



TCK CONNECT HANDBOOK

Recommendations and Ideas for Connecting
Alliance Missions Third Culture Kids with Local
Churches and Individuals



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THE “WHAT” AND “WHY” OF TCK CONNECT

The goal of the TCK Connect ministry is to connect each of our Alliance Missions third culture kids (TCKs) with a church family who will pray specifically and care especially for “their” TCK. We encourage you to experience the joy of connecting with and caring for our precious Alliance Missions TCKs. We want to ensure that ALL of our TCKs in ALL of our districts are connected with a church. We don’t want any of our Alliance Missions TCKs to “fall through the cracks.”

Being a Christ-centered, Acts 1:8 family is the heartbeat of The Christian and Missionary Alliance. Within this family we have a long history of caring well for our international workers and their children. Healthy families stay on the field longer and enjoy a more effective ministry. Throughout the years, Alliance Women has played an important role in praying and caring for our workers and their children. Churches and individuals have invested both time and resources in the ministry of developing relationships with specific international worker families and especially their children (TCKs) by praying, sending birthday and Christmas cards, and even hosting graduation parties!

As a family, our goal is that each TCK will be lifted up to the Father by a group of people that are interceding regularly for that child’s spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being. Connections like this have borne eternal fruit in the lives of our TCKs as they connect with the U.S. Alliance church family and know that someone cares for them specifically (not just their parents’ ministry).

“I have no doubt that the prayers prayed for our kids have changed circumstances and helped our children. I’m sure this is the biggest impact! It is more encouraging when the Church stays in contact and asks for requests and lets us know that they are praying and that they care.” –an Alliance international worker

This handbook contains recommendations and ideas for maximizing that connection.

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION FOR TCK CONNECT

Every district is encouraged to appoint a TCK Connect coordinator. The primary goal of the coordinator is to ensure that each TCK in the district is connected with a church family and to follow up with the churches to facilitate that connection. In the past, an Alliance Women leader fulfilled this role in every district. In the absence of an Alliance Women ministry, we recommend that the district missions mobilizer (DMM) or district superintendent appoint someone to fill this role so that we can continue these important connections.

The role of a TCK Connect coordinator includes the following responsibilities:

1) CONNECT WITH CHURCHES

- Send a copy of the TCK Connect Handbook to all participating churches and individuals. Check in with churches and ask about their specific TCK connection(s).
- Initially, this role may include asking churches which TCK(s) they are connected to and cross-checking that list with a list of district IW families to ensure that all TCKs are connected to a church. As new connections are forged, we strongly recommend that all of the TCKs in one family be connected to the same church. This ensures that siblings will experience the same level of care (versus comparing between each other if one TCK has a more generous church than the other).

“We have four kids who were adopted by three different churches. There was some inequity, which created some difficulty on our end explaining to our kids why their sibling got something from a church, but the other did not. One church stayed with us the entire time our daughter grew up. Our oldest only heard from his church once a year and sometimes not at all.” –an Alliance international worker

2) CONNECT WITH DISTRICT INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

- Send an annual evaluation questionnaire or email to IW families who have children in the TCK Connect ministry in your district. Ask what they have appreciated about the connection and if they have any suggestions to improve the connection. As a courtesy, please share the IW responses with the Alliance Women national director and the Alliance Missions TCK advocates so we can be encouraged by these connections and consider the IWs’ suggestions.

“My children have felt a greater ownership of our family calling through the affirmation of our adopted church.” –an Alliance international worker

3) CONNECT WITH THE DISTRICT

- Submit an annual report of the TCK Connect ministry to the District Conference. This report could include a list of the churches and their assigned TCKs, any special stories or events that churches hosted to celebrate their TCKs, specific answers to prayer, and mention of any unassigned TCKs that still need a church connection.
- Ask the district office and/or DMM for updated information about IW appointees so that new TCKs (and their families) may be connected to a church as soon as possible. Kids need extra prayer and care during all of these transitions!
- Use district events such as retreats and/or District Conference to promote the TCK Connect ministry with churches, individuals, and Alliance Women groups. One idea would be to offer a seminar on member care for TCKs—talk to the TCK advocates at amtck@cmalliance.org about ideas!

“Our kids saw love displayed through churches who did not really know them or our family personally before adopting them. It was a powerful testimony to our kids of the love of the family of Christ and the C&MA family.” –an Alliance international worker

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH:

1) Appoint a TCK Connect team.

This team may be composed of individuals from different ministry groups in your church—women’s ministry, children’s ministry, youth ministry, missions committee, etc. The team is encouraged to document their TCK connection (see “Documenting Your TCK Connection”).

“Our kids have felt loved by their churches (especially those who were very active in the relational connection), and they always looked forward to visiting “their church” on home assignment. Knowing that it wasn’t just their parents who were supported for and prayed for, but that a church was specifically praying for and supporting them too, made a big impact in their lives.” –an Alliance international worker

2) Pray for your TCK.

Share this important ministry with the entire church family. One idea would be to assign different small groups a specific day of the week to regularly pray for your TCK (see “Praying for Your TCK”).

3) Communicate regularly with your TCK(s) and their family.

In the beginning of your communication with the IW parents, ask about their specific context. Are they in a creative-access country? What is the best way to communicate carefully with them? Frequent letters, cards, and emails will let them know that they are important.

- Encourage children and youth in the church to write personal notes or to connect with TCKs on social media. We want TCKs to have a sense of connection and friendship with the kids and youth in your church.
- Keep praying and writing even if your TCK (or their family) does not always respond!
- Remember special occasions such as birthdays and holidays (see “Giving Gifts to Your TCK”).

“The churches that adopted our two kids were small, but they never missed a Christmas or birthday, and they were always there with an encouraging card. The gifts and cards were always special, but more than anything, we appreciated the prayers and notes that they sent. Our children were covered in prayer by the Alliance women of those churches. That is priceless.” –an Alliance international worker

4) Be faithful and continue the connection as long as possible.

Local churches and individuals are strongly encouraged to maintain a connection with assigned TCKs through the first four years after high school graduation (or until completion of college). If you

are no longer able to fulfill your TCK Connect ministry responsibilities, contact the district TCK Connect coordinator as soon as possible. As a courtesy, notify TCK parents of the need for a change as well. We desire to keep TCKs continually connected with a church, quickly reassigning a new church when necessary.

“Our kids always felt special when they received packages from their ladies. As they got older it gave us a way into deeper relationships with those churches. Some of those relationships have lasted 40 years! Even as adults, our kids are not forgotten. Recently our grandchildren were adopted by one of the original churches who had adopted our daughter so many years ago.” –an Alliance international worker

When your TCK family is on home assignment, invite them to your church. Be creative and host an event to celebrate your TCKs! Maybe host a weekend event in their honor, perhaps with a celebration Friday night with the youth and a lunch for the entire family on Saturday. If they would like to participate, offer your TCK(s) the opportunity to share in Sunday school or at church. Extend an open invitation to the church so that everyone can connect with your TCKs and their family. Offer to sponsor a fun experience for their family. For example: tickets to an amusement park or concert, whitewater rafting, a summer camp scholarship, or lift tickets for skiing.

“We received family tickets to a number of Major League Baseball games from a couple in a supporting church. We still talk about the great time we had at those games and how we felt loved by that couple. Our son’s church hosted a birthday party complete with cake, ice cream, and presents for him when he was in elementary school. He is now a young adult and still remembers the party.” –an Alliance international worker

5) When your TCK is in high school, support them financially and help send them to the LIFE conference and/or a district summer camp.

If your church is sending a youth group to LIFE, include your TCK in your church group if they are not traveling with a group of TCKs from their region.

6) When your TCK graduates from high school and moves to the U.S., your connection is needed more than ever!

Even if the TCK lives in or attends college in a different city, please help find a family who will open their home to your TCK during weekends, vacations, and school breaks, especially during those first four years of transition and adjustment. Send special care packages to their college dorm room or wherever they are staying. If you are in the area, stop by and offer to take them out for lunch. Ask if they need to go shopping for anything, including clothes for the different seasons.

“This is a critical time in a TCK’s life. My observation has been that in many cases, a TCK receives a lot of care and support while on the field with their parents but then are forgotten when they return to their passport country for university. The continued care for college-age TCKs cannot be emphasized enough in my mind.” –an Alliance international worker

“Our two oldest kids had families that ‘adopted’ them while they were in college. They were part of the family. It made the transition to college so much easier and of course provided us, as parents, a great deal of peace of mind.” –an Alliance international worker

PRAYING FOR YOUR TCKS

Pray for TCKs as you would for your own children.

TCKs need friends, encouragement, and, most of all, a meaningful, growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

[GRIT: A Guide to Praying for Third Culture Kids](#) is a blog post that outlines a great acronym for praying for your TCKs.

[Dear Moms at Prayer: 52 Letters Written from an Overseas Mom and Grandma on Praying for Third Culture Kids](#), written by Alliance worker Deanna Harrison, provides insight and prayers that you can pray.

Here are more specific prayers you can pray for TCKs:

- “May _____ find his/her primary identity in Jesus.”
- “Provide _____ good friendships with both local kids and other TCKs.”
- “Help _____ adjust to the culture and learn the language.”
- “Create in _____ a love for both his/her host culture and passport culture.”
- “Give _____ grace for transitions and goodbyes, and may he/she learn to grieve well.”
- “May _____ adjust well to his/her school situation (boarding, international, local, or home school).”
- “Graciously provide _____ a healthy, open relationship with his/her parents.”
- “May _____ have good relationships with teachers and, if in boarding school, dorm parents.”
- “Grant _____ safety and health, physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually.”
- “Provide spiritual protection for _____ so that Your truth would prevail in his/her heart and mind.”
- “Grant _____ wisdom and a teachable spirit.”
- “May _____ learn to trust You, God, in all of life’s circumstances.”
- “May _____ develop a healthy independence and confidence.”
- “Enable _____ to learn how to resolve conflicts with others.”
- “Bless _____’s future plans (college, career, marriage, ministry).”
- “May _____ always seek You and Your Kingdom first.”

“I once had the leader of my daughters’ Alliance Women group email me and ask me if everything was okay and if anything had happened. I said we were fine, and I couldn’t think of anything significant that happened in the last couple days, but I wanted to know why they had asked. She said that she and some of the other Alliance women were coming back from a meeting and suddenly felt the urgency to pray for our daughter who was about nine years old at the time. So, they pulled off the interstate and stopped on the side of the road and prayed specifically for her and for her safety. I was so impacted by this, that they listened to God’s leading and stopped and prayed for her. Who knows what their prayers stopped? My mama heart is always worried about their safety, especially since we live in a part of the world where safety is a huge concern. Knowing that these ladies took their responsibility to pray so seriously was a huge blessing to my anxious heart.” –an Alliance international worker

GIVING GIFTS TO YOUR TCK

Sending gifts to TCKs blesses you and the family! What do you send a TCK? Ask the kids and teens in your church. What things are they interested in or excited about? Ask the TCK’s family for suggestions.

Ask TCK parents before sending a package overseas. Sometimes packages can be complicated or costly to receive. Ask parents if there are creative ways to give gifts (funding an “experience” the family might not otherwise be able to afford, for example). Consider sending a gift card or coordinating with the parents so that they can buy a gift locally with the money you have collected.

Most churches spend at least \$100 per year on their TCK. We encourage churches to be creatively generous in caring for their TCK(s).

“When we were unexpectedly on home assignment, the church gifted our boys with warm Under Armour sweatshirts, which was the perfect gift because we came from Africa and were entering Wisconsin autumn.” –an Alliance international worker

“During COVID, I received an email from one of our adoptive churches asking if our children would benefit from a subscription to an online learning app, and I had just been praying and talking to my husband about how we were in need of more educational materials while the children were home from school. This was a huge blessing to me and an answer to prayer from the Lord. It was so meaningful that the Holy Spirit prompted the leader of the ministry to ask that question.” –an Alliance international worker

DOCUMENTING YOUR TCK CONNECTION

Organizing and maintaining TCK Connect ministry information will facilitate communication and help maintain consistency through team transitions. Here are some ideas for keeping track of your connection:

Personal Information

Keep a current document with your TCK's contact information and other helpful information (birthday, likes, dislikes, interests, hobbies, clothing sizes, etc.).

Correspondence and Gifts

Save letters, notes, and emails received from your TCK(s) and parents. Keep a list of gifts you sent to your TCK(s) so that you avoid duplication.

Prayer Journal

Keep a record of prayer requests and answers. This will be an encouragement to your TCK(s) as well as your church and district family!

Photo Books

Collect pictures and memorabilia from events hosted at your church when the family is on home assignment. You could also collect pictures that their parents send you throughout the years. These pictures can be organized in a photo book or scrapbook and given to your TCK as a special gift when he/she graduates or on a special occasion.

“The church that adopted our daughter took her on as an entire church. They tried to send a little something each month to encourage her. Then they sent a nice gift at Christmas and her birthday. They adopted her when she was born, and we were doing our home service. They continued to care for her all the way through her graduation from college. Our daughter called this church, “my church,” and she eagerly visited them when we were on home assignment. Their extra special care for her helped her through her years at boarding school. She knew, tangibly through all the little notes and small gifts, that people loved her and were praying for her.” –an Alliance international worker

Date: _____

TCK INFORMATION FORM

We are so excited to connect with your TCK and partner with your family by praying for and caring for your child. To help us begin our journey together, please share the following information with us:

TCK INFORMATION

Name and birthdate:

Hobbies, interests, favorites:

Specific prayer requests:

What is the best way to communicate with the TCK (email, WhatsApp, other)?

If your TCK is a teenager, what social media platforms do they prefer to communicate on?

PARENT INFORMATION

Names:

Country/Region:

What is the most effective way to communicate with you (email, WhatsApp, other)?

Share that contact information or phone number here:

FAMILY INFORMATION

Do you have other children that are connected with a partner church through TCK Connect? If “yes,” we would love to collaborate and coordinate with the other partner churches serving your family.

Child’s name and birthdate:

Partner church’s name:

TCK Connect contact info:

OTHER INFORMATION

What mailing address should we use to send cards and letters?

Please share your family’s or child’s preferences. Would you prefer that we mail gifts or send money?

What is the best way for us to send money?

If you can receive packages, what is the best way for you to receive packages?

- Any weight limits, duty charges, packaging, or postal regulations we should be aware of?
- Are there items you would advise us NOT to send?

RETURN THIS FORM TO:

Name:

Address:

Email:

