

Missions Scope and Boundaries

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Definitions establish boundaries. Missions committees frequently find themselves dealing with too many ministries of too broad a scope. Further the missions fund becomes the target for every ministry that doesn't fall logically somewhere else. The missions fund may become the "miscellaneous fund." I've heard (this is true!) of churches that have funded their new organ and paved their parking lot with missions funds because they judged these were aids to reaching unchurched people and therefore missions.

In order to clarify what qualifies for missions funding and in order to limit the workload to what is most important and manageable, it is valuable to draw boundaries. Where are the edges? What kinds of ministries, projects, and Christian workers, do not qualify for missions consideration? Our Scriptural basis for missions and our church philosophy of ministry will provide input for our definition.

Following are some questions, which may help, determine what's "in" and what's "out." After answering these questions, it may be possible to write a simple definition of missions for our church. If later on, we want to change it, we may, but in the interim we avoid having missions stretched beyond recognition by the precedent of individual decisions.

For our church, does missions include?

Ministry outside the U.S. only	or	ministries inside the U.S. as well e.g. ministry to ethnic communities in our city
Cross-cultural ministry only	or	same culture ministry as well e.g. ministry to college students, seminaries, retirement
Spiritual ministry only	or	relief, development, & support ministries, as well e.g. emergency disaster relief or missionary aviation
Field ministry only	or	administration and support as well e.g. home office staff, secretaries
Evangelism & church planting only	or	social ministry as well e.g. medical or hospital or education
Social ministry with clear spiritual aims only	or	social ministry on its own as well e.g. Habitat, food pantries, crisis pregnancy center
Missionary support only	or	projects and organizations as well
Missionaries from our church or denomination only	or	other missionaries as well
Vocational ministry only	or	short term and mission trips as well
Work done only by missionaries sent	or	work done by the congregation as well
American missionaries only	or	partnership with national Christians, national churches and national organizations as well
Work done only outside the church	or	work done by our church on our premises as well

Stuff II: *More Stuff* you need to know about *Doing Missions in Your Church*, p. 11