

Member Care for Missionaries

*A Practical Guide
for Senders*

Marina Prins
Braam Willemse

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P O Box 327, Strand, 7139, South Africa

Email: membercaremc@gmail.com

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Dedicated to
Braam Willemse
(25/04/1955 – 15/06/2001)

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Neal Pirollo

*Serving as Senders
The Reentry Team*

Contact details:

Emmaus Road International
Email: emmaus_road@eri.org
Web Site: www.eri.org

Lois A. Dodds & Lawrence, E. Dodds

*Caring for People in Missions:
Just Surviving – or Thriving?*

Contact details:

Email: ledodds@earthlink.net

Graham Fawcett

*Ad-mission
The Briefing and Debriefing of
Teams of Missionaries and Aid Workers*

Contact details:

Email: gffawcett@yahoo.co.uk

We also want to express our gratitude to the SA Missions Trust for funds granted for the printing of this book.

This publication provides for a critically important facet of the churches' involvement in spreading the Gospel. If this book had been published earlier, it could have helped to eliminate many mistakes made in the past.

It is written in a typically South African context and forms an essential part of the tools of any spiritual leader or church grouping that takes their task of spreading the Gospel seriously. It is probably the best practical South African tool to care for workers comprehensively.

The authors have succeeded excellently in combining thorough research and practical, creative ideas. We are using it with much fruit in our facilitation of mission related church processes. I can strongly recommend it.

Johann Theron: Regional Director: Russian speaking world: Kingfisher Mobilisation Centre (Missions Mobilising Centre)

This is a solid, foundational work for sending bodies: local churches and agencies to better understand the big picture of missionary care. It overviews the various ways of supporting mission personnel, including home staff, and front line workers, over the course of their missions service. The authors are to be commended for their user-friendly approach as well as their ability to link outside practices with their context in Southern Africa. This is an important book for all those wanting to see missionaries remain healthy and effective. I highly recommend it!

Dr. Kelly O'Donnell: Consulting Psychologist, Member Care Associates

It gives me great pleasure to write a commendation for this thoughtful book. Some people have had difficulty understanding what Member care is all about, and it is good that the book opens with a clear outline of the Biblical and practical principles behind the provision of missionary care. These form a good introduction to the practical and theoretical material it contains.

One of the strengths of the book is that it clarifies the relationship between local churches, missionaries, and their support structures, for this is an area where confusion may arise.

The practical sections on selection, orientation, care overseas and at re-entry will be very useful. They are instructive not only to missionaries, their sending churches and organisations, but also to the many ordinary church members who want to be better informed on how they should care for their missionaries.

I pray for God's blessing on the book.

Dr Marjory F Foyle: Consultant Psychiatrist to Missions

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Foreword

This study guide deals with a very important issue. It is thrilling to see so many churches becoming involved in the sending of workers – either to render service in communities where there is a need, or as fellow workers and supporters to other churches in target areas, or to reach out as missionaries to less reached areas or groups. Today hundreds of South Africans are being sent and supported in this way by their churches.

When, however, it comes to the sending and the support, problems frequently arise. The whole process requires a church's sustained involvement. This includes the individual sense of a call, the confirmation of that call by the church, the screening, preparation and orientation, the choice of a target area and/or church partner, to the sending by the church and its continuous support and involvement and finally, the return of the person who has been sent. It is saddening to meet people who were sent by a church without having first gone through a process of screening and preparation – even worse when it soon becomes apparent that we do not have the right person in the right place. It is sad when a church has the attitude of “we will send you, but after that it is all up to you”. Or when a church wilfully allows the missionary to endure unnecessary suffering, because “after all, a missionary is supposed to be someone who is willing to suffer”. The large percentage of people returning prematurely from the field, an event which inevitably is accompanied by trauma, a feeling of failure and even by accusations that time and money have been wasted, is proof that we are dealing with a serious problem.

On the other hand, it is wonderful when churches are actively and responsibly involved from the outset and continue to be involved with the people they have sent out. It is wonderful when a church says: “We send or support a given number of people”, not in order to sooth their conscience or as a feather in their cap, but because of

a deep conviction that the essence of being a church means to be fully involved with God's mission in this world. It is wonderful if a missionary can work with joy and peace of mind and can fully depend on the support, involvement and continuous prayer support of the church(es) that has sent him or her. It is wonderful if, as in the case of Barnabas and Paul, a person is sent by a church that is totally convinced that they have experienced and obeyed the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is wonderful when the missionary can return to that church to "...report all that *God* had done through them..." (Acts 13:1-4; 14:27).

This study guide is meant to help churches and to guide them in the process of sending and supporting workers and missionaries. It was born from a passion for this cause and is based on practical experience at grass roots level. It is a beautiful legacy of Braam Willemse, whose entire life was a testimony to a deep sense of calling and of service.

Churches and support groups will certainly benefit from the use of the study material and guidelines that are presented here.

Martin Pauw

Former Secretary: Commission for Witness
(DRC Family in the Western Cape)

Introduction

I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

Joh 4:35b

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

Joh 12:24

God's dream is that every person should be saved. He has chosen to use people to make this dream a reality. People who would go . . . to all nations. Many missionaries are ready to go, but are we as senders equipped to give them the necessary care?

This book is about the different aspects of member care and is meant as practical guide to equip senders. For that very reason, with the specific needs of senders in mind, the book is written in such a way that each chapter can also be used as a separate unit. Some themes are consequently addressed in more than one chapter. *Re-entry* is an example of this. It is described in short in certain chapters, but is also dealt with in detail in a separate chapter.

The book is a team effort and we owe thanks to many people who have worked together in helping us to complete it. To each one we would like to say: Thank you, we appreciate you! Special thanks to Martsie Dreyer who wrote the chapter on the assessment of missionaries and for permission to publish it as part of this book. Also to Ria de Vos, and Stephen and Anna Fellingham who helped in the editing of the English translation, our sincere thanks and appreciation.

The book is dedicated to Braam, our friend, colleague and co-author of this book, who was called home on 15 June 2001, after suffering from cancer. Braam had a passion for the Lord and for missions. He deeply understood what being a missionary and being the church of God meant. We thank the Lord for Braam's insight and wisdom in writing the book – and for the enthusiasm with which he wrote each paragraph. When we think about Braam, we do it with the certainty that *a kernel of wheat has fallen to the ground and died, but that many seeds have been produced.*

It is only at the foot of the Cross, where our heavenly Father cares for us, that we can care for one another, gather the sheaves of wheat and bring in his harvest. When we care for our missionaries, we are working towards the

fulfilment of God's dream. May He make us faithful in our calling to care for our missionaries, *because the fields are ripe for the harvest!*

To God be the glory!

Marina Prins

Introduction to Member Care

Member care is not a new concept, but a biblical responsibility to care for one another as members of the body of Christ. Member care is a field in its own right and is a combination of pastoral care, Christian counselling and human resource development.

Senders have a biblical responsibility to effectively care for the missionaries entrusted to them. They also have to understand that they are, together with the missionary, equal partners in this process.

Missionaries are strategic in reaching less reached groups, but their effectiveness is often hindered by insufficient care. Senders are not only responsible to people for the care of their missionaries, but first of all to God.

Therefore it is important that every role player – missionary, local church, mission organisation and support structure on the field – will understand his¹ role in caring for missionaries.

¹ For practical reasons the masculine gender is used for both male and female.

Part 1: Introduction to Member Care

- 1. What is Member Care?**
2. Biblical Basis for Member Care
3. The Importance of Member Care
4. Partners in Sending and Caring for missionaries

What is Member Care?



Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Acts 20:28

Member care is exactly what the words say. At its core is the concept of *care* for those who are *members* of the body of Christ, and at the same time “members” of our staff, organisation, local church or cell group, and who have been sent out by us to share the Good News of Christ to the ends of the earth. Kelly O’Donnell (1997a: 287) defines it this way:

Member care can be defined as the ongoing investment of resources by mission agencies, churches, and mission service organisations for the nurture and development of missionary personnel. It focuses on everyone in missions (missionaries, support staff, children, and families) and does so over the course of the missionary life cycle, from recruitment through retirement.

Member care is a continuous awareness of our responsibility to care for one another. It requires commitment, time and money.

Member care is more or less synonymous with “missionary care.” According to O’Donnell & O’Donnell (1992: 10), McLagan (1989) indicates that the business world refers to this field as human resource development. In the missions community it is often called pastoral care or personnel development. Missionaries are not only individuals, but also part of a team. As such their care should be handled in a way that also builds up the team on the field as a whole.

Member care is therefore a combination of pastoral care, Christian counselling and human resource development. The aim is to care for and build up the missionary as a total person, so that he will be able to live and minister as a spiritually healthy and effective individual.

The concept of member care is not new, but what is new is the organised attempt world wide to develop and establish member care as a central part of the missionary endeavour.

Part 1: Introduction to Member Care

1. What is Member Care?

2. Biblical Basis for Member Care

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Biblical Foundations for Member Care



A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Joh 13:34-35

Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward...And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

Matt 10: 41-42

GOD'S INITIATIVE

Member care is not a new concept. The initiative started with God:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. (2 Cor 1:3-5)

There are numerous “one another” verses in the New Testament, which command us, urge us and encourage us to care for one another in different ways. In this sense member care is part of our responsibility as Christians towards each other. This responsibility does not only apply to member care, but to all areas of our daily lives as followers of Christ. If, however, it applies to all of us who are followers of Christ Jesus – how much more does it not apply to our attitude and actions towards those we have sent out to the frontline of the battle against darkness, ignorance and unbelief? Here are some examples of “one another” scriptures (*italics added*):

“Love *each other*.” (John 15:17)

“...serve *one another* in love.”(Gal 5:13b)

“Carry *each other's* burdens...” (Gal 6:2a)

“Be kind and compassionate to *one another*...” (Eph 4:32a)

“Submit to *one another* out of reverence for Christ.” (Eph 5:21)

“Bear with *each other*...” (Col 3:13a)

“Therefore encourage *one another* and build *each other* up...” (1 Thess 5:11a)

“And let us consider how we may spur *one another* on toward love and good deeds.” (Hebr 10:24)

The foundation of member care therefore lies in the words of Christ in John 13: 34-35:

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

According to Pollock (1997: 2) we were given a Great Commandment (to love one another) and a Great Commission (to make disciples). But sometimes in our zeal to respond to the one, we ignore or make light of the

other. As Pollock puts it: “The Great Commission cannot be fulfilled without obedience to the Great Commandment.”

APOSTLES

The Greek word “apostle” means “one who has been commissioned and sent as a special messenger” (Louw & Nida, 1988: 542). It can be used for someone like a soldier who is sent out on a mission with a special message or task. In that sense “apostle” means “missionary.”

It seems, however, that the word “apostle” functions on at least four levels in the New Testament.

The **first** category is “the twelve apostles” whom Jesus specially chose and sent out. “He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.” (Mark 3:14-15)

Sometimes they are only referred to as “the Twelve” (e.g. Matt 26:47). They are unique – never to be repeated. When someone had to be selected to replace Judas Iscariot, Peter said: “...Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.” (Acts 1:21-22) Never again will Jesus appoint and “send out” twelve apostles. Nobody, not even the Pope as the Catholics claim, has the same authority as the Twelve.

But there is a **second** category. A number of other believers in the Bible are also called “apostles”. And what about Paul? We all know that he was an “apostle” (see Rom. 1:1). He also had spiritual authority in the new churches he planted. This brings us to the **second** category. Here we have “apostles” who were in a position of spiritual authority or leadership in the church. Paul says to the church in Corinth: “The things that mark an apostle – signs, wonders and miracles – were done among you with great perseverance.” (2 Cor 12:12) Paul and the Twelve are part of this category of apostles.

If there were no more apostles after “the Twelve,” it would have been pointless to warn the churches against false apostles (e.g. 2 Cor 11:13 and Rev 2:2). Because apostles (missionaries) were ministering to new churches that could easily be misguided, it was so important for these churches to be warned against people who claimed to have been sent out by established churches, but were not. It often happened in Paul’s days that Jews came to

the young churches with the teaching that it was necessary to be circumcised. They then claimed that the church at Jerusalem had sent them out. This was of course not true; they were false apostles or people who had not been sent.

Others were also called “apostles” in the New Testament, e.g. Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Timothy and Silas (1 Thes 1:1 and 2:6). That brings us to the **third** category of apostles: Believers who have the *gift of an apostle or missionary*. *The gift of a missionary is the special ability that the Holy Spirit gives to certain members of the body of Christ to understand the principles of the Gospel supra cultural and to be able to apply, proclaim and live the Gospel beyond cultural boundaries.*

The Bible is a special book in which God’s truths are explained clearly. Although these truths or principles are eternal, it was revealed within a specific cultural situation. A person with the gift of a missionary has the special ability to understand these principles apart from culture and to apply it in other cultures. He also has the ability to live happily and successfully in a cross-cultural situation and to help people from another culture to make the truths of the Gospel their own.

There is a big difference between a person with the gift of a missionary or apostle today and Jesus’ twelve disciples that were called “the Twelve” in the Gospels. The Twelve had a unique *office*, while those with the gift of a missionary today have a *ministry*.

This brings us to the **fourth** and last category of missionary. Paul was in jail – probably in Rome. In Philippians 2:25-30 we read about Epaphroditus who was sent to Paul by the church in Philippi to “take care of [his] needs” (v 25) and “to make up for the help [they] could not give [him]” (v. 30). Paul called him a “missionary” of the Philippian church (verse 25 - Greek “apostolos,” NIV “messenger”). Epaphroditus was not a pioneer missionary preaching the Gospel on the “front line,” but he supported Paul in his ministry. Paul made sure readers of this letter understood that Epafroditus was not some kind of “second class missionary” just because he was helping another missionary.

When Epaphroditus became ill, and nearly died, Paul sent him back to Philippi. But, because he was afraid that there would be those who might not regard Epaphroditus as a “proper” missionary or describe him as a failure just because his ministry was to support another missionary, he exhorts them to “welcome [Epaphroditus] in the Lord with great joy, and honour

men like him...” (v. 29). He called Epaphroditus a “fellow worker and fellow soldier” (v. 25).

Many of you who are doing this workshop (or read this book) fall within the scope of this last category of “missionaries” that have been commissioned or sent by your church to support and care for other missionaries.

PEOPLE DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO MEMBER CARE

We also read in the New Testament about people devoting themselves to member care:

You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labours at it. (1 Cor 16:15-16)

And the “fruit” of member care was:

*I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. **For they refreshed my spirit and yours also.** Such men deserve recognition. (1 Cor 16: 17-18)*

The apostle John also wrote (3 John 5-8):

Dear friend [Gaius], you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.

THE SUPPORT TEAM OF JESUS

Apart from “the Twelve” with whom He shared closely, there were some other people who took care of his earthly needs. “*The Twelve were with [Jesus], and also some women . . . : Mary (called Magdalene) . . . , Joanna . . . , Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.*” (Luk 8:1-3) We can almost call these women Jesus’ support team!

CONCLUSION

Jesus said: “*Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward . . . And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.*” (Matt 10: 41-42) Our involvement in a

missionary's ministry can be as small as "a cup of cold water", but, if we become involved, we become a partner – not just a partner, but an *equal* partner. What a privilege to share in the expansion of the Kingdom of God!

Part 1: Introduction to Member Care

1. What is Member Care?

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The Importance of Member Care



Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Matt 10:29-30

Missionaries are strategic in reaching less reached groups, but their effectiveness is often hindered by insufficient care. Current estimates indicate that there are some 400 000 personnel in cross-cultural ministries world-wide (Barrett, 1997: 25). Of these people 3.1% return from the field each year prematurely, permanently and for preventable reasons (Brierley, 1997: 86). Working on the estimated figure of 400 000, it means that ± 12 000 people return from the field each year. This study did not include people in their first term on the field. If we include them, the figure would probably be raised well above the 3.1% mentioned above. According to O'Donnell (1999: 119) *the need to sustain people on a long-term basis on the field* is reflected in these figures: Such undesirable attrition not only affects the missionary who is returning, but also has a negative impact on thousands of family members and friends at home and in the host communities.

Each person counts in God's eyes – how much more the cry in the heart of 12000 people who have had to leave the field prematurely. Can we ignore their cry!!

It is no longer ethically or morally acceptable to send aid workers or missionaries abroad unprepared for the realities of what they are likely to encounter. It is also no longer acceptable to send people into situations that it is probable they will be unable to deal with. It can only be a matter of time before civil litigation is used against those who fail in their 'duty of care.' (Fawcett, 1999: 1)

If we are accountable to men for the care of missionaries – how much more are we accountable to God!

Member care is not an option, but is rather the one sign that truly shows others that we are the Lord's disciples (John 13:35) (cf. Eckblad, 1995: 2).

In missions, much of the attrition with its waste of people and resources is readily traceable to our failure to intervene appropriately at the right places in the life of the missionary, the family as a whole and missionary kids (Pollock, 1997: 2).

If we consider the time, energy, money, personnel and prayer invested in new missionaries before they go to the field, should we not invest just as much time, energy, money, personnel and prayer in helping them through their problems after they reach the field? (cf. Jones, 1993: 297)

To train missionaries, prepare them and send them to the field without caring for them continuously in a responsible and proper way, is short

sighted, irresponsible, poor stewardship and a waste of the resources, which God has given us.

I place missionary care on par with church planting strategies, language and culture mastery, and contextualization approaches (O'Donnell, 1992: xiii).

Member care is important not because missionaries necessarily have more or unique stress, but rather because missionaries are strategic. They are key sources of blessing for the unreached (O'Donnell, 2001:221).

Part 1: Introduction to Member Care

1. What is Member Care?
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Partners in Sending and Caring for Missionaries



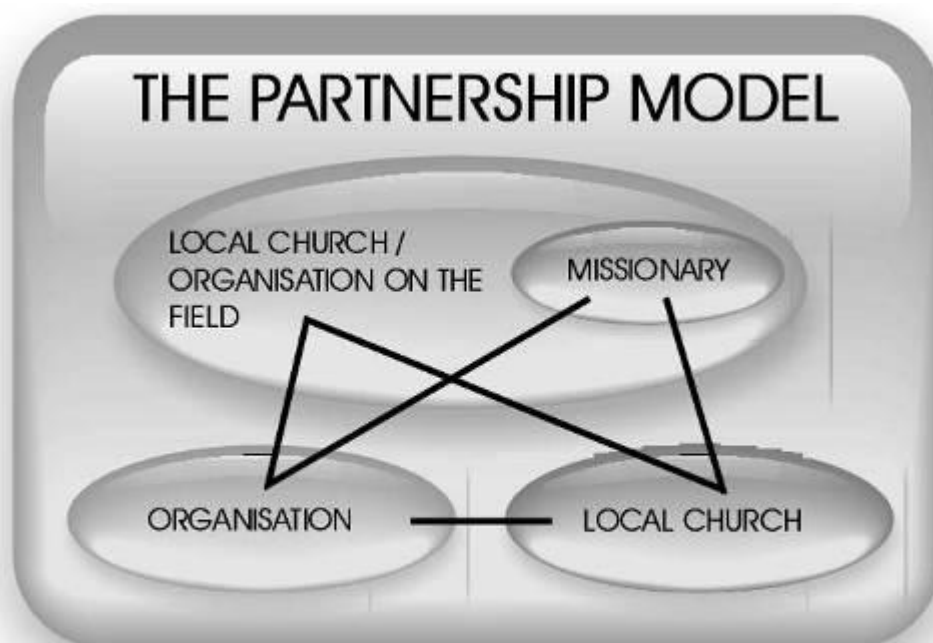
*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. . .
Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of
three strands is not quickly broken.*

Eccl 4:9, 12

Over the years we have witnessed the missions enterprise becoming increasingly sophisticated and relatively autonomous from the local church. With these developments we have observed that much of the responsibility for the preparation and the spiritual and emotional support of missionaries has been assumed to be the domain of the mission organisation (cf. Strauss & Narramore, 1992: 299). The sending church has played a small role, mostly through prayer and finances, which of course was very important. It is, however, necessary that the local church should play a larger role in world missions, particularly in the care and development of the missionaries that they send out (cf. Strauss & Narramore, 1992: 299).

In the past we have seen and experienced the same trend in South Africa. At the moment, however, we are faced with a challenging situation. More and more local churches are sending missionaries out, either in co-operation with organisations, or on their own. The question then arises: what is the role of the local church, the organisation, the missionary and the support structure on the field in the sending and in the ongoing care of the missionary on the field?

The missionary, the local church, the organisation and the support structure on the field are all part of the missionary endeavour. It is not the one or the other. All should be involved and play their unique role. It can be described as a partnership where each partner has his own responsibility and unique role to play. Together they form the support structure for the missionary. Sending the missionary is therefore not the responsibility of one partner alone. As Herr (1987: 43) puts it: “The missionary is an extension of his local church.”



Initially the missionary has contact with his local (sending) church and the mission organisation and the partnership starts to develop. As he continues with his preparation he will eventually finalise his choice of field, which in some cases will involve contact with the local church or organisation on the field. The missionary almost never works on his own on the field. He will either work together with the local church on the field or he will be under the authority of an organisation, or both. In the case of tentmakers the situation will be slightly different where a company within the host country employs the tentmaker.

The local church has a lot to offer in terms of support for the missionary. This does not mean that the role of the organisation is overlooked or overruled. Over the years organisations have gained experience in matters such as liaison with other organisations or churches either at home or on the field, arrangements for entering the host country and financial matters such as the transfer of money to a foreign country, to mention just a few. The role of the organisation cannot and must not be overlooked, but it does not mean the local church should not get involved and gain experience in these fields. Rather, the organisation must be willing to share its expertise, while the local church on the other hand must be willing to accept its responsibility and be equipped in the process, so that in the end they will all work together to offer effective service and support to the missionary.

People are ready to be sent out, but are we as a church ready to give them the support they need? As Pirolo (1991: 15) comments: “There is a tremendous need for senders. And the need goes beyond the traditional token involvement of showing up for a farewell party or writing out a cheque to missions. A cross-cultural worker needs the support of a team of people while he is preparing to go, while he is on the field and when he returns home.”

According to Strauss & Narramore (1992: 303) it is important that the sending church be recognised by the missionaries, the mission organisation, and by the church itself as a vital and fundamental element in (a) the identification of those who are called to be missionaries, (b) the preparation of its missionaries for their work, and (c) the development of a relatively comprehensive spiritual and emotional support system for its missionaries.

The support of the missionary does not start when the missionary goes to the field. It already starts when the missionary is evaluated and selected right at the beginning. It is an ongoing support and involvement that continues even after the missionary has returned from the field. In order to give the

necessary support from within local churches, it is important that a support team is formed before the missionary goes to the field. The support team consists of people committed to care for the missionary and to be involved in his life and ministry. Each member in the support team will be responsible for or involved in an aspect of support.

For a more detailed description of the support team see chapter 8.