



WAYS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR MISSIONARIES DECEMBER 2017

Steve & Kathy Austvold, EFCA Mission Mobilizers

Serving the NCD, NPD, and Beyond
Steve.austvold@ncdefca.org
Kathy.austvold@ncdefca.org

Dear Pastor and Mission Leaders,

Greetings in Christ. In this busy month of Advent, let's take time to consider ways to encourage your missionaries. For some of your churches, this will be easy. Maybe you don't have any missionaries or you are already doing a good job in this area. Consider this: December can be a lonely month for missionaries serving overseas. They are away from their families and loved ones. It can be a month where they are often not thought of due to the busyness of the season. What can we do to encourage our missionaries?

1. *Write to them:* Send a card from your mission team or from a Sunday school class. Send them an e-card with a personal message.
2. *Send a gift:* Some churches give yearly gifts to their missionaries. Our church gives a yearly \$100 personal gift to each of our supported long-term workers. Some churches might give gift cards or cash gifts. Maybe, they would like a book or a CD or a DVD. How about sending them a gift card for one of these items on Amazon.
3. *Ask the question:* Ask them what they would like from your church at the end of the year. What needs do they have as a family? What needs do their children have? What would their children like to get for Christmas?
4. *Ask about their financial needs:* If missionaries are short on support, this often creates stress in their work and in their overall spending for family needs. Consider giving an extra gift to their support this month. If you have extra funds in your mission account, bless your missionaries with an extra gift. Also, considering raising their annual support. Most missions have built in salary increases or cost of living increases. Many churches should consider these items when they prepare their budgets.
5. *Connect with them on Skype:* This can be really fun for the missionary family and also with your mission team. Find a time that works for both groups and plan a Skype visit with video. Maybe, you cannot do this with each of your missionaries this year, but it can be the start of a good connection with them.
6. *Pray for them:* Yes, we already know this point, but it might be very important this month in December to get current prayer updates from them and pray for them specifically. For example, it was 20 years ago this December that I came home quickly to care from my mother, who had terminal cancer. I had planned to leave at the end of the year, but due to the urgency of the situation, I arrived home the night of Christmas Eve. That was a time when I and my family really needed extra prayer and encouragement.
7. *Mobilize your church with mission awareness this month.* Pray for your missionaries in your Sunday services. Include them in your church bulletins or in your church news updates. Encourage your church family to be good communicators with your missionaries.

Merry Christmas,

Steve Austvold