



Running Effective Support Team

Church is about fellowship and community. Likewise, Adopting A Missionary should not be a solitary activity. Consequently, we strongly recommend that groups or teams adopt missionaries. Bible study groups and Sunday school classes can be effective at praying, encouraging, and supporting missionaries. However, we have found that support teams that are made up of people who have made individual commitments to Adopt A Missionary and then come together as a team are much more effective.

Pray

Samuel Chadwick said, "The only concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when **we** pray." Prayer is where the action is—supporting and sustaining those on the fields of the world. God is a God of community and calls us to corporate prayer; "where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" Matt 18:20. Effective teams pray together.

Support teams that are made up of people who have made individual commitments to Adopt A Missionary and then come together as a team are much more effective.

As a team you can use the OMF prayer suggestions found in the Introduction.

Encourage and Communicate

We wouldn't invite our children over for a family dinner every year or two, or wait to hear an up date from the pulpit on how they were doing in Sunday school. Because missionaries are so far away, it is even more important to do our best to make them feel like they are still part of the family. Therefore, we need to communicate and encourage our adopted missionaries not only as individuals but also as a team. We are exhorted in 1 Thes 5:11 to "Encourage one another and build each other up." As a team we can more effectively support our missionaries than we can alone. We can leverage our communication, support, prayer, and material support.

Come up with creative ways you can show your missionaries they are still part of the family. Send them a little card signed by the group saying you were praying for them, set a time for the group to talk with them on the phone or chat over the internet, or send a care package from the team—as a team you can leverage the gifts of everyone to really bless your missionary.

When your missionaries are home on furlough, have them over for a team dinner. Ask them to share about what is going on in their lives and have them tell some stories. Doing something special for them soon after they arrive is always a HUGE encouragement—it communicates you really do care and that they were important to you.

Below are some special things you can do as a team soon after your missionaries arrive from the field to demonstrate encouragement and show your love to them.

- Ensure your missionaries have a good place to stay that will be refreshing.
- Help them get a car to borrow.
- Offer to pick them up at the airport or just meet them there; make them feel special and appreciated with flowers, balloons, and/or banners.
- When they arrive, they will most likely be tired from the trip; ensure they have a quiet place to recover and rest.
- Plan some meals for them; however, you might want to find out what their plans are first.
- Have some gift certificates for meals in town so they don't have to cook. Fast food gifts certificates are great—it is quite common for them to be craving a simple American made hamburger...You remember the “Big Mac Attack?”
- Create a welcome basket. Write them a note encouraging them, have gifts, toys, or games for the children (games and toys they can play during their stay) to keep them entertained and out of mother's hair.
- Decorate the place—make a big deal about their return, make them feel welcome. While decorating, inspect the house to ensure they have all they need (like enough beds, towels, toiletries, dish wash soap, etc...)
 - If it is Christmas, decorate the house accordingly and put up a Christmas tree, maybe put some gifts underneath the tree.
- Stock the place they are staying in with basic foodstuff (pre-package foods like Easy Mac and pizza pockets for children are HUGE).
- Things change, update them on the changes that have occurred, new places to shop, supply them with a current map, and any laws that might have changed that they should be aware of (car seat laws, cell phone laws, speed limits, etc...).
- **IMPORTANT:**
 - Missionaries need to a time to report what God has been doing in their ministry. At the very least schedule a time for them to share with your team, but if you can get a larger audience for them to share with that would be a HUGE encouragement. It helps them feel like the work they are doing for the Lord is noticed and appreciated. Having a missionary report has a biblical precedence; when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and Jerusalem for their first *home assignment* (Acts 14:27 and 15:4), each church gathered together and heard a report on all that God had done through them.



Material Support

The lack of financial support can weigh heavy on a missionary family. Especially, when special needs come up that require immediate attention. Examples could be: surgery, flight home because of a death in the family, school fees, or a car accident. Leveraging a team's resources can be very effective at meeting immediate the one time needs of your missionary.

Other ways to leverage the team's resources:

On the field:

- Teams can be very effective in covering care packages, birthdays, anniversaries, and special events.

- Nothing excites kids more than receiving a box from back home. Consider giving a package every quarter. It doesn't have to cost a lot; snacks and other "comfort items" are just perfect. Leveraging your team and the church can really spread the costs around.
- Don't forget travel time for gifts such as Christmas; sometimes it can take up to 4-6 months for a package to arrive. Better to be early vs. late. However, late is better than nothing—it is quite common for missionaries to be receiving Christmas packages in April.
- Don't forget about customs, duty, and other fees that missionaries might have to pay for their gift.
- Do your missionaries need any school supplies? Remember many missionary kids (MK's) are home schooled so new curriculum is needed every year. Other items: Calculators (graphing), software (encyclopedia and other reference materials), books, pens, pencils, staplers, scissors, and backpacks.
- Some missionaries are shy about sharing their needs often—ask them directly (“I am going to send you school supplies so I would rather get what you want rather than what you don't)

Bless you missionaries on furlough—remember the cost of living back home is often higher than in the field. Their money will not go as far as it normally does:

- Give them some gifts certificates for the local grocery store. If they are on an extended furlough, consider doing this a few times.
- Missionaries travel, consider purchasing them gas cards.
- Often missionaries will not carry a lot of clothes while they are traveling or were planning to update their wardrobe while back in the U.S. Consider giving them gift certificates for the local department or clothing store.
- Offer to host their children while your missionaries go out on a date.
- Do you know someone with a time-share they can use?
- Are there any activities your missionaries might enjoy?
 - A trip to the local amusement park?
 - Get them some sporting equipment. (People have always blessed me with a mountain bike while on furlough.)
 - Tickets to a professional sporting event?
 - Take them ice skating...some MK's have never seen a rink.
- Passing through: Many missionaries are just passing through your area to visit churches, friends, family and friends.
 - Offer them a place to stay to avoid paying for a motel/hotel.
 - Offer to let them use your laundry facilities.
 - Make a lunch for the road.

Support Team Activities

Working with others to support your Adopted Missionary, sharing information, and praying together is vitally important. This can be done in a number of ways.

- Set aside a few minutes each time your bible study, class, or group meets to hear any new updates about your adopted missionary and pray for them.
- Set up a special meeting/party and pray for them, call them on the phone.



In his book, [Serving as Senders](#), Neal Pirolo suggest that every missionary **MUST** have a support team to cover the following:

- Identifying the cross-cultural workers in your fellowship.
- Maintaining accountability in ministry.
- Confirming and encouraging spiritual growth (Before they go, on the field, and when they return.)
- Managing business affairs. (Money, Taxes, Health, and Death)
- Attending to personal details. (Material goods, material goods, family matters, ministry needs)
- [Re-entry](#) (*We have a separate chapter just for this subject!!*)

If you are serious about being an effective support team, we strongly suggest that you read this book. Chapters 4 (Logistics) and 7 (Re-entry) are especially important for teams.

Be an Advocate

- Special needs will arise for your missionary; mobilize your team and church to meet this need.
- Invite others to join your team and adopt your missionary.
- Get the word out.
 - Ensure your missionary is on the church website. Is it current?
 - Is there a location for prayer cards or news letters in your church? Is it current? Are prayer cards available? If not, ask to have a location set aside for your missionary.

Resources

- Neal Pirolo, *Serving As Senders*. You can get it from www.eri.org/publications.htm (it is also available in Spanish and about 20 other languages).