



THE ALLIANCE
MIDWEST DISTRICT

Missions Emphasis Events
IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL: To build life-on-life relationship between the people in your church and the people serving cross-culturally.

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Basic Facts

(we sometimes forget to consider)

FACT: October and March are the first months to fill up and speakers may already be booked at partner churches outside of our district.

FACT: International Workers (IWs) on home assignment are balancing their time between personal family gatherings, speaking at partner churches in different parts of the States, and speaking here in the district.

FACT: Sometimes, our district IWs are based out of a different district because it's closer to family.

NEED: Most IWs coming from overseas are in need of a vehicle (sometimes two) and a house. Is there anyone in your church that could supply that for a year? They are also starting their kitchens from scratch, so supplying their pantry/fridge needs is huge!

Key Elements to a Missions Emphasis Event

- Fun and memorable
- Play to the strengths and interests of your church
- Involve all the ministry leaders at your church in planning the event. Let your missions committee lead the planning, but don't relegate everything to the missions committee.
- Find out what interests the IW and find ways to weave that into your schedule.
- One-on-one time with key people (those pursuing the call, the pastor, the strategists in your church, prayer warriors, and youth)
- Create a shared experience (conversations and relationship happen most naturally with these)
- Share the hosting responsibilities for the IW so no one person is overwhelmed, and the relationship opportunities can be spread out to multiple people
- Let the speaker have down time to rest and have time to prepare for his/her times of speaking
- A call to ministry/missions
- Clear presentation of the GCF and Alliance Missions

What if there isn't a speaker available?

1. **Reschedule to when the IW can come.** Supplementing summer VBS programs or outdoor parking lot events are a great alternative! Does your church do summer camp on its own? Invite an IW to come with you! Schedule them for early in the winter holiday season and host a "Christmas around the World" event.

2. **Find another speaker.** Your district mission mobilizer can help you explore other options, such as: Envision Chicago, District Mission Mobilizer, retired/home-now IW
3. **Host a member care week or weekend** for an IW family that has previously spoken at your church.
4. **Invite a virtual speaker.**
5. Participate in a church-wide **Mission Engagement Assessment** with your district missions mobilizer.
6. **Go on a short-term trip** to Envision Chicago or one of our IW's countries. With the entire church, have a send-off week where you build up to why missions is so important and what your church is committed to doing to be engaged in missions. What does the larger mission field look like? Why support the GCF?

How do we fill a week (or even a half week)?

What do we do with them all week? Get them elbow-to-elbow with your people! **IMPORTANT:** The schedule doesn't have to include the whole church every day of the week. What do you already have going on during the week and how can you give that a missions twist? Here are a few ideas to get your wheels turning:

- **Give them time with the worship team** to teach them a song in their host language.
- **Facilitate a cooking class** for those interested in cooking new and interesting recipes.
- **Be a tourist in your own hometown and** have a strategically selected family take the speaker sightseeing (sports event, museums, scenic hikes, local flavors).
- **Host a family fun night.** It could be a game night, movies (subtitles if you think your church could tolerate it) and popcorn, or maybe even consider a surprise birthday party for the whole family!
- **Have them serve in *your* church ministries** during the week (food pantry, after-school tutoring, prayer meetings).
- **Treat them to a one-on-one dinner with the pastor(s)' family** (because both are families in ministry and can listen to and pray for one another).
- **Celebrate the holidays – from their host culture.** Let them guide you in celebrating a holiday that from another country.
- **Find a way to give local expression** to what the speaker is doing overseas.
- **Have a behind-the-scenes meal with the speaker for those who might be called** to missions and ministry strategists who want to impact their own Acts 1:8 circles.
- **Host a small group at an ethnic restaurant** (especially if there is one from the speaker's host culture) and let the IW be your guide.
- **Meet with the pastor(s) and elders** for a time of prayer over the church and its community.
- **Give the speaker a whole day off.** Ask if the speaker would be interested in a temporary pass to the gym.

You can see it doesn't take long to fill up a week!

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--------------|--|--|--|
| IW arrives | Lunch meeting with pastor and elders | Help set up missions carnival | IW's day off | Lunch with those with a potential call to missions | Service project followed by lunch with the men | Practice new song with worship team Preach |
| | Jones family takes IW to local touristy place | | | Serve in after-school ministry | | Lunch with Darling family |
| Dinner with pastor and wife | Dinner with Smith family | Evening with families (missions carnival or holiday party) | | Youth group event | Evening off | Depart with fond memories & stronger relationships |

What could your week look like? Mark the ideas you want to come back to. Take notes on other ideas you hear.

Ideas for a Member Care Week

The AM Member Care model for overall wellness relies on a foundation and core of dwelling with and depending on God. Sharing the responsibility of member care for our international workers are Alliance Missions, themselves and their family, their team members, and the local church. Following are some ideas on how the local church can contribute to member care (feeling valued by being seen, heard, and known). Some of these ideas can be done with the IW in person, and some ideas are designed to come together to care for the IW while they are still on the field.

- Assemble housewarming gifts at the beginning of home assignment (seasonings, cleaning supplies, throw blankets, iron & board, et cetera – make sure to get allergy/dietary restrictions and brand preferences).
- Collect gift cards for date nights and family fun experiences for them to pull back and connect with each other.
- Host a fun day with the family (or individual members of the family) in ways that are truly fun/meaningful to them. During that day, listen. Share some. Listen more. Let the Holy Spirit give you the right words to respond.
- Write meaningful letters to them. Dwell on Scripture and incorporate that into your letters. Share personal examples of how Scripture has been meaningful in your life experience. Have someone take pictures of you to include with your letter so there is a face that goes with the story.
- Throw a birthday party for the entire family.
- Read their newsletter corporately, pray corporately or in small groups, and then (before leaving) respond to their newsletter via e-mail.
- Have someone prepare a presentation on the culture, challenges, and opportunities the IW experiences in their host culture. What does daily life look like (school, shopping, transportation, appropriate dress)? Why someone else? The fact that you took the time to learn and understand the context of your IW will speak volumes to the IW!
- Consider a corporate fast and prayer/worship night to intercede for the IW's ministries in their host culture.
- Record a video of church life, prayer requests/praises from your church, and greetings from people in your church the IW has connected well with (because relationship is two-ways, right?).
- Compile a trusted list of local resources for physical, mental, and spiritual wellness for the international workers to have choice and access to. Remember to communicate with respect and grace.
- Host a Member Care training for the caring of your IWs and your pastors.
- Host a Peacemaking Level 1 and Level 2 training so you can effectively coach IWs through difficult experiences as they open up to you.

- Ask about their kids! Prepare a fun worksheet for your kids to fill out about favorite snacks, hobbies, movies, best and worst parts about school, etc. Invite the IW's kids to fill out the same worksheet and share the answers with each other.

Invite a Virtual Speaker

You may be worried about not having an in-person speaker for people to engage with, and (if we're honest), not everyone is a particularly engaging in-person, let alone on video or long distance. Here's the key: Their sweet spot is engaging in the culture they've been sent to rather than trying to relate it to Americans who probably don't have a box for the sort of stuff they are working with. Of course, let them share what they want/need to, but also give them assignments to let them shine in their sweet spot *and* create a shared experience with Americans.

Ideas for Videos from Workers

Talk with the IWs and see which of these videos resonates with them the most. The "what does life look like for you" type of videos help to create a shared experience with your church. It's interesting for kids and for adults.

- Ask the international worker to film a friend in the culture preparing a meal (maybe toward the end of the meal preparation so it's not such a long video) and explain what the food is. The international worker can easily explain they are filming so their family can see what life is like in this country.
- Ask them video what their version of a grocery store looks like and feature some common food items/snacks.
- Ask them to take you on a tour of their home. What makes it different than the home they had in America?
- What does the money look like there? How much does the food cost (McDonald's, ground beef, cereal, soda pop)?
- What are they looking forward to in the next couple of months and why? What have they been encouraged by?
- Ask them to show how COVID has affected their daily life in that country. How did they adapt ministry? What have they learned as a result of this season?
- Ask them to do a mini language lesson and teach a simple song – yes, even to the adults!
- Ask their family to present a fashion show of what people wear in their culture – and why (weather, religion, culture, economic reasons).
- Ask them to share cultural and language blunders or other moments they found funny.
- Ask them if they can receive care packages (it's always an interesting story if they can't); what do they LOVE to get in those packages and why? Take notes and act on what you learn!
- How are birthdays celebrated in their culture?
- What holidays are popular there and how are they celebrated?
- What have you learned about God while being in another culture?
- What have you learned about yourself while being in another culture?

- What have you learned about people while being in another culture?

Be kind: Request pre-recorded video so they don't have to get up in the middle of the night due to the time difference. There is usually 6-10 hours difference, which makes evening events difficult for our workers. If they insist on being available live, then go for it; but otherwise, please be considerate of the time difference!

More Ideas to Use a Virtual Speaker

Read and Respond

Have everyone *read* the prayer newsletter and challenge them to respond to the worker via e-mail after they have prayed for them.

Personal fundraisers for the GCF

Encourage people to babysit, sell a pie-a-month, organize closets, hire themselves out for handyman jobs, or do a physical challenge to raise awareness and funds for the GCF. Have them post their activities and progress on your church Facebook page. See how creative your congregants can get!

Virtual Birthday Party for an IW Family

Have the party at your church in person, but then send a box of balloons, signed cards, and birthday cake-in-a-mug packets through the mail.

Virtual cards (via Google forms)

Gather notes of encouragement or verses you are praying for a missionary family via a Google form in lieu of passing around a physical card for everyone to sign. This will include those who can't be at a missions conference in person and is more sanitary for those who are there in person.

Flat Stanley idea

International workers are often visited by "Flat Stanley", a character from the book, *Flat Stanley*, by Jeff Brown. In this book, Stanley is flattened when his bulletin board falls on him while he is sleeping. He takes the opportunity to go on many exciting adventures because he is only a half-inch thick. Classrooms across America make their own "Flat Stanley" and see how far around the world a postage stamp will take him. Why not take the international workers on a similar adventure within your church family? Create flat versions of the family members with their prayer requests on the back, and then take them around your church for a week, taking pictures with them.

International Meals & Snacks

If you can reproduce the meals/snacks featured by the international worker, have them available to your church members. You can at least offer the recipes and have families post pictures of

them preparing the meal on your Facebook page, if they “nailed it”, and what their reactions to the food were.

Zoom Room Ideas with the IW

- Prayer groups
- Small groups
- Pursuing the call – those who feel called to missions
- Kids Korner – what does your culture look like to the kids? Teach them a simple song in your language. Can you replicate a popular snack (fun to see the facial responses as kids try the snack)?
- A cooking class using cultural recipes
- Culture awareness study of the country the international workers serve in (make it a show and tell format)
- Meet with the ministry strategists in your church (How did the international worker identify ministry strategy in their context? How can they help you identify some ideas in your context?)
- Ministerium (the local association of pastors) could meet and talk about different expressions of church in different contexts and cultures, and perhaps find new ideas to appropriate to their context.

Mission Engagement Assessment

This tool is designed by and for leaders who oversee missions in Alliance churches throughout the USA. This tool is designed around 5 key areas of missions engagement - building relationships, praying, giving, sending, and promoting. To properly utilize this tool in your own church, it is essential to understand these 10 things:

1. **The goal is deeper engagement.** There are hundreds of ways to be engaged in Alliance missions, and this tool's goal is simply to help you determine new ways to be engaged.
2. **This tool is only for Alliance missions.** While most Alliance churches engage in other missions activity outside of the Alliance, the goal for this assessment is to help you engage more deeply within the Alliance and all it has to offer.
3. **This is a self-assessment and not meant to compare against other churches.** Year over year you should only use this tool to evaluate your own church and whether it is moving forward or backwards when it comes to engagement in Alliance missions.
4. **This tool should be used each year.** After taking the assessment you will receive a score based on 135 possible points. This gives you the ability to measure in subsequent years if your church is making progress at engaging deeper in Alliance missions.
5. **This tool is designed for global missions** but can be used for local ministries as well. You have complete freedom to use this tool in any way and any context you desire.
6. **This tool is meant to be used by your church's missions leadership.** The assessment is very subjective and will be most effective when your primary missions leadership are the ones using the tool. This could be a missions pastor or missions committee leader, lead pastor, key elder, or your entire missions leadership team.
7. **The effectiveness of this tool will be found in the reasons for your answers.** While you may answer a question quickly, take the time to write down why you answered the way you did. This will be the key to determining new and deeper ways to engage.
8. **It will not always be clear how to engage more deeply, so ask for help.** This tool may help you figure out where you are, but it does not provide answers on next steps. Talk to your district missions mobilizer, other missions leaders, or Global Link for help.
9. After using the tool, **set clear goals on where your church can engage more deeply** in the coming year. The tool will help you see many possible areas to deepen engagement. The best step forward, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to create goals for how to improve your engagement score in the coming year.
10. **This tool is really meant to help your church start the discussion.** There are other tools and assessments for churches that also provide rich insight into missions engagement. This tool is meant to help Alliance churches, large and small, young and old, take the time to have the discussion, because every church is vital to Kingdom advancement.

