



Serving as Senders

No Christian worker, whether at home or overseas, can go it alone. Missionaries need the support of a team. God may not be calling you to go, but He may have put mission on your heart and called you to be part of His work around the world. There are many ways to get involved from the home end.

What can you do to support missionaries in your church?

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?”

Romans 10:14-15

The automatic response to the word 'support' when thinking of mission is to think of money. But financial support is just one of the many kinds of support that churches and individuals can give. Romans 10:14–15 makes it clear that those who 'send' have a role in missions just as much as those who go.

How can you offer support?

Whatever your gift, you can be involved in showing Christian compassion and sharing the message of Christ around the world. God may have given you a heart to pray - for an individual, a country, or a specific group of people. You may express your concern for those yet to hear the gospel by sharing your financial resources. Gifts — whether for SIM's ministry in general, a specific project, or an individual missionary — will make a difference in the lives of men, women, and children . . . for eternity.

Perhaps your skills are practical and you could distribute a missionary's prayer letter, keep in touch with them regularly with news from home, or keep an eye on their house. There are many ways to be part of the team supporting and encouraging them in their work.

Neal Pirollo's article [‘Raising the Standard of Missionary Care’](#) (used by permission) focuses on the significance of supporting and caring well for those who go.

1 Before They Go

Moral support

Encourage them in what they are about to do. This may counterbalance some of the less positive comments that they may hear such as 'Why throw away your education?' or 'Why don't you get a real job?'

Prayer

Praying with them and for them, and attending a service at their church are also great ways to show support during this time of transition.

Practical support

You could volunteer to act as their prayer co-ordinator, send out their prayer letter and be a contact point for their news. If you have the space, you could store some of their belongings, or look after their house whilst they are away. You could offer to send them church newsletters or CDs.

You can also offer support by visiting elderly parents, providing a second home to university-age kids, and serving as executor of the missionary's will.

2 While They Are There

Prayer

Once the missionary is on the field, your prayer support can literally change the world. You can pray more intelligently and specifically by reading the missionary's prayer letter and using Operation World. [Ways to pray for missionaries](#) will give you more ideas of how to pray for them, and help you to get beyond the 'God bless the missionaries' stage.

Find a system that works for you to help you pray regularly for mission. Why not start up a prayer support group for missionaries in your church, or find one or two other people to pray with you? Pray for missionaries unceasingly (Ephesians 6:18) as you go about your daily life. If you drop a note saying simply, 'I prayed for you today' that will be a great encouragement. Finally, as Jesus said in Matthew 9:35-38, pray for more people to join in the harvest.

Practical support

Involves keeping in touch, and keeping them encouraged. Don't be overwhelmed at the thought of writing a long letter. Buy postcards, send an email or a text for a quick update. If you hate to write, you can phone (depending on cost and availability!), or send a CD . . . What would you miss if you were gone? Do you know your missionary's favourite things that they might miss from home? Chocolate bars, a book, a CD . . . all say, 'I care!' Be creative . . . let missionaries know that they can ask you for things they miss. Paul had this kind of relationship, and felt free to ask in 2 Timothy 4:13, 'And when you come, please bring the cloak . . . the books, but especially the parchments.'

3 Once They Are Home

Readjusting

Readjusting to life back home is often more difficult than learning to live in the foreign country, so re-entry support is vital. Professionally, financially, culturally and practically, a missionary will face much change, so will value sensitive support. Debbie Lovell-Hawker's article [Coming Home](#) gives an insight into the struggles many face when returning from a period of service overseas.

Practical Support

A missionary may need a car or somewhere to stay when they come home. They may simply need someone to listen, and enjoy looking at the photos they took. Opportunities to speak to small groups about their experiences will be welcome. But someone to go with them on their first visit to the supermarket after they get back could help too.

Get Involved

You can be a vital part of world mission. Now is a great time to 'adopt' a missionary. [Contact us](#) and we can put you in touch with someone in your area.

Read more:

Neal Pirollo's books 'Serving as Senders' and 'The Re-entry Team: Caring for your returning missionaries' are both available through the [Oscar website](#).

'Burn up or Splash Down - surviving the culture shock of re-entry' by Marion Knell (published by Authentic Books). Go to the [Oscar website](#) to see a list of on-line booksellers.

Useful articles (pdf format):-

['Coming Home' by Debbie Lovell-Hawker](#)

['Raising the Standard of Missionary Care' by Neil Pirollo](#)