**Dawson’s Major Mission Projects**

**Questions and Answers**

Over the last few years several Dawson members have asked about the possibility of a campaign to raise funds for missions. Recognizing God’s leading, Dawson’s Missions Team developed the concept of undertaking new additional Major Mission Projects (MMP) to respond to what God is calling us to do. This will be the largest mission undertaking in our church’s history and will challenge our family of faith to greater levels of serving and giving. Following are several key considerations in this undertaking.

**Why is this initiative being done at this time?**

The Missions Team believes that our church family is at a unique and positive place in the life of our fellowship that provides us a tremendous opportunity. We have a high level of trust and commitment based on long-term leadership. Our most recent capital campaign has resulted in giving that exceeded pledges. The desire of our members to be involved in service beyond the walls of our church has never been greater.

**What will be the impact of the projects?**

The ultimate impact of each project is to lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. For believers, the impact will be to help them grow stronger in their faith and be equipped to share their faith with others. Also, practical human needs will be met, which is a way to introduce people to Jesus.

**How were these projects selected?**

The Missions Team established criteria that would be used to determine the projects to be done. Those criteria are attached. They carefully considered numerous possible projects before selecting these five. They think that these five best fit the criteria and are where they feel God is leading Dawson.

**Which projects will start first?**

Projects will not begin until the money is in hand. We will ask members to give generously on Commitment Day so that we can begin as many projects as quickly as possible. However, it will not be practical to start every project at the same time anyway so projects will begin as money is available and they can be managed. The actual start date of each project will be determined based on the Missions Team’s evaluation of the priority of each project, the availability of funds, and our partner’s being ready to start work.

**What is the expected duration of the projects?**

These are intended to be long term ministries and some may require Dawson funding beyond five years. The method of funding beyond the five years will be recommended by the Finance Team and the Stewardship Team and approved by the church as we approach the end of the first five years. This could include additional special offerings or transferring some expenses to the church budget. Also we hope to involve other churches in these projects and hope they will provide some funding.

**What accountability will there be for the money?**

To ensure accountability, each project will operate on a budget that is monitored and reviewed the same way as all other Dawson expenditures. Expenses will be monitored by the Dawson Finance staff with the same approvals and review as all other expenditures. In addition, the Dawson staff person assigned to coordinate the projects will review each expenditure to ensure that the money is spent the way it was intended. Each project will have a Dawson ministry team to give oversight to the project and part of their job will be to ensure that funds are used as they were intended. For projects in which Dawson partners with a local person or entity, they will also give an additional layer of oversight for accountability of the funds.

**How will the construction projects be monitored?**

Where construction of a facility is required, the construction will be managed and done by proven reputable contractors and workers local to the project. Our partners will ensure that projects are on schedule and moving ahead. Our staff person and the Dawson ministry team for each project will be in regular contact to ensure the projects are on schedule and being done as planned.

**How will we evaluate the projects?**

The Missions Team, with input from the Dawson staff and the ministry team for each project, will evaluate each project on an ongoing basis to ensure it is meeting the set goals and the criteria. If the Missions Team determines that a project is no longer meeting those requirements, it can recommend that major changes be made to the project or that it be terminated. In such case the Missions Team may recommend that remaining funds be redirected to another project.

**How will we communicate the results?**

We will know the results of each project because the Dawson ministry team for that project will give direction and oversight to the project. A Dawson staff person will stay in regular frequent contact with project leadership and each project will report results on a regular basis. Those results will be regularly communicated in various ways to all Dawson members.

**How will this impact our other mission work?**

MMP will not replace any current Dawson mission partnerships or projects. Its purpose is to expand our ministry rather than to change it. Over time mission partnerships and projects change for various reasons and that will still be the case, but they will not cease due to MMP. Our commitment to all of our current ministry and missions efforts will remain as strong as ever.

* Dawson’s cooperative missions giving will not be impacted by this proposal as we anticipate that the church will continue to support the Cooperative Program at its current level.
* Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong missions offerings will not be changed by MMP. Members will be encouraged to continue to give to Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong and any other current missions offerings and to not decrease giving to those offerings in order to give to MMP.
* MMP will not replace or change any facet of our Kids Connection ministry.
* MMP will have no impact on Dawson’s South Sudan partnership. It will continue under the supervision of Dawson’s Missions Team. Funding for this partnership will continue to come from the regular church budget, so it is totally independent of funding for MMP.

**How will this impact our Cooperative Program funding?**

These are projects that would not be funded through the Cooperative Program. By funding these projects directly we will be enhancing any related work that is currently funded through Cooperative Program giving. Each of these projects will accomplish something that is not being done by any existing organization, so they are not a duplication of current work.

**How will this work relate to other missions organizations?**

We are cooperating with the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention and other existing missions organizations to make these projects reality. For the international projects, in most cases as funds are needed for the project, the money will flow through the IMB, designated for the account of the missionary with whom we are partnering. That missionary will then be able to draw down the funds. For the Maine project, the money will flow through the Maine Baptist Association. For the Birmingham Ministry Center, the money will be managed through the Dawson Finance Office.

**How will our members serve in the projects?**

There will be a wide range of opportunities for people to serve in conjunction with these projects. A wide variety of talents, skills and experiences will be needed. Service opportunities will range from one day in length to one week or even longer. Some will be ongoing commitments and some will be one time. A large number of Dawson members will be asked to serve in these projects. Just as is true for giving, members will be strongly encouraged to continue to serve in all current areas and not decrease their service in those areas in order to serve in one of these new projects.

**Why did we not do this instead of buildings?**

Every building project we have done was absolutely needed to meet the needs of our members and people from throughout the community and was a step to lead us to where we are now. The most recent project in particular was aligned with our emphasis on children being a priority and was badly needed to teach the many children in our congregation and prepare them to be the next generation who will go and give. That building allows us to maintain that focus on children, which continues to be a high priority for Dawson.

**Have other churches done something similar?**

We have found no examples of churches doing exactly what we are doing, raising money for totally new mission projects. There are churches that have done campaigns to raise money for their existing missions work or to expand existing work. That often is done annually or bi-annually as part of a general giving emphasis. Because we are initiating totally new work in addition to everything we are already doing and because we will be significantly increasing our total missions giving, we hope to be a model for other churches.

**Will any staff be added?**

There may be staff required to direct the work at the Birmingham Ministry Center and there may be a need for some staff to give oversight to the projects. This will be determined as details are developed but it is expected that administrative costs will be less than 5% of the total cost of MMP.

**Do we believe our members will give to support these projects?**

Dawson members have given faithfully and generously over several years so that our building needs can be met. The Missions Team and Stewardship Team feel our church family will be even more willing to give to world mission needs. Members will be strongly encouraged to prayerfully consider what God is calling them to do with His resources.

**What will be the timeframe for giving contributions?**

The process to seek contributions will be similar to our prior capital campaigns for buildings. Members will be asked to make a commitment to give over and above their regular tithes and offerings for a period of three years. The most recent campaign for the Arendall Building was based on commitments to give over four years but all of our prior building campaigns have been for three year commitments. Because we will not incur any debt, the money must be in hand to pay for each project before we start the project. For that reason the Stewardship Team is recommending that the commitments for MMP be for three years. As funds are given and before they will be disbursed to projects, the funds will be held in church accounts as determined by the Finance Team, to protect the asset and possibly earn some return on the funds.

**Should we pay all of our debt before we start these projects?**

As of June 2015 the remaining debt will be about $3.5 million or even less, depending on designated contributions to Legacy of Faith up until that time. That is less than 40% of our annual budget. Only 8% of the total expenses in our annual budget are used for debt retirement. This debt will be paid in full from budget offerings in six to seven years. The Finance Team feels that this relatively small amount of debt should not delay our taking the gospel to people who desperately need to hear it.

Dawson will not under any circumstances incur any debt to conduct MMP.

**What if we have future needs for buildings at Dawson?**

We believe that God will continue to provide for future building and repair needs just as He has for past needs. We think we should not let the unknown future needs keep us from meeting the known current needs. At this time we do not expect any major building additions in the next five years but there may be some needs for building improvements or modifications in the future. Those will be evaluated at the time they arise in the context of all Dawson is doing and the church will decide how to fund those needs.

**What will be the impact on the church budget?**

The funding for these projects will not impact the church budget in any way because the funding will come totally from giving over and above regular tithes and offerings and will not be funded from budget giving. Just as giving to recent building campaigns did not negatively impact giving to the budget, we expect giving to MMP will not negatively impact giving to the budget. All communications about giving to MMP will emphasize the importance of continuing to support the church budget so that all existing ministries and missions can continue. Members will be strongly encouraged to continue to give their tithes and offerings to the church budget and give over and above that amount to support MMP.

**Will we be asked to also continue to give to Legacy of Faith?**

Members have been encouraged to continue to give to Legacy of Faith through the end of 2014. Some may continue to fulfill pledges even beyond that time and some may choose to give to debt reduction beyond that time but we will not encourage people to do so. That will not be necessary since the debt will be paid from the regular budget.

**What if the amount given is over or under the need?**

If we receive commitments for more than the amount needed for the projects included in MMP, the Missions Team will evaluate other additional projects that meet the criteria for MMP and will help accomplish the goals of MMP and will recommend to the Finance Team that the available funds be used for those projects.

If we do not receive commitments for the full amount needed, the Missions Team will prioritize the projects and the lower priority projects would be deferred until funds are available.

**Can we make designated gifts to individual projects?**

Church members will be encouraged to give to MMP as a whole so that the Missions Team has maximum flexibility to respond to the timing of the exact needs during the five years. All giving, even if designated to an individual project, will be with the understanding that the details of any one project, and its related costs, may change due to circumstances beyond our control or because of changes in the projects themselves as they are implemented.

**Major Mission Projects**

**Criteria for selection of projects**

The following are the criteria that were used by Dawson’s Mission Team to evaluate and select projects to be undertaken by Dawson. Some of the criteria are true for only one mission project while others are only true in the collective.

**Criteria that are true of each project:**

1. Consistent with and supports Dawson’s Vision and Mission and the Mission Vision
2. Can reach the unsaved and/or un-churched
3. Directly meets significant human needs with the hope of developing self-sufficiency
4. Intentionally meets spiritual needs in the long term
5. Undertaken in partnership with an existing organization that is doing work in that location, if possible
6. Approved with strong consensus by the Missions Team, the Stewardship Team, the Church Coordinating Team and the Deacons
7. Has a clearly stated purpose, goals, and measures of success
8. Has a detailed plan for implementation
9. Reasonable potential for measurable success
10. Dawson members will have a strong feeling of responsibility for the project, not necessarily legally but spiritually and psychologically
11. Long term project, typically at least five years
12. Has some logical affinity with Dawson
13. Annual accountability for finances and results
14. Dawson short-term teams, even if very small, can be used in a meaningful and effective way

**Criteria that are true collectively but not necessarily true of each project:**

1. Provides opportunities for large numbers of Dawson members to serve on short-term mission trips
2. Provides opportunities to use a range of skills available in the Dawson Family (e.g. medical, educational, construction)
3. Diverse geographically (e.g. local, U.S. and international)
4. Provides opportunities to plant new churches
5. Provides opportunities for developing disciples
6. Has the potential to serve a large number of people
7. Provides opportunity for the work to be taken over eventually by local Christians
8. Visionary; may not be done by another church or organization