

# Accountability

## January 2021

Avail's approach to supporting and caring for mission workers



# Introduction

For any relationship to work well, there needs to be mutual respect and transparency. In practice this means there should be a balance between individual freedom, responsibility and accountability between partners. In the past, Avail has been intentionally informal in its expectations because it wanted to provide support and care without being too prescriptive. However, our approach has sometimes led to misunderstanding and difficulty, because what we and our partners have understood, was not always the same.

To provide a clearer framework of understanding, we think it is helpful to briefly outline our approach.

First, it is important to stress that our fundamental mission ethos of building relationships based on grace, respect and integrity, remains the same. We want to partner with you as friends. We do not want to be seen, or act, merely as a faceless charity or as a provider of convenient legal cover. A meaningful and open relationship is important to us.

## Some practical questions

To understand what our approach to working together looks like, it may be helpful to consider some questions that may occur to you. We have been asked some of these:

### Applying to Avail

**Q** Do you tell people where to go on the mission field?

**A** No. We are prepared to make suggestions but, ultimately, we believe the Lord will direct your path.

**Q** Will you tell me what to do when I go on the mission field?

**A** No. But if, for example, you tell us that the Lord has called you to be a church leader when you have no previous experience in that area, we would naturally have to enquire further.

**Q** How would you respond if I applied but then felt unable to sign indicating acceptance of the requirements outlined in the application process?

**A** Naturally we would ask why, and probably request a face-to-face meeting to discuss your reservations.

- Q** How will you react if after such a discussion I still feel unable to sign?
- A** We would of course be disappointed. However, if it became clear that agreement could not be found we would have to suspend the application process.
- Q** Would you really refuse to accept my application?
- A** We would. This is because, whilst we sincerely wish to serve you, you would be depriving us of means required for that support.
- Q** If I were seriously ill, with little hope of a return to full health and strength, would this mean my application would be refused?
- A** Not necessarily, but before deciding we would want to know a lot more about your health situation. We would try to agree a way to assist and would probably require you to sign a disclaimer form.

## Accountability with Avail

- Q** Why does Avail ask for confirmation of acceptance of the *Statement of Faith* and *Accountability*?
- A** Whilst there is always going to be different views on secondary issues we believe there are certain truths and principles regarding faith and social issues which it is important we agree upon from the outset of our relationship to avoid misunderstandings and disappointment at a later stage.
- Q** I have read your document *Crisis Management*. Don't you think these precautions are a little extreme? Shouldn't I be left to trust the Lord without these, no matter what?
- A** We do not believe that identifying specific areas of risk and preparing practically to minimise them contradicts trusting the Lord, who calls us to be both responsible and fully trusting in His protection.
- Q** Why is it necessary to complete an annual report?
- A** It is a good way to keep in touch with you and maintain fellowship. It also helps us to know if there are areas in which you may need particular support.

## Accountability and the sending church

- Q** In what way would you suggest a mission worker should be accountable to the sending church?
- A** We think a good way is to agree with the church that every three months you will send them a quarterly report using a template. This has a dual purpose: it lets them know what is going on, and it promotes you in their prayer and general support. You might try to encourage the church to reciprocate by sending you regular reports on their work
- Q** My pastor always insists we do things his way. Is this acceptable?
- A** Clearly the answer depends on what is being insisted upon. Out of a right attitude for those exercising spiritual authority in a healthy way, we would encourage a respectful acknowledgement of a pastor's wisdom and advice. However, misuse of authority, overbearing control, or inappropriate intrusion into incidental matters or matters of conscience, would be concerning.
- Q** Do you think that I should be accountable to my supporters for money given for my personal use?
- A** You shouldn't be expected to have to account how you spend your money. Like anyone else, it is yours to use as you see fit, subject of course that you are not using it for anything that would be considered harmful to you or others. Added to that, you are certainly accountable for it to your spouse and to the Lord.
- Q** We also receive funding from the church and other supporters for projects. Should we be accountable to them for this?
- A** Yes, of course.
- Q** Regarding the last question, how would this accountability work?
- A** You need to agree with your supporters what information was/is appropriate to share and how often it was/is required.

## Avail's position on key issues

Under the following headings, we focus on specific issues which we consider fundamental to being part of Avail. They are to do with beliefs, values and behaviour. We trust Avail partners to embrace them as part of their own values.

### Cultural sensitivity

Most of those partnering with Avail are working, or will work, in countries away from their birth country. This brings new and ongoing challenges in adapting to cultures quite different from the ones they left, whether in public settings, workplaces or in the church. Mistakes in what we say or do are often unavoidable, even by people who have lived abroad for many years. Drawing on wise advice from experienced people and locals, being willing to listen and observe, is a good way to avoid pitfalls and learn to enjoy the new culture. Above all, we need to live in way that does not make others feel that they are inferior.

### Financial management

In John Wesley's sermon *The use of money*, he wrote: "Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can". We would add to this: "Act righteously in both personal and business finances whether you are receiving or giving money."

The existence of serious debt can negatively impact dependents. Where possible every effort should be made to maintain a standard of living for them that will not cause a loss of respect or possible damage to their well-being. We advise you to have insurance in place to cover all eventualities, including the cost of repatriation, for which Avail cannot be held responsible. Having insurance is not only for your protection, but for others you love and care about. Needless and serious expense, heartache and difficulty can affect your co-workers or close family if you do not have health insurance or life insurance.

Financial mismanagement, fraud or theft, is clearly unacceptable.

### Relationship to governments

Governments around the world have their own laws and rightly expect foreigners to comply with them. We agree that missionaries should adhere to national and world laws and regulations, including those relating to employment, the transfer of foreign currency, tax requirements and specific rules about visas.

## Abusive behaviour

We take very seriously any abusive behaviour by a mission partner, whether it is physical, emotional or spiritual. We include intimidation, bullying, harassment, persistent blame of others or the exercise of manipulative or coercive financial control.

## Discrimination and defamation

We recognise that we live in communities which can be very mixed and diverse. Often there is peaceful co-existence and respect but sometimes people become inconsiderate, harshly judgemental or unfeeling towards others who are different. While maintaining our Christian beliefs, we also need to maintain a Christian spirit. We would be concerned if attitudes are held or expressed that denigrate another race, faith or gender.

We also hold as unacceptable the defamation of another person's character through libel or slander.

## Sanctity of life, marriage and same sex relationships

We believe in the sanctity and preservation of life from conception to end of life.

We believe that any sexual activity outside marriage between a man and woman is contrary to what is commanded in Scripture and we trust those in the Avail Family to hold the same view.

Regarding same sex relationships we hold to the views expressed in the article by Evangelical Alliance entitled *Biblical and pastoral responses to homosexuality*. Please refer to the following link:

[https://www.eauk.org/resources/what-we-offer/reports/biblical-and-pastoral-responses-to-homosexuality?utm\\_source=old\\_eauk](https://www.eauk.org/resources/what-we-offer/reports/biblical-and-pastoral-responses-to-homosexuality?utm_source=old_eauk)

## How does Avail react if its partners act contrary to its values?

Our core values are summarised as "Avail seeks to Glorify Jesus Christ by providing spiritual and practical support to mission workers in partnership with churches". In reading scripture, we also read about restoration of folk who have problems or serious occurrences that require some form of correction. In light of these things we have formulated a process for our response.

## **Our process of discipline and dismissal**

In certain circumstances we may need to warn mission workers that their teaching and/or actions require us to step in, otherwise the name of the Lord may be brought into disrepute and the standing of Avail or sending churches jeopardised. We are legally required to follow Charity Commission and banking rules, and therefore we reserve the right to give instant notice of our withdrawal of support. Recognising that most problems are errors of judgement, we use a nine-month process that includes a verbal warning, a written warning and eventual suspension. The latter would include removal of our promotional support. At the end of the suspension period we would terminate all support including any gift aid claims but there is a three-month period in which we expect the mission worker to inform all their supporters that they should cancel all their donations including Gift Aid claims. After the three months any monies we receive will be transferred to our fund for missionaries in need.

Avail remains hopeful that where disciplinary matters have been addressed, even those resulting in dismissal, there might still be the possibility of restoration as a result of dialogue between Avail and other supporters, such as the sending church, counsellors, and so on.

## **Accountability to Avail whilst being accountable to another mission.**

We have a vision that can complement the help that another other agency provides. We accept that our role would be secondary to the main sending agency. If a mission worker is to benefit from our services, we expect to be in communication with the other mission during and after a successful application. It is important that we have parameters in which to help and assist.

We are members of...



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