

**Fitzroy Presbyterian Church
Overseas Personnel
Policy & Guidelines**

The Mission of Fitzroy

1. *'Mission is everything the church does at its interface with the world.'*¹ Fitzroy has a rich and varied mission that includes; its church services, other activities supported directly or indirectly by the church, and activities supported by members of the Fitzroy community in their various involvements.
2. Part of Fitzroy's mission is a desire to engage with the needs of other parts of the world. Currently, this includes; the work of the One World Group, supporting short term trips/programmes for young people, and the support of Overseas Personnel.

Remit and Application of this Policy

3. This policy addresses how Fitzroy supports its Overseas Personnel (OP). Overseas Personnel are those who go to work outside Ireland in a missional context, with the formal accreditation and support of Fitzroy, for a period of two years or more². Such Personnel will have been formally approved by Kirk Session, and regarded as 'sent' by the church, most likely in conjunction with a Mission Agency. Not all members of the Fitzroy family who are living and working overseas, will necessarily be regarded as Overseas Personnel, even although they may be recognised as working in a missional context. Short term service, mission trips, etc are covered by others.
4. The policy will apply to the encouragement, guidance, evaluation, selection and endorsement (or otherwise) of members of the Fitzroy community who express an interest in serving as Overseas Personnel, and will also apply to the ongoing support – prayer, financial, practical, pastoral care and accountability – of those in service.
5. The policy will act as a guideline for the support of those Overseas Personnel who were already in service before the adoption of the policy. While the application of the policy in its entirety to existing Personnel may not be possible or desirable, it will act as a guideline for the development of Fitzroy's support and the expectations on those in service.
6. The policy is adopted and implemented by the Kirk Session, and should be reviewed annually.

Note – Annex C sets out a Three Year Focus for Overseas Personnel, covering the period 2014-2017.

Purpose Statement

7. In general, Fitzroy is keen to play its part in bringing light to the nations, by practically supporting appropriate organisations and activities, by educating the Fitzroy community on

¹ David Bosch

² In exceptional cases, where there is good reason, this may be reduced, but the Policy is designed to serve long term mission personnel, not short term work, or mission trips.

global issues, and by supporting those serving in missional contexts outside Ireland. Part of this means being willing to encourage and facilitate people from within the church community to serve overseas. Fitzroy recognises that this represents a cost to the church, of both finance and people, but understands that the church will be enriched by their experiences and by the partnership their work brings with organisations and churches in other countries.

8. This desire, while genuine, is constrained by the available resources of finances, time, energy and people, and must be balanced against the other activities and commitments of the church.

Mission Support Team (MST)

9. A Mission Support Team (MST) is appointed by the Kirk Session and acts as an advisory group to Session. Ideally, it will have a small number of people (4-6), including at least one Session member, and at least one person with some overseas experience. It has the following responsibilities;

- To implement this policy;
- To lead in educating and encouraging Fitzroy to consider the needs of the church outside Ireland, including by going;
- To discuss likely issues, possibilities and constraints with those who may have an interest in serving overseas, including those who may be in training with a view to serving overseas;
- To receive formal or informal requests from those seeking Fitzroy's support and/or accreditation for overseas work, and to help the enquirer through the steps of discernment, evaluation, selection, and eventually to make a recommendation to Session as to the suitability of the enquirer for formal 'sending';
- To cooperate with mission agencies/colleges/etc, including PCI/BMO , with regard to the application, training and selection of enquirers, and the ongoing care and support of Overseas Personnel;
- To ensure that Fitzroy plays its full part in the spiritual, physical and emotional support of Overseas Personnel, and that Fitzroy is enriched by the experience;

10. The MST will not be directly responsible for fund raising, financing, pastoral care or emergency/crisis management for the Overseas Personnel, but will aim to ensure that such support is in place, and will be in communication with the support groups of each, as appropriate. If Session/Committee desires, MST will advise on the disbursement of funds allocated by Committee.

Educating & Mentoring of Fitzroy Family and Interested People

11. Fitzroy recognises that it has a role in encouraging its members to be engaged in global mission issues, and to consider partnership in mission, including praying, giving, visiting and other practical support. The MST will act as a resource to Fitzroy, in actively collecting, holding and updating information on overseas service opportunities, possibilities, organisations, programmes, etc. Part of this may include developing a mentoring role with potentially interested people.

Discernment, Application, Accreditation & Endorsement Process

12. Fitzroy will implement a clear and open process by which an enquirer might become recognised and supported as Fitzroy Overseas Personnel. Guidelines for this process are set out in Annex A. It is recognised that the process of initial enquiry, discussion and

discernment may take a period of time, and will involve several informal prayerful conversations and discussions between the enquirer and several parties, both on and off the MST, over a period of time. Annex A sets out several issues which will assist this discussion, recognising that there are many reasons why not all enquiries will result in the full endorsement and accreditation of Fitzroy.

13. Once the enquiry process is advanced to the degree that the enquirer wishes to make a formal application for consideration by the MST, the following steps will be followed;

- The enquirer (now a candidate) will inform the MST that he/she wishes to enter the formal application process.
- If informal conversations with the candidate have not taken place, MST will meet with the candidate to discuss their vision, desire, goals, interests, etc.
- MST will inform session of the candidate's desire to be formally considered. Note, it is not necessary that the Minister is involved at this stage.
- MST will interview the candidate. Annex B lists the issues that should be covered in this interview.
- A representative from MST will meet with the proposed Mission Agency: to understand their vision and values; to understand the application and accreditation process and the stage the candidate is at in this process; to clarify expectations on each side; to discuss possible training needs; to discuss possible placement locations; to discuss financial needs, support, other practical needs and logistics. If a Mission Agency is not yet proposed, MST will advise and assist the candidate in selecting one.
- MST will then make a recommendation to Session, taking into account the needs of the candidate, the Mission Agency and the suitability of the candidate and their vision. The recommendation may be:
 - to accept the candidate as Overseas Personnel to be sent and supported by Fitzroy;
 - not to accept the candidate as Overseas Personnel;
 - other recommendations such as delaying the application for a period of time, for example to allow the candidate to develop emotionally or spiritually, to enter a period of study and preparation for overseas service;
- If necessary, Session (or a delegation) will then meet the candidate, and confirm the approval/endorsement, or otherwise.
- Approved candidates will then be presented to the church to encourage prayer and support from the congregation.

14. It is recognised that not everyone who has a desire to serve overseas is suitable for this ministry. Working in a cross-cultural context in another country has particular challenges and requires those who are spiritually mature, suitably gifted and have a proven ministry. It is the role of the MST in cooperation with the Mission Agency to assess the gifts and suitability of

the candidate. It is important for all to recognise the possibility and the wisdom of candidates being advised against overseas service. If, at any point in this process, the MST or Session feels that the candidate has failed to meet the requirements or for other reasons is not suitable or ready, MST will advise the candidate and provide reasons for the decision. Embarking on the evaluation process, even after a period of discussion and discernment, is not a guarantee of a positive decision.

15. Given the needs of the world, and the pool of energy and talent in the Fitzroy family, and the number of ministries available, it is likely that the limited resources available to Fitzroy will constrain how many people can be formally endorsed and supported. It should be recognised that there are many valid means of serving, and many specialised agencies exist to support a wide range of useful activities and ministries. It may not be necessary or appropriate for all those from Fitzroy serving overseas to be formally accredited in this way. Fitzroy will recognise and encourage all those from its family who wish to serve in mission overseas, regardless of whether or not they become recognised Overseas Personnel. See Annex C for the Three Year Interim Focus 2014 – 2017.

Financial Considerations

16. Candidates must supply a realistic annual budget, ideally developed on conjunction with the Mission Agency. MST, in consultation with Session/Committee will determine the level of financial support to be provided.

17. It is not possible for Fitzroy to consider providing for the full financial needs of Overseas Personnel. At best, Fitzroy will commit to providing a part of the candidate's needs from the quarterly Fitzroy Appeal. In some cases, this may be supplemented by additional donations from the General Fund. In other cases, Fitzroy may decide not to support the OP financially. The degree of financial support will depend partly on the needs of the OP, the other sources of support, the other commitments of Fitzroy, and the available resources. Candidates will be encouraged to seek other sources of support, eg from other churches, individual supporters, grants and from earned income. It is increasingly difficult to fully finance mission workers from grants and gifts and innovative and imaginative ways should be sought to provide supplementary income.

18. Candidates may also receive direct financial support from members of the congregation in addition to that from the church. From time to time, Fitzroy may wish to emphasise that member's commitments to the United Appeal and Fitzroy Appeal should be maintained even if they wish to support Personnel directly as well. Candidates (and their Mission Agencies) will be expected to be open to the MST and their other supporters regarding finances – needs and income – particularly when needs change, and particularly when the level of needs reduces.

19. In considering financial support, Fitzroy will consider its historic commitments to existing Overseas Personnel, the United Appeal, other Projects, as well as ongoing commitments such as the Building Fund. It is the responsibility of Session to set the overall priorities for the church which will be reflected in how finances are allocated.

20. It is possible that some accredited Overseas Personnel will not receive financial support from Fitzroy, particularly during the period of fund raising for the Buildings Development.

Engagement with Sending Organisation

21. Fitzroy will not be the main sending organization, but will seek to partner with a recognised, experienced organization, such as a Mission Agency. The partnership with the sending organization is important, and although different organisations operate in different ways, Fitzroy will seek to communicate and cooperate with the sending organization. During the evaluation process, Fitzroy will seek information on the proposed sending organization, recognising that some will be more compatible than others with the vision of Fitzroy. There will be some organisations that Fitzroy is uncomfortable working with, and this will be taken into account in the evaluation of the candidate and their proposals for service.

22. During the evaluation process, Fitzroy will seek information on the Mission Agency, including; its aims, values, policies, missional understanding, faith basis, geographical sphere, type of ministries, selection process, financial requirements, pastoral and practical support, financing, spiritual support, and how it addresses pastoral care on field, accountability, disciplinary processes, leadership, mentoring, children's education, child protection, health care provision, medical insurance, emergency care, conflict resolution, debriefing, pension, national insurance, etc.

Support in Service and Expectations

23. Fitzroy will commit to supporting Overseas Personnel in the following ways;

- Prayer, with needs being notified to the church on a regular basis;
- Pastoral support and encouragement, through letters, parcels, phone calls;
- Visits in country, at appropriate intervals to be determined;
- Practical support with Home Assignments;
- Assistance with debriefing and reflection during Home Assignments and at end of service.

Fitzroy will consider the ministry of the Overseas Personnel to be part of the ministry of Fitzroy, and will seek to be informed of the work, and of the church and Christian communities in the country of service.

24. In return, Fitzroy will expect;

- Regular communication and updates on the life and work of the Overseas Personnel, not only on 'spiritual' or 'ministry' issues;
- Regular information Prayer needs, both spiritual and practical;
- During each Home Assignments, an update to Fitzroy, in the service, or otherwise, as appropriate;
- During Home Assignments, and upon end of service, ongoing input into the life of Fitzroy, including reflection on life and work overseas, and issues facing the global church, ongoing prayer needs, etc.

Home Assignment

25. Fitzroy will expect the sending agency to take the lead in Home Assignment medical and pastoral debriefing. However, it is expected that the MST will meet with the Overseas Personnel on Home Assignment to discuss the term of service and issues arising. Within the

bounds of confidentiality, Fitzroy will expect the Mission Agency to inform MST of any important pastoral issues that have arisen.

26. The MST or PSG will ascertain any needs for Home Assignment – accommodation, transportation, etc – and will publicise these in an attempt to meet them.

Pastoral Support Group (PSG)

27. All Overseas Personnel will be strongly encouraged to establish a Pastoral Support Group (PSG). Ideally this will be a small group of 4-8 people made up of friends and family. The members need not necessarily all be from Fitzroy, but ideally the Fitzroy family will have at least one representative on this group. Other churches may also be represented. The MST need not necessarily be represented on the PSG, but should liaise closely to ensure the MST is aware of important needs and issues.

28. The PSG is an informal group whose purpose is to be involved in pastoral and practical support for the OP, both when overseas, when on home assignment and upon return home. Specifically, the group will meet and pray regularly and be up to date with news, needs and prayer requests of the OP. The PSG should maintain close, regular contact with the OP and provide spiritual encouragement and accountability. The PSG will take the lead in arranging visits, and arranging any needed practical support, eg for home assignment.

29. The PSG should be available from time to time to inform Fitzroy as to the wellbeing, news and needs of the OP, including providing updates in the services.

30. Where current OP do not have a PSG, they shall be strongly encouraged to establish one, as many experienced mission agencies emphasise the importance of such support.

Emergencies and Crisis Care

31. Fitzroy recognises that the church is not set up for management of emergencies or crises overseas. In the event of a physical crisis (eg sudden serious illness or death, violent assault, kidnapping or hostage situations, war, natural disaster) or serious issues of morality, Fitzroy will expect the Mission Agency to take the lead in emergency care including repatriation where necessary. In these cases, Fitzroy will;

- pray and organise prayer;
- stay informed via the Mission Agency;
- only share information sensitively, given possible political or confidentiality restrictions;
- attempt to assist with urgent financial needs (although we expect the Mission Agency to have insurance and contingency for such occasions);
- providing support to family and friends.

32. If the OP is evacuated from crisis situations, Fitzroy will attempt to provide prayer, support and a healing environment, and pastoral care.

If re-deployment is necessary, this will be discussed positively with the Mission Agency and the OP.

Professional Help

33. Fitzroy will attempt to recognise, along with the Mission Agency, when professional input and help is needed, for example in cases of suicide risk, signs of psychosis, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, serious alcohol or substance misuse, self-destructive behaviour, violent tendencies or anger, signs of mental illness, physical health problems, conflict management, etc. In such cases, the OP will be encouraged to seek professional assistance.

Termination of Overseas Personnel Status

34. When OP return home, support and encouragement will be given, and practical assistance with re-entry, where necessary. The drawdown of financial support will be determined in advance with the OP and the Mission Agency, depending on the circumstances. It is normal for the Mission Agency to fund a period of months (perhaps up to 6 months in the case of long term OP service) to allow for adaptation and resettlement, depending on the circumstances. In most circumstances, Fitzroy will cease support of OP after a maximum of 6 months of return.

35. For unexpected termination and repatriation, additional debriefing and pastoral care may be required.

36. In cases where the repatriation and termination of service is required (or recommended) by the Mission Agency, against the wishes of the OP, Fitzroy will expect to be involved in discussions with the Mission Agency, and will seek to provide whatever additional pastoral support is appropriate. If the OP breaks their relationship with the Mission Agency, Fitzroy will re-evaluate the situation, and reserves the right to withdraw its support, depending on the circumstances, taking into account the pastoral needs of the OP.

37. Fitzroy reserves the right to withdraw support (or 'sent' status) from the OP in cases of serious moral failure or other circumstances, even where the Mission Agency disagrees. However, all such cases shall be discussed in depth with the OP and the Mission Agency, and such a decision shall not be taken lightly. Serious discussions regarding withdrawal of support will normally be held during Home Assignment.

Annex A. Guidelines for Selection

Note – these guidelines are provisional recommendations and should be approved by the Kirk Session. Their purpose is to encourage enquirers who are considering service overseas to consider some key issues involved in their planning, to guide those involved in the selection/endorsement processes.

1. Candidates for endorsement must; be mature believers, have been a member of Fitzroy for at least 2 years, have been involved in some aspect of the ministry of Fitzroy for a period of time, have demonstrated a servant attitude and a willingness to serve, and have demonstrated an ability to use of their gifts in service.

2. In general, candidates for work in a cross cultural context (ie overseas) should have a particular skill to offer, an ability to make friends and engage with people, and a flexible, adaptable attitude regarding change of plans. They should also be able to demonstrate a prior interest or involvement in engaging cross-culturally.

3. Candidates should be able to articulate a clear reason for their desire to serve overseas. For married couples, this should be true for both parties.

4. While candidates are encouraged to have a vision for their service (including a part of the world, people group, type of ministry, etc), they should also be open to God's leading into other areas, as may be evident in suggestions from others (Fitzroy, mission agencies, others, etc), recognising that God often has plans other than those we have formulated.

5. Fitzroy will wish to see that candidates have thought realistically about the type of role they may have, recognising that; i) communication, especially of important truths, is best in someone's heart language, ii) it takes time, dedication and perseverance to become fluent in another language, iii) there is a Church in all countries and most cities in the world, iv) that the best people to reach a people are their own people, v) that one major strategic aim of western Christians should be to partner with, build up and equip the church in other countries to carry out its own mission rather than have foreigners do it.

6. In most cases, Fitzroy will not consider endorsing candidates who wish to work outside the structures of a recognised professional Mission Agency, or where there will not be in-country support (pastoral care, accountability structures, emergency and crisis support). Fitzroy will cooperate and partner as appropriate with such an agency, recognising that different agencies work in different ways and have differing expectations of the candidate's home church.

Fitzroy will not take on a role where we are the main agent of pastoral care and accountability, since this role cannot be done from a distance. Fitzroy would expect travel and health insurance, medical and psychological support, emergency support to be place in the country of service, and will be reluctant to support candidates where these are not provided. If necessary, Fitzroy will work with candidates to select an appropriate Mission Agency with which to partner. Fitzroy will take into account the ethos and values of the Agency, and it may be that Fitzroy will not be able to partner with certain agencies.

7. For long term cross-cultural service (more than two years), Fitzroy will strongly advise a period of cross-cultural training, even for mature Christians with a sound understanding of their faith, and may make their support contingent upon this.

8. Candidates endorsed by Fitzroy must accept that they have a role to feedback to Fitzroy, including;

- sharing prayer, practical and financial needs on a regular basis;
- communicating regularly regarding living situation, concerns, ministry, daily needs, etc;
- educating Fitzroy about the church, the needs and the mission context in the country of service;

Annex B. Issues to be discussed in Application/Interview

Candidate

- Spiritual journey of the candidate;
- Biblical understanding of the candidate;
- Missional understanding of the candidate;
- Involvement in the mission of the Church, including in Fitzroy;

Vision of the Candidate

- Vision and aims of the candidate;

- Calling;
- Area and countries of interest;
- Time period

Sending Agency

- Mission Agencies of relevance/interest to the candidate and area/type of service.
- Information on the Mission Agency of interest, including; aims, values, policies, missional understanding, faith basis, geographical sphere, type of ministries, etc
- Selection process of Mission Agency, including financial requirements.
- Involvement of local church
- Pastoral and practical aspects, including; financing, spiritual support, pastoral care on field, accountability, leadership, mentoring, children's education, health care provision, medical insurance, emergency care, pension, national insurance, etc.
- Issues of partnership with local church;

Cross-Cultural or Biblical Training

- Previous training or learning experience;
- Candidate's needs;

Financial and Prayer Needs

- Budget and financial needs, including travel, accommodation, living allowance, children's education; medical cover; home assignment, etc.

Involvement of Fitzroy

- Candidate's understanding of Fitzroy's involvement and commitment;
- Candidate's commitment to Fitzroy (information, prayer needs, practical and financial needs, feedback and education of Fitzroy);

Annex C. Three Year Interim Focus – 2014-2017

Given i) the pastoral and financial needs of current Overseas Personnel, ii) the need to raise finances for development of the Buildings, iii) the decision to support the Fields of Life Project in Uganda, Fitzroy will not actively seek out new candidates for overseas service during the 3 year period 2014 – 2017.

Where candidates come forward and are selected, it is likely that Fitzroy will be able to offer no financial support during this period. This should be made clear at the outset of the enquiry process. However, Fitzroy will still be able to provide non-financial support and guidance to those who are approved.

Any candidates that do come forward will be encouraged to link with the ministry of our existing Overseas Personnel, or with the Fields of Life Project in Uganda, rather than developing ministries in new areas.

During this period, we will continue to focus our financial and pastoral support on our existing Overseas Personnel.