

Guiding Principles of Missionary Support For Home Groups

I. Goal: To provide loving care for our missionary families based on 1 Peter 1:22 "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart." The Missions Task Force has as one of its major goals to assist home groups in becoming Barnabas Encourager Teams for each of our currently supported missionaries.

II. Method: We desire to provide meaningful missionary information to home group leaders about our currently supported missionaries. We are excited that the home group structure is so well suited for individual missionary focus and, as such, will be able to provide meaningful support in the following biblical areas: (1) moral support; (2) logistics support; (3) financial support; (4) prayer support; (5) communication support; and, (6) re-entry support; (7) Barnabas short term encourager trips.¹

III. Understanding the Role of the Missionary Advocate: Each missionary has an "Advocate." The Advocate serves as the main point of contact between the missionary and Immanuel's Church and is an official member of the Mission's Task Force. The Advocate knows the intimate details of the missionary's work and can share necessary information to begin a relationship with the missionary of your calling. **It is absolutely critical that you contact the missionary's advocate because many of our missionaries have very important security guidelines that must be followed for their protection and for the protection of the indigenous believers that they seek to serve. See attached list of missionaries and missionary advocates.**

Advocate Definition: Based on 1 John 2:1, the Greek word for advocate is "Parakletos," which means intercessor, consoler, comforter. The dictionary defines "advocate" as a supporter, backer, promoter, sponsor, and campaigner.

IV. How can our home group assist a missionary Advocate in becoming a "Barnabas" Encourager Team to an Immanuel's currently supported missionary?

1. By providing moral support (II Corinthians 7:5-6)

"...this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn--conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted (parakaleo) us by the coming of Titus..."

Be available for your missionary to listen to his/her struggles by e-mail, letter, telephone calls, even faxes--be creative. It is important that the missionary knows that there is a team of people behind him. In secular war there is an acknowledged ratio of support personnel to frontline soldiers. In WW II the ratio was 15 to 1; in the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the ratio was 50 support workers per frontline soldier. Spiritual warfare, which all true missionary work is, demands no less an emphasis. In the 1700's the Moravians of Central Europe enlisted 4 senders for each goer. The Student Volunteer Movement sent 20,000 frontline missionaries and there were 80,000 committed to care for those who went.

Resources: Shadow of the Almighty: The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot, by Elisabeth Elliot; Bruchko by Bruce Olson; Vanya by Myrna Grant; I Dared to Call Him Father by Bilquis Sheikh, Eternity in Their Hearts by Don Richardson

¹ Taken from "Serving As Senders" by Neal Pirolo (How to care for your missionaries while they are preparing to go, while they are on the field, and when they return home.)

2. Logistics support (2 Timothy 4:13)

"When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments."

Be willing to send requested items, such as books, tapes, etc.--we have even shipped a computer on occasion.

3. Financial support (Phil 4:18)

"I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."

"The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them."

While the church provides the missionary's primary financial contribution in its monthly support, it is perfectly acceptable if your home group provides a "gift" toward a specific project that your missionary is involved in, i.e., publication of Scripture portions or funds towards tools that will help the missionary accomplish his work among his specific people group.

4. Prayer support (Ephesians 6:19)

"Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel..."

Prayer is the most important contribution we can give to our missionaries, their families and the people they are working among. It is also important to communicate to your missionary that you are praying for him. Be sure to use the *Monthly Prayer Guide* provided in the Sunday bulletin to guide your prayers. Also, make sure that you either get on your missionary's newsletter mailing list or pick up a copy of your missionary's latest newsletter at the Mission station in the rotunda. Current copies are always available.

Resource: Touch the World Through Prayer, Wesley Duewel; Destined for the Throne, Paul Billheimer; Operation World, Patrick J. Johnstone (an excellent volume!)

5. Communication support (Philippians 2:19)

"I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you."

Communicate, communicate, communicate by e-mail, letters, birthday cards, anniversary cards, cards of encouragement signed by your entire home group, Christmas greetings, etc. Have the children in your home group draw pictures and send along to the missionary's children--send unblown balloon, hair ribbons, stickers, anything that will let the children know that they are cared for. We have heard that it is very difficult to get good children's books and cassette tapes overseas--send along a book that has been a particular blessing to your family. It could be for the missionary's family or for use in his ministry.

The missionary's Advocate can share with you a specific profile of your missionary family. This profile will include a picture, birthdates of all family members, wedding anniversary, if appropriate, people group association, country of service, how to send packages, etc.

Resource: We Really Do Need to Listen, Reuben Welch (Impact Books)

6. Re-entry support (Acts 14:26-28)

"From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples."

If you are in regular communication with your missionary, you will be aware of when he is returning home for a visit. It will be such a blessing to him to gather the home group to hear of his work, pray for him, celebrate victories, encourage him through the hard times, find out how the group can specifically pray for him and his ministry. We will also seek to provide a public arena for your missionary before the whole church.

7. Become a Barnabas on the field--consider visiting your missionary individually or as a home group (Acts 11:21-27)

"The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts."

Use your vacation time to visit and encourage your missionary. Many of our most meaningful and memorable trips have been those dedicated to serving and encouraging our missionaries.

Resources: Vacations With A Purpose, Kim Hurst, Chariot; Stepping Out: A Guide to Short-Term Missions, YWAM Publishing

V. If our home group decides to adopt a currently supported missionary, what steps should we take next?

1. Contact the missionary's advocate to get your missionary's profile and *security information*(very important).
2. If your missionary has major security issues, appoint one person in your home group to organize communication with your missionary. That person should keep in close contact with the missionary's advocate until he/she is comfortable about the wording of e-mail messages, (avoiding words such as "mission, missionary, converts, church, etc.). If there are no security concerns, we encourage everyone to communicate directly with the missionary.
3. Use any and all of the above types of support as you pray for your missionary and be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit in providing new and unique types of support!

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. Hebrews 6:10