

**Information and  
Advice for Missionaries**

# **The Call**

***Serving those who serve***



This booklet and its companion, *Information and Advice for Missionaries: In the Field*, are intended for the guidance of those wishing to serve overseas as missionaries in association with International Mission Project (I.M.P.); they should be read in conjunction with our booklet *An Introduction to International Mission Project*.

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## Part 1: Confirming the Call

**“Then he said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’” (Acts 22:21)**

It is a great privilege to serve the Lord overseas, but it is important to be sure of His calling. For this reason, if you feel that the Lord is leading you to serve Him abroad, I.M.P. recommend that you consult the leaders of your church and explain how the Lord has been leading you. They may require some time to consider the matter, as they will need to look at your proposed move carefully, giving attention not only to your own fitness for it, but also to the implications for the church. They will certainly need to know the witness of the Holy Spirit. In addition, we recommend that you contact I.M.P., who will be delighted to hear from you; it would also be helpful for you to read our Introduction booklet at this time. Lastly, it is wise in seeking the Lord's will to discuss your plans with family and friends and ask for their reaction and opinion. It is of particular importance in this context to remember that married couples need to be of one mind in the missionary undertaking. Confirmation of your calling through these various channels will enable you to go forward with confidence.

In the event that your church feels unable to send and support you, further talks will be necessary, since the policy of I.M.P. is to respect the autonomy of the local church (see page 6 of our Introduction booklet). If they agree to your move, we will, with your permission, write to a family member and a work colleague to gain a clearer picture of you as a person; the responses to the questions which we put to them will be kept in strict confidence. At the same time, an application form will be sent to you and a reference requested from your church. We will also ask for the names and addresses of the church leaders so that we may contact them to establish an ongoing relationship during the years of your proposed service.

The information or documentation which will be required of you in the application form may be summarised as follows:

### **1. Your family**

We will want an outline of your family and home background.

### **2. Your testimony**

We will not primarily require dates and details of your life prior to conversion, but rather an account of your walk with the Lord from the time that you first came to a true knowledge of His saving grace.

### **3. A record of your Christian service**

We will want to know the part you have played in the ministry of churches or other organisations with which you have been associated. It may be necessary for us to contact your present and past church leaders for further information.

### **4. Your views on Bible doctrine**

It will be required that you read and assent to our Statement of Faith, which can be found on page 10 of our Introduction booklet. If you are unable to assent to it, we will need to discuss this with you.

### **5. A child protection certificate**

You will need a Criminal Records Bureau certificate, a copy of which will be required by I.M.P.

## **6. A health report**

We will want a current report from your GP.

The final step in the application process is an informal talk with one of I.M.P.'s trustees, after which you will be asked if you accept our principles (see page 6 of our Introduction booklet); you will then be given our decision on your application. If both your church and I.M.P. are in agreement with your move abroad, preparation work can proceed in earnest as described in part 2. We will undertake at all stages of your service to share with you our international experience, but in every matter discussed it should be remembered that we will provide advice, information, and support only: we will not dictate any course of action.



## Part 2: Preparing to Go

**As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”** (Acts 13:2)

As you prepare to go to the field, you may find it helpful to consider the following:

### 1. Prayer support

I.M.P. recognise that the sending church should carry the main responsibility for regular and prevailing prayer; regular communication with prayer partners is important in order for them to pray with understanding. We suggest the appointment of an individual to whom you convey your news and prayer requests in order that they can be passed on to your prayer partners in the sending church and elsewhere. I.M.P. are willing to help you ensure that supporters are kept informed of your prayer requests. A prayer diary is distributed via email every month, and an I.M.P. prayer card is also a useful tool.

### 2. Pastoral care

If you have been part of your sending church for some time, we would expect a pattern of pastoral care to be in place and would advise you to encourage visits from those to whom you relate. I.M.P. are able to provide background information to pastoral-care workers who are not familiar with your place of service, and we will have periodic contact with your church leaders to share with them our view of your work and its development. If possible, an I.M.P. trustee will visit you occasionally. In addition to personal visiting, letters, CDs, DVDs, MP3s, and text messages can all play a part in pastoral care.

### 3. Financial matters

#### a) Funding for you and your work

I.M.P. emphasise the importance of faithfulness in this area and will stand with you, your sending church, and other supporters in believing the Lord to provide by whatever means He chooses. We are also able to assist by providing estimated costs for such things as air travel, insurance, daily needs, housing, vehicles, health care, National Insurance, and children’s education.

#### b) Pensions and self-employment contributions

Although your thoughts will be focused on your future in the field, I.M.P. ask that you and your spouse (if you are married) consider your position on this issue prayerfully and in fellowship with your church. We suggest that you consider at the very least an ongoing National Insurance contribution to help in your retirement. We are able to present the implications of the different views possible and will try to ensure that you have the best available information to decide on what course of action to take.

#### c) Insurance for life, travel, and other needs

As in the case of (b) above, we are able to provide all the relevant information for you to decide prayerfully and responsibly how to act.

#### d) Banking

Advice is available from I.M.P. on a number of issues. These include currency and exchange rates (often an area of difficulty for missionaries), money transfer, and running accounts in the home country while living abroad. Some missionaries ask trusted friends to run a local bank account for them in the home country. This has advantages but is best arranged before leaving for the field; it also requires trust and commitment from the persons involved. Electronic banking is another option.

#### e) A will

If you have not already done so, we strongly advise you to draw up a will before leaving for the mission field.

#### **f) Debts and ownership of property**

It is the policy of I.M.P. not to allow debts to be incurred in our name. At the discretion of the trustees, we are prepared to enter into the ownership of land or buildings, if required.

#### **4. Employment**

It has been the practice of some to make sharp distinctions between Christians in secular employment and those in 'full-time service'. I.M.P. do not hold to this dualistic position and strongly affirm that all Christians should consider their lives as being fully employed in God's purposes, whatever their role. In advising missionaries, therefore, we usually draw attention to the possible benefits of paid employment, which include the financial aspect, aid with language and cultural orientation, and the opportunity for personal contact. However, even when full-time employment is planned, it is imperative to have a clear call from the Lord for service overseas.

#### **5. Your home**

If you own your home in your country of residence, a decision will have to be made whether to sell or rent out your property. There are advantages and difficulties with either course of action, and I.M.P. are prepared to discuss with you the financial and family issues which will affect the decision you make. We are able to advise also on how many of your personal belongings should be taken with you; the relative costs of transporting or replacing your household furnishings are an important factor here. Taking many belongings with you may provide a necessary link with home; this too needs to be considered. We suggest that valued or irreplaceable items are best left behind in safekeeping.

#### **6. Children's education**

This is a major consideration for many missionaries. I.M.P. can provide both personal counsel and a pamphlet outlining the various options.

#### **7. Health**

Although poor health does not necessarily disqualify a person from service overseas, it is plain that the conditions in many countries are difficult and the medical services limited. It is therefore sensible to take precautions as well as to be in faith. Inoculations and prophylactics could be essential, and thorough research is needed; I.M.P. are glad to help with these issues. If there are any long-standing problems, these need to be discussed in advance with our medical director. It may be necessary in this connection to establish the availability in the new country of any medication you are using. Due to the possibility of change in the National Health Service, we strongly advise you to maintain a close relationship with your GP so as to keep your registration with him.

#### **8. Training courses**

I.M.P. are able to direct you to all types of training opportunities and recommend that, where possible, you take courses in the following: car maintenance, computer skills, health and hygiene, language, and cultural understanding. A course in agricultural and water-supply issues may also be appropriate, depending on the conditions in the country where you will be living, and further specialist training to develop an existing skill could also be considered. Prior contact with the country of service is extremely helpful, and study of the culture is crucial. There are many books and audio/media presentations available; we have a list on our website of books that we recommend.

#### **9. Communication**

Communicating with others is a vital part of our partnership in the gospel, yet very often we are not as effective in this as we might be. To help facilitate good communication, I.M.P. are prepared to advise on prayer letters and presentations in order to make them as interesting and informative as possible. We are also willing to help you make the best use of modern technology: the Web, emails, VoIP (e.g. Skype), and text messages all present the missionary with new and extensive opportunities to communicate and inform.



## 10. Travel

You will need to discuss this with your travel agent, who can advise you about fares, routes, and visa requirements. It is important to ensure that your passport is current and that it will remain so until after your first proposed visit home.

## 11. Coming home

I.M.P. encourage you to fix an approximate time for your first furlough at home; our recommendation is that it should follow a first term of two-and-a-half to three years. In making a decision, you will need to consider not only your own need of rest and renewed fellowship at home, but also the need for continuity in the place of service and the welfare of co-workers. Your home-support coordinator would be well placed to help you arrange the furlough.

## 12. Crisis management

I.M.P. have produced a policy document on this subject, linked to a database. It is not intended to be directive, but to help ensure your welfare in a crisis. We will want to discuss it with you in detail so that you fully understand our position on the matter.

## 13. Risk assessment

To assist with crisis management we will provide you with a risk assessment form, which you will be asked to complete before leaving. This will need to be renewed annually.

# Part 3: Leaving

**Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.** (Acts 13:3)

The months immediately prior to your departure can bring increased activity. We suggest that you consider the following to avoid undue pressure on yourself and to relate sensitively and effectively to family and church at a significant time:

### 1. A presentation

The use of multimedia is an obvious consideration when preparing a presentation about your work. In addition, a folder containing information and photographs about the work that you are undertaking is very helpful. It will enable you to communicate more easily and provide material for distribution. The folder can include general facts about the country of service as well as details of your role in the work, its nature and location; prayer cards and your contact details are also useful and important. An address book in which supporters who wish to be kept in touch can provide their contact details will be helpful as well.

### 2. Visiting family and friends

It is advisable to anticipate the inevitable desire of family and friends to see you before you leave by keeping your diary as clear as possible in the month before your departure. This is a good time to visit and to renew relationships with brothers and sisters in your sending church and to strengthen their fellowship with you in the gospel. There will doubtless be an occasion for the church to commend you to the Lord in prayer, at which a representative of I.M.P. will be present, if possible. We hope that at this time you will also remember family members who are not Christians or who do not attend your church. They may well find it difficult to accept what you are doing, and we advise you to be particularly considerate of their feelings, especially at the actual time of departure, when sensitivity is high. During this time before your departure, an air of unreality may enter your life as your thoughts, and the thoughts of those you are leaving behind, focus increasingly on your future, which now lies elsewhere.

Further reading, covering life on the mission field and the return home, can be found in the booklet *Information and Advice for Missionaries: In the Field*.

[www.impcharity.org.uk](http://www.impcharity.org.uk)

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