



# UMVIM WJ

## Team Leader Manual



**United Methodist Volunteers In  
Mission, Western Jurisdiction  
(UMVIM WJ)**

[www.umvimwj.blogspot.com](http://www.umvimwj.blogspot.com)

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# WELCOME TO UNITED METHODIST VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION!



*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.*

*Ephesians 5:1*

## Introduction

### What is UVMIM?

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) is the short-term mission arm of the United Methodist Church. Our volunteers are lay and clergy, young and old, with differing abilities, vocations, and stations in life.

We come together through the United Methodist Church in order that all may offer their skills and talents for Christian service at home and abroad. Our emphasis is upon matching persons with opportunities so that everyone may participate in mission. After all, mission is not only for those who live in the field full-time. God calls all Christians “to bring good news to the oppressed [and] to bind up the broken-hearted” (Isaiah 61:1). We believe that no matter who you are, no matter the level of your resources, no matter how big or small your church, God is calling you to mission.

UMVIM exists to connect you with mission projects, both in your backyard and across the globe. Within the United Methodist Church, UVMIM relates closely with Annual Conference UVMIM Coordinators and the General Board of Global Ministries, all of which seek to serve as a source of information for potential volunteers.

### What is the WJ?

UMVIM, WJ is the jurisdictional organization for the Western Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church. This arrangement means that UVMIM, WJ is responsible for facilitating short-term mission in the following annual conferences: California-Pacific, Desert Southwest, California-Nevada, Oregon-Idaho, Yellowstone, Pacific Northwest, the Alaska United Methodist Conference, and Rocky Mountain.

The UVMIM Conference Coordinator(s) for each of these annual conferences is part of UVMIM, WJ as we work together in the ministry that is UVMIM.

UMVIM, WJ exists to help local churches fulfill the Great Commission by personifying Christian love in action. The primary function is to connect churches and individuals with appropriate mission projects, both within the U.S. and abroad. UVMIM, WJ also provides training materials for churches and mission teams, and we exist as a resource for team leaders.

The website, [www.umvimwj.blogspot.com](http://www.umvimwj.blogspot.com) offers information and links on teams needing volunteers, training sessions, UVMIM Annual Conference Coordinators, UVMIM project sites both international and national, insurance information, and other news and updates that you will find helpful.

**Best practices:** UVMIM, WJ considers the following four items best practices for UVMIM teams:

#### ***1. Have a trained team leader through your annual conference or UVMIM WJ program.***

Contact your annual conference UVMIM coordinator for more information on upcoming trainings. You can find your coordinator, as well as a listing of upcoming training events, on the UVMIM, WJ website, [www.umvimwj.blogspot.com](http://www.umvimwj.blogspot.com). This Manual is used as the basis for the training, though please note that simply reading this Manual does not take the place of attending a team leader training.

## ***2. Comply with the Safe Sanctuaries policy of your annual conference.***

Each annual conference has a policy designed to make church programming safe and welcoming for children and vulnerable adults; this policy is commonly called “Safe Sanctuaries.” It is your responsibility as the team leader to ensure that your annual conference’s policy is observed during all parts of your mission experience: before, during, and after the trip. More information on Safe Sanctuaries is offered later in this Manual.

## ***3. Register your team and take insurance.***

There are a few options for your team to purchase insurance for your UMVIM trip. The General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), the UMVIM Southeast Jurisdiction (UMVIM, SEJ) and the UMVIM Northeast Jurisdiction (UMVIM, NEJ) offer insurance for UMVIM teams.

**\*PLEASE NOTE EACH ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN THE WJ IS DIFFERENT AND MAY ONLY OFFER ONE WAY TO PURCHASE INSURANCE. ALL THREE WAYS ARE GOOD AND WILL COVER YOU AND YOUR TEAM. PLEASE ASK YOUR UMVIM CONFERENCE COORDINATOR WHICH INSURANCE TO PURCHASE.**

The SEJ and NEJ insurance policies are very similar. Their insurance policies cover both accidents and illnesses that occur while you are on your mission trip, and we believe it is vital that all mission teams take out insurance before traveling. Mission trips can carry with them some inherent risk, and it is very important to plan for contingencies. We pray that your mission experience is free of any need for insurance, but we know that sometimes, insurance can mean the difference between a negligible medical bill and an overwhelmingly large one. Teams that take insurance either with UMVIM, SEJ or UMVIM, NEJ office must pay an associated registration fee.

You can receive more information and apply for UMVIM, NEJ and UMVIM, SEJ insurance policies online and/or through their offices. UMVIM, SEJ’s website is [www.umvim.org](http://www.umvim.org). To contact the UMVIM, NEJ office, please go to [www.gb-gm-umc.org/umvim-nej/](http://www.gb-gm-umc.org/umvim-nej/).

GBGM offers accident only insurance coverage and you can apply for this online. There is no registration fee required for GBGM insurance. Currently, the rate is .85 cents/day per person. Please go to [www.umvimwj.blogspot.com](http://www.umvimwj.blogspot.com) and click on “UMVIM Insurance Application” to apply. Your UMVIM Annual Conference Coordinator is also available to assist you.

## ***4. Serve with an UMVIM project.***

Some mission teams who purchase insurance through one of the above channels may not serve with projects directly related to UMVIM. It is recommended that your team serve with an UMVIM project which gives us a layer of accountability often not possible otherwise.

UMVIM projects have all been approved by area bishops and church officials, and should the need arise, we are able to step in and address certain situations. These projects have also gone through an extensive application process. You can find listings of both national and international UMVIM projects at [www.umvim.info](http://www.umvim.info).

### **What is a team leader?**

A team leader is someone who has undergone UMVIM team leader training and serves as the “head missionary.” There are as many leadership styles as there are mission volunteers, and there is no one set model for being a successful team leader. However you choose to delegate your responsibilities, and however you choose to lead your team, your team must understand that above all, you are the leader. When conflicts arise on your team—and they will inevitably arise—it is vital that your decisions are respected. Safety requires that in difficult situations—particularly internationally, or in situations unfamiliar to the team—the team leader has the ultimate say. This does not mean that the team leader should function as a dictator. Rather, it means that the team respects the leader as the one ultimately in charge, and functions accordingly.

**A Note About This Manual** We have structured this Manual around the process of forming and sending a team. If you are a seasoned team leader, you might already be familiar with some of the material discussed early in the Manual. However, we have included information and tips we have received from team leaders and long-term individual volunteers. You will benefit from reading this Manual from start to finish. As always, if you have any questions about the process of forming or sending your team, please contact us. *Please note: while this Manual supplements training, it does not replace Team Leader Training coordinated through your annual conference or through the UMVIM, WJ office. As a future team leader, you are still expected to attend one of these training sessions.*

## Selecting a Project

An extensive project list of domestic and international projects is available at [www.umvim.info](http://www.umvim.info). These projects are updated by several UMVIM jurisdictional offices as we receive information from individual project hosts. On the Project List you will see the latest project information.

Choose a project (or a few that look promising) and email or call the UMVIM, WJ office or your UMVIM Annual Conference Coordinator for contact information. We will put you in touch with on-the-ground project hosts who have agreed to work with us and our volunteers. As you would expect, different projects have different attributes, associated costs, and requirements. It is important for you to think through the implications of these attributes as you select the project.

If you are selecting the project before you are selecting the team, be sure that the project is one that fits your experience level as a team leader. If this is only your first experience leading an UMVIM team, you might look for a project with an on-the-ground coordinator to handle logistics, rather than going off on your own and scheduling housing, food, construction details, and the like. Some important issues to consider when choosing a project:

### Size of your team:

How many volunteers can the project host? It is important to not burden the host with too many (or too few!) volunteers.

### Type of project:

Whether or not you have selected your team already, different churches have different skill sets, and different team leaders have different skills, too. Find a project that fits your interest and abilities. If you have prospective team members with a variety of skills, find a project with a variety of outlets for those skills. There are plenty of projects, for instance, that need volunteers to help with construction and VBS.

### Experience level of your team:

Is this a good project for first time missionaries? How much work will you as the team leader have to do to coordinate the project, food, laundry, housing, etc.? Is there an on-site coordinator to help your team accomplish their goals?

### Priority:

From time to time, UMVIM, WJ will post information on our website ([www.umvimwj.blogspot.com](http://www.umvimwj.blogspot.com)) about projects we have deemed to be Priority projects, whether due to disaster, urgent requests from church leaders, or other factors. Consider taking on one of these projects if the project's needs match your team's abilities.

### Other teams' experience:

If you are curious about how other teams have fared at certain projects, the UMVIM, WJ office and/or your UMVIM Conference Coordinator is available to answer your questions and put you in contact with other teams who may have served on a particular project.

### Costs:

International missions, of course, tend to cost more than domestic mission trips, though this rule is not hard and fast. The farther away from the United States that the project is located, the more travel costs

you will incur, but we have worked with many project leaders to offer affordable mission opportunities, both domestically and abroad. As you prepare your budget, consider all costs associated with your trip: food, lodging, travel, construction costs, etc. We will detail the budgeting process later in this Manual.

We discussed the important reasons for using UMVIM projects in the “Best Practices” section, but UMVIM projects offer more than just project accountability. UMVIM selects projects with a community-based approach; we do not believe in “parachuting” in, serving for a week, and leaving forever. UMVIM supports projects by building relationships with project leaders and maintaining this relationship through many teams and over many years. Building relationships is central to what we do as a ministry. What is more, we believe that building relationships is central to what it means to be a Christian.

## Types of Projects

The UMVIM project list features many different kinds of projects. Consider these needs as you put your team together. Please note that while most projects fall within these seven descriptions, many projects combine different needs. Some projects may include needs not described here.

### Medical/Public Health

If you have medical professionals in your congregation, consider taking a medical team. Even other types of projects can often easily add a medical component, if you have medical skills that are in great need. Contact your project host to find out if these skills are needed. While some established projects rely solely on medical professionals, medical skills are in such demand that a project can often be created for your team.

Non-medical volunteers can still participate in medical teams, serving as assistant pharmacists, clinic scheduling facilitators, and in other ways. Note that treatment of acute manifestations of chronic problems often produces no lasting benefit and continuing care is usually not possible outside of the privileged few in urban areas. Also, a medical program with an emphasis upon technology and medication far beyond the reach of the local medical community does little good for those in need. Tailor your team and tasks accordingly. Be cautious of raising expectations of help for specific patients, particularly if treatment would require transfer to the United States.

Medical teams have some unique steps to complete in preparation for travel. Talk with your host about credentialing requirements in the country in which you will be serving; you might also speak with a travel clinic about these requirements, as different countries require different methods of presenting credentials.

Here are some general guidelines for credentialing, though it is very important that you do discuss these matters with your host:

1. You will have to be cleared in some manner by an “official” body, usually the ministry of health.
2. Requirements most often are proof of graduation from your professional school, current licensure to practice, and completion of certain forms.
3. Usually, nurses do not have to register for short-term work, but must work with a doctor or dentist.
4. In most countries, physician assistants and nurse practitioners have no special status. In practice, as long as there are doctors working directly with them, they can perform similarly to the way they function in the United States.
5. Malpractice in developing countries is not the problem that it is in the United States. If you have a concern, contact your personal insurer to see if you are covered. UMVIM’s insurance does not include a malpractice provision.

You should assume that you will have only what you take with you in the way of medical and dental equipment. If you are going to a specific facility and have contacted someone who has been there recently, you may be able to depend upon their report, especially if you are going to a hospital.

Equipment and expendable supplies are hard to acquire in developing countries, and repairs and replacement parts are nearly impossible to locate. Still, there are a few medical and dental facilities with modern medical equipment. If your team is dependent on equipment and supplies, you will need to be directed to certain particular areas.

No matter where your team is located, plan on limited expendable or reusable supplies. Take all the surgical gloves that you need and some to leave. Surgical gowns and drapes are usually washed by hand and supplies often limit the amount of surgery that can be done each day. You should plan to take your own examining instruments. If you can leave them, you will be contributing to your host's overall health care system without the added high costs of import duties.

Note that when taking in prescription medicine, it helps to have a letter in the native language from the Bishop in the area that will receive the medicines, as well as a valid prescription. If area doctors donate medical samples, breaking down the packaging helps in packing, but be sure that you do not break the seal on any medicines.

Finally, visit [www.umvim4health.blogspot.com](http://www.umvim4health.blogspot.com) for a list of medical resources; there are many nonprofit organizations that offer medicines and medical supplies at a substantially reduced cost for medical teams.

Public health is a growing field in which UMVIM teams serve. Particularly in international contexts, public health teams serve to teach basic sanitation, disease prevention, and health skills to groups who do not have regular access to care. Those participating in these projects need not necessarily be trained medical professionals, though you will need to offer the team at least some "lay training" in public health before you travel. This is a good opportunity to invite in a doctor or public health professional to train your team members. Your host will know more about the requirements needed.

### **Construction**

Construction is the most common task of UMVIM teams, though not all construction teams solely do construction. Construction takes many forms, and there are UMVIM projects to fit all levels of construction experience. While UMVIM does offer projects requesting complicated well and electrical systems, a majority of UMVIM construction projects can be completed by (mostly) unskilled labor. When unskilled labor is involved, it is vital that you rely on skilled labor on-site; this is also a great way to provide work for those with construction experience in the area you will be serving. Speak with your host to be sure that tools will be provided, and that supplies can be purchased or ordered.

If you will be bringing your tools, divide them among your team members for transport and consider offering them as a donation to the project. Some supplies, such as concrete, will have to be purchased on-site, so be sure that your host has a plan for purchasing them. As always, safety is a very important consideration; this issue will be dealt with later in this Manual.

### **VBS/Evangelism**

Vacation Bible School and evangelism teams are also popular projects for UMVIM teams, and these types of projects can be done in conjunction with other (medical, construction, etc.) teams. Be sure to

read the section on evangelism later in this Manual for more information. When preparing Vacation Bible School curriculum, be sure that the curriculum, including games and handouts, are in the native language of those whom you will be teaching. Cultural sensitivity is important in planning VBS, too. A Vacation Bible School curriculum based on space travel might not translate very well to a community who knows nothing about the space program.

### **Disaster Response**

With all the major natural disasters in the United States and around the world, it is clear that UMVIM teams are, and will continue to be, a primary resource for long-term recovery efforts. It is essential that teams be prepared for effective service. Disasters cause destruction, but disasters usually include many additional issues. Teams must understand that the disasters have many layers beyond the actual tragedy. Effective service requires awareness of and sensitivity to, these factors including: the loss of the usual avenues of response; hordes of “official” strangers, all from an alphabet-soup list of groups and agencies of which most survivors have never heard; constant visible reminders of destruction; and years of community change compressed into a very small span of time.

The primary concern of the church and the disaster response group should be the survivor! Frequently, the survivor’s primary need is to tell his or her disaster story to someone willing to listen, and to be assisted in connecting with a range of disaster-related services.

Church volunteer group members from outside the disaster area should be prepared to offer whatever services are most needed at the time. Each person should first of all be prepared to be a willing and available listener. Even if your task is physical labor, the more important role involves **listening**. Groups offering themselves for volunteer services need to make themselves available for a specific service, but should be flexible enough to respond to needs that may be more immediate, such as mass feeding, distribution of supplies, or cleanup of debris. Disaster response—and all mission works—is about serving where needed.

Know the stages of a disaster and the duration of each stage. This will provide the volunteer with an understanding of the bigger picture of a disaster’s life cycle. Remember the 3 ‘R’s’ of disaster relief:

#### ***Rescue Stage:***

The first few hours, or even days, immediately following a disaster is known as the Rescue Stage. The duration depends on the level of devastation. Local persons and agencies work desperately to stabilize the situation in order to prevent added loss of life and property. The only outsiders needed at this point are those who are specifically requested by local leadership to assist in mobilizing the response. Such groups should be totally self-sufficient, carrying with them all necessary food, fuel, and water. They should also be prepared to leave the affected area at night in order to minimize the burden on local resources.

#### ***Relief Stage:***

The Relief Stage lasts approximately ten times as long as the Rescue Stage. In the beginning, trained Early Response Teams (ERTs) assist in opening roads, communications, conducting damage surveys, and encouraging survivors to apply for needed assistance. But the primary function of Early Response Teams is to make homes safe, sanitary and secure. Early Response volunteers should be 100% self-sufficient. Training for such teams is coordinated through UMVIM, WJ, UMVIM Conference Coordinators and

UMCOR and requires: (1) certification of training in Early Response by the sending annual conference and UMCOR, and (2) an invitation from the affected conference through UMVIM. **Note** that ERT training is not the same as team leader training.

### *Recovery Stage:*

The Recovery Stage last approximately ten times as long as the Relief Stage and is the time of rebuilding. Following are some guidelines for working in the recovery stage of disaster response. No more important relationship exists with the volunteer teams than that with the local host disaster response organization. The spirit with which the volunteer team approaches its work through the hosts will make or break its efforts in disaster response. Incoming volunteers must coordinate either through United Methodist channels or through the local interfaith response group at the site of the disaster. *Never* send in a team or supplies unannounced, unexpected, or uninvited. Your team should remember that you are guests of the local host organization and should work under its direction, understanding that the local response staff has no control over such things as building codes, permits, looting, etc. It is not helpful for each of two thousand volunteers to tell them that the situation was different in another disaster.

It is also very important to do the work assigned. Your team does not have the option of deciding that a home is not worthy of being salvaged. Though your team may deem it damaged beyond repair, it may be the only living space available. Your team should plan to be self-sufficient. They should expect to supply their own tools, electrical generators (if power is unavailable), food, and housing. A place for housing and storage of larger tools may be coordinated by the local host organization. Let your team know beforehand that flexibility is key. In the event that the local host organization redirects your work, you should accept and affirm the change, pitch in, and do what you can. The only constant following a disaster is change!

Typically, your team should plan on providing the materials needed for rebuilding or cleanup. Monies for any materials should, where possible, be forwarded to the local host organization before the volunteer team arrives so that the materials can be purchased locally. The disbursement of funding from other sources is frequently delayed by stipulations on its use, so teams should always be prepared to supply materials for the work they will do. Know that helping persons and communities struck by disaster is much the same as caring for a family that has experienced a sudden and tragic death.

Approach survivors' possessions with great care. What might seem like trash to you could be a precious treasure to the survivor. Listening is more important than talking. Always remember that you are a guest and a servant. Just as with grief after a funeral, the recovery time following a disaster will take months and frequently years. Your team will be involved in only a small but important part of the healing work that needs to be done. Be willing to listen in a helpful way. Being judgmental or telling folks they "shouldn't feel that way" is never helpful. They do feel that way and their feelings are real.

Avoid the temptation to "fix" folks, to mend their brokenness or give them personal advice. Remember that time is an important healer. Never spread rumors! Check out any "facts" before you pass them on, and do so only if it will really help the situation. Rest is important. You will want to remain on the list of helpers rather than become a victim! Sleep is vital. Many groups plan a day of rest and relaxation or recreation as part of their mission. Plan some fun while you are away. Include your hosts where possible.

Transportation needs of the group should be determined and handled prior to arrival. Do not expect the local disaster response organization to take care of transporting work crews.

### **NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) Teams**

Occasionally, UMVIM teams have the opportunity to work with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) through one of its nongovernmental organization affiliates. UMCOR NGO teams assist in direct ministry to persons in need, in ways that advance the dignity of persons without regard to religion, race, nationality, or gender. Because of UMCOR's unique relationship with other countries, and because of security concerns, teams who work with UMCOR NGO are asked to honor the commitment made in 1940 by our denomination to reach out and serve all those who are suffering, as described in Matthew 25:31–41. This means that in the NGO setting, food is given to the hungry, a cup of water is offered to the thirsty, hospitality is offered to strangers, clothing is given to the naked, those who are sick and in prison are cared for—with no strings attached. Volunteers who desire to serve in this setting are asked to show their faith and love by what they do, and not by what they say. It is inappropriate to engage in proselytizing, converting others to United Methodism, preaching, or praying in public when working with UMCOR NGO.

Again, these arrangements are crucial to maintaining UMCOR NGO's special status. Not all teams will want to serve in this capacity, and there are a multitude of other UMVIM opportunities for those who wish their team to have a more evangelistic focus. UMVIM individuals and teams must realize some faiths and locations are hostile or offended by the Christian faith. Although Christ called us to share our faith, we are to do this through our action and not openly when working with NGO.

Appropriate activities for UMVIM teams in the NGO setting include construction and rehabilitation of buildings, assisting with summer and day camps, teaching English or computer technology, therapeutic drama and art, training in specialized fields (medicine, agriculture, etc.), and other activities in consultation with UMCOR or UMCOR partners.

Please note that UMCOR staff members are not to accept any gifts from UMVIM teams or team members. Gifts brought for UMCOR beneficiaries should be presented to the UMCOR staff upon arrival, to ensure proper accounting and orderly distribution of the gifts to the appropriate beneficiaries. Volunteers may be requested to work within UMCOR projects, or with any of UMCOR's indigenous NGO partners. The UMCOR/UMVIM Coordinator will work with the UMCOR project manager or the local NGO manager to discover the needs and develop the volunteer project.

### **Youth**

More and more youth leaders are contacting UMVIM about sending youth mission teams out for service, both domestically and abroad. These leaders believe—and UMVIM agrees—that mission is the best Christian education that the church can offer young people. A youth who experiences a mission trip during his or her formative years will remember that trip and its lessons for a lifetime.

UMVIM does not have a minimum age for youth missionaries. Obviously, some projects are not appropriate for youth, but there are many UMVIM projects which can host youth (and families) of all ages. Visit the UMVIM WJ website or call the UMVIM, WJ office for more information.

UMVIM seeks to make the process of planning a mission team as easy as possible for youth leaders. We understand that most youth leaders and pastors are already stretched thin. Because we believe that mission is so important to helping youth understand how God is at work in the world, we are ready to assist you as you plan this important event in the lives of your youth.

## Gathering a Team

Recruiting a team is one of the most important tasks of the team leader, and the makeup of the mission team can make or break the mission experience. If you have already decided on a project, you will have an idea of what kind of skills you are looking for. For instance, a medical project will benefit by having various medical professionals on the team: sometimes this means doctors and nurses, but projects vary. Some medical projects may be looking for pharmacists and physical therapists. Knowing the needs of the project will help you determine what kind of team member you need on your team.

## Application

We have found that the best way to put together a successful team is through an application process. Put together an application for prospective team members to fill out, detailing their skills, their motivations for mission, their past experience, and whatever else you care to find out. This is a good time to find out about prospective team members' physical abilities; it is always better to learn this information *before* the trip than *on* the trip, particularly in situations of rough terrain and difficult living conditions. A team application form also gives you, the team leader, the opportunity to ask questions that will help you get to know prospective members of your team in a new way. You can learn a lot about someone by asking them about their favorite books, movies, and television shows.

Applications have two other advantages. First, they give you an insight into how conscientious a prospective team member is about details. If an applicant turns in her application late (without a reasonable excuse), you learn something about her attention to detail. Second, the application process helps you say "no" to those people who are not best-suited for your particular mission. Whereas it can be difficult to deny someone who has "signed up" for the trip a spot on the team, the application process puts the assembly of the team in the team leader's hands. Remember, the team leader is responsible for all members of the team during the trip, and if a prospective team member presents problems for the team before the trip begins, it is a safe bet that these problems will multiply exponentially once the trip begins. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

## Selecting the team

Different projects require different skills. Even if you are gathering your team before you have selected a project, it is best—once you have received team applications—to construct your team with skills in mind. This is not to say that all your team members must be highly skilled workers. All Christians have something to offer in the name of Christ, so consider looking beyond only professional skills. Still, looking at skills is important for putting a team together. If you do not have a specialized project that will require specific skills, consider building a team with a variety of skills. This will ensure that the team will be successful. In addition, different projects require different sized teams with differing abilities. A build in Colorado may be appropriate for forty youth, but the proper team for a trip to southern Sudan may be 10-12 experienced adults. Confer with your host, if you have selected your project.

We have compiled a list of traits of successful teams. Be on the lookout for these traits when selecting team members, and be sure to communicate these traits to team members when you hold your team orientation. It is important for team members to keep these qualities in the front of their minds, especially on days when the mission is particularly difficult. These traits are:

- Tolerance for ambiguity

- Low goal and/or task orientation
- Open-mindedness
- Nonjudgmental attitude
- Empathy Communicativeness
- Flexibility (the ability to adapt)
- Curiosity
- Sense of humor
- Personal warmth
- Motivation
- Self-reliance
- Strong sense of self
- Tolerance for differences Perceptiveness
- Ability to fail well

## Planning the Trip

### Working with church and pastor for support

Just because the rest of the church is not traveling with the mission team does not mean the sending congregation is not part of the mission! Having a supportive pastor and congregation goes a long way towards ensuring a successful mission. As you move from selecting your team to implementing the project, be sure to have discussions with your pastor and other church leaders, so that everyone can be on the same page. As part of the church, it is their mission, too, and they deserve to be in communication with you and your team.

It is also helpful to have these folks on your side as you prepare. Sometimes, mission leaders are surprised at the amount of pushback they get from church members. Arguments like, “Why don’t we just send them money over there?” and “We should help the people here before we go to another state or country!” are more common than many new team leaders realize. Talking with the pastor and church leaders early on will help blunt some of this criticism. Working with your church and pastor will help when it comes time to fundraise, as well.

Present the mission as being supported and undertaken by the entire congregation. The mission team is sent from among the congregation, but it is the congregation doing the sending. There may be members of your church who are unable to travel, but can provide gifts of time or money. Use these people, as it will take pressure off of you as the team leader and lead to a greater acceptance of your team among the church.

### Project communication

Communication with project hosts can be difficult, particularly in international contexts. Part of becoming an official UMVIM project involves agreeing to communicate in a timely manner, but international understandings of “timely” often vary widely. Even mission project hosts within the United States can sometimes be difficult to contact, as these leaders are often overburdened and dealing with many teams.

Be persistent in your communication. It is also very important to be very clear and honest about your expectations. Being clear and honest does not mean that you are unwilling to honor local customs or traditions. But it is vitally important that you are very clear with your hosts about what you expect from them, and what they expect from you. You do not want to travel to Cambodia, for instance, believing that laundry service is available, and find out once you arrive that there is no laundry detergent for one hundred miles.

Whatever your questions, communicate them to your host. Rest assured that no question is too personal or stupid. Accepting volunteers is what mission hosts do, and they are by and large very used to and comfortable with any questions you may have. Make a list of these questions and be sure to ask them as you prepare. Some of these questions will be covered in material later in the Manual.

Email is the best way to communicate, as you will have traceable information; email also allows for communication across large time differences. Still, email communication in other countries can be spotty. Keep at it. If the language barrier is a problem, find someone in your church to translate. Often, UMVIM project leaders in other countries speak English. Do make sure that, if needed, a translator will

be provided for your team. Know that if you absolutely cannot reach your hosts, or if you are having trouble communicating, you can always contact the UMVIM, WJ office and/or your UMVIM Conference Coordinator for assistance.

### **Downtime for reflection**

As you communicate with your project host, be sure to speak with the host about downtime for team reflection. This reflection time may take the form of a sightseeing day, or an afternoon at the beach, or a couple of days at the end of the trip—even in a different location—spent relaxing and scheduled around organized discussion. Extended reflection time is an excellent way to help the team process what they have seen and experienced. Christian mission carries with it great implications for how we understand God and the world, and extended reflection, especially at the end of a trip, helps your team members think through what these implications mean for their own lives and the way they live out their faith. Many team leaders have found great success, time and budget permitting, scheduling an extra day or two at the end of the trip in a different location. This time allows team members to see things they otherwise would not be able to see, and relieves some of the pressure to “see everything” during the actual mission phase of the trip.

A team traveling to Mozambique, for instance, might take a bus to South Africa and spend a day or two on a photo safari. Or a team working at Ketchikan United Methodist Church in Alaska might spend a day sightseeing there. For many team members, the change in accommodations alone will spark reflection of the mission they have done. Later in this Manual, we will speak about reverse culture shock and the ways in which it can be used as a tool to help your team members process what they have experienced. Suggestions for facilitating reflection can be found later in this Manual.

### **Paperwork**

As mentioned in the “Best Practices” section, UMVIM, SEJ, UMVIM, NEJ, and GBGM provide insurance coverage for teams traveling both domestically and internationally. Because the paperwork associated with these programs changes occasionally, it is very important that you contact your UMVIM Conference Coordinator or the UMVIM, WJ office to find the latest paperwork and insurance information. Please note that many annual conferences require all teams from within its bounds to get approval from that conference’s UMVIM Coordinator. Be sure to get your paperwork in order far enough in advance that you have time to speak with your conference coordinator. The insurance programs require that all paperwork be in at least two weeks prior to your departure date. The earlier you get your paperwork in, the easier it is for us to help you prepare for your trip.

### **Taxes**

Generally speaking, costs associated with a short-term mission trip *are* tax deductible. However, there are guidelines associated with deducting these costs, and it is important to discuss these guidelines with your accountant. If there is an accountant in your church congregation, you might ask them to speak with your group about how to claim mission trip expenses as tax deductions, including common pitfalls. For your information, a summary of IRS Publication 526 is included in the appendix to this Manual.

### **Timeline**

As you prepare for your trip, create a timeline for your team members. Included in this timeline should be various deadlines for your team members. These deadlines include dates for returning application

forms, paying trip deposits, completing forms, and offering payment. A payment schedule is particularly helpful, as it will allow team members to pay for their trip in stages, as the team prepares to travel. The timeline should also include dates for team orientation, fundraisers, and other meetings. Be sure your team members know the dates of these meetings before they sign up, as these meetings are vitally important for preparing your team. Attendance should be a requirement for joining the team. Also include in your timeline dates for purchasing airline tickets, confirming travel and other plans with the host and any other task that you as the team leader need to complete before your trip.

Be sure to also schedule, with the pastor of your church if possible, a time of sending-forth. This service can happen in worship or outside of worship, and it is an important time of centering. Holding a sending forth service also gives the rest of the congregation who may not be traveling on the team an opportunity to actively participate in the sending of the team. A sample sending forth service is included in this Manual.

### **Budget**

Building a budget is an integral part of assembling your mission team and preparing for your trip. The budget will help team members know you are spending their money wisely, ensure that you are remembering all the things which must be purchased before your trip, and ultimately let people know before they sign up how much they can expect to spend on their trip. Keep in mind costs like construction materials and tools requested by the site, lodging, laundry, food, excursions, travel fees, excess baggage fees on airlines, etc.

The further ahead you plan your budget, the more time you will have to ensure that you have remembered everything. As you prepare the budget, be sure to let team members who feel sticker-shock at the total price know what fundraising opportunities are available, and encourage them to discuss their trip with family, coworkers, and friends. Often these people are great sources of financial support. Fundraising will be discussed in the coming pages, and a sample budget form is included in this Manual.

### **Airline tickets**

Airline tickets and other transportation costs typically make up a very large percentage of the entire project cost. Minimizing this cost can be difficult, but it can be done. Start out by checking out various airline and discount fare sites online to get a base understanding of how much travel will cost. This research takes time, but it is invaluable as you search for deals. Watch out for discount sites, as some sites offer tickets that are affordable but non-refundable. Call around to various airlines, as well. If a location is served by more than one airline, speak to a customer service representative and let them know you are shopping around. Be sure to tell airline representatives that your group will be doing mission work, and let them know what kind of work you will be doing.

Sometimes—though certainly not always—customer service representatives will offer your group a special rate for this kind of work. Even if they cannot offer you a specific lower fair, airline representatives will sometimes take a special interest in helping you out when they learn that your group will be doing humanitarian work.

Some groups like to designate a member—or a congregation member who will not actually be traveling with the team—the responsibility of securing airline tickets. This is a good job for someone who enjoys looking for deals. There is no magic bullet to a good airline deal: just keep searching, and often, you will find one. One tactic for keeping airline costs low is to investigate several different airports for your departure. Some teams have found that chartering a bus to take them to a different airport (Hartsfield-Jackson in Atlanta, for instance, or Miami International Airport) keeps costs down, as often flights from major hubs save money.

Other team leaders prefer working with a travel agency. Travel agencies offer you the opportunity to put your travel plans in the hands of someone experienced with this kind of travel, and they can be especially useful if your group is traveling to more than one location, traveling far away, or undertaking a complicated itinerary. While there is a premium charged for this service, many team leaders find the additional cost worth it.

### Passports

If you are traveling internationally, be sure that each team member has a current passport. Names on international airline tickets should match the names on your team member's passports exactly, in order to avoid hassles at customs. The expiration date for each team member's passport should be at least a year after the date of mission trip; if the expiration date is earlier, have the team member go ahead and renew, as some countries require extra time before expiration. Passport applications are notoriously slow to process, so each team member needs to know that getting a passport must happen immediately upon being selected for the trip. Even "expedited" status does not mean that the passport will come quickly.

Once your team members have their passports, make sure that they include a couple of copies of their passports in their luggage; should a team member lose his or her passport, the copy of the passport will be an important part of getting a new passport from the embassy. It is also a good idea to have someone who remains behind to keep a folder of copies of your team's passports, should they be needed. Some teams also require their team members to get an extra set of passport pictures, as this, too, expedites the process of replacing a lost or stolen passport. As a team leader, you should also have a copy of each person's passport on your team.

### Visas/Travel advisories

Many countries require a visa for any visitors. A visa is a statement of permission to enter a country, and it is generally stamped inside your passport. Discuss this requirement with your host and visit the international travel section of the website for the US State Department, <http://travel.state.gov/travel>, for more information on visa requirements and other travel advisories.

On that page, you will find country-specific information for the location to which you will be traveling. Should your host country require a visa, instructions are listed on that page. You can also visit [www.traveldocs.com](http://www.traveldocs.com) for country-specific visa information. Please note that you should discuss with your host which type of visa you will need. *In nearly all situations, including mission teams, you will want to apply for tourist visas, not missionary visas.* On your host country's page on the State Department website, you will also have the opportunity to register your team with the US Embassy or Consulate

nearest to where you will be staying. Registering your team is very important in the unlikely situation that you need international assistance while traveling.

## Raising Money

### Fundraising

Fundraising can be one of the most time-consuming aspects of a mission trip. While fundraising is very important, do not allow it to consume all the energy of you or your team. When raising money becomes the primary objective of a mission team, the overall mission can be quickly lost in the day-to-day struggles of preparing for the trip. In all that you do, remind your team *why* they are raising funds. These funds allow them to serve God in a special way. That said, funding the mission is almost always a central concern of mission team members. Offering opportunities for team members to raise funds to offset the costs of their trip keeps finances from being barriers to Christian service. Even more, if the entire congregation is to participate in the mission, it is your responsibility as team leader to inform them of opportunities to participate, including (and, at times, especially) financially.

Many people are interested in helping out, but they do not know how, or they do not believe their small offerings will help. Let these people know how much you value their support! Small donations add up to large sums, and often, these small donations can mean a lot to team members. Speak with your pastor about asking for support for the mission team. The church has an important role to play. Family and friends also have an important role to play in funding the mission. Team members are sometimes afraid of asking for support, but again, small donations add up to large sums.

Tell your team members to consider sending letters to family, coworkers, and friends, detailing the mission and offering the opportunity to participate financially.

Thank you notes, postcards sent from the project site, and small presents from an international site often make the difference between one-time support and sustained support for other trips. Most teams also schedule fundraisers specifically for their mission trips. The money from these fundraisers can be used for project funds or individual scholarships, or it can be used to offset the total cost for the entire team.

These fundraisers encompass a wide variety of activities used to raise money and awareness about the project. Sometimes, these events are more “fun-raisers” than fundraisers, but they inevitably serve the purpose of spreading the word about the good work you are doing. Because teams have found a wide variety of fundraisers to be successful, presenting an exhaustive list of fundraising ideas is prohibitive in this Manual. Here are a few ideas we have seen done often, and well.

*Coffeeshouse performances.* Let your team members and other congregation members offer their talents in support of your mission, and collect donations at the door.

*T-shirt sales.* Often, t-shirt sales do not raise large amounts of money on their own, but they present great opportunities for raising awareness of your project. Every person who wears your team t-shirt is advertising the great work you are doing!

*Church-wide yard and consignment sales.* Set up a consignment or yard sale at your church and designate that proceeds go towards your mission team. If you anticipate a large crowd, consider working with a professional consignment company. One team sets up a sale every year of once-worn prom dresses, and reports that it is always a great success. Be creative!

*Dinners.* If you are traveling internationally, consider putting together a dinner consisting of local food. This evening will allow those who are not traveling with you to experience the mission in a unique way. Often, people who attend these dinners feel more connected with your team and are more likely to participate financially in your team's mission. If local food is not an option, consider holding a spaghetti dinner and presenting details of what you will be doing on your trip.

*Silent auctions.* This is another great way to get members of your church who will not be traveling involved in your mission. Allow those who can offer goods and services, or perhaps the use of a vacation home, the opportunity to support your team.

*Work days.* An excellent way for youth teams to raise money is to offer their services to church members for a few hours on a weekend or two. Often, older members of the church could use the help mowing their lawn or doing light repair work on their homes. This project has the added benefit of building relationships between youth and the older members of the church. However you choose to raise funds for your team, be sure to be sensitive to the financial needs of your members. Though finances are a delicate issue, they are often in the front of the mind of team members. Helping to ease this financial burden is vital to a successful mission. One note of caution: the *United Methodist Book of Discipline* forbids raffles for any purpose.

### **Scholarships and Team Responsibilities**

If possible, offer scholarships for team members who otherwise could not afford the trip. Scholarships need not cover the entire cost of the trip; partial scholarships are a good way to keep costs down. One particular strategy for scholarships involves offering financial support to those who perform certain tasks for your mission trip. For instance, many teams "hire" a team photographer, whose job it is to document the trip in pictures. By offering a small (\$200-300) stipend to this team member, you are helping that team member fund their trip, and you are solving the common problem of having every team member lug around cameras all day, clicking en masse when they see something interesting. Just be sure that your team photographer understands their responsibilities and has some photography experience.

Other tasks that can be performed for scholarship are team journalist (someone who blogs about the trip during travel), a team information specialist (who researches and reports on the area to which you will be traveling), or an assistant team leader. Be creative; you can easily delegate responsibilities while offering financial support to those who need it.

## Team Orientation

Holding a team orientation is an important step in preparing your team for mission. This meeting—or series of meetings—will help your team understand the work they are going to do, as well as get them thinking about issues of safety, health, cultural sensitivity and the like. Some team leaders choose to hold this orientation by scheduling weekly meetings over the period of a month or two; other leaders choose to hold intensive day-or-weekend-long sessions. However you choose to hold your team orientation sessions (and there are templates offered to assist you in this Manual), there are several important matters that need to be covered. These matters are listed in this section.

## Spiritual

Spiritual health is a very important part of your mission trip experience. A team that is spiritually healthy and attuned to the work of God within them is a successful one. And yet it can be difficult to maintain spiritual health in the midst of so much work. Often, we get in the mode of “doing as much as possible while we are here,” and while the sentiment is a well-intentioned one, it does not do justice to the work of God in our own lives.

As discussed with regard to team reflection, it is possible for a missionary to go on a trip and not be changed, but if you as the team leader—and if the team members themselves—are intentional about paying attention to spiritual health, such an outcome is unlikely. If you are not gifted at spiritual direction or teaching, consider asking one of your team members to be the spiritual director; if your team includes a pastor, this is a good job for that person. Be sure to begin and end each day in prayer. Often, we get so busy with the particulars of a mission trip that we miss this important step. Do not let this happen to you!

Prayer began the trip, as you started to build a team and pick a location, and it should sustain the team throughout the experience. Devotionals are important, as well, as your team grows together spiritually. Ask each person to present a short devotion during the trip, making sure that each person has the opportunity to share.

Finally, recognize that mission work can be spiritually and emotionally exhausting. For those who do not encounter poverty, illness, or great need on a daily basis, this work is especially taxing. Take the time to allow God to work within those team members who need an extra boost. Look after your team, and give them the chance to share, to rest, and to be in the presence of God.

## Reflection

Discuss your schedule for reflection with your team before you leave. If you have scheduled additional time at the end of the trip for reflection, explain to them how this will work. Reflection time is not “goof-off” or “vacation” time; reflection can be hard work! It involves tough questions and group discussion. Your team members should understand the importance of this work before they travel, so that they are not surprised when they face tough issues.

You will want to begin these reflection sessions before you leave, so that your team can enter into the proper mission mindset, and so that they can begin to think about issues of charity and justice. Included in this Manual is a valuable resource called “Spiritual Preparation”. In this devotional and reflection

guide, you will find valuable information to share with your team. You will also find some ready-to-go reflection sessions, including several which can be done before you travel.

### **Evangelism**

Evangelism is a touchy subject for many people. As the team leader, it is important for you to understand that your team members may have wildly divergent understandings of what evangelism means. Having these different opinions is perfectly acceptable for your team, but you need to understand that if you do not discuss this issue before the trip, it will often come up during the trip in less-than-productive ways. Discerning how each of your team members understands evangelism is vital for a successful trip.

Have a discussion before you leave, during your team orientation, about this topic. Talk about the fact that people disagree about what evangelism means: some people believe that evangelism means “saving souls,” and others believe evangelism involves a “silent witness”. However your team members understand evangelism and faith-sharing, know that this topic is sometimes a very divisive one for mission teams.

Evangelism, it seems, goes right to the heart of how each of us understands the Gospel. So when people disagree about what evangelism means, or how it should be conducted, they are really disagreeing about something much deeper. These disagreements can get heated, and cause division within your team, if you are not proactive about discussing the issue beforehand. Carve out some time before you leave for this discussion. You might even tell your team members beforehand so that they can be thinking about their own understandings of evangelism.

As you talk about evangelism, be sure to talk about “making disciples”. Professions of faith have less potential if they are not followed by disciple-making, either by folks in the project area or your team. For instance, receiving 400 professions of faith sounds great, but unless there are resources for those people to be disciplined into more mature Christians, then little has happened except the mission team having a great story to tell upon their return. Making disciples requires commitment from your team as well as those who profess Christ.

Be sure, too, that your team members are on the lookout to find opportunities to share the love of God with those who need it most. God calls us to no less than this.

### **Health/safety**

Issues of health and safety can make or break your mission experience. If a team member gets hurt, the whole project can be thrown off balance. It is your responsibility as a team leader to ensure your team’s safety. Because there are different construction standards in different countries, your understanding of safe practices may, at times, conflict with your host’s. Use your best sense; if safety conditions concern you, it is better to graciously work with your host to find a safer method than to risk injury to one of your team members.

Your team’s health is your responsibility, as well; no one benefits from a sick team member. Be sure to encourage your team members to rest adequately and drink plenty of water. If possible, bring a doctor or nurse along on the trip. It is also important to have medications available for your team, should you be in an area that does not have medications readily available. Talk with your doctor about carrying

Cipro or other antibiotics in case someone on your team needs them to treat travelers' diarrhea. Should your team not use all the antibiotics, there is often a clinic near the project site that could use the extra medicine.

If you do bring prescription medications, be sure to have your doctor write out a prescription, or carry the medicines in pill bottles printed with the name of the doctor and the pharmacy. This includes medicines you will leave behind, as well as personal prescriptions for members of your team. Some countries require certain inoculations for international travelers. It is your responsibility as team leader to ensure that your team has the latest information on vaccines and inoculations.

Visit the website for the Centers for Disease Control, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), and the international travel section of the website for the US State Department, <http://travel.state.gov/travel> for more information, and talk with your doctor. The best resources for travel health information are travel clinics; these clinics can be found in most towns and cities. Discuss the nature of your trip with the staff at one of these clinics, and they will be able to help you understand the steps that your team needs to take.

Countries in which malaria is found, for instance, necessitate your team taking a malaria prophylaxis, but depending on the severity of the malaria presence, different medicines are needed. The travel clinic will know. You might also consider having a team meeting in which all necessary shots are given to team members, one at a time. Invite a doctor or nurse to be present at this meeting, explaining all the shots to the team and then taking them one by one to give the shots. A suggested list of medicines and supplies for your team's first aid kit is found in this Manual.

### Safe Sanctuaries

Contact your annual conference, or visit your conference's website, for more information about that conference's Safe Sanctuaries policy. Your team needs to be well-versed in this policy before you travel, as concern about the most vulnerable among us is a very important part of serving on a mission team. While it is your annual conference's specific Safe Sanctuaries policy, we offer some general guidelines for working with minors in this Manual.

### Water

Before your trip, it is vital that you discuss the issue of drinking water with your host and team. If your team is traveling within the United States, water is not a problem, but different standards for drinking water in other countries means that you need to be careful. Talk with your host about water for your team. If filtered or bottled water is not available at the site, be sure that your team purchases water bottles with built-in carbon filters, or go in as a team and invest in a large pump-style filter.

Even if the water is safe for locals, Americans are usually not used to the bacteria that are sometimes present in drinking water in other countries. A corollary of this caution is that your team members need to be certain to use bottled or filtered water to brush their teeth and wash their toothbrush. Because rinsing a toothbrush under the faucet is second nature to many people, try placing a bottle of water on top of the faucet so that when your team members go to turn it on, they are reminded to use the bottled water. Remind your team, also, to refrain from opening their mouth in the shower. In some areas, bottled water and other drinks are sold in roadside stands or carts. Be wary of bottled water sold from these carts; in some countries, vendors reuse water bottles by filling them with tap water and screwing the tops back on.

Finally, your team needs to be careful about what they eat. Only food that has been peeled, cooked, or boiled should be eaten; produce like lettuce should be washed only in filtered or bottled water.

### Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity is one of the most important—and most difficult—aspects of Christian mission. Being culturally sensitive requires knowledge of local customs and language, a respect for diversity, and a heart-felt commitment to relating to people as they are, rather than how we wish that they were. Every action, every gesture, and every word spoken carries with it cultural implications, and it takes great self-control and purposeful restraint to behave in a culturally sensitive way.

Whether you are traveling to Angola or Arizona, cultural sensitivity is vital to ensuring a successful mission. Working to understand the culture in which you will be serving is part of being a faithful Christian, but so, too, is understanding that you are carrying your own cultural understandings and prejudices. Your team may find themselves frustrated by: language barriers, lack of mobility, the formality of relationships in other cultures, the (often complicated) protocol required, the completely different understanding of time, the lack of conveniences, unusual local customs, and the expectations placed upon Americans.

Your team will need to adapt to differences in schedule, noise, food, and work. Discuss these issues with your team. Let your team know beforehand that these issues will come to the surface, and devise a plan for dealing with them. Often, letting your team know that these feelings are normal goes a long way towards helping your team cope with cultural differences. Just as it is your responsibility as team leader to prepare your team for the frustration involved with the different views of time and tasks in other cultures, it is also your responsibility to tip off your team to some of the habits which Americans find quite conventional but which might be perceived as offensive in other cultures.

We have found that project hosts list six traits of some mission teams from the United States which prove to most stand in the way of building authentic relationships. Teams which do not take the issue of cultural sensitivity seriously:

1. Expect to accomplish more than is possible.
2. Are insensitive to local customs and culture.
3. Do not work through proper channels.
4. Like to take credit for themselves.
5. Act as if they know everything.
6. Are too task-oriented, abrupt, and insensitive.

Help your team be aware that these traits will—fairly or unfairly—be projected onto your team. The onus is on the team, then, to prove to your host that they can be trusted with the difficult work of building relationships.

Speak with your team about ethnocentrism, the belief that our culture is the best, and that our ways of doing things are better than all others. American culture is not better than other cultures; American culture is different than other cultures. Make sure your team knows that if they enter the mission site without checking their feelings of cultural superiority at the door, they will achieve very little for the Kingdom of God.

One way to help your team overcome their natural feelings of ethnocentrism is to focus on intercultural communication. Communication is the transmission of various symbols—whether they are words, letters, gestures, colors, or shapes—from one person to another. The difficulty arises when the meaning of the symbols change. Sometimes, of course, the meanings change in an obvious way. The main difficulty comes to the forefront when the changes are subtle and nuanced. This is often the case when one enters into another culture. A familiar American “OK” hand signal, for instance, is deeply offensive in some countries. Even words with which we are very familiar sometimes do not translate very well into other languages, creating often embarrassing cultural faux pas. This is not to say that your team will not commit cultural faux pas. Faux pas will happen. Prepare your team, and encourage them, in appropriate situations, to laugh at themselves. Cultural faux pas are often funny, and laughter has a way of diffusing an otherwise tense situation.

Two things will help your team build relationships and function best in a culturally foreign context: careful listening and the courage to ask questions. Listen very carefully for subtle clues and instructions. Often, simply listening will help answer your questions about proper customs and cultural minutiae. Also, know that project hosts are experienced at accepting mission teams and working with foreigners. Very rarely is any question offensive. In case of a question, simply ask!

You will put your project hosts at ease as they recognize your willingness to work within their culture, and you will put your team at ease as some of their anxiety of not knowing is removed. Even if it takes several times asking the same questions in different ways, stick with it. Your relationships will be strengthened because of your persistence.

### **Packing/clothing**

Your team members, especially if traveling on a mission trip for the first time, may have some concerns about packing. Here are some general guidelines for packing for a mission trip.

If you are flying, be sure to check with your airline for luggage weight limits, restricted items and fees for excessive baggage. If possible, pack all your personal items and clothes in a carry-on bag; remember that once you land, you will be expected to carry all of your luggage yourself. Talk with your host to see if laundry service is an option. Having your clothes washed onsite offers two benefits: you can carry less clothing, and you are putting money into the local economy by offering church members or local people work washing your clothes. Be sure that your important items like money, passport, medicines, camera, and any valuables are packed in your carry-on bag. Include in your carry-on one complete change of clothing including underwear, in case your luggage gets lost.

When possible, plan on buying tools and supplies at the location you will be serving; this will keep you from having to haul all your supplies to the site, and it supports the local economy. When you cannot

buy supplies on location, tools and materials should be brought with you, divided among team members for transport. Use ribbon or luggage labels to help you identify all team member bags.

If you are bringing anything unusual with you on your trip—large quantities of medicines, for example—you may need a manifest of items in each bag to carry with you.

It is also a good idea to have a letter of invitation from the host indicating all items are donations. A letter from the Bishop in the native language works best. Always ask your host about bedding, towels, etc. Often, these items are provided, and you can save valuable space in your luggage. Still, it is always important to ask in case you arrive in your destination without linens!

If you are responding to a disaster, you will need to bring everything with you so that you can remain self-sufficient. This means food, water, fuel, bedding, and tools.

Finally, be sensitive to cultural expectations. Discuss with your host and your team which clothing is appropriate on the work site, what is appropriate for church services, and what is suitable for the climate and culture of your destination. In many areas, women are expected to wear long pants or skirts, and shirts that cover the shoulders. While dressing conservatively is not the norm for Americans, remind your team that you will be guests in another culture, and cultural sensitivity requires that you play by their rules.

### **Politics/Book club**

Take some time to discuss the area to which you will be traveling. Some teams have found it useful to spend the weeks before a trip sharing in the reading of a book about the history of the project country or area. Having this information gives team members more ownership of the project and can help them better appreciate their work. If you will be traveling internationally, learn a bit about the politics and government of the country you will be visiting: who the President or Prime Minister is, what form of government is used, what civil wars have been fought, etc. People who live in the project area often appreciate that teams have taken the time to learn more about their country. Also, if another language is to be spoken at the project site, take the time to learn some of the language. Even if you do not become fluent by the time you travel, knowing phrases like “Where is the bathroom” and “God bless you” go a long way towards showing local people that you really do care about the work you are doing.

### **Alcohol and Tobacco**

In many other countries, alcohol and tobacco use is unacceptable for Christians. While this expectation is not present in most churches in the United States, it is a very serious offense in many developing countries. Going to the bar for a drink after a long day of work may not seem like a big deal to your team, but it can absolutely devastate your hosts and completely discount the relationship-building work you have done. We do not usually hear many complaints about UMVIM teams from local hosts, but when we do, it tends to involve this issue. Discuss the issue of alcohol and tobacco use with your team, and let them know that drinking or smoking on the trip is a very serious offense. You should be prepared to send anyone who does not comply with this understanding home, at their expense. The intention on enforcing this cultural expectation is not to be prudish, but—as always—we want to be culturally sensitive to the expectations placed upon us by the local church and our hosts.

## **On the Trip**

### **Confirm travel plans and host plans**

Before you leave, be sure to confirm your travel, work, and lodging plans with your host. Make sure that your host very clearly understands what you will be doing, where you will be staying, what time you will be arriving, and how you will be getting around. Again, do not worry about offending the host by asking these questions. It is your job to be thorough so that nothing falls through the cracks.

### **Travel**

As you approach your dates of travel, be in close communication with your team about preparations. Reiterate packing concerns, offer words of support, and make sure that if your team is traveling internationally, each team member has their passport. On the day of travel, make sure to meet your team in plenty of time to make it through security (as wait times are ever-increasing for international travel); you might consider having all the team stay together the night before travel to make sure that everyone makes it to the airport together.

### **Transportation**

Be sure to arrange transportation with your host before you leave; this includes transportation from the airport. See if your site can provide you with a bus and driver for the length of your stay; this way, you will be able to transport your team together, and you will be supporting the project financially.

### **Initial orientation**

Once you arrive at the place you will be staying, gather your group for an initial orientation session. This is a time for them to pause after a hectic journey and prepare for the work ahead. If possible, have someone from the guest house (or the place you are staying) present to give instructions on matters like showers, meals, and safety concerns. It is also important to have orientation at the work site every morning. Have the construction foreman or supervisor talk through the day's work with your team, emphasizing safety. If everyone on the team has a good idea of what everyone else is doing, the work will go more smoothly and no one will get hurt.

### **Money**

It is important to keep an accurate record of money spent on the trip. Your financial supporters deserve to know how their money is spent, and you as the team leader need to know where your money is going. Consider designating a team member (or two) as team treasurer, and go over receipts and expenditures each day. Bring a receipt book with you for times when you do not receive a receipt.

Many countries, especially in developing areas, do not accept credit cards; some do not accept traveler's checks. Before you travel, discuss money with your host. You will most likely be asked to bring project funds in cash. Consider dividing this money up among your team members during travel. In some areas, ATMs are present, and can be the best method of getting cash. Your host will have more information for you.

Also, be sure to ask your host about guidelines for tipping. While this may seem like a strange question to ask the host, know that your host is there to answer your questions. He or she has probably received this question before. The host knows best. As you prepare your budget, be sure to include gratuities. At some point in your trip, if possible, take the staff of the guest house or project site out for a meal at a

local restaurant. In addition to treating those staff members who have helped you during your mission trip, you will get to know them in a new context. God is at work in these relationships; they are often among the most memorable of the trip.

### **Food**

As team leader, it is important that you are aware of any dietary concerns your team members may have. Find out if you have any vegetarians, members with diabetes or food allergies. Be sure to discuss these concerns with your host before you travel, and make sure that your team can be accommodated. A jar of peanut butter is always a good thing for members of your team to pack, just in case. Especially in international contexts—but in any project—there will be times when the food you are served does not fit with your normal diet. In some cultures, refusing food is considered a deep offense. Many people in other countries eat only one or two meals daily often without meat. The hosts sometimes sacrifice to provide the team with the best that they have. Please realize and appreciate the differences and eat what is placed before you by the hosts. At these times, remember the missionary's pledge: "Where you lead me, I will follow. What you feed me, I will swallow."

Of course, like with any trite saying, there are exceptions to this rule. Do not eat anything you believe to be unsafe. Be sure to remember the adage about only eating things that have been peeled, cooked, or washed in clean, filtered water. Because most teams work with experienced hosts, these problems are rare. Still, issues do come up from time to time, and you should be prepared to speak with your hosts as needed.

### **Health**

Regardless of the precautions you take, it will often happen that a team member gets sick while on the mission trip. Be sure to look out for the health and well being of your team members, and if they need to take a day off to rest, make them take the day off to rest! Remember, you are in charge, and you have the responsibility for your team members. It is natural for team members to resist taking a day off of work while on a mission trip, but getting others sick, or getting sicker because of lack of rest, is counterproductive.

Discuss with your host about medical facilities near where you will be staying, in case of an emergency. Even remote areas often have emergency medical facilities, though the quality of these facilities differs widely. Be sure to take this into account as you pack first aid and medical supplies for your team. When you receive your insurance paperwork take time to read it carefully. In the certificate of coverage, you will find specific information about what is covered and how to make a claim. If both accident and illness are covered by the insurance remember that in order to make a claim, you must see a doctor during your dates of coverage. Should you or another team member need medical attention, do not wait until you get home to be seen!

### **Communication**

Internet access, while sometimes hard to come by, is becoming more and more ubiquitous, even in developing countries. You may be able to find an internet café nearby to keep in touch with friends and family. If possible, have a team keep a blog while you are on your trip so that the church and your team's loved ones can stay abreast of what the team is doing. Still, it is important to discuss with your

host what kinds of communication options are available. If necessary, rent a cell phone at the airport and keep it with you in case of an emergency. Usage rates on these phones can be quite high, so be careful when using the phone.

### **Worship**

As Christians, we are called to find God in all places we go. Just as you are experiencing God in your work, you should expect to find God in your worship. Find time to worship with a local congregation, alongside the local people with whom you are working. Your team will learn a lot about who God is and what it means to be a Christian in the area you are working. Do not be surprised if you are called upon to speak during the service. Be ready with some kind words for your host, or testimony about your own Christian journey. Often times, these worship services are much different than what we are used to; Pentecostalism, for instance, is an important part of Christianity in many developing countries. After worship, have a team meeting and discuss the service with your team. What was different? What did you like about the service? What made you uncomfortable?

### **Safety**

Safety should be your number one concern once you arrive. Go over the obvious potential trouble spots with your team and any on-site people who will be working with your team. If you are working on a construction project, speak with whomever is in charge and let that person know your concerns. Be sure that your team does not engage in any unsafe construction practices.

Also, be sure to discuss with your team and your host personal safety when out and about. Your host will be able to tell you whether traveling outside the guesthouse or project site is appropriate, and how to avoid problems. No matter where you are, insist that team members travel in groups of at least two. Seasoned travelers may be hesitant to take your advice about personal safety, but safe is always better than sorry.

### **Team Life and Cohesion**

Everyone is different and your team members will reflect this in the way they work, orient with the site, and interact with each other. Be sensitive to these differences and how you manage the team members. How team members interact can be emotional and spiritual. Beginning the day with a devotional is a great way to remind the team why they are there and how their work is Christian love in action. After each day's work, schedule a time for all team members to participate in a time of reflection discussing the day's work and experiences sharing insights, concerns, or observations. Explain to members that they might feel uncomfortable, homesick, or even broken. These experiences are pivotal in one's spiritual life and should be communicated and addressed.

Be sure to address health concerns: is everyone hydrating and taking breaks? Remember that everyone needs some down time, so providing time to just hang out can help with team building and minimize stress.

### **Conflict Management**

*"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others*

*along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector.” Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV)*

Jesus sets out a four step process to be used when there is conflict in the church, and this process works well when used with UVMIM teams. Be cautious since it is possible that you are the major contributor to any problems that occur.

*Step 1:* Address problems as they arise. If there is a problem with an individual on the team, first go to that individual and assess the problem. Beginning with a phrase like “You seem to be troubled by . . .” attempt to create an atmosphere of mutual trust. Praying together is often helpful in resolving problems.

*Step 2:* If the individual is openly criticizing you, or if the team member is not open to solving the problem with you alone, take another person along to help with the situation. Do some problem solving and creative thinking about ways both parties can work together to accomplish and advance the work of the team.

*Step 3:* If there is a problem that involves a number of team members or if the problem with an individual is one that requires some changes in attitudes or schedule for the team, take the problem-solving questions to the whole team. Be mindful of individual feelings, but know that the team leader is the ultimate one to make decisions based on what is best for the host and majority of the team members.

*Step 4:* If the individual causing difficulties does not respond to the three-step process above, Jesus tells us to treat that person as we would a tax collector or as he treated the tax collectors – with loving kindness and respect. Let the individual know through words and actions that in spite of differences that exist, they are a vital part of team.

### **Reflection**

It is possible for team members to go on a mission trip and come back unchanged; it is rare that the opportunity is missed, but it does happen. However, if you as the team leader are intentional about scheduling time for reflection, both in a longer period of time and for a short time each day, none of your team members will miss the opportunity to reflect on what they have experienced on the mission trip and have their faith strengthened as a result. Reflection can take several forms. During your daily team meetings (before the day’s work, in the evening, or both), discuss with your team members what they have seen. Facilitate discussion—or have someone designated to do this—around themes of service, poverty, evangelism, Christian love, or other themes you deem appropriate. Allow your team members, through discussion, to process what they have seen in order to help them grow in their faith. Not everyone processes orally, however.

It is important to recognize that different people have different learning styles, and it is your responsibility as the team leader to see to it that all team members have ample opportunity to process what they have seen. In discussions, give your team members the opportunity to think through their responses, perhaps writing down thoughts before they speak, and be intentional about giving everyone equal opportunity to share. Encouraging (or requiring!) team members to journal each day is a good way

to ensure that all team members are thinking through the important issues always present on mission trips. Not all team members will find this a productive exercise, but it is a good way to help your team members prepare for your discussions. In many ways, Christian missions are as much about inward change in your team members as it is about the work done on the site. Think of your mission trip as an extended lesson on how God is at work in the world.

When we start to think of mission work both as service and as Christian education, we can begin to understand how God works through mission. Give your team members the opportunity to experience God in this way. “Spiritual Preparation” included in this Manual, offers some guidelines, questions, and material for your reflection sessions.

### **Farewell**

Before you leave, have a farewell gathering with the people with whom you have been working. It is important for the spiritual development of the team—and the spiritual development of those on site—that you give them the opportunity to say goodbye in a meaningful way. A special prayer, or a special meal (if this can be arranged by your host) is a good way to let those on the project site know how much they mean to you. Allow enough time for all your team members to say their goodbyes to all the wonderful people with whom they have worked.

Understand, too, that unless your team has a long-term commitment to this site, and as difficult as it may be, your team will probably not see these people again. Make sure your team members know that “I hope to see you again” or “If you are ever in the United States, I hope you will visit us” means something very different in some contexts: that is, those who hear this promise take it as Gospel truth, rather than a platitude offered as a farewell. Make sure your team members do not unknowingly invite someone to their homes! Every word matters! An on-site evaluation between team leader and host prior to departure is strongly encouraged. An informal discussion of the experience (what seemed to go well; what could have been done better, and what impressions does each person have). Any financial negotiations still pending should be discussed and resolved.

### **Gifts**

If you will be presenting gifts to your host or to those with whom you will be working— including clothes or other personal items brought by team members--understand that different cultures understand gifts differently. A safe way to offer gifts is to give them to a pastor or church leader with the instructions that the gifts are “for the church” and they will be distributed as appropriate. This way, the team can avoid creating unnecessary conflict among those on site. Some projects may want to celebrate these gifts with a ceremony during which the gifts are handed over; other projects prefer to do this distribution themselves, and privately. However you offer gifts, be sure to respect the host’s wishes for how gifts will be presented. The purpose is not for your team members to feel good about what they have given: the purpose is for the gifts to truly be gifts, offered freely and without expectation.

### **Final meeting**

Hold one final meeting with your team before you leave the site, to gather impressions, discuss the experience, and prepare to travel home. Travel can be stressful, and if traveling to the mission site was not stressful enough, now you have to return home much wearier than when you left. Make sure your team has everything together and has not left anything behind (unless you are leaving behind clothes,

gifts, etc.). Mistakes are made when we are most tired, so make sure your team knows to stay together through the customs process, if applicable, as they prepare to go home. Finally, have team members complete evaluations (found in back of this Manual) on the way home while their impressions are still fresh.

### **Departure tax**

Some countries require a departure tax in order to pass through customs and leave the country. Be sure you know about this requirement beforehand, and whether the tax must be paid in cash. If so, make sure your team knows (so that they can each have sufficient cash!) or keep cash with you and dole it out before arriving at the airport.

## Returning Home

### Reverse culture shock

Upon their return, your team will probably experience reverse culture shock. Reverse culture shock is the feeling of returning home and feeling strange about all the comforts we have, especially considering the comparably sparse conditions of those living in the project location. Reverse culture shock does not only happen with international mission! Speak with your team about reverse culture shock, and let them know that this is a normal feeling. In fact, tell them to look out for it and, if possible, discuss the feeling after you return. The feeling of reverse culture shock can be an excellent teaching moment, as it allows your team members to think through issues of poverty, health, and living conditions. Members of your team will experience a range of emotions. Some common responses to mission trips are:

*Elation:* Your team will be excited to share their “Mountain top” experience with anyone who will listen to their story over and over. Prepare the team for the fact that most people want to hear only a brief summary. Many missionaries feel slighted when this happens, but a productive way to channel this energy is to discuss the experience with other team members.

*Depression:* After being away from routine schedules and together experiencing close Christian community, everything changes immediately. This sudden change can lead to feelings of depression.

*Guilt.* Returning to more affluent circumstances may create feelings of guilt. Prepare your team members for this feeling and use these feelings as teaching moments.

*Rejection:* Team members may reject the UMVIM experience to cover their guilt or denial, or the church family that doesn’t respond positively to them. Encourage these team members to view their mission trip experience in a positive way, and help them see ways they can respond to these feelings productively.

*Acceptance:* People achieve acceptance of the experience when they choose to see it as a real, meaningful, and important time in their lives and begin plans for follow-up.

### Reunion

Be sure to schedule a reunion for your team. At the reunion, let the team tell stories, share pictures, and “remember” together the work that they did. This debriefing goes a long way towards helping your team members process their experience, and it is a great way to share after returning home. If possible, use this time to discuss proactive steps that team members can make towards working for justice now that the trip is over.

### Evaluation

If you have not yet collected evaluations from your team members, be sure to do so when you return home and return them to UMVIM, WJ. Also, complete a team leader evaluation (found in the “Forms” section of this Manual) and return it to UMVIM, WJ. These reports help UMVIM pass along important information to future teams. If you have any comments or concerns which need to be shared with UMVIM, WJ please feel free to contact the UMVIM, WJ office and your UMVIM Annual Conference

Coordinator. Your experiences are a great resource for us, and we want to be able to share them with other team leaders.

### **Telling the Story**

Work with your pastor to find time—in worship, or at another time—to present your team’s experience to the church. The mission is part of the faith journey of the entire church, not just those who were able to travel on the actual trip. Showing pictures helps the church understand its role in the mission, and telling stories and offering examples of how God was at work during the experience brings home the fact that God calls all Christians to mission. This is also a good time to explore issues of justice with the congregation.

If worship time is not available, offer a dinner where donors and supporters can come see the good work that they have supported. It will not be possible for the team to adequately express their experience in words, but offering a summary of the mission to your church family helps them see God at work.

Some guidelines for telling the story: give a brief overview of the mission, tell a personal story, explain future plans for the project, and express appreciation for support. Be positive and appreciative about the experience, but do not romanticize it: be honest and sincere about the project’s challenges, as well as its unique blessings. Be respectful when using pictures and recordings; you do not want to exploit those associated with the project, but to support them. Discuss the ongoing needs of the church in the area you have served, and offer ways to continue to support the church. Many people have been influenced by the opportunity to serve on your team, and many others may be influenced to become a volunteer in mission because of your story.

Assign someone to write articles for church, district, conference, and jurisdiction newsletters and websites. A team member might want to continue a blog about the experience and ways to continue the mutual relationship with the project. Exposing more people to your story helps keep God’s mission thriving. Also vital to God’s mission is the identification and encouragement of new team leaders. Recognize and nurture individuals who exhibit leadership traits necessary for the success of an UMVIM mission. Encourage them to attend a team leader training in the annual conference, and equip these individuals and provide delegated duties that will enhance their abilities and knowledge. Be willing to mentor and coach them on a future team so that they, too, can experience the unique blessings of being a team leader. Above all, celebrate the good work that has been done in God’s name. You, your team, and your church community have fulfilled God’s call to be Christian love in action!

## THE ADVANCE FOR CHRIST & HIS CHURCH AND UMVIM

You can continue to support your place of service through The Advance for Christ and His Church (The Advance). Many of the UMVIM sites that teams serve at can receive financial support through The Advance. The Advance is a designated giving program of the United Methodist Church through GBGM. There are hundreds of projects and missionaries that can receive financial gifts via The Advance. You can make your donation online, through your local church, or by mail. 100% of your gift will be go towards the project you are supporting. To find out more about The Advance and to see if your UMVIM site is an Advance Special (is able to receive donations through The Advance), please visit <http://new.gb-gm-umc.org/Advance/> or find a link to The Advance webpage at [www.umvimwj.blogspot.com](http://www.umvimwj.blogspot.com).

## Resources

### Some helpful websites:

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, Western Jurisdiction [www.umvimwj.blogspot.com](http://www.umvimwj.blogspot.com).

General Board of Global Ministries: <http://gbgm-umc.org/missionvolunteers> and <http://gbgm-umc.org/vim>

United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR): <http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/>

Centers for Disease Control (lists immunizations required for all countries plus travel advice): <http://cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>

International Medical Volunteers Association (lists organizations that send medical volunteers): <http://www.imva.org/>

Information regarding passports, visas, document travel service, and country information: <http://www.traveldocs.com/>

Information regarding passports and visas: <http://www.travel.state.gov/> (click on “passports” or “visas”)

Worldwide database of embassies and consulates: <http://www.tyzo.com/planning/embassies.html> US State Department (lists travelers’ advisories for all countries): [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_1764.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html)

Intercultural Press, Inc. (has many resources for learning about intercultural living): <http://www.interculturalpress.com/store/pc/home.asp>

Magellan’s (provides travel supplies): <http://www.magellans.com>

Currency Converter: [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com) and [www.gocurrency.com](http://www.gocurrency.com)

Time zones around the world: <http://www.worldtimezone.com/>

Bread for the World Advocacy Guide for Mission Teams: <http://www.bread.org/help/church/organize-your-church.html> (click “store” for resources)

Travel supplies: <http://www.rei.com>

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## Team Leader Checklist

### *Planning and Preparing for the Mission Pre-Planning (One Year or More Before Departure)*

- Gather everyone interested in organizing an UMVIM team. They may be from one local church, several churches, a district, or a conference.
- Decide what kind of mission team to organize. Will you include youth and adults? What kind of project is it: construction, medical, evangelistic, Bible School, a combination?
- Seek the endorsement of your local church and conference UMVIM Coordinator.
- Select a team leader.
- Make a preliminary decision about your project site. Project opportunities are available at [www.umvim.info](http://www.umvim.info) and/or [www.umvimwj.blogspot.com](http://www.umvimwj.blogspot.com).
- Decide whether you will raise money to pay the personal expenses of any team members. Volunteers pay their own expenses as a rule, but selective assistance can be useful.
- Appoint someone to lead fundraising activities. Select ways to raise money for the project.
- Choose a coordinator to handle all travel arrangements.
- Name a publicity coordinator to publicize the mission trip. Decide how to inform and involve the local church(es), the district, and the conference in the project from beginning to end.
  - Set a tentative date for the trip (to be confirmed with the host).
- Decide how to recruit team members.
- Contact project leaders for more information about opportunities that interest you, or work with your Conference and/or Jurisdictional UMVIM Coordinator to make these contacts.
- Make final decisions about your project (type, location, cost, etc.). If possible, send the team leader for an on-site inspection. Keep your Conference and Jurisdictional UMVIM Coordinators informed. Follow normal procedures in your jurisdiction. Let your coordinators know if you will accept team members from outside your own area (who may call coordinators to find a suitable project for themselves).
- Discuss with project contact if there is a set amount for project fees and then determine how the team will raise the funds to pay for project materials and supplies (not personal expenses of the team).
- Consider the insurance coverage(s) that your UMVIM Annual Conference Coordinator recommends your team to purchase.

### International Projects Only

- Passports are required. See if team members need to apply for a visa.
- Check the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website, <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>, regarding required/recommended inoculations.
- Contact the UMVIM Coordinator in the country you will visit. Ask about any credentials and documents you will need to send in advance. (Medical teams need clearance from the local government to practice medicine.)
- Research customs regulations, especially about any supplies you will bring.
- Contact a travel agent or research travel options.
- Decide how to handle your money. If your project is an Advance Special, your local church may route your money through the General Board of Global Ministries. If your project is not an Advance Special, you may be able to get an Advance Special number assigned to it. Contact your UMVIM Coordinator about this.

#### Planning (9–12 Months Before Departure) Select Project and Team Activities

- Contact project hosts. Making arrangements may take several contacts and several months. Get as much of this in writing via email.
- Request a formal letter of invitation be sent to team leader.
- Determine type of project and cost of supplies (see project opportunities at [www.umvim.info](http://www.umvim.info)).
- Determine maximum number of team members the host can accommodate.
- Make team arrangements for housing, meals (prepared by host or team), and transportation.
- Complete Covenant for Mission Partnership.
- Determine need for interpreter.
- Arrange for team orientation by host.
- Confirm joint worship opportunities with host.
- Arrange for sightseeing.
- Establish best form of communication with host (phone, fax, e-mail), keeping in mind costs for host.
- Have a clear understanding of host's expectations.  Discuss and agree upon transmittal of project funds (means, timing, accountability).  Inquire about cultural information.

#### Make Travel Arrangements

- Transportation details and tentative airline schedule and reservations confirmed in writing.

- Non-personal luggage transportation details.
- Lodging/meals while traveling to site.
- Travel agent information (if using one).

### Gather Health and Safety Information

- First aid kit needs.
- Appropriate immunizations / medications needed.
- Worksite safety precautions.
- Other health, safety, and security precautions.
- Emergency numbers. Medical facilities, US Embassy, UMVIM office

### Develop Timeline

- Departure and return dates.
- Deadline for forms and money to be turned in to team leader (set deadline 2-3 weeks ahead of real need).
- Deadline for team leader to turn in money to appropriate treasurer (church, conference), travel agent, project host, etc.
- Dates for team orientation and training.
- Date for UMVIM team's Sending Forth Service.
- Possible dates for UMVIM team reunion.

### Prepare Budget

- See " Building a Budget" in this Manual.
- Take a receipt book for the trip.

### Recruit and Select Team

- Include interpreter(s) if needed.
- Consider offering scholarships.
- Keep size of team to host's request (10–14 is generally acceptable).
- Confirm receipt of applications.
- Distribute forms to team members and discuss team member application; covenant; liability release; insurance; medical information and release; emergency contact; notification of death; parental permission for minors; and any others required by Conference or Jurisdictional UMVIM. (Consider making a spreadsheet to track receipt of inputs.)

- Announce deadlines for turning in money and forms.

### Team Leader Preparation (3–6 Months Before Departure) Determine Travel Essentials

- Obtain passports, visas, and work permits where needed.
- Collect money for airfares and purchase tickets.
- Send list of team members to travel agent (with names as they appear on passports).
- Verify professional credentials for serving in host country (health-care volunteers).
- Know information about medical system in country of travel.
- Have evacuation plans in case of severe weather, social upheaval, medical emergency, etc.

### Team Training Preparations

- Schedule orientation and training (meetings, conference calls, mail, video sessions).
- Prepare or assign devotionals for orientation and training sessions.
  - Prepare training packet with mission information.
- Purpose of UMVIM.
- Project information (place, personnel, work to be done, weather, housing, food, etc.).
- Mission Policy Agreement and other forms.
- Tentative itinerary for the mission (daily schedule of travel, work, worship, and recreation).
- Accidental/medical insurance information for team members, optional travel health insurance.
- List of team member responsibilities to the team and hosts, sign-up lists (devotions, work assignments, etc.).
- Emergency and contact numbers.
- Packing lists.
- Health and safety information. Be certain to stress any dangers and possible problems or concerns that might arise so that team members fully understand them prior to going. This is critical for you as team leader.
- Currency information.
- Cultural information.
- Sightseeing information.
- Deadlines for payments and forms to be turned in to the team leader.  Team assignments, job descriptions.

- Plan team-building exercises for training session.
- Plan UMVIM team Sending Forth Service.

Preparing the Team (1–2 Months Before Departure) Hold Team Orientation and Training Meetings

- See “Team Orientation and Training” and related materials agenda schedules in this Manual.
- Have team members choose work assignments (or delegate assignments based on knowledge of their skills).

Collect Documents and Money from Team Members

- Collect forms from team members. Consider having a notary attend the meeting to complete forms.
- Check forms for signature, witness, and notarization as indicated.
- Collect copies of picture pages of each passport for international teams.
- Collect any remaining money due from team members.

Follow-Up

- Have medical information forms checked by team medic and precautions discussed with individual team members.
- Send forms to appropriate UMVIM office (conference and/or jurisdiction).
- Receive devotions sign-up list from spiritual guide.

Verify All Arrangements

- Travel
- Lodging
- Food and drinking water
- Ground transportation
- On-site work information (tools or supplies to bring from home, or money needed to purchase them)
- Daily schedule
- Receipts for monies spent (request receipts and carry a receipt book if needed)
- Advance Special number for the project (so that team members can continue to support the project financially)
- Ordering of needed supplies (medical, Bible School, etc.)

- Team roster sent to US Embassy in host country, including passport numbers (see <<http://www.tyzo.com/planning/embassies.html>> for locations of embassies).
- Team roster sent to US Representative, including passport numbers
- Register team on the State Department website [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)
- Record health needs of team members and persons to contact in case of emergency.

#### Involve Sending/Sponsoring Congregation in the Mission

- Educate congregation(s) about the mission project.
- Ask for prayerful support of the team during the mission.
- Raise funds.
- Prepare to share the story after the team returns.

#### Finalizing Mission Plans (2–3 Weeks Before Departure)

- Reconfirm airline reservations.
- Notify travel agent immediately if there is a cancellation.
- Check tickets for correct names, times, points of departure and arrival.
- Send forms for registration/insurance of team to GBGM, UMVIM, NEJ, or UMVIM SEJ no later than 2 weeks prior to departure.
- Confirm plans with host contact.
- Make travel and meeting arrangements with host.
- Verify work project and housing details (money sent or brought with team for project supplies, food, lodging).
- Make currency-exchange plans.
- Obtain or verify phone numbers of local contacts, officials, etc. Give copies to team members and conference UMVIM Coordinator.
- Ask what amount is customary when tipping luggage handlers, waiters, etc.
- Have a Sending Forth Service for the team.

#### Travel to Project Location (Pre-Departure and Departure Day)

- On pre-departure day, pack donations.
- On departure day, meet at a church or other appointed meeting place early enough to load luggage and boxes, say goodbye, take pictures, get last-minute instructions, and ask God's blessing on the mission

- Team leader will carry documentation for the team members such as emergency numbers, medical, insurance and death forms, parental permission forms (*Forms available in "Forms" section*)
- Travel with the team.
- Confirm all arrangements with the host, and keep track of finances.
- Build Christian community with the team.
- Have the team assess the mission.

#### Upon Arrival

- Have nametags with only first names.
- Spend a few minutes with the introductions and exchange of greetings.
- Participate in on-site orientation as previously arranged with the host.
- Take time, if the location allows, for a brief prayer/devotional with the hosts and the team.
- Confirm arrangements for lodging.
- Confirm plans for meals/drinking water.
- Clarify transportation arrangements and time schedules.
- Review the covenant with the local coordinator and clarify any area that is not clear.
- Have on-site orientation by the host team.

#### During the Mission

- Daily devotions and reflection times.
- Daily reports on the project on blog or website.
- Worship with local community.
- Maintain health and safety of team members.
- Lead the team at the worksite.

#### Concluding the Mission

- Consider a farewell meal and a worship/communion service near the end of the mission.
- Invite the host to assess and celebrate the mission.
- Debrief team to return home – Reverse Culture Shock.

#### After Your Return (2–3 Weeks After Returning)

- Send letters of appreciation to team and to hosts (include some photographs for hosts).
- Hold debriefing and evaluation meeting. Include time for sharing journals, photos, videos.
- Complete plans for your presentation to your congregation(s), district, etc.
- Assemble items you will need for keeping permanent records of your mission trip.
- Arrange for publicity about the trip through local newspapers, church publications, TV, radio, websites.
- Send final reports to Conference and Jurisdictional offices.
- Suggest readings and resources for dealing with reactions to Developing Countries' culture and problems.

**Building a budget** (Costs are per person)

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Airline Tickets   | _____ |
| Tourist Card (required in some countries)                     | _____ |
| Departure Tax   | _____ |
| In-Country Transportation                                     | _____ |
| Sightseeing   | _____ |
| Food  | _____ |
| Lodging   | _____ |
| Gifts   | _____ |
| Registration Fees if any                                      | _____ |
| Insurance   | _____ |
| Team First Aid Kit  | _____ |
| Local Travel To and From Airport                              | _____ |
| Orientation Expenses  | _____ |
| Team Reunion Expenses   | _____ |
| Miscellaneous Expenses (postage, publicity, etc.)             | _____ |
| Amount toward cost of construction and/or<br>medical supplies | _____ |
| Grand Total   | _____ |

## Sample Mission Team Training Retreat (All-Day option)

9:00 Opening devotional

9:30 Warm-up exercises (ice-breakers and group-builders)

9:45 Overview of day

10:00 Team training Role of team members; Construction and/or medical plans; in-depth review of work to be done VBS; in-depth review of daily plans; theme; closing

10:30 BREAK

11:00 Background of country

11:30 Cultural awareness exercises

12:00 LUNCH followed with Communion by the Pastor

12:45 Singing

1:15 More cultural awareness exercises

2:15 Tying up loose ends ... update on assignments / additional assignments

Collect forms

Budget review

Hostess gifts

First aid kit

Boxes for packing ... at church on \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation to & from airport

VBS snacks covered

Team snacks

Airport transportation movers/leaders

Supervise luggage/boxes

Daily devotional roster for AM and PM

Music for team

Ask pastor to be at send-off for prayer with group

Daily schedule Review

Sending Forth Service & date

3:00 Answer unanswered questions

3:30 Closing devotional with circle of prayer/4:00 Departure

## Sample Mission Team Training Retreat (Weekend option)

### Friday evening SUPPER

Opening devotional  
Singing and language lesson  
General UMVIM information and philosophy; explain and distribute “Missioner Profile and Release of Claim” forms, and collect signed forms; Team responsibilities / plans for construction and/or medical work and VBS if applicable

### Saturday BREAKFAST

Morning devotions  
Reports by team members on aspects of the country to be visited Cultural awareness exercises  
Final plans for packing, travel, etc.; questions and answers

### LUNCH

Singing  
More cultural awareness exercises  
Tying up loose ends ... update on assignments / additional assignments Budget review  
Hostess gifts  
First aid kit  
Packing  
Transportation to & from airport  
VBS snacks covered  
Team snacks  
Airport transportation movers/leaders  
Supervise luggage/boxes KP roster ...  
Daily devotional roster for AM and PM  
Music for team  
Ask pastor to be at send-off for prayer with group; Daily schedule ... handout Review; Sending Forth Service & date; Questions and answers Closing devotional (with Communion by the Pastor)

## Topics for Team Orientation and Training

Who We Are  
UMVIM history and purpose  
Team Member Assignments  
Team Member Covenant  
Where we're Going and what we'll do  
Presentation of mission project  
Where we'll stay, eat, work  
Spiritual Formation  
Devotions  
Journal  
Worship Sending Forth/Commissioning Service  
Travel Plans  
Travel itinerary  
Schedule during mission  
Travel document information (passport/visa)  
Passport copy/check  
Customs/immigration information  
Departure tax  
Cultural Exchange  
Local culture and customs, language  
Cultural dos and don'ts  
Currency  
Photography etiquette

Gift-giving guidelines  
Culture shock and Reverse Culture Shock  
What to take  
Packing list  
Clothing/shoes  
Luggage requirements  
Forms  
Registration/Insurance  
Team forms for trip as needed  
Costs-Budget Review  
Project funds  
Fundraising  
Donations  
Payments and other costs  
Health and Safety Precautions  
Water and Sanitation

Work limitations and safety  
Vaccinations and prescriptions  
Team health and safety during trip  
Emergency contacts, including embassy for international teams  
Other issues  
T-shirts options  
Discuss ways to involve the local church  
Discuss/schedule reunion date

## Sample Team Member Assignments

*(These assignments give team members a sense of responsibility on the trip, and they take some of the pressure off of the team leader. If possible, consider offering scholarships as “payment” for accepting one of these roles)*

**Co-Leader** shares administrative responsibilities with the team leader and acts on the team leader’s behalf when necessary. This role is good preparation for becoming a future team leader.

**Construction Coordinator** coordinates the construction phase, in conjunction with the on-site construction coordinator, and gives daily briefings to the team on work assignments and safety concerns. The coordinator also compiles tools needed and arranges to secure them when appropriate such as with Disaster Early Response Team.

**Drivers** may be needed to transport team and luggage to airport or site in USA. Drivers coordinate transportation and drivers in-country with host.

**Fundraising Coordinator** promotes trip fundraising in a local church and oversees the gathering of donated items needed for the mission.

**Interpreters(s)** are responsible for translation during the mission.

**Journal Keeper** is responsible for the team journal which may be written by one person or passed around so each member writes. The journal keeper then makes copies available to team members at the team reunion.

**Luggage Supervisor** coordinates packing and listing of contents of team supplies and provides a method to identify team luggage (colored tape or tags).

**Meal Coordinators** plan, purchase food, and schedule preparation of meals for team during orientation, trips, and reunion as needed. This job may not be needed, depending on the host’s responsibilities.

**Photographer** is the “official” photographer/videographer for the team and will provide copies for team members. Be cautious of taking expensive cameras.

**Presentations/Displays Coordinator** creates the resources for telling the story when the team returns.

**Researcher** studies history, geography, and culture where the project is and provides handouts or presents at orientation/meeting.

**Spiritual Guide** plans and/or schedules devotionals during orientation/training meetings, during the mission, and team reunion, and is sensitive to the spiritual needs of the team and seeks opportunities to promote spiritual growth.

**Team Medic or First-aid Coordinator** secures first-aid kit for team and is responsible for transporting it and overseeing its use. Ideal person might be a doctor, nurse, EMT, or person trained in first-aid.

**T-Shirt Acquirer** creates design and obtains print t-shirts for team and may include other items as needed.

**Travel Coordinator** negotiates to secure needed and appropriate transportation for team and might include van transport to airport, bus contract or airline tickets. This person can be responsible for process travel documents such as visa and securing travel documents (passports, etc) and tickets during mission.

**Treasurer** collects and keeps funds to handle expenditure and gives financial report after the trip. An additional person can receive payments and contributions and receipt all funds prior to the trip.

**Vacation Bible School Coordinator** manages and assigns duties.

## Sample Icebreakers

**Memories** Participants realize the impact of early parental messages on their lives. Members shake hands with each other while announcing a “memory”. Have them introduce themselves to each other with a present-tense statement of a parental message that they received as a child. For example: “Hello, I’m Jill, and I don’t keep my bedroom clean enough.” Jill’s partner would say, “Hello, I’m Jodi and I drive too fast.”

**Questions** Ask members to write on 4 x 5 cards the answers to several questions related to themselves. Ask silly and serious questions such as: What kind of food do you like to “pig-out” on? What were you “famous” for in high school? What is your favorite book in the Bible and why? Then have the group sit in two rows, facing each other, with knees touching. Have them interview each other and after a two minute period, have one row shift positions in order to be sitting in front of a new person. Repeat until all have talked with each other.

**Guess What?** Members walk around and talk with each other while displaying small signs on their backs. On each card, write the name of an animal, a plant, a household product, a city, or some other specific member of a large class of names or items. Tape one label on each member’s back without letting him/her see what it says. Members are to find out what type of sign they are wearing. Instruct them to ask yes-no questions of each other member until the answer has been figured out. When the answer is known, remove the label and put it on the front shoulder area. Continue until everyone has succeeded.

## “Mission Is” activity

This activity is helpful in getting your team to think through the implications of Christian mission, and it helps them get to know one another. The activity is also helpful for the team leader. Pay attention to how each team member thinks about mission.

For this activity, pick out six points around the room, and tape up a sign at each point. On each sign should be written one of the following statements, in large print:

*Mission is: Clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and setting at liberty those who are oppressed.*

*Mission is: Seeing and naming the injustice of the world and working to change the conditions that perpetuate poverty and oppression.*

*Mission is: Reaching out to the hurting in loving compassion, offering what you have in service to others.*

*Mission is: Engaging in dialogue with persons of faith wherever they may be, and joining together in making the world a better place for all of God's children.*

*Mission is: Joining with Christians around the world in global partnership and mutual cooperation to do the work of God.*

*Mission is: Going into the entire world to take the Gospel, baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

Instruct your team that when the activity begins, they are to walk around the room, read all the statements, pick the **one** statement that best sums up their understanding of their theology of mission, and stand by that statement. Members of your team will inevitably want to stand between two signs, or to choose more than one. Tell them that they can choose only one, even if it does not completely describe how they view mission. Once all your team members have chosen a sign, have one person from each group read the sign aloud and explain why she or he decided to stand by that sign.

End the discussion by talking about different understandings of mission. We all understand mission differently, and in order to serve most effectively we need to see how others understand mission, too. All of these understandings of mission are faithful.

## Essential Keys to Intercultural Communication

We have empathy for the feelings, values, needs, and insights of others.

Our communication is positive and pleasant, an evidence of our good will and sincerity.

Humility helps us learn from others and from our own experience.

When feasible, we use the language, and manner of expression, of the other people.

We show we care, inoffensively.

We pay the price of research, and reap the reward.

Our praise is appropriate and sincere.

We use caution if criticism is necessary.

Where possible, we suspend judgment until all the facts are in -- especially during conflict.

Our demonstration of trust is exemplified by keeping our word.

Essentially, we keep the confidences of those with whom we communicate.

We become increasingly aware of and continually use feedback received from other persons and other sources to make communication complete.

## Act of Dedication

("An Order for Commissioning to Short-term Christian Service" is offered in the *United Methodist Book of Worship*, pages 592-593. An alternate act of dedication is offered here.)

**MINISTER:** Hear these words of our Lord Jesus Christ: As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

The United Methodist Church, in its endeavor to carry out the Great Commission, has declared, "The supreme aim of missions is to make the Lord Jesus Christ known to all people in all lands as their divine Savior, to persuade them to become His disciples, and to gather these disciples into Christian churches; to enlist them in the building of the kingdom of God; to cooperate with these churches; to promote world Christian fellowship; and to bring to bear on all life the spirit and principles of Christ."

Members and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, the Great Commission given by our Lord is still in effect today, and the call is great upon each one of us to answer in our own way. Before us today stand those who are ready for a particular assignment as volunteers in mission who wish to dedicate themselves to their task.

Now we as a congregation are to commission them and send them forth in the name of Christ and the Church \_\_\_\_\_ name(s), we rejoice that you have resolved in your heart(s) to devote time, talents, and energy to this mission of \_\_\_\_\_. Your labors will take you to the people of \_\_\_\_\_. They will also be in mission to you as they likewise share their faith. Through word and deed you are to testify to the infinite love of God. Such a task confers a great privilege. It also places upon you a solemn responsibility. What you have done alone with God in offering yourself for this mission we now ask you to do publicly in the presence of this congregation. Do you sincerely believe that you have been led by the Spirit of God to engage in this ministry of \_\_\_\_\_?

MISSIONER(s): I do so believe.

MINISTER: Will you earnestly seek to carry forward this ministry in a Christ-like manner, in cooperation with your fellow team members and leader, and in full respect of the national church officials and local hosts?

MISSIONER(s): I will, the Lord being my helper. (The missionary(s) will then kneel for prayer.)

MINISTER AND CONGREGATION: Almighty God, whose love for the whole family of humankind has been made known to us through your Son, send thy blessing upon these your servants soon to go forth on this mission assignment. Grant that they be guided and strengthened for their task; that they be open to new truths and insights from their hosts, and that they be given good health and traveling mercies; to the end that your name be glorified in all the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Sample Personal Checklist *(varies, according to destination)*

- Missioner Profile / Release of Claim
- Insurance card
- Passport & Visa or tourist permit
- Medical documents, including immunization record
- Special medications (asthma, insulin, any prescription medicines)
- Copies of prescriptions
- Band-Aids, aspirin, etc. (personal first aid supplies)
- Spare contact lenses or eyeglasses; cleaning solution, etc. for contact lenses
- Spare batteries (for hearing aids, camera, flashlight, alarm clock, razor, etc.)
- Canteen (collapsible plastic jugs are convenient)
- Drinking cup
- Water purification tablets
- Travelers checks
- Cash for immediate expenses
- Work clothes, work shoes, work gloves, hat, bandannas and/or sweat bands
- Quick dry underwear, socks
- Appropriate clothing for church
- Appropriate shoes for work, play, church
- Flip-flops for shower, where appropriate
- Rain poncho and folding umbrella
- Swimsuit
- Small pocket knife (put in checked baggage)
- Toiletries (all unscented): Towel, wash cloth, soap (antibacterial), shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, razor, shave cream, toilet paper and pre-moistened wipes packed in lock-top plastic bags. (Duffel should be lined with trash bag.)
- Flashlight
- Notebook, pen, and pencil
- Sleeping bag or bedroll; mosquito netting (if needed)
- Bible and devotional materials; team songbook (if available)
- Coat hangers, clothespins and clothesline (optional)
- Hat
- Pillow (inflatable)
- Camera (only one or two persons per team, not every team member)
- Charger for laptops and phones
- Electrical Converter (if needed)
- Insect repellent
- Suntan lotion and sunglasses

- Powdered or liquid laundry detergent
- Snack foods (trail mix, granola bars, peanut butter, etc.)
- Foreign language dictionary (appropriate language)
- Small hostess gift(s)
- Suggestion: Use zip-lock bags to pack as much as possible.

**Sample Mission Team Checklist** *(In addition to personal items, some of these may be helpful to the team as a whole)*

- Batteries
- Binoculars
- Calculator
- Children's clothing (to donate to the host church)
- Compass
- Cooking utensils
- Duct tape
- Engineering references
- Eye protection
- First Aid kit
- Frisbees
- Games
- Gatorade powder
- Matches
- Metric conversion chart
- Mosquito coils (if needed)
- Rubber bands
- Shortwave radio
- Tape recorder or similar recording device
- Trash bags
- Camcorder
- Walkie talkies

## A Prayer for Those Who Have Too Much

To my brothers and sisters in developing countries. While I was deciding which oat bran cereal to eat this morning, You were searching the ground for leftover grains from the passing wheat truck.

While I was jogging at the health center, You were working in the wealthy landowner's fields under a scorching sun. While I was choosing between diet and regular soda, Your parched lips were yearning for a touch of water.

While I complained about the poor service in the gourmet restaurant, You were gratefully receiving a bowl of rice. While I poured my "fresh and better" detergent in the washing machine, You stood in the river with your bundle of clothes.

While I watched the evening news on my wide screen television set, You were being terrorized and taunted by a dictatorship government. While I read the newspaper and drank my cup of steaming coffee, You walked the dusty, hot miles to the tiny, crowded schoolroom to try to learn how to read.

While I scanned the ads for a bargain on an extra piece of clothing, You woke up and put on the same shirt and pants you have worn for many months.

While I built a 4-bedroom house for the three of us, Your family of 10 found shelter in a one-room hut. While I went to church last Sunday and felt more than slightly bored, you looked out upon the Earth and those around you; and felt gratitude to God for being alive for one more day.

My brothers and sisters, forgive me for my arrogance and indifference. Forgive me for my greed of always wanting new, bigger and better things. Forgive me for not doing my part to change the unjust systems that keep you suffering and impoverished. I offer you my promise to become more aware of your situation and to change my lifestyle as I work for transformation of our world.

*(Sr. Joyce, author, more recently of Dear Heart, Come Home wrote the above after her visits to Guatemala and Liberia.)*

**Suggested First Aid Kit for Mission Teams** *Discuss with your host the level of medical facilities available, and adjust this list accordingly.*

- Buffered aspirin (100 tablets)
- Extra Strength Tylenol (100 tablets)
- Oral Thermometer (digital) (2)
- Alcohol (1 bottle)
- Cotton balls (100)
- Band Aids - medium size (1 box)
- Butterfly bandages (1 box)
- Q-tips (1 large package)
- Sterile dressings, individually wrapped
- 4 x 4 gauze (10)
- 2 x 3 non-stick (Tefla) (10)
- 5 x 9 thicker abd. pads (10)
- 3" stretch gauze wrap (Kling) (4)
- Eye pads (6)
- 1" paper tape (2 rolls)
- 2" cloth (regular adhesive)
- tape (1 roll)
- Antibiotic ointment (1 tube)
- Non-sterile exam gloves (1 box)
- Instant ice pack (1)
- 3" Ace bandage (2)
- Finger splint (2)
- Wrist splint (1)
- Calamine lotion (1 small bottle)
- Single use syringes (4)
- Toothache / oral pain medicine (1)
- Imodium A-D caplets (2 packages)
- Pepto-Bismol tablets (2 packages)
- Laxative (1 package)
- Myoflex or BenGay (1 tube)
- Snake bite kit (1)

- Cough drops (1 package)
- Cough syrup (1 small bottle)
- Benadryl (1 package)
- Vaseline (1 jar)
- Eye drops (1 small bottle)
- Blood Pressure cuff (1)
- Stethoscope (1)
- Temporary tooth glue (to glue cap on tooth) (1)
- Hibiclens (1 bottle)
- 1% Hydrocortisone cream (1 large tube)
- Sutures, assorted (1) (Only if a medical professional is part of your team.  
Superglue works as a temporary closure)
- Hydrogen peroxide (1 bottle)
- Handiwipes (20)
- Motion sickness medication (1)
- Tweezers (1)
- Scissors (1)
- Nitroglycerine, sub lingual (1 package)

## Sample Covenant for Mission Partnership

**Team Leader** I prayerfully accept the role of team leader and will, with God's help, present myself as an ambassador for Christ to my team and our hosts. I agree to hold training session(s) with all team members on cultural sensitivity, team building, spiritual growth, and other components that will ensure the team will be in partnership as co-workers with the host volunteers/community. I agree to communicate frequently and promptly with our host contact in order to complete mutually agreed upon preparations for our team prior to departure. I agree to be a good steward of funds collected and disbursed to the project. I agree for our team to participate in an on-site orientation with our host leader and/or others soon after arrival. I agree to ensure that an evaluation will be held with the host/leaders prior to returning home, and conduct follow-up written evaluations for the conference UMVIM coordinator. I agree to remain non-partisan in differences of opinion occurring in the church that hosts our work. I agree to work under the leadership of the host coordinator or designee.

**Host Coordinator** I prayerfully accept the role of host leader and will, with God's help, present myself as an ambassador for Christ to my people and our guests. I agree to provide orientation to our local volunteer hosts on cultural sensitivity, spiritual growth, division of responsibilities, and other components that will ensure our local volunteers (host community) will be in partnership as co-workers with the mission team. I agree to communicate frequently and promptly with the team leader in order to complete mutually agreed- upon preparations for the mission team prior to its arrival. I agree to be a good steward of funds collected for the project. I agree to provide on-site orientation for the volunteer team soon after its arrival. I agree to ensure that an evaluation will be held with the team leader and our local leaders prior to the departure of the team.

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Team Leader

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Host Coordinator

**Safe Sanctuaries guidelines for mission projects** *UMVIM, WJ provides these general guidelines for your information. Your team is expected to follow your annual conference's Safe Sanctuaries policy. Each annual conference has their own Safe Sanctuary policy. Please go to your annual conference website to receive more specifics on your annual conference's policy.*

## **Guidelines for Working with Children**

1. More than one adult with the children
  - a. 2 adults at all times and preferably a translator should be present.
  - b. At least 5 years older than the age group with whom you are assisting.
  - c. At least the age of 21 in order to be in charge of a group.
  - d. Never be alone with a child.
  - e. Wear your nametag.
  - f. Background check on all volunteers participating with the team and safe sanctuary training.
2. If you are staying in the same facility as the orphanage or child care facility, do not stay in the same space with the children.
3. Be aware of children's personalities, and show sensitivity to the way they would like to interact with you. Let the children warm up to you by engaging them in positive ways.
4. Follow the safety procedures and regulations of the orphanage or child care facility.
  - a. Obtain those regulations ahead of time and train your mission team on their expectations and yours.
5. Do not take children off site without permission, and take translators with you who know the area if you so choose.
6. Consider safety in your activities with games and equipment.
7. Make sure your volunteer staff has a plan for emergency procedures.
  - a. Take a first aid kit with you to leave at the orphanage.
  - b. Have someone on your team who is CPR trained who is accessible to provide medical care for any child who might be in need of medical attention.
  - c. There should be a plan set in place if a child is in need of medical attention. The CPR trained individual should remain in a central location where people have access to get to the medically trained person in case of emergency.

8. Have a sign in and sign out system for the children participating in your group.
9. Number count of children each time that you change positions
10. Gain permission to take pictures of the children, become pen pals, or communicate via the computer.
11. Be aware of the signs of child abuse: From Joy Thornberg Melton's book, *Safe Sanctuaries*, p. 37-38.

#### Possible Signs of Physical Abuse

1. Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others.
2. Fearful of parents and or other adults.
3. Destructive behavior toward self, others, and/or property.
4. Inexplicable fractures or bruises inappropriate for child's developmental stage.
5. Burns, facial injuries, pattern of repetitious bruises.

#### Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse

1. Exhibits severe depression and/or withdrawal.
2. Exhibits severe lack of self esteem.
3. Failure to thrive.
4. Threatens or attempts suicide.
5. Speech and/or eating disorder.
6. Goes to extremes to seek adult approval.
7. Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns.

#### Possible Signs of Neglect

1. Failure to thrive.
2. Pattern of inappropriate dress for climate.
3. Begs or steals food, chronic hunger.
4. Depression.
5. Untreated medical conditions.
6. Poor Hygiene.

### Possible signs of Sexual Abuse

1. Unusually advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior for child's age and developmental stage.
2. Depression – cries often for no apparent reason.
3. Promiscuous behavior.
4. Runs away from home and refuses to return.
5. Difficulty walking or sitting.
6. Bruised/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas.
7. Exhibits frequent headaches, stomachaches, extreme fatigue. 8. Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

### Possible signs of Ritual Abuse

1. Disruptions of memory or consciousness.
2. Unexplained mistrust and mood swings.
3. Flashbacks.
4. Eating disorders.
5. Fear of the dark, especially at sundown or a full moon.
6. Agitation or despair that seems to occur in cycles.
7. Fear of ministers, priests, or others wearing robes or uniforms. 8. Nightmares or sleep disorders.
9. Any of the symptoms of Sexual Abuse.

12. Make sure you are aware of allergies when you provide snacks for the children.

- a. Serve healthy snacks (fruits or vegetables).

13. Bathroom

- a. Give the children as much privacy as possible while using the bathroom, only giving the child assistance if necessary.
- b. Have an extra change of clothes with you if the child soils himself.

- c. If you need to change a diaper or assist a child with the potty make sure that another adult is in sight of you as you aide the child.
  - d. Elementary age children should have an adult accompany them as a group to the bathroom. The adult should stand at the bathroom entrance to supervise. This allows influence while monitoring.
14. If you must bathe a child make sure there is a second adult present, and the parent or guardian should be aware and present if possible to provide effective communication.
  15. Clean the toys after the children play with them with a mixture of water with a touch of Clorox, and let the toys dry before the children play with them again.
  16. You are unfamiliar to the children, and you should take the time to get to know the children and let them warm up to you.
    - a. Only hand out hugs if the children reach out to hug you. This allows for sensitivity to the child's comfort level.
  1. Perfect the side hug and provide appropriate touch.
  2. Do not carry the children unless necessary for medical purposes.
  17. Make sure that you interact with the children in age appropriate manner.
    - a. Let the children come to you.

Appropriate Example – a two year old coming to sit in your lap is appropriate, but you should let the child come to you on his or her own and sit in your lap instead of taking the action to sit them there.

Inappropriate interaction for age – a twelve year old sitting in your lap.

18. Let the host or administrators of the facility pass out any gifts to the children.
19. Teenage volunteers should understand that they should wear appropriate clothing for the culture, climate, and Christian demeanor
20. Teenager volunteers should understand that public displays of affection should not take place in front of the children or on the mission trip.
21. Crushes – if a volunteer finds that an older child has developed a crush on them, there should be an expectation that the volunteer deflect the affection in a kind manner. The leader of the group should be aware of the crush, and take action if necessary.

### **Guidelines for Medical Teams**

1. Take your procedures slower with children to make them feel more comfortable. Introduce yourself to the child and give them your name.
2. Always have a second person in the room when performing a medical exam or any procedure on a child.

- a. The most desirable situation is a nurse who can translate.
- b. Never be alone with a child.
- 3. Help make the child feel comfortable by distracting them or providing a toy to hold onto while you examine them or perform a procedure.
- 4. Explain to the parents and the child what procedure you are performing and keep the child aware of what is happening.
- 5. Encourage the parent to stay with the child while you perform a check up on the child.
  - a. Explain everything that you are going to do to the parent before you do it to the child.
- 6. If you are administering medicine explain to the parent how to treat the child.
- 7. Be aware of the allergies that the child has or any prior medical conditions.
- 8. Bring a first aid kit to leave at the facility.
- 9. Teach hygiene and washing of hands to the children and adults.
- 10. Have an adult sit with the child while they wait for the doctor.
- 11. Keep the medicines away from the children.
- 12. Make sure medical records are kept in a locked away space or given back to the proper person.

### **Guidelines for Lodging**

- 1. If you can find a hotel that has an entrance from the inside, it is safer for you to stay in that style facility rather than a motel style with outside access to the rooms 2. Adults should not stay in the room with the teenagers.
  - a. The ideal situation is to have four teenagers in a room, then two adults in the adjoining room, and on the other side of the adults have four more teenagers.
  - b. The adults can rotate turns staying up and monitoring the hallway for the safety of the teenagers.
- 3. It is ideal to have security at the Hotel front desk as an extra precaution.
- 4. Try to stay on the same floor.
- 5. Have the hotel management know one person to contact in case of emergency.
  - a. They should have information for the leaders. Room number, phone, etc. in order to get in touch with them so that they can be reached to help with an emergency situation.
- 6. Set a curfew time for the group.

7. Teenagers must not leave hotel room by themselves after curfew unless there is an emergency.
8. For the students' safety, they should partner up with their roommates, and each time the group transitions, the teenagers should look for their roommates.

### **Background Checks**

Some annual conferences in the WJ require that each team leader go through a background check. This requirement is becoming more common throughout the WJ and nationally. In addition, some annual conferences are suggesting that each team member also receive background checks. There is a fee involved to get these processed and as a team leader you may want to include this in the budget you prepare for your team members.

Of course, all information received is kept in the strictest of confidence to keep with privacy laws. If there is a concern that arises regarding having to go through a background check by you, the team leader, and/or a team member (if the whole team is to receive a background check) please discuss this with your annual conference UMVIM Coordinator.

Some issues that may arise include:

- Team leader refuses a background check
- Team member refuses a background check
- A team member/leader has a concern that comes up on the background check. How to move forward? Does it require ejection from the team or some other change?

Most annual conferences and/or local churches and/or UMVIM Conference Coordinator's office can perform background checks for you and your team members. There is a fee for a background check which varies depending on who processes the background check.

## IRS Publication 526 (2008)

### Travel

Generally, you can claim a charitable contribution deduction for travel expenses necessarily incurred while you are away from home performing services for a charitable organization only if there is no significant element of personal pleasure, recreation, or vacation in the travel. This applies whether you pay the expenses directly or indirectly. You are paying the expenses indirectly if you make a payment to the charitable organization and the organization pays for your travel expenses.

The deduction for travel expenses will not be denied simply because you enjoy providing services to the charitable organization. Even if you enjoy the trip, you can take a charitable contribution deduction for your travel expenses if you are on duty in a genuine and substantial sense throughout the trip.

However, if you have only nominal duties, or if for significant parts of the trip you do not have any duties, you cannot deduct your travel expenses.

**Deductible travel expenses.** These include: • Air, rail, and bus transportation, • Out-of-pocket expenses for your car, • Taxi fares or other costs of transportation between the airport or station and your hotel, • Lodging costs. Please check with your tax professional for more specific information on possible deductions.

### Mission Trips as a Tax Deduction

***You should consult with your personal tax accountant. The following are best practices based on the information available, but not guaranteed as IRS requirements and allowances to be considered a tax deduction:*** Payments for mission trip expenses and/or contributions for material/supply needs for a mission trip should be made payable to a church or non-profit 501(c)-3 organization. Donations for an individual, other than self, should be made payable to a church or non-profit 501(c)-3 organization. Receipts indicating general expenses (food, toiletries, medications, etc.) needed in association with a mission trip should be kept. Any monies paid for mission trip expenses not paid to a church or non-profit 501(c)-3 organization should have a letter indicating participation on a mission trip.

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION & REFLECTION

### BOOKLET

#### INTRODUCTION

Ever since the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Christians have been a missionary people – that is, Christians have felt God calling them to take the gospel throughout the world. Jesus commands us to do this.

**“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” – Matthew 28:19-20a**

Throughout the ages, Christians have responded faithfully to Jesus’ commandment. Paul insisted that God’s grace was for all, for Jews and Greeks, and became one of the first missionaries to travel all over the region. The theologian and physician Albert Schweitzer gave up a lucrative medical practice to share Jesus’ love with those who could not afford medical treatment. Mother Theresa gave her life to serve orphans and the “least of these” throughout Calcutta, India.

The history of Christian Mission has been a mixed bag, however. For every Mother Theresa, we have stories of Christians from the West forcing Africans and Native Americans to convert to Christianity at gun point. Many times, mission became an excuse to justify the control, exploitation, and enslavement of peoples throughout the world. Wars have been fought in the name of Christian Mission. People have been burned at the stake and killed in the name of Christian Mission.

It seems that Jesus has entrusted us with a very dangerous tool in commanding us to be in mission to the world. When used rightly, mission has brought life and hope to millions of people all over the world. And when used wrongly, mission has brought death and grief to millions of people as well.

We have a tremendous responsibility then to prepare ourselves to be the kind of missionaries Christ would have us to be. Nothing is more important in this process than understanding our motivations and goals for doing mission work.

This booklet seeks to help those working through Volunteers in Mission to do just that, to gain a Biblical and Christ-centered understanding of why we do mission and what mission should look like. Because this booklet seeks to promote a Biblical model of mission, it should be used like a Bible study. This is not a “how to” booklet in terms of explaining the logistics of being part of mission teams. Rather this booklet seeks to foster the spiritual formation and development for those who are participating in these experiences.

Of course, the experience itself is most important. Everyone I know who has participated in a mission experience has been impacted spiritually through that experience. This booklet merely seeks to aid the spiritual formation that is already taking place.

Part I of the booklet will be a series of Bible studies designed for spiritual preparation before the mission experience.

Part II provides a guide for reflecting during the mission experience. This part is much more general than Part I as the reflections should be guided by the experiences of the trip. God always works in strange and mysterious ways, so it would be quite foolish for us to try to guess how God’s Spirit will move in each experience.

Finally, Part III will be a guide for debriefing from a mission experience. Each session will have reflections on Scripture, stories to illumine the Scripture, and questions for discussion. All of the discussion questions are in italics. If time does not permit using all the questions, it will be up to the leader to choose which questions are the most important.

Lastly, we encourage you to keep a journal from this point until you return. Often times, writing down our thoughts is one of the most important spiritual disciplines we can practice to foster our spiritual formation. For each session, there will be a list of suggested journal topics. But do not feel limited to these. Be open to the Spirit’s leading and if you feel the need to focus your journal time on an entirely different topic, then please do so. The last thing this booklet should do would be to confine the movement of the Spirit in your hearts and lives. Grace and Peace to you as you serve Christ through this mission experience.

## PART I PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

### BEING SENT – Session 1

**“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” – John 20:21**

Jesus tells us that we are sent in the same manner that he was sent, or in other words, we are sent to do the same things Jesus did. *What are the things Jesus did? (For example, Jesus healed, Jesus welcomed children, etc.)* Our first rule of thumb in doing missions, then, is to constantly ask this question, “Are we doing the things Jesus did?” A case study can help us see the danger of failing to constantly ask this question in our mission work.

**Rwanda: A Case Study** In 1994, nearly 1,000,000 people were killed in about 2 months in Rwanda. This was the most effective and efficient genocide in the history of the world. And at the time, Rwanda was the most “Christian” country in the world, with 85% of its inhabitants professing faith in Christ. Clearly, for many in Rwanda, Christianity had nothing to do with the life and teaching of Jesus. We must ask, “What went wrong?”

In Rwanda, there are basically two ethnic groups: The Hutu and the Tutsi. They basically lived together peacefully before European colonization and “Christian” mission work. When the Germans and Belgians colonized the country, they set up Tutsis as overseers and enslaved the Hutus, who were the vast majority of the population. It was the Tutsis who were required to whip the Hutus and exercise control over them.

The arrival of Christianity in Rwanda was very closely tied to the arrival of colonialism. The German and Belgium colonialists recognized that, in order to rule Rwanda using a very small number of their own troops, they would need to divide the Rwandans and develop a dominant and a subordinate group. The Christian Church provided the ideology for this division. Recognizing that the Tutsi were taller than the Hutu, the colonialists declared that Tutsis were part of the Hamitic race, or those who descended from Noah’s son Ham, who migrated to Rwanda and subdued and conquered the Hutus.

The Tutsi came to be seen as “European in black skin.”

The missionaries quickly set up mission schools where they could prepare the Tutsi to lead the country, thus providing the needed stability for colonial exploitation. One of the missionary reports from 1927 stated, “With the Tutsi Christians the missionaries hope to achieve the creation and formation of a social elite that is pro-European. Such an elite is needed. Christianity will provide it.”

Therefore, from the very beginning, the missionaries decreed that religion would be the vehicle for political power. It would convert the Tutsis and appoint them as the ruling elite. In turn, the Tutsi would closely follow the orders of their “white fathers.”

This “Christian” method of colonization set up tremendous division between the Hutus and Tutsis. Eventually, the Hutus gained political power, and, in 1994, they began a systematic campaign to kill every Tutsi.

*How did the missionary work of the Europeans contribute to the genocide?*

*What were the Europeans’ motivations and purposes for doing mission work in Rwanda?*

*What were some of the things the missionaries did that were not in accordance with the things Jesus did?*

*What would Jesus’ way of mission have looked like in Rwanda?*

*What does this example teach us as we are about to enter into a mission experience?*

The Europeans who evangelized Rwanda viewed those in Africa as godless heathens who should be so grateful to receive the gospel, that they would become slaves and serve the European countries. In reality, these so called “heathens” lived peacefully with one another until the “Christians” came and taught them “Christianity.” While the very worst short term mission trip would not have the same effects as years of missionary work in support of colonialism, the story of Rwanda teaches us that we must be clear about our motivations and purposes for serving as short term missionaries. Are we going to convert the “godless heathens” or are we going to experience life with our brothers and sisters across the world? Are we going to help the poor people who can’t help themselves or are we going to form relationships and solidarity with God’s children in another place?

In addition to being clear about our motivations and purposes, we must also be clear about what we are going to do. Jesus gave the disciples certain tasks when he sent them out.

*(For more information please see: Michael Budde, “Pledging Allegiance,” The Church as Counterculture, ed. Michael Budde and Robert Bromlow, (Albany: State University of New York Press), 215. Tharcisse Gatwa, “Revivalism and ethnicity: The Church in Rwanda,” Transformation (April, 1998), 6. Tharcisse Gatwa, “Victims or Guilty?” International Review of Mission, (Geneva: World Council of Churches), 350-351.)*

**Sent to Witness Acts 1:8 “And you will be my witnesses in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.”**

Typically, we tend to associate witnessing with evangelism. And many people tend to associate evangelism with “saving souls.” A typical evangelistic experience for many might sound something like this:

Person 1: “Have you ever accepted Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?”

Person 2: “Well, I’ve been going to church most of my life, and I believe in God and everything.”

Person 1: “But have you accepted Christ? You see the Bible says that the only way to have forgiveness of sins is to accept Christ as our personal Savior. Let me ask you, if you died tonight, where would you go? Would you be in heaven or hell?”

Person 2: “Well, I guess I’m not sure. I mean I would want to go to heaven.”

Person 1: “You can be sure! Just pray this prayer with me...”

There are several problems with this kind of evangelism. First, it uses fear to convince people to have faith in Christ. There is not one example in any of the gospels where Jesus scared someone into

following him.

Secondly, this method of evangelism promotes selfish reasons for professing faith. Jesus asks us to, “Deny yourselves and take up your cross” (Mk 8: 34). If the only reason we accept Christ is because we want to go to heaven, then we’ve missed the whole point of the gospel.

Finally, this method of evangelism claims to know more than we as humans can know. God is so big that God is not confined to the boxes we set up. C.S. Lewis reminds us that we may indeed be surprised to see some of the people we find in heaven.

When we evangelize in this way, we make the focus all about the other person. “**You** need to accept Christ... **you** need to repent... **you** need to pray this prayer.” To witness, though, means that we share with others what God has done in our lives. We are witnesses to **our** experience of God’s work in the world.

And the first way we witness is in how we live. We live differently because of what Christ has done for us. To witness means that people should see the love of Christ in us. What people see in us is far more important than what they hear from us. And when we witness with our lives, then our words will have more meaning. When others can **see**

what God has done in our lives, then they will be willing to **hear** what God has done for us.

Therefore evangelism is no longer about, “You need to do this.” Rather, a Biblical model of evangelism says, “This is the love of God that I have experienced in my life and you can experience that same love as well.”

**“Preach the gospel always...if necessary, use words.” – St. Francis of Assisi**

**Mike’s Witness** *Mike is one of the most powerful witnesses for the transforming power of the gospel that I know. For over twenty years, he was a drug addict. In remembering life in addiction, Mike says that everything he did was controlled by drugs. His whole life was about getting his next hit – that is until God saved him. His children started going to church, and Mike went by the congregation to check on his kids, and the next thing he knows, he’s talking with Pastor Lewis about the healing power of the gospel.*

*Today, Mike is one of the leaders in the drug recovery program where he found healing, he works for Urban Ministry and supervises work teams that paint houses for low-income people, and he tells anyone willing to listen about what God has done in his life. For Mike, witnessing is about sharing with others what God has done for him.*

*He doesn’t point the finger, he doesn’t tell others what they should do, he doesn’t try to scare people. He simply says, “This is what God has done for me.” And Mike knows that when people see what God has done in his life, they will realize that God longs for them to be made whole as well. He says, “The natural human instinct is if God did this for him, then God can do it for me.” And God has done it for many people through Mike’s witness.*

*Hundreds of people have found healing from their drug addiction through the program that Mike now leads. Mike is an example of a true witness for Christ. He knows that the way he lives is the strongest witness he can give. He says, “When I was using drugs, I worked 24/7 for the drug dealer. My life was about getting \$10 so I could get more drugs. Why can’t I be like that for the Lord? If I could give all of myself to drugs, then I*

*can give all of myself to the Lord.” And because Mike gives all of himself to the Lord, others have experienced the healing power of the gospel and given themselves to the Lord as well.*

*How would you describe your experience of God?*

*What are some meaningful ways that people have witnessed to you?*

*How can you be a witness on this coming mission experience?*

For more information on Lewis’ understanding of heaven and hell, read “The Last Battle,” in the *Chronicles of Narnia*.

## **Sent to Serve**

Read Matthew 25: 31-46

*According to this passage, how do we know if we are truly followers of Christ?*

It is interesting that Jesus only mentions actions. Nowhere in this passage does he tell us to tell people about him or to evangelize. Often, service is seen as a means to an end. Some of the conventional thinking is that we serve so that we can build relationships of trust so that we can convert people to faith in Christ. This views service as a means to an end, however, is not Biblical.

James says, “If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?” (James 2:15-16). Jesus never had ulterior motives for healing people. He did not heal people so that they would become his followers. He healed people because God sent him to heal...just like God sent him to call people to follow him.

In the same way, our service to others must be an end in itself. It is not a way to manipulate people into accepting Christ.

*How did Jesus demonstrate serving others throughout his life?*

*What are some of the ways we can serve on this mission opportunity?*

**Sent to Love “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” – John 13:34**

In mission trips, we often feel we are sent to work. We are there to feed people or to build houses or to work in a field. Many times, it is easy to let the work blind us to what God really cares about: people.

Read Mark 5:25-34

The gospels tell of an encounter Jesus had with a woman who had been suffering for twelve years. This encounter, though, was unplanned. Jesus was on his way to Jairus’ house, a very important place. Jairus was a leader of the synagogue whose daughter was ill. He needed Jesus’ help, and Jesus was on the way to heal her. But Jesus’

journey was interrupted. Out of the crowd this woman, whose name we do not even know, made her way to Jesus and touched his cloak and immediately was healed. But then Jesus did something very strange; he asked who touched him. Have you ever wondered why Jesus asked? The woman was healed. Wasn't Jesus' work done? Apparently not.

While this woman had been healed physically, she was still broken emotionally and spiritually. For 12 years she had been unclean. No one could touch her; no one could show her love. It was not enough for Jesus to simply heal her physically. Jesus wanted to let her know that he cared about what she was going through. Jesus took the time to love her and to form a relationship with her. He called her daughter, making her part of God's family and reintroducing her into community.

In doing mission work, we must let love guide everything we do. It is important to do work, to build houses for people, to serve food, to labor physically. But it is just as important, maybe more important, to build relationships, to be in community and solidarity with those we serve.

**“There is more hunger in the world for love and appreciation than for bread.” – Mother Theresa**

*What are some of the most important relationships in your life?*

*How have you experienced love and appreciation through relationships with others?*

*How can we let love guide our service and witness on this mission experience?*

*How can you open yourself in this mission to be fully present as Jesus was to this woman? What do you need to change in yourself to transcend the need to do and instead, be?*

**Suggested Journal Topics** 1) Any of the discussion questions listed above. 2) Why are you going on this mission trip? 3) What is Missions to you? 4) How can I be fully present to those around me as Jesus was for this woman?

## **GRACE 101 – Session 2**

**“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” – Ephesians 2:8**

The story of grace is central to the message of the gospel and it is central to our theology as United Methodists. John Wesley stressed that God’s grace was prevenient. Or, in other words, God’s grace is bestowed upon all of us even before we realize it. God’s grace is present everywhere and upon every person. And yet, we often live as if God’s grace is something we have to earn or something we can control.

Read John 4:1-26

*What had the Jews told the woman at the well about worship?*

*How did grace fit into their understanding of worship?*

*What did Jesus tell her about the kind of worship that God desires?*

*How did grace fit into Jesus' model of worship?*

## **WHAT'S YOUR GRACE MODEL?**

**Limited Grace** Those who told this woman that she must worship in Jerusalem had a limited understanding of God's grace. For them, God was confined to a particular place, the temple in Jerusalem. With this model, they were able to be the gatekeepers, that is, they could set the rules as to who could receive grace. Notice what the woman says, "You say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." She had been told where she must go to receive God's grace. But this model of grace not only involves location. For her to go to worship in Jerusalem, she would be worshipping in the temple. And there were certain rules that people had to follow to be allowed to enter the temple.

Because this woman was a Samaritan, she was automatically rejected. She was considered unclean – not fit to enter the temple – not fit to receive God's grace. In this model, God's grace was reserved for some, but not for all. God's grace was for certain people and not for Samaritans. This was a limited view of grace.

*What are some of our attitudes toward this mission experience that might reflect a limited grace model?*

This model of limited grace is at work when we, those who are doing mission work, view ourselves to be, in some way, superior to those we are going to serve. This model says, "There but for the grace of God, go I." When we say similar statements, we may mean that we are thankful that we do not suffer from extreme poverty, that we have clean drinking water, that we have a roof over our head, etc. But the underlying assumption behind that statement is that God loves us more. God has shown more grace to me than to other people. Those who follow this model say, "We are going to take Jesus to

them.” We may mean that we are going to share Jesus’ love with those we are going to serve, but again the underlying assumption is that Jesus’ love is a commodity that we control and can distribute out to those to whom we chose to give it.

It’s the same as the Jews saying that God must be worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem. They were claiming ownership of God’s grace and the authority to determine who was worthy to receive it. The woman at the well fell outside their grace model.

Jesus operates on a different model.

### **Extravagant Grace**

*Where does Jesus say is the location of true worship?*

*Under Jesus’ model, are there gatekeepers to God’s grace?*

Jesus says that God is not limited to a particular place or to the rules of human gatekeepers. Rather true worship is done in “spirit and in truth,” or in other words, true worship is something that comes from the heart. And because it comes from the heart, it is something that every single person can do. Because it comes from the heart, then other people can’t set up rules to determine who can and who cannot worship. This model of grace says that God is available to everybody, that no one person or one group of people have a monopoly on God’s grace. It’s available to all.

**“We never take God anywhere; we find God already present.” – Bishop Ken Carder**

The grace model that we have affects our motivation and purpose for going on a VIM experience. With a limited grace model, we may think we have God’s grace and we

need to take it to those who do not have it. With an extravagant grace model, we know that we are not taking God anywhere. God is already there. We are simply going to witness to where God's grace is already at work. Acts 11: 19-26

*What did Barnabas find when he came to Antioch?*

*What do you expect to find or experience on this mission trip?*

**“Grace has no bounds.” – Alan Storey Grace and the Homeless**

*To illustrate the boundless nature of God's grace, I want to share a personal story. When I was in college I went through a crisis of faith. I didn't know what I believed. I quit going to church. Finally, I ended up one Sunday at a congregation in downtown Birmingham called Church of the Reconciler. This is a very unique church as about ½ the members are homeless men and women. I went, almost as a desperate attempt to hold on to what little faith I had left.*

*After the service, a homeless man came up and introduced himself to me and said, “I'm glad you're here.” I said, “Thanks, this is a great place. I think I'll come and volunteer here.” Even though I was impoverished in faith, I still felt like I was the one who was supposed to be helping; I felt that I was the one who was supposed to bring grace to this homeless man. I was acting as if I were the gatekeeper to grace. I was going to come and volunteer. The man said to me, “Volunteer? I don't want you to volunteer to help me. I want you to worship with me.” So I did. And over time, I listened as homeless people shared with me their struggles with poverty and violence and drugs.*

*But I also listened as many of them shared with me their amazing faith in God, and, as I listened, I began to regain my faith. I began to see that I didn't need to bring God's grace to them because God's grace was already there in a real and powerful way. And as I witnessed God's grace in the lives of homeless men and women, I began to see how God's grace was at work in my life.*

## Jesus as Missionary

Philippians 2:5-8

Jesus was a missionary. He was **sent** from God to come and share love with the world.

*According to the passage we just read, what are the attributes of Jesus' missionary work?*

*What can we learn about the way that Jesus became one with the people with whom he was sent to serve?*

Luke 5:17-26 When Jesus sees the paralytic, the first thing he does is say, "Your sins are forgiven." What had this person done to receive forgiveness of sins? Nothing. He was simply lowered through the roof in the room where Jesus was, and Jesus offered him words of grace. Jesus had never met this person before and yet he knew that God's grace was already present in his life. Jesus always took an extravagant view of grace. God's love and grace is present in the life of every single person in every single place.

*What does this passage teach us about the magnitude of Jesus' love?*

*How can we be missionaries like Jesus in this experience?*

**"Jesus loved loving more than anything else in the world." – Alan Storey**

Suggested Journal topics:

1) How have you experienced grace in your life?

2) Is your purpose for going on this trip motivated by a limited or an extravagant model of grace?

3) How can you be a witness to God's boundless grace on this mission experience?

4) How might you be a recipient of God's boundless grace on this mission experience?

### **TAKING THE GOSPEL VS. TAKING OUR GOSPEL – Session 3**

We never live out our faith in a vacuum, but rather we strive to be Christians while also living in a particular time and place with a particular culture. Often times, our faith is so immersed in our culture that it is difficult to separate what is necessary for our faith and what is added on by our culture. There's nothing wrong with our culture influencing the ways we worship God. In fact, it is impossible to completely avoid this.

It becomes a problem, however, when we believe that people have to accept our culture if they are to accept the gospel. Or, in other words, it becomes a problem when we begin to believe that our culture and the gospel are the same things.

*What are some of the elements in our church that reflect our culture?*

*Do we live as if some of these cultural elements are essential to the gospel?*

The early Christians had the same problem. The first great debate in the early church was whether or not Gentiles could become Christians without accepting Jewish culture. Some said that Gentiles must be circumcised, that is they must take on the mark of being a Jew. But Paul came along and said, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor non-circumcision counts for anything. The only thing that counts is faith working through love." Galatians 5:6

Faith and love are universal. Every culture in the world places a value on faith and love. Circumcision was a particular cultural practice of the Jewish people. Paul is saying that the gospel of Christ transcends culture.

*What do we know about the culture where we are going? (This would be a good place to teach participants about the culture)*

*What in our culture might be offensive to those we are going to serve?*

## **CULTURE AS A MEANS TO WORSHIP**

Our particular cultural practices do not have to be something negative. Many elements that are unique to a particular culture can provide meaningful ways to draw us closer to God. Paul never said Jews should quit being circumcised. He recognized that the Jewish practice of circumcision was a way for Jews to enter into meaningful covenant with God. Paul did not have a problem with the practice of circumcision.

Rather, Paul had a problem with people saying that circumcision is the only way to God.

*What elements from your own culture bring you closer to God?*

*Can you imagine how these cultural elements might appear to Christians from other cultures?*

## **The Gospel and Native American Culture**

Just as elements from our culture enhance our worship of God, elements that are unique to other cultures (that might even seem unchristian to us) can enhance worship as well. Read the following excerpt from Brian McClaren's *A New Kind of Christian*. The character in his book, Pastor Dan Poole, was talking with a group of Native American ministers. Dan asked them, "Do any of you use Native American culture in your church services back home?" Each one denied doing so until one finally said: "*I am Hopi, and one of the most meaningful memories in my life is being a boy, before our family became Christians, and being at the pow-wow. We would dance and dance for hours*

*each day. You see, in Hopi culture, dance isn't just symbolic. Dance is actually a form of prayer. Every time my foot stamps on the ground, I'm saying something to the Great Spirit that I could never put into words. My whole body is praying as I move around the circle.' By this time, he was standing and demonstrating the movements. Then he sat down again and put his head in his hands. 'One of my greatest dreams,' he said, 'would be someday to lead my congregation in a Hopi dance of worship to my Savior.'" Brian McLaren, A New Kind of Christian, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 76-77.*

*Many Western Christians have assumed that rituals from other cultures contradict the gospel of Christ, but what does this story teach us?*

**LEARNING TO LISTEN: THE STORY OF PENTECOST** - This interpretation of Pentecost comes from Eric Law's book, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*.

Read Acts 2:1-13

*Is this a miracle of the tongue or a miracle of the ear?*

For centuries, we've interpreted Pentecost as a miracle of the tongue: the disciples are given tongues of fire to proclaim the Good News of the gospel. But, if we take the Scripture seriously, then we see that the miracle of the tongue is only half the story.

The Scripture says, "Each one **HEARD** them speaking in the native language of each" (Acts 2: 6 emphasis mine). Maybe if we look at this passage as both a miracle of the tongue **AND** a miracle of the ear, we might gain a more complete understanding of this passage. The disciples are locked up in a room. Their leader had been crucified and they are afraid they could be next. The "devout Jews from every nation" are free to wander about throughout Jerusalem – they do not have to hide behind locked doors. Now in this context, who seems to have the most power? It's the crowd. They're free.

The disciples, before the coming of the Holy Spirit, are powerless, they are afraid, they are hiding behind locked doors. So maybe the miracle of Pentecost is that the powerless are given tongues to speak and the powerful are given ears to hear.

*How might the Church be different today if we understood the story of Pentecost to be a miracle of the ear, of the powerful being given ears to hear?*

## **YOUR CONTEXT**

*What are the power dynamics between you and those you are going to serve? You live in the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world. You have the resources to travel on this mission experience. If you get hurt or injured or sick, no matter where you are, you will have insurance that will take care of you. *By and large, you have more power than the people you will meet. According to the story of Pentecost, what is the first thing you should do? How does this understanding of Pentecost change our understanding of what it means to be in mission?**

For years, the traditional understanding of missions has been for those in positions of power to go and tell what they know to those who are powerless. This is the same kind of missionary work that we discussed at the beginning when we looked at Rwanda. Those who were conquering native peoples believed they were better, believed their culture was better, and believed their religion was better. So in Rwanda, they tried to make the Tutsis accept European Christian culture. When the powerful come, not to listen, but to assert control, terrible consequences are the result. The gospel, on the other hand, is about giving the powerless a voice. Jesus was not from Rome, the center of political power, or from Jerusalem, the center of religious power. Rather, Jesus was a poor peasant from Nazareth. The story of Pentecost teaches us that the gospel is best proclaimed not by those in power but by the powerless finding a voice. In our first session, we looked at how God has sent us to love and to form relationships. If we come in a position of power, we can't form relationships.

Power is about control and authority. Relationships are about love. Today, we have examined some of our cultural and power differences. Relationships between people of

different cultures do not just happen; they require work, and, for those of us in positions of power, the first step is to surrender our power and **LISTEN**.

**“What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life.” – Henri Nouwen**

### **Suggested Journal Topics**

- 1) What are the challenges about seeing listening as my first responsibility on this mission experience?
  
- 2) What cultural baggage am I bringing with me? What do I not understand about the culture to which I am going?
  
- 3) What part of my culture have I mistakenly believed is essential to the gospel?

### **ENCOUNTERING JESUS – Session 4**

In our first session, we looked at how we are sent to witness, serve, and love on this mission experience. We are also sent to receive.

## **The Gift of the Poor – Back to Matthew 25** Read Mt 25: 31-46

*Why does Jesus associate himself with “the least of these?”*

We looked at this passage several weeks ago to talk about the kind of service God asks of us. The most striking part of this passage is that Jesus tells us that, “Whatever we do for the least of these, we do for him.” In other words, Jesus is telling us that if we want to find him, we have to go to the hungry and thirsty, the naked, the sick, the prisons because that’s where he hangs out.

In a sense, then, when we go to the poor, we receive far more than we give. We might help build a house for them or provide medical supplies or serve food. But they give us Jesus. In preparing to go on this mission experience, expect nothing less than an encounter with Jesus.

*On this trip what are some ways you may encounter/meet/experience the living Jesus?*

*How might this understanding of Matthew 25 affect your purpose and motivation for participating in mission work?*

## **The Gift of Hospitality**

When we go on a mission experience, we must not forget that we are guests who are invited to enter into the lives of others. Often, we feel guilty to accept the hospitality offered to us by those less fortunate financially than we are.

When I was a seminary student, I spent some time in South Africa and stayed several weekends with families living in informal settlements, or what we would call “shanty towns”. Each time I stayed with a family in the informal settlement, they made sure that I received the biggest portion of food, that I received the bed (the family would sleep on the floor), and that I received the only chair. At first, I felt terrible about this arrangement. I felt I was depriving people who were in drastic need. Shouldn’t I be the one giving to them?

But as we spent time together, I began to see the incredible joy these families took in offering hospitality to me. I begin to realize that my discomfort had more to do with my concern for myself than for the families. In our society, I normally have more power than people in informal settlements. I have the power to give or not to give. And yet, in this instance, the power structure was flipped on its head. Being able to offer hospitality inverts the normal structures of power. I was dependent on people in shanty towns instead of them being dependent on me. My hostess had the power to give her bed, her food, and her chair to me. If I refused her offer of hospitality, I would have robbed her of her power and reclaimed it for myself.

The kingdom Jesus proclaimed was in many ways an Upside Down Kingdom. (For more on this concept, see Donald Kraybill's *The Upside-Down Kingdom*.) The gospel is filled with examples of Jesus making the last or powerless, first or powerful, by inverting the normal power structures. After the resurrection, Jesus first appeared to women, thus inverting the sexist power structure of his day. When calling his disciples, instead of choosing the best educated, Jesus chose fishermen. By learning to receive hospitality on this mission experience, we can learn to give up our power and to accept Jesus' way of inverting power structures. And perhaps that is the gift the poor offers us.

Because the poor are powerless, they know what it means to depend on God. And by offering hospitality, they claim power for themselves and put us in a position of dependence. And when we recognize our dependence on the poor, then we are in a place where we can meet Jesus. We realize that we are completely dependent in the arms of a loving God. And it is in that place of dependence where we can find Jesus and his Upside Down Kingdom.

**“Many who are first will be last and the last will be first” – Mark 10: 31**

*What do you need to give up in your life to encounter Jesus?*

*How can you prepare yourself spiritually to live the reality of this Upside down Kingdom?*

*How might this mission experience help you learn to give up some of your power?*

**Michelle's story** A friend of mine, who also spent time in South Africa, experienced Christ through receiving hospitality from a woman who was very poor. It was a difficult experience for her, but one in which she and a woman named Gertrude experienced the love of Christ through the giving and receiving of hospitality. Here's her story:

*"I have had the opportunity to visit with a woman named Glenda who runs a ministry called Phakamisa. Phakamisa means, "to lift up" in Zulu. Glenda has done such a marvelous job of empowering the older women in the communities to learn how to properly care for the children who have been orphaned by the AIDS epidemic. The women come in for training at the church I work at and there is a whole network of leaders in the communities who report back to Glenda the needs of each community. Glenda took me with her one afternoon to visit with the Gogos (grannies). We met them at a local school where they had planted this beautiful garden. I sat on the ground next to Glenda and listened to each of the Gogos give her report about how her work was going. One Gogo, Gertrude, shared with us that she was raising 6 orphans and that she barely had enough food to feed them. She was 73 years old. As we were preparing to return back to the church, Gertrude met us smiling on the road. Her arms were full of avocados. She gave an avocado to Glenda and one to me. My first reaction was to say, "No, I can't take this. You have children to feed." Yet, something in her eyes stopped me. I could tell that this meant so much to her to give me this gift.*

*"Yet, it was so very hard for me to receive. I have thought a lot about this avocado. It is funny how one little vegetable can stir up so much emotion. What shocked me was that this woman who had so little to feed her and the children she cared for would offer me **food**. If it were something she had made it would have been easier for me to accept. Her gift of the avocado was as extravagant as the woman who poured a whole bottle of perfume on Jesus' feet. Her extravagance shocked me. It is difficult for me to receive hospitality such as this. I responded in the same way that the disciples responded to the woman. I missed the point just as they did. This woman demonstrated a trust in the abundance of God's grace with her gift of the avocado. I was worried that she would not have enough to feed herself or the children.*

*“Yet, she trusted that God would provide for her needs. This is the gift that the poor can offer us. For, I have never once in my life had to wonder where my next meal was going to come from. I don’t know what it is like to rely on God for food. The faith that this Gogo had was so beautiful it still moves me to tears.*

*“It is just as important for me to learn how to receive hospitality as it is for me to give hospitality. For, if I only give, then I am belittling the humanity of the other who is trying to participate in a friendship with me. So then, in our relationship with the poor, we often enter these relationships with a certain good we want for the other person. Maybe our relationship is based on our desire for them to have a job, to have an education, or even simply for them to have food to eat. Yet, this is not really true friendship.*

*“True friendship is more about the desire to know the person than to obtain a certain good for them. I must admit that I really wanted this woman to have food. I believe that our right to life includes our right to food, should it not? I don’t think this is a bad desire, but I understand the danger in imposing my desires for this woman upon our friendship, for then I am not truly becoming her friend. I am creating a relationship based on the power I have to bring about a certain good in her life, rather than understanding the certain good she can bring into my life just by my knowing her. I am quite sure I will never look at an avocado again without seeing the face of my friend Gertrude. I hope to visit with her again. Yet, if I never set eyes on Gertrude again, just knowing her for one day has changed me. So often the Greatest Commandment is categorized as a “thing we must do”. Yet, I believe that this type of love, to love another as ourselves, is like a present to us all. For as we accept the fact that each of us is a child of God created in God’s likeness, we can catch a glimpse of God hidden in the faces of each other. This is indeed a gift and a blessing! Yet, so often we live our lives never opening these gifts God has placed before us. What if I had turned away my avocado? What if?”*

A word of caution: there is a fine line between receiving hospitality and going to be served. The point is not that we go to be served, but that, in our service, we also receive the hospitality of the people. Jesus said, “The Son of man did not come to be served” (Matthew 20:28). But he also spent large amounts of his time receiving hospitality. He ate in the homes of Pharisees and tax collectors. A poor woman anointed his feet with costly perfume. Jesus came to serve, but part of his service was not only to give but to receive hospitality.

*What is the difference in going to be served and in serving while also receiving hospitality?*

*In your day to day life, how do you respond to receiving gifts? Is this a comfortable or awkward experience for you?*

*How do you feel when you extend hospitality to others?*

*In this mission encounter how will you respond to the hospitality offered to you?*

## **SENT TO BE TRANSFORMED**

Read Acts 10:1-35

*How was Peter changed because of his mission work with Cornelius?* Peter was a missionary. Cornelius invited him to come to his home and share the gospel with them. But in this experience, Peter was changed more than Cornelius. And this was no small change. God used this encounter with Cornelius to challenge Peter's very understanding of who God is.

For Peter, to follow God meant that he must avoid things that would cause him to be unclean. There were certain foods he couldn't eat, there were certain people he couldn't touch, and there were certain homes he couldn't enter. Peter's religion, his view of God, forbade him from entering Cornelius' home. But God had other plans. God longed for Peter's transformation and God wanted to remove everything in Peter's life, even his religion that was an obstacle to that formation. Peter had to learn that God is more concerned with relationships than with religion.

Sometimes we can be like Peter. Sometimes some of our deepest and most sincere religious beliefs can blind us to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Jesus summed up Christianity by saying that we are to love God and to love people. Starting with this foundation, perhaps we should be willing to risk being transformed in every other aspect of our faith. The Holy Spirit has a history of transforming those who are sent to do mission work. So as you leave for this VIM experience, be open to the Spirit's leading. Change is not always easy. You may find that some of your deepest beliefs that you have held for years might come into question. You might even find that, like Peter, even your religion is called into question. Do not resist the struggle. It was not easy for Peter. But through the struggle, Peter came to a more authentic understanding of who God is and of God's purpose for his life.

If you are open to being challenged through this VIM experience, then trust that through the struggle, you too will gain a more authentic understanding of God and God's purpose for your life.

Peace be with you as you serve.

**Journal Topics** 1) In what areas of your life do you hope to be transformed by this VIM experience? 2) How have your motivations for participating in mission work changed after preparing for this experience? 3) Is there an aspect of your religion that hinders authentic relationships? If so, how might God be challenging your religion?

## **PART II ON THE JOURNEY**

This section offers possibilities for reflection and prayer to help process each day's experiences during the VIM trip. Because all trips are different, it will be up to you to determine which of these questions and prayers would be most meaningful for reflection as you process your experience.

Mission work can be very draining physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is often tempting to forego the reflection time and head straight to bed at the end of each day. I

strongly encourage you to resist this temptation. Leaving time to reflect, to journal, and to support one another in prayer not only encourages and strengthens you for the work but also helps to foster a lasting spiritual impact on you and on those on your team. During a mission experience, there may be some days when people have far more negative reflections than positive ones. During encounters of pain and suffering, sometimes it is difficult to see signs of hope, which is another reason why processing the experience together and supporting one another in prayer is so crucial. The message of the gospel is that in the most hopeless of situations, on a Roman cross, Jesus brought hope and life to the whole world. Reflect and process the pain, but always be aware of the signs of hope and the places where God is at work.

**Sample Reflection Questions:** It may be helpful to give people time to journal about these questions individually before sharing with the whole group.

Where did you see God's grace already at work in this community today?

Where did you encounter Jesus today?

How were you Jesus to others today?

When did you experience failure and when were you discouraged?

How were death and suffering present today?

How were life and joy present?

What signs of hope did you see today?

What would Jesus have done today?

How does it feel to not have an answer to all the questions?

What kinds of poverty did you see today?

What did you learn from the people we met today?

What did you not understand today?

What can these two communities do together as a result of our time together?

How will this encounter change the way you live when you return home? What has this experience meant to you?

What Scriptures speak to your experience today?

What challenged you today?

What did you struggle with today?

In what ways has your faith been challenged?

What is something new you learned today? (skills, culture, etc)

What shocked you (culture, religion, lifestyle, etc.) today?

**Prayer and Encouragement** Often times, mission experiences can be very emotionally draining. For some of you, this mission experience may be your most profound encounter with human pain and suffering. It is important for the group to offer support and care for one another. Many of the above questions allow people to share their feelings over the day. Another way to do this would be to invite people to share prayer concerns and then to pray for one another. Here is a suggested way of sharing.

#### **SHARE CELEBRATIONS:**

What were the encounters of the day where you experienced life and joy, where you saw Jesus and his grace manifested in your life, in your group, and among the people?

**SHARE CONCERNS:** Where did you encounter pain and suffering today? Who would you like the group to remember in prayer? How do you need support in your own life through what you are encountering?

**SHARE COMMITMENT:** What is God calling you to do or to change in your own life through what you experienced today? There are many meaningful ways to enter into prayer together after each person has had the opportunity to share. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Partner Prayer: Find a partner and take turns praying for the other person and for the things he or she has shared.

2. Communal prayer: Provide a prayerful liturgy (like Prayers of the People) for the group to pray together. The liturgy should reflect the experiences of the day.

3. Journal: Invite the group to spend time alone and write their prayer in their journal. This provides more time for personal reflection and introspection.
4. Circle prayer: The leader begins by praying for the person to her right by placing her hands on his shoulders. The prayer should not be long and it may be spoken or unspoken. The personal touch is important. When finished, the leader goes on to the next person until she has prayed for everyone. After each person is prayed for, he or she stands up and prays for each member of the group just as the leader did. In the end, each person will have prayed for every other person.
5. Musical prayer: Many find musical chants to be meaningful ways of praying. One person would develop a simple tune and simple words to express a prayer. For example, “Lord, bless the poor. Lord, bless the poor...” After repeated several times, the prayer could change (with the same tune) to another prayer concern (i.e. “Lord, teach us love...”). The Taize community is a great example for this sort of prayerful meditation. For more information, see: [http://www.taize.fr/en\\_rubrique12.html](http://www.taize.fr/en_rubrique12.html).

## **PART III WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

**“I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.” – Philippians 1:6**

You have been given a tremendous gift. You have been given the opportunity to experience life with your sisters and brothers in a different place. You have had the privilege of serving them and of receiving from them. Often times, it is difficult to come home. Many people who have participated in mission experiences struggle to find ways for their mission work to affect the way they live at home. This part of the booklet seeks to help those of you who are struggling with the question, “Where do we go from here?”

### **From Charity to Justice – Session 1**

**“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” – Micah 6:8**

Short-term mission work is, for the most part, about charity. And charity is an important Christian obligation. Mother Theresa spent her whole life offering charity to others. But charity, by itself, is not enough. The Bible teaches us that we are all called to meet the

needs of those who are suffering (charity). But the Bible also teaches us that we must address the reasons why people suffer in the first place (justice).

*What are the needs of the people where you served?*

*How did you work to meet those needs?*

*What do you think are some of the causes of those needs?*

*How could you begin to address the causes?*

*What ways can you help others to understand your experience and the needs of those you encountered? (Part of the VIM experience is to translate your experience for people back home.)*

*Do you see similar needs and situations to those you experienced on your trip in your own communities?*

Here are some statistics that may help us understand some of the causes of poverty in our country and across the world which come from the 2005 United Nations Millennium Development Report.

In the U.S., the average pay of a CEO of a Fortune 500 company is 1000 times the pay of someone making minimum wage.

The richest 50 people in the world control more wealth than the poorest 416 million.

40% of the world's population live on \$2/day.

This 40% receives 5% of the world's income whereas the richest 10% receive 54%.

*Where are you located within these statistics?*

*How does your answer affect your understanding of the cause and effect relationship between poverty and wealth in the world?*

*How might the rich in the world (even people like us) contribute to the poverty in the world?*

## **God's Gift of Manna**

**Read Exodus 16:1-20** This story happens shortly after God delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. In many ways, the story of Egypt reflects the conditions of the world today. Pharaoh owned all the land (wealth in the hands of a few), people were enslaved and had to work constantly so Pharaoh could get richer. Today, many women and children throughout the world work 12-15 hours a day in sweat shops being paid around 21 cents an hour to make the shoes and clothes we wear. For more information on sweatshops, go to [www.sweatshopwatch.org](http://www.sweatshopwatch.org).

Therefore, when God delivered the people of Israel from slavery, God gave the people the Torah, the law, in part to ensure that Israel would not become that which they left, to ensure that Israel would not become Egypt. The preface of the Ten Commandments says, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery..." In other words, the commandments are deeply connected with God's delivering the people from slavery. They are to ensure that no one will be enslaved among God's people. And one of the ways to make sure that Israel would not become like each was for the people to learn to share.

By giving the people of Israel manna, God was not only providing them with food but also teaching them a lesson in sharing. In fact, learning to share was the first thing God taught the people of Israel after delivering them from Egypt.

*What happened to the Manna of those who gathered more than they needed? What does this story teach us about poverty, wealth, and excess? What is the manna in your life?...in your community?*

Maybe a first step in moving from charity to justice is to learn that hoarding stinks, that when we take more than we need, others do not have enough. And when others do not have enough, when others suffer in poverty, our hoarding becomes a stench in the nostrils of God.

**God's Justice vs. Our Justice** The lesson of Manna demonstrates a Biblical model of justice, and often times, a Biblical understanding of justice is different than the pervasive notion of justice in our society. We tend to think about justice in terms of the criminal justice system, about bringing the guilty party to justice. This kind of justice is usually about punishment. David, a homeless man that I know in downtown Birmingham, knows about this kind of justice. Here is his story:

*David was working at a waffle house and living in his car. He had finally been able to get a job and was hoping to save enough money to be able to get off the streets. He soon ran into a problem when a police officer noticed that David had an expired tag on his car. The officer did his job, ran a background check on David, found that he had an unpaid traffic fine, and arrested him. At his court date, he was given an additional fine with a deadline. But since he missed work the night that he spent in jail, he was fired. Consequently, David had a larger fine and no way to pay the original fine since he had lost his job. As time went on, David was not able to get enough money to pay this fine, so he was given an additional fine. David became trapped in a justice system that hindered rather than helped his recovery from homelessness.*

The Biblical model of justice is drastically different. In the Bible, justice is not about punishing perpetrators, but about restoring that which is broken.

**Read Isaiah 58: 6-7**

*What is the connection between loosing the bond of injustice and feeding the hungry?*

*Where did you see injustice on your VIM experience?*

*How can you work to bring a Biblical form of justice to that situation? What about at home as well?*

**“True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.**

**Journal Topics** 1. What are some areas of my life where I hoard? How can I apply God’s lesson of Manna to these areas? 2. What are some ways I can share my resources with those in need? 3. What are some of the injustices of the world against which I feel God is calling me to work? 4. How can I incorporate a Biblical view of justice into my life?

## LIVING A MISSIONARY LIFESTYLE – Session 2

For most of you, this VIM experience was a time of intense service. You were missionaries for a short period of time. You formed relationships with people who may be different from you. You witnessed to God's love and you served others. You may have had a deep personal encounter with Jesus and have felt that your life has somehow been changed. And now, you are back home.

*What was that first Monday like when you had to get up and go back into work?*

*Or the first day that you had to get your kids ready for school?*

*Or even the first church meeting that you had to go to where people argued about things that may no longer seem so important to you?*

The challenge, now, is to avoid allowing this VIM experience to become a one or two week experience that has no affect on your everyday routine. How can you foster a missionary lifestyle?

*What experiences on your VIM trip were the most transformative for you?*

*What frustrations have you experienced as a result of your transformation since you have returned home?*

### Back to the Great Commission

**“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.” – Acts 1:8**

*Where does Jesus tell the disciples to begin their work?*

Through this VIM experience, you have been able to be Christ's witnesses in another place. We are commanded to do this. But Jesus first commands the disciples to witness in Jerusalem, to witness at home. Too often churches make a habit of serving Christ in the ends of the Earth, while ignoring service opportunities at home. I hope that this VIM experience will encourage each of you to live as missionaries in your hometown and to find ways to serve there.

*Why is it sometimes easier to go somewhere else to serve people in need than to serve people at home?*

*What are the needs of your community?*

*Where are the places of pain and suffering? How can you be Christ's witness in Jerusalem (in your home town)?*

If we take Jesus' words seriously, then we realize that he expects us to live a missionary lifestyle all the time. Through the VIM experience, you have been able to serve others and give of yourself, but you have also received an incredible gift. You have been received by your sisters and brothers in another place. You have experienced life with them and encountered Jesus among them. You may have experienced the beauty of another culture and the scenery of another place. And Jesus tells us that he has expectations for us when we receive such wonderful gifts.

**“To whom much has been given, much will be required.” – Luke 12:48**

Peter also received a gift.

Read John 22:15-19

Peter was able to spend three years walking around with Jesus, listening to him teach, witnessing the miracles he performed. Peter was able to experience forgiveness when he failed by denying Jesus three times. And here, at the end of John's gospel, Peter's encounter with Jesus is about to change. His time for walking around Galilee with Jesus is over. Jesus is leaving, but before he goes, he gives Peter a job to do. Jesus expects Peter to no longer be the same after experiencing life with him. He expects Peter's daily life to be a response to his encounter with Jesus. And that's the same challenge for you.

*What gifts did you receive from this VIM experience?*

*How can you live your life in response to these gifts?*

*How can you "feed Jesus' sheep" where you live?*

## **Work as a Holy Calling**

Read Ephesians 4:28

*Why does Paul tell thieves they must stop stealing and work honestly?*

For Paul, the purpose of work is to have something to share with the needy. In this way, all work is a holy calling. We, in the church, have a tendency to think that only pastors, or foreign missionaries, or the like are the ones whose job is a holy calling. For others, their job is simply a way to pay the bills and put food on the table. The Bible does not share that view. All work is a holy calling and so we must ask how we can use our job to serve God's purposes. How can we use our work to live a missionary lifestyle? For some, you may feel God calling you to find another job. Peter and the disciples left full time work as fishermen to be apostles. But this is not necessarily the case for everyone.

Read Luke 19:1-9

*How was Zacchaeus' job affected by his encounter with Jesus?*

After Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus, he was still a tax collector, but a different kind of tax collector. Instead of using his job to exploit the poor, he used his job to serve the poor.

*How can you use your work to serve God? How can you use your work to serve others?*

**“Your vocation in life is where your deep joy and the world’s deep pain meet.” – Frederick Buechner**

**Journal Topic 1.** What do you feel God is calling you to do or to change in your life as a result of this VIM experience?

## **CONCLUSION**

This is the end of this booklet, but it should not be the end of your reflection and processing of your VIM experience. Rather, perhaps this VIM experience could be the beginning of living a reflective life, not only on this mission trip, but on how you can live as a missionary where you are. If you have been faithful to this study, then you have fostered the spiritual disciplines of study, reflection, and journaling. I encourage you to continue practicing these disciplines. For some of you, this experience and this study may have produced more questions than answers. That can be a frustrating thing, but it is not a bad thing. I encourage you to continue to ask the hard questions, to continue to struggle to find the answers, and to not give up if some of the answers do not come. One of the paradoxes of our faith is that the more we encounter Jesus, the more we realize how little we truly understand, the more we realize the truth of Paul's statement that we only see dimly (1 Corinthians 13: 12).

But through this experience, I hope you have seen that you are not alone. There are children of God all over the world wrestling with the same questions, the same struggles. There are people who have experienced the very depths of human pain and yet have an inexplicable joy that even they do not understand. And somehow, there is great hope in that. There is great hope that all of us can experience that joy in the midst of our pain and struggle, in the midst of our lack of understanding.

So continue to struggle and wrestle. Continue to seek out ways to experience life with your sisters and brothers in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the Earth. Continue to ask the hard questions. For perhaps it is in embracing the struggle that we truly find what Jesus termed, “the abundant life”.

Blessings on your journey!

## A History of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission

The United Methodist Volunteers in Mission movement arose through the local church, as United Methodists felt called to express their faith through hands-on mission. The UMVIM motto, “Christian Love in Action”, is taken from 1 John 3:18, in which Christians are asked to love “not in word or speech, but in truth and action”. UMVIM has worked closely with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), providing teams to assist in recovery from natural disasters and violent conflicts. Volunteers have served on every continent, often but not always in nations with Methodist churches.

1972 - Group of individuals from Southeastern Jurisdiction formed a steering committee to organize what has become known as United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM).

1976 - UMVIM became an agency of the Southeastern Jurisdiction Administrative Council.

1980 - General Conference officially sanctioned UMVIM and directed the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) to “affirm Volunteers in Mission as an authentic form of personal missionary involvement and devise appropriate structure to interpret and implement opportunities for mission volunteers in the global community” (301.14 Book of Discipline 2008).

1988 - General Conference suggested that every annual conference name a Volunteer in Mission Coordinator to work cooperatively with GBGM and the jurisdictional UMVIM offices.

1996 - General Conference established the Mission Volunteers Program Area (of which UMVIM is a part) within GBGM, with instructions to enable the participation of Methodists from throughout the world in global mission volunteer programs so that affirming, empowering, and trusting relationships would be established.

2000 - General Conference adopted a resolution recommending that every jurisdiction include in its budget a line item to cover the salary, professional expenses, and office expenses for a jurisdictional UMVIM Coordinator.

2004 - General Conference ruled that “The charge conference shall receive reports annually on all local church organized UMVIM teams, and the total number of local church participants in any UMVIM team, and shall forward the combined report to the annual conference and the general church through the regular annual local church statistical report (247.12 Book of Discipline 2008). General Conference also ruled that each annual conference may set aside a Sunday to be declared Volunteers in Mission Awareness Day.