

Dear Friends of The Antioch Partners (TAP),

In the church year we are heading into what liturgically is called “ordinary time.” This is the season of the day-to-day living out of following the risen Christ. In ordinary time we ask, “What in the day-to-day keeps us following Jesus with passion and perseverance through the ordinariness of life?”

When we think of those who have answered God’s call to serve cross-culturally in challenging places for the sake of the gospel, it may be difficult to imagine what for them is ordinary life. It may be even more difficult to know what keeps them faithful and encouraged, passionate and persevering in their places of service.

These are the questions at the heart of member care for TAP. Our vision statement expresses the scope of answering God’s call to the peoples of the world: *Presbyterians effectively equipped, sent out and supported as they participate in God’s mission in the world, and every Presbyterian congregation extensively, strategically, and radically involved in this process.* Our vision for member care expresses our commitment to TAP Partners for the long haul: *for TAP Partners to be healthy, thriving and effective cross-cultural servants; growing in their relationship with Jesus and supported by a community of care in all aspects of their life.* The mission of TAP member care affirms our awareness that the support and encouragement our Partners deserve requires communities of care: *build relationships with TAP Partners and their support community (sending church, TAP administration, local partners, other ministries) such that all are aided in growing toward maturity as members of the body of Christ and partners in the Kingdom.*

When we joined TAP in September 2009 as the Member Care Coordinators, we became the sixth and seventh TAP Partners (we spend part of each year in Ethiopia teaching at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology). Now, the number of TAP Partners has grown to 21 people serving or appointed and preparing to go. Others are in various stages of discernment with TAP. Our commitment is to see that these dedicated servants are effectively cared for and supported from the beginning of their discernment throughout their call to cross-cultural witness.

When we share with churches about member care, we often get a rather blank look, as the term is not widely used in Presbyterian circles. Conversely, the response from mission personnel to what we’re doing has overwhelmingly been, “That is so needed! That is so important!” So, part of our task is bridging the gap between the felt need on the part of those serving around the world, and those who are serving as senders in supporting churches. Caring for the missionaries we send out requires our financial resources, but it also calls for our continuing and committed relationships with these friends. We would love to see every congregation involved in sending people in mission receive the kind of testimony heard from cross-cultural servants some years ago, “Our own congregation back home has been absolutely tremendous in its caring support for us – they have made the difference between feeling supported and prayed for each day, and feeling unsupported...”



John and Anne Wheeler-Waddell
TAP Member Care Coordinators

The Privilege of Member Care

How wonderful it is to experience God's best timing, better than we can ever plan! Our time teaching in Addis Ababa this past January to March meant we "happened" to be around and accessible for one of our TAP Partners who teaches in a school several hours south of Addis. The students and staff at the school experienced shocking tragedy and grief when a popular young teacher and then a few weeks later a kindergarten student died suddenly and unexpectedly. With all community members sworn to secrecy until next of kin could be notified (which in the Ethiopian context is handled very carefully and not at all in haste), our TAP partner would have had no place to process her own shock and grief except we "happened" to be in Addis. She was able to come away for a few days and in confidence we spent time just listening, grieving together with her and praying. Then at the end of our teaching time, we arranged to travel down and spend a couple of days at her school, seeing where our colleague lives and works, meeting her fellow teachers and students, getting a sense of both the beauty and the isolation of the place.



Project Mercy School Children

What a privilege to come along side at times of special need but also just to experience and share the ordinary life of one of our Partners serving across cultures and sometimes in remote places.

While we as TAP support staff seek to do our part in good communication with and support of all our Partners, we are committed to working with the congregations involved in sending our Partners with financial and prayer support. As a way to broaden and deepen the practice of member care, TAP is offering to work with congregations who wish to grow in their mission ministry of support and encouragement of these servants. For information about our *Caring for Cross-Cultural Servants* workshop and to see other resources on member care, please visit TAP's website, www.theantiochpartners.org and click on the resources tab. Grateful for your partnership in the gospel, we look forward to hearing from you as together we expand our crucial partnership with those serving across cultures and around the world.

Serving together in Christ,

Anne & John Wheeler-Waddell

Member Care Coordinators, The Antioch Partners