



**MIDAMERICA DISTRICT
OF THE C&MA**

Missions Tour Handbook

2020–2021

Why do we have an annual missions conference event with an Alliance worker targeting Alliance Global ministry?

1. We have a passion to fulfill the Great Commission and provide access to the gospel in the least reached places of the world. Our denomination intentionally targets these least reached places for our international focus.
2. We want to be a district and a local church that reaches our neighborhoods, creates networks of churches, and reaches the nations. Our annual missions conference is a key tool to inform, inspire, and invite people to participate in this strategic opportunity.
3. Did you know that hosting a missions conference is the **ONE thing that** the CMA requires of each of our churches each year? That is because Global **MISSIONS is our CMA DNA!** Let's fulfill this task well as we communicate our commitment to our church families to take the Good News to the ends of the earth!!!

A note to pastors

Your church may be quite large or fairly small. However, no matter the size of your church, you are the key missions leader. If you publicly support the work of global missions from the pulpit and in personal conversation, it will set the tone and focus of your congregation. Thank you for being a champion for the cause of reaching the nations and for the health of your local church family!

Scheduling of your International Worker

Over the last number of years our denomination has wrestled with having enough International Workers (IW) on home assignment to visit and minister in all of the churches. To accommodate this challenge, a different method of scheduling conferences for local churches has been instituted. Previously, the National Office scheduled IWs for districts. In the last two years it has become the responsibility of each district to schedule the IWs using an online calendar program.

Your district mobilizer is given an opportunity to begin the scheduling process for your local church in March of each year. Availability of IWs fills quickly. To accommodate the low number of IWs and high demand, it is important for the district to create these schedules and to inform the local church of the timing of the conference. This makes it challenging to consider individual requests or desires from local churches.

One of the components that makes this process difficult is the breadth of our district covering a 5-state area. The other component is that we, as a district, typically do not have enough returning IWs residing in our district to staff our churches' missions conferences throughout the year. This means that most of our tour speakers are flown into the district and then travel throughout the district for 4-6 weeks while being away from their families for that season. Often times churches only plan to have their conference over a weekend which means the IW is away from home for 4 days in the middle of the week with no specific responsibilities or activity assigned. Please consider this as you plan your schedule with your IW.

Planning Ahead

Our goal is to become more effective at communicating to you the dates of your conference and the name and contact information of your IW. All of us know that the key to any effective event in the local church is planning and implementation. An effective missions conference is no different. We have found that planning ahead, publicizing, decorating, and involving different groups of people results in a far more effective conference, reaching a church's potential, and fulfilling its global mission.

Communication is key with your congregation, community, churches on either side of your conference, and your IW. Let me briefly touch on each of these:

- **Communication with your congregation:** Missions conferences are a key time to connect your IW with people in your local church. One great use of this time is to create engagement opportunities with small groups, leadership teams, age-related ministry groups, etc. Please schedule these types of meetings well in advance and invite your people to lead some of these opportunities. Some ideas to consider are:
 - Preach a series on the missions heart of God prior to your event
 - Provide a missions moment highlighting Alliance missions each week during the month of your missions conference/event
 - Prepare the children and teens in your church for the event through stories, interviews, lessons
 - Schedule coffee dates, lunches, and dinners for your IW with key people who are interested in missions
- **Communication with your community:** It is possible you may have people living in your community who are from the same host country as your IW. A public announcement in the newspaper sometimes provides opportunity for local church outreach that can be very strategic (unless the IW is serving in a Creative Access Country). There are times when churches have been able to create opportunities for their workers to speak in local schools, rotary events, etc. to create some cultural engagement in your community as well.
- **Communication with churches that host your worker before and after your conference.** This is very important! Due to most churches desiring to have their conference scheduled for a weekend, this leaves days during the week that are often unbooked and unused. It is still the responsibility of the local church to make sure that your IW is cared for during these times. In other words, planning needs to be given to make sure that housing and meals are continued to be covered during this time. Transportation may also need to be considered for the transfer of IWs from one location to the next. This is the responsibility of each local church.
- **Communication with your International Worker:** When you are notified of your assigned IW, please begin communicating with them and praying for them publicly and privately. Here is a list of items to address:
 - **Housing/dietary needs:** Again, please remember the local church is responsible to coordinate housing and meals prior to and after your

- conference in conjunction with the churches before and after your conference. Consideration should be given regarding any allergies, etc.
- **Transportation:** Will the IWs have their own vehicle? If so, the local church is responsible to cover mileage. It is recommended reimbursing at the IRS recommended mileage rate to and from the church.
 - **What type of ministry in the local church do they most prefer?** Some IWs are great at communicating with youth and children; others do not prefer this as much. Find out how they prefer to communicate. What is their sweet spot and be sensitive to how you can help them win in connecting with your people?
 - **It is always good to take time to listen.** Find out the needs of the IW's family. What are their names? Look for ways to connect relationally with these International friends.
 - **Missions conference is NOT all about Sunday morning.** Please realize and take note that an effective missions conference is not all about Sunday morning! It is often the time spent with a meal, or coffee, or a small group discussion in which there is space to ask questions. Listen to the heart of the IW and hear about the needs in their host culture that God will use to move your heart. Ask your IW how busy they want to be and then look for opportunities to connect them with key leaders who will help to facilitate ongoing missions engagement through the year.

A Word about Finances

Our IWs are supported to varying degrees by the Great Commission Fund. Please give the IW the opportunity to celebrate what your church's involvement in this fund has accomplished. Also realize the support that is provided for transportation, housing, and meals is not income for our IWs. This being said, your special gifts and generosity to our workers during their time of missions conference is extremely helpful for them in taking care of extra expenses and obligations that often need to be cared for as a part of preparing to head back overseas. Your church is encouraged to be generous as you ask God how he wants you to partner with our International Workers.

Creative Access information

Some of the IWs we have on tour in our district are serving in Creative Access Countries (CAC). This means you will not be able to post their information publicly due to the sensitive nature of where they are serving internationally. Please ask your IW if they are serving in a CAC location and what parameters are needed in your communication about them.

Logistics checklist:

A checklist is sometimes helpful in planning your conference. The following are suggested:

- Publicity
- Pick up and drop off of worker
- Housing
- Meals

- Small group connections with worker
- Community engagement
- Ask the IW what they would like to do and how they would like to use their time between conferences
- Create space for the IW to connect with pastoral staff and key leaders?

Thank you for all of your hard work in making this year a fantastic one of global missions engagement! If there is any way I can serve you in this area, please don't hesitate to contact me with your questions.

For the forward movement of Christ's Kingdom!

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