

## CARING AND CONNECTING WITH YOUR MISSIONARIES

### Advice from MTW Missionaries

Missionaries often make a distinction between a “supporting” church and a “sending” or “home” church. Both are critical for the advancement of the kingdom through missionaries among unreached peoples. The ideas below are primarily for a missionary’s home church which initially sent them out and typically takes the lead role in discerning with them, supporting them, and caring for them.

### Communication

- Regularly initiate communication with your missionary, asking for updates, prayer needs, and financial needs.
- Give clear and direct expectations for newsletters and any reporting that you expect.
- Give grace and extra patience. Missionaries are some of the busiest people in the world and under extra strain from the nature of their work.
- Regularly update the missionary on happenings at the church.

### Knowing

- Have two or three key people who really know the missionary and their work. These are people who listen at length to the missionary’s stories, situation, and family happenings. Having a few people in the church who play this role helps the missionary feel deeply known and cared for.
- Offer your missionary substantial time to share on HMA if you are their home church.
- Offer for one or two key people in the church to visit the missionary on the field once per term.
- Build safety in your relationship with the missionary that lets them know it’s OK to struggle, to go through highs and lows, to “fail,” and to be discouraged.

### Logistics

- Missionaries need all kinds of practical helps. Here is a quick list of some ideas:
  - Airport pickup and drop off, housing, furniture, moving and storage help, vehicle, groceries, vacation, social invitation, help with aging parents, advice on getting things done locally in the U.S., a person to ask any silly question, babysitting, overnight babysitting, someone to travel with them to conferences to watch kids or when moving internationally to help with kids and setup, gifts for their kids’ birthdays ... and the list goes on.
- Select a point person in your church who is gifted at helps and at recruiting others to help. Let this person ask the missionary regularly for needs and offer various ways of helping. Encourage this person to form an informal “team” or people in the church they can regularly call on to help with particular needs.

### Counsel

- As a sending church who knows your missionary, your advice and consulting *continue* to be valuable throughout the missionary’s career.
- Coaching your missionary as needed through life choices, strategic decisions, and career decisions. Sometimes you can play a part in helping them craft their ministry and life vision and goals.

- Ask critical questions in verbal conversations with the missionary: lovingly ask about the missionary's spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical well-being.
- Help your missionary surround themselves with a customized member care team. This can consist of counselors, colleagues, friends, and pastors who regularly support the missionary.
- Connect with the missionary's sending organization and field leadership. Give input on major field decisions as appropriate (or at least stay well informed and let the field educate your church on these decisions). Decisions can include field location placement, team membership, making plans like sabbaticals and changing fields, retirement decisions, even dating relationship decisions, etc.
- Offer to help mediate in times of conflict—either on a mission team or between missionaries and national partners. Do so in coordination with field leadership and the sending agency.
- Recommend to your missionary various trainings, counseling services, rest, and vacations, etc.

### **Advocacy**

- Sometimes you need to make sure your missionary is getting what they need. Things can “fall through the cracks” or be a bit dysfunctional in mission agencies, on mission teams, in field leadership and member care structures, and in Presbyteries. Advocate for the needs of your missionary. Listen to their needs and perspective and become a voice for them.
- As a sending church, you have a biblical and gospel mandate to be bold, confident, and assertive as needed. Sometimes the senior pastor is needed to personally intervene in these types of cases.