SUMMER 2015

HOW TO CREATE A GREAT SUPPORT LETTER

Mission trip support letters are easy to write if you know what to include. The following are some quick tips on what to put in, what to avoid and how to share your mission trip support letter.

But first, let's make sure you know *why* you're writing a support letter. When you write a support letter, you're doing way more than just asking for money and prayer – you're inviting someone to *participate* in your trip. While they won't be hopping in the van with you, they *will* be filling the vital role of providing support in your mission trip experience. Keep this in mind as you write and send your support letters.

10 WRITING TIPS

1. Keep it short. One page is plenty. Two pages should be your maximum. Quality trumps quantity.

2. Make it look good. First impressions matter. If designing documents isn't your cup of tea, find a friend who can help. Including a picture of you or your team is an easy win.

3. Proofread it. Errers are fairly noticeabl… and often avoidable. Have someone help you by reading your letter for any errors before you hit PRINT.

4. Don't forget the details. Where is the trip? What are the dates? What will you be doing? Is there a send-off service beforehand? How much money are you trying to raise? If they want to donate money, where do they send it and who are checks made out to? A great way to ask for money is to suggest a couple options for dollar amounts (e.g. "I recommend a gift of $50, $100 or $150, but of course, any amount is more than welcome.")

You should also include whether or not donations are tax deductible. Ask your church if gifts qualify. Also, many qualifying organizations recommend that checks have nothing written on the Memo line as it can jeopardize the gift's tax deductible status. If the gift qualifies as tax deductible you might write something like this: "Gifts are tax deductible. You can make checks out to ABC Church, but please do not write anything on the Memo line as this could jeopardize your gift's tax deductible status."

5. Be interesting. Share about what you are doing, the place you are going and the people you will be with, but don't drag out your letter with tons of minute details. (YouthWorks provides a Community Info Sheet for each of our communities; you might include some of those details about the community you're headed to in your support letter.)

6. Make it personal. People want to support *you*! Don't send a generic letter from the team when you can send a personal letter from you. While you might share some details about your team, also include what your hopes, fears and needs are.

7. Don't *just* write a "fundraising letter." *Support* is so much more than people's money. At the same time, there is nothing to be ashamed about when offering people the opportunity to be generous. If asking for money is *part* of the support you need, make it secondary to asking for prayer. Even if people can't contribute financially, they can certainly still support you.

8. Ask for prayer. And be specific when you do. Give them 4 or 5 things they can pray for, for example: the community and ministries you are visiting, your team, your travels, etc. (If you wrote a team covenant, there is probably some great things to pray for in there!)

9. Be humble and respectful. Don't make the place you're headed seem destitute in an effort to make your trip sound more significant. Remember that Jesus is the hero, not your team. Use language that honors what God is already up to in the place you are headed. Use phrases like, "serve alongside," "partner with" and "learn from."

10. Say thank you. A great way to end your letter is with gratefulness for the people you are asking to partner with you in this mission trip. Thank them in advance for whatever way they choose to support you.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SENDING YOUR LETTER

Think about *when* to send. A good timeframe for many mission trip teams is about 3 or 4 months before your trip. Consider that you don't want to send it so early people forget about the trip by the time you go, but you also want prayer for your team's preparation process, not just the actual trip. Also, consider when you need financial support to arrive and plan accordingly.

Intentionally pick your people. Don't forward your support letter to all your Facebook friends. Instead, take 10 or 20 minutes to think through whom you should send your support letter to. A few groups of people to consider include family, friends (even if they don't have money to give you), people you know from church, people you know from school, people you want to invite to know you better, etc.

Don't overload someone. When requesting financial support, coordinate with your team to make sure the same family in your church doesn't receive 20 letters from 20 different mission trippers.

Use snail mail. It's easy to forget the attachment to a Facebook message, but there's something meaningful about getting a support letter in the mail. When you put it in an envelope you could even include a separate picture asking for prayer during your trip. Who knows – you might wind up on someone's fridge. ☺

Consider print quality. If you're printing your letter or picture, make sure you use a printer that doesn't make your letter look like it's from the 1980s. Maybe your church or a friend can help, and if not them, invest a little money at a local print shop. It's worth the extra trouble.

Sending support letters is an important part of your mission trip process. They begin a story that you get to continue telling after the trip! Include others in your story by writing a really *great* support letter.

On the next page, you can find an example support letter that demonstrates many of the ideas listed in this resource, please feel free to copy and adapt content as needed.

Dear Friends and Family,

From July 14–20 I'm excited to be headed to Kansas City, Kansas leading a mission trip with my youth group from Calvary Church. We're going through YouthWorks, a short-term missions organization that specializes in setting up life-changing Christ-centered trips for teenagers.

The neighborhood we'll be serving in is largely Hispanic, so we'll be participating in bilingual worship and sharing some Mexican food cooked by friends in the community. One of the interesting issues we'll be learning about is how local ministries respond to the many undocumented workers within the community. Additionally, we'll be serving the community through helping facilitate a sports camp for kids, restoring old houses with a local ministry, and serving through partnerships with various local organizations.

As you can probably tell, it's going to be a full week of listening to, learning from and loving on the people we meet in Kansas City, and there is going to be a great opportunity for growth within our group.

I would love it if you would pray for this mission trip experience. Pray for the 17 of us who are going – that we would be open to learning from the community we're visiting and grow closer as a group and closer to Jesus. Pray for the five YouthWorks staff who are living in Kansas City all summer long and will be leading us during the trip. Pray for the community members who we meet – that we could love and honor them well. Pray especially for the kids who we'll get to do ministry with – that they would connect the love we show with the love Jesus has for them. Finally, pray for me – that I could really experience this YouthWorks mission trip week in a fresh and effective way. If you will commit to praying for us, please let me know. I would love to share that news with my team.

Also, many members of our team are still working on fundraising for this trip. Please consider supporting us financially. I recommend a gift of $50, $100 or $150, but of course, any amount is more than welcome.

Gifts are tax deductible and can be made out to **"Calvary Church"** and mailed to:

Attn: Sam Townsend
c/o Calvary Church
1234 Calvary Way
Roseville, MN 55113

If you do send a check, please do *not* write anything in memo line as this could (because of laws I don't quite understand!) jeopardize the tax deductible status of your gift.

Thank you for considering supporting us through prayer and/or giving. This trip would be impossible without the generosity of so many.

I'm excited for this new opportunity, and I'm looking forward to sharing about it with you when I return.

Grateful for the places God draws us,
Sam Townsend

KANSAS CITY, KS FACTS & STATISTICS

Kansas City, KS is the lesser-known twin of the city of the same name just across the border in Missouri. The two cities join each other at the Missouri/Kansas border, the junction of the Missouri and Kansas rivers. Being a river town, Kansas City is a port of entry for farm products and is a large commercial, industrial and agricultural seat of the Midwest. With a community tagline of "Kansas City: Change Your Perspective," it is clear that Kansas City would like to climb out of the definitions it has had to bear over the years. Poor economy, low median income and high unemployment coupled with high dropout rates, increasing teen pregnancy and homelessness make life difficult for many Kansas City residents. In fact, among the homeless population in Kansas City, 56% are families with children.

- The population of Kansas City, KS is 142,320.
- Kansas City is the third largest city in Kansas.
- The median household income is $36,211, compared to $47,451 statewide.
- 21.6% of the population is living below the poverty level.
- The racial makeup of Kansas City is 48.9% White, 30.1% African American and 16.8% Hispanic.
- The unemployment rate is 7.8%.