

MISSION EXPLOSION

The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts

Guiding Principles

1. Led by the Spirit—Often the question has been asked, “Why there and not here?” In order for a mission to be sustainable, there must be a sense of leading and calling to a particular place and/or work. Just as Paul believed he should go into one region and not another, so there must be a sense of the Holy Spirit leading and guiding before and during a ME involvement.
2. We must be asked—Although we may feel a leading to meet a particular need in the world, confirmation of that leading is an official request by an international partner to address that need in a way or ways most helpful to that organization.
3. TABCOM's involvement--The Region's commitment is made by The Mission and Stewardship Team, approving the ME window (usually two years) and the goal amount.
4. International partners have final say—Consistent with our longstanding ABC missional philosophy, all details of a project are under the direction of the international partner. In addition to listening and respecting the international partner, the role of the region is to fundraise and promote. This respect involves a high level of trust once the partnership is entered into.
5. Funds channeled through Valley Forge—For transparency, accuracy and practicality, funds are channeled through International Ministries and then wired to the international partner.
6. Imperative of an exploratory trip—Although the argument can be made that the cost of an exploratory trip could be better used by donating that sum to the project, there is no substitute to a team of people seeing the need first-hand, getting excited about the opportunities for service and, once home, helping to cast a vision for that mission as a key ingredient in the fundraising and promotional efforts.
7. More than one church involved—Although the “seed” for a ME project may start with one church or even one individual, like an explosion, it needs to spread up and out to involve sister congregations, associations, the region and perhaps beyond. The exploratory team also needs to be comprised of individuals from multiple congregations.

Supporting Churches

What qualifies a church to be a supporting church? In the past, this qualifier has been quite open ended, ranging from financial and prayer support to the dissemination of information. In most cases, supporting churches have made a fairly significant financial donation and also have at least one person on the project's steering committee.

Is Mission Explosion Sustainable?

The average window for a ME project has been a little over two years. When we began this emphasis the thought was that about every two years we would start fresh and new and have the same resources to tackle new projects as we did the previous ones. But we found that the attachment that some churches established with international partners continued. This is both understandable and laudable. It has meant, however, that the pool of resources has dwindled as churches have maintained financial ties to previous projects.

In November of 2009 The Mission and Stewardship Team voted a program to reconnect the region with previous projects. This would allow for the renewing of ties with international partners, the celebration of past accomplishments, and perhaps the opportunity to undertake a modest project to augment the previous one in that country. It would also provide a bit of respite from the frenzied pace of doing a project every two years.

This reconnect program may start as early as Missionworks, September, 2011, and run for three to four years. It is recommended that the region return to ME as the most effective way of putting a face on mission and, as a by-product, experiencing the renewal of our churches.

TABCOM's Responsibility After the ME Window

If a church or cluster of churches decides to continue the relationship with a particular international partner, organizing, fundraising and

promoting are the responsibilities of that church or churches. The Mission and Stewardship Team has and will lend support to such efforts within the resources that TMST has available and without compromising the current signature project.