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Practical Ideas for Caring for Missionaries

Before They Leave

- Ask them what their needs are (materially and spiritually), and pray earnestly for them.
- Help them to find information about the country they are going to and the people they will be working among by going to the library, reading missions periodicals, keeping an eye out for articles in the daily paper.
- Be available for them. Encourage them as their emotions vary just before they go.
- Help them find information on needed equipment by reading Consumer Report articles, discussing with others, etc.
- Ask them about what they are learning as God takes them down the path that will lead them to a foreign country.
- Help them to get all the supplies that they need to take with them overseas. You can help them by running errands, or offering to take care of their children so that they can more easily run errands.
- Drop dinner off at their house their last few nights so that they can concentrate on accomplishing those last few tasks.
- Offer to have them stay with you if they need a place just before they leave.
- Help them pack the items they'll store here in the U.S., as well as the items they'll take with them or ship.
- Treat them to something special just before they go.
- Take them to the airport as a team and have a send-off there.
- Have an open house or "Informal Commissioning" service for them before they leave so they can pray with and say good-bye to many of their friends.
- Host a reception for them at Bethlehem after their Sunday morning church commissioning

While They Are Gone

- Pray earnestly for them.
- Write to your missionary often.
- Keep up-to-date with what your missionary is doing so that you can encourage them in the work and share their work with the Bethlehem family.
- Remember their birthdays, holidays, and other special days with a card, gift, email, or telephone call.
- Send emails, if possible, to them occasionally so that they have current, up-to-date information on their team.
- Pass on any special prayer requests to the church office so that the pastoral staff knows how to pray and so that it can be shared during the regularly scheduled Bethlehem prayer meeting times.
- Send fun "care packages" occasionally to encourage your missionary or to help meet some of their needs.
- Send your missionary articles of special interest out of the newspaper or magazines.
- Consider visiting your missionary on the field.
- Send them a good book you've especially appreciated.
- Mail out their prayer letters for them.
- Help to take care of your missionaries' home while they are away.

When They Return

- Pray earnestly for them.
- Be at the airport to welcome them back home.
- Host an open house so that they can see many of their friends and update them.
- Help them to organize a time at Bethlehem where they can show their photos and update the body.
- Praise the Lord with them for how God used them overseas.

- Mail out their prayer letters.
- Be available to help them readjust to life in the U.S.
- Have housing ready for them when they arrive home.
- Have a few groceries for them in their refrigerator and cupboards so that they don't have to go shopping right away.
- Help them to find a car to borrow during their furlough time.
- Help them to catch up with what is current, what's in, and what's out. Provide them with a cultural update on trends, U.S. & local news, and fashions.
- Bring dinner by their house for the first few days.
- Introduce them to new people at Bethlehem.
- Help them to get caught up on the latest happenings here at Bethlehem.
- Listen to them, be available. Show interest in their ministry and overseas life.
- A month before they come back, begin keeping a calendar for them, setting up times when people can see them so that they aren't so overwhelmed when they return.
- Include them in social activities
- Offer vacation possibilities.
- Care for family needs like babysitting, loaning a car, providing car maintenance, and communication support.
- Introduce the children to other children their age.
- Give them space.

How to Help During Times of Political Upheaval or Natural Disaster

- Stay informed.
- Volunteer to help if the need arises.
- Pray and develop a team who will pray.
- Be generous in your giving.

- Don't insist on regular contact with your missionary.
- If missionaries have had to be evacuated from crisis situations, provide a healing community.
- If re-deployment is necessary, provide financial support, prayer support, encouragement, and input.

How to Help a Missionary During a Time of Personal Crisis

- Provide a safe place to debrief and to seek prayer and emotional support.
- Be concerned and pray, but don't pry.
- Give the missionary emotional and physical space if needed.
- Offer pastoral and member care when requested.
- Continue to contribute financially or provide for emergencies with one time gifts.
- Write notes of encouragement.

The Care of Missionary Kids (MKs)

MKs are kids whose dads and moms serve as cross cultural missionaries. They are normal kids who are neither growing up strictly in their parents' culture nor growing up exclusively in the culture of the country where they live. As a result, their lives are being shaped by both their parents' culture and their host culture; this forms a different, third culture. That's why MKs are often called TCKs (Third Culture Kids). Are they normal? Certainly! MKs grow up in extraordinary

environments that impact their lives—and we trust that they, too, will impact others for Christ.

- Build a Relationship

MKs are kids with a lot of adults in their lives. It's unrealistic to expect them to know you when your involvement in their lives is limited to once every five years. Be consistent in communicating with them and their families. Visit them overseas when you have a chance, exchange pictures, send the Sunday comics, be involved.

- Be Informed

Communicating with someone who makes an effort to know basic facts about your life and your country is much more enjoyable than talking with someone who merely makes assumptions. The more informed you are, the better your questions and comments will be. Learn more about TCKs and their world; they have a unique set of experiences, skills and worldview. For more information, see www.tckinteract.net and www.tckworld.com.

- Meet Felt Needs

Getting to know MKs will help you know how best to help them in ways that are meaningful to them. International calling cards, a home away from home, a gift card, or a subscription to a magazine especially for TCKs such as "Among Worlds" (write to amongworlds@tckinteract.net) all make great gifts for MKs.

- Help Them Transition

MK life is filled with transition. You can help make the transitions easier. Remember that coming to the U.S. is probably not coming home for them. They are "constant immigrants" with the ability to make unique contributions. As immigrants, they often find the "normal" overwhelming and the "extraordinary" usual. Introduce them to peers and mentors, serve as a liaison between the MK and their new school. Give the MK room to observe and make decisions before jumping in to an activity or a group.

- Pray

Pray for their health; their part in their parents' ministries; their adjustments to new places, schools, and ideas; their spiritual and emotional growth.