

HOW TO COMMUNICATE SAFELY ABOUT YOUR MISSIONARY

Sharing information about your cross-cultural workers is crucial to their ongoing financial and prayer support. However, it can be an area requiring additional care when security concerns exist. Some have had to return to their home country when well-meaning supporters have shared too much information. The best consultant is your worker and their team. Ask them for pointers!

The greatest exposure and expulsion risks come from information posted online. Those who would like to hinder the work can search social media, blogs and websites, which can be searched from anywhere there is an internet connection. You may rightly ask: *"How can we communicate to the church in a way that is effective while not putting anyone at risk?"*

We suggest the following guidelines for various contexts. ...and they are just that – guidelines – be sure to confer with your cross-cultural workers about how they want you to handle communication.

What's in a name? The word "missionary" has become a loaded term. Different people have many different ideas of what a "missionary" does. To help communicate more safely, you may consider substituting another word, for instance, "worker."

PUBLIC

Church's social media, website, displays, bulletins



Never use the real name or photos of the missionary. Do not use specific country or city names, but instead use general regional names.

Example: "Pray for our missionary family serving in East Asia, as they build relationships to eventually share the Gospel."

SEMI-PUBLIC

Sunday morning service



Church services should be considered semi-public, as most are open to visitors and some are recorded or broadcast elsewhere. Use missionaries' first names only, and regional names rather than specific locations. Missionary photos are okay to use in a church service. If the missionary is speaking in the service, it is likely that they will not want that portion of the service recorded or broadcast.

Example: "Pray for Mallory, serving in South Asia, as she builds relationships to eventually share the Gospel."

PRIVATE

Small groups or one-on-one conversations with trusted people



When speaking with individuals or small groups of trusted people, you may be able to share more information about your missionaries, including their first names and country. You may share photos. This applies to verbal communication only; do not give out written information about your missionaries.

Example: "Pray for Mallory, serving in China, as she builds relationships to eventually share the Gospel. You can email her to encourage her, but please do not talk about her work publicly on social media."

HOW TO COMMUNICATE SAFELY WITH YOUR MISSIONARY

You are a key element in the care of your cross-cultural workers. It is crucial that you remain in touch with them! Ask them how to best communicate with them, as they will know what is best for their location. Talk with them about:

- Is there a specific email address to use?
- Are WhatsApp and other messaging apps acceptable?
- Should you send letters or packages?

The following guidelines will help you communicate in a way that holds no threat even if the message were compromised. These guidelines should be considered for all forms of communication. And remember, it is your local partners who are most at risk - discuss this with them when you are together.

COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES



- Please DO write to your missionary. Mail is a cherished and important encouragement. Even if you can't say all you'd like to, please write. A note about what is happening in your life could make their day!
- Do not criticize the government of the host country, especially any policies or person by name, or their response to any tensions or tragedies.
- Do not mention missions, evangelism, witnessing, giving out Bibles, the host country's religion, the church in the host country, etc.
- Do not send missionary prayer letters, tracts, church bulletins, missions magazines or Bibles.
- Do not send letters on church stationery or packages with church labels.
- Do not mention other missionaries in the host country by name or in any way identify people who might be interested in Christianity.
- Limit your use of Christian language to talking about your own spiritual life. You can quote Scripture, but moderation is the key.
- Do not use character substitution, for example: "We are pr@ying for you."
- Do not give your missionaries' mailing or email addresses to anyone unless you have permission from the missionaries. Then, pass along these guidelines as well.
- Do not forward email or letters from your missionaries without their permission.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

Feel free to say: God, serve, worship, salt and light, prayer, Scriptures, Believer(s), Christian(s), showing the love of Jesus

Do not say: evangelism, salvation, church, Bible, mission or missionary, outreach, converts, witnessing, gospel, proselytize, sharing the love of Jesus, Crusade