

LIBERTY BAPTIST CHURCH MISSIONARY SUPPORT TEAMS

"You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such ones, that we may be fellow workers with the truth." 3 John 6b-8

In recent years, Liberty Baptist Church has been trying to learn what it means to be a sending church, one which sends our missionaries out in a manner worthy of God because they are going out for the sake of the Name. They are going out to champion the Name of God in places where God's name is unknown or horribly neglected. If we love God's glory, His Name, then we will love to see the fame of His Name spread to every unreached people. And those who go out from us for the sake of the Name will therefore be, seriously, and substantially supported by those of us who stay behind. Should not the reason we are staying behind be for the sake of the Name, not for the sake of comfort or convenience or money or any private ambitions?

To that end, the Missions Ministry requires that all missionaries, both short-term (six months or more) and career, have a Liberty Baptist Church based missionary support team. In this way we hope to more fully meet the needs of our missionaries and to be active fellow workers with them in the truth.

What is a Support Team?

A support team is a small group (4-8) of committed people who come together to care for their missionary in a variety of ways, striving to help meet their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. It is a group of people with whom the missionary can be open and honest, allowing them to see his needs, and share his successes and defeats.

Why have a Support Team?

Because support teams help to make our missionaries feel understood, and by providing them with a committed group of people who will show them practical love, keep them visible before the rest of the Liberty Baptist Church family and strengthened on the mission field.

What does a Support Team do?

A support team works together to care for their missionary, striving to meet their spiritual, physical and emotional needs. To a large extent this will happen only to the degree that the missionary is willing and able to make his needs known to the team.

The specific ways in which a support team goes about meeting their missionaries' needs will vary depending on the specific personality and needs of the missionary, as well as the personality (creativity) of the support team. Ask your missionary how you can best assist him; learn from the example of other teams; be creative; pray about it.

This doesn't mean that the support team does everything but they do take personal responsibility to serve as that missionary's advocate at Liberty Baptist Church.

Therefore, we ask that each Missionary Support Team should make a commitment to:

1. Commit to being on the team for at least one year or preferably one mission term. (Our preference is to see people with a passion doing this for as long as God gives passion)
2. Meet together on a monthly basis.
3. PRAY for your missionary individually as well as corporately.
4. Correspond regularly with your missionary.
5. Work to create an atmosphere where your missionary feels safe and comfortable to share himself very personally with the team – keeping confidential concerns confidential.

6. Be available to provide practical care for your missionary

The Team Will Also:

1. Maintain a newsletter for the missions personnel.
2. Develop/maintain a web page for the missions people or people group
3. Help to develop a prayer team.

Various support teams have organized themselves differently. Many support teams have found it helpful to have the following roles assigned to various people on the team, leaving other members of the team open to volunteer for other specific, occasional duties.

1. Church Contact Person. If LBC needs information about a missionary, or if they need to organize a support team's involvement in LBC activities (annual missions conference, missionary monthly displays, Missions Corner articles for the church newsletter...) they will contact this individual on the missionaries' support team.
2. Meeting Facilitator. This individual will be responsible to call meetings to order, keep meetings focused on the missionary and help the team's discussion to keep moving.
3. Team Organizer. Many support teams have found it helpful to have someone on the team organize a number of details that will assist the team to better support their missionary. These include keeping track of missionary prayer requests and answers, keeping track of money given by team members for LBC sermon tapes or other gifts, making up a calendar of team member letter writing assignments, etc.
4. Communication Person. In case of emergency, it may be helpful for the support team to be organized into an information chain with a contact person at the head of the list. If anyone on the team hears of an emergency that their missionary is facing, they should contact that individual so that information can be passed on quickly and accurately.

It may be helpful to divide the work further by assigning each specific role (care package, meeting treats, sermon tapes, missionary displays, article writer, etc.) to one person on the team so that each member is always responsible for making sure that their role always gets taken care of, whether they do it themselves or assign it to someone else.

How are Support Teams formed?

Members of a support team are prayerfully chosen by the individual missionary, if possible. Some missionaries ask friends from their small groups, Sunday School classes, choir, various ministry involvements, etc. to come together to form their support team. Others have asked the small group that they're involved in to also function as their support team. Everyone on the team does not have to be from Liberty, but the majority should be and the designated leader must be. The key for the missionary is to choose people with whom they have already established a level of trust and with whom they can be "real".

Why does Liberty Baptist Church desire to have Support Teams?

Missionaries don't go out for adventure, they don't go out for material profit, they don't go out for prestige, nor do they go out merely for humanitarian purposes, they do go out for the sake of the Name. We want the missionaries that we financially support to deeply feel that they are genuinely cared for, that they are more than just names on the back of our worship folders, or that they are more than just line items in our budget.

Liberty doesn't want to "have" missionaries, but we want to "send" missionaries in a manner worthy of the Name. How can this happen? In the future, LBC will be sending out great amounts of people into the fields. Their support and care cannot be undertaken by the Minister of Missions or the Missions Team alone. Therefore, we hope to enlist the help of many of the LBC family. Missionary Support Teams will prove themselves to be an essential part of the missions enterprise at LBC and that is why the Mission Team requires every missionary sent from LBC to have a missionary support team.

Practical Ideas for Caring for Your Missionary

Before they go

- Pray earnestly for them.
- Help them to find information about the country they are going to and the people they will be working among by going to the library, reading missions periodicals, keeping an eye out for articles in the daily paper.
- Be available for them. Encourage them as their emotions vary just before they go.
- Help them find information on needed equipment by reading Consumer Report articles, discussing with others, etc.
- Ask them about what they are learning as God takes them down the path that will lead them to a foreign country.
- Help them to get all the supplies that they need to take with them overseas. You can help them by running errands, or offering to take care of their children so that they can more easily run errands.
- Send out e-mail updates.
- Drop dinner off at their house their last few nights so that they can concentrate on accomplishing those last few tasks.
- Offer to have them stay with you if they need a place just before they leave.
- Help them pack the items they'll store here in the U.S., as well as the items they'll take with them or ship.
- Treat them to something special just before they go.
- Have an open house before they leave so they can say good bye to many of their friends.
- Host a reception for them at LBC.
- Write a Missions Corner for the Liberty Light, letting the church know what you missionaries are up to and how to pray for them.

While they are gone

- Pray earnestly for them.
- Write to your missionary often.
- Keep up to date with what your missionary is doing so that you can encourage them in the work and share their work with the LBC family.
- Remember their birthdays, holidays, and other special days with a card, gift, FAX, or telephone call.
- Write an article for the Missions Newsletter.
- Send an E-mail to them occasionally so that they have current, up-to-date information on their team.
- Pass on any special prayer requests to the church office so that the Pastoral Care Staff knows how to pray and so that it can be shared during the regularly scheduled LBC prayer meeting times.
- Send fun "care packages" occasionally to encourage your missionary or to help meet some of their needs.
- Send your missionary the LBC Sunday morning sermon tapes so that they can continue to learn from the church and feel more a part of the body (send the complete worship service!)
- Send your missionary articles of special interest out of the newspaper or magazines.
- Give your missionary a subscription to a magazine like Time or Newsweek so that they can keep up with what is happening in the U.S. (if they can get it.).
- Share your prayer requests and concerns with your missionary; they want to pray for you.
- Consider visiting your missionary in the field.
- Send them a good book you've especially appreciated.
- Mail out their prayer letters for them.

- Send them a note to remind them you're praying.
- Help to take care of your missionaries' home while they are away.
- Send a "day brightner" that will fit into an envelop with your letter to them (e.g. herbal tea bags, perfume samples, bookmarks, a recipe, a cartoon, a seasoning or soup packets, hair ribbons, fancy shoe laces, stickers, baseball cards, sticks of gum, etc.)

When they return

- Pray earnestly for them.
- Be at the airport to welcome them back home.
- Host an open house so that they can see many of their friends and update them.
- Help them to organize a time where they can update the body.
- Praise the Lord with them for how God used them overseas.
- Be available to help them readjust to life in the U.S.
- Have housing ready for them when they arrive home.
- Have a few groceries for them in their refrigerator and cupboards so that they don't have to go shopping right away.
- Help them to find a car to borrow during their furlough time.
- Give them a special night out or some other special treat.
- Help them to catch up with what is current, what's in and what's out.
- Bring dinner by their house for the first few days.
- Introduce them to new people at LBC.
- Help them to get caught up on the latest happenings here at LBC.
- Listen to them, be available.
- Give them space.
- A month before they come back begin keeping a calendar for them, setting up times when people can see them so that they aren't so overwhelmed when they return.
- Contact Sunday School classes and small group regarding possible speaking times.