



Caring well for your mission partners

Mary Hodson - UFM Worldwide

What would mission partners say they would most like to have from their sending church?

- Shared vision
- Regular pastoral support
- Prayer

- “Sharing of the vision and an understanding of partnership. Prayer support. Community. Pastoral support/care”
- “Prayer support - both from individuals and wider sections of the congregation; a mission committee who are actively keeping in touch...and representing needs to the leadership as well as looking for ways to encourage the church in engaging further with mission”
- An advocate who is able to communicate on your behalf and bring your needs to the church regularly. A church who are committed to pray for you. The support of the leadership and pastors, pastoral care and regular contact, a willingness to visit, good listeners, invested in caring for us and family and children in particular.
- “A pastor with missionary vision”

This next hour...

Biblical perspective

What are your challenges?

What are the benefits?

Practicalities - how can we do it well?

- Spiritual care
- Communication
- Loving practical care

Biblical basis – 3 John 1-8

- Spirit of love
- Breadth of care (John and Gaius)
- “Fellow workers in the truth” – working in partnership

“You would do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God”

Also seen in the example of Paul....

What are your challenges?

- What challenges do you face in **engaging** your congregation with mission partners? (mindset)
- What practical challenges are you facing that inhibit supporting your mission partners well?

Common themes....

Mindset:

- Local needs
- “Westernising” influence
- No relevance to me here

Practicalities:

- Limited resources (incl. time)
- Communication and relational engagement
- Accountability/transparency

What about the benefits?

- Widens your vision
- See gospel work being lived out
- Helps local cross-cultural engagement
- New opportunities
- Anyone can be involved
- Inspires the young

Spiritual support

An extension of your flock – that need accountability and encouragement.

“We notice that missionaries thrive when they have a good solid sending church, that has a passion for mission and is motivated to support, both practically and spiritually. Also when the church understands that in sending missionaries it is also fulfilling part of God’s command to send and be a part of the Great Commission.”

How are they being refuelled in the Lord? Who are the ones encouraging them to stand firm?

Additional feedback

- Spiritual Accountability "It really makes it feel true that our church leadership is really shepherding us and has authority over us and we're not just lone rangers out doing our own thing with no accountability. We actually WANT good accountability, rather than to be just trusting our own instinct all the time without guidance."

"My church helped me prepare before I left...the eldership asked important and challenging questions that might have been difficult to ask if they weren't invested in my spiritual life."

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- Partnership in ministry – guidance in direction and focus
 - Having a link person for regular connection
 - Link with a home group
 - Recommend helpful resources
 - Sharing of Prayer needs – individual/whatsapp groups
 - Debrief and reviews with the church leadership team

Communication

Regularity – fosters trust, shows patterns, timely advice, reduces risks

Depth – consistency in relationship, deeper heart questions

“Sometimes the communication can seem generic i.e. send us 3 prayer points by Friday. Sometimes I would love a call rather than a catch all message. It is hard to truly share with a message like that.”

“I have 2 examples of churches. One has given me LOTS of money but no emotional/spiritual/pastoral support. The other has given me very limited money but has sent messages, spent prayer meetings praying for me, really taken a genuine interest...Money is needed but I would rather be struggling financially and have people walking this journey with me.”

Two way – sharing news; use them as a resource; partnership both ways

Accessibility

Visits – “We often felt like the church didn’t understand the pastoral needs of cross cultural missionaries living away from home. Sometimes it felt like they expected UFM to do the majority of the pastoral care, other times it felt like they thought we had the same needs as ministry partners working locally. This is where I think a visit in the first year might have really helped our pastor understand the situation we were in and how much we needed the church’s regular pastoral care.”

Delegation – not just the pastor! Mission team/link contacts/home groups/individual roles “It’s a whole body that sends a missionary and it’s the whole body that supports a missionary and you’re not just there on your own, you’re part of that body.”

Pastoral care is loving and practical

Be aware of the needs

Be aware of the whole family

"I guess our kids don't really connect with the church as they left when they were small and they don't really have friends there. In hindsight it would have been helpful to ask specific people to look out for our children in some way. I guess some homegroup picnics have done this in recent years by providing games for the children to feel involved."

How can you apply this?

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