



FREE METHODIST WORLD MISSIONS

WHEN A MISSIONARY VISITS YOUR CHURCH

Preparation

- 1 Start planning early.**

Don't wait for your missionary to contact you. Annually ask each missionary you support if they will be returning to the U.S. for home assignment during the next year. If the answer is yes, set up a time for their visit as far ahead as possible. This confirms your interest in them and facilitates adequate planning.
- 2 Encourage missionaries to spend as much time as possible with you.**

Let them know up front you are excited about their visit and want to work with them to make it a highly productive time. Complete the "Missionary Visit" online form for churches (<http://fmcusa.org/fmmissions/missionary-visit/>). Then finalize plans with the missionary.
- 3 Underwrite the cost of your missionary's visit.**

Clarify in advance your intentions to cover the missionary's travel expenses. Don't expect missionaries to visit if they have to invest a significant amount of the support you give them to come see you. Don't ask a missionary to come back from the field for your church's missions conference or event without covering the travel expenses. Be generous!
- 4 Include activities that are fun and refreshing.**

If time allows, schedule a fun activity (such as a sports event, a concert, a nearby theme park, a local museum) during the missionary's stay with you. Ask ahead of time what your global workers would enjoy doing. Each missionary has different interests.
- 5 Plan an informal gathering.**

Sponsor a potluck or another type of activity and invite the entire congregation. If a Sunday school class or small group is particularly interested in these workers, ask them to organize the event but consider including everyone.
- 6 Feature your missionary's strengths.**

Utilize the communication method/s that will best showcase your missionary's message. A small group or an interview format can help the missionary who struggles with public speaking to feel more comfortable, and thus be more effective.
- 7 Offer Missionary Kids (MKs) options.**

Do not assume MKs will be traveling with their parents. However, if they are, ask parents what would make their children feel comfortable and welcomed during the visit. Some kids may choose to stay with parents; others may love to blend in with children their own age. Few like to be singled out. Offer options but never pressure participation.

- 8 Listen well.**

Do share about your church. Missionaries want to know how to pray for you. But it is just as important for you to ask questions that help you really know your missionaries, the people they work with and their ministry. Listen to their heart. Remember they have been on the front lines and may have returned with battle wounds.
- 9 Clarify and pursue strategic goals.**

Prayerfully consider what you would like God to do in your church as a result of the missionary visit (for instance: increased vision for fulfilling the Great Commission, focused prayer or short-term team ministry). Share with your missionary what you are asking God to do through their time with you. Seek to identify those in your congregation whom God might want to connect to this specific missionary. Bring these people together with the missionary in comfortable, informal settings.
- 10 Involve the not-yet-interested.**

Think of ways to include those in your congregation who have never shown missions interest; they have the potential to become missions enthusiasts. Ask them to provide the missionary housing, a meal or hospitality at the church.
- 11 Promote the missionary's visit.**

Utilize numerous means to advertise the missionary's visit. A reproducible bulletin insert is available on the missionary's web page at fmcusa.org/fmmissions. Contact FMWM (1.800.342.5531, Pam at x236) for posters and prayer cards.
- 12 Decide who will "do the ask."**

Consult with the missionary to decide whether the missionary, the pastor or another person will be the one to challenge the congregation to support the missionary's MSA and/or approved project (CSA or EMP). No matter who presents the challenge to the congregation, the pastor needs to affirm the importance of supporting the missionary. If commitments for support are requested, clarify how to fulfill the commitments. (Individuals should give through the church to fulfill a church commitment. They should give directly to FMWM to fulfill their individual commitments.) If an offering is to be received, be very clear to the missionary and the congregation the intent of the offering, whether it is a love offering, an offering to support the church's MSA or CSA commitments, etc.
- 13 Provide hospitality.**

Find ways to make the missionary feel welcome. Greet them in the parking lot or at the door as they arrive at the church. Assign someone to host them, helping them know the location of restrooms, connecting them with the pastor and the sound / audiovisual team, etc. If the missionary is staying for more than one service, provide time for them to have "down time" away from others to rest and have time to meditate and reflect.
- 14 Pray faithfully.**

Commit to pray regularly for the missionary. Your prayers can provide the needed encouragement, protection, wisdom and strength for their ministry.
- 15 Follow-up.**

Plan to contact the missionary following their visit to affirm their work and encourage their spirits. If you observe any tangible results from their time with your congregation, share those in your follow-up.