



FUNDING YOUR HOME ASSIGNMENT

We know you have plenty on your plate as you begin planning for your upcoming home assignment (a.k.a furlough). But we'd be remiss if we didn't encourage you to stop now and consider whether you have the funds available in your account so that your time stateside does not become a financial burden.

This guide, adapting principles from our End of Year Giving Strategy (which is also the BEST time to invite people to special giving), is intended to help you prepare for and execute a special gift campaign to ensure your upcoming furlough contributes to, rather than detracts from, your overall thriving.

For additional resources for your upcoming furlough, [check out this Solomon page](#).

When to Ask?

There are two answers to this question:

- 1. 4-6 Months prior to the start of your home assignment.**

Don't underestimate the amount of time needed to prepare, communicate, and ultimately follow up with those who might contribute to a special gift campaign. On top of the other preparations you will make to return to the States, earlier is always better.

- 2. If possible, an end of year giving campaign is generally the most effective.**

Did you know that end of year giving appeals to a different type of donor than your standard monthly partner? It's wise to offer various giving opportunities because you recognize there is no "one size fits all" to financial partnership. A large ask, such as an end-of-year giving appeal, tends to resonate with your special gift donors (look for any who gave over the past three years) and those with a higher capacity to give. This group may even include those who stopped giving or have never given before. This group can make up a HUGE chunk in your MTD. We've had missionaries who gathered \$10,000, \$25,000, and even \$50,000 in their end-of-year giving efforts!



Statistics indicate that 31% of all charitable giving happens at year-end, and 12% of all giving happens in the last three days of the year. This is a season when everyone you know is making some financial choices for this year and next. Two streams of thought are happening: decisions about their giving priorities for the next year, and how to steward end-of-year bonuses and/or commissions.

Who to Ask?

For any direct ask for special gifts, we usually recommend a Top 20 or 30 list. Here's our recommendation as to who you should consider adding to that list:

- **Those who give annually:**
Consider asking donors who give once or twice a year to consider making an end-of-year donation.
- **Those who give irregularly:**
You likely have some donors who give as money comes up, and the end of the year is a great time to invite them to invest in the ministry again.
- **Those who give only when asked:**
Many donors aren't able to make monthly commitments but would love to give towards a need once a year. Look at your list and find those donors.
- **Those who have never given (but might be open if asked again):**
Take a look at your prayer list and consider asking people who may not have been asked in a year or two. It's possible their situation has changed and they would be open to giving.
- **Lapsed partners (listed as non-current in Toolbox):**
While monthly or quarterly giving might not fit with this someone's current situation, sometimes a special gift does.
- **Those who've previously given special gifts:**
Anyone who has given a one-time gift in the past 3 years.



- **Who NOT to ask:**

Those you've asked for a special gift or increase in regular giving in the past 3-6 months (up to your discretion).

Your database can help you determine this information. Run reports from the last 3 years and take a look at your list. Filter by: Gift Type/ Special, Last Gift/ Last 3 Years.

How to Ask?

There are many options on how to invite someone to give a special gift. However, this is the process we recommend and have seen a lot of fruit from:

- **Card:** If aiming for the end of the year, send out a Thanksgiving/Holiday card with your smiling face to each person on your list and drop it in the mail before Thanksgiving. This puts you ahead of the other Christmas-card and year-end-giving appeals. Here are [some holiday card examples](#), and some [additional examples](#). If not planning for an end of year appeal, you could still send out a hand-written note (if feasible) and include an updated prayer card or memento from your country of service. Consider having an advocacy team member, or a friend from your sending church, aid in mailing these out.
- **Phone:** Call each person on your list and make the invite to give voice-to-voice (or face-to-face via Zoom). The point is for you to make a very personal invitation. If your donor only texts, then go ahead and make the invitation over text, but don't let that be the default for everyone. Put in the effort to connect voice-to-voice or face-to-face.
- **Email/PDF Letter:** After you ask them face-to-face or voice-to-voice, let them know you'll be following up with an email or letter. This email should contain details about the ministry vision for the coming year, as well as how to give (mailing address for check donors, link for online, and instructions for submitting their gift). Let them know you'll be praying the Lord makes it clear as to how much He's challenging them to generously give, and that you'll call back to see how God is leading them.
- **Phone:** Anticipate you'll have to make about 3 follow-up calls/texts/emails before a decision is made. Don't let this surprise or discourage you; it's normal! If you are asking at the end of the year, use the end of the year as a motivator and calendar out and batch your follow-up calls. For example: One follow-up each week of December. If not at the end of the year, establish a clear goal end date (such as a month before you leave for



furlough) and use that as your motivation and structure for follow-ups.

What to Say?

For an invitation to be effective, we recommend sending this follow-up email separate from your monthly update letter. [Here are some sample letters/phone call scripts](#) tailored for an end-of-year gift, and below are some tips on how to best craft this email:

- 1. Look back and celebrate what God has done this past year.**
Lift people's eyes to what the Lord has done and celebrate His accomplishments. Ask others on your team about what they have seen God do. Feel free to use each other's stories, as anything God is doing in your ministry is fruit your partners deserve to know about!
- 2. What are you trusting God to do in the coming year?**
Take time to dream and ask God what He wants to do in your ministry in the next season/year. Invite the Lord to show you what He wants to do through your team. Your partners will be encouraged as they read what you are trusting God to do next year.
- 3. Invite people to give to the vision of what you are trusting the Lord to do in the coming year.**
Ask people to give to your vision, not to your need. Invite people to be a part of what God is doing. THAT is exciting. See these [sample letters](#) for a great example of how to do that. Be specific; challenging people to give a specific amount is helpful for them. If you are needing to raise funds explicitly for your home assignment, communicate the vision behind your furlough rather than merely stating a need for money. (For some ideas, [see this Solomon page](#) for our heart behind furlough.)
- 4. Keep it concise, but clear.**
Be sure that your celebration, vision, and ask are all on one page or able to fit on one screen. Most people take in things within 30 seconds and may not read a two page letter, no matter how compelling it may be!



How Much to Ask For?

There is no real limit for how much you can ask for, and we've seen anything from \$100 to over \$70,000 come in for certain individuals. However, there are some good ways you can go about setting an special gift or end of year goal:

- **Calculate how much you need to be fully funded**
If you haven't received our Home Assignment Prep Guide, let us know! It contains a worksheet to help you assess your furlough funding needs.
- **Check on your backpay**
Since back pay only lasts for so long, it's essential to get this paid back as soon as possible. As gifts come in during the final months of the year, back pay will be added to your pay. This could be a perfect number to let your support team know about to see if they can meet that need.
- **3 month buffer in your account**
A good rule of thumb is to aim to have 3 months of expenses covered by your account balance. If your current balance does not cover that, calculate the difference and this could be a good number to ask for.
- **Ask the Spirit for a number**
Technically this should be your first move. Let the Lord of hosts guide and direct you on how much you should be asking for, and then let God blow that number away to shine His Glory!

Step-by-step Summary

1. **Stop and pray, then plan.**
The old adage is true: we don't plan to fail, we fail to plan. Yet, at the same time, we can strategize and plan all day long, but unless the Lord moves in the hearts of those you ask, nothing fruitful will come from it. Ask God for wisdom as to who to contact, ask Him to move in their hearts, and then go and be strategic and thoughtful about your plan and communication. Prayer and planning work hand-in-hand.
2. **If you need the funds urgently, plan to follow-up voice-to-voice or face-to-face.**
People have great intentions, but tasks get lost in the shuffle of life; especially around the holidays! A follow-up plan will greatly increase follow-through from those who



desire to give. Effective invitations to give include written communication (letter, card, email, etc), followed up by a phone call or face-to-face meeting, and then more follow-up after! This can be done in small batches over a number of weeks.

3. Determine your distribution list.

Who will receive this ask? Definitely send to those who don't give on a regular basis. Don't send to anyone who has been recently asked (either for an increase or special gift) or those who just started giving monthly within the last 6 months.

4. Consider snail-mail, including a hand-written note, if possible.

Printed mail has far more staying power than electronic and it allows you to add a personal, hand-written note. These notes build relationships and show you care. We've found this to be true especially for donors who primarily receive correspondence electronically throughout the year because it stands out! Recruit help from your advocacy team or stateside friends and family if you are currently abroad.

5. Determine timing.

If you're planning on an end-of-year campaign, aim to have it hit mailboxes the weekend after Thanksgiving as you'll want to beat the deluge of Christmas cards (and Christmas spending). Some people recommend putting your letter in the mail on Black Friday. If you're needing to raise special-gifts at other times, plan your first communication at least 2-3 months out from your home assignment.

6. Affirm the value of the relationship and honor your ministry partner's generosity.

This is where that hand-written note comes into play. This small gesture helps build relationships.

7. Anchor your ask in vision.

Show them the impact they're making and invite them to go deeper. Tell them how the Lord is moving within your ministry, then invite the partner to come alongside that work by leveraging their finances. When following up your invitation with a call or a meeting, remember that your invitation is more about learning how God is challenging your partner toward radical giving than it is about you and your ministry. Avoid these terms: need, shortfall, lack of funding, low support, backpay, deficit. Those are not compelling reasons for people to give. Your ask should be vision-driven, not need or crisis-driven. Remember, people give to people, justified by a cause.



8. List your financial needs and what those finances will help accomplish.

Special gifts that meet a specific need are often a much easier way for someone to join in, and knowing the specific impact they will have helps your financial partners actually feel like partners!

9. Make a clear ask.

Don't bury it with lots of words, but be clear and succinct.

10. Include how to donate.

Be sure to include your giving link and instructions. Additionally, because not everyone gives online, provide a way for people to easily send a check in the mail (include the [How to Start Giving Form](#) and a self-addressed envelope in your mailing).

11. Follow up!

Phone calls, email, or texting are all appropriate ways to follow up on the invitation. Consider following up at least 3 times per donor.

Thank Them

When people respond to your opportunity to make an impact through giving, the next step is to thank them. Donors give to multiple causes. An average donor will see 10-20 thank you's a year and promptly forget them all. You want to be the thanks they can't forget.

The standard is a hand-written thank-you card and a phone call. A welcome packet sent to a new donor or a small gift for a particularly impactful gift can also go a long way! Tell your donor often, loud, and clearly just how great they are (because they are!) and remind them of the impact they're making.

Do not include a financial ask or additional giving opportunity in your thanking process.

See [Annual Stewardship Plan & Timeline](#) for how to follow-up with donors after your special giving campaign with a THANK, SHOW, CONNECT, OFFER progression.

Sample Timeline (for a January furlough)

6 Months Out (July)	Through prayer, ask the Lord to determine your need and what you will ask for. Begin praying over your donors by name.
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<p>4-5 Months Out (August/September)</p>	<p>Review your data from the past 3 years and compile a Top 20 or 30 list. Click here for a reminder of who to consider.</p>
<p>3 Months Out (Early-Mid November)</p>	<p>If possible, send your Thanksgiving/Christmas card or prayer card to your Top 20/30* along with a short, handwritten note about why you're thankful for them. This should be a meaningful message of gratitude.</p> <p>*If you have the time, you can send to more than just your Top 20, but make sure your first priority is reaching your Top 20.</p>
<p>2 Months Out (Last week of November/ First week of December)</p>	<p>Follow up with an email containing your end-of-year appeal info. If you need, click here for a refresher of what this contains.</p>
<p>1-2 Months Out (A few days after email)</p>	<p>Follow up your email with a phone call to make the invitation. Remember, your most effective way to connect will be face-to-face (even over a video call). If that can't happen, then the second best is voice-to-voice. An ask in a mass email that's not followed up with a one-on-one ask is the least effective.</p>
<p>As Needed</p>	<p>Follow up with anyone who committed to give. Remember, it often takes 3 or more touch points for someone to follow through and give.</p>
<p>Within 1 Month Later (January)</p>	<p>Thank them with a personal, hand-written card.</p>

Note: Remember, there is no magic formula, but rather healthy principles and best practices. Cling to those, and adapt this schedule to meet your needs.

