

Chapter A Purpose and Principles of OMF International

(This replaces the "Purpose and Principles of OMF International" 2004)

A-1 The Fellowship

We believe that this Fellowship of Christians from many nations, now known as OMF International, was brought into being by God for His glory, the proclamation of the Gospel and the advancement of His church.

As members of an international and interdenominational mission, we declare our complete dependence on God to direct and enable the work to which He has called us. Ultimately we look to Him alone for the supply of all our needs, spiritual, physical and others.

We believe the following to be God's pattern for us as a Fellowship.

A-2 Our Mission

TO GLORIFY GOD BY THE URGENT
EVANGELIZATION OF
EAST ASIA'S MILLIONS

A-3 Our Vision

Through God's grace we aim to see
an indigenous biblical church movement
in each people group of East Asia,
evangelizing their own people and
reaching out in mission to other peoples

A-4 Our Ministry

Pioneering - Reaching the Unreached

Where the church does not exist we work to see a multiplying church movement established. We do this with other Christians wherever possible. We use whatever methods are both effective and glorifying to God. We persevere in sharing until His church is established. Where there are restrictions or barriers to open mission work we serve through other approaches while our goal continues to be to establish Christ's church there.

Planting Churches

Where the church is small and Christians are few we work to see that place, society or people saturated with the gospel and churches established in every community. We aim to establish churches that are faithful to the Scriptures, are a genuine expression of local culture, are reaching out to their own people and other peoples, and are able to care for themselves while taking their place as part of the world-wide body of Christ. We respect, serve and partner with local churches and Christians where we

work. Where there is already an established pattern of church order and government we do not interfere with it.

Perfecting and Discipling

We contribute to the growth and maturity of the body of Christ through publishing, student work and other ministries of discipling and training. Where the church is weak we seek to strengthen it through teaching and encouragement. Where the church has lost its zeal we seek to see it renewed. As an expression of our wholistic concern to share the whole gospel with the whole person, we engage in ministries to the needy, always relating these ministries to the church.

Mobilizing East Asians

We challenge and assist churches to reach out in evangelism and church-planting to their own people and in cross-cultural mission to other peoples. We see existing churches of East Asians, both in and outside East Asia, as key to the evangelization of the many East Asians who do not know Christ. We work with them internationally to establish churches locally.

Mobilizing for East Asia

We mobilize resources worldwide to advance and sustain the evangelization of East Asia. We present the needs of East Asia to churches and individuals to stimulate prayer, challenge Christians to service, and encourage sacrificial giving. We see prayer as essential to the work. We mobilize and inform a worldwide group of praying supporters.

Networking & Partnering

As an international team of men and women from around the world we value diversity and partnership. We partner with churches in sending countries to mobilize, develop, and support members for effective service. We network and partner with other mission organizations that share our goals.

A-5 Our Beliefs

In the light of our nature as an international, cross-cultural, Christian mission committed to glorify God through the urgent evangelization of East Asia's millions, and for the sake of clarity and integrity in all our work and relationships, we humbly declare the following fundamental truths of the Christian faith and mission:

1. We believe in the one, holy, sovereign, creating and redeeming God, eternally existing in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe in the divine inspiration and entire trustworthiness of the Bible, its infallible teaching and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct; and its normative value for all peoples, at all times, in all cultures.
3. We believe that all people without distinction are made in the image of God, but all are now sinners

and have incurred both God's holy wrath and their own shame and guilt. All are therefore in utter need of redemption.

4. We believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, the incarnate Son of God, uniquely God-man and the only Savior. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, bodily resurrection and ascension. We believe He has achieved the final defeat of Satan and all evil powers.
5. We believe in the justification of sinners by God's grace, through faith in Christ alone.
6. We believe in the Holy Spirit and His convicting, regenerating, sanctifying and reviving work. He guides and empowers individuals and churches in their service to God and all people.
7. We believe in the unity and priesthood of all believers who together form the one, holy, universal, apostolic church.
8. We believe in the visible, personal return of Jesus Christ in power and great glory to judge both the living and the dead. We believe that the Scriptures set out only two destinies for humanity; the joyful prospect of eternal life in the presence of God for those who have received Christ and the agonizing prospect of eternal separation from God for those who have rejected Him.

As an evangelistic mission, in fellowship with local churches in many countries, we are called to be a worshipping, praying and caring fellowship committed to world-wide evangelism. We rejoice in our partnership with local churches on all continents, and pray that God will make us a humble, vigorous, attractive fellowship, bringing the good news especially to those who have never heard of Jesus Christ.

A-6 Our Values

We affirm the following values in the context of our submission to the Lordship of Christ, the authority of Scripture, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We TRUST in God

- Praying as an expression of faith is an integral part of our life and service
- Depending on God for holy living, fruit in our work and for all our needs
- Inviting others to join us in a life of faith and prayer

We are a FELLOWSHIP

- Pursuing our vision and mission together
- Caring for and supporting each other and sharing resources
- Encouraging and enhancing each other's effectiveness

We are Passionate to Reach the UNREACHED

- Keeping a sharp focus on the neglected frontiers
- Constantly evaluating and innovating in line with our vision
- Taking prayerful risks and persevering with the task God has given us

We Practice INCARNATIONAL Ministry

- Identifying with the people and living an appropriate lifestyle
- Learning culture, language and worldview
- Working in ways that encourage indigenous movements

We PARTNER in Ministry

- with sending churches globally
- with local churches in the ministry context
- with likeminded Christians and mission agencies

We LEAD from the MINISTRY Context

- Strategy is developed by those engaged in the ministry
- Structures, administration and policies are designed to serve the ministry
- Home and field work together to accomplish the ministry objectives

We Celebrate DIVERSITY IN UNITY

- Valuing the diversity that God has given us in OMF – such as ethnic, denominational, generational, personality, gifts, gender
- Respecting one another and maintaining our unity in Christ
- Fostering unity and cooperation among Christians

A-7 Name and Character

When it was founded in 1865 by Dr. J. Hudson Taylor the Fellowship was called the China Inland Mission. Following the withdrawal of members from China in 1951, the China Inland Mission Overseas Missionary Fellowship started working in the surrounding countries of East Asia.

In 1964 the Fellowship was reconstituted as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. Then in 1993 it was further renamed OMF International.

OMF International is open to any race or nationality, and its members come from many different denominations and churches. We believe the points on which we differ are less important than those which unite us.

A-8 Leadership and Management

Godly leadership is influencing other people toward God's purposes with a servant spirit.

1. The leadership of the Fellowship under God is the responsibility of the General Director, together with the International Executive Council. The General Director works together with a team of International Directors and regularly consults with all Directors of the Fellowship.
2. The Fellowship is run on the principle of full and free discussion at all appropriate levels, through the establishing of councils and committees to work with Fellowship leaders. Decision-making is based on consensus building and, if possible, unanimity.

Failure to achieve consensus on important matters is regarded as a call to further prayer. Directors are expected both to lead and to be accountable to their councils. Major decisions are normally made together with their councils.

3. International Council, led by the General Director, is the highest Council in the Fellowship, in which members are represented through their appointed leaders. Changes to the Fellowship's fundamental direction, purpose, and principles must be agreed by International Council.
4. The International Executive Council, also led by the General Director, is the major (but not the highest) policy and decision-making Council of the Fellowship.
5. Directors of the Fellowship are those appointed by the General Director or their nominee. They are appointed after consultation with the other Directors of the Fellowship and the members for whom the director will be responsible. Each Director works together with a Council. For International Directors this is the International Executive Council.
6. A new General Director is normally appointed by the retiring General Director after the nomination has been approved by other Directors, Councils, and members of the Fellowship.
7. To provide a local focus and in some countries to comply with legal requirements, national councils or national boards with an independent identity have been established to exercise responsibility for the work in that country.
8. Our identity and unity in OMF International is spiritual and voluntary in nature.

A-9 Member Development

All members of the Fellowship are expected to exercise their role "as unto God," endeavoring to make best use of the resources, gifts and personnel available. As a Fellowship we are committed to the intentional development of all our members. The Fellowship is therefore committed to develop programs to enhance their effectiveness in life and ministry and thus to fulfill God's purpose for them in the urgent evangelization of East Asia's millions.

A-10 Finance

Strategy

The Fellowship exists to glorify God through the urgent evangelization of East Asia's people.

God's faithful provision is our foundational assumption and proven testimony. Our financial policies rest solely on the provision of a loving heavenly Father. They are designed to give members and supporters flexibility and freedom to respond creatively to God-given ministry challenges and demonstrate our confidence in the faithfulness of God.

We pray and trust God for full financial provision for

ourselves and for the Fellowship.

Our objective is full financial support for each member. To this end we encourage all our members to work and pray and trust God for their full support.

We believe that, for the Fellowship to go into debt is inconsistent with our principle of entire dependence on God. As a Fellowship therefore, we will not seek or receive loans nor will we go into debt.

Supply

Individually and corporately, members depend on God for the provision of all financial needs, and these needs are brought to Him in prayer. No member is authorized to make appeals for finance either on their own behalf or on that of the Fellowship. No announcement of specific financial needs is to be made except in response to a genuine inquiry. Funds normally come through the free-will offerings of partners, individuals and/or groups who are moved by the Lord to support the work. We believe that, for the Fellowship, going into debt would be inconsistent with our principle of entire dependence on God.

Support

We are not guaranteed an income. We all look to God for that.

Our principal support comes from the people and churches the Lord brings to join with us in prayer and finance. These are usually people with whom we have a personal relationship, and who the Lord leads to express their partnership in this way.

The primary responsibility for the provision of a member's financial support rests with the sending country. However, we recognize that the Holy Spirit is not constrained and the Lord may provide in many other ways.

Partnership

We gladly accept it as our duty to pray and to let our supporting churches and supporters know our financial needs and those of the Fellowship. We do this in ways which take into account the nature of the relationship and interest level of the supporter to the end of achieving full financial support which includes personal needs and also a proportion of the shared needs of the whole Fellowship.

Partnership with supporting churches, committed groups and individuals is the main way our needs have been met. By regular informed communication we will build a team of committed individuals and groups who will faithfully pray for our personal, work and financial needs and, as God leads, will give in support of our ministry.

To an individual or group who are not regular supporters, we will give full and detailed information in response to genuine financial enquiries. However, we will not make direct appeals for finance either on our own behalf or on that of the Fellowship.

Sharing

We show love and concern by sharing with one another. This is done both voluntarily, on a personal basis and

through the Fellowship at local, national and international levels.

Fields and Homesides have their own policies on sharing to help members who are less than fully supported.

Summary

We recognize that our dependence for the supply of all our needs both individually and as a Fellowship is not on any human organization but upon God alone, who called us and whom we serve.

Although funds might fail, and the Fellowship might cease to exist, if we put our trust in Him, we believe His promises will last. He will never fail nor disappoint us.

A-11 Membership

Applicants for membership are required to satisfy the Directors and Councils concerned as to their soundness in the faith, suitability for service and call to service with the Fellowship.

Candidates and members of councils should be in agreement with the Purpose and Principles. On acceptance as members they are required to read and sign an agreement to this effect.

A-12 Amendment

Amendment to the Purpose and Principles of OMF International shall be by the direction of the General Director with the unanimous approval of the Directors, after Councils and members have been consulted.

A-13 Conclusion

In concluding this Statement of Purpose and Principles, it is well to recall the words of Dr J. Hudson Taylor which were also quoted in the conclusion to the 1984 Statement of Principles and Practice.

"If the members are godly and wise, walking in the spirit of unity and love, they will not lack divine guidance in important matters and at critical times, but should another spirit prevail, no rules could save the Mission nor would it be worth saving. The China Inland Mission must be a living body in fellowship with God or it will be of no further use and cannot continue."