

Christian Workers – resources for churches

# senders' guide

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## introduction

When someone enters into mission work abroad, the emphasis can often be placed on them taking the initiative and being the one in the active role. Their home church may wave them off with much prayer and promises to keep in touch but should it end there? What should the role of the sending church be as weeks become months and maybe even years? What sort of relationship should there be between the church as sender and the mission worker on the field and what makes up a healthy relationship that is nurturing for all? This paper explores some of these questions and points to further resources to equip churches to fulfil their vital role in supporting and encouraging the mission worker.

## in it together

Mission is a team game, not an individual exercise, and the team is made up of people with different skills and abilities, all committed to the same task of taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth (whether that's across the world, or across the street!). In fact, the team is any Church seeking to fulfil its calling to mission. This team will have three main groups of people, all necessary to fulfil this task:

1. **Goers – Matthew 28:18-20**
2. **Equippers – Ephesians 4:11-12**
3. **Senders – Romans 10:14-15**

We usually focus on those who go, often failing to realise that mission isn't just an individual exercise, it's something that the whole church can be involved in. If the church is an equipping church, hopefully it will have prepared the 'goer' well for the task ahead, both in building faith and equipping for ministry, through scriptural knowledge and development of gifts. That leaves the majority of the church congregation who are neither 'goers' nor 'equippers'. Their role, as part of the team, is to send.

## authority

As the great commission was given to the early church, the sending authority remains with and comes from the church. Senders, just like those who go, should initiate their ministry in, and remain connected to, the local church. This means that the sender does not work in isolation, but works under the guidance of the church and its leaders, and in partnership with all parties and organisations involved in their particular mission initiative or situation.

## the role of a Sender

A sender is a person whose life is committed to enabling others to go. They provide the support for missionaries on many different levels, right through their journey, before, during and after their time 'on the field'. The importance of this role cannot be under-estimated because without the consistency of support from the sender, the missionary is unable to fulfil his or her calling and recognising that all Christians are called to obey Jesus, the sender goes about the tasks of his or her calling with the same degree of commitment as the one they send. This "sending" becomes a crucial partnership role in the 'goers' ministry; unless they are 'sent' how do they 'go'?

## key areas of support

There are six main areas of support, under which most of the tasks of the sender will fall. It is these six areas that this guide aims to highlight and equip the reader for.

### 1. **Moral Support:** just being there

Whilst quite difficult to define, moral support is an important part of everyday life. Before anyone actively does anything to help, the fact that they are there and available should the need arise is support in itself. It's important for us to articulate our willingness to give moral support to those whom we seek to support, so that they can count us in the people who are behind and for them in their role.

Moral support also includes encouragement. We all need encouragement throughout our lives, but it's often more needed and valued in times of crisis, hardship or transition. Missionaries go through lots of transition, and each step provides its own set of challenges. It's vital that they not only feel supported through these times, but that they are also uplifted and encouraged by others. It may be that there is no-one in their location who fully understands and appreciates what they are going through, so the sender's role is crucial in coaching and encouraging them ... and 'being there' should they need them.

One of the most important tasks of a moral supporter is to listen. Giving an encouraging 'word in season' means you need to know what season it is. So, actively listening to the mission worker and reading their news (often between the lines!) will help you appreciate the issues faced by them. Of course, this isn't just a human exercise. All the time we're also listening for what God might be saying, or wanting us to say. The most encouraging and most valued 'word in season' is usually one that comes from someone who is both in tune with God and the needs of others. When these two come together, the words are like gold dust!

## 2. **Logistical Support:** all the practical bits and pieces

This is where support gets very practical. Whilst you may not have felt called to go, you may have practical gifts that your mission workers doesn't. The more things you can help your mission worker with, the more time they have to do their ministry. As part of the team, this means that your practical help directly affects what's happening on the field.

It may be that the person you're supporting needs a certain item that you can source and supply, or help with researching travel options. This is particularly useful if they don't have such good access to the Internet. Whilst they are away perhaps they would appreciate someone to manage their property or bills, or sort and re-direct their post. Also, offering to print and distribute newsletters.

➔ See OSCAR website for helpful logistical resources:

Arranging travel [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/travel](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/travel)

Shipping items [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/shipping](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/shipping)

Sourcing supplies [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/purchasing](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/purchasing)

## 3. **Financial Support:** stewardship, lifestyle and giving

Financial support is so much more than the act of giving money. As Christians, giving should primarily be something that is conducted under God's guidance and in obedience to Him. Often it's about moving or re-distributing God's resources, helping Him get them from where they are to where He wants them to be.

Being generous is also about the devolution of personal choice, meaning that we limit our lifestyle choices so that others with greater or particular needs might improve theirs. Like the air we breathe and the water we drink, financial resources are never really ours ... just entrusted to us for a time. After all, as the old saying goes 'you can't take it with you', but your decisions as to what you do with it whilst you're alive can have eternal impact.

➔ Some resources to help you in this role can be found at [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/finance](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/finance)

How much and how often you decide to give is up to you, but there are some principles that you might like to consider as you decide on your financial support:

- **Have a Plan**

Plan your giving. Rather than give out of what's left over, plan your giving with your budget. This both helps with consistency and helps us to see just how much we're spending. Most mission workers appreciate receiving a regular amount, so they too can have some financial stability and plan their expenditure.

- **Set some Targets**

Decide what or who you want to give to, along with approximate amounts or proportions. We may decide to divide our giving between the support of individuals and organisations, or between 'home' and 'overseas'.

➔ See [www.stewardship.org.uk](http://www.stewardship.org.uk) for information on giving accounts.

- **Check Accountability**

We need to be sure that the money we give is being handled efficiently and used in the way we intended. Don't be afraid to ask for a clarification of procedures. But do remember that 'accountability' does not mean expecting the worker to justify how they spend the money that has been given to them for living. After all, we would not expect to explain to our employers how we spend our salary.

For a few, one extremely valuable way to help a worker is to be part of their 'accountability' or 'close support group' – but this is something that would normally be initiated by the worker unless you know them very well.

➔ See Stewardship's [Finance for Living series](#) for more on accountability.

- **Evaluate Periodically**

This will help us keep up with both our own financial situation and the needs of those to whom we give. However, it's also a spiritual exercise. If God is prompting us to change our plan so that it can better reflect His calling on us as a supporter, we need to be open to this. If you do decide to decrease someone's support amount, give them plenty of notice as they may need to make up the shortfall from somewhere else.

- **Don't just give**

It is tempting to think that once we have given our finance, we've done our bit. This is a reminder that support is so much more than the giving of finance. It is about being a partner in the ministry; involving heart, mind and wallet.

- **Be Sacrificial**

Rather than just give out of your excess, make some sacrifices that release funds that you can give. This makes an important connection with giving ... that it's not just an afterthought but is at the heart of who we are. Sometimes it's also appropriate to respond with compassion and give in faith so don't reduce your giving to being no more than a standing order from your account.

- **Pray**

Behind all of this is the need to lift our finances before God and seek His guidance in our giving. This is so important if we are really to have an impact on His Kingdom.

#### 4. **Prayer Support:** alone and with others

The people we send should be covered with prayer. This is the key to breakthroughs in their ministry and the release of God's blessing. That's why prayer is so important. There are two aspects to prayer support.

The first is including them in your personal prayers. Whether you're someone who has a place and space to pray, or whether you pray better when doing something else (driving or walking), it's good to have something that prompts you in your prayer. A photo or prayer card in a prominent place will remind you to pray. However, it's not easy to know what to pray when you have little experience or knowledge of their situation. Using their newsletters and other communications may give you some idea of the particular issues they are facing. If they're active online, use their website, blog or Facebook page to remind you about their current situation. There are some issues common to most missionaries and there are various resources around to help you pray through these.

The second aspect of prayer is corporate prayer (i.e. with others in your church or group). Having some time set apart to pray either in services or at other times is important for the church in their support of the mission workers they send. The key here is 'be creative'. In a group gathering you can use images or other visual aids to stimulate prayer. It's also a chance to fuel the prayer (and all those present) with information about the situation you're praying for. As well as provide your church's mission workers with important prayer cover, it will keep their needs in the minds of the congregation members and prompt them to pray individually too.

➔ See [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/support-roles/prayer-support](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/support-roles/prayer-support)

#### 5. **Communication Support:** keeping in touch

Whatever support you give to someone, communicating with them is an important part of it. Even more so if the person you are supporting is a distance away. As you're not able to meet for coffee or stop for a chat as you see them during your daily lives, it's important to think about when and how you might keep them informed, resourced and encouraged. With so many forms of communication, you may gravitate to the one that feels most natural for you but don't forget that there are many ways for you to keep in touch. Here are some of them, along with suggestions for their use:

- **Email**

Now that most missionaries and supporters have email, this is probably the primary way to keep in contact. Newsletters are often sent by email, as it is easy and cheap to keep many people informed at the same time. It can, however, seem a little impersonal and one way. Having an ongoing conversation is very stilted by email. Using Facebook chat or other social networking facilities can be good for brief online conversations.



- **Letter/Card/Postcards**

Most missionaries still love to receive things in the post, and a personal, handwritten letter, card or postcard will often be really appreciated. It's a good way to get a short message across. A card or postcard with a few chosen words of support or encouragement can make someone's day.

- **Call**

Most mission workers have access either to the Internet or a telephone, if not permanently then at least at certain times. This makes it possible (and usually cheap) to call them. If the telephone is one of your (or their) favourite ways to communicate, a 10 minute call can be a real boost. 'Skype' is a popular online facility amongst many missionaries. Unless you're planning to surprise them, it may be good to arrange a time with them in advance.

- **Send/share Photos**

Photos are a great way of keeping them up-to-date and involved in what's going on back home. These can be of people, church events or local changing scenes. Nowadays there are numerous ways online to share photos. Find one that works for you both. Flickr is popular.

- **Send a Recorded Message**

This can be good for a family or housegroup to do. It's less pressured than a live conversation and, therefore, suits some people and situations better. You can do a video or just an audio message. Rather than sending the file (which is likely to be large) by email, it would be better to upload and share it through an online service. YouTube is popular and has a private sharing option.

- **Visit**

The ideal is face to face communication but you don't have to wait until they return home. Why not plan to go out and visit? Such a visit can show care and concern and be a great encouragement for your mission worker. However, do check with the mission worker about this as visits may put undue strain on their situation.

## 6. **Re-entry Support:** Making home feel like home

The process of re-entry, or returning to life back home, is one of the least understood stages of a missionary's life. It's a time that will nearly always prove to be more of a challenge than the missionary expects, and a time when they are very dependent on people to whom they have returned. That's why your role in supporting them through this time is crucial.

➔ See OSCAR website for some resources to help you in this role:

Arranging housing [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/accommodation](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/accommodation)

Sourcing a vehicle [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/travel/uk-travel](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/travel/uk-travel)

Finding a holiday [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/accommodation/uk-accommodation/holidays-uk](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/practical/accommodation/uk-accommodation/holidays-uk)

Booking a re-entry course [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/training-development/reentry-refresher](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/training-development/reentry-refresher)

Help with debriefing [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/pastoral-spiritual/membercare](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/pastoral-spiritual/membercare)

Counselling help [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/pastoral-spiritual/counselling](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/pastoral-spiritual/counselling)

Post-field health checks [www.oscar.org.uk/resources/health/health-services](http://www.oscar.org.uk/resources/health/health-services)

## ultimate aim and goal

As a support worker for God's harvest, you can share in both the ministry and reward of the whole of your 'team'. In fact, the effectiveness of this ministry is actually dependent on everyone playing their part. If the support for a missionary is lacking, their whole ministry suffers. Conversely, the actions you take as a sender make a real difference at the other end. Distance and role mean little to God, it's the fact that we're responding to His call to be part of His mission that's important. It's from that place that we become effective in whatever we do — as someone who goes, equips or sends.

The ultimate aim for anyone contributing to God's mission is to see others encounter Him and be blessed by Him, with the ultimate goal being to see His kingdom grow and His name glorified.



This paper forms part of Stewardship's resources for Christian Workers and the churches supporting them. For other papers offering biblical teaching and practical guidance on issues affecting those living on personal financial support see the Stewardship website [www.stewardship.org.uk/resources/finance-for-living](http://www.stewardship.org.uk/resources/finance-for-living)

Mike Frith is the Director of OSCAR, the UK Information Service for World Mission, and also serves as the UK advocate for Emmaus Road International. The main structure and many key points of this article come from the book 'Serving as Senders' by Neal Pirolo of ERI.

If you have any questions or comments arising from the material presented here, you can contact us at [education@stewardship.org.uk](mailto:education@stewardship.org.uk) or by telephone on 0208 502 8585.

# appendix

## useful resources and contacts

### Training

OSCAR's 'Serving as Senders' workshop – a practical one-day workshop for churches to engage with their role as senders. Regular days are held all over the UK. Mike Frith, OSCAR's director, is also available to 'tailor make' a day for your church. See [www.oscar.org.uk/training](http://www.oscar.org.uk/training) or contact OSCAR for more details: 0300 121 0585 or [info@oscar.org.uk](mailto:info@oscar.org.uk)

### Books

Serving as Senders - Today by Neal Pirollo, Emmaus Road Intl. ISBN: 1880185245

The Re-entry Team by Neal Pirollo, ERI. ISBN: 1880185075

Get your church involved in missions! by Michael Green, OMF books. ISBN: 9971837846

Bringing the World to your Church by Joy Piper, WEC Publications. ISBN: 090082882-X

Member Care for Missionaries: A Practical Guide for Senders by Marina Prins & Braam Willemse. ISBN: 0-620-28967-8 (available from Member Care Southern Africa, [mcsa@xsinet.co.za](mailto:mcsa@xsinet.co.za))

Care Across Cultures by Cheralyn Orr. A practical guide for churches on taking care of their missionary families.

'Receiving Them Well' by Lisa Ennis & Lori Bryan. ISBN 1979209367

### Websites

OSCAR is a hub of mission service and support resources, as well as an online community of mission workers and supporters for peer-to-peer interaction and advice. There are sections of the website specifically for supporters of mission and a group for 'Senders and Supporters' (<http://oscaractive.ning.com/group/sendersandsupporters>). See [www.oscar.org.uk](http://www.oscar.org.uk)

Stewardship partner with Christian workers to help in the finances of those that raise their own support for ministry. They handle giving to support individuals involved in full-time Christian work and also provide training, guides and practical tools to help with finance. See [www.stewardship.org.uk/receive](http://www.stewardship.org.uk/receive)