

Short-Term Mission

Best Practices

Sample Group Schedule for a 10-Day Trip

Structuring a short-term mission experience requires a delicate balance between reflection, activity and relationship-building. The way that a trip is planned and carried out will impact what participants take away from the experience. Too heavy on activity and “doing” mission? Your participants may feel like they missed out on relationships. Forget to allow time to learn from global partners? Your participants may not leave understanding the importance of partnership. Forget to include time for devotion and reflection? Your group may miss the chance to share all that God is doing in your group and within the people they are visiting.

Prior to arrival:

Discern the WHERE, WHO, WHEN & WHAT when planning your trip:

- WHERE?** Consider the strengths, connections and interests of your congregation.
- WHO?** Connect with a mission co-worker in that region to help plan your visit and connect you with a global partner (ie. church, non-profit or relief organization) to work with.
- WHEN?** Keep in mind the schedule/calendar of your group AND of the global partner and logistical pieces, like the state of the roads at certain times of the year
- WHAT?** Consider the temperament and physical ability of your group and the global partner. Will this work best as a work trip, a partnership visitation or a combination of the two?

Plan the trip in conversation with the global partner and mission co-worker, where possible. 6-10 months before the trip, send information to global church partner or mission co-worker regarding the group’s process, expectations, experience doing reflection and learning together, ages and abilities, etc.

Determine group leader(s) for overall direction and guidance. Fill key roles for group members, such as musician, health person, photographer, journal writer, devotion team, etc.

Day 1: Arrival

- SETTLING IN** Orientation on basic logistics, general rules and safety. Introduce the schedule and goals of the trip.
- EXPECTATIONS** Discuss group expectations, including interaction with global partners, participation in scheduled activities, basic conduct and care within the group
- ROLES** Reiterate individual roles assigned to each group member (see above)
- DEVOTIONS** Close the day with prayer & reflection

Our first task in approaching

another people

another culture

another religion

Is to take off our shoes, for the place we are

approaching is

holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on

another’s dreams.

Suggested group activities:

- Bible study
- Art activity
- Theological reflection (ie. Where do you see creation, grace, hope, solidarity, salvation today?)
- Visit community centers, the market, churches, museums, playgrounds
- Guided outings (ie. visit the market and attempt to buy a “basic basket” of goods for the week. Consider: what does it take to feed a family of eight? Keep in mind the local cost of living)

After the trip:

- Meet at least once within a month to share memories and pictures
- Find ways to share your experience with your family, friends and home congregation
- Work to maintain your relationships with your new partners through letters, Skype calls and emails

For more information

Presbyterian World Mission

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Day 2: Orientation

DEVOTIONS Open the day with prayer & reflection

ORIENTATION I Welcome from the global partner. Overview of the history, context, and current events in country, and historical relationships with the United States.

Overview of the global partner's work and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s work in the country

ORIENTATION II Orientation within your group. Touch base regarding culture, language and etiquette. Share guidelines for health and safety. Review the program for the week. Reaffirm group expectations and individual roles.

REST TIME/GROUP ACTIVITY (see suggestions below)

DEBRIEF Share what was learned and reflect on the day. Share "highs and lows" (highlights of the day, low points of the day). Have group check-in (physical, emotional). Consider Eric H. F. Law's method of mutual invitation.

DEVOTIONS

Days 3-7: Partnership Building

DEVOTIONS

CHECK-IN Review the program for the day and any group roles for day (ie. photographer, journaling)

PROGRAM Visit with partners, community/church leaders and groups. With global partners, engage in projects (ie. building, agriculture, relief, etc.).

REST TIME/GROUP ACTIVITY (see suggestions below)

DEBRIEF See above for format.

DEVOTIONS

Day 8: Leisure day

DEVOTION

LEISURE ACTIVITY Travel to local attraction, visit craft market/ souvenir market (Include the partners, if appropriate, but also make space for group-building time)

DEBRIEF See above for format.

DEVOTIONS

Day 9: Debrief and Evaluation

DEVOTION

DEBRIEF Review the experience from theological lens. Consider how to "bring" the trip back home and how you will share your story with friends and family. Discuss reverse culture shock.

CLOSING CELEBRATION WITH PARTNER

DEVOTIONS

Day 10: Departure