

## Send Them Well

God has commissioned the local church to send out laborers into his harvest fields.

This divine responsibility involves much more than financial support. In order for missionaries to have successful, sustained ministry in unreached areas of the globe, they must be properly prepared and upheld through prayer, encouragement, and practical assistance.

Whether your church is sending out its first missionaries or looking for ways to increase its involvement those already on the field, the five points below offer ideas for sending missionaries well—to the glory of God.

### SEND THEM PRAYERFULLY

“Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,” Ephesians 6:19.

Prayer is the life-blood of missions. God calls, sustains, and rewards prayer. As you know, for your missionaries to be successful, you and your church must pray. But developing a corporate practice of prayer for missions requires work.

Ideas to Implement:

Pray for a missionary by name every Sunday from the pulpit.

Email your church members a missionary update every Monday so they can join together in praying specific requests.

Email your missionaries specific Bible verses that you are praying over them.

Follow up on specific prayer needs that your missionaries have shared.

Use creative methods, including pictures of your missionaries, in your ministries to children and teen to encourage prayer support.

Pray for the country(s) in which your missionaries are serving, and follow current news or political events of that region.

Mail your missionaries a note every month. Tell them you're praying!

Questions to Consider:

Who is the person who should collect prayer needs from your missionaries and share them with the pastoral staff and church body?

How will the pastoral team implement prayer for your missionaries as part of their routine in the life of the church?

SEND THEM FINANCIALLY

“Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing,” Titus 3:13.

Finances are typically the first thing that we think of when sending or supporting missionaries, and for good reason. It takes money to do missions!

Not every church has the same financial abilities to send people off to the field, but they do have opportunities for generosity and to bless their missionaries.

Ideas to Implement:

Invite your missionaries to present to small groups or Sunday School classes to invite individuals to personally support them.

Set up lunch meetings between your missionaries and key business people in the church who can join in on the effort.

Personally call other pastor friends and schedule a meeting for them to meet your missionaries, giving them your full endorsement. (Note: don't just ask your friend to set up a meeting; schedule the meeting right then, while you're on the phone.)

Ask your missionaries what gift cards would be most helpful, and recruit the church to provide those! Find out both needs and ways to splurge on them.

Questions to Consider:

How much does your church plan to contribute to your missionaries' financial needs?

How much do you hope church members will contribute individually in addition to that?

What percentage of funding do you hope to see your missionaries raise in 12 months?

SEND THEM RELATIONALLY

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you," Philippians 1:3.

Loneliness and heartache are some of the most commonly shared missionary experiences and some of the main reasons for leaving mission work. One of the most practical ways to keep missionaries from being out of sight and out of mind is to dedicate a care team for them.

Ideas to Implement:

Form a dedicated missionary care team for each missionary family. While this could be an existing Sunday School class or small group, we recommend hand-picking a dedicated team to care for them.

The care team should have regular communication with the missionary—not as "status updates," but as "life updates" to listen, pray, encourage, and motivate in support raising. One team member should be specifically chosen to encourage the missionary's children and be an advocate as they too are on this journey.

Find ways to bless the missionary! Remember birthdays and anniversaries, write notes, send gifts, and visit them.

Remind them that you are partnering on a team with them. Some churches have gotten matching t-shirts, or found other creative ways to visualize this.

Be a "safe zone" for your missionaries to talk about both the discouragements and the blessings.

Questions to Consider:

Your missionaries need a care team. Who should be a part of that dedicated care team?

PREPARE THEM FOR HARSHIPS

"For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death," 2 Corinthians 1:8-9.

Missions is a uniquely hard calling. There are physical challenges, cultural challenges, emotional challenges, and spiritual attacks unlike any other job or calling—and these impact the whole family!

Ideas to Implement:

One of the first hardships for new pre-field missionaries can be fundraising while working another job, or needing to quit their current job before being fully funded. Is there someone in the church who can provide missionaries in this situation with a part-time job? Or would the church be willing to hire them part time?

There will be weeks or possibly months when the percentage of new support doesn't go up. During this time, your missionaries will need constant encouragement and help to rethink strategies. And then, of course, celebrate with them when that percentage does go up!

Find out what challenges your missionaries on the field are currently facing and look for ways to encourage and help them.

Questions to Consider:

How often will someone from the church connect with your missionaries to discuss how they are doing? Set up a recurring calendar invitation now.

What hardships do you expect your missionaries may go through during their years on the mission field?

What are ways to prepare in advance for those hardships?

What are ways your church can come alongside your missionaries in encouragement?

SEND THEM SECURELY

"Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble," Proverbs 21:23.

The top reason missionaries get forced out of a country is because they were discovered online as being connected to Christian evangelism. These discoveries harm not only the North American missionary, but often cause more harm—sometimes including jail time or other grave consequences—to the nationals connected to their ministry.

Be secure in how you talk about your missionaries:

Do not publish a picture of their faces online. Do not use both first and last names online (try first name + last initial).

Do not publish exact locations online.

Be secure in how you talk to your missionaries:

Use secure messaging apps like Signal and avoid those known for data leaking.

Use creative language like “dunking” to describe baptism or “brother” to describe another Christian.

In most places it’s legal to be a Christian, but it’s not legal to proselytize. Avoid clear language discussing evangelism.

Always avoid negative comments about a country’s political situation.

We encourage churches to train anyone who interacts with missionaries in the above information. Make a list of who needs training. Set a potential date or dates for this training to take place.

As local churches proactively pray, support, care for, prepare, and protect their missionaries, those on the field will be strengthened to continue in ministry, and the unbelievers around them will have an opportunity to hear about Christ. For the sake of the gospel, we must send missionaries well.