

# Mission Trip Sites:

## How do we decide our destination?

Deciding on your mission trip destination is a discernment process that can engage your congregation's or presbytery's mission committee and other groups. We encourage you to think of the mission trip, not as an end unto itself, but as one step in a journey of deeper engagement in the global mission of the church. The questions below will help your group in the discernment process of selecting a destination, but are not a substitute for prayer.

As people of faith, we are called to walk by faith. Mission is never our mission, but God's mission. God graciously invites us to participate in what God is already doing in this world that God so loved. So, prayerfully consider your responses to the questions below, not worrying about money or any other obstacle, being open to God's Spirit.

### 1. Size of your group?

The size of your group may limit some possibilities. Many sites can handle 12 - 15. Others can handle up to 25. A very few can handle over 25. It's a good idea to limit the size of the group in any event so that each person has more of an opportunity to interact with members of the community you are visiting and so that your church group is more cohesive. Our experience indicates that larger mission groups tend to stay more within their own group and have less interaction with the community they are visiting. This tendency is particularly true for youth groups.

### 2. Composition of your group?

Most sites can accommodate youth groups. For youth groups, we recommend a 5:1 ratio of youth to adult leaders. Some sites are less advisable for youth groups due to environmental conditions and realities or the nature of service projects: for example, areas experiencing conflict or war, and reconstruction projects in remote regions. Youth is here defined as ages 15-17 (senior highs). Middle school youth groups (ages 12-14) may want to consider sites in the U.S. Some sites can receive intergenerational groups.

### 3. Objectives of your trip?

All of the sites available through PC(USA) partner churches and institutions provide opportunities for:

- learning about the country (culture, political, economic and social realities);
- learning about the church in that place (forms of worship and religious expression; challenges to the church and joys of the church in that place);
- learning about PC(USA) involvement in mission and ministry in that place;
- building relationships with members of the local church and community.

Some sites provide service opportunities as well, such as:

- clean-up and/or construction after natural disasters;
- construction or repair work on churches, church camps, homes for pastors;
- digging and planting in reforestation and development projects;
- leading Vacation Bible Schools or similar activities with local churches;
- medical training or service (limited to a very few sites where legal and requested).

Service projects are identified by the partner church or organization by their priorities and, in most cases, PC(USA) groups work with members of the local church or community.

Please remember that the PC(USA) does mission in partnership with churches and organizations in other countries. (See the "Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership" policy statement, posted on [presbyterianmission.org/partnershipresources](http://presbyterianmission.org/partnershipresources)). Further, the PC(USA) understands mission to be with others and not doing for others.

#### **4. Global connections with your congregation?**

Consider some of the following questions to identify long-term potential relationships between your church and the church throughout the world:

##### **a. Presbytery or Synod Connections?**

- Does your presbytery or synod have an international presbytery partnership with a presbytery or other church body in another country?

Find out where your presbytery and synod have global mission commitments and get involved! Where partnerships exist you are likely to find potential speakers and other resources to assist your group's preparation for the trip.

##### **b. PC(USA) Mission Worker Connections?**

- Does your congregation receive Mission Connections letters from a particular mission worker?
- Does your congregation have members who are former PC(USA) mission workers?
- Has your congregation hosted a PC(USA) mission worker as a speaker?

These existing connections between your congregation and PC(USA) mission workers can spark interest within the congregation for a visit to the country in which they serve. Profiles of mission workers and their letters are available online from the Mission Connections office at [presbyterianmission.org/missionconnections](http://presbyterianmission.org/missionconnections).

Caution: Please understand that not all PC(USA) mission workers have responsibilities for hosting visiting groups. Visit [presbyterianmission.org/missiontrips](http://presbyterianmission.org/missiontrips) and click on "Contacts for mission trips and partnerships" to see which mission workers can host short-term mission trip groups.

##### **c. Global Mission Funding Priorities?**

- Does your congregation fund mission programs or projects through the Extra Commitment Opportunities?
- Does your congregation or presbytery financially support particular PC(USA) mission workers?

A mission trip would be an opportunity to see firsthand the ongoing ministry you are supporting.

#### **5. Mission or Outreach at the Local Level?**

- What are your congregation's outreach ministries locally? E.g., children's ministries (daycare, tutoring, etc.); hunger (soup kitchens or food pantries, etc.); international students.
- Does your congregation or community include people from other countries? Where are they from?

These natural links between your congregation and local community to the larger world can form a good basis for deciding to focus on a particular country or region for your mission trip and further global mission involvement.

#### **6. Practical Considerations?**

- Is it politically safe and financially feasible to visit a particular country?
- Is your preferred destination able to accommodate the size, composition and objectives of your group?
- Are they able to schedule your visit at a time when your group is free to travel?