

## OP Crisis Policy for Grace Bible Church

The context of ministry in the world is one of high-risk. This is not new. Jesus sent his disciples out as sheep among wolves (Matthew 10:16). He told them that if He was persecuted, they would be also (John 15:20). He stated that they would be hated because He had been hated first (John 15:18, 17:14). He promised there would be tribulation but also that they could overcome it (John 16:33). It is no surprise then that He called them to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-37). Compared to other areas, the Church in U.S. has not yet faced much in terms of risk and danger, even in sending workers to other cultures and many parts of the world. It is readily apparent that this is changing rapidly.

The nature of reaching the nations in regions of the world that need the message of the gospel expose our people to certain risks. Paul commended Priscilla and Aquila in Romans 16:4 for risking their lives for him in the cause of the gospel. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:12 that all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted. God tells His children they will suffer as His Son suffered (Revelation 13:7,10) or even become martyrs (Revelation 6:11; 12:11). In fact, Paul told the Philippians, “For it has been granted (Lit., graciously given) on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1:29). We and our partners accept the physical and other dangers inherent in a calling to minister among the least reached and in the difficult contexts of the world.

Having said that, we do not believe we should be foolish and take unnecessary risks. Sometimes we should flee persecution (Matthew 10:23; Acts 8:1-4). Our desire is to accomplish the work of establishing reproducing churches in difficult areas while minimizing personal and organizational loss. We will do our best to avoid crises but will stand alongside and assist those in need when a crisis occurs.

*Definition: a “crisis” is an event that threatens our partners, their team and their agency or its assets, that presents a danger to their personal safety, their displacement from their field of service or the potential for significant organizational disruption that is likely to be extended in time and that is likely to require abnormal commitment of resources to effectively address the needs brought about due to the crisis.*

In the event of a major crisis to a Global Outreach Partner (GOP or OP) supported by Grace Bible Church (GBC), it is our firm conviction that all Christians may be called to take a stand for Christ in the face of persecution or hardship. In such an event, the Sending Agency will be the primary contact to handle all crisis situations. It is expected that the Pastor of Global Outreach or another representative appointed by the Global Outreach Committee will handle the communications between GBC, the partner’s family and the partners Sending Agency and ensure that the Agency has a crisis contingency plan in place even prior to the worker arriving on the field. All Global Outreach Partners, prospective candidates and Sending Agencies will be provided a copy of our policy.

The Global Outreach Committee will consider additional support in coordination of emergency assistance as personal needs arise.

## **OP Crisis Procedures**

All Christians are called to take a stand for Christ in the face of persecution and hardship (2 Tim. 3:12, 1 Peter 3:17). Those who are called to missionary service face additional risks in which their lives and safety may be threatened.

As a sending church, we will do our best to screen candidates and evaluate their readiness for their ministry. We will encourage them to be under the supervision of a reputable partnering agency that assumes joint responsibility with us for their safety, shepherding, and administrative needs on their field of service.

If a major crisis arises in the course of travel or ministry, there is no way to be fully prepared, but we believe that it is prudent to create a list of procedures to follow so that we may avoid unnecessary confusion, delay, or suffering. A 'major crisis' may include such events as kidnaping, terrorism, personal or family threats, imprisonment, life-threatening health conditions, or any other scenario which may require urgent attention.

1. The Global Outreach Pastor, senior pastor or another representative chosen by the Global Outreach Committee will be in charge of our formal response to any major crisis involving our partners. All partnering agencies will be informed of our current staff information – personal cell phones, email addresses, etc., in addition to the main phone number for the church office. We expect all of our partnering agencies to notify our church immediately if a crisis arises so that we can mobilize prayer and any preparations needed if our outreach partners must be evacuated from their field. We will likewise notify the partnering agency if we receive any pertinent information directly from our outreach partners that they might not be aware of.
2. In a crisis, we will communicate all that we know to the elders, the partner's families and whatever is appropriate to the entire church body, based on the advice of the elders. As needed, an emergency meeting of the GOC will be called to deal with the crisis.
3. We insist that each of the Partnering Agencies provide us with a copy of their crisis contingency plan prior to the worker arriving on the field. Furthermore, whatever procedures they have established should be understood by our Outreach Partners and followed to the best of their ability. We expect our OPs to strictly adhere to the guidance of their supervisory agency and avoid reckless and imprudent behavior while following all evacuation instructions or other directions from field leadership as necessary.
4. If an OP returns suddenly from the field to the vicinity of our church due to a crisis, our GO Partner Care Subcommittee will be responsible for taking the lead in coordinating emergency assistance with the Partner's Support Team in areas such as housing, transportation, medical needs, meals, prayer and counseling support, and any

communications that would be helpful to reduce the stress level they are facing. If we are not the sending/home church for the OP, then the Care Subcommittee will assess what assistance we can provide to supplement the OPs home/sending church.

5. Communication in the event of a Crisis

In all of our crisis communications, we will endeavor to write and say: “Workers, Partners or Outreach Partners” not *missionaries* and “Company” not *Agency*”

It is important for the sending church to understand that some of its outreach partners are working in places where they should not be identified as a “missionary” nor appear as being affiliated with a mission agency such as those who working in restricted areas within the 10/40 window or other sensitive areas. Why? First, because the religious connotation of “missionary” or “missions” is often misunderstood or misinterpreted. In many places’ governments and citizens of that country understand the term to mean (literally), “a person who works for the U.S. government.” Second, using such terminology can put a person at risk and can also put others (co-workers and nationals) at risk.

Public Comments and Information

GBC’s leadership, outreach partner(s) and their families and GBC members will refrain from making public statements or communicating internally about the crisis situation until we have consulted with the Crisis Management Team (CMT) of the outreach partner’s agency. It is expected that the CMT will work to understand all aspects of the crisis situation, develop an appropriate action plan and provide clear parameters for how meaningful and appropriate communication can and should occur. In some instances, in order to aid resolution of a crisis or to protect lives, GBC will be the one to communicate publically on the crisis. There may be some instances where our partnering agency should be the one to communicate publically on the crisis. It may also be that in certain situations, neither party says anything publically. These decisions are based on the need and uniqueness of each crisis situation and done in consultation with the leadership of the mission agency, sending church and when appropriate with the outreach partner and their families.

**Grace Bible Church Crisis Communicating Protocol for Career and Short-term Partners**

In the event of a crisis impacting Outreach Partners sent out by GBC, whether career or short-term, or short-term teams sent by GBC, the following communicating policies and procedures will be activated:

Career and Short-term Partners

Partners may not comment to the public or to other partners about a crisis that impacts their company’s work or workers, their immediate family or their sending church until

informed by their company's director of communication and sending church.

If information about the crisis can be shared with trusted constituencies, an official statement and a short FAQ will be given to workers to share with their families and partners in confidential correspondence. They should strongly encourage donors and families to not make any public comments about the crisis in any public forum, on any websites or on social media channels. This includes the public sharing of prayer requests.

GBC Staff, GO Committee members, outreach partners, OP families, and church members may not refer to or comment on the crisis with any media outlets, websites or social media channels without approval from the leadership of GBC (The Elders and GO Committee) and the outreach partner's agency or the outreach partner themselves. *This includes the public sharing of prayer requests.*

If the crisis situation is in a volatile area, GBC in consultation with and directed by the partner agency will be equipped to be the public face for the worker and to handle all public communications about the situation. This is to protect others (national and expatriates) in that region from further harm.

If contacted by the media, government agencies, media outlets, ministry organizations or the general public, workers must refer inquirers to the designated spokespersons by stating, "You will need to contact (name) (title) (email and/or phone) with your questions." Workers must also notify their sending church, field team director and the Director of their agency about inquires from these external groups.

If GBC or the partner's agency's website has an information center set up for the situation, refer anyone or any agency to the material there.

#### Short-term Teams sent from GBC

Please see, "Communicating Back Home" pages 8-10 in the Short-term Team Handbook.

6. This policy will be sent to all current Global Outreach Partners and provided to all outreach candidates prior to their acceptance to our Global Outreach Ministry. It will also be sent to all the partner agencies overseeing our outreach partners with the contact information they will need and a request for a copy of their crisis policy.

#### Short-term Team Structure

1. The Short-term Team Leader (STL) serves under the direction of the Global Outreach Pastor and Global Outreach Committee.
2. The STL will work in conjunction with our Global Outreach Partner (OP) or partnering agency whom they will be assisting. Together they will constitute the leadership team that

will oversee our short-term team members, assistant leaders and national workers.

3. Depending on the type of short-term team it is (teaching, construction, medical, water, etc.), individuals may be chosen, based on ability, experience, and ability to communicate with others, to assist the STL and our OP in carrying out the tasks given to the team. In that setting, the individual in charge of that ministry/project will be the final authority on/in that area of ministry. Team members are expected to follow the directions given to them and respect the decisions that are made. For example they are —

Not to teach contrary to what is being taught on Sunday morning or in our pastoral classes and /or they are to follow the directions of the construction foreman and not do it your way

### **Communicating “Back Home” while on a Short-term Team**

Being part of a short-term team can be fun, exciting and challenging. It’s understandable you would want to share information before your trip, while on your trip and after you have returned home. The following guidelines are not intended to squelch first amendment rights. They are, however, intended to avoid unnecessarily or inadvertently alarming family and friends back home, possibly embarrassing oneself, a fellow teammate, our outreach partner(s) and/or the people we are ministering to and with. In addition, it is intended to avoid the potential of exposing the team, our outreach partners and the individual(s) they are mainstring to so that it could lead to persecution or our partner(s) being deported.

Remember, too little information can be as harmful and disconcerting as too much information. Communicate what is necessary and only when it is necessary. To help in this process the following guidelines will be followed.

1. Prior to the team’s departure, a member of the team will be selected to be the chief spokesperson for the team in the event a situation arises that needs to be communicated to the Global Outreach Pastor, Global Outreach Ministry, family members or the GBC Church family.
  - A. This includes but is not limited to: serious illness, accidents, security issues, civil unrest where you are serving, bombings, hospitalizations, persecution, evacuation of a team member or the team itself. In the event of such situations, the person given over sight of this task will, in conjunction with the team leader and our national partner (if applicable) will contact the following persons in this order unless one or more of the individuals are unavailable: Pastor Bryan and Global Outreach Pastor who will in turn contact the family (if an individual is involved) or the families (if one or more team members or the entire team is involved). Pastor Bryan and/or the Global Outreach Pastor will in turn contact the Elders, Global Outreach Committee and the church family in general (if necessary).
  - B. If the situation involves a member of the team and is of a personal nature, e.e., one

that would unnecessarily expose someone's misconduct, whether insubordination, breaking of the team covenant, etc., that information will be initially shared with only Pastor Bryan and the Global Outreach Pastor and the persons' immediate family. It may or may not be shared more broadly should it become an issue of church discipline. At all times we will strive to keep this information confidential unless the situation becomes one of church restoration. In such cases, Matthew 18 and Galatians 6:1-5 will be followed.

- C. Under no circumstances will a media outlet be contacted without permission of the team leader, Outreach Partner or the leadership of GBC starting with the Senior Pastor and Pastor of Global Outreach. In a situation where local media in a country might seek information, it is expected that the team spokesperson in conjunction with the Team Leader and National Partner(s) and the Leadership of GBC (unless contact is impossible), will decide what to say. Team members will refer all questions asked of them to the team spokesperson.
- 2. Individual pictures and e-mails to family and friends are okay provided they are modest, in good taste, and do not embarrass or comprise the team in general, individual team members, our partners, our national friends or the country. When in doubt ask the field team leader, short-term team leader or teammates before sending a picture or comments that include others.
  - 3. Why these guidelines?
    - A. Not every team member is as tech savvy as others nor do they feel the need to write to everyone about everything they or the team is doing. Those who always find time to "be on" some form of social media owe it to their brothers and sisters to be considerate of what might be shared. For example, how would you like it if your family found out about your illness, broken leg or lost passport via someone's post on Face Book or when someone else asks your parents how you are feeling, how the leg is or whether or not your passport was found, when they were unaware anything had happened to you?
    - B. Not every person you text, e-mail, snap chat, etc. are as tech savvy as you. They might not check social media as often . . . thus, only part of the audience back home may know or hear of what is going on and they only know your slant on the news and happenings. That can lead to "too many" versions of the story, event, or situation. Too many voices and too many versions can lead to confusion, fear and frustration. It is helpful for the Senior Pastor and Pastor of Global Outreach to know what is going on so they can answer questions, avoid potential misunderstandings, and be in touch with the team leader and national partner in order to assess the situation before an announcement is made to immediate family members and the church at large.

## **Appendix 1 – Potential Threats and Crisis’ (there may be others in certain locations):**

### **PERSONAL THREATS**

Kidnaping  
Hostage-taking  
Violent crime victimizing our people  
Property crime  
Loss or theft of sensitive information or confidential data  
Transportation accidents affecting our partners

### **ORGANIZATIONAL / POLITICAL THREATS**

A bomb attack against assets or people (biological, chemical or other types)  
Extortion: threats against our partners demanding certain actions  
Riots or violent civil unrest  
Civil war or violent insurrection within a country  
Coup or violent collapse of a government  
War between countries  
Arrest or imprisonment of our outreach partner(s) by the government  
Seizure of our assets by the government  
Revocation of visas or expulsion of our outreach partner(s)  
Pandemics

### **ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS**

Fire threatening the lives of our outreach partner(s) or damaging assets  
Earthquake, flood, hurricane or Typhon