



# Great mission trips:

## *Tips for leaders*

### **A great short-term mission trip requires:**

#### **1. On-the-ground leaders to help plan, lead and interpret experiences**

- These are “bridge people” between different cultures and contexts. They often help with logistics and, when necessary, language interpretation.
- They humbly connect us in the Body of Christ, helping all participants learn from personal experiences and from one another. They help U.S. participants see how God is present in the place being visited, and what this experience could mean long term after we return home.

#### **Questions for reflection:**

- ❓ Who are the “bridge people” or on-the-ground leaders with whom you can work when planning and leading a mission trip?
- ❓ Are these individuals equipped to bridge cultures or only language and logistics?

#### **2. Clear trip goals and healthy motivations**

- Examine your (and others’) motivations for going on a short-term mission trip.

#### **Questions for reflection:**

- ❓ Why are we going to \_\_\_\_\_ ?
  - What do we expect to accomplish or do there?
  - What do we believe we will experience there?
  - What do we hope to gain? What do we hope to give?
  - What, if any, are our concerns or fears?
- Develop overall trip objectives together with on-the-ground leaders.
- Whenever possible, allow the on-the-ground leaders to develop more detailed trip schedules and plans.
- Reflect ahead of time about how you will communicate with the congregation about the trip before, during and after it takes place.

#### **Questions for reflection:**

- ❓ What’s the “story” you want the congregation to hear about the trip?
- ❓ What orientation and guidance will you provide to trip participants about the ways in which they communicate about the trip before, during and after it takes place?

### **Mission Toolkit: Short-Term Mission**



## Tips for leaders



### 3. Thoughtful planning and orientation

- Plan with the “on-the-ground” leader — not on your own.
- Consider an emphasis on relationships, mutual learning and reflection rather than on “doing” or accomplishing something. If you do an activity in the community you visit, be sure to plan and carry out the activity together.
- Consider using an application process to select team members. This is a valuable tool to explore potential team members’ motivations and personal issues. Don’t assume that every person who wants to go should go at this time.
- Make orientation part of the expectations for the team.
- Orient your team through three or more face-to-face meetings, supplemented with readings and videos.
- People learn in different ways. Use various kinds of media for orientation: videos, books, articles, etc. Use different methods and moments for learning: personal reflection, small-group exercises and large-group conversations.
- Include devotional time and team-building activities in orientation sessions.
- Consider essential topics for orientation:
  - Personal reflection and group conversations on why they are going;
  - Culture and context of the place and the partner you will be visiting;
  - History and current events;
  - Cultural humility/awareness;
  - Group roles during the trip;
  - Trip goals and expectations.
- Develop a team covenant together, naming and committing to team expectations before, during and after the trip.

### 4. Ways to include those who are not going

- Communicate with the congregation about the trip prior to leaving.
- Establish prayer partners between participants and nonparticipants.
- Be creative and intentional about including people in the congregation in the mission trip — before, during and after the trip.
- Invite congregational participants and members to talk with you about the trip after you return — possibly over a potluck meal that includes foods from the place you visited.

***Develop a team covenant together, naming and committing to team expectations before, during and after the trip.***

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## Questions for reflection

- ❓ What are you most excited about as you plan and lead the trip?
- ❓ What challenges do you face?
- ❓ What are unique challenges in planning and leading the trip in tandem with an “on-the-ground” leader?
- ❓ What resources do you need to orient your group?
- ❓ How might you include those who cannot “go” on the trip?
- ❓ What ideas do you have for meaningful follow-up after the trip?

***Looking for more resources to equip and lead a short-term mission trip?***

***Visit [pcusa.org/toolkits/short-term-mission/GO](https://www.pcusa.org/toolkits/short-term-mission/GO)***