



Church Care Teams

A problem many missionaries share is that they feel disconnected from their sending church, the place that was home to them before they left for the field.

We've found this is not an intentional gap--in fact, many churches are feeling disconnected from their missionaries as well. One way churches have decided to bridge the gap is through the creation of Barnabas teams.

Barnabas in Scripture was known as the Son of Encouragement, so teams named after him are meant to share that special trait. Barnabas teams are groups of people tasked with connecting often with the missionary, praying for them, and representing them to the church.

For example, one Barnabas team could Skype with their missionary every other month, and exchange prayer requests in between. As the local team disperses to their places of service and discipleship in the church, they take the updates of the missionary and share those prayer requests. Alternately, the Barnabas team can also share updates about the church to the missionary ("You wouldn't believe the updates to the children's hallway, it looks like a new place!").

What does it take for a Barnabas team to be successful?

- **A defined role:** It is helpful to define exactly what your church expects of your Barnabas team and encourages them to meet those goals. A few helpful questions to answer are:
 - How often should the team Skype with the missionary?
 - Are they expected to send gifts or cards at birthday and holidays? Who will pay for postage and gifts?
 - How often should they share prayer requests?
 - When and how should they let the missions leadership know if there is an issue?
 - How can the Barnabas team help during Home Assignment or times of crisis?
- **Interaction:** The goal is for Barnabas teams to understand, as much as possible, the emotional state of the missionary and the state of the work they are called to. This requires updates from the team to the missionary *and* the missionary to the team. It could mean your church sponsoring team members to visit the work or monthly Skype calls or emails. It also requires trust and love to be developed between the team and the missionary.

- **A celebrated role:** At Bethlehem Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, Barnabas teams are a tangible way for every church member to be involved in sharing the Gospel around the globe. Barnabas teams are mentioned from the stage, and team members are encouraged by the staff. When new missionaries are preparing to be sent out, it is not uncommon for church members to ask the missionary if they can join their team.

How can my church get started?

If your church would like to start Barnabas teams, we encourage you to connect with your missionary. Ask them if there are individuals or even a small group or Sunday school class they know of that could serve in this role.

Alternately, some churches assign one Elder or Deacon per missionary or missionary family. That leader then develops the Barnabas team alongside the missionary.

Gather the people willing to serve on a Barnabas team together and help them define the role of service to the missionary and the church. Encourage them to begin talking with their missionary and sharing requests.

Periodically check in with the teams and missionaries to see if the Barnabas team is helping them feel connected. If the teams are; what is working? If they still aren't feeling connected, how could you improve?

[Additional Missionary Care Resources](#)

