

CMS



CARING

for missionaries

WHO ARE THE EASIEST PEOPLE TO CARE FOR?

Those in our immediate vicinity, of course. For many people, that makes caring for missionaries quite tricky, because they are often only in our midst for a couple of months every few years.

Sadly, most missionaries find that the longer they are away from home, the less they hear from people at home. There is a flurry of contact immediately following each Home Assignment, but as the months and years pass, the contact, except from a faithful few, wears thin.

Ongoing care is essential for missionaries! Here are some ways that you can continue caring for missionaries, long after they have gone to their location.



2. WRITING

Writing letters to or emailing missionaries is a great way to show them you care, and to let them know you're praying for them. Here's how to write a great letter to your missionary:

- **In the opening letter** you write to a missionary, if you are unknown to them or have met them only once, make sure you introduce yourself, and explain how you came to be writing to them.
- **Let the missionaries know** that you have been praying for them! You could also include personal news, news from your church, or anything about daily life at home.
- You could also share **words of encouragement**, such as how you are personally encouraged by their ministry, what you are reading in the Bible at the moment, or a verse or story that will encourage them.
- Tell them **they don't need to write back** if they don't have time. Your letter is a gift, so it's not always helpful to ask lots and lots of questions that beg for a response and could become a burden.
- Unless you have a very close, mutually prayerful relationship, **don't include a list of your own personal woes**. Letters to missionaries are for their encouragement. If you have a problem that they can't help with, they may feel frustrated at being so far away and unable to assist, which won't help them to do their work.



WRITING TO MISSIONARIES IN SECURE LOCATIONS:

Do NOT include:

- **Christian language** – Bible, Christian, church, congregation, prayer/praying, baptism, converts, Sunday, Christmas, Easter...
- **Bible verses** or reference to the Bible
- **The name** of the organisation they work for or the key people who work in it – anything that might be found in an Internet search
- **Mentions** of local politics or governments

Here's a sample letter to a missionary serving in a secure location:

Dear _____,

I wanted to let you know that I have been thinking of you regularly. And the people we meet with every week also keep you in their thoughts. I was speaking to the state head of your company and he said that your work was going very well at every level, that you have many opportunities to do your work and that you feel well supported by the one we love the best. That is wonderful news!

Love _____.

You need to keep your message very general. Check it carefully before you send it because it is easy to slip up. In some locations it is vital to be very cautious.

Check on the website of the relevant missionary organisation for further advice.

3. IN CHURCH COMMUNITY

There are many ways you can promote care for your missionaries in church community. Here are some suggestions:

- **Make your missionaries' Home Assignment visits an event** – interviews in church, a meal together or a special cultural night are all great ideas. Hold another event at your church halfway through a missionary's tour, to refresh everyone's memory.
- **Take ten minutes from a service** to hand out paper and pens and get every member of the congregation to write short letters.
- **Publish fresh prayer points** in the church newsletter as often as possible. It is important to provide people with new, regular prayer points to keep them praying.
- **Pray through missionary prayer points** from the front of the church.
- **Run a mission week** at Sunday school, kids club or youth group. Tell the kids what the missionaries have been up to lately and show some photos if available, spend some time learning about the country and pray for the missionary.
- **Have the missionary's prayer card on the wall** or table at Bible studies each week, as a visual reminder that they are still a part of the community.



4. OTHER CREATIVE WAYS TO CARE

There are plenty of other creative ways you can care for your missionaries! Here are some fun suggestions:

- Talk with them directly by phone or by Skype.
- Donate Frequent Flyer points to them, if this is appropriate for their situation. This might be something you can do for them while they are on Home Assignment or to help them to get away on some annual leave while they are on location.
- Purchase an iTunes, Amazon or some other type of international gift card for them. You can either mail it to them or just email the activation code to them.
- Make a movie of friends, family, their church family, or familiar locations for them and send it, or put it on Vimeo or YouTube. There are secure ways of uploading movies onto the Internet but be very careful (and check with the mission agency) if you have a missionary in a secure location.
- If your missionary is serving in an urban area, use the Internet to find a local florist or food outlet and get them something fantastic delivered to the door.
- Find out what they are really missing or what items are really hard to find in their new country and send something to them. Organise a magazine or journal subscription for them. Again, check with your missionary before you do this for security, content, postal or Internet access issues.
- Get in touch with their family back at home and find out how they are doing. If they are Christians pray with them and if not, pray for them. Think of practical ways to serve the missionary's family members back at home, like mowing the lawn for their elderly parents.
- Mark on the calendar when you are going to do practical things to care for your missionaries personally, as a group or as a church. Plan to provide regular care and act upon those plans.

Important note:

Before sending anything, check with your missionary. Sometimes there are restrictions on sizes of parcels that can be received and it can be an expensive exercise for the missionary to retrieve it from the local authorities. Communicate and work with your missionary on the best way to get things through to them.



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For more suggestions on caring for missionaries go to

www.cms.org.au/care

