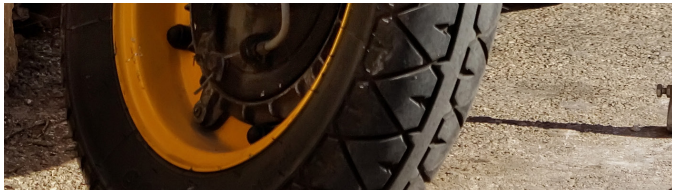




Is God Calling You?

OUR COMMENDATION PROCESS



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Welcome

Global Connections in Mission (GCiM) has been championing cross-cultural mission for over 125 years. We exist to inspire and assist churches and individuals in God's mission of reaching the world with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

God calls men and women to serve Him. We are called to serve God in our families, our local church, in our workplace, and in our communities, and God calls us to serve cross-culturally. The Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) calls us to make disciples of the nations, and in the book of Acts, we see the church going to all the world to be witnesses of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8).

Global Connections serve the Christian Brethren Churches in New Zealand. We partner with local churches to send out individuals, couples and families to do cross-cultural ministry. We believe that God is still calling men and women to proclaim the Good News to all the nations. For some this means travelling overseas to every corner of the world to take the Gospel to those that need to hear. For some this means taking the Good News to those from every part of the world that have come to New Zealand. Regardless of where you are – the mission is the same – we are to share the love of God and the proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

This booklet is designed as a guide to help you understand our commendation process. Commendation is the way that we work with our churches and our partners to identify God's call on their lives and to commend them to the work that God has called them to. We following the New Testament example, where local churches identified God's call of God on people's lives and commend them to God's work.

Please have a good read of this booklet. If you have any questions, we would love to talk more.

In God's Service,

Michael Hanson
Executive Director

michael@gc3.org.nz

+64 27 522 4001

The Concept of Commendation — A Biblical Overview

COMMENDATION IS A BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE best understood by studying the passages that show how this practice was established and what it looked like in action back then. Some examples of commendation are:

- The men who travelled to Antioch with Saul and Barnabas took a letter from the elders and apostles in Jerusalem to establish their genuineness (Acts 15:22-31)
- Even though he was known there, Timothy was commended to those in Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:10-11).
- Two unnamed men accompanying Titus were recommended to Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:16-24).
- In-field co-workers receive the mission partner with confidence.
- Paul commended the runaway slave Onesimus to his master Philemon (Philemon).
- John spoke well of Demetrius to Gaius (3 John 12).

To follow this New Testament pattern it's important to observe God's initiative in the heart of the individual. To begin with there was...

THE CALL

"I have called them" (Acts 13:2). There is no clear indication at this stage that either Barnabas or Saul were aware of the call. They may have been, but God had marked them out. Then for the church at Antioch, there was ...

THE IDENTIFICATION

"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 13:2). The Lord, through the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of the prophets and teachers at Antioch, clearly identified Barnabas and Saul as his chosen instruments. Having established this, there was ...

THE COMMISSIONING

"... sent on their way by the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:3). The workers left, being purposefully 'sent' to the task God had for them to do.

These three elements are essential for anyone wanting to serve God in a specific work whether at home or overseas.

Then there was the part for the church to play and the picture we see is of a church sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

“They fasted and prayed”

The church through its leadership was fully involved in the process too, as they confirmed God’s call on those being sent.

“They placed their hands on them”

This was a physical way of showing they understood the invisible power of the Holy Spirit and was a deliberate commissioning. It is clear from Acts 13:2-3 that the whole church was involved in supporting Paul and Barnabas as they set out on their mission. The church showed a bond of fellowship, interest and prayer that would have been continuous, as it should be today.

“They let them go”

That is what the original text expresses rather than *“They sent them away”* or *“They sent them off”*. Acts 13:4 makes it clear that it was the Holy Spirit who sent them so the concept of letting them go is an important one. Very often it will be someone who will be sorely missed in their home church that God calls to go.

The church showed a bond of fellowship, interest and prayer that would have been continuous, as it should be today.



What does Commendation mean in today's world?

IN PRACTICAL TERMS, we see commendation as something more than a character reference. It is a solemn commitment by a church when one of its members is called to a specific work of the Lord. This is in response to a clear indication of the Holy Spirit's leading and the preparation of that person for service in that ministry.

A CONTINUING COMMITMENT

Commendation includes a continuing commitment from the commending church. It is a commitment to communicate with and pray for this person and to meet their practical and financial needs.

AN INFORMED COMMITMENT

In order to complete a thorough commendation, representatives of a sending church and their mission partner need to have a strong and open relationship. Hard questions must be asked and honest answers must be given. It is especially important for questions to go both ways. It's a partnership and you are likely to be in it together for the long haul! The commendation checklist outlines the areas to be covered and includes ideas and suggestions for conversation starters. Any decision for commendation must be made only after taking all these kind of factors into consideration.

A RESPONSIBLE COMMITMENT

Sometimes it may be necessary to ask the prospective mission partner to defer plans while issues are clarified. Or a delay may be required while the Lord's will is made clearer in the hearts of elders in the commending church. In any event, these decisions are never easy to make. On one hand, care must be taken to avoid quenching the Spirit's activity in leading the person. But on the other hand, real courage and sensitivity is needed to challenge that call if the suitability of the person is in any way in doubt. Without clarity and certainty that there are no concerns, someone can end up being a hindrance rather than a help to the work they feel called to and the people they will be working with.

Partnership in Commendation

A NEW MISSION PARTNER normally gains commendation from their home church which then takes on responsibility for their care and support. This church is referred to as their 'commending church'. GC3 also encourages a new mission partner and their commending church to develop and widen relationships with other churches that are known to them. This can be done in a number of ways.

JOINT COMMENDATION

If the commending church is not able on its own to carry the major responsibility, it may look for another church that knows the mission partner to accept a joint responsibility. The proportion of responsibility each local church accepts needs to be negotiated between the respective church leaders.

COMMENDATION SUPPORT

In some cases a local church, recognising the level of partnership involved, may not be in a position either to commend or to enter a joint commendation arrangement. However there may be individual members of the church who have an interest in the mission partner and they may make a commitment to pray for and support this mission partner and their work. In this case the church may advise the commending church and GC3 that they wish to support the commendation. A 'supporting church' would expect such mission partners to tell their stories and would circulate their reports or newsletters in their church.



Note:

An increasing number of New Zealand churches are linking with local churches overseas to support them or members of their community prayerfully and financially, recognising that indigenous workers are culturally effective communicators of the Gospel from the outset. The financial requirements to sustain them and their ministries are generally much less than for an expatriate mission partner. This situation does not involve a commendation but none-the-less it should be subject to rigorous scoping through partnership with the leadership of the overseas church. Cultural insensitivities can be avoided and ministry outcomes maximised as a consequence. Many of our commendation checklist topics are also relevant in this context to help frame the conversations around these partnerships.

Writing a Letter of Commendation

IN A NUTSHELL, THE OUTCOMES OF COMMENDATION ARE:

- The church mandates the mission partner to their unique ministry.
 - People support the mission partner prayerfully and financially.
 - In-field co-workers receive the mission partner with confidence.
 - The receiving church is introduced to the mission.
- While we require a copy of the letter here at GC3, it is important to remember that the commendation is from your church to the church or organisation your partner will be working with. The letter should be a clear endorsement of your mission partner, their bona fides in the role and their spiritual maturity.



BELOW ARE SOME STATEMENTS that you might like to choose from to construct the relevant, personalised Letter of Commendation for your mission partner.

The elders of (your church) with the support of the church, have the privilege of commending (your mission partner/s) to partner with (mission organisation) in the role of (role description).

The elders of (your church) are pleased to formally commend (your mission partner/s) to the work of God in (area/country)

We advise that the elders of (your church) are delighted to confirm that (your mission partner) has our full commendation for the work they are doing as (role) for (organisation) based in (country)

(Your mission partner/s) are returning to (area/country) to take up a position at (organisation). They are commended by (other church) but we are endorsing that commendation and, in doing so, we are committing this church fellowship to prayer and pastoral support for (your mission partner) and financial support as we are able.

This commendation is to be reviewed at the end of (number) years.

We assure (your mission partner/s) of our prayer support and encouragement as he/she/they fulfil and grow in his/her/their roles with (organisation)

You may rest assured that, in commending (your mission partner/s) to this work, we and the church are fully conscious of our responsibilities towards him/her/them.

NOTE: The Letter of Commendation should be signed by at least two church leaders of the sending church. A new Letter of Commendation will be required if the ministry engagement changes.

Writing an Accompanying Letter

THIS LETTER should be addressed to the Operations Director at GC3 and state that all the topics in this checklist have been covered to the satisfaction of the elders of the sending church. This is the letter that gives your mission partner access to GC3 services.

Executive Director
Global Connections in Mission
PO Box 744
PALMERSTON NORTH 4440
michael@gc3.org.nz

Dear Michael,

We wish to advise you of the commendation of (mission partner) _____ and confirm that they will be living / working overseas in this ministry role.

or

We wish to advise you of the commendation of (mission partner) _____ and confirm that they will be based in New Zealand and not receiving income from this ministry role.

A letter of commendation is attached.

In supplying this commendation we wish to confirm that all points in the checklist you have supplied, relevant to this case, have been fully considered with the best information and advice available and have been cleared to our satisfaction.

Yours etc.

How do I get listed in the Daily Prayer Guide?

To be considered, you need to be commended by your local church and be committed to working in cross cultural missions.

I want to live / work in another country

learn it's culture and engage with the local people and community.

I intend to spend at least two years engaged in this mission work.

I will not be receiving income from this ministry/mission work. Any unrelated paid work will not extend beyond 20 hours/week.

OR

I will use business as mission or paid employment to gain entry into the country I will be working in. (this requires discussion with GC3).

I want to work in NZ

with people who are not NZ citizens and not permanent residents.

OR

work for a mission agency / organisation whose chief focus is to engage with this group of people.

I intend to work a minimum of 20 hours per week in this role for at least two years.

I will not be receiving income from this role. Any unrelated paid work will not extend beyond 20 hours per week.

I want to live in NZ

but spend time overseas each year engaging in mission work.

My intention is to spend 50% or more, of my working year involved in this mission work and I intend doing this for at least two years.

I will not be receiving income from this role.

OR

I will use business as mission or paid employment to gain entry into the country I will be working in. (this requires discussion with GC3).

Here at GC3 we partner with many people just like you! We would love to hear from you and your supporting church and see how we might be able to work together in mission. **Please contact Michael Hanson, michael@gc3.org.nz.**

Don't be discouraged if you don't meet all the above criteria. We would still love to hear from you and work through your circumstances. It's possible we may still be able to list you, or provide you with other support services.

CHECKLIST

THIS CHECKLIST is designed in a way to record that each topic has been discussed to the satisfaction of both the representatives of the sending church and the candidate(s) for cross-cultural mission by formally addressing the question, "Should this commendation proceed?"



Within each main section there are further sub-headings for you to discuss with some suggested conversation starters to assist you. But don't be limited to these. Naturally, every situation will be unique. Some candidates will be newbies, others will have had cross-cultural experience and exposure; some will be single, others may be married with families; some will be working with an institution with some infrastructure, others will be in a remote isolated situation; some will work closely with expatriate colleagues, others will 'on their own'. Discussion questions will therefore need to be tailored specifically for each unique situation.

Commendation has many parts to it and carries a degree of responsibility. We therefore urge you to take these conversations seriously, particularly to provide adequate care and counsel to your mission partner candidate.

We will gladly provide support to you in your process of commendation and we urge you to dialogue with us.

In the first instance email Michael Hanson, michael@gc3.org.nz, or phone him on 027 522 4001.

We suggest a copy of this checklist is circulated to all those participating in the discussion ahead of time (including the candidate) so that there are no surprises and everyone has time to formulate pertinent questions around all the key areas.

THE ESSENTIALS

When completed, please scan this page and send it to Michael Hanson,
michael@gc3.org.nz

FULL NAME OF CANDIDATE(S):

Name: _____

NZ postal address: _____

_____ Postcode _____

Landline: _____

Cell: _____

Email address: _____

NAME OF CHURCH:

Name: _____

NZ postal address: _____

_____ Postcode _____

Landline: _____

Cell: _____

Email address: _____

CHURCH LIAISON:

Name: _____

Position: Elder / Pastor / Missions Coordinator

Landline: _____

Cell: _____

Email address: _____

PERSONAL

WE ENCOURAGE YOU to explore the personal circumstances of the candidate and document the key points of discussion in the areas of:

EMPLOYMENT

- Attitude to work
- Punctuality
- Relationship with work colleagues

RELATIONSHIPS

- Spouse/fiancé
- Family
- Opposite gender
- LGBT
- Christian family
- Social media

HEALTH

- Fitness
- Known medical conditions
- Current medications
- History of filial mental health issues
- Full medical check-up before departure

FAMILY

- Dependency of parents or children
- The 'blessing' of parents or children

PROPERTY

- Retention of the family home
- Management of tenancies, maintenance, etc.
- Adequacy of rentals to cover all outgoings, including mortgage commitments

SOME EXAMPLES OF CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Talk through a recent difficult work situation and how you resolved it.
- Is there any situation you are escaping from? (eg, debt, a failed relationship)
- What is the attitude of your parents / family towards your going?

SOME QUESTIONS ELDERS NEED SATISFACTORY ANSWERS TO

- What grounds do you have for thinking the candidate will make a useful contribution in cross-cultural mission?
- How does the candidate display maturity and stability in their relationships?
- Is the candidate's use of social media healthy and will it restrict the ability of the candidate to 'leave' NZ?
- Has a police check been organised?
(The approach to a police clearance of the candidate should be the same as for anyone working in your church – essential!)

On the basis of this discussion are you satisfied that a commendation should proceed?

For the sending church:

Yes (initial)

No (explain)

Candidate:

Yes (initial)

No (explain)

SPIRITUAL

WE ENCOURAGE YOU to explore the spiritual maturity of the candidate and document the key points of discussion in the areas of

KEY EVENTS

- Certainty of salvation
- Date of baptism
- Call of God to mission

EVIDENCE

- Love for God
- Desire to worship
- Regularity to fellowship
- Aptitude to evangelise
- Application of the Bible to life and living
- Biblical understanding
- Ability to teach the Bible accurately
- Extent of service and involvement in local ministries
- The 'hole' the candidate will create at your church upon leaving

SOME EXAMPLES OF CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Tell us about your call to mission.... How did that come about? (Separately for husband and wife)
- How would you describe your relationship with God?
- What's your favourite Bible verse and why?

SOME QUESTIONS ELDERS NEED SATISFACTORY ANSWERS TO

- Are there any detracting emphases or unbalanced opinions that others should be aware of?
- What do you consider is the candidate's motivation for cross-cultural service?

On the basis of this discussion are you satisfied that a commendation should proceed?

For the sending church:

Yes (initial)

No (explain)

Candidate:

Yes (initial)

No (explain)

FIELD MINISTRY

WE ENCOURAGE YOU to explore the field 'welcome' along with the expected ministry role and document the key points of discussion in the areas of

PREPARATION

- Communication with receiving church/ministry
- Invitation from receiving church/ministry
- Spiritual/theological training
- Cultural training
- Practical training
- Mission agency/GC3 involvement

SUITABILITY

- Practical skills offered
- Spiritual gifting
- Cultural Awareness
- 'Fit' for position
- Security/risk adversity profile

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Field support and direction
- Partnership agreement with mission agency (where an agency is involved)
- Your reporting expectations

SOME EXAMPLES OF CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Explain to us what you expect to be doing, what a typical day might look like.
- What level of engagement do you expect to have with the local church?
- Who will you talk with if the actual role is not what you expected?
- Who will you be ultimately responsible to?

SOME QUESTIONS ELDERS NEED SATISFACTORY ANSWERS TO

- What preparation has the candidate had for cross-cultural ministry? (If none, what needs to be done?)
- What evidence is there to indicate the candidate has a servant heart who will work well as part of a local team with cultural sensitivity and the ability to cope well with change?
- Will the candidate's use of social media impede the formation of robust relationships with co-workers?

On the basis of this discussion are you satisfied that a commendation should proceed?

For the sending church:

Yes (initial)

No (explain)

Candidate:

Yes (initial)

No (explain)

SUPPORT

WE ENCOURAGE YOU to explore the adequacy of support for the candidate and document the key points of discussion in the areas of:

CARE

- Culture shock
- Marriage / family life
- Pastoral issues
- Crises management
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Medical / travel insurance
- Isolation / disagreements / incompatibility / burnout
- Events triggering forced repatriation
- Frequency of visits by a 'care person' / furloughs

FINANCE

- Budget for:
 - General cost of living
 - Ministries
 - Transport
 - Medical
 - Schooling
 - In-country holidays
 - Furlough
- Adequacy of overall support/your church contribution
- Retirement/NZ Superannuation
- A co-commending church/other support network

SOME EXAMPLES OF CONVERSATION STARTERS

- How do you think you and your family would cope if you were robbed or hijacked?
- On a scale of 1 (never) to 10 (every time), where would you say you sat in seeking help for difficulties in your life? Who would you turn to? Who do you trust?
- Do you know how to recognise you're suffering from culture shock?
- How have you arrived at the costs you will incur in-country?

SOME QUESTIONS ELDERS NEED SATISFACTORY ANSWERS TO

- Are you satisfied with the level of support you can provide the candidate? (Remember we are here to help you)
- Who is the best person in your church to liaise with the candidate knowing that a strong relationship with mutual trust is required?

On the basis of this discussion are you satisfied that a commendation should proceed?

For the sending church:

Yes (initial)

No (explain)

Candidate:

Yes (initial)

No (explain)

OTHER GC3 PUBLICATIONS YOU MAY FIND USEFUL

RETURNING TO NZ PERMANENTLY?

A GUIDE FOR CHURCHES AND MISSION PARTNERS

This guide encourages churches and mission partners to consider all the arrangements that need to be made when a mission partner returns permanently from their service for God overseas.

RETURNING FOR A HOME VISIT?

A GUIDE FOR CHURCHES AND MISSION PARTNERS

This guide contains suggestions for a successful home visit and ways for your mission partner to reflect on their experience and ensure they have a fresh or continuing call for a new term of service.

HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR MISSION PARTNERS

RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK ACT 2015

This publication explores what the Health and Safety at Work Act means for mission partners and churches and provides practical ways for church leadership meet its obligations.



IT IS IMPORTANT THAT A CHURCH FOLLOW A ROBUST PROCESS

when commending their people. This guide outlines the biblical basis of commendation and considers how commendation might work. The second half of this guide is a checklist containing topics for discussion between the sending church and the candidate. It lists topics, conversation starters and appropriate questions to be covered when exploring candidate's suitability for mission work.