



FREE METHODIST WORLD MISSIONS

Trail Markers for Church Leaders

Guiding People Toward Global Service

When someone in your local church expresses an interest in missionary service, you have a great opportunity to make a connection that will touch the world. God can use pastors and local church leaders as guides, facilitators and a crucial source of support. Pray and carefully consider the matter with the potential candidate. If it seems God is leading in this direction, contact FMWM to discuss it and begin a more formal process of exploration. Meanwhile, how can you, as a church leader, best guide the potential missionary?

Cheer, don't push.

Your encouragement is vital, but don't overwhelm the individual with too much help and enthusiasm. Avoid becoming so focused on sending a missionary from your church that you lose sight of the person. Their action and initiative is a key test of whether they truly have a call to serve on the mission field, and whether they are serious about responding. The candidate will need time to discern God's leading and they will appreciate your interest in their development as they seek God's direction.

Listen to your gut.

If you have reservations about an individual's ability to serve abroad, it's important that yellow or red flags be addressed with sensitivity and care. Difficult questions need to be asked. In those instances where a cross-cultural ministry setting would not be a good fit, individuals need to be affirmed and to know they can still make a significant contribution to the kingdom of God. FMWM is committed to working with local church leaders to redirect people into other forms of service as appropriate. Also, consider the timing of announcements. If the candidacy process is delayed or a red flag ends it altogether, reversing a public announcement with little explanation can be awkward.

Feed the need for growth.

Help the missionary candidate consider what kind of work they might do on the mission field and suggest ways they can grow by understanding better their strengths and weaknesses. For example, if their training does not include essential elements such as theological education or computer literacy, use your influence to encourage further study and suggest resources. If they lack strong interpersonal skills, their ability to communicate their vision and inspire others will be hindered. Helping them become more confident relationally and with public speaking will set them up for success and be a tremendous blessing to their future ministry.

Promote responsible stewardship.

As one who is closely connected to the missionary candidate, you serve as a key advisor in helping determine the best use of resources in the missionary's preparation and placement. The Free Methodist Church must be a good steward of its resources and exercise wisdom when it comes to making an eternal investment. Sending an unqualified and/or ill-prepared person to the field would be financially irresponsible and could prove devastating to the missionary, to the mission field and to the church.



Connect the dots.

As the candidate's advocate, you will serve as a facilitator in connecting them with the necessary resources. They will need church and conference sponsorship to be appointed, and will also need your affirmation to establish funding and prayer support.

Utilize VISA Ministries.

Extended-term missionary candidates are required to have cross-cultural experience to be approved. You and your church can help facilitate this by encouraging individuals toward qualifying service and helping to fund their ventures. Working with VISA Ministries ensures that the highest standards for short-term missions are upheld in the areas of appropriate placement, supervision and the fulfillment of a well-thought-out ministry strategy. Exploring short-term missions can be the catalyst for further involvement in missions. VISA also offers special educational opportunities such as Global Studies Intensive, Impact Teams and Team Leader Training that can further the development of future career missionaries.

Build on the momentum.

Build on the excitement a new missionary creates in your church to raise awareness and engagement in missions. Your church can serve as a missionary's home base. Foster a spirit of supporting one of your own and promote a deeper relationship between your church family and the missionary as they are preparing to go, while they are on the field, and when they return home. Connecting via social media, e-mails, Skype, phone calls and letters of encouragement are lifelines to the missionary.

Anticipate challenges and support them through transitions.

A new missionary goes through numerous physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional transitions. It takes a lot of preparation, empowerment from God and personal resolve to successfully move into a cross-cultural ministry setting. Your prayers and encouragement will be vital to them as they must ...

- ... be conscientious about their emotional, physical and spiritual health.
 - ... live on a limited budget and carry no debt.
 - ... communicate their prayer concerns and financial needs to their supporters.
- ... learn a new language and culture.
 - ... minister in new ways that will stretch them.
- ... deal with stress and adjustments that may at times strain marital and family relationships.
 - ... handle living far from extended family and friends.
- ... weather a period of intense stress as they undergo culture shock and adjustment to a new setting and way of life.

Do you have an interest in cross-cultural ministry?

Is someone in your church sensing a call to serve in overseas mission work?

Contact FMWM at 800-342-5531.

Visit fmcusa.org/fmmissions and click on "Go" for the most up-to-date information and service opportunities.

