

Modes of Mission Engagement

When groups engage in mission, they often use different strategies, or modes, for going about their work. These modes shape the very nature of the mission and affect how groups interact with partners and understand “success.” Find out which mode most closely matches your current mission involvement, and consider other modes you might be drawn to engage in.

Mode of Mission Involvement	Hands-on	Empowered Partners	Advocacy
Relationships and Focus	Serving others to meet basic needs	Partnering with others for quality of life changes	Solidarity with others for structural and personal justice and change
Objective	Meet immediate and perceived needs of others by providing goods, services, training.	Develop relationships with partner communities and, with them, identify and seek to overcome causes of needs and injustice.	In solidarity with partner communities, seek humane community development and just structures and systems.
Theological Basis	Deut. 15:7-11: “Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.” Matt. 25:31-46: “For I was hungry and you gave me food.”	John 13:16: “Servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.” 1 Corin. 3:5-9: “For we are God’s servants, working together.”	Prov. 31:8-9: “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

These three modes of mission represent the different ways in which Presbyterians do mission. With “Hands-on” mission, individuals and congregations often engage in the work of emergency intervention through efforts like soup kitchens, building projects, clothing drives or water development. This is the work of standing alongside individuals in need and actively engaging in work that can help their situation in that moment. Many individuals have their first experience with mission through this mode.

With “Empowered Partners,” individuals and congregations work to build up the capacity of partners, helping them to

transform their personal and communitywide situations. With “Hands-on” mission, a congregation might lead a vacation Bible school, while with the “Empowered Partners” mode, that congregation’s mission might be to train church leaders for leading Christian education within their own community. “Empowered Partners” is a long-term, sustainable form of mission, and it often takes the form of training partners to have a variety of skills that might transform their communities. Most Presbyterian mission co-workers serve through this mode of mission involvement.

Finally, through “Advocacy,” individuals and congregations seek to use their influence to impact systems of injustice. This work can be done through letter-writing campaigns, organizing marches or setting up educational events in your congregation. Both the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations and the Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C., offer excellent resources for congregations wishing to engage in advocacy.