

How To Support Mission Partners

1. Use the Prayer Manual and pray for them, both in your private devotions, and in public worship. Use ideas in their newsletters for prayer topics. It is nice for the Mission Partners to know that they are prayed for, so sometimes drop them a line/email and let them know.
2. Learn about the country in which they are serving: geography /climate/ languages/ politics/religions/ issues facing the country. If you have children, encourage them to do a project on that country, as they will have a primary source for information. Within your Church, encourage Junior Church and groups such as Brownies/ BB etc to make links with the Mission Partner and learn more about that country. Encourage children, e.g. Junior Church, to exchange drawings with children where the Mission Partner is serving.
3. Read their newsletters and respond - sometimes Mission Partners spend a lot of time on their newsletters and they feel as if they are sending them out into Mission Partner ether!
4. A practical help is to offer to send them out anything they might find they need but cannot get locally. It is invaluable if there are a few people who have made this offer. For example, one Mission Partner was asked to run music and singing classes but, thinking she was there to teach theology, she had left all her music resources behind in the UK. So she had to rely on the kindness of friends in the UK to send out things to her.
5. Even in these days of emails, do send letters by post as it is nice to receive mail and often the local people like the foreign stamps from Mission Partners.
6. Make the occasional surprise phone call. When back on annual leave or furlough Mission Partners can feel bombarded but for the rest of the year they do not have much contact. Telephone lines are very clear these days - but just check the time difference so you do not wake one another up! If the technology that you and the Mission Partner can both access allows it, why not arrange a conversation by Skype?
7. Share news about your lives and what is going on where you are too. Relationships are two-way. Sometimes it can feel that Mission Partners have travelled thousands of miles away but their world has shrunk! New situations can be all-consuming but it is good to be kept in touch with folks from the past too, but do not make unreasonable demands on their time. Link Churches can share news of their Church life by sending Church magazines to their Mission Partners.
8. Churches in Link Districts or Link Churches can have a Notice Board in the Church, with a display of their Mission Partners. This is often done very well in the Church of England but not within Methodism. Update it regularly with their newsletters, photos, news from the country, e.g. if it makes your the BBC news. Encourage wider interest, e.g. amongst groups that use your premises, not just church groups.
9. It is nice to hear from friends, and prompt replies to emails sent by Mission Partners are appreciated but please avoid sending BIG emails i.e. bigger than 200KB without first checking with the Mission Partners. Emails can be problematic, e.g. poor connections/power cuts and power surges, and often there is no broadband.
10. One couple said how they had been touched to receive post from places where their Prayer Cards had been handed out even though they did not know the people. This had meant a lot to them: to think that others were remembering them and their work. But they asked that those who write do not necessarily expect replies!

11. If personal letters are received by anyone in Link Churches, please be aware that those are not for publication unless prior permission is sought.
12. Another couple said how it made their day one day to receive some packets of Angel Delight in the post. They had not had any for over 2 years. (This is not a hint to send Angel Delight to every Mission Partner in the Prayer Manual, just an example of some of the nice things that do happen to Mission Partners!)
13. Please do support their work by sending moneys to the Fund for World Mission at Methodist Church House 25 Marylebone Road London NW1 5JR as this is the fund that pays all Mission Partners and supports their work.
14. Money complicates the relationship between Mission Partners and their local context and increases the already prevalent idea that Mission Partners from the West mean money. This distorts partnership and is not helpful to the local Mission Partner. They have other things to do rather than administering moneys. Monetary gifts for their work can be fraught with problems: e.g. a recent example: a church held an event for the work of a Mission Partner. The Mission Partner did not know about this until a cheque for £200 arrived for him. He paid it into the account of where he was working. There then arose a difficult discussion between the Mission Partner and the local boss as to how this money should be spent. Both had very different ideas. The Mission Partner felt he just did not need this sort of hassle and would much rather the moneys had not come via him. It is far better to send money to the World Church Relationships (WCR) team of the Methodist church in Britain for their onward transmission as this reduces association of the money with the Mission Partner. Also, money sent to the WCR can be gift-aided but not money sent to an individual Mission Partner. Of course there are exceptional circumstances when a Mission Partner has made a specific request, e.g. money requested for books for a library.
15. Make your link more real by taking advantage of the periods of leave (also known as furlough) when the Mission Partner is in the UK. During such periods, Mission Partners will usually be available for preaching/speaking events. This can be as important for the Mission Partner in terms of “debriefing” as it can be enriching for British churches. When you know that a period of leave is approaching, contact can usually be made direct with the Mission Partner - in the first instance to check what might be possible. Bear in mind that (a) the leave period is also meant to be a time for rest and relaxation as well as a time to “report back” to the UK churches, (b) to avoid being overburdened with requests, the Mission Partner may not be able to fit in all that is requested of them and (c) each British Mission Partner is linked with certain District(s).
16. When a Mission Partner is invited to your church for an event, please do have travelling expenses ready for them. It is embarrassing and hard for the Mission Partner to ask for expenses, so courtesy asks that these be given as a matter of course.
17. Of course, support of your personal friends is important, but if you are a Methodist or an Anglican find out who are your link Mission Partners (e.g. through District of Diocese) and include them in your support too.
18. We know there are global warming issues involved in travel but if you are planning long haul flights, why not try and visit the Mission Partners with whom you are linked?

This was written in August 2007 across the ether by a group of Mission Partners who trained together at UCA, Selly Oak. Birmingham 2004/5