

# THE USPG MISSION COMPANION PROGRAMME – *PROCESS*

*Vocational discernment, selection, appointment  
and training of mission companions*

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The aim of this leaflet is to provide information about the vocational discernment and selection process for mission companions – long-term mission personnel from Britain and Ireland supported by USPG.

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**M** | **SSION**

companion programme

*Supporting people, linking churches,  
transforming lives*



USPG

Anglicans in  
World Mission

## The nature of the work of mission companions

- ▶ Mission companions are invited and employed by church partners to support them in God's mission in their local contexts.
- ▶ Appointments are usually for two or three years in the first instance.
- ▶ USPG's role is to assist with recruitment and to enable the movement of personnel in mission to take place as part of our partnership arrangements. At the heart of our work, we wish all our dealings with partners to be:
  - *Strategic* – utilising resources to support activities that really matter in their context.
  - *Transformational* – supporting programmes that lead to greater self-sufficiency.
  - *Relational* – working together to strengthen the bonds of love and fellowship between us and throughout the church worldwide.
- ▶ Following an International Consultation in 2005 between USPG and its overseas partners three themes were agreed that define the focus of work that USPG will be able to support. The three themes agreed for 2007, 2008, 2009 are:
  - Leadership Formation, including Theological Education
  - Health, Education and Development
  - Justice and Reconciliation
- ▶ We expect the work of mission companions to fall within the three themes.

## Stage I – Initial Exploration

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**a)** When we receive an enquiry from you about being a mission companion we send you an information pack. If you then return the completed application form, the process may begin with an initial conversation with the Mission Personnel Programmes Officer followed by a preliminary interview in your own home. The USPG Regional Coordinator in your local area normally does this informal interview.

**b)** When the preliminary interview report is ready, and we have received references, the Mission Personnel Programmes Officer will discuss the application with colleagues in USPG's International Relations Team to explore whether there may be possibilities for a job for you with any of our partner churches.

It is important to note that USPG is not the employer, and there are no guarantees that we will be able to find a post for you. It depends mainly on the specific needs and requirements of our partner churches. USPG's role is to assist with recruitment and to enable this movement in mission to take place where possible.

**c)** Mission companion appointments are only founded on requests received from

overseas church partners. The details are set out in a Request for Mission Personnel Form. If we have a request on file that appears to match your gifts and profile we shall consider this with you. If, on the other hand, there is no request or notice to USPG of an immediate vacancy at this stage of the process you will be advised accordingly. USPG will keep your details on file and contact you when a suitable appointment arises.

**d)** When details of an appointment matching your details are available you will be invited to an informal meeting with staff to consider the position. The informal meeting offers the chance for all parties to ask questions and seek clarification about the job, the process, fundraising matters, and other related information. You will be asked to confirm afterwards if you are interested in the post and wish to continue the exploration with USPG.

**e)** If there is a suitable appointment available then you will be invited to the next stage: a two-day residential selection event. These residential selections take place three times a year. A full medical examination will also be arranged with our medical agency at this point.

## Stage II – Residential Selection Panel

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**f)** During the two-day residential selection you will have three separate interviews with members of staff, one of whom will normally be the USPG Regional Desk Officer responsible for the region of the prospective appointment. You will be interviewed about your professional skills and experience, hobbies and interests, life and faith journey and any other related matters.

**g)** You will also meet with the mission companion fundraising group to discuss fundraising strategies towards the cost of the appointment.

**h)** The residential selection programme will also involve sessions with a clinical psychologist who will ask you to undertake

a number of tests that will help assess your suitability for working abroad.

**i)** A member of the Archbishop's Board of Examiners (ABE – *see inside back cover*) will take part in the interviews and chair the residential selection panel. At the end of the two-day residential a selection panel will meet and you will be informed of the outcome on the same day.

**j)** If the selection panel commends you to continue to the next stage, the decision will be conditional upon fundraising targets being reached and training objectives being met satisfactorily, as well as the formal approval of the partner church.

## Stage III – Fundraising Period

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**k)** After the residential selection, the candidate and the USPG fundraising team will concentrate on setting up and implementing a fundraising plan. The first target will be to reach 30 per cent of the total cost before dates for training and formation are decided.

A date will be arranged for a fundraising review meeting. The appropriate time for most candidates to give notice to employers would be when the targets are reached and the training dates agreed.

## Stage IV – Formation and Preparation Period

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**l)** Formation and preparation for mission companions is usually provided at the Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies (SOCMS), in Birmingham. Additional training may also take place within the region of the appointment.

SOCMS is based within the Queen's Foundation. It is jointly run with the Methodist Church and it is USPG's mission training resource. Mission companions in training will live alongside mission partners from the Methodist Church, students and research scholars from partner churches around the world, as well as students preparing for a variety of ministries in Britain and Ireland.

SOCMS delivers programmes for mission companions in formation. These include mission studies, regional briefing and practical issues affecting personnel serving abroad, as well as any specific recommendations made by the residential selection panel with particular reference to the post. The period at SOCMS also provides time for reflection and disengagement as you make the transition from one situation to the new role with the church overseas

**m)** The residential selection panel will make recommendations about training, and the USPG Regional Desk Officer and a tutor from SOCMS will meet with the candidate to discuss specific training needs.

**n)** The period of formation and preparation at SOCMS is regarded as an

integral part of the USPG selection and discernment process. For that reason it is carefully monitored and evaluated by staff before final consent is given by USPG for the mission companion to travel overseas.

### **o) The Mission Companion Agreement**

Further meetings will be arranged between the relevant Regional Desk Officer, the Mission Personnel Programmes Officer and the mission companion to discuss and finalise details of the Mission Companion Agreement.

The Mission Companion Agreement is the tripartite agreement between the mission companion, the overseas church (the employer) and USPG, and it sets out the roles and responsibilities of all the parties relevant to the appointment.

### **p) Fundraising Status Review**

A final fundraising status review will be undertaken close to the end of the training and preparation period.

*The entire selection and discernment process, training and preparation can take between 12 to 18 months from first enquiry to actually going overseas.*

### **q) Commissioning**

Most mission companions have a service of commissioning in their home church or cathedral a few weeks before departure. This is usually organised by the mission companion. A member of the Archbishop's Board of Examiners will attend.

## Financial Resources and Support

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To enable USPG to continue to support mission around the world it needs to ensure that mission companions' costs are fully funded. So right from the beginning of the selection and discernment process the subject of fundraising will be discussed so that you can begin to think about likely sources of support. Members of USPG's fundraising team will meet with you at Stage II of the selection and discernment process, to lend a hand in developing fundraising strategies.

Mission companions are not expected to raise all the money by themselves. Working together with USPG fundraising staff, potential sources of funds will be identified from your personal contacts and supporters, as well as from churches that support USPG.

The Stage III of the process is dedicated to the implementation of the fundraising strategies jointly agreed with the USPG fundraising team. During this time you will work closely with people from USPG's fundraising, communications and church relations teams, who will provide resources and support. The goal will be to raise at least 30 per cent of the total cost before training begins. By the time the mission companion is ready to go overseas to take up the appointment, it is expected that at least 75 per cent of the cost is available or pledged, with concrete plans in place to realise the remainder.

The total cost of a mission companion appointment takes into account the cost of the selection process, training and

preparation, as well as costs relating to the time working in the post. The costs will vary depending on the location, your personal circumstances and the terms and conditions of the employment being offered by the overseas diocese or province.

USPG has worked out appropriate financial allowances to cover every stage of the process, which include items such as living allowances, National Insurance and pension contributions, etc. These figures help to estimate the total cost of the appointment. It is essential that likely sources of funding for any appointment are identified before a placement can proceed.

Churches and the individuals who support mission companions are invaluable. They provide encouragement, practical support and prayer. They are an essential resource to the mission companion and USPG will work with them and develop a relationship with them throughout your time abroad.

Arrangements will be made for mission companions to meet with these churches and supporters before they go overseas and while on furlough. Churches and supporters will be encouraged to pray regularly for you. They will also be invited to send letters of encouragement and support through USPG where possible.

Mission companions will be expected to keep regular contact with supporters through newsletters, which will be sent out by USPG to avoid putting pressure on you.

## Other Information

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### ► **Child protection policy**

All mission companions are screened under the USPG child protection policy, which is renewed periodically. This includes Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) references and a self-declaration form.

### ► **Medical information**

Medical examinations are undertaken by a health agency appointed by USPG. The agency will provide the appropriate list of inoculations and other medical information applicable to your location. While we respect the confidentiality of the medicals, the nature of our process of discernment does assume that details of any relevant medical conditions will be disclosed during the discernment process.

Very seldom does a medical condition preclude a candidate from serving overseas. However, USPG reserves the right to halt the process if a serious medical condition is diagnosed.

### ► **The Archbishops' Board of Examiners (ABE)**

The ABE is an independent body founded in the nineteenth century to undertake the final commendation of missionaries on behalf of the Church of England and the Church in Ireland. A member of the ABE takes part in the interview of candidates and chairs the residential selection panel. They also scrutinise the USPG selection process. The men and women involved know the Society well and understand our ethos, but are independent.

**Please feel free to discuss any issues that arise from the information in this leaflet with Habib Nader, the Mission Personnel Programmes Officer (e-mail: [habibn@uspg.org.uk](mailto:habibn@uspg.org.uk), direct line: 020 7378 5673)**

**USPG: Anglicans in World Mission**  
200 Great Dover Street  
London  
SE1 4YB

Tel: 020 7378 5673  
Fax: 020 7378 5650  
e-mail: [missionpersonnel@uspg.org.uk](mailto:missionpersonnel@uspg.org.uk)  
[www.uspg.org.uk](http://www.uspg.org.uk)

