

THE AMAZON MISSION FELLOWSHIP
Guidelines and Responsibilities of U.S. Sister Churches

- ⊖ The sister church relationship begins with the understanding that this partnership is a long term commitment. This is not simply a ‘get in, get out’ deal. Short term mission trips to different locations each year are popular, but our model is different. We are seeking to build meaningful, highly influential, and effective reciprocal relationships with our Peruvian brothers and sisters. These partnerships are investments in which we will grow in our faith, hold each other accountable, and practice the ministry of presence in good times and in bad.
- ⊖ AMF is an interdenominational organization. Though the make-up is currently primarily Presbyterian, we are open to any churches, groups, or individuals who profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
- ⊖ When a missions committee and/or session decides their church should enter into a sister church relationship, it is suggested that you make a minimum commitment of five years, though a longer commitment is encouraged, as it is difficult, even impossible for true partnerships to develop in shorter time spans. If/when it becomes apparent that either the U.S. church, the Peruvian church, or both are no longer able to honor the sister relationship, please inform AMF immediately so that we can assist in the dissolution process, helping to ensure as little negative impact on either party as possible.
- ⊖ Good communication is essential. Due to language and technological barriers, this will require more effort on the part of the U.S. church. Each sister church should:
 - ⊙ Appoint an individual as a regular contact. This individual should assume the responsibility of communicating with the pastor or other leader of the sister church on a regular basis via email. (You may appoint two people if it is too much for one person to manage.) There should not be an excessive number of people communicating with the Peruvians because this is typically how misunderstandings and misinterpretations occur which have the potential to cause friction in the relationship.
 - ⊙ The appointed contact person(s) should:
 - preferably be the church’s trip leader
 - plan to travel to Peru at least once a year (it is suggested that the church provide yearly funding for this person), twice if possible (once with the mission team and again in November for the annual AMF pastors’ meeting)
 - should be in charge of planning the group trip each year which includes working with the sister church to coordinate construction/work projects, Bible school, medical clinics, and any other joint activities
 - should be involved with AMF by attending meetings and/or serving as a board member

- ☺ Bring a translator/interpreter along on each trip. Neither MMI nor AMF is responsible for providing this service. When there is a full-time missionary in Iquitos, he/she will work to find locals who speak English and are willing to be hired to assist with translation/interpretation. This service, however, cannot be guaranteed.
 - ☺ Fund its own work projects. MMI has completed its original commitment to setting up the mission infrastructure. Under special circumstances, however, such as working with first time groups, non-AMF mission teams, and/or other unique occasions, MMI will be involved with providing supplies and/or organizing major construction projects. It is the responsibility of each AMF sister church to provide the necessary cash for work projects.
 - ☺ Educate your mission leaders and mission team members. It is especially crucial for first time travelers to understand Peruvian culture, customs, and manners, but repeaters need to be reminded of this as well; sometimes mission team returnees can unintentionally cause more problems than first timers. They are familiar with the surroundings and the routine and might assume they know more about the culture and the people than they actually do; there is a significant difference between visiting once a year as a member of a missions team and living in a foreign country year round. Their intent is well-meaning, but the results sometimes are not. The goal is to create lasting relationships, not to be obstacles to this process.
- ☺ There are more than 2000 verses in the Bible which address money and possessions. Obviously God knew that this would be a problem area for us, and it is. Financial responsibility is of the utmost importance in foreign missions. As sister churches, we are not looking to be employers, we are not interested in creating unhealthy, unproductive dependencies, and we are not trying to create rifts or promote jealousy among the Peruvian pastors and congregations; therefore, it is extremely important that we be overly cautious in our donation and distribution of money and other material resources. In order to create fair, equitable partnerships, sister churches are asked to rigidly adhere to the following:
- ☺ **No U.S. church is to directly pay a Peruvian pastor.** Each U.S. church should encourage, even help its partner pastor to identify and raise up leaders in their churches, including someone who is trustworthy enough to be a treasurer. This treasurer, or other trustworthy lay person, will be responsible for receiving, managing, and providing written records for the monthly love offering from the sister U.S. church.
 - ☺ **Limit monthly love offerings to a MAXIMUM of \$200.** While this amount may not seem like much in terms of U.S. church budgets, it is an extraordinary sum to our Peruvian counterparts. If your church is giving less than \$200 per month, please let the AMF board know; one of the most significant obstacles to effective cross-cultural ministry is the perception of favoritism. We understand that sometimes churches will give less than \$200 for economic or other legitimate reasons, but we need to be able to explain this to the AMF churches in an effort to be transparent and to maintain as much equity among the pastors as possible.

- ☺ **Each U.S. church is responsible for the transmission of funds to its sister church.** It is up to you how to accomplish this. Westminster Presbyterian and First Presbyterian, Huntington, WV have each set up checking accounts in local banks and provide their respective pastors with an ATM card and a PIN to access the money. You may opt to wire the money to Iquitos. AMF will not be a dispenser of funds, except on rare occasions, under special circumstances in order to avoid an employer/employee relationship which can potentially result in legal issues.
 - We are continuing to discuss the transfer of funds to Peruvian churches who are not partners with a U.S. church. We want to be able to help these churches as much as possible through unspecified donations to AMF, but further investigation into the legal problems that can ensue is necessary.

- ☺ **Set a \$1000 annual limit for group work projects.** Again, in an effort to be fair, please do not exceed this limit without consulting the AMF board first. If you are spending significantly less than this amount, please make us aware of this as well. Please do NOT make up the difference in the form of an additional monetary contributions. Remember that you will not always get the same bang for your buck as how much you can accomplish with your \$1000 will depend on the value of the dollar when exchanged for soles.

THE AMAZON MISSION FELLOWSHIP
Guidelines and Responsibilities of *Peruvian* Sister Churches

- ⊖ In the sister church relationship you are seeking to build meaningful, highly influential, and effective reciprocal relationships with your U.S. brothers and sisters. These partnerships are investments in which we will all grow in our faith, hold each other accountable, and practice the ministry of presence in good times and in bad.
- ⊖ AMF is an interdenominational organization. Though the make-up is currently primarily Presbyterian, we are open to any churches, groups, or individuals who profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
- ⊖ You are required to identify at least one leader, other than the pastor himself or another member of the pastor's family, whom you have designated as a deacon or elder.
- ⊖ Good communication is essential. Each Peruvian sister church should:
 - ⊙ Have your pastor or an elder/deacon send regular emails to your U.S. sister church's pastor or other contact person, giving them updates on what is happening in the church and how they can pray for you.
 - ⊙ Your pastor should:
 - participate in the annual AMF meeting in November at the Iquitos Presbyterian church on Napo Street (an elder, deacon, or your treasurer is welcome at this meeting as well)
 - work with your elders/deacons to determine appropriate work projects, Bible school lessons, medical clinics and any other activities that the U.S. mission teams will be participating in and communicate/meet with representatives from your U.S. sister church to jointly plan these activities (remember that all activities must stay within a \$1000 budget – please do not put your U.S. partner church in a difficult situation by planning/requesting projects that exceed the \$1000 limit as they will be forced to inform you that the project is not possible, except in special circumstances)
 - participate in all activities alongside the U.S. mission team members and encourage church members to participate as well
 - ⊙ Educate your church leaders and congregation. Your U.S. brothers and sisters know that most Peruvians are very poor and have many needs, and they would love to be able to help everyone. But the truth is that many of them have financial struggles of their own and may have had to work extra hours or rely on the generosity of others in order to be able to come to Peru. Just because a person is from the U.S. does not mean he/she is wealthy. Sometimes U.S. missionaries become discouraged and feel used or taken advantage of if all their Peruvian brothers and sisters do is constantly ask for money or other material things. If they begin to feel this way, they no longer want to come to Peru or be involved with the mission. We do not want this to happen. Our goal is to create lasting relationships, not to be obstacles to this process.

- ☺ Occasionally rumors begin about gifts/money that a pastor, a church member, or even a church in another village may or may not be receiving from its U.S. sister church. Please do not help spread such rumors; instead, attempt to silence them. If you have questions or concerns about any activity between a U.S. and Peruvian church, please talk with the AMF missionary and/or contact your U.S. sister church to communicate your concerns. We welcome your questions during the AMF meeting each November and we also encourage you to arrange a yearly meeting to allow your congregation to ask questions of and share concerns with your U.S. sister church. Our partnerships will only be successful if we are all open and honest with each other.

- ☺ There are more than 2000 verses in the Bible which address money and possessions. Obviously God knew that this would be a problem area for us as humans, and it is. Financial responsibility is of the utmost importance. Your U.S. sister church is not your employer, but they do want to create healthy, productive relationships, not situations where the Peruvian churches are dependent on the U.S. churches. They also do not want to create rifts or cause jealousy to exist among the members of their sister church or between Peruvian pastors and congregations; therefore, the U.S. churches will be overly cautious in their donation and distribution of money and other material resources. In order to create fair, equitable partnerships, the U.S. sister churches will rigidly adhere to the following:
 - ☺ **No U.S. church will directly pay a Peruvian pastor.** Each U.S. church will provide a regular love offering to your church that will not exceed \$200/U.S. in any given month. The amount of the offering from each U.S. church may vary depending on that church's particular financial situation. It is **not** the intent of the U.S. church to state how this money should be used, except that it should be spent in a godly, wise manner. It is a gift to your church and the leaders of your church must determine the best use of the gift.

 - ☺ **Each Peruvian church must have a designated treasurer.** The treasurer should be someone who is honest, trustworthy and active in the church. The treasurer may **not** be a member of the pastor's family. It is the treasurer's responsibility to receive and record the U.S. church's love offering each month in a ledger. The treasurer, the elder(s)/deacon(s), and the pastor should meet to determine the best use for the money, and the treasurer must record all financial transactions involving this money in the ledger. Your ledger must be available for U.S. sister church leaders to see and make copies of whenever they are in Peru. While the U.S. churches do not dictate how to spend the money, they do have the responsibility of reporting to their elders/deacons how their financial gifts are being used, and whether or not the Peruvian church is being a good steward of its finances.

- ☺ **Together each U.S. and Peruvian church must determine the best method for the transmission of the love offering.** Again, this is a love offering. It is not a salary or any other form of compensation. Neither AMF, the AMF missionary, nor Medical Missions or any of its staff is responsible for handling love offerings. If there are problems with receiving your offering, you should email the pastor or other leader of your U.S. sister church to let them know. If you are having difficulty communicating with your U.S. sister church, please let the AMF missionary know and he/she will help you.

- ☺ **The Amazon Mission Fellowship and Medical Missions are not financial institutions.** Please understand that neither AMF, the AMF missionary, nor Medical Missions or any of its staff has access to any funds that can be distributed to you. AMF and Medical Missions are both non-profit organizations whose primary purpose is Christian ministry. Please do not visit El Jardin for the purpose of asking for money as, again, none will be available.