

Keeping in touch



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Interserve England & Wales Partner Joyce Huggett continues her series of articles on supporting mission Partners.

Imagine leaving your homeland for the first time – not for a holiday, but to *live*. How might you feel to be surrounded by people who speak little or no English? How might you feel to be stared at by people who have seen few, if any, Westerners before – people whose lifestyle is very different from your own? What might help you to adjust?

If you can put yourself in the sandals of someone who has embarked on an adventure like this, you may well catch a glimpse of some of the ways you can best support partners working in tough places. You may also experience a whole variety of emotions: excitement and fear, fascination and frustration, expectation and disappointment, to name but a few of those that fill most mission partners as they serve God in a cross-cultural context. You may also catch a glimpse of some of the ways in which you can best support partners while they are overseas.

Emotional support

However exciting and fascinating it feels to be on foreign soil, our

heart, inevitably, turns to our homeland from time to time, so news from family and friends is always welcome. When we were mission partners working overseas, my husband and I walked to the post box almost every day just in case a letter from home was lying

in wait for us. The letters I *enjoyed* most were those that described the weather (!), the countryside or gardens, and those that reported some of the events that were happening in the church and town where we used to live and worship. The letters that *encouraged* me most were those in which the writer expressed belief in the work that we were doing and reminded us that they were continuing to take an interest in us and that they were still praying for us.

Emails are a quick and convenient way of communicating this kind of encouragement too as long as the writer doesn't expect an instant or lengthy reply. (Always bear in mind, of course, any advice a Partner has given about ways to be careful about what you write in an email or letter.) Phone calls can also convey care – but remember to check on the clock and ensure that you phone during the partner's *daytime*, not in the middle of their night!

Prayerful support

A pile of newsletters from Partners sit on the desk beside me as I write.

Copies of *GO* magazine and monthly prayer diaries lie there too. Each reminds me of specific needs that particular Partners have been experiencing recently. Keeping in touch in this way, I find, prompts me to pray – not only in my Quiet Time, but at odd times during the day as well. Such prayer can be wordless – after all, God knows each Partner's needs much better than we do. All we need to do is to tune into God's presence, recall the name or need of a particular Partner and hold that person into God's loving care. He will know what to do! He might, though, prompt *us* to support the Partner in some practical way.

Practical support

'Send her a surprise!' That's one thing God might well whisper in the ears of our heart as we pray. This happened to the supporters of one Partner I met on one of my trips overseas. They obeyed by sending a very generous sum of money and an accompanying letter that insisted that the money was to be spent on something the partner *really wanted*. This partner worked in a large town in one of those hot and steamy countries where the temperature soars sky-high in summer. This town is notorious because the men love to leer at Western women. When the letter and the gift arrived, the Partner gasped. How did these supporters guess, she wondered, that she *longed* for somewhere cool and quiet where she could pray each day? Now that she had sufficient funds, she could buy a season ticket that would enable her to go regularly to a hotel swimming pool that was frequented by Westerners. There, at a time of day when the pool was usually empty, she could enjoy a swim in the clear, cool water *and* spend time in quiet prayer, Bible reading and reflection. How she thanked 'the God of Surprises' for the generosity and obedience of these supporters!