this church to fulfill Acts 1.8 according to a focused strategy, informed by the 3 themes of improving living conditions, medical care, and training/evangelism. Thus, with our focused efforts we are better stewards of time, energy, money, and congregational involvement. We will know what we're doing, where we're headed and why.

Mission Trips and Funding

Each person going on a mission trip from AFUMC is not only an ambassador of this entire congregation, but also of Christ. As such, some foundational expectations for mission trip participants are:

- Complete the mission trip application;
- Participate in AFUMC worship services regularly;

- Have required number of individual prayer partners for the trip;
- Attend and participate in mission trip team training sessions;
- Pay their portion towards transportation, food and lodging;
- Seek outside funding before applying for any possible scholarship;
- Adhere to mission team covenant and trip leader's leadership.

Specific requirements or expectations for each type of mission project will differ and be established and communicated by the assigned leader to the specific team. Any exceptions would be handled by the trip leader or appropriate pastor.

Each participant on an AFUMC mission trip would be strongly encouraged to participate in our local mission efforts prior to the trip and after the trip has returned. *"The light that shines farthest burns brightest at home."* Local missions are where most of our congregation will be able to get "hands on" with missions.

The goal for participants in mission, be they local, regional, or international, is that they not only give help and offer hope, but that participants also grow as disciples of Christ. Mission experiences are no different than taking a Bible study class; there are expectations and costs for a class and the goal is to grow as a disciple. Mission trips are merely discipleship in transit.

For mission trips that involve airfare, participants will need to pay any required deposits for airfare or travel expenses per the trip deadlines, and such deposits will be non-refundable.

Due to the nature or context of some mission partnerships, there may be certain requirements (age, skill, maturity) to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the individuals and team, as well as the relationships in the host culture.

Mission Finances

Apart from those apportionments that are missional, the mission budget would necessarily increase as needed while we live out God's purpose for AFUMC to *Make Disciples of Christ for the Transformation of the World* by continuing to **Give Help** and **Offer Hope**.

Ideally, fundraisers would be rare and general in nature, not for specific mission partners or projects. This ensures a unified approach to missions and not a silo approach. Generally, since sponsoring missionaries with monthly payments is not an extremely effective means of furthering our stated mission priorities, we will strive to use wiser stewardship which entails investing in the nationals/host culture both financially and personally.

Missions Committee

The missions committee should consist of eight to twelve members, including a chairperson. Each member shall commit to serving at least a two year term, but ideally the members would serve for many years. Each of the members would be expected to attend the meetings regularly, assist in projects as necessary, take an active role in the

decision-making process, pray consistently for God to guide our efforts, and devote much of their energy to furthering the missions of our church.

Summary

Through increased marketing efforts, support from the pulpit, and regular mission updates, the church members will be more informed about the various mission opportunities available. Ideally, with a focused strategy we should be able to increase the percentage of the active church population who participate regularly in the mission opportunities provided by the church.

As the different groups in our church embrace the Mission Strategy, our mission efforts are more focused, less splintered, more unified, and as a result more effective. The Mission Strategy builds on the great things AFUMC is already doing, deepens them, and guides us forward with greater focus and commitment.