

Team Leader Toolkit

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Northeastern Jurisdiction

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This Toolkit is based on a similar one produced by UMVIM, Southeastern Jurisdiction. Many thanks to them for sharing it with us. A team of UMVIM Coordinators from around the Northeastern Jurisdiction helped to adapt it for our readers and team leaders, but particular thanks goes to Rev. Michelle Ledder of the General Commission on Race and Religion for helping us revise the manual with an eye to mutuality, partnership, and intercultural competency. Her contributions added immeasurably to the final product. We are forever grateful.

Introduction

What is UMVIM?

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 at different phases in life. We come together through the United Methodist Church to offer our skills and talents for Christian service at home and abroad.

Our emphasis on matching persons with opportunities helps to enable everyone to 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 both in your community and across the globe. Within the United Methodist Church, UMVIM relates closely with annual conference UMVIM committees and the General Board of Global Ministries, putting the best of our “glocal” knowledge resources to good use.

What is NEJ?

The United Methodist Church in the United States is divided into five geographical regions; the Northeastern Jurisdiction is one of those five. UMVIM-NEJ is a ministry of the Northeastern Jurisdiction that coordinates short-term mission efforts across the following 10 annual conferences: New England, Upper New York, New York, Greater New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, Susquehanna, Western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Baltimore-Washington, and Peninsula-Delaware.

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 share your responsibilities, and however you choose to lead your team, the team should understand that final decisions rest with the Team Leader. When conflicts arise on your team—and they inevitably will—it is vital that your decisions are respected. Safety requires that in difficult situations the team leader has the ultimate say. This does not mean that the team leader should function as a dictator. Modeling respect for your hosts and your team members is the best way to ensure that they return that respect when a quick decision is necessary.

How We Work With Local Churches

UMVIM-NEJ exists to train and mobilize United Methodists to fulfill the great commission by personifying Christian love in action. Our primary function - to connect churches and church members with appropriate mission projects both within the United States and abroad - is supplemented by a variety of training materials. Our website, www.umvimnej.org, offers information on the process of sending a team, potential project sites, and insurance. In addition, the staff of UMVIM-NEJ is knowledgeable on all aspects of short-term mission. Contact our office with any questions relating to your local church's mission experience. If we cannot immediately answer your question, we connect you with someone who can.

The Purpose of this Book

We have structured this Team Leader Toolkit around the process of forming and sending a team. It is designed to be used in conjunction with *A Mission Journey: A Handbook for Volunteers*. The Toolkit frequently refers to *A Mission Journey* to direct you to more detail or further resources.

The Team Leader Toolkit takes the insights of *A Mission Journey* and blends them with the “nuts and bolts” utility of a Training Manual to make one compact, lightweight reference that you can use anywhere.

While some of this material may not be new to you, there is something here for everyone from the first-time leader to the seasoned veteran. Reading this handbook from start to finish, you benefit from the information and tips we have received from team leaders and individual volunteers over many years. As always, if you have any questions about the process of forming or sending your team, please contact us.

*Please note that while this handbook **supplements** training; it **does not replace** Team Leader Training coordinated through your annual conference or through the UMVIM-NEJ office. As a team leader, you are still expected to attend one of these training sessions. Check our website or subscribe to our newsletter for up-to-date Team Leader Trainings across the Jurisdiction.*

Core Values and Best Practices for UMVIM Teams

Core Values

- ❖ **God Is In Charge of Our Mission.** Our God is a missional God. There is nowhere we can go where the grace of Jesus Christ has not already preceded us or where the Holy Spirit is not at work. It has been said that rather than God's church having a mission in the world, God's mission has a church in the world. We take no credit and claim no glory. We simply rejoice at being able to witness and participate in God's great plan of redemption.
- ❖ **Radical Discipleship.** Like Jesus, our mission relationships are meant to be:
 - incarnational
 - relational
 - humble
 - based in service
 - justice-seeking
 - intentionally and radically inclusive
- ❖ **50/50 Partnership.** We expect mutuality, respect, dignity and equity in each relationship. We are called to be in ministry WITH one another, not FOR or TO one another. UMVIM Teams never go anywhere without an invitation from the host church or resident bishop.
- ❖ **People over Projects.** Projects are secondary. Relationships are primary. Mission relationships are built over time by accompaniment. As we share life with one another, listen to one another, and learn about one another, we also discover how to serve alongside one another with dignity, respect, and mutual accountability.
- ❖ **Intercultural Competency.** In mission, we recognize that God's image is reflected in our diversity. As we honestly engage and respect and create space for this diversity, we honor God.
- ❖ **Self-Awareness.** Every act of mission - local, national, or international - is cross-cultural because it brings us into relationship with others who see the world differently than we do. To understand ourselves and the ways we affect (and are affected by) others requires time for reflection, prayer, and honest conversation.
- ❖ **Do No Harm. Do Good. Stay in Love With God.** These "Three Simple Rules" of John Wesley remind us to root out the sin within ourselves and the social systems in which we live; to constantly move on toward perfection in our relationships and behaviors; and to stay rooted in the love of God from whom all blessings flow.

Best Practices

UMVIM-NEJ considers the following seven items Best Practices for UMVIM teams:

1. *Have a trained team leader through your annual conference or Northeastern Jurisdiction UMVIM program.* Contact your Conference UMVIM Coordinator for more information on upcoming trainings. You can find your coordinator, as well as a listing of upcoming training events, on our website, www.umvimnej.org. This handbook is commonly used as the basis for the training, however simply reading this handbook 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 by all members of your team. Check with your Conference UMVIM Coordinator for specific policies, requirements, and expectations related to Safe Sanctuaries/Child Protection Policies, background checks, and insurance prior to registering your team on the UMVIM-NEJ website.

If your conference does not have a Safe Sanctuaries policy or you need one to review, you will find a general one in the Appendix of this handbook.

3. *Serve with an UMVIM project.* Some mission teams that register and get insurance through UMVIM-NEJ do serve with projects not directly related to UMVIM. Choosing an UMVIM project (i.e. a project listed on our website) gives a layer of accountability often not possible otherwise. UMVIM projects have all been approved by area bishops, heads of church, or church officials; should the need arise, we are able to step in and address problems through our connectional system. Each of these projects has also gone through an extensive application process. Links to the approved USA and International Project lists can be found at www.umvimnej.org.
4. *Register your team with UMVIM-NEJ (and the State Department if traveling internationally).* Registering with UMVIM-NEJ allows us to assist your team in placement, maintain mission relationships with our partners, and intervene in the unlikely event of a dispute between your team and the people in the community. Moreover, in the event of an emergency, we can quickly notify your annual conference and church officials in the area where you are serving. Team registration is a free service of UMVIM-NEJ.

If you are traveling internationally, it is important to register each team member with the US State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) as well. This is a free service

that you complete online at <https://step.state.gov>. In the unlikely event of an evacuation, this helps the US State Department locate you.

5. *Take insurance through UMVIM-NEJ.* There is a nominal fee for this service. Our insurance policy covers both accidents and illnesses that occur during the dates of your mission, including travel dates to and from your destination. We believe it is vital that all mission teams take out insurance before traveling. Traveling for mission purposes carries 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 sometimes it can mean the difference between a negligible medical bill and an overwhelmingly large one. A copy of the insurance policy is available from the UMVIM-NEJ office and is accessible on our website.
6. *Spiritual Formation.* The mission opportunity does not simply begin and end with your travel dates. Embarking on a mission should encompass a spiritual journey for you and your team that requires prayer and devotion before, during, and after you travel. Attending local worship services where you are serving is both crucial to understanding the culture, and respectful to those you are visiting. Remember this is God's mission, and you have each agreed to be part of it. *Transforming Ventures*, by Jane Ives is one of the many good devotional resources you can use to help you organize devotions.
7. *Commitment to Intercultural Competency.* All of us operate in the world with implicit assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices about others and knee-jerk reactions. It is vital that you do the hard work with your team before, during, and after your mission experience to critically examine your own biases, stereotypes, and prejudices. Honestly acknowledge them, allow God to transform them and to redeem you. In many cases we enter a mission relationship carrying privileges that we do not understand fully, due to our nationality, relative wealth, or even race. While we may have been born into some of these privileges - what we do with them now is our responsibility so that, as far as possible, we can "Do No Harm."

Selecting a Mission Opportunity

The UMVIM-NEJ office maintains an extensive list of domestic and international projects. These opportunities are updated as we receive information from individual project hosts and can be found on our website under the *Send A Team* tab. These lists are organized by the following criteria:

International Mission Opportunity List:

- Country
- Name of contact person
- Ongoing types of service
- Priority Project, if applicable (attempting to complete within 2-3 years)

Domestic Mission Opportunity List:

- State
- Conference
- Organization's Name
- Other information

Choose an opportunity, or even a few, that you feel could be a good match of your team's skills and desired type of service, and call or email our office 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.

Individual mission opportunities 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 in conversation with the host organization. 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 your first experience leading an UMVIM team, you might look for a project with an on-the-ground coordinator to handle logistics, rather than trying to schedule housing, food, construction details, and the like on your own.

Some important issues to consider when choosing a project:

Size of your team: How many volunteers can the project accommodate? It is important not to burden the host with too many (or too few!) volunteers.

Type of project: Team members have different skill sets, as do team leaders. 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 Bible School.

Experience level of your team: Is this a good project for first-time missionaries? What kind of cultural preparation and sensitivity will be required? 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 its goals? Consider the physical capabilities, emotional maturity, and intercultural competency of your team as well.

Priority Projects: From time to time, UMVIM-NEJ sends out information about projects that have been deemed to be Priority Projects 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. You can learn more about these projects through our newsletter; the signup form for these monthly emails is located on our website.

Other teams' experiences: If you are curious about how other teams have fared at certain projects, contact our office. We maintain an extensive database of all teams that have traveled under the auspices of UMVIM-NEJ. We are happy to connect you with team leaders who have visited the projects in which you are interested so that you can learn more.

Costs: International missions tend to cost more than domestic missions. The farther away from your home base the project is located, the more travel costs you will likely incur. 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 materials, etc. We will detail the budgeting process later in this handbook.

A few more helpful questions to ask your project host who will guide you as you prepare yourself and your team: When is the best time for our team to serve? Do you have a Priority Project you need to complete? What are the maximum and minimum numbers of volunteers you prefer for a team? What is the best way to communicate with you? Can you provide a detailed list of expected expenses (e.g. transportation, lodging, meals, translators, etc.)?

We discuss the important reasons for using UMVIM-approved mission opportunities in the Best Practices section, but UMVIM projects offer more than just accountability. UMVIM recommends serving with opportunities that have a community-based approach; we do not believe in "parachuting" in, serving for a week, and leaving forever. UMVIM-NEJ supports these projects and initiatives by building relationships of mutuality and respect with project leaders and maintaining these relationships through many teams over many years. We believe that building healthy relationships is central to what it means to be a Christian.

Types of Mission Service

There are as many ways to connect communities in mission as there are varieties in our gifts and graces. The possibilities are only limited by our imagination. Our mission opportunity lists feature many kinds of service that have been requested by our mission partners. Consider these requests as you put your team together. While you are on site, continue to dream with your hosts about what other forms your mission relationship might take as it grows in the future.

Peace With Justice (see *A Mission Journey* pp. 23-38)

The healthy relationships that we build with others as we go forth in the name of Christ are the bedrock of all good mission activity. “Mission as justice work means asking about hidden costs and consequences that may devastate the lives of our sisters and brothers.” (*MJ* p. 26) There may be aspects of peacebuilding and justice-seeking in all of the other types of mission service described below, but some journeys have this as their primary focus and organizing principle.

For example, some churches have engaged in missions such as accompanying vulnerable people in Israel and Palestine; pairing missions of mercy with people experiencing homelessness alongside advocacy toward changing public policy; or interrupting human trafficking networks. The Northeastern Jurisdiction Council on Ministries with Young People sponsors a Mission of Peace each year for teens that connects them with other people of faith at the nexus of injustice and inequality. The United Methodist Women sponsor several Ubuntu Journeys each year to practice living out a shared humanity in “mission to address social issues and discover new ways of working together, supporting one another, and growing spiritually.” (“Ubuntu” is a Zulu/Xhosa word meaning “I am what I am because of who we all are.”)

A critical consideration in missions is to make sure that we remain in ministry **WITH** our partners, rather than ministry **TO** or **FOR** our partners. Our goal is to amplify the voices of those facing injustice, not supplant them. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself whose agenda you are pursuing as you plan your mission.

Whether peace and justice are the main foci of your mission or something you are grappling with for the first time, teams should think carefully and critically about the impacts of the ways that they speak, listen, act, empower, learn, give, and receive while engaged in mission. As our humanity becomes linked with the humanity of those we encounter in mission, we will begin to invest in redemptive long-term relationships and discover how Christ is using us to break down the walls that divide us.

Medical/Public Health

If you have medical professionals as volunteers, consider taking a medical team. Other types of projects can add a medical component if you have team members with medical skills. 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 or in other roles.

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. 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. Take time to listen and learn to local medical experts. If you are invited, teach and train the local medical professionals to equip them to care for their community; the impact is farther-reaching and lasting for those you are there to serve.

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 these do not and cannot replace discussing these matters with your host:

1. You need 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 is defined, recognized, and litigated differently in different countries. UMVIM's insurance does not include a malpractice provision. If you have a concern, contact your personal insurer to see if you are covered.

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 some countries, and repairs and replacement parts are nearly impossible to locate. Still, there are a few medical and dental facilities with specialized medical equipment. If your team is dependent on equipment and supplies, you will need to be directed to 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 official national language from the Bishop or head of church in the area who 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.

Public health is a growing field in which UMVIM teams serve. Particularly in contexts where communities lack regular access to health care, public health teams teach basic sanitation, disease prevention, and health skills. Community leaders may ask for a class in basic first aid. 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 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 specific skilled labor, 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. Buying your tools and materials near the worksite can also be an important support for the local economy. Speak with your host about what type of tools are needed, which tools will be provided and the process and cost for supplies that 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 ask your host about a plan for purchasing them. As always, safety is a very important consideration; this issue will be dealt with later in this handbook.

Bible School/Evangelism

Bible School and evangelism teams are also popular types of service for UMVIM teams. These types of projects can be done in conjunction with other projects (medical, construction, etc.). Be sure to read the section on evangelism later in this handbook for more information. When preparing Bible School curriculum, consult your hosts to see what they are currently using. Perhaps you can co-create a curriculum with the local teachers and leaders. Be sure that the curriculum, including games and handouts, are in the preferred language of those whom you will be teaching. Employ a translator if necessary. Cultural sensitivity is critical in planning Bible School as well. Realize that cultural reference points which are familiar to you may not be familiar to everyone. Realize also that since childhood and adulthood are defined differently in various cultures, the age range of your class may be different from what you expect.

When planning any Bible School programs and activities, keep it simple. Consider purchasing any supplies you will need from a local source so that you are investing in their economy. Also take time to learn from and share ideas and resources with leaders while you are there. If your hosts desire them, you can donate your extra supplies when you leave.

Disaster Response

With memories fresh from major disasters in the Northeastern United States, 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 beyond physical damage. Teams must understand that disasters have many layers beyond the actual tragedy. Effective service requires awareness of, and sensitivity to, these factors including: the loss of the usual norm or daily routine; hordes of “official” strangers, all from an alphabet-soup list of groups and agencies unfamiliar to most survivors; constant visible reminders of destruction; people’s deep relationship to land and place; 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.

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. Avoid the temptation to “fix” folks, to mend

their brokenness or give them personal advice. Often wisdom is received most willingly from within the community and its leadership. Remember that time is an important healer.

A strong relationship between the volunteer teams and the local host disaster response organization is vital. 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.

Those offering themselves for volunteer services need to be 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 service—is about serving where needed when invited.

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 5 'R's' of disaster response:

Readiness Stage: Training and preparation before a disaster strikes. Being properly trained can help save lives and minimize further damage.

Rescue Stage: The first few hours or days immediately following a disaster. The duration depends on the level of devastation. Local persons and agencies work tirelessly to stabilize the situation in order to prevent added loss of life and property. This phase is generally handled only by trained emergency professionals.

Relief Stage: Lasts approximately ten times as long as the Rescue Stage. Trained Early Response Teams (ERTs) assist in removing debris, securing homes from further damage, and linking survivors to available assistance. But the primary function of ERTs is to provide a caring Christian presence to the survivors of the disaster. Early Response volunteers should be 100% self-sufficient. Training for such teams is coordinated through UMVIM-NEJ and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (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. **Note that ERT training is not the same as UMVIM team leader training.**

Recovery Stage: Lasts approximately ten times as long as the Relief Stage and is the time of rebuilding.

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, etc. It is not helpful for each volunteer to tell them that the situation was different in another disaster. It is also very important to do the work assigned. Moreover you are guests of the homeowner. Though your team may deem a home damaged beyond repair, that is not your decision to make. It could be the only living space available to the survivor.

Let your team know beforehand that flexibility is key. In the event that the local host organization redirects your work, you should accept and support 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. 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 those affected by disaster is much the same as caring for a family who 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.

Sleep and "down time" are vital. Volunteers may be exerting themselves beyond their norm and have need for extra sleep, not less. Set quiet hours if your host has not already done so and encourage people to consider creating a quiet area and a noise-friendly space. More extroverted team members may need that reminder for self-care as they meet or re-connect with so many people and more introverted team members will appreciate their need for a break from people.

Many groups plan a day of rest and relaxation as part of their mission. Plan some fun while you are away that will provide greater connection and context to the community with which you are serving. Be mindful that the activity and pace allow energy to renew before concluding work or traveling home. Include your hosts when possible and be sure to ask if they view your activity as appropriate, respectful, and safe. (This paragraph is true beyond disaster response and rebuild work.)

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.

Review Stage: The time after recovery, when volunteer organizations assess what went well and what can be improved, and then modify best practices if necessary. This time is also a great opportunity to assess what was learned from the host community, and to look at how to reduce risks the next time a disaster strikes, such as designating storm shelters and creating emergency preparedness kits.

International Disaster Response

In the early stages of the disaster response, volunteers are most helpful in sending funds to UMCOR through The Advance, (the official program of The United Methodist Church for voluntary, designated giving beyond apportionments) or to assemble relief kits as specified and requested by UMCOR. More information on these kits is available on their website, www.umcor.org.

If there is a need for an international volunteer response, it takes time to develop logistical support and structure to receive volunteers. Going too soon to an already stressed infrastructure causes potential harm to an area that may already have limited resources of food, water, transportation, and lodging. If and when the affected area has the resources and infrastructure to invite volunteers, the jurisdictional offices will communicate the necessary information.

Working with Humanitarian Organizations

Occasionally, UMVIM teams have the opportunity to work with other nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). These 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 NGO's unique relationships with other countries and governments and because of security concerns, teams who work with NGOs are asked to honor their commitment and provide humanitarian aid by reaching out to serve those who are suffering, as described in Matthew 25:31-41. This means that food is given to the hungry, 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 their actions and through words of care and respect. It is inappropriate to engage in proselytizing, converting others to Christianity or United Methodism, preaching, or praying in public. 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 toward or offended by the Christian faith. Although Christ called us to share our faith, when we agree to work with an NGO, we also agree to abide by their rules and not jeopardize their neutrality in matters of religion.

Youth

More and more youth leaders are contacting UMVIM-NEJ about sending youth mission teams out for service, both locally and globally. These leaders believe—and UMVIM-NEJ agrees—that culturally responsible mission is the best Christian education the church can offer young people. A youth who experiences a carefully-planned, well-executed mission opportunity during his or her formative years will remember that trip and its lessons for a lifetime.

UMVIM-NEJ does not have a minimum age for youth missionaries. Obviously, some mission opportunities are not appropriate for youth, but there are many UMVIM opportunities which can host youth (and families) of all ages. Visit our website or call the UMVIM-NEJ office for a list of UMVIM-sanctioned mission opportunities that are youth-appropriate. You can also consult the www.umcyoungpeople.org/missions for a list of opportunities geared to youth.

UMVIM-NEJ seeks to make the process of planning a mission 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.

Other Types of Service

There are even more ways you can plug into mission opportunities, such as training in specialized fields, and other appropriate activities in consultation with UMVIM and its partners. Examples include:

Educational: Educational mission includes opportunities where the goal is to instruct and equip, such as assisting with summer and day camps, teaching English or computer technology, therapeutic drama and art programs, and more.

Agriculture: Agriculture service could include training farmers in improving their methods of growing, harvesting, selling, and/or storing food, or even assisting a grower with any of these things as a helping hand.

Water: Missions that focus on water could encompass programs such as installing water catchment and storage systems, teaching water sanitation, digging wells, implementing irrigation methods, and more.

Gathering a Team

Recruiting a team is one of the most important tasks of the team leader, and the composition 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 members you will need.

Recruitment can help you engage in cross-cultural ministry in your own community, too. What members of the community are missing from your team as it represents the full diversity of the body of Christ? If members of your community have felt that they don't qualify to participate in mission because of their race, ethnicity, income-level, disability, gender, or sexual orientation, you may need to extend a personal invitation for them to apply.

Registering your team with UMVIM-NEJ can help you in the recruitment process also. We keep a list of teams with openings updated constantly. For those who are mission-minded from smaller congregations, this can be a way to tap into what God is doing through the United Methodist connection. It may just add the missing piece to complete 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 complete, detailing their skills, their motivations for mission, their past experience, intercultural competency, and whatever else you care to know. 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 rather than *on* the trip, particularly in situations of rough terrain and difficult living conditions. A team application also gives you the opportunity to ask questions that will help you get to know prospective members in a new way. You can learn a lot about someone by asking them about their favorite books, movies, and television shows. Asking a potential team member to complete an application, along with asking for a small deposit to secure their spot on the team after approval, is also a good way to gauge if they are seriously committed to the mission journey.

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 a spot to someone who has "signed up"

for the mission, 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, and if a prospective member presents problems for the team before the trip begins, it is a safe bet that these problems will multiply exponentially while traveling. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Refer to the Appendix for a sample application, or download it from our website.

Selecting the Team

Pray for guidance as you set out to build your team. 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 diversity in mind. In other words, not all your team members need to be highly skilled workers. All Christians have something to offer in the name of Christ, so consider looking beyond professional skills to character and spiritual gifts. In addition, different projects require different sized teams with differing abilities. A build in West Virginia may be appropriate for 40 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, none of which have to do with technical skill. 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:

- Intercultural competency
- Self-awareness
- 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
- Places value on differences
- Perceptiveness
- Ability to fail well

Planning the Mission Journey

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 mission, 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.

When these folks understand the mission, they can be great advocates. 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?” and “We should help the people here before we go to another state or country!” are more common than many new team leaders realize. Don’t get defensive! A good place to turn for help is Scripture. In Acts 1:8, Jesus did not call us to be witnesses in Jerusalem *or* Judea *or* Samaria *or* to the ends of the earth...we are called to be witnesses *everywhere*. UMVIM is committed to holistic mission service and a healthy mission model, which is why we require team leaders to read this handbook and go through our Team Leader Training program. Reading this handbook, becoming trained, and talking with your pastor and church leaders early on will help prepare you to respond constructively to the misunderstandings while also equipping you and your team to make the most of your mission journey.

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. Rely on 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 multinational contexts. Part of becoming an official UMVIM project involves agreeing to communicate in a timely manner, but cultural understandings of timely vary widely around the world. Mission project hosts can sometimes be difficult to reach, either because there is a weak, expensive or damaged communication infrastructure or because these leaders are often overburdened by multiple teams or the demands of responsibilities beyond mission work. Be persistent in your communication, but be patient as well. Where possible, communicate your questions or needs in a time frame that allows a comfortable cushion before you absolutely need the response.

Inquire about the hosts preferred time frames and the dates by which information is needed so that you can adjust your expectations.

It is vitally important that there is clarity between you and your hosts about what is expected. Being clear and honest does not mean that you are unwilling to adapt to local conditions or customs. 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 100 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. As you continue to read this handbook, some of these questions will perhaps be answered.

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 some areas can be spotty. Keep at it. If the host's preferred language, find someone in your church to translate. Often, English is one language that UMVIM hosts and teams have in common. Do make sure that, if needed, arrangements for a translator who has skills appropriate to your work are made in advance. Biblical or theological terminology, medical terminology or construction jargon are not always common knowledge for translators, especially volunteers.

Know that if you absolutely cannot reach your hosts, or if you are having trouble communicating, you can always contact the UMVIM-NEJ office for assistance.

Evacuation Plan

When communicating with your host, it is vital to discuss an evacuation plan in the event of inclement weather (like a hurricane or typhoon) or a potential violent uprising. Determine what you would do if a situation arises to ensure the safety of your team. Identify a secure location and—should the situation warrant—an exit strategy. If your destination is international, check with your airline to see what accommodations can be made if evacuation is required. Consider looking into purchasing additional travel insurance as it could assist with evacuation costs.

Downtime for Reflection

As you communicate with your project host, be sure to speak with the host about time for team reflection. This may take the form of cultural sightseeing activities that allow you to learn about the local culture and people. An afternoon at the beach, or a couple of days at the end of the trip at a different location, should be spent relaxing, but scheduled around organized discussion. Remind your team members that this isn't vacation time, but rather a time to reflect and learn.

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, in 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 enjoying the beauty of their culture, heritage, and landscape. Or a team working at Choctaw United Methodist Mission in Mississippi might drive up to Oxford or Tupelo and 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 handbook, we will examine 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 in *A Mission Journey* (see pp. 90-121).

Registration and Insurance

As mentioned in the Best Practices section, UMVIM-NEJ provides insurance coverage for teams traveling both domestically and internationally. Because the information associated with this program changes occasionally, it is very important that you visit the Insurance FAQ page on the UMVIM website to find the latest insurance information. Please note that some annual conferences require all teams from within their bounds receive approval from its UMVIM coordinator or committee. Be sure to register far enough in advance that you have time to speak with your Conference UMVIM Coordinator. Also note that UMVIM-NEJ recommends that all registration be completed online at least three weeks prior to your departure date to allow time for processing. Late registrants cannot be guaranteed insurance coverage.

Other Forms and Information

UMVIM-NEJ has created a packet of forms for team leaders to collect necessary information from members; these can be found under the *Training and Resources* tab on our website.

The paperwork you will collect is extremely important, as it should include your team’s emergency contact information, insurance ID cards, copies of passports, paperwork for you and your church, and other types of information of a sensitive nature. We suggest keeping a Team Leader binder with you at all times, leaving a copy with someone at your church, and also keeping a copy electronically, either on a flash drive or tablet. It’s not a bad idea to have a trusted team member carry a backup binder as well.

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 a tax professional. If there is an accountant in your church congregation, you might ask her or him 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.

Timeline

As you prepare for your mission, create a timeline for your team members. Be sure to include deadlines for returning the application, 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 departure.

Be sure to schedule the commissioning service with the pastor of your church as 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 commissioning service also gives the rest of the congregation who are not traveling an opportunity to actively participate in the sending of the team. A sample commissioning service is included in the Appendix.

Budget

Building a budget is an integral part of assembling your team and preparing for your mission. 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 while traveling. Keep in mind costs like construction materials and tools requested by the host, lodging, laundry, food, excursions, travel fees, excess baggage fees on airlines, etc. Also remember that it is far better to over-budget than under-budget. Consider building in a 10% emergency fund for unexpected expenses. If the money isn't needed you can either reimburse any overages to your team members, or donate it to your project hosts.

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” 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. A sample budget form is included in the Appendix, as well as on our website under the *Training and Resources* tab.

Airline Tickets

Airline tickets and other transportation expenses typically make up a large percentage of the entire cost. Minimizing this cost can be difficult, but it can be done. Begin 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. 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 even 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.

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 keeps costs down, as flights from major hubs often save money.

Some team leaders prefer working with a travel agency, which offers you the opportunity to put your travel plans in the hands of someone experienced with this kind of travel. 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.

International Travel

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. The expiration date for each team member's passport should be at least six months after the scheduled date of return for your mission; if the expiration date is earlier, have the team member go ahead and renew, as some countries require extra time before expiration. Passport applications can be 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.

Passport applications can be obtained on the US State Department website. There are also authorized passport acceptance facilities across the country where you can apply in person. Locations and further information on these facilities can also be found on the US State Department website.

Once your team members have their passports, make sure that they pack a copy of the photo page in their luggage; should a team member lose his or her passport, this will be an important part of getting a new one from the embassy. It is also a good idea to have someone who remains behind keep a folder containing copies of your team's passport photo pages, 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.

Visas

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 US State Department website for more information on visa requirements and other travel advisories. On that page, you will also find country-specific information for your destination. Should your host country require a visa, instructions are listed on that page. 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.*

Travel Warnings and Advisories

On your destination country's page on the US 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. As discussed in the Best Practices section, if you are traveling abroad, register your team with STEP, the US State Department's **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program**. Registering

your team is very important in the unlikely situation that you need international assistance while traveling.

We suggest that you check with the US State Department to see if there is a travel warning or alert for your destination. A travel warning might be issued because of unstable governments, war, terrorist attacks, or intense crime. You should carefully consider if you want to travel to a country with a travel warning. It is also possible that UMVIM-NEJ might not insure teams who travel to these countries.

Travel advisories are issued for short-term situations, such as severe weather warnings (cyclones, hurricane), health concerns or outbreaks (cholera, H1N1, Chikungunya, etc.), and elections where protests or demonstrations are likely.

Keep in mind that in some areas, the emergency response infrastructure in place different from what you are used to. Ask your host how emergencies are communicated and addressed and the medical support options available.

Raising Money

Fundraising

Fundraising can be one of the most time-consuming aspects of your mission. While important, do not allow it to consume all of your energy. 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 journey. 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 costs keep 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.

Like the congregation, family and friends also have an important role to play in funding the mission. Team members are sometimes afraid to ask for support, but again, these small donations add up to large sums. Tell your team members to consider sending letters to family, co-workers, 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 your destination often make the difference between one-time support and sustained support for future mission opportunities.

Most teams also schedule fundraisers specifically for their mission journey. 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. Consider selecting a fundraising chair to coordinate these opportunities.

Because teams have found a wide variety of fundraisers to be successful, presenting an exhaustive list of fundraising ideas is prohibitive for the purpose of this handbook. Here are a few ideas we have seen to be successful. Network with others who are experienced in mission-based fundraising for more ideas. You might choose to do one or do several, but be

mindful of “returning to the well” too many times. Incorporate your fundraising dates in your timeline, and communicate all activities to your pastor for approval.

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

Sell “Shares” of the Mission: One way to create lots of involvement from the congregation is to sell “shares” in your mission. You can set designated amounts - \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100 - or allow the congregation to pick their own amount. One version of this is to set out envelopes with dollar amounts in \$1 increments from \$1 all the way to \$200. Put a description of your mission in the envelope. If all of the envelopes go out and come back with the indicated amount, this can raise \$20,100! Even if you don’t distribute all of the envelopes, you can still raise a lot of money and get a lot of people involved in God’s mission.

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 God is doing through your team!

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

Dinners: Consider putting together a meal with cuisine from the area where you will be serving. It 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 region-specific food is not an option, consider holding a spaghetti dinner and presenting details of what you will be doing on your mission.

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, the use of a vacation home for example, 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 should not cover the entire cost, as it is important for members to have a personal investment in the mission.

One particular strategy for scholarships involves offering financial support to those who perform certain tasks for your mission journey. For instance, many teams “hire” a team photographer to document the entire journey in pictures. By offering a small (\$200-300) stipend, you are helping that team member cover his or her expenses, and you are solving the common problem of having every member 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 monetary credit 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

A Good Starting Point: The “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 what 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 structures and systems 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 share 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 next to that statement.

Members of your team will inevitably want to stand between two signs, or to choose more than one. Allow them to stand where they feel best describes what mission means to them.

Once all your team members have chosen a sign, have at least 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.

Components of the 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, privilege, power dynamics, 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 the Appendix), the following are important matters that need to be covered.

Spiritual Health

Spiritual health is a very important part of the mission 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. It is possible for a missionary to

go on a mission journey 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 the mission 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. Additionally, devotionals are important as your team grows together spiritually. Ask each person to present a short devotion during your travels, making sure everyone 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.

A Mission Journey contains many resources for volunteers and team leaders to use for spiritual reflection before, during, and after the journey. As mentioned before, we also recommend *Transforming Ventures*, by Jane Ives. 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 that can be done before you travel.

Cultural Awareness and Respect

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

Whether you are traveling to Angola or Appalachia, cultural awareness is vital to ensuring a successful mission. Working to understand the cultural norms in the place where you will be serving is part of being a faithful Christian, but so, too, is understanding that each of us carry our own cultural understandings and prejudices. One excellent resource is “[10 Ways to Honorably Learn about Another Culture](#),” an article produced by the United Methodist General Commission on Race and Religion (available at www.gcorr.org).

Your team members may find themselves frustrated by language barriers, lack of mobility, the formality/informality of relationships in other cultures, the protocol required in a new place, the

completely different understanding of time, the lack of conveniences, unfamiliar local customs, just to name a few. Your team will need to adapt to differences in schedule, noise, food, and work. Keep in mind that while some cultures might seem “extreme” to us, our culture might seem “extreme” to those we encounter.

Let your team know beforehand that these issues will arise, and devise a plan for dealing with them. Often, letting your team know that these feelings are normal will help them appreciate the cultural differences they will find.

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 inform your team about some of the habits which we find quite conventional but which might be perceived as offensive in other cultures. While U.S. culture is diverse, project hosts have identified 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 responsibility 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, which is the belief that our culture is the best and that our ways of doing things are better than all others. Our culture is not better than other cultures; our culture is different than other cultures. Make sure your team knows that if they enter the mission site without relinquishing their feelings of cultural superiority, they will act as a barrier for the Kingdom of God.

One way to help your team overcome their 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. The familiar “OK” hand signal we use in the United States, 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, often creating embarrassing cultural faux pas.

This is not to say that your team will not commit cultural faux pas. Prepare your team that if and when this happens, it is ok 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 working with mission teams from other cultures. Rarely is any question offensive. If you have 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.

Reflection

Most team leaders set aside time each night for the team members to reflect upon how they have seen God at work, to discuss any issues related to the day, to share plans for the next day, and to pray together.

Discuss your schedule for reflection with your team before you leave. If you have scheduled additional time at the end of your travel dates 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 reflections 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.

Evangelism

As the team leader, it is important for you to understand that your team members may have wildly divergent understandings of what evangelism means, which is perfectly acceptable. However, if you do not discuss this issue before departing, it will often come up during the mission in less-than-productive ways.

Discerning how each of your team members understands evangelism is vital for a successful mission journey. Have a discussion during your team orientation about this topic. You might even tell your team members beforehand so that they can be thinking about their own understandings of evangelism. Consider having your team do the “Mission Is” exercise, which is located in the Appendix.

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. If you are not proactive about discussing the issue beforehand, these disagreements can get heated and cause division within your team.

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 it is important that there are resources for those people to be disciplined into more mature Christians. 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 culturally respectful 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. 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 Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) and the international travel section of the US State Department website (<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 many 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. Traveling to countries in which malaria is found, for instance, necessitates your team taking a malaria prophylaxis, but depending on the severity of the malaria presence, different medicines are needed. The travel clinic will know.

For a suggested list of medicines and supplies for your team's first aid kit, see the Appendix.

Safe Sanctuaries

Contact your annual conference or visit your conference's website for more information about its 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. Your annual conference's specific Safe Sanctuaries policy applies to your team; however, we offer some general guidelines in the Appendix.

Water and Food

Before you travel to your destination, it is vital that you discuss the issue of drinking water with your host and team. Even if your team is traveling within the United States, access to clean water can be a problem. Depending on where people live, bodies acquire different immunities to bacteria and other additives such that definitions of "safe" and "clean" can mean different things to different people.

Talk with your host about water sources for your team. If filtered water is not available at the site, be sure that your team purchases either: (1) water bottles with built-in filters which remove most bacteria, (2) AV wand purifiers, or (3) water purification tablets available at any sporting goods store or large department stores. Boiling water for 3 minutes is the surest way of purifying water; pre-filtering may be necessary to remove particulate matter. Remember that ice is made (usually) from local tap water - unless you are sure of the source, chill your drinks ahead or drink them at room temperature.

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 members, 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 refilling them with tap water. Make sure the caps have not been tampered with.

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.

Packing/Clothing

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

If you are flying, be sure to check with your airline for luggage weight limits, restricted items and fees for excessive baggage. Be sure that your important items like money, passport, medicines, camera, toothbrush/toothpaste and any valuables are packed in your carry-on bag. In your carry-on, pack one complete change of clothing, including underwear, in case your luggage gets lost.

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 work to church members or local people.

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 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 or head of church in the host 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 to avoid arriving in your destination without linens!

Finally, be sensitive to cultural expectations. Discuss with your host and your team what clothing is appropriate on the work site, what is appropriate at 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 may not be the norm for today, 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 share in the reading of a book about the history of the area. Look for books written by people of that culture. 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 the common greeting or 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

Often, alcohol and tobacco use is considered unacceptable for Christians by other cultures. While this expectation is not present in most churches in the United States, it is a very serious offense in many other areas. 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. Adhering to this cultural expectation is not to be prudish, but—as always—we want to be culturally sensitive to the expectations of the local church and our hosts. It is a matter of conveying respect and honor to those with whom we wish to be in ministry.

Commissioning Service

Talk with your pastor about scheduling a commissioning service for your team. This service allows the rest of the congregation to feel a part of the mission, and it lets your team members know that they are going as emissaries of the congregation and representatives of Christ’s church. This service is often a powerful one and sets the tone for the rest of the trip. A sample commissioning service for teams is included in the Appendix.

Traveling on Your Mission Journey

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 his or her passport.

On the day of departure, make sure to meet your team in plenty of time to make it through security (wait times are ever-increasing for international travel); you might consider having the team stay together the night before travel to make sure that everyone makes it to the airport, and on time. Some teams wear matching t-shirts so they can be easily identified as a group.

Transportation

Be sure to arrange transportation with your host before you leave, including transportation from the airport. See if your host can provide you with a bus and driver for the length of your stay; if so, 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 place you are staying 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 was 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. It is a good idea to divide the group cash among several responsible members of your team in the event of theft, pickpocketing or similar circumstances.

Many countries, especially in poorer areas, do not accept credit cards; most do not accept traveler's checks, which come with high fees anyway. Before you travel, discuss money with your host. You will most likely be asked to bring project funds in cash. It is best to divide this money among your team members during travel. In some areas, ATMs are present and may be the best method of getting cash, but be sure to check with your bank regarding global use of ATM's, as there may be additional requirements or restrictions to accessing funds. Your host will have more information for you on the best way to obtain local currency.

Also, be sure to ask your host about guidelines for tipping. As you prepare your budget, you might want to include a line item for gratuities.

At some point, 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, 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 mission journey.

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 or 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.

In any cross-cultural encounter there may 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. Be gracious and adventurous...you might just like it!

Of course there are exceptions to this rule. Do not eat anything you believe to be unsafe for you. Take proper precautions if you have food allergies. Be sure to only eat 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, a team member may get sick while traveling. 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, 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 varies greatly. Be sure to take this into account as you pack first aid and medical supplies for your team.

When you receive your insurance paperwork from UMVIM-NEJ, take time to read it carefully. It will be sent to the team leader specified during the registration process via email a few days before you leave. If you are three business days from departing and have not received your insurance information, please call our office immediately. Keep a copy of each card with you, but be sure that each team member receives a copy of their insurance ID card as well. Before you depart, provide them with a copy of the Schedule of Benefits, which is available for download on our website. In the certificate of coverage, you will find specific information about what is covered and how to make a claim. Note that both accidents and illnesses are covered. ***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 common across the globe. You may be able to find an internet café nearby to keep in touch with friends and family. If possible, have a team member keep a blog while you are traveling so that the church and your team's loved ones can stay informed 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 or purchase a cell phone and keep it with you in case of an emergency. Usage rates on these phones can be quite high, so be explore your options with your cellular service provider and be careful when using your phone.

It may be a good idea for you to include a team policy on use of electronic devices in a team covenant that you prepare together before the journey.

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 people with whom you are working. Your team will learn a lot about God and what it means to be a Christian in the area you are serving. 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. Pastors should be prepared to preach when invited.

Globally, worship services may be much different than they are in your home church. Pentecostalism, for instance, is an important part of Christianity in many parts of the world, especially in South America and Africa. Experiencing a different mode of worship will naturally raise questions for your team. After worship, have a team meeting and discuss the service with them. What was different? What did you like about the service? What made you uncomfortable? Why?

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 the supervisor and let that person that safety is of utmost importance. Be sure that your team does not engage in any unsafe construction practices.

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 it's always better to be safe than sorry.

Team Life and Cohesion

Everyone is unique 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. Use the daily reflection time for your team members to share insights, concerns, or observations. Explain to them 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 UMVIM teams. Often, emotions run high because people can easily become exhausted, homesick, or overwhelmed, thus causing tempers to flare and tensions to rise. Take this into consideration. Also be cautious since it is possible that you could be a 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 will make the final decision 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 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 journey 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 journey. They will 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 verbally, however. It is important to recognize that different people have different learning styles, and it is your responsibility as the team leader to see 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 or process their experience artistically 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 them prepare for your discussions.

In many ways, Christian mission is as much about inward change in your team members as it is about the work and service in which you engaged. Think of your mission journey 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.

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 meal are good ways to let those on the project site know how much they mean to you. Allow enough time for your team members to say their goodbyes to the 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. Have an informal discussion of the experience, discussing such things as what seemed to go well, what could have been done better, what impressions each person has, etc. 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 to be distributed as they deem 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. 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 on the way home, while their impressions are still fresh. The evaluation is available for download on our website under *Training and Resources*.

Departure Tax (International Only)

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 (see also *A Mission Journey*, pp. 123-138)

Reverse Culture Shock

Upon their return, your team members will probably experience reverse culture shock. If this is the first experience a team member has had leaving and return to his or her own culture, this could be especially true. Reverse culture shock is returning home and feeling strange about all the comforts we have, especially considering the comparably sparse conditions of those living in the project location. It also involves recognizing that our culture is not the only way of experiencing God's world, nor is it necessarily better, more worthy or more honorable.

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. This can be an excellent springboard to discussion, 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 journeys are:

Elation: Your team members will be excited to share their "mountain top" experience with anyone who will listen to their story. 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 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

The mission journey does not end when the team returns home. 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. You might consider having this off-site, or even doing a small retreat. If so, make sure to work this into your budget at the beginning of the planning process. If possible, use this time to discuss proactive steps that team members can make towards working for justice now that they have returned home. Look for ways to continue to engage in mission, through both staying connected with your host and somewhere in your community.

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-NEJ. Also, complete a team leader evaluation (also available on the UMVIM website under *Training and Resources*) and return it to UMVIM-NEJ. These reports help us pass along important information to future teams. If you have any comments or concerns that need to be shared with UMVIM staff members, please feel free to contact us. 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 performing a skit or reading a poem can be just as powerful as offering a summary of the mission to your church family so they can understand how God is 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. 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. 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 put Christian love in action and participated in God's mission to redeem the whole world!

APPENDIX

Team Leader Checklist

Use this list to help prepare and plan for your 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 type of mission opportunity is it: construction, medical, evangelistic, Bible School, a combination?
- ❑ Seek the endorsement of your local church and Conference UMVIM Coordinator.
- ❑ Select a team leader and co-leader.
- ❑ Make a preliminary decision about your location and type of service. Lists of Mission Opportunities are available under the *Send a Team* tab at www.umvimnej.org. Contact your Jurisdictional and Conference UMVIM Coordinator for suggestions.
- ❑ Decide whether you will raise money to assist with the personal expenses of any team members. As a general rule, volunteers pay their own expenses, but selective assistance can be useful. Financial or economic situation should not exclude someone from participating in mission.
- ❑ Appoint someone to lead fundraising activities. Select ways to raise money for your mission and any needed project funds, such as materials and supplies.
- ❑ Choose a coordinator to handle all travel arrangements.
- ❑ Name a publicity coordinator to publicize the mission. Decide how to inform and involve the local church(es), the district and the conference in the mission.
- ❑ Set a tentative date for the mission (to be confirmed with the host). Ask host when the best time to travel would be and plan accordingly.
- ❑ 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 mission (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 conference and jurisdiction. Let your coordinators know if you will accept team members from outside your own area or have openings for additional team members.
- ❑ Establish best form of communication with host (phone, fax, e-mail), keeping in mind costs for host.
- ❑ Discuss with host 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).

- Check on insurance coverage provided by your local church or conference. Strongly consider the medical/accident/accidental death and emergency evacuation insurance available through UMVIM NEJ.

For International Destinations Only

- Determine if there are visa requirements for the country where you will be serving.
- Ensure all team members have passports that will not expire within 6 months to 1 year of your travel dates.
- Check the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website regarding required/recommended inoculations and health information for your destination.
- Ask about credentials and documents for any medical team members and when these need to be sent to in-country government officials.
- Research customs regulations, especially about any supplies you will bring.
- Contact a travel agent or research travel costs and options.
- Decide how to handle team funds. If your project is an Advance Special, your local church may route funds through the General Board of Global Ministries.

Planning (9–12 Months Before Departure)

Select Mission Opportunity and Team Activities

- Contact host. Making arrangements could take several emails over several months. Get as much of this in writing via email as possible.
- Determine type of service and cost of supplies.
- Determine maximum number of team members the host can accommodate.
- Make team arrangements for housing, meals (prepared by host or team) and transportation.
- Arrange for team orientation by host.
- Have a clear understanding of host's expectations.
- Discuss and agree upon transmittal of project funds (means, timing, accountability).
- Inquire about cultural norms and expectations, as well as daily living conditions.
- Confirm joint worship opportunities with host.
- Arrange for cultural exposure (sightseeing, dining, art, sporting events, etc.).
- Determine need for interpreter.

For International Destinations Only

- Request a formal letter of invitation be sent to team leader. This may be needed at immigration and customs for any donated items and/or gifts the team is taking.
- Complete Covenant for Mission Partnership (*available in the Appendix*).

Make Travel Arrangements

- Confirm transportation details and reservations in writing.
- Determine non-personal luggage transportation details.
- Arrange lodging/meals while traveling to site.

- Travel agent information: _____

Gather Health and Safety Information

- Acquire first aid kit items needed (*list of kit items available in the Appendix*).
- Determine immunizations/medications needed and have team members schedule appointments with health department or travel clinic.
- Check with host about worksite safety precautions.
- Find out other health, safety, and security precautions for your destination.
- Create a list of emergency numbers, medical facilities, U.S. Embassy (for international destinations), and UMVIM-NEJ office.

Develop Timeline

- Decide departure and return dates.
- Create deadlines for forms and money to be turned in (set deadline 2-3 weeks ahead of real need).
- Determine deadlines for team leader to turn in money to appropriate treasurer (church, conference), travel agent, project host, etc.
- Schedule dates for team orientation and training, making sure to include time to address intercultural competency.
- Schedule date for the UMVIM team's Commissioning Service (*see sample services in Appendix*).
- Discuss possible dates for UMVIM team reunion.

Prepare Budget

- See "Building a Budget" in the Appendix.
- Collect deposit with application.
- Purchase a receipt book.

Recruit and Select Team

- Include translators if needed.
- Consider offering scholarships.
- Keep size of team to host's request.
- 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 UMVIM Coordinator or church. (Consider making a spreadsheet to track receipt of forms, payments and donations.)
- Announce deadlines for turning in forms, payments and donations.

Team Leader Preparation (3–6 Months Before Departure)

Determine Travel Essentials

- Confirm travel arrangements and make deposits for rentals or purchase tickets.
- Have evacuation plans in case of severe weather, social upheaval, medical emergency, etc.
- Learn as much as you can about the culture of your hosts.

For International Destinations Only

- Obtain passports, visas, and work permits where needed.
- Collect money for airfare and purchase tickets.
- Send list of team members to travel agent or airline (with names as they appear on passports).
- Verify professional credentials for serving in host country (healthcare volunteers or other types of professionals who will need to show credentials).
- Know information about medical system in country of travel.

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.).
 - Forms team members need to complete for sponsoring church, host, conference, etc.
 - Tentative itinerary for the mission (daily schedule of travel, work, worship and recreation)
 - Accident/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.)
 - Contact information of host in case of emergency situations
 - Packing lists (*See “Team Member Packing List” in Appendix*)
 - 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. Convey customs, practices, behaviors, and expectations that your team may encounter. Help them to view these respectfully.
 - Sightseeing/Reflection day options
 - Deadlines for payments and forms
 - Team assignments, job descriptions (*See “Suggested Team Member Assignments” in Appendix*)
 - Plan team-building exercises for training session (*See “Icebreakers” in the Appendix*)
 - Work with pastor to plan UMVIM team Commissioning 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 the Appendix.
- Create team member covenant of goals, expectations, and conduct.
- 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 photo page for each passport if applicable.
- 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.
- Record health needs of team members and persons to contact in case of emergency.
- Send a copy of the team roster to your Conference UMVIM Coordinator.
- Receive devotion sign-up list from spiritual guide.
- Register team online on the UMVIM-NEJ website.

For International Destinations Only

- Check that team members have their passports and visas or other documents.
- Check immigration and customs requirements.
- Leave a copy of team roster, including passport numbers, with church office and someone who can send information to a member of the US Congress if necessary.
- Register team with the **Smart Travelers Enrollment Program** on the US State Department website.

Verify All Arrangements

- Confirm travel.
- Confirm all lodging.
- Determine what food options work best for team.
- Confirm that ground transportation is arranged if flying to destination.
- Confirm on-site work information (tools or supplies to bring from home, or money needed to purchase them).
- Review daily schedule.
- Request receipts for monies spent (carry a receipt book if needed).

- Obtain Advance Special number for the project so that team members can continue to support the project financially.
- Order needed supplies (medical, Bible School, etc.).
- Check that safe drinking water is available and determine if there are any associated costs.

Involve Sending/Sponsoring Congregation in the Mission

- Educate congregation(s) about the mission.
- Ask for prayerful support of the team during the mission.
- Ask for assist with some assignments (publicity, communication, maintaining records of forms, payments and donation, travel arrangements, etc.).
- Raise funds.
- Prepare to share the story after the team returns.

Finalizing Mission Plans (2–3 Weeks Before Departure)

- Register team online with UMVIM-NEJ no later than 2 weeks prior to departure.
- Purchase travel medical insurance through UMVIM-NEJ.
- Confirm plans with host contact:
 - Confirm meeting arrangements with host.
 - Confirm arrangement for project funds and payment for other expenses like lodging and food.
 - Obtain or verify phone numbers of local contacts, officials, etc. Give copies to team members.
 - Ask what amount is customary when tipping luggage handlers, waiters, etc.
- Have a Commissioning Service for the team.
- Reconfirm airline reservations
- Notify travel agent immediately if there is a cancellation.
- Check tickets for correct names, times, points of departure and arrival if flying to destination.

For International Destination

- Confirm airport pick-up with host or other in-country transportation.
- Make currency-exchange plans.

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

- Pack donated items on a scheduled pre-departure date.
- Meet at church or other appointed place early on departure day. Allow time to load luggage and supplies, say goodbye, take pictures, and get last-minute instructions.
- Pray God's blessing on the mission before departing.
- Carry documentation for the team members such as emergency numbers, medical, copy of insurance cards, parental permission forms, and other needed forms (*Forms available on website www.umvimnej.org*).

- Plan for team to travel together if possible.

Upon Arrival

- Wear name tags with first names only.
- Take your time as you introduce yourselves to your hosts and exchange greetings.
- Invite the hosts and the team to engage in a brief prayer/devotional.
- Check with host to see if any arrangements have changed.
- Have on-site orientation by the host.
- Send word to sending church(es) that team arrived safely.
- Review the covenant with the local coordinator and clarify any things that are not clear.

During the Mission

- Hold daily devotions and reflection times.
- Communicate information about mission on blog, website, and social media.
- Attend worship with local community.
- Encourage health and safety practices of team members.
- Provide time for relationship-building and journaling.
- Keep records and receipts of expenses.

Concluding the Mission

- Consider having a farewell meal and/or a worship/communion service.
- Invite the host to assess and celebrate the mission.
- Debrief team to return home – Reverse Culture Shock.
- Have the team assess the mission (*Evaluation forms are available on www.umvimnej.org*).

After Your Return (2–3 Weeks After Returning)

- Send letters of appreciation to team and to host(s); include some photographs.
- Have team reunion meeting to evaluate the mission. Include time for sharing journals, photos, and videos.
- Complete plans for your presentation to your congregation(s), district, etc.
- Assemble items you will need for keeping records of your mission.
- Share the story of your mission responsibly through local newspapers, church publications, TV, radio websites.
- Send Finalized Report and Team Leader Evaluation to Jurisdictional and Conference UMVIM Coordinators (*form is available on www.umvim.org under Resources and Publications*).
- Suggest readings and resources for dealing with reactions to the culture and systemic injustices that your team may have encountered.

Building a Budget

Domestic

Administrative/Orientation Expenses	_____
Insurance & Processing Fees	_____
Transportation Expenses (rentals and gas)	_____
Lodging	_____
Food	_____
Project Cost (materials & supplies)	_____
Team First Aid Kit	_____
Tips	_____
Cultural Experiences	_____
Gifts (if appropriate)	_____
Team Reunion Expenses	_____
Miscellaneous/Emergency Fund (add 5-10%)	_____
Grand Total	_____

International

Administrative/Orientation Expenses	_____
Insurance & Processing Fees	_____
Travel to/from airport	_____
Airline tickets	_____
In-country transportation	_____
Lodging	_____
Food	_____
Project Cost (materials & supplies)	_____
Team First-Aid Kit	_____
Cultural Experiences	_____
Gifts (if appropriate)	_____
Tourist Card/Departure Tax/Visa	_____
Team Reunion Expenses	_____
Miscellaneous/Emergency Fund (add 5-10%)	_____
Grand Total	_____

Sample Mission Team Orientation Meeting

All-Day Option

9:00 Opening devotion

9:30 Team building exercises (*Sample ice-breakers can be found in the Appendix*)

9:45 Overview of day

10:00 Team Talk

- Role of team members and make assignments (*Sample Team Member Assignments in the Appendix*)
- Construction and/or medical plans: in-depth review of type of service to be done
- Bible School: in-depth review of daily plans: theme, snacks, closing

10:30 BREAK

11:00 Cultural norms, expectations, and information about destination

- Awareness exercises (*Essential Keys to Intercultural Communication available in the Appendix*)
- Background of destination country/site

12:00 LUNCH

1:00 Team Covenant

- Code of Behavior
- Dress Code
- Evangelism on the mission
- Giving Gifts

2:00 Reviews

- Review travel information and departure – indicate where and when
- Review daily schedule
- Review budget
- Review Commissioning Service – indicate where and when

2:30 Break and Sign-Ups (post sign-up sheets)

- Daily devotions
- Items for first aid kit
- Snacks for team

3:00 Final Items

- Pre-departure packing—indicate where and when
- Music for team
- Collect forms

3:15 Answer any unanswered questions your team members might have

3:45 Closing Prayer and/or Communion

4:00 Departure

Sample Mission Team Orientation Retreat

Weekend Option

Friday Evening:

SUPPER

Opening devotion

Team building exercises (*Sample ice-breakers can be found in the Appendix*)

Overview of weekend and collect forms

Theology of Mission (*Mission is... in the Appendix*)

Team Talk

- Role of team members and make assignments (*Sample Team Member Assignments in the Appendix*)
- Construction and/or medical plans: in-depth review of type of service to be done
- Bible School: in-depth review of daily plans: theme, snacks, closing
- Spiritual formation study (Preparing for the Journey *available on www.umvim.org*)

Saturday:

BREAKFAST

Devotion

Cultural information about destination

- Awareness exercises (*Essential Keys to Intercultural Communication in the Appendix*)
- Background of destination country/site
- Language lesson (for international destinations)

Team Covenant

- Code of behavior
- Dress code
- Evangelism on the mission
- Giving gifts

LUNCH

Reviews

- Review travel information and departure – indicate where and when
- Review daily schedule
- Review budget
- Review commissioning service—indicate where and when

Sign-Ups (post sign-up sheets)

- Daily devotions
- Items for first aid kit
- Snacks for team

Final Items

- Pre-departure packing—indicate where and when
- Music for team

Answer unanswered questions
Closing Prayer or Communion
Departure

Topics for Team Orientation and Training

Who We Are

UMVIM history and purpose
Mission theology
Evangelism during the mission
Team member assignments
Team member covenant

Where We're Going and What We'll Do

Presentation of mission and type of service
Lodging and meals

Spiritual Formation

Devotions
Journal or other Tools for Creative Expression
Worship
Commissioning Service

Travel Plans

Travel itinerary
Schedule during mission
Travel document information (international teams)
Check and copy passport (international teams)
Customs/immigration information (international teams)
Tourist card/departure tax/visa information (international teams)

Cultural Exchange, Learning, and Humility

Local culture and customs
Cultural do's and don'ts
Currency
Photography etiquette
Gift-giving guidelines
Culture shock and reverse culture shock
Country and language information (international teams)

What to take

Packing list (personal items and team supplies)
Clothing/shoes
Luggage requirements (air travel)

Forms

Online team registration

Team forms for trip as needed

Smart Travelers Enrollment Program registration (international teams)

Costs/Budget Review

Project funds

Fundraising

Donations

Other costs

Payments

Health and Safety Precautions

Water and sanitation

Work limitations and safety

Vaccinations and prescriptions

Team health and safety

Emergency contacts, including embassy for international teams

Other Topics

T-shirt options

Discuss ways to involve the local church

Discuss/schedule reunion date

Sample Team Member Assignments

These assignments give team members additional responsibility during the mission, as well as taking some of the pressure off the team leader. If possible, consider offering a stipend as payment for accepting one of these roles.

Bible School Coordinator manages and assigns duties.

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 a disaster response team.

Drivers may be needed to transport team and luggage to airport or site in United States. For international teams, they can work with the team leader to coordinate in-country vehicle rentals and drivers.

Fundraising Coordinator promotes trip fundraising in the 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 presentation at orientation/meeting.

Spiritual Guide plans and/or schedules devotions during orientation/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 and overseeing its use. Ideally, this person might be a doctor, nurse, EMT or person trained in first aid.

T-Shirt Acquirer creates the design and obtains team t-shirts and other items 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 processing and securing travel documents (passports, tourist cards, visas, etc.) and tickets during mission.

Treasurer collects and keeps funds to handle expenditures and gives financial report after returning from the mission. An additional person can receive payments/contributions and receipt all funds prior to departure.

Sample Icebreakers

What You'd Never Know by Looking At Me

Think of 3 things someone else would never know by looking at you and that you are willing to share with a stranger. Find at least 2 people with whom to share your 3 things and hear theirs. The facilitator then asks what this has to do with mission. Many times people have gifts, experiences, or knowledge that we could not guess just by looking at them. The people we encounter in mission will have similarly surprising gifts, experiences, and knowledge.

Gifts of Others (from *Fearless Dialogues*, Dr. Gregory Ellison II)

Have each person ask two other people "What is your gift?" Give people 2-3 minutes each to share how they express that gift, and how people have received that gift. The facilitator closes by sharing that ALL people have gifts to share including those whom the missionaries will be working alongside - even those in deep poverty. See everyone as a person with gifts and assets, not just needs.

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 make the best pancakes in the family."

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: If you were stranded on a desert island with one type of food, what would it be? What were you famous for in high school? What is your favorite book in the Bible and why? What countries have you visited? What languages do you speak? Then have the group sit in two rows and face each other. Have them interview each other and after a two-minute period, one row shifts positions in order to be sitting in front of a new person. Repeat until all have "interviewed" 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 item from the culture or area you will be visiting. 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 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.

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 goodwill 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.

When possible, we suspend judgment until all the facts are in—especially during conflict.

Our demonstration of trust is exemplified by keeping our word.

We hold the confidence of those with whom we communicate.

We draw upon our personal experiences and the feedback of others to continually improve our intercultural communication, knowing that we will always have new things to learn.

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.

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

Act of Dedication for Commissioning Service

“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

This is a suggestive checklist for individuals on your team, however this can vary according to destination. Share ideas on how to save space in your luggage.

- Cash
- Copy emergency contact information
- Insurance card
- Medical documents, including copies of prescriptions
- Special medications (asthma, insulin, any prescription medicines)
- 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.)
- Water bottle
- Work clothes, work shoes, work gloves, hat, bandanas and/or sweat bands
- Quick dry underwear and socks
- Appropriate clothing and shoes for church
- Appropriate clothing and shoes for work and play
- Flip-flops for shower, where appropriate
- Rain poncho and/or folding umbrella
- Swimsuit (modest, and if appropriate for location and weather)
- Coat hangers, clothespins and clothesline (optional)
- Powdered or liquid laundry detergent
- Toiletries (unscented for tropical international destinations):
 - Towel, washcloth, soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, razor, shave cream, toilet paper, and pre-moistened wipes packed in zip-top plastic bags.
- Suntan lotion and sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Sleeping bag or bedroll and inflatable pillow (if needed)
- Bible and devotional materials; team songbook (if available)
- Notebook, pen and pencil
- Flashlight
- Small pocket knife or scissors (must be in checked bag)
- Camera (only one or two persons per team, not every team member)
- Snack foods (trail mix, granola bars, peanut butter, etc.)

For International Destinations Only

- Passport
- Visa or tourist permit (if applicable)
- Immunization record (yellow card)
- Mosquito netting (if needed)
- Water bottle with purification filter (if needed)
- Foreign language dictionary

Sample Mission Team Checklist

Depending on your team type or project, some of these may be helpful to the team as a whole.

- Binder with copy of all team member forms, insurance cards and passports for international team
- Binoculars
- Calculator
- Compass
- Cooking utensils
- Digital voice recorder
- Double-zipper plastic baggies in various sizes
- Duct tape
- Engineering references
- Eye protection
- First aid kit
- Frisbees, deflated balls (basketball, soccer, football) and pump with pin
- Games
- Garbage bags
- Gatorade powder
- Items to donate to project or the host church
- Metric conversion chart
- Mosquito coils (if needed)
- Plumb bob
- Rubber bands
- Shortwave radio (disaster area)
- Super glue
- Trash bags
- Video recording device
- Walkie-talkies
- Water filtration system
- Others (list):

Suggested First Aid Kit for Mission Teams

Discuss with your host the level of medical facilities available, and adjust this list accordingly.

- Extra Strength Tylenol (100 tablets)
- Buffered aspirin (100 tablets)
- Oral Thermometer (glass) (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 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)
- 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)
- Temporary tooth glue (to glue cap on tooth) (1)
- Hibiclens (1 bottle)
- 1% Hydrocortisone cream (1 large tube)
- Hydrogen peroxide (1 bottle)

- Handiwipes (20)
- Motion sickness medication (1)
- Tweezers (1)
- Scissors (1)
- Nitroglycerine, sub lingual (1 package)

Only if a medical professional is part of your team.

- Sutures, assorted (1) (Superglue works as a temporary closure)
- Single use syringes (4)
- Blood pressure cuff
- Stethoscope

Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines for Mission Service

UMVIM-NEJ provides these general guidelines for your information. Your team is expected to follow your annual conference's Safe Sanctuaries policy.

Guidelines for Working with Children

- Schedule 2 adults at all times, and preferably a translator should be present for international teams.
- Adults must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child in the group with whom you are assisting.
- Should be at least the age of 21 in order to be in charge of a group.
- Never be alone with a child.
- Wear name tags.
- Perform background checks on all volunteers participating with the team, and provide safe sanctuaries training.
- Gain permission to take photos of the children, and also to continue any ongoing communication.

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 competency, 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 and jurisdictional UMVIM coordinators.

I agree to remain non-partisan in differences of opinion occurring in the church that hosts our work.

I agree to work with 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 norms, expectations, ways of showing respect, 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.

Team Leader

Host Coordinator

IRS Publication 526

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
- Cost of meals.

Because these travel expenses are not business-related, they are not subject to the same limits as business related expenses.

Mission Trips as a Tax Deduction

You should consult with a tax professional. 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.

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 the world over, sometimes even in countries without Methodist churches.

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

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” (1302.14 Book of Discipline 2012).

1988 - General Conference suggested that every annual conference name a Volunteer in Mission Coordinator to work cooperatively with the General Board of Global Ministries (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 (2012 Book of Resolution, #3109).

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 2012). General Conference also ruled that each annual conference *may* set aside a Sunday to be declared Volunteers in Mission Awareness Day.

2016 - General Conference mandated that each annual conference *shall* set aside a Sunday as Volunteers in Mission Awareness Day. UMVIM-NEJ recommends that this take place on the 3rd Sunday in October, coinciding with Laity Sunday. An offering may be taken which will support annual conference UMVIM efforts.