

ENGLISH PRESBYTERY MISSIONS SURVEY 2010

1. Introduction

The purpose of this exercise is to understand the missions practices, activities and policies of the churches surveyed so as to enable the English Presbytery Missions Committee (EPMC) to better support the missions endeavors of these churches by providing them with information and resources. The last English Presbytery Missions Survey was conducted in 2005.

2. Research Methodology

The English Presbytery Missions Survey (EPMS) was initiated and conducted by the EPMC from February to June 2010 using a survey questionnaire consisting of 7 questions on topics like the churches' understanding of missions, the career missionary sending capacity of each church, partnership with mission organizations, short-term missions trips, mission projects, financial support for missions/missionaries, mission policies and whether the EPMC has met the churches' expectations¹.

The survey questionnaires were distributed to the 9 EPMC members to be given personally or via email to the missions chairpersons of their own and link churches. A total of 21 churches were involved, 17 EP churches and 4 CP churches with English Services. All the 21 churches responded and the data from their responses were collated and analyzed. It should be noted that findings of this survey is limited to the data collected from the questionnaires given.

3. Key Findings

3.1 Understanding of Missions

In this section, respondents were asked to indicate whether their churches classify missions as solely overseas cross-cultural missions separate from local evangelism or both. Table 1 indicates that the majority of the churches (66.7%) understanding of missions as consisting only of overseas cross-cultural involvement as *distinct* from evangelism or local outreach. "Local evangelism" or "outreach" ministries include local community services, reaching out to internationals (students and migrant workers) and

¹ The 9 questions are (1) Is your church missions overseas and cross-cultural, or does it include local evangelism and outreach as well? (2) Did your church send out missionaries? With whom – is it solely a church initiative or with other mission organizations? Which country/people group? What is the nature of the work (church planting, youth work, community development, livestock, business, English language teaching, community health, others – please specify)? (3) How often does your church send out short-term mission teams? With whom and what is the average duration of the short-trips? Which country/people group? What is the nature of the work? (4) What other mission projects is your church currently involved in? (5) How does your church provide financial support for missions (missionaries and short-term trips)? From church budget/pledges by members/special offerings? (6) Does your church have a mission policy? How often has the policy been reviewed? (7) The 3 objectives of the EPMC are to *Educate*, *Encourage* and *Empower* the churches in missions through the various consultations and mission festivals. How far do you think these objectives have been met? Mostly met/Partially met/Not met? Please give reasons and share how the EPMC can improve to serve the EP churches better.

social/community engagement. However, nearly a third of the churches (28.6%) define missions to include both overseas and local outreach. One respondent opined that missions can mean local evangelism and evangelism can also apply to missions. Another noted that cross-cultural missions should embrace the internationals in Singapore, aka “missions at our doorstep”. Only one church has not started an overseas missions committee as its present focus is on local outreach to teenagers and youth.

Table 1: Understanding of Missions

	No of churches	Percentage (%)
Only Overseas (Cross-cultural) Trips	14	66.7
Both Overseas (Cross-cultural) and Local Outreach/Evangelism	6	28.6
Only Local Outreach/Evangelism	1	4.7
Total	21	100

3.2 Missionaries

3.2.1 Career Missionaries

A good 85.7% of the churches surveyed have been sending missionaries. There are approximately 40 career missionaries from the various churches who have been serving both overseas and locally (Table 2). A career missionary is defined as someone who has been commissioned to a full-time ministry (in or outside Singapore) by the church either directly or in partnership with a mission agency. There are also many more “associate” or “adopted” missionaries not listed here. The term refers to non-church members serving with mission agencies and receiving support from the sponsoring churches.

Table 2: Did your Church send out Missionaries?

	Number of churches	Percentage (%)	Estimated number of missionaries sent
Yes	18	85.7	40
No	3	14.3	-
Total	21	100	40

3.2.2 Church-Mission Agency Role

All the churches surveyed which have been sending missionaries are partnering with mission agencies e.g. YWAM, SYFC, Wycliffe, OC, OM, OMF, SIM, MSI, Pioneer, CCCS, etc. It appears that these mission agencies provide a much needed support in training, orientation and placement of missionaries.

3.3 Short-term Mission Trips

3.3.1 Short-term Mission Teams

All the churches surveyed except one (95.2%) sent out short-term mission teams. Most of these sent out between 1-5 short-term mission teams annually, although there is one

church which sent out 9 teams in one year. The average duration of the short-term mission trips is between 7-9 days. The total number of teams sent out was 68 (Table 3).

Table 3: How many Short-term Teams were sent out annually?

	Number of churches	Percentage (%)	Total number of teams sent
Yes	20	95.2	68
None	1	4.8	-
Total	21	100	68

3.3.2 Countries favored by Short-term Mission Teams

The countries most favored by Short-term mission teams are all in East Asia and South East Asia. Table 4 lists the top 7 countries/regions which Singapore short-term trippers favor. These top 7 countries and regions accounted for almost 80% of all the responses in this survey. The remaining 20% went to 8 different countries and regions of greater diversity including Nepal, Taiwan, East Timor, Swansea (Wales), India, Sri Lanka, Laos and Australia.

Table 4: Top 7 Countries favored by Short-term Missions Teams

Country/Region	Number of Responses
Thailand	12
Cambodia	10
East Asia	9
Myanmar	8
Philippines	6
Indonesia	5
Malaysia	4

3.4 Local and overseas projects

This section examines the churches’ understanding of missions in relation to certain activities/projects. Respondents were asked to indicate which activities/projects (local and overseas) their churches were involved in which could be categorized under missions. This section is also a consolidation of the previous two questions on the “nature of the work” in which the churches’ missionaries and short-term teams are involved in. In Table 5, the majority of churches consider church planting as the primary aim in missions. This is followed closely by community development which is seen as a platform for church planting especially in Creative Access Nations (CAN). Youth and children’s activities and teaching English are also important mission activities. As these activities are not mutually exclusive, most churches have a combination of them. There are four churches which cited local outreach projects as part of missions.

Table 5: List of Local and Overseas Missions Activities/Projects

Activities/Projects (*local)	Number of Responses
Church planting including evangelism/Bible teaching/equipping of local Christians	22
Community development including healthcare, livelihood projects, business, prison ministry etc	16
Youth and children’s activities/orphanage work	13
Teaching English/computer classes	7
Child/Student care centers/Presbyterian Community Services/Boys’ Brigade/Girls’ Brigade*	4

3.5 Financial support for missions

Only one church did not presently have financial support for missions (missionaries and short-term mission trips). Of the other 20 churches, the most common source of funds for missions is through a special budget allocation for missions purposes, followed closely by special offerings (including pledges and fund raising projects) (Table 6). For most churches, the “missions fund” comes from both the church budget allocation and special offerings. Three respondents indicated that the church will draw from its general fund when the “missions fund” proves to be insufficient.

Table 6: How does your Church provide financial support for Missions?

Methods	Number of Responses
Church budget allocation	18
Allocation from General Fund	3
Special offerings for missions	15

3.6 Missions policy

An analysis was done to determine how many churches have a formal written missions policy. The vast majority of the churches surveyed (90.5%) (Table 7) have formal missions policies of which slightly over half (52.6%) (Table 8) have undergone review and/or revision during the last 5 years (this figure stretches to 73.7% if a review and/or revision has taken place within the last 10 years). About a quarter of the churches (26.3%) did not have any fixed period for review. Of the latter, one respondent said a review will take place when “special needs” arise. Another did not see the need for review as the church has “an unspoken” mission policy.

Table 7: Does your Church have a Mission Policy?

	No of churches	Percentage
Have mission policies	19	90.5
Do not have mission policies	2	9.5
Total	21	100

Table 8: How often has the policy been reviewed?

	No of churches	Percentage (%)
1-5years	10	52.6
5years or more	4	21.1
No fixed period	5	26.3
Total	19	100

3.7 Objectives of EPMC

In this final question, the respondents were asked whether the EPMC's objectives to *Educate, Encourage* and *Empower* the EP Churches through its Missions Consultations and Festivals were met. The respondents were also asked to suggest ways in which the EPMC could serve them better. All the churches affirmed that the EPMC's objectives were either met or partially met. Respondents noted that the Missions Consultations and Festivals were "sincere attempts" which taught them "some skills and knowledge" and brought about an "increased awareness and better understanding of missions." Table 9 shows the detailed breakdown of suggestions in which the EPMC can serve the churches better and the number of responses after each suggestion. Of those who gave concrete suggestions, a majority perceive that it is important that the EPMC is able to go down and interact at the local church level, identify needs and follow-up with the churches missions committees.

Table 9: In what ways can EPMC be improved to serve you better?

Suggestions	Number of Responses
Consolidate, follow-up, update and co-ordinate missions efforts by going down and working with a church's mission committee or a group of (cluster) churches	6
Signature events to rally churches to joint participation e.g. mission trips and projects	1
EPMC website be kept current with materials and information	1
Missions Retreat (2-3 days) for individuals to cast vision, pray and seek God's direction	1
EPMC can serve as a central clearing house for information on missions training and events, and for missions related resources e.g. speakers	1

4. Summary of Key Findings

We are very grateful and indebted to all the missions chairpersons for their help in completing this survey from which several highlights emerged:

First, the majority of churches understanding of missions (overseas and cross cultural) are quite distinct from their understanding of evangelism (local outreach). All the churches except one have both overseas missions and local evangelistic programs. There is some ambiguity regarding whether certain activities, for example, reaching out to internationals such as migrant workers and foreign students, should be categorized under missions or evangelism.

Second, while a healthy 85.7% of the churches have sent out career missionaries (both local and overseas), there are 3 churches which have never sent out any career missionaries. Of the missionary sending churches, all chose to work with mission agencies which assist in the missionary's training and orientation, while the churches provide the pastoral and financial support. This is in contrast to some independent and larger churches which provide all the training and orientation for their missionaries. All the churches except for one have an on-going short-term mission program for its members. The majority of the missionaries and short-term mission teams serve in East and South East Asia, and are involved in church planting, community development work, youth and children's activities. This model of caring for both the spiritual and physical needs of people is a holistic way to do missions and is especially relevant when missionaries are no longer welcomed in most parts of Asia.

Third, 90.5% of the churches have formal, written missions policies and all the churches except one have missions funds that come predominantly from church allocated budgets and special offerings. These indicate accountability in terms of structural and financial support in sending out missionaries and short-term mission teams.

Last, it is heartening to know that all the respondents appreciate what the EPMC is doing in strengthening the cause of missions among EP churches. Overall, the state of missions in the churches surveyed is healthy. Nevertheless, this survey also identified needs which the EPMC did not anticipate (e.g. the desire for more follow-up and interaction with missions committees at the local church level), and will help set the agenda for future planning.

English Presbytery Missions Committee
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