



## Making the Most of Missionary Visits

Missionaries heading home on furlough are often spiritually and physically exhausted, in desperate need of encouragement and renewal. Deputation—those lengthy trips from church to church to talk about one's ministry to raise financial support—can be an exhausting marathon of meetings, long hours in the car, hurried visits, and cranky kids. Or it can be a rich time of fellowship and spiritual refreshment.

We've discovered several ways you can make a visit to your church a heartwarming experience for your missionary:

### **Promote your missionary's visit.**

It can be disheartening for a missionary to arrive at a church and find that the pastor hasn't even bothered to announce their coming. Roll out the red carpet and fill the seats. Make announcements weeks before and send out invitations for other churches to join in the celebration.

### **Celebrate their arrival.**

Put up a welcome banner. Learn a chorus in the missionary's host language. Post a photo collage of their ministry and family. Plan an ethnic meal. Be creative. But let your missionaries know you are excited they've come.

### **Give them time to share.**

Your missionary gets one chance in years to share his ministry. If a main service speaking slot isn't possible, find alternative times, such as Sunday school classes, small groups, kids' church, or churchwide picnics that will bless both the missionary and church members.

### **Accommodate your missionary's schedule.**

Missionary travel schedules may not always fit the regular church routine, but good planning can make a success of even off-season missionary visits. A weeknight barbecue or Saturday family day may even allow for closer interaction between missionary and congregation.

### **Take the opportunity to visit with your missionaries.**

Limiting your missionary's visits to one-hour timeslots shortchanges both the missionaries and the congregation. Take the time to get to know your missionary. Invite them early for dinner. Take them out for coffee after church. Meet with them as a missions committee. Invite them to stay a night or two. Schedule meals for them with different church families. You will be a blessing to them and they to you. Who knows—it may be your enthusiastic welcome or encouraging word that sends the missionary back to the field refreshed and renewed for another term in God's service.