



When God's People
Travel Together
Volume II



Reflecting

and

Acting on

Mission Trip

Experiences



Barbara Battin

Reflecting and Acting on Mission Trip Experiences

Mission Trip Leader Materials

*When God's People Travel Together:
A Trip Leader's Planning Manual
(1999)*

Key planning components, steps, and timeline for before, during, and after a trip; sample forms and checklists to assist trip leaders in thinking through the logistics of a trip and for ways in which the trip can be an instrument for transformation and renewal in the lives of individuals and congregations.

PDS #70-270-99-009

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PDS #74-400-99-083

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Volume 2
Reflecting and Acting on Mission Trip
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and Acting
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Mission Trip
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Barbara Battin

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How to Use This Manual

■ How to Use This Manual

■ A Series for Trip Leaders

This book is one of a series titled *When God's People Travel Together*. The series has been jointly developed by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and the Worldwide Mission in Partnership Program unit, both of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The first volume, *A Trip Leader's Planning Manual*, focused on the role of the Planning Leader for a mission trip or a travel/study seminar. This volume, *Reflecting and Acting on Mission Trip Experiences*, is designed to be a resource and tool for the Worship and Reflection Leader of a travel/study seminar or a mission trip. We recommend that there be at least two leaders for each mission trip or travel/study seminar. One leader would assume the primary role for the trip planning: logistics, itinerary, safety, etc., and one leader would assume the primary role in community building, worship, and reflection time. Each role is indispensable. We encourage trip leaders to work in close concert with each other on the overall objectives for the trip, the overall planning, and many other shared duties. But in today's busy world some "specialization" in focus is helpful. No one person can do all that needs to be done before, during, and

after a trip. No one person can see the trip experience from all angles and perspectives.

■ About This Manual

This manual, *Reflecting and Acting on Mission Trip Experiences*, has two primary purposes:

1. to equip the leader for his or her role with participants in worship and reflection; and
2. to provide the leader with ideas, activities, and written materials that she or he can use with the trip participants.

This is how the manual is organized:

1. It has ideas, activities, and handouts for *Before*, *During*, and *After* the trip.
2. Within each phase of the trip (before, during, and after), the manual is further divided into chapters with material *for the leader* and material for the leader *to use with the group of trip participants*.
3. A substantial *Resources* section for each phase of the trip is in the last half of the manual.

■ Planning with This Manual

This manual can help you plan for community building, worship, and reflection time before, during, and after the trip. Read through the manual well in advance of the trip.

Make plans for how you will prepare and orient the trip participants. Choose activities from the Resources for Orientation and Preparation section of this manual, and come up with your own ideas, too. Duplicate the handouts. Send information about the trip and how to prepare for it, as well as information about orientation, to the participants. If you have an orientation session before the trip begins, arrange the time and place and notify everyone.

Think through what you and the group will be doing during the trip. Schedule in group reflection times. Choose activities from the Resources for Experiencing the Trip section, and duplicate handouts. Of course, you will want to remain open and flexible, because events of the trip and the leading of the Holy Spirit may require some spontaneous discussion and action during the reflection times. But go prepared. The Holy Spirit may bring something special to your attention but probably expects you to bring thoughtfulness and planning to the trip.

Choose activities that will help participants re-enter our culture, and exercises that will give them ideas about how to interpret the trip when they get home. Duplicate the handouts. Activities, exercises, and handouts can be found in Resources for Preparing to Re-enter Our Culture. If you

have visited a culture quite different from your own, you know that returning to your own culture can be a jarring experience. This manual will give you ideas on how to help participants make a more graceful re-entry. But re-entry is not the end point for the participants. They will be asked to tell about their trip, to interpret what they have seen and heard. Some will be inspired to further action and involvement. Nonparticipants will ask for information on how they can become involved. This manual will help you prepare participants for interpretation, action, and involvement.

Have some ideas ready to contribute to a discussion with the participants about how they might remain in contact for a while after they return home. Some participants will have developed friendships with each other that will continue. Others don't want or accept long-term relationships with other trip goers. But it is helpful for participants as they go through the transition time to be able to communicate with others who have had the same experience. Being able to share interpretation experiences and ideas will keep participants from feeling isolated and should enhance their presentations. See chapter 6 and Resources for Preparing to Re-enter Our Culture.

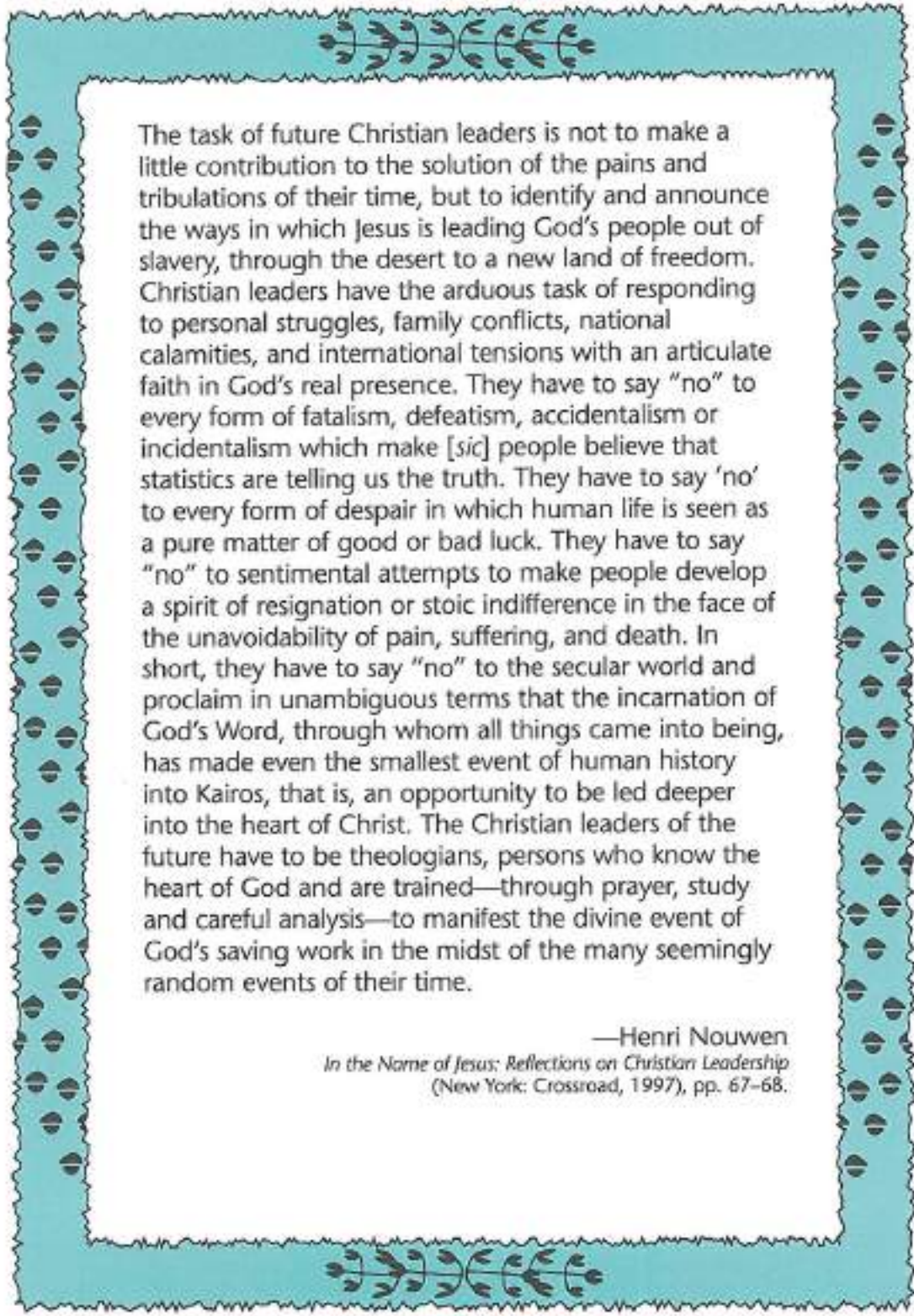
Do a little self-review after the trip, when you've discharged your responsibilities to the participants. Chapter 7 will help you think through how you've grown spiritually and as a leader.

Before, during, and after the trip, this manual has you covered.

Chapter 1

Invitation

- A Word about Transformation

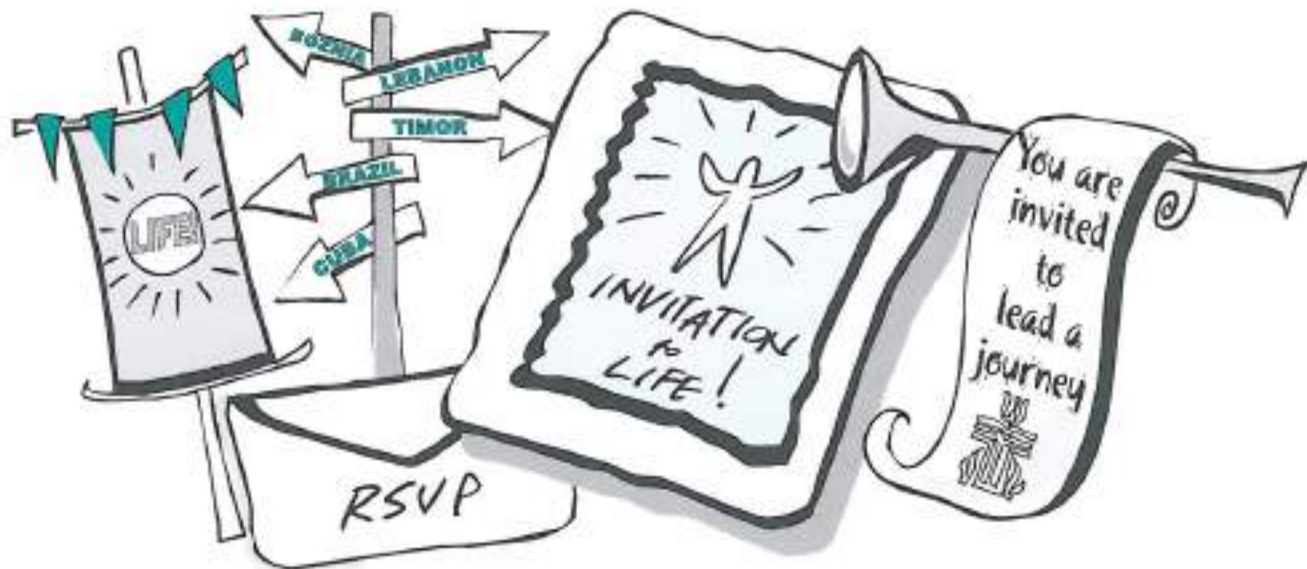


The task of future Christian leaders is not to make a little contribution to the solution of the pains and tribulations of their time, but to identify and announce the ways in which Jesus is leading God's people out of slavery, through the desert to a new land of freedom. Christian leaders have the arduous task of responding to personal struggles, family conflicts, national calamities, and international tensions with an articulate faith in God's real presence. They have to say "no" to every form of fatalism, defeatism, accidentalism or incidentalism which make [sic] people believe that statistics are telling us the truth. They have to say 'no' to every form of despair in which human life is seen as a pure matter of good or bad luck. They have to say "no" to sentimental attempts to make people develop a spirit of resignation or stoic indifference in the face of the unavoidability of pain, suffering, and death. In short, they have to say "no" to the secular world and proclaim in unambiguous terms that the incarnation of God's Word, through whom all things came into being, has made even the smallest event of human history into Kairos, that is, an opportunity to be led deeper into the heart of Christ. The Christian leaders of the future have to be theologians, persons who know the heart of God and are trained—through prayer, study and careful analysis—to manifest the divine event of God's saving work in the midst of the many seemingly random events of their time.

—Henri Nouwen

In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership
(New York: Crossroad, 1997), pp. 67–68.

Invitation



■ Invitation

God has extended an invitation, a call to life. God invites us to liveliness. God invites us to share life with others.

■ This is an invitation to live fully the experience of being a trip leader. It is a call to engage not only in the mechanics of trip preparation but also in the guiding of the group. This guidance includes the following elements:

- building community among those who were strangers
- supporting individuals as they encounter new people and places
- examining with participants their assumptions and world views
- offering sacred spaces for reflection
- being a midwife for transformation
- challenging individuals to involvement beyond the trip itself

- encouraging participants to share their experiences in ways that stimulate others to grow in knowledge, commitment, and action in the world

Further, it is a call to allow the experience of leading this trip to be a transformative one for you personally. It is a call to allow yourself to be touched in and through the leadership role by God's creative, comforting, challenging, and holy Spirit.

■ This is an invitation to consider both the leading of the journey and the journey of leadership. As the leader of the trip, you will have certain clear responsibilities that you must meet. As you meet the people on the trip and meet the responsibilities required to guide them in their experience of the outer world, you may encounter issues that give you the opportunity to stretch and grow. Then leading the trip becomes a journey in itself for you. Leading the trip invites you to enter your inner world as you

confront frustrations, temptations, prejudices, exhaustion, and other very human responses to living in community and leading God's people.

■ This is an invitation not only to lead the journey but also to be led on the journey. Others will look to you, as the leader, for information and inspiration. You will hold the schedule and make decisions for revisions along the way. You will provide a context for the day's events and make sure that the number of people with which you start out is the number with which you return.

Participants will follow the leader. Whom will you follow? Who is your leader on this trip? How will you stay attentive to people and places and aware of potential problems? How will you remain ready to celebrate the breakthroughs in people's understanding and able to offer a word of comfort or challenge when and where appropriate? What is the source of your leading? Will you be led by God in the leading you do?

In new situations, or even in familiar ones with a new group of companions, there may be times when you do not know what to do. Then you have the option of either pushing ahead as if you did know, or engaging in prayerful discernment. You have the opportunity to practice (or learn) the spiritual discipline of "unknowing" which keeps the options open to God's voice and leading.

■ This is an invitation to engage "the spirit of matter" and "matters of the spirit" as you travel with the participants. The God of Creation is present in all times and places. Being able to see God in the places and people you visit is an important aspect of your journey. To see God at work in the situations you encounter, and to sense God's wisdom in the voices of people you meet, is to meet the "Spirit" in matter, to see the Holy in material things. To be witnesses to the powers of death and resurrection and to recognize the gospel lived out in daily lives is to engage the Sacred in physical things. This outer journey is paralleled by an inner journey, an opportunity to engage the "matters of spirit" which rise as we respond to what we see, hear, taste, touch, feel.

The inner journey is an opportunity for us to grow in the Spirit of God: in love, in compassion, in commitment to justice, in the exercise of hope and the practice of joy. The inner journey prompts us to examine our own lives for those things which contribute to the war, poverty, hunger, injustice, and oppression which we encounter outwardly. We are given the gift of confronting our own complicity in the way the world works. We are led to examine those internal wars, poverties, hungers, injustices, and oppressions that we perpetrate and/or experience ourselves. Our personal sins must be confessed and our own wounds must be healed as part of the healing of the world. There are abundant

opportunities for spiritual growth to occur in the midst of peacemaking, mission involvement, information gathering, community living, and learning together.

■ This is an invitation to model for participants a travel etiquette that honors those whom you visit. Such a travel ethic respects not only persons but also local culture, customs, resources. You have the opportunity to model a travel experience that is rooted in God and therefore is vulnerable, open, and, as John Calvin said, “teachable.” As a leader of the trip, you have the opportunity to make visible by your example new ways of meeting the world and its people. If you can build a community among the participants, and if you can create a climate in which the travelers become open with and to each other, you also model an openness to the people you encounter on the trip. If you respect persons of diverse experience, opinion, and faith expression within the group and in the people you meet, participants will be invited to do the same with each other and those they meet. If you honor the customs and culture of the people who are your hosts, participants will have the choice to do so as well. Participants may be less aware of cultural differences and may be less able to respond appropriately to these differences. If you approach each situation, not only with information, but with a willingness to learn more, to change your mind, even to be confused, participants will be affirmed in

doing the same. John Calvin wanted God’s people always to be “teachable.” It is a most difficult thing for us—to be comfortable with not knowing. It is not easy for us to be vulnerable to emerging truth, to wrestle with conflicting information, to suspend judgment, to refrain from expressing our own opinion until we have heard all sides and can see a broader picture.

The trip you are taking is a journey outward and a journey inward. It is an opportunity for seeking justice and experiencing joy. It is an occasion for peacemaking and prayer. It is a time for growing in knowledge and in wisdom. It holds the possibility of engaging in reflection and action.

The 1983 General Assembly Mission Council of the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) said in its report to the Assembly: “If the Gospel does not drive us to our knees and to the streets, we are not faithful in either aspect of our discipleship.” It is the journey inward as well as the journey outward that leads us to true transformation. The transformation of our selves is always a contribution to the transformation of the world.

■ A Word about Transformation

Two weeks may not be long enough to change Guatemala, but it is long enough to change your life forever.¹

The trip you are about to lead has at its core an emphasis on transformation of the participants. None of us, no matter how we may want to, can change much about the place we visit in a two-week trip. We may build a church, paint school rooms, dig irrigation ditches. We may listen to the stories of refugees, of survivors, of victims of torture. We may stand in silence by mass graves, light candles in places of worship, pray in the places of deepest pain for God's peace and justice to heal the wounds. On the whole, however, the changes we make there, if any, are small. It is not that we do not make a difference. We do. Our willingness to go matters. Our presence with people individually and in groups matters. Our giving of money, of self, of time, of advocacy matters. But it is we who are changed the most through the experience. The going is about our coming home different, changed. It is about how we may be moved to change our own lives as a result of the experience we have had. It is about sharing our encounters in such a way as to move others to reflection, action, and change in their lives as well. The trip is about our own transformation. And, as has been said, this is crucial to the transformation of the world.



■ Further Resources

Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. New York: Crossroad, 1997. See especially pp. 67–68, 73.

Henri Nouwen explores leadership styles in the Christian context. You may want to read the section titled "From Leading to Being Led." This material offers some thoughts for you to ponder as you think about your own leadership style.

1. Martin B. Copenhaver, Anthony B. Robinson, and William H. Willimon, *Good News in Exile: Three Pastors Offer a Hopeful Vision for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 100.

Before the Trip

Chapter 2

Preparing Yourself for Leadership

- Encountering God
- Yourself as Leader
- A Look at Leadership
in the Bible

Spirituality embraces all of life, breathes through its homely details and its noble intentions. It is at the heart of our efforts to be human. It is the seamless robe worn in all our roles. Spirituality arouses in us an awe for the mystery of every human life. It is the lived connection of body and spirit, work and play, life and death. It is the reflection of our inner, honest, searching self and the expression of our tender, generous, hoping heart. It is the style of our judging and acting and the quality of our loving. It is the voice of our prayer and the progress of our pilgrimage towards peace. It is the silence of our struggles and the echo of our cry for justice. It is the ability to turn obstacles into opportunities and cacti into kingdom-signs. It is the truth of our allegiances and the measure of our commitment to our world and its people. It is the scope of our wisdom, the test of our trust, the human translation of our Godlikeness. It is the realization that every bush is burning.

Perhaps most specifically, it is the degree of our harmony with all that is within and without us. We become spiritual when we inhabit our bodies, know our own souls, and insert ourselves gracefully into all that surrounds us. We become spiritual when we discern the sounds of our earth, recognize signs of pending destruction, speak the words of blessing and reconciliation. We become spiritual when we know ourselves as potential sisters and brothers of everything and everyone who has lived. We become spiritual when we find in this moment the message for today and in today the mission for tomorrow. When we experience the "in-one-ness" of life. Being spiritual demands the combined investment of our whole heart, our whole mind, our sexuality, our psyche, our sweat, and our very breath. "I came that they might have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Life fully human and fully spiritual, life integrated and incarnated.

—Joan Puls, O.S.F.

Every Bush is Burning: A Spirituality for Our Time
(Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1985),
pp. 1–2, used with permission

Preparing Yourself for Leadership



■ Encountering God

The trip you are preparing to lead is not just a journey to a "place away." It is a spiritual journey, a journey into the heart of God. Like you, the participants on the trip will make an outer journey and an inner journey. You will be able to see a lot of their outer journey as you lead them in the trip experiences. You will be able to see only what each chooses to share of the spiritual journey that accompanies the traveling, the meeting, the doing, the being along the way. In this manual we hope to assist you in your own openness to the spiritual journey as you lead the outer journey, and in your nurturing, affirming, evoking, and encouraging the spiritual journey of the participants.

■ God in the Burning Bush

Read Exodus 3:1–5.



Think for a moment about Moses. He was out with his sheep, minding his own business—or rather his father-in-law's business—

when in the midst of the desert, a bush began to burn. In that experience, he met God. He came face to face with Sacred Mystery. He had stumbled into one of the "thin places" where the holy and human mix and mingle more readily. But did he stumble into it? Was it without intention or awareness that he encountered God in that material entity of a burning bush? We do not know for sure. However, what is clear is that there are times and places where we are more likely to find ourselves face to face with God and where God may more easily find us. When God finds us, when we are

willing to stick around and meet God, have a conversation, listen, hear, and respond, then God also may call us to act.

You, as a leader, and each of the participants will come together with an array of reasons for being on the trip. Some participants may indeed travel with the intention of meeting God. Other may travel for reasons, perhaps unknown, which will put you and them in a place where God will speak to you, ready or not, whether you intend it or not. Either way, in the conversation, there will be opportunity to reflect on your own life experience in the past as well as the experience of the immediate present. Out of that reflection, there may come a clear call to action. Perhaps it will be a nudge in some direction that is not so clear but which, if attended to during and after the trip, may emerge into a new understanding of self, or work, or vocation, or purpose in life.

■ Christ Met on the Road

Read Luke 24:13–35.



Think about the disciples on their post-crucifixion walk to Emmaus. They had not heard about the resurrection yet, but, in an unexpected encounter, Jesus appeared to them. In dialogue with this person they thought to be a stranger, they encountered the living Christ. At the table, his identity was revealed to them. It was in the midst of community sharing that Jesus was made real to them.

The importance of reading Scripture and dialoguing with it during the trip, and the importance of occasions for community sharing, especially at mealtimes, is unmistakable in this passage. A trip leader may learn two things from this passage. First, never dismiss as unimportant someone who is speaking to you, for indeed, she or he may be carrying a word of wisdom, a message of the moment that may lead to the mission of tomorrow. Second, it is important, not only to set aside formal times for reflection, pondering, and sharing, but also to stay alert to the possibilities that informal gathering times may hold. Martin Buber once said: “One eats in holiness and the table becomes an altar.” Eating together creates a sacred space where meanings may emerge, where the bread and cup shared may again reveal the Christ among us.

The Moses story indicates that we must always anticipate the presence of God. God is present all around, and in and through creation, and may speak to us at any moment. Seemingly temporal and material places may break open to reveal the eternal. The ordinary may speak to us of the sacred. The Emmaus story reminds us that even in the midst of an experience of death or destruction, resurrection and creativity may happen. New understanding and wisdom may emerge from shared experience and community conversation.

As you read these Scripture passages, what other learnings do they hold for you as you prepare to lead a trip? Is there a way to share your learnings with participants and to invite them to reflect on these passages also?

■ Yourself as Leader

Being a trip leader requires a triple attentiveness, giving your attentiveness to these things:

- the content of the overall experience
- the dynamics, experiences, and needs of the community with whom you travel
- your own sense of self in the role of leader

You must also be attentive to yourself, understanding how you act and react as a leader.

■ Your Leadership Style

It may be helpful as part of your preparation to spend some time thinking about who you are as a leader. What has your leadership been like in the past? Are there things you would like to change about how you lead people? You may want to write in your own journal some reflections on your personal leadership style. List what you consider to be your strengths and your weaknesses. Identify ways in which you may ask for help in the weak areas in order to “round out” your leadership.

■ Your Fears and Concerns

Spend some time assessing whether you have any fears associated with the trip or with leading the trip. If you have some concerns about personal safety or health, for example, they may be magnified when you add the leadership component. Letting your fears out in the open, and naming them, is like turning on the light in a dark room. You are less likely to trip over the things that are scattered over the floor when the room is lit than when the room is dark and you don't know where the dangerous places are. Some leaders get anxious before a trip because they anticipate problems, but haven't acknowledged what those problems might be. Do a self-check, and be honest with yourself. If you anticipate problems during the trip—for instance with travel arrangements or other logistics, with persons you are to meet on the trip, or with participants in the group—admit it. When you identify concerns, you have the opportunity to figure out how to deal with them and to consider alternatives before you leave home.

■ Your Anticipation of Joys

You may also want to anticipate the joys of the experience you are about to have. If you are looking forward to visiting a particular place or to meeting a special person, you may want to handle things during the trip in ways that will help you to enjoy the opportunity when it comes. While

you are the leader of the trip, you are also a participant in the experience. It is quite legitimate to pursue your own joys along with leading the group.

■ Your Own Boundaries

It will be necessary for you to set some boundaries for yourself and the group in order to offer good leadership. If you know that you are best in the morning, let the group know that staying up late to talk over the day in an informal conversation after the evening's debriefing is not the best thing for you. If during a "free" afternoon, you need to have some personal space while the group goes in its various directions, you may want to decline an invitation from a group member to join her or him. On the other hand, some group members may hesitate to invite you because you are the leader. So, if you are someone who enjoys and wants company, you might see if you can accompany two or three of the group who are doing something of interest to you.



■ A Look at Leadership in the Bible

As preparation for the trip, you may want to read about some of God's leaders and the issues they encountered in leading a group.

■ Immersion in the "Foreign"

Read Exodus 32:1–20.



What were the people thinking? How could they make a golden calf out of their own jewelry and claim it was the god that led them out of Egypt? And Aaron! What in the world got into him so that he went along with it?

Often when people are in a new place, with new people, in a "foreign" or unfamiliar land, they may "revert" to behaviors that seem adolescent or even childish. Ordinarily mature people can become "disoriented" in a new situation, especially if they do not speak the language, or if it is their first such experience. They may do or say things they would not think of doing or saying at home. Likewise, in a new place, a person may suddenly give voice to latent prejudices, use inappropriate language, or act in hurtful ways, without even being aware of it. She or he may stand out in bas-relief against the different culture your group is visiting, causing embarrassment. This offers you an opportunity for gentle reflection with the individual, as well as for redirection and renewal.

If you have established trust among the group and with individuals in it, and if the group has acknowledged that part of the intent of the trip is for spiritual growth as well as accumulation of knowledge, or service, you may have the opening to assist individuals in looking at their behavior and the issues related to it. A community context may also support this kind of growth. The behavior of one person may even elicit in others the recognition that within themselves they need a re-vision, a new seeing, in their lives. A caution here: While it is important to be prepared for the possibility of helping a person reflect on his or her behavior, it is also important to carefully assess whether it is necessary, or possible, to deal with it, either individually or within the group.

■ Mutterings and Murmurings

Read Numbers 11:1–17.



In this story, Moses overheard the people complaining about the usual stuff: accommodations, foods, schedule, etc. He

began to doubt his own leadership abilities and went to God complaining about how he got into this mess. Yes, the people may complain. After several days of cold and rain, or after five nights in a row of the same or similar food, or after a couple of lodging places with no hot water or with lumpy beds, the people may mutter and mumble. You may wonder how you got

yourself into this. Like Moses, you may want to ask for some help.

Usually, you will not be the only leader on the trip. If there is another leader, it may help for the two of you to mutter and mumble together as well. After all, just because you are a leader does not mean you don't feel the lumps in the bed, that you don't taste too much salt in the food or shiver in the damp weather.

You may also want to ask a couple of the participants to "brainstorm" with you about what might be done. Maybe nothing. But if that is the case, at least others will have had the opportunity to discover that reality and to "pass it along" in a positive kind of gossip to the rest of the group. If something can be done—skipping a stop in order to get a good night's rest, changing the menu for the next night, or just naming the gripes in such a way that people can laugh together about it—then you may be able to get assistance from two or three folks to help make that happen and to interpret it to the rest of the participants.

■ Leadership Problems

Read Mark 2:1–12; 3:1–6; 4:1–13.



In each of these stories you will find Jesus having leadership problems. The people, including his own disciples, didn't "get it."

Reading through the Gospels, you will find many passages in which the disciples revealed that they did not quite understand this man whom they followed. At times, participants on a trip may not "get it." They may not "get" the purpose of the work they are doing. Someone on a mission work project may ask, "Why build a church, when people do not have a place to live?" But the church is what the village has asked to have built. For such occasions it is important to be familiar with the General Assembly's recent statement on our partnership in mission. It is Handout 4 in Resources for Orientation and Preparation, page 101.

When people don't get the point of the trip you may feel exasperation. Jesus certainly experienced his share of exasperation with his followers. He probably was exasperated with James and John fighting over their places in heaven (Matthew 20:20–28). And he must have been exasperated with Judas in his Zealot concern for the poor when the woman poured expensive oil over Jesus' feet (Matthew 26:6–13). Undoubtedly you will have some exasperating times along the journey you make.

It may be helpful to remember that Jesus often went "off to a lonely place," and we can perhaps conjecture that this was to pray through the exasperations of his leadership and ministry. Taking a deep breath (and remembering the Breath/Spirit of God as you do) is a mini-retreat, an opportunity to collect yourself before you respond. Sometimes it may require more than that, a brief walk to the edge of the group, a moment of calling forth the love of God which resides in you to meet this particular moment of challenge. Sometimes, if the exasperation and its cause are persistent, it may require morning or evening prayer time in your "closet," in your own space, before meeting with, or after leaving, the group. It may even be helpful to have a brief chant or mantra which you use "under your breath" when dealing with sometimes difficult fellow travelers. One that may work well is "Changeless and calm, Deep Mystery, ever more deeply rooted in Thee."²

■ Conflict and Resolution

Read 1 Corinthians 13.



This passage is often taken out of context, used at weddings and all sorts of occasions for talking about love. What we often forget is that Paul's words are addressed to a church

2. Words adapted from Elizabeth of the Trinity by Gerald May of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation.

in deep conflict. They are fighting over whose gifts of the Spirit are better. They are ranting and raving over the hierarchy of good things. Where two or three are gathered together, there is a good possibility for conflict. And when there is conflict it is necessary to deal with it in a loving and creative manner. Be familiar with "Seeking to Be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement." This is Handout 3 in Resources for Orientation and Preparation, page 100. It will undoubtedly come in handy. You may also want to read the section on conflict resolution in *When God's People Travel Together: A Trip Leader's Planning Manual*. Of course, it will be helpful to have your own "love quotient" well intact!

■ Love the Questions

Have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. Try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign tongue. . . . [L]ive the questions.³

This book, as well as other two books in this series, *When God's People Travel Together*, seeks to assist leaders in their ministry on mission trips but cannot cover all the possibilities you may encounter. These materials provide some guidance for stirring thoughts, perhaps evoking questions in your mind, heart, and spirit. Rainer Maria

Rilke's words suggest that questions themselves have value. It is in closing down the questions of life that we become hardened or, in Jesus' phrase, "hard-hearted" (see, for example, Matthew 19:8). It is in not asking questions that our souls shrink, our sense of the world narrows, and we become flat. Questions open us up. Questions have the spiritual value of leading us further into the world, into persons, into ourselves.



As questions arise for you *before* the trip,

- write them down,
- encourage participants to write their own questions,
- seek answers and responses from those assisting you in planning and implementing the trip,
- know that for some questions there may not be firm answers.

As questions arise *during* the trip, your own and those from the group,

- ask them when appropriate,

³ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. Joan M. Burnham (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2000), p. 35.

- ask the people you are meeting,
- raise questions within the group you are leading.

There does not need to be an answer for every question. Allow questions to become your teachers. Remember the spiritual discipline of Mary as she “pondered these things in her heart.”

Even *after* the trip, questions may continue to rise in the quiet moments of your day or, more impudently, in the rush of the business of your life.

- Allow space for the questions.
- Encourage participants to continue to raise questions, to ponder them, to pursue them, to let them wriggle around in the mind, to struggle with them in the heart.

There is a story (perhaps apocryphal, perhaps not, but certainly filled with some truth) about a former Senator who rode a bicycle around Washington, DC, looking very much as if he were doing nothing. When asked about this practice, he said, “I am thinking. I am conjuring up impudent questions.” It was a noble calling!

At the end of each of the following chapters, there will be a list of questions. They will be generic in nature, related to the general experience of mission trips. You, as leader, are invited to tailor the questions to your own trip’s purpose and experience and to add more questions to the list. These questions may

- serve as part of a formal reflection time,
- be inserted into informal conversations,
- be asked aloud as part of an encounter with a guide or host, a guest, or another person you meet.

■ Encourage the Questions

You may also want to encourage the participants to come up with a question per day out of their experience. This could be done each evening in a “go-round,” an opportunity for the group, sitting in a circle, to go around once, giving everyone a brief option to speak her or his question. There is no need to “give answers,” though the group may want to explore some of the questions further after the go-round. It is part of the richness of a group experience that one person may hear what another has missed, or see from a perspective something not available to another. Then a question may be answered easily. Other questions may need to be pondered long-term.



■ Further Resources

Dass, Ram, and Paul Gorman. *How Can I Help: Stories and Reflections on Service*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

Dass, Ram, and Mirabal Bush. *Compassion in Action: Setting Out on the Path of Service*. New York: Bell Tower, 1992.

Two good resources for setting the context for mission trips and emphasizing partnership with those we go to meet and from those we go to serve.

Having an Excellent Adventure: Handbook for Responsible Travel—A Guide for Planners and Travelers. New York: Friendship Press, 1992. (Order directly from Friendship Press, 1-800-889-5733.)

Part One, for planners, includes steps for organizing, activities for group orientation to cross-cultural settings, and post-trip activities. Part Two, for travelers, explores preparation for the trip and for sharing the experience at home. Also contains a section on “The Power of Language” and includes helpful suggestions for consciously examining and changing the way we speak.

If you only read one other book, read this one.

Peck, M. Scott. “The Rabbi’s Gift.” *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987.

In regard to creating and building community, this story is an excellent resource to share with the group either in orientation or during an early part of the trip.

VanderHaar, Gerard. *Active Nonviolence: A Way of Personal Peace*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991.

Especially see the chapter on nonviolent speech. An excellent resource for thinking about the discipline of language.

Whalen, Loretta, and Tom Hampson. *Tales of the Heart: Approaches to Global Education*. New York: Friendship Press, 1991.

One of the best resources for global education. Whalen and Hampson have put together excellent material on the why of global education and the how of personal transformation. The book includes a wealth of material usable for orientation, worship, reflection, and impetus for action.

Chapter 3

Preparing the Group

- Preparing Yourself for Orientation
- Preparing Participants for the Journey Inward/Outward
- Briefing on Trip Destination
- Developing Cross-Cultural Skills

Great works lie not always
in our way; but every moment we
may do little ones with excellence,
that is, with great love.

—Francis de Sales

In Anne Broyles, ed., *Ways of Justice, Ways
of Prayer: Words to Sustain the Spirit*
(Washington, DC: Methodist Federation
for Social Action, 1993)

First, it is imperative in the name of the gospel to make
the under-developed masses aware of their human dignity,
of their rights to a better life, one which is worthy of the
human person. The second point is to stir the
consciousness of the rich at home and abroad.

—Dom Helder Camara

In Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen,
*Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to
Global Education* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991)

We shall have to repent in this generation,
not so much for the evil deeds of the wicked
people, but for the silence of the good people.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

In Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen,
*Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to
Global Education* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991)

Preparing the Group



■ Preparing Yourself for Orientation

After you have agreed to lead a trip, your preparations will begin. We hope that there will be at least two leaders: one for planning and handling the logistics and one for planning and facilitating the worship and reflection time. Your preparation for worship and reflection will include the following:

- personal learning and reflection on the situation you will enter
- spiritual preparation for leading others into that situation

Both are important. You will soon lead others in what may be one of the most significant and life-changing experiences of their lives. For your own comfort and confidence, as well as for the good of the participants, you must be prepared, physically, intellectually, spiritually. As you

prepare, consider what is appropriate to share with participants to assist them in their preparations.

How you relate to participants on the phone, through letters, and in person will color the group's total experience. Each piece of material you send, each question you answer, each suggestion you make is part of orientation. Before you begin these interactions, it may be helpful to think through the orientation process. Ask yourself these questions:

- What are the primary messages we want to communicate?
- What is the tone we want to set?
- What is the most important thing for participants to learn before the trip?
- What is important to save for experiencing and learning during the trip itself?
- What information will help participants prepare adequately for

the experience and feel confident about being able to engage the moment of travel when it arrives?

■ Developing Participant “Aptitudes”

There are other important preparations (you may call them “aptitudes” or “attitudes”) that help us be open to the experience of transformation:

- the willingness to be teachable
- practicing dialogue as a primary form of interaction
- practicing spiritual disciplines such as prayer, community, nonviolent speech, life review, benevolent glancing, reading the morning paper with a prayer, journal writing

In *Resources for Orientation and Preparation* you will find a handout for you and the participants. It is entitled “Developing Aptitudes for Mission Participation” (Handout 1, page 89). It offers specific suggestions for making attitudinal preparations. You may duplicate Handout 1 and send it to participants in pre-trip mailings or use it in orientation sessions prior to the trip.

■ Orientation

Orientation is more than just disseminating useful information. It is also your first opportunity for community building. While the information is important, equally important is the meeting and the getting-to-know-you time the group will spend together. This time is especially helpful to the leader for identifying potential problems

as well as gifts that can be called forth and counted on during the trip.

Orientation suggestions are included in the “Before” chapter because some of you will be leading local groups from one congregation or presbytery and will be able to gather the group before travel. If you are a leader of a group that will be meeting for the first time at departure (such as a synod or national trip), do not skip this section! You may adapt activities for an “on-site” orientation as a group gathers at the time of the trip. Orientation activities and handouts are located in *Resources for Orientation and Preparation*, pages 74–108.

■ Worship

If your orientation is a day or longer, you may want to schedule more than one time of worship. You might come together in worship early in a two-day event or at the beginning of a daylong event, as well as at the close of the event. If you are using a short time in the early part of a trip as orientation, you may want to have worship at the close of the time. Whether it is an extended orientation prior to the trip, or a short orientation at the beginning of the trip, worship is an important way to affirm the community that is being formed and to ground the community and the trip in the Word and worship of God.

If you know the participants ahead of time, you may want to invite some of them to assist you in planning and celebrating the

group's first worship experience. If you don't know participants, you may discover some people in the course of the orientation who would be willing to participate in the leadership of the worship experience. In this case, it is good to have short Scripture readings printed out for people to read, or to ask people to read brief portions of the liturgy that you highlight for them on whatever worship sheet you prepare. You may want to include as an integral part of the first worship experience an affirmation of the group and its becoming a community. A sample for a group covenanting service may be found in *Resources for Worship*. Other worship resources may be found in *Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to Global Education*, by Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen.⁴ You may also consider providing a commissioning service for participants to use in their home congregations. See *Resources for Worship* for a sample.

■ Planning Ahead for Worship and/or Bible Study

Planning ahead for worship during the trip is essential. While on the trip you want to be able to live fully into the experience instead of frantically trying to figure out what you will do for worship that evening. Plan with an eye toward flexibility. For example, you might write some prayers ahead of time, but don't stubbornly stick to them. You will want to pray specifically for the people you meet and the projects you see and to incorporate their concerns into your prayers.

For most groups, music is an important element. Determine how you will provide music. You might invite people to tell you their favorite hymns. If you will be copying hymns, write the publishers for permission. Be open to new hymns the group may learn on the trip. If you do not have musical skills yourself, see if there is someone else on the trip whom you could ask to be "music director" for the group.

It may be helpful to take along a candle or other object that can serve as a consistent focus for worship during the trip. Using this object during the trip is one way of bringing forward the group's beginnings, during orientation, into the trip itself. The worship focus may be added to as participants discover objects that represent important aspects of the group's experience. Having one piece that remains

4. Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen, *Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to Global Education* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991).

constant, however, helps to provide continuity in worship. Continuity may be especially important if you are in a place in which worship differs significantly from what participants are used to at home. (For instance, if you are guests in a Russian Orthodox service on a Sunday, having a familiar daily worship center to return to may be welcome.) On the other hand, you and the traveling community may want to incorporate into your daily worship pieces of the liturgy, such as a hymn, a prayer, a phrase or response, or some part of the tradition from the place you visit.

If you plan to celebrate Communion at some time on the trip, perhaps as part of the closing worship service, you must obtain permission, prior to the trip, from a session or governing body. A sample permission form is in the Resources for Worship section.

■ Meeting and Greeting: The Importance of Introductions

The Bible is full of the importance of names and naming. Naming the animals is one of the privileges God gave Adam in the second creation story. To the ancient Hebrews, the name of God (Yahweh) was so sacred and powerful that it was never pronounced;

rather, YHWH was substituted for the full word naming God. When something really important happened to a biblical person, it was often accompanied by a name change. For instance, Abram and Sarai became Abraham and Sarah, Jacob became Israel, Simon became Peter, Saul became Paul. Names are a gift that invites persons into relationship.



Suggestions for getting acquainted by name ("Basic Introductory Exercises") appear in Resources for Orientation and Preparation. These may be used in orientation sessions prior to the trip or as the group comes together at the time of

the trip. The intent of each of these "games" is to use names as many times as possible so that people are able to put names and faces together and so they can begin to connect. Participants may be drawn into further conversations when, for example, two people discover that they both lived in Jasper, Georgia, or attended the same college ten years apart, or are avid fans of Star Trek, or love jazz. Such pieces of information may become building blocks for deepening community ties, especially on trips that include a lot of time traveling in a van from place to place or on a service trip when no work is done in the evening.

It is important to know people's names and to get those names right. This holds true for trip participants and for people the group meets along the way. Find out if a nickname is preferred. When meeting people on the trip ask for the spellings of their names, especially unfamiliar ones. Introduce EVERYONE, not just the "important person" in the foreground! It may sometimes be appropriate for the trip participants to introduce themselves to the people with whom you meet, giving some detail about themselves like where they live in the United States or what their primary work is. Even such minimal sharing allows people to meet on somewhat common ground.

■ Deepening Community

In the introductory games, people have shared names and "fast facts." These are information pieces. To build community, we will need to share more than information. We will need to share emotion, spirit, physical space, intellectual exploration, common experience. Building community is not a one-time event. It is not usually "accomplished" in the first day or even during the first several days of a trip. Also, there is no guaranteed formula for building community. It may happen quickly with one group, never with another. True community is a grace and a gift. There are, however, some things you as a leader can do to facilitate the formation of community.

To Facilitate Community

- First and foremost, give it space and time to happen.
- Second, anticipate it without forcing it.
- Third, encourage it in small ways. Be alert to opportunities to affirm the group's movement toward community.
- Fourth, nurture it when it becomes a reality.

■ Don't Squelch Community

There are some things a leader may do, with or without knowing it, to squelch community. Being aware of things that may squelch community helps you avoid minimizing or missing the gift of community.

One way to squelch community is to avoid opportunities for sharing meaningful conversation. To only "gather facts" and not share reflection and responses to those facts may make it possible for the group to avoid an encounter of depth with one another.

A second way to squelch community is to avoid conflict. Because we are diverse human beings with different backgrounds, styles, preferences, ideas, opinions, ways of learning and relating, when two or more people get together for a significant length of time, the possibility for conflict exists. Sometimes even "just the facts" can produce some conflict. As in a marriage or friendship, conflict does not need to be a

“dirty word.” In fact, one of the ways we come to know each other is through conflict. The places we are different are the places we may enrich each other and/or learn to appreciate and enjoy each other beyond the sameness of a group that simply shares a common interest. When this happens, we may become a community in which loving one another includes our differences and acknowledges, even celebrates, our diversity. Especially in a group with significant differences in background, experience, opinion, and perspective, it is important NOT to avoid the places of difference and potential conflict, but rather to use them as creative openings for building community.

You may want to copy and distribute the General Assembly’s document “Seeking to Be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement” (Handout 3 in Resources for Orientation and Preparation). While this document was prepared for congregations in the midst of conflict, it contains guidance for group interaction in all conversations. Distributing these guidelines ahead of time, or on the first day of the trip, will not only offer participants some general ground rules for group interaction but will also prepare them for conversation that may reveal differences and/or disagreements.



■ Preparing Participants for the Journey Inward/ Journey Outward: A Way of Looking at Mission and Peacemaking

When God’s voice is heard, the body knows it from its core, from the inside out rather than the outside in. . . . The Living God speaks to each of us from the inside out, in our own voice. For my soul to recognize God’s voice there must be an inner voice I hear, an imperative from the depths of my soul. The word “commandment” casts God’s voice as if it were only a voice of external authority, but our own teachers know that when we truly hear, we hear with an inner voice and touch an inner knowing as well. Or perhaps we should say

that when we hear God’s voice, outside and inside merge to become the same place. The voice of God addresses us from within and from without at the same time!

This is the authentic voice that speaks to us in crystalline moments of our lives. I would like to challenge us to dive deeply enough into life, into [Scripture], and into

committed spiritual practice to encounter not merely authority but authenticity. We will know we are compelled to sacred action when we have learned to hear the

“voice that is both within and without” simultaneously as God’s voice and our own. Then we will respond to the call to live sacred lives because this call resonates with our very being.⁵

Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21 KJV; NRSV note). For people living under Roman rule, experiencing cultural oppression, political disenfranchisement, and economic exploitation, it was not surprising that a Zealot like Judas Iscariot fervently sought an outer solution for his community’s predicament. Jesus did not deny the outer reality of Roman rule; in the Sermon on the Mount he offered a truly creative nonviolent suggestion for how to deal with the situation. But Jesus also spoke the difficult truth that the potential for authentic humanity is within us and among us: The New Community of God—the New Reality of God’s peace built of justice and joy—is within.

If we understand the work of mission and peacemaking as work for the “kingdom of God,” the New Reality of Wholeness in which all people participate, then the work is both outer work, to transform systems we can see “out there,” and also inner work, to address the destructive patterns of those systems that we have ourselves internalized.

We internalize through simply living in our culture, being immersed in a particular world view, participating in the educational system, social systems, arts, media, and so on. Whether from the perspective of one who experiences the oppression of the outer system of domination and dehumanization, or from one who benefits by it, we come to take into ourselves the assumptions and attitudes of the system. This can be very confusing. For example, a European American man may have come to understand the issues of racism and sexism, yet he continues to demonstrate traces of racism and sexism in his lifestyle and relationships. An African American woman may have worked her way into a successful job in the corporate world of marketing, yet she continues to suffer from both racism and sexism because it lingers in her own self-image. Someone who grew up in a situation of economic poverty and moved into a middle-class lifestyle may still feel the pain and pinch of poverty and act out of that reality rather than from her or his current experience.

Elie Wiesel says: “To simply be human in our time is a creative act.”⁶ To simply seek the authentic humanity modeled by Jesus is a creative act. Jesus was rooted in God. He embodied the Divine in word and deed. That he did so in the fullness of human life with all its intricate web of problems, issues, and challenges that

5. Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing: Experiencing the Energy and Abundance of the Divine* (New York: Bell Tower, 1998), pp. 156–157.

6. As quoted in Anne Broyles, ed., *Ways of Justice, Ways of Prayer* (Washington, DC: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1993).

remain unsolved was a creative act. As participants make the outer journey of the trip, they have the potential of being involved in the creative act of “becoming authentically human” as Jesus was authentically human. The dialogue between the outer experience and the inner experience, both historical and current, will be an important part of the total journey.

■ Risks in Not Addressing the Inner Journey

Whether it is conscious or unconscious, the journey will be both inward and outward. If it happens unconsciously, there are some risks. First, without realizing it, a participant may exhibit behaviors arising from issues related to her inner journey that are not part of God’s new creation. This may be especially true when a person is operating in a country, culture, or language foreign to her. Such behaviors are part of that residue of systemic injustice, deeply patterned into one’s personality through many years of “unconsciousness.” Even persons with excellent intentions for doing good in the world may be blind to what lies beneath their public presentation of self. A well-intentioned European-American woman may use language that reveals her assumption that the Western world, the North American lifestyle, is superior to that of a culture that has different standards for shaping life. Her words may embarrass her and perhaps the group. Or, in group interactions, a man who has not worked

through issues of sexism may use language offensive to a woman on the trip. Either within the group or as part of the group, unconscious issues of the inner journey toward God’s peace may arise. These may be problems or they may be opportunities to assist persons in taking a step further on the journey. They may be opportunities to explore with the group the inward and outward dimensions of our own experience of the misuse of power, and perhaps understand more fully the issues of the misuse of power in another country, as well as the interactions between the United States and other countries in terms of power dynamics.

A second risk of this new awareness happening unconsciously is that of missing opportunities for growth and new insights. For example, a participant may awaken to a new sense of connection. Perhaps he may be wrestling in silence with a new perception about self and cultural imperialism. If you don’t encourage the group to address the inner journey, the individual may not mention the new-found perception and the wrestling, thus cutting off the possibility for enriching the group and stretching others’ experiences. Likewise, the silence cuts off community support and encouragement for the individual as he explores more deeply the new awareness.

If potential awakening is named as part of the whole experience of the trip—that is, if the group understands the dynamics of the

inner/outer journey they are making—there is a potential for self-reflection and group support on both aspects of the journey. It has been said that the personal is political. If we are willing to encounter the personal dimensions of the political realm in which we have been raised, if we are willing to examine the dynamics of its ripple effect in the rest of the world, then we may be more willing to look at our own lives as places in need of change. If we are willing to claim the “baggage” with which we travel and examine it along the way, we may find we arrive home with less “baggage” than when we began the trip.

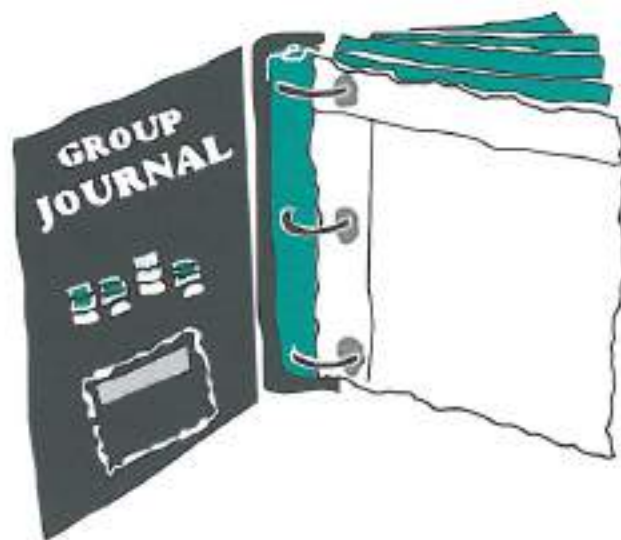
This, too, is mission. This, too, is peacemaking. This is also a necessary element of real transformation. We need to make changes in the outward manifestations of poverty, hunger, war, etc., that are symptoms of domination systems. We also need to make changes in the inner patterns we have learned from those systems to reach the full transformation of self and world that God hopes for us.

If transformation is to be an intentional part of the experience, it is essential that the publicity and initial communications about the trip convey this message. As Christians from the United States, we tend to move into the world with a sense that we are going to “help” and to “give.” There is nothing wrong with that. However, we must recognize how much help we need in confronting the systems of domination in

ourselves, in our own country and in our own world.

■ Planning for a Group Journal

We encourage you to offer the group the experience of a group journal. Purchase a blank journal for this purpose and have it ready the first day (a journal with ruled paper, such as a school notebook, is usually better than a blank one). At the orientation, introduce the group to the concept of the group journal and to the expectation that everyone will take one day of the trip to write about in the journal. If possible, assign the first person immediately so that the journal can begin the first day. Each consecutive day at the briefing or debriefing, pass the journal to



the next person responsible for the writing. If someone has been assigned to a particular day and has not had an opportunity to complete the writing, make arrangements for that person to catch up later on, using the notes from his or her personal journal for that day.

■ Briefing on Trip Destination

Participants need to have basic information about the region, country, or countries you will visit. This information should include a brief history, summaries on the culture, economy, political system, and religious traditions present there. Also include information about any Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) partnerships in the area. The Worldwide Mission in Partnership Program can provide information on PC(USA) partnerships and activities for a given destination. See Handout 5, "Resources from the General Assembly" in the section on Resources for Orientation and Preparation, page 107. For destinations within the United States, the local presbytery and synod offices can provide valuable information about Presbyterian ministries in the area.

Guidance on local customs is important as well. For instance, if local custom requires that women not wear shorts or slacks in public, it is essential that you include that information in the briefing material. If the church or denomination which is hosting you does not allow its members to smoke or drink, tell the participants this and ask them to honor those customs. Where other languages are spoken, it is helpful to include some basic language education. You may want to provide a list of common phrases for participants.

■ Sharing Information

Information sharing is an important part of the pre-trip experience. For some people it may even be the MOST important part. For others it will be more important to know the people than the schedule. Either way, information sharing is part of helping people feel at home. It provides a framework for the trip into which people can relax, a skeleton that is fleshed out each day, a structure on which people can lean. While it is practically impossible to provide everyone with all the information they may need in order to feel completely comfortable, sharing as much as is possible is important, always with the proviso that things may change "when we get there."

Whether you construct the schedule yourself or someone else provides the major time frames for the local experience, it is important to include in the schedule some time each day for briefing and debriefing of the day. Regular worship and community reflection time should also be part of the schedule. More will be said about this in the next chapter. It is important during the meetings or in the mailings to let people know that worship and reflection will be part of the trip.

Once you know who will be in the group, ask each person to give you a one-paragraph introduction to themselves. Compile the information so participants will know who is in the group.

Put together a packet with all the briefing information, including the information on group members, and mail it to the participants—or otherwise distribute it—prior to the trip. Take time during the orientation to go over these items with participants and to invite any questions they have about the information. You may want to refer to this material several times during the trip to remind participants of it and to reinforce its importance.

■ Developing Cross-Cultural Skills

■ Building Cross-Cultural Awareness

Whether you are traveling to India or to an American Indian reservation within the geographic boundaries of the United States—any place outside your own home church setting and life location—an awareness of cross-cultural concerns is important. A few small examples: if you live in Maine, Connecticut, or eastern New York and you travel to Ohio, you may elicit laughter if you ask for a “soda.” It’s called “pop” there. If you travel north from South Carolina or Georgia don’t expect to be served sweetened ice tea in Wisconsin. They let you add the sugar yourself. If you are from an African American congregation, or a Korean American congregation, you may find significantly different worship styles in a predominantly European American church

setting. If you travel from Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota to suburban Minneapolis, you may find some difference in the way time is perceived and a different perspective on what it means to be “on time.”

In many cultures it is impolite to make direct eye contact. In others the distance at which conversations take place is much closer than in our own. In some cultures and religious traditions, it is considered disrespectful for women to wear clothing which does not cover their arms. It is important for the group to have



information about the cultural customs in the place to which you travel. Encourage participants to honor local customs as much as is possible.

■ Responding to Cultural Differences

Beyond information, it is important for participants to look at their responses to cultural differences. As North Americans, we tend to think our way is the best way. Participants need to learn how to move

beyond their own culture. We need to learn to be genuinely open to another culture, to acknowledge differences as neither good or bad, but simply different. We need to learn to be available to its way and wisdom as an enrichment and, often, a needed instruction or correction to our own culture.

■ Building Multicultural Community

One of our hopes for mission trips is that the diversity among trip participants will increase. The exercise “Perspectives and Perceptions” may be used to point out that even within the group of travelers there is the potential for differing perceptions. These differences may be due to the following or other factors:

- life history
- cultural background
- language
- race or ethnicity
- gender
- age
- theology

■ Different Perspectives

If you are an African American leading a trip to South Africa, your own perspective on the trip experience may differ greatly from that of a European American member on the trip. If you are a Korean participant on a trip to South Korea, your perspective may enrich the group’s understanding of culture and religion in that country. If you are a man on a trip to a country in which women are generally not allowed to participate in the

social life of the culture, you may find it hard to hear how deeply a woman on the trip connects that experience with her own experience of church and society at home. In any of these cases, conflict may occur within the group.

Conflict that arises from conversation in a diverse group may be the most instructive learning encounter of the trip. It may become a learning tool that enriches, rather than detracts from, the group’s total experience. Traveling in a multicultural community that is aware of the issues raised by multicultural encounters, and that is open to speaking directly about those issues, can be an added bonus, because it will offer opportunities to look at the world and at oneself in new and different ways.

■ Power Dynamics

In his book *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in Multicultural Community*,⁷ Eric Law notes that there will be particular challenges to leading a multicultural group. One of the dynamics that will be operating within a multicultural group is that of power. Eric Law identifies two kinds of power in cultures. He describes high power cultures as ones in which persons sense they have the ability to change things and are willing, therefore, to speak out, to act on beliefs, to take healthy risks for change. He describes low power cultures as ones in which the

7. Eric Law, *The Wolf Shall Lie Down with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in Multicultural Community* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993).

opposite is true. People in these cultures tend to feel there is no possibility for change. They may not speak out, may not value their own opinions, may not risk themselves in order for a change to take place. When people of high power cultures mix with people in low power cultures, their views of personal power are often reflected in the way they relate to one another. Often, men (coming from a high power culture), especially white men of European heritage, tend to speak first. Women of the same race and national origins, may speak second. People of low power cultures, Hispanic persons, African American persons, Southeast Asian persons, and so on, will tend to remain silent, sometimes for the duration of the conversation—if they are not personally invited to speak. If this becomes a pattern in the group, it may isolate those of low power cultures. This phenomenon reduces the richness of the whole group's experience. These same power dynamics are often at work when groups from the United States attempt to talk and work with people in other countries, creating many communication difficulties and, sometimes, hard feelings. To explore this further, see chapter 3 in Law's book, "Differences in the Perception of Power and Their Consequences for Leadership."

A second cultural difference can affect the life of a multicultural group. There are persons who take more time to think before speaking than others do. For them to be called upon and expected to respond immediately is to require an unnatural manner of interaction. Again, the group loses if persons are passed over because their initial silence seems to indicate they do not have anything to say.

Please see Resources for Orientation and Preparation, pages 74–108, for ideas on how to prepare the group for the trip.

■ Further Resources

Friendship Press, the publishing arm of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., contains many country- or region-specific books, videos, and "map'n'facts" in its inventory, as well as materials on specific global issues. Many of the resources are produced by ecumenical working groups. Call 1-800-889-5733 or check online at www.nccusa.org/friend/fphome.html.

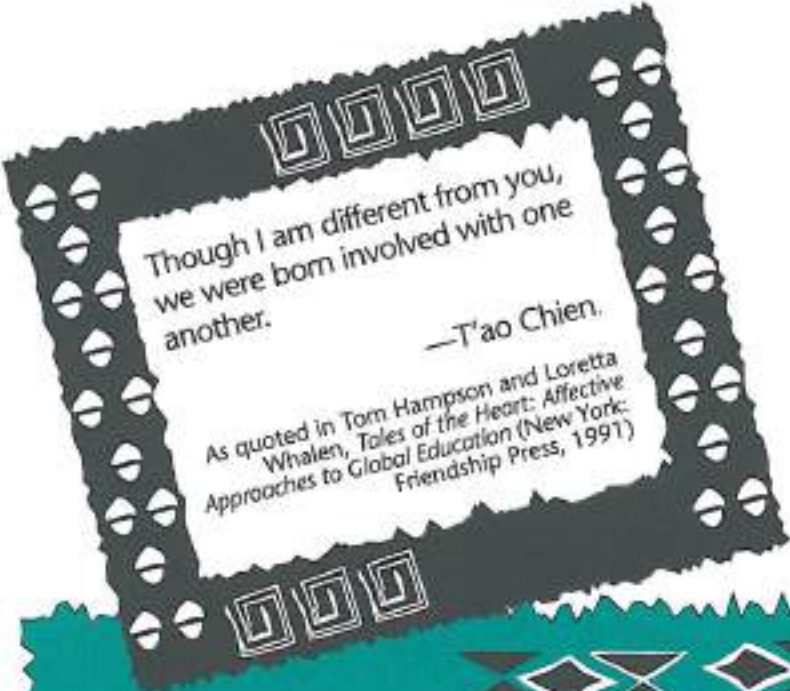
For sources of information available from the Worldwide Mission in Partnership Program, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, and from other General Assembly offices or programs, see Handout 5, "Resources from the General Assembly," page 107.

During the Trip

Chapter 4

Experiencing the Trip

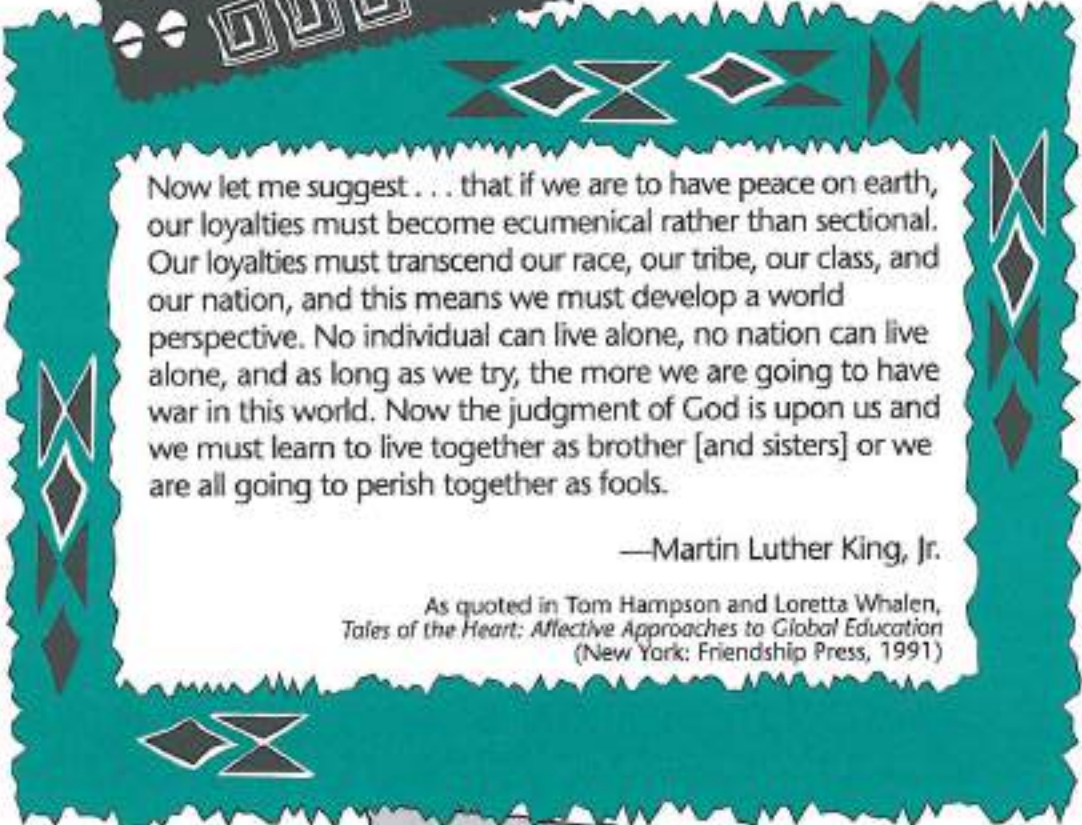
- Encountering God
- Leading the Group
- Ways to Work Toward Engagement, Community, and Reflection
- Love the Questions



Though I am different from you,
we were born involved with one
another.

—T'ao Chien.

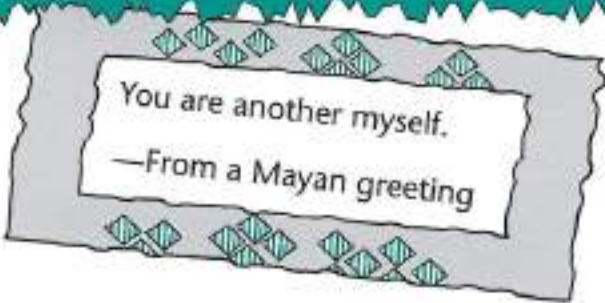
As quoted in Tom Hampson and Loretta
Whalen, *Tales of the Heart: Affective
Approaches to Global Education* (New York:
Friendship Press, 1991)



Now let me suggest . . . that if we are to have peace on earth,
our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional.
Our loyalties must transcend our race, our tribe, our class, and
our nation, and this means we must develop a world
perspective. No individual can live alone, no nation can live
alone, and as long as we try, the more we are going to have
war in this world. Now the judgment of God is upon us and
we must learn to live together as brother [and sisters] or we
are all going to perish together as fools.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

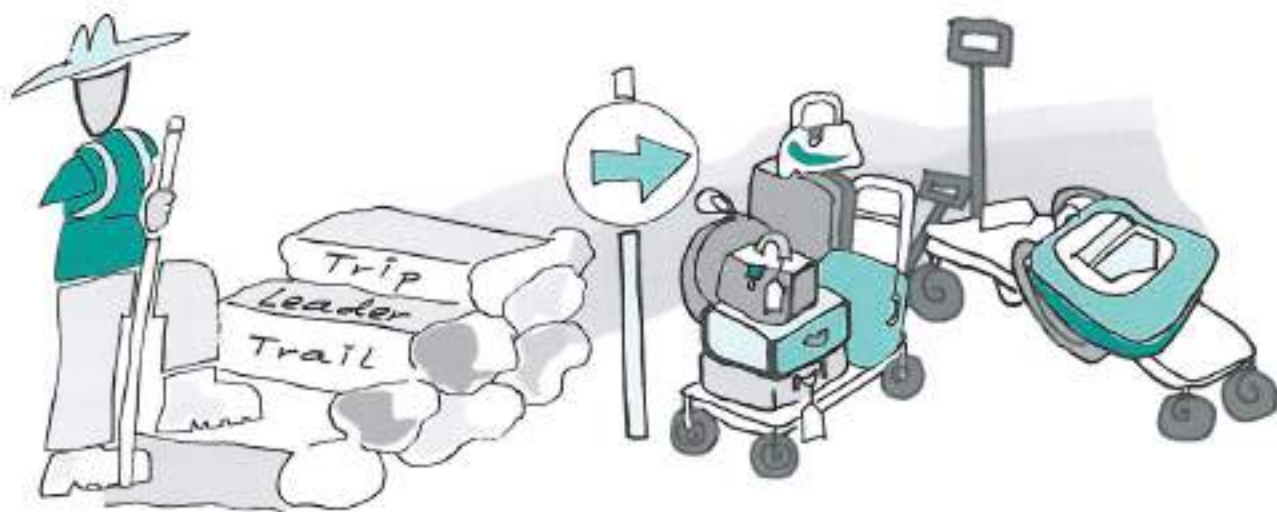
As quoted in Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen,
Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to Global Education
(New York: Friendship Press, 1991)



You are another myself.

—From a Mayan greeting

Experiencing the Trip



■ Encountering God

The following biblical reflections invite you to think about your leadership during the trip. But you don't need to keep them to yourself. They are written in such a way that you may share the perspectives they contain with the trip participants.

■ Spiritual Confirmation

Read Matthew 3:13–17.



Matthew 3 tells the story of Jesus' baptism. Whether the trip you are taking is a travel/study seminar or a service-learning project, it has the potential to be a life-changing experience. In this sense, it is like a baptism marking the end of the old life, the beginning of a new life. It is as if the experience itself becomes the Jordan River, a river of God, a river of living water that

washes away old perspectives and invites a reorientation of one's life. Within this experience, it is quite possible that participants may experience, individually or together, a "sacred moment," a moment of sacrament when they are particularly aware of God's presence. It may not be in the form of a descending dove. It may not be a voice from heaven. Instead, it may be while eating handmade tortillas hot off the fire in the cooking hut of a Mayan village. It may be the voice of Abuna Elias Chacour speaking about the high school and college he founded on the West Bank for students who are Palestinian, Israeli, Muslim and Druze. It may be as they worship among the multitude of Presbyterians in Seoul, Korea. It may be the moment after they brush the last bit of paint on the walls of a new hospital kitchen in Pinon, Haiti. The experience of mission trips and travel/study seminars is an "immersion" experience: it is

intense. It is potentially transforming. It holds the possibility of death and resurrection.

■ Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on the story of Jesus' baptism. How did his baptism impact and influence his life? In what ways was Jesus' baptism a part of his whole life journey?
2. Identify and reflect on significant events in your own life (for example, graduations, marriage, new job, birth of children or grandchildren). How have these events been part of the unfolding of your life journey?
3. Think of a time in your life when you were "immersed" in a project or an experience and emerged from it changed in some way. How was your life affected by the event?

In your role as leader of the trip, watch for the life-changing moments. Listening to participants' accounts of such experiences, affirming those moments, celebrating them, and nurturing them is an important part of your calling. With individuals, this may mean listening to their unfolding stories. It may mean standing in silent awe with them after the telling. Such moments often need "a witness," someone who will share the power of the moment with another. Entering the city of Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, a trip participant cried when he saw the destruction there. In that moment, the appropriate response became

a silent extension of a hand, a connection, a recognition, a validation of his holy response to the aftermath of violence in that place. With a group, there may be an opportunity to honor in ritual, in liturgy, in worship together either the corporate experience of a sacred moment shared by all or the collection of individual experiences present in the group. It may be helpful for you to talk about such experiences with the whole group during the orientation time or in one of the early reflection sessions and encourage the group to be sensitive to such moments, so that participants may be "witnesses" for each other.

■ Confronting Systems

Read Luke 6:1–36.



In Luke's sixth chapter, we find a sequence of events: Jesus' confrontation with unjust systems, Jesus calling his disciples, and Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Plain. In the places you will visit, it is probable that some form of injustice exists or you would not be there. Poverty, hunger, political oppression, economic inequities, religious prejudice, war. You may know a great deal about the problems of the people you visit. Or, you may know very little. You may find that the information you have is insufficient, inaccurate, challenged by what you see or hear. What you see and hear may also be in conflict. Your encounter with injustice, with

the victims of it, with the systems that perpetrate it, with people who perpetuate it, may be very uncomfortable.

As you prepare to share the experience of travel, work, and study with others, it is important to consider ahead of time how you will respond to various aspects of the situation. How will you respond to those whom we label “victims”? How will you deal with confrontation with the systems that wound and kill? How will you deal with the people who represent those systems? How will you deal with the inner turmoil all this may cause? How will you deal with whatever responsibility or complicity we North Americans may bear in the situation? How will you deal with your own pain in response to the situation, especially if in your own experience you have been excluded in the United States, in our culture, or in the church because of your race, gender, age, ethnic heritage, or any other difference?

When we come face to face with injustice, when we understand peace with justice as the fulfillment of God’s intention for creation, and when we deeply desire God’s intention, then we seek ways of contributing to its realization. We want to make a commitment, a commitment that reaffirms our intent to be people of God, disciples of Jesus Christ, living temples of the Holy Spirit. Our commitment or recommitment opens the opportunity for God to call us again. As you travel, listen, work, and learn, be alert to conversion experiences that may lead you or any of the

participants to commit or recommit your lives to God. Some may experience a new conversion through their immersion in another culture, some through a gift of time and labor, still others in situations of great pain or great promise. Nurture the recognition of conversion moments, and celebrate the possibilities.

■ *Reflection Questions*

1. Reflect on the story of Jesus violating the laws of the Sabbath in order to care for people’s basic needs and to restore health. Identify places in your life or in the life of the church where there are difficult decisions to make about ethical priorities and compassionate action. In what ways do the situations you have named relate to the Bible passage?
2. Think of a time when you felt moved to a small act of compassion, even though it was risky, because you were going against a law or cultural value or popular understanding (for instance, stopping to help someone when it meant being late for church).
3. Remember a time when you felt called by God to make a commitment or to renew a commitment. What were the circumstances of that calling and how did you respond to the call?

We read that after he called the disciples, Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Plain. This capsule version of Jesus’ teaching reminds us that, as disciples, we have not “arrived,” but rather we have “begun.” The need for daily opportunities for reflection and

conversation, for clarification of information and questioning, for mulling and musing, for pondering and praying cannot be understated. If people give themselves over to immersion and conversion they need the support of a community, a community that continues to learn and reflect, to support and challenge. As you move through the time of learning and/or serving, create spaces in the schedule, make time for participants to “reconnect” with each other and with “the mystery of their being” through reflection and community.

■ Spirited Comprehension

Acts 2:1–21

Acts 2 is the story of Pentecost. It takes place in Jerusalem, which at that time was a cross-cultural meeting place. People from many places came to trade in the markets there. It was not unusual to hear several different languages spoken. What was so astounding in this Pentecost event is that people understood each other. The Tower of Babel story (Gen. 11:1–9) was reversed. Communication was restored, made possible by the presence of the Holy Spirit. For a brief moment, communication opened up across nationalities, ethnic backgrounds, native languages, cultural experiences, and social stratifications. Wherever communication is restored, we hear an echo of Pentecost. Whenever communication is restored, we receive a gift of new possibility.

Imagine your whole trip as having the potential for a kind of Pentecost, for an understanding beyond differences, for a restoration of communication, for a coming together of community. This may not even be an international event. This Pentecost experience may happen within your own group. Even the most seemingly homogeneous groups may discover differences that need to be understood, gaps in communication that must be bridged, separations between people that need to be reconciled. If your group is one of diverse people, there will be a clear opportunity for a Pentecost quality to the trip. People of differing races have different experiences of United States culture, society, economics, and politics and will bring those perspectives with them. Likewise, men and women will bring varying perspectives, as will persons of different ethnic backgrounds, ages, economic circumstances. While we may all carry a United States passport that may be where our experience of what it means to live in the U.S. stops. There may be widely differing understandings and expressions of theology as well. It is important to take time to honor differences and to communicate with one another about the differences you discover.

The purpose of the trip is not to see all you can see or even complete all the projects you anticipated. The larger purpose of the trip is mutual transformation of several things:

- ourselves and our own understandings
- our hosts' understandings of themselves and of us
- our relationships with one another
- our mutual understanding of and commitment to being the church of Jesus Christ in and for the world

The biggest transformation, the most challenging, may be within your own community rather than with those you meet as part of the trip's itinerary. One of the greatest enrichments of an experience such as the one ahead of you is the presence of different perspectives. When you see them as gifts, the variety of viewpoints become positive elements in the trip rather than issues with which you have to contend. Recognize the gifts and seek a Pentecost experience with your group, as well as with the people with whom you meet and work.

■ Reflection Questions

1. Have you had the experience of being in a place where a language was spoken that you did not understand? How did you feel in that situation?
2. Consider a conflict situation, that you are familiar with, in which the parties involved found a way to move beyond that which kept them from communicating. How did that situation feel before the breakthrough and after the breakthrough?

3. Recall a time in your life when you experienced God's grace in the midst of conflict. Perhaps you found yourself growing through a conversation that led to reconciliation. Perhaps you discovered a deeper peace in your self because you had moved through an argument while retaining respect for the other party. What enabled grace, reconciliation, and peace to occur? What emotions did you feel in the process?
4. How may these learnings be applied to the trip?

Time taken to facilitate communication is not "lost" time. While not every setting may be appropriate for this, it is important to construct the schedule in such a way that there will be opportunities to develop communication about different experiences, perspectives, and opinions in the group, and to deal with conflicts that may arise.

■ Leading the Group

Once you reach the primary place of your trip's focus or of your service project, you will need to give participants a little time to get adjusted. On a long trip, this may include an early bedtime and awareness of jet lag. On a shorter trip, or one within the same time zone, it may mean getting used to accommodations, doing a little exploring, tending to physical needs for food and sleep. Where possible, it is wise to do the orientation on the first day of the trip if you have gathered participants for the first time at an airport en route to your destination or at the destination itself. It is also wise to plan

active things for that first day, rather than a series of speakers in whose presence jet-lagged trip members may fall asleep!

Remember that every part of the trip is food for thought. The banquet does not begin when you arrive, it begins when you leave home—or perhaps sooner! Participants may have significant adventures even before you arrive at your destination. Try to check in with people individually on their initial travel experience. Inquire during the group time about any mishaps or serendipities en route!

■ Ways to Work toward Engagement, Community, and Reflection

■ Community Time

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks you have is scheduling community time. Creating time and space for reflection and sharing every day is not easy. First of all, you will have at least two different types of people, morning people and night people, and bridging this gap may require some finesse. For some folks, getting up early in order to have significant time before leaving for the day's activities or for the work project is attractive. For some folks who don't wake up fully until mid- or late morning, an evening gathering is preferred, even if it is after a long and intense day. You will not please everybody all the time in terms of scheduling. You may want to alternate morning and night as the time for extended community time, or at least not schedule all

mornings or all evenings. You may also want to be alert to opportunities during the day to gather folks in the midst of things. For example, one group arrived early for a church service on Sunday afternoon in a small town in Croatia. They went into the bombed-out sanctuary, stood in a circle, and engaged in a time of prayer and meditation before turning to the manse next door where the service was held.

■ Morning and Evening Prayer

Beginning each day and ending each day with a time of prayer puts a frame on the day. It keeps the day's work or activities within the context of faith. These prayer times do not need to be extensive. A brief, well-chosen Scripture, a short opportunity for silence, a spoken prayer by you or by someone else in the group, can work well. Morning prayers may include some thought related to the day, a brief quotation, a hymn, even a well-selected word or phrase to mull over as a centering point during the day. Morning prayers may also provide an opportunity to lift up concerns or anticipations for the day. Evening prayers may repeat or vary from the pattern of morning prayer. They may include opportunities for intercessory prayers that lift up persons you have met during the day, situations you have encountered, experiences you have had individually or as a group. Intercessory prayer time may offer participants the opportunity to name loved ones back home, family, friends, colleagues, or

situations at home or elsewhere in the world about which they are concerned. After a long day, you may choose to close the day with a hymn or a reading that sums up or highlights something in the day. Prayer is not about words, but about relationships. The spoken or sung words assist us in being present with God so that God may speak to us. The spoken or sung words also may help us to focus and give voice to our own needs, concerns, and intentions in the presence of God. Sometimes, the words allow us to let go and to let ourselves be carried along on the faith and love of the community. Sometimes we simply need to be cradled in the “everlasting arms of God.”

■ Briefing and Debriefing

Briefing and debriefing is not the same as worship time. The purpose of briefing is the communication of essential information; the purpose of debriefing is the opportunity to share experiences.

Briefing should include a lay-out of the day, and a check-in on people’s health and general well-being. You can do this with a brief “check-in” time, either going around the circle or in popcorn fashion allowing each person to speak and to choose a word or phrase that represents the state of their being on that day. The check-in may surface something that needs more group attention or your personal attention. You can then schedule group time to attend to it, or make a mental note to intentionally

connect with a person or persons during the day.

Debriefing at the close of the day may include anything from a significant time for digesting and reflecting on the events of the day to a simple circle “roundup” where each person is given the opportunity to concisely name what has been most meaningful or most important event of the day. Also it may be a good opportunity to gather questions and perhaps to answer or discuss a few. Again, it is important to check in on the health and well-being of participants. If there have been conflicts or problems during the day, this may be the time to deal with them.

Even though you plan for the briefing and debriefing times each day, there may be days when, due to intractable schedules, you must delete or minimize your plans. Such is the life of a trip leader. You cannot always control the schedule. Late buses, unexpected additions to the day’s itinerary, and surprises of all sorts are USUAL in group travel and are part of, not apart from, the learnings of the trip. Stay creative. Use the surprises, even the frustrations, as teachable moments. Let the interruptions be gifts that expand your understanding rather than shrink your patience. Most of all, let yourself have a sense of humor about the unavoidable glitches. Laugh and the others will laugh with you!

You may combine the time for briefing or debriefing with the worship/prayer time, especially on very full days. If you do this, it

may be helpful to take a candle with you to light as the demarcation of prayer time and worship space.

■ Reflection Time

While each day optimally holds some time for processing what is happening to the group, and, no doubt, informal conversation happens as well, it is essential that you set aside longer times for intentional sharing and reflection. In-depth dialogue and real wrestling with the issues of the trip need a spacious climate in which to emerge. When possible, it is good to select a time when people are rested and when rushing to the next event will not encroach on the reflection time.

■ Vulnerability and Trust

A spacious time frame is not the only aspect of a climate that fosters the willingness of participants to struggle with issues. The group must have a sense that they can trust each other not to belittle an opinion, not to dismiss a question, not to demean another member. In an unfamiliar place, we may tend to put on protective roles or to erect protective walls around the most tender parts of our personality. If the group is to become a community in which transformation is possible, welcomed, and expected through dialogue with one another, then members of the group will have to risk vulnerability. People usually are willing to risk some vulnerability if they feel the group is safe and trustworthy.

Encourage in the group an atmosphere of respect, humility, compassion, empathy, and acceptance. You may want to establish a group covenant which includes an agreement about what may be shared beyond the confines of the group.

■ Processing and Speaking

Some participants are more comfortable than others in jumping into discussions. For them, a growth point may be in remaining quiet. For others who find it more difficult to get into a conversation or to voice their thoughts, a growth point may be in speaking out. Some people discover what they think as they speak. Others learn by keeping silent, mulling, and musing, and will eventually speak if they are given the chance. Often they will have distilled the conversation and will offer a nugget of wisdom; they will take a piece of rock-hard information or experience and discover the diamond in it. Remember that silence in this context is not empty. Some people will need that time to let their words emerge from a place deep within. *Honor the silence as much as you honor the speech.* There is much going on within people that is “in process” and needs time to ripen. Rushing for a response may cut off the process rather than assisting it. Discipline yourself not to “rescue the conversation” or rush into the silence in order to “keep things going.”

You may want to read a small book by Gunilla Norris titled *Sharing Silence*.⁸ This is an excellent resource for use with groups as they come to understand the power of silence and its political nature and impact. It may also be helpful to share Norris's perspective on silence with the group to give them permission to respect and honor the silences that may rise and punctuate their conversation, the way a "rest" mark does in a great symphony.

See Resources for Experiencing the Trip, page 109, for ideas on inclusive group conversation during group time.

■ From Reporting to Reflecting

At the end of each day as you debrief, you may find that people do more reporting than reflecting. For some this will indicate a personality more keyed to facts as a natural way of processing experience. For others it may signal the need for more time and space to sort through the events of the day in order to go beyond recalling and naming them. Or simple reporting may be a symptom of fatigue. Unless you have reserved a significant amount of time and have scheduled a rest or break before beginning, when you ask for reflections you

may only receive a report: the facts, and just the facts, of the day.

You need to find not only space in the schedule, but also a physical space that is conducive to reflection. Cramped seating, noisy competition from the surrounding environment, visual distractions such as people walking through a public place, may all impede your purpose, which is to focus on what is happening to and with participants on the inner journey of the soul.

Recognizing that the

optimum in scheduling and location are not always possible, it will be beneficial to seek the best that is possible and use it well.

When the optimum is not available, acknowledge that with the group and ask for their attention and cooperation.

Now the really tough part: the move from reporting to reflecting involves risk—on your part and on the part of the participants. It involves moving beneath the apparent, the superficial, the surface layer of the trip to engage the emotional and spiritual aspects of persons. It involves a vulnerability, a willingness to reveal oneself, to move out of the comfort zone into confrontation with what one is experiencing on the outer journey and into directly meeting the issues being raised on the inner journey. If you are



8. Gunilla Norris, *Sharing Silence: Mindful Practice and Mindful Living* (New York: Bell Tower, 1992).

not willing and able to do this, if you are not actively aware on this level yourself, it will be more difficult to invite others to this kind of intimate exposure. However, for transformation to occur, some exposure of this sort is nearly always necessary, and nearly always needs nurture and support to continue.

Be aware as you move to this level of conversation, that there may be persons in your group whose personal lives hold experiences or issues that reduce their willingness, or readiness, or ability to share on a deep level. For instance, a woman who has experienced domestic violence may encounter on the trip stories of violence similar to her own. She may not be able to participate freely in a conversation about that encounter. A man whose son is mentally or physically challenged may have difficulty in responding in conversation regarding a visit to a school for children with similar mental or physical challenges. For many good reasons, participants may be unable to risk themselves in intimate conversation on certain topics. Respect each person and his or her boundaries.

■ Nurture Dialogue

There is a difference between dialogue and debate. We are interested in dialogue. There is a difference between discussion (cutting things apart) and conversation (bridging gaps in our personal understandings and group awareness). We are interested in conversation. People may need to be

reminded that it is fine to have strong personal opinions, but it is inappropriate to require them of others or to use the group reflection time to try to convince the rest of the group of one's own point of view. Give people permission to leave things hanging. In other words, it is not necessary to answer every question, solve every problem, "fix or finish" other participants' statements, their processes, or their experiences. While the group may indeed come to consensus on an issue or on a response to an experience, or on a follow-up action, it is not necessary for this to happen in order for the trip to be a success or for individuals to have a personally transforming experience. If group consensus is forced, it may serve to disenfranchise participants who resist the consensus. Keeping an open dialogue, and affirming an ongoing conversation are as much the responsibility of the leader as is asking the tough questions that invite the dialogue and conversation in the first place. See Resources for Experiencing the Trip, pages 109–122, for activities to nurture dialogue and reflection.

■ Encourage Social Analysis

Social analysis will happen! Either intentionally or unintentionally, guided or unguided, participants will be observing the social structures, political climate, economic systems, and cultural expressions of the place they visit. When we move into another culture, we naturally compare what we see with what is familiar to us. It may be helpful to use a structured experience to

assist participants in looking closely at the culture in which they find themselves. This does two things: (a) it offers participants tools with which to work, and (b) it offers the context of community in which they may check out their personal perceptions, revise narrow understandings, expand information and awareness. Social analysis happens as participants share their varied responses to the group's common experience.

See the section titled "Cross-Cultural Activities," in *Resources for Experiencing the Trip*, pages 117–119, for exercises to encourage social analysis.

■ Love the Questions

■ *Reflection Questions for Leaders*

These questions are to help you reflect on your experience and what is happening in the group. You may want to use them as part of your personal review of the day.

1. As I think about today's experience, what stands out most for me?
2. What has gone well? What has not gone well? How can I change things so that tomorrow will go better?
3. How is the group "jelling?" What signs do you see of the group becoming a community? What more can I do to assist this process?
4. Is there anyone who consistently remains on the fringe of the group? From time to time people may need some space apart from the group and

may choose to sit by themselves on a bus or at a meal. This is certainly legitimate and even to be encouraged as part of self-care on the trip. However, if this is a consistent pattern, it is worth noting and dealing with in a direct way with either the individual, the group, or both.

5. Is anyone consistently pulling the group in his or her direction—manipulating, dominating, or controlling the group or individuals in the group? Such behavior would include one person doing most of the talking, or someone lobbying for her or his agenda to replace all or part of the group's agenda. You may have to take steps to deal with the behavior directly.
6. What am I noticing about my leadership style as I move through the trip experience? How am I being stretched? When and why am I shutting down? Do I need or want to change this at this time? How?

■ Supplemental Questions for Teachable Moments

These questions may be helpful to have in your hip pocket for teachable moments. A teachable moment is one of those unpredictable times when all of a sudden someone says or does something that may highlight an understanding or invite the group into deeper encounter, or stir a prayer, or evoke an opportunity to pursue an issue. It is helpful to have some sense of how to introduce a question at that moment, to have in mind a way to overlay the immediate experience with a moment

of reflection right then and there. Tailor these to your particular trip situation and the core issues it raises. It may be appropriate at a moment of deep apprehension of the holy or sacred nature of a person or event to invite participants into a time of silence, either letting that “sound of sheer silence” (1 Kings 19:12 NRSV) speak itself, or allowing it to be a prelude to the question and more silent reflection or conversation.

1. How are we meeting “Emmanuel” in this time and place? How is “God with us” in this moment?
2. How are we experiencing the authentic humanity of Christ in this moment? How are we receiving, sharing, giving, manifesting the “new community of God’s peace” at this time?
3. Is there a call to action in this moment? Is there a call to prayer in this moment? Is there a call to sing in this moment, in praise, in sorrow, in solidarity? Is there a call to speak or respond in this moment—to one another in the group or to others present?

■ Questions to Offer Participants for Their Ongoing Reflection on the Trip

1. What is growing in me through this experience?
2. What is being challenged in me through this experience?
3. What is being affirmed in me through this experience?
4. What is being called forth from me in this experience?

5. Is there a specific new commitment and call to action for the future which is emerging for me?

6. To what extent am I participating in this experience? Am I as open as I would like to be to what I am hearing, seeing, feeling? Am I sharing as much as I want to share of what I am thinking and feeling? Am I connecting with the group at the level that feels right to me and is conducive to building Christian community among participants?

Please see Resources for Experiencing the Trip, pages 109–122, for suggested activities to do with the group during the trip.

■ Further Resources

Broyles, Anne, ed. *Ways of Justice, Ways of Peace: Words to Sustain the Spirit*. Methodist Federation for Social Action (212 E. Capitol St. NE, Washington, DC 20003), 1993.

A year’s worth of quotations bringing together the life of the spirit and the life of social action.

Hampson, Tom, and Loretta Whalen, eds. *Make a World of Difference: Creative Activities for Global Learning*. New York: Friendship Press, 1991.

Offers a wealth of creative activities for learning in the global classroom. The focus is on global interdependence and international development.

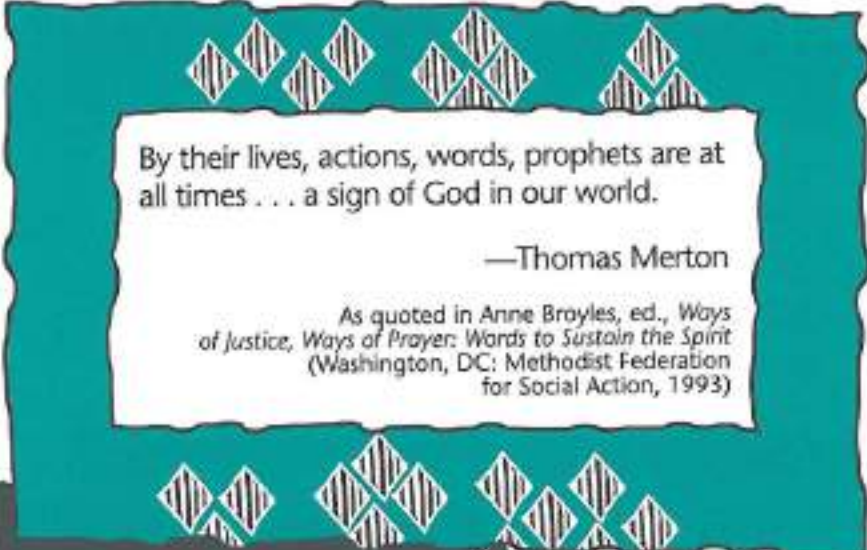
Leadingham, Carrie, Joann E. Moschella, and Hilary M. Vartanian, eds. *Peace Prayers: Meditation, Affirmations, Invocations, Poems, and Prayers for Peace*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992.

A wonderful collection of prayers and thoughts usable in a variety of contexts on the trip. It might be called “spiritual fast food!” It is small book and easily tucked into a purse, backpack, or other carrying bag.

Chapter 5

Preparing to Re-enter Our Culture

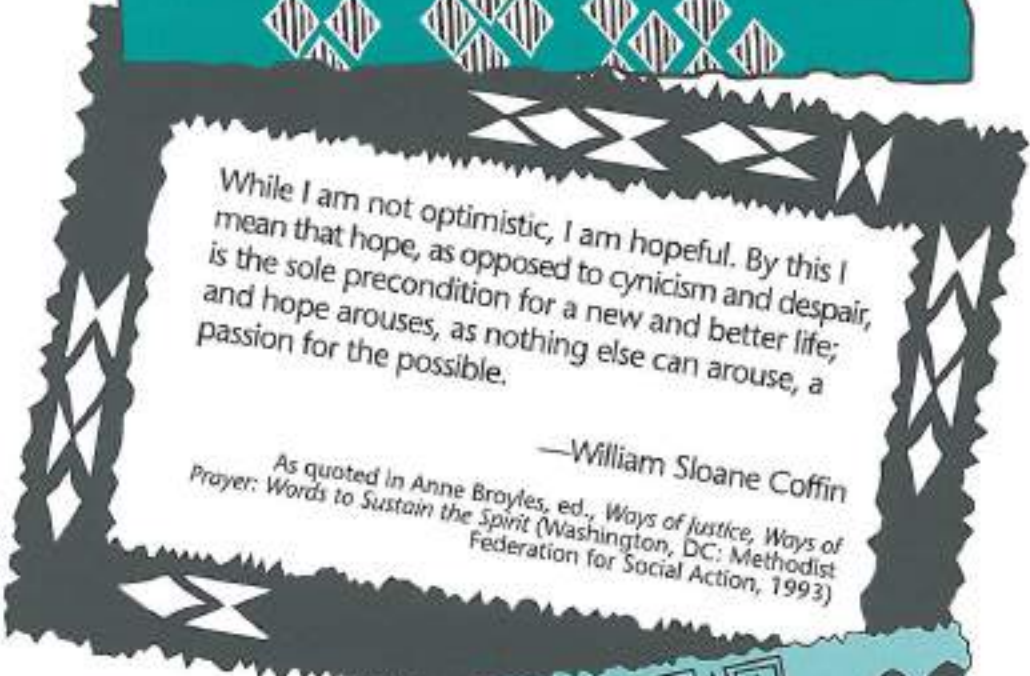
- Encountering God
- Leading the Group toward Re-entry
- Love the Questions



By their lives, actions, words, prophets are at all times . . . a sign of God in our world.

—Thomas Merton

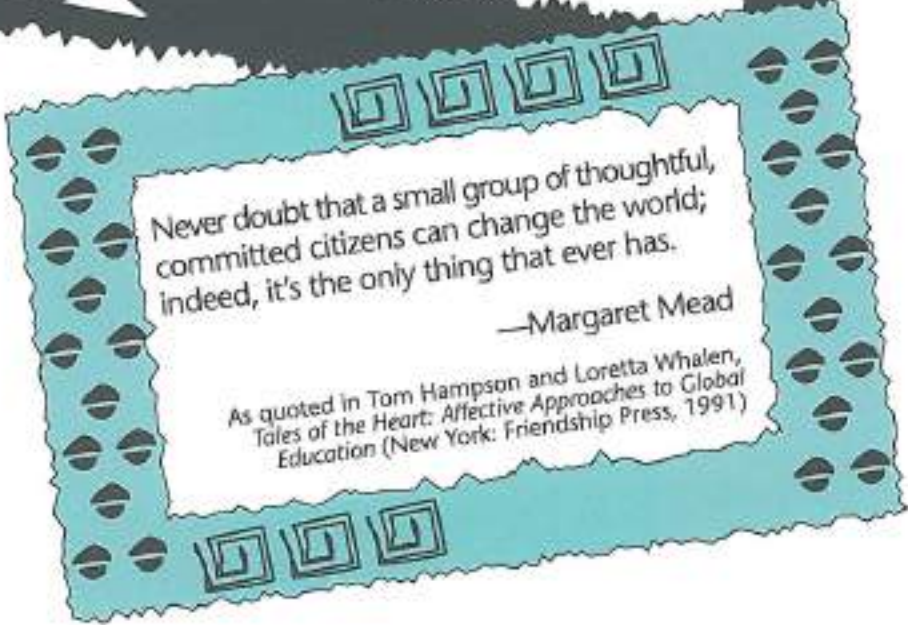
As quoted in Anne Broyles, ed., *Ways of Justice, Ways of Prayer: Words to Sustain the Spirit* (Washington, DC: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1993)



While I am not optimistic, I am hopeful. By this I mean that hope, as opposed to cynicism and despair, is the sole precondition for a new and better life; and hope arouses, as nothing else can arouse, a passion for the possible.

—William Sloane Coffin

As quoted in Anne Broyles, ed., *Ways of Justice, Ways of Prayer: Words to Sustain the Spirit* (Washington, DC: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1993)

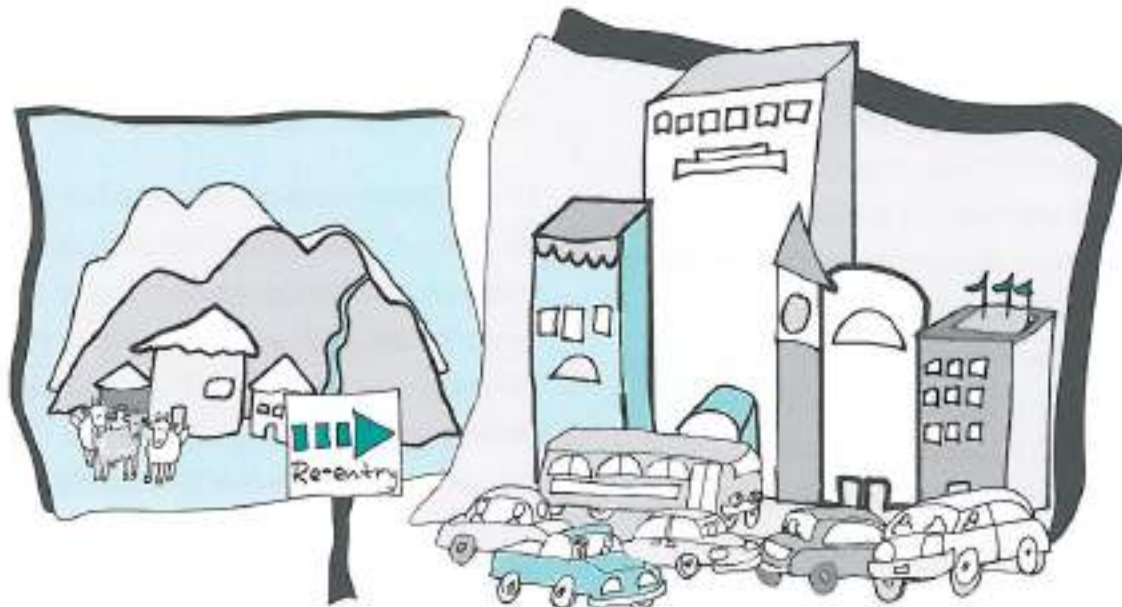


Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

—Margaret Mead

As quoted in Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen, *Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to Global Education* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991)

Preparing Yourself to Re-enter Our Culture



■ Encountering God

■ Go Tell

Read Mark 16:1–20.



In this passage we read of Jesus' resurrection. The instruction to the women is: "Go tell." The different endings to Mark's Gospel reveal several responses to the "go tell" directive.

We have likened the service-learning mission trip, and the travel/study seminar, to a kind of baptism, an immersion experience in which we go under the river of life, into the depths, and emerge different, changed, transformed in some way, large or small. Likewise we may expect that somewhere in the midst of the experience we will encounter death and resurrection in the place we visit, among the people with whom we talk. You may be

witnesses to the death and resurrection experience of one of the members of your traveling community. You may have a death and resurrection experience yourself. In the biblical account of Jesus' resurrection, the response of the first witnesses to the event may inform you in how to respond to your contemporary experience, whether as a witness or as the one resurrected into new life, new hope, new action.

In the face of a profound encounter with either death or life, the response may be terror. It is no accident that in the Hebrew Scriptures, the word for "fear" and "awe" is the same. In radical amazement, even amazing grace, we may be struck dumb. The most articulate among us may become speechless, without words to adequately describe the mystery, the miracle, the meaning of the experience. The first recorded response to the resurrection was fear resulting in silence. The women told no one.

It is possible that having been immersed in the experience of the trip you too may falter when someone asks, “How was your trip?” You may have been on a service project where the group built significant relationships with the local community. Or you may have been on a travel/study seminar where the group encountered both the evil of the world and the courageous survival of the human spirit. Whatever the case, in the first few days after their return, travelers tend to be overwhelmed by the enormity of what they saw, felt, heard, and thought, and how it has affected them. They may have difficulty reconnecting with friends and family and readjusting to our culture. For some, returning from a two-thirds-world country, simply going to a grocery store, much less the mall, may be an experience of extreme pain, further revelation, deep grief, contrition, even guilt. Alone, without the companionship and support of the traveling community, without those who shared the experience, a traveler may find it almost unbearable to tell the stories that touched the heart. Travelers may fall silent. They may elude their questioners by saying “good” or “fine” or “exciting,” shutting down the questions with a minimal response.

A second possibility is that as you return home, as you re-enter your life and culture, the experience of the trip will seem unbelievable, even to you. You were there. You saw it with your own eyes; you heard with your own ears; did the work with your

own hands, and yet in the context of your daily home routines, it seems like a tall tale. You wonder if you really felt those feelings, or was it contrived, constructed somehow for your benefit, keyed to your sympathies?

Or the trip may be so very real, so clear in your mind, that it does not even seem like memory, but continues with you as a very present partner in your days—yet others dismiss your telling of it. They do not believe you. They may not want to believe that you have been changed by the experience. They may not want to hear about it for fear that it may challenge them to change as well. In both these cases, how to interpret the experience becomes a difficult question. It is good, then, to continue to have some contact with those with whom you shared the experience, for “reality checks,” for support, for the continuing encouragement of community.

Biblical scholars have discovered ancient copies of the Gospel of Mark with different endings. There are at least two endings, more depending on how you count. Different translations identify the endings in different ways. Though the number of verses in Mark’s last chapter is not clear, what is clear is that the response to resurrection includes both action and interpretation: “Go and tell” (verse 7). What is it that you will go and tell?

■ Reflection Questions

1. Was there a place on the trip where you saw crucifixion (a place where God's peace, justice, and joy are being snuffed out by greed, oppression, torture, war . . .)?
2. Was there a place on the trip where you saw resurrection (a place where new life is emerging out of experiences of poverty or hatred or death)?
3. What is the "good news" you can take home?
4. What is the most important thing for someone to hear about the experience you have had?

As with the early disciples and friends of Jesus, it may take a while for participants to know what they have experienced. Offer them the opportunity to reflect on the people and places they have visited, and to make the connection with biblical stories. Such reflection may assist them in sorting through the wide expanse of experience and distilling it into some initial impressions that can be shared when they return. People process experiences differently and on different time lines. Allow those who are ready to share to do so. Allow those who need more time to take time. Affirm everyone's process and encourage them to keep reflecting on the trip and letting new discoveries emerge even after they return home.

■ Stop and Think

Read Luke 4:1–13.



Jesus met the Adversary in the wilderness and was tempted. What about you?

When you return home, some people will immerse

themselves in your story; they will hear, see, and feel with you to such an extent that they may also be transformed. The response to telling becomes appropriate action. What is the appropriate action response to what you have seen and heard and to what you tell others of your journey? It will, of course, vary for each trip and each person.

However, the passage from Luke offers some clues as to how to discern what action may be appropriate and what inappropriate.

At the beginning of his ministry, just after his baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness and was tempted by the Adversary (otherwise known as the devil). As he sought direction for his ministry, Jesus experienced the temptation to solve problems by using power inappropriately. Sometimes when we have met hunger, poverty, and the scars of war face to face, we want to "fix it" in any way we can. We may be tempted to "just send money." We may feel a personal need to deliver goods or services to the people we met on the trip, or perhaps to those whose stories we heard.

Stop. Step back from such impulses. Ask if the Adversary is tempting you with power. Is the Adversary luring you with the idea that

you know what is best for others, that you can exert control over others—with the best intentions, of course—making decisions without even consulting them? Don't be tempted. Work through the mission partnerships, the partnership churches and organizations in the area you traveled. That is the best method of honoring both the humanity of the people and addressing their needs.

The Adversary continued to wrestle with Jesus for his mind and heart. He tempted Jesus with public recognition, limelight, authority, and glory. It is possible for you, as you tell of your experiences, to attract attention, to become the center of the story rather than an interpreter of it. Sometimes it is important, even essential, to speak of one's own transformation, to tell one's own story as part of the overall story. But one can do it with humility. You have had a special experience, but you do not need to use it to make yourself seem special in the eyes of others. You are part of the beloved people of God who are called to share both the deaths and resurrections of the life journey with one another. This is a high calling, and not to be used for personal gain or glory.

Finally, the Adversary tempted Jesus to throw caution to the wind, renounce responsibility for his actions and let God take care of the consequences. In particular the Adversary tried to wheedle Jesus into throwing himself off the pinnacle of the Temple, trusting that God would not let him fall to his death. When we return we may be

tempted to forge ahead in unwise ways in telling the story of the trip. We may go off the deep end, thinking we should quit our job to go back to where we have been, so that we can help the people we met. We may make the experience into its own kind of idol, allowing it to dominate our lives, to take all our energy. When the trip becomes the object of our worship, instead of the One who calls us to ministry, it loses its creative place in our lives and may even become destructive.

There are other temptations as well. We may feel guilty about our role, or our country's role, or the church's role in the problems we have encountered. Dwelling on guilt is not a healthy personal lifestyle. Dwelling on guilt is not a powerful agent for change. It does not make a person available for actively working for peace. Facing our complicity, owning it, and taking the steps we can to change what we can in ourselves and in society is not only more healthy for our bodies, it is more effective in transforming the world. Likewise, there may be a tendency to feel overwhelmed and depressed about a perceived lack of creative power in the face of the enormity of the pain of the world. These feelings tend to produce more inaction than action. Feeling impotent or insignificant will not change the situation. Assessing what is possible, including the powerful action of prayer, is what will add transformative potential to the world community.

■ Reflection Questions

1. As you think about the temptations Jesus faced, do you see some of them present in the church or in individuals you know? Without naming names, describe how you see these temptations occurring.
2. As you think about the temptations Jesus faced, are there any that you find present in your own life? What makes you susceptible to a certain temptation? How do you resist it?
3. Are there temptations, other than the ones identified in Luke's Gospel, which you find present in your own life with regard to discovering "appropriate responses and actions" after this trip? How will you deal with them?

There may be other temptations that the group will name for themselves. You may find that in one group there will be named the temptation to talk too much and the temptation to be silent, the temptation to discount persons, things, practices, or systems, and the temptation to make such things into an idol, the temptation to guilt and the temptation to fix. No two people will have precisely the same response. As the group arrived with different backgrounds, as they offered their varying perspectives throughout the trip, they will choose different ways of interpreting the experience and different means of acting themselves and involving others in action. As participants prepare to go home, it is

important to spend time as a group talking about how each person will respond to the experience, what the temptations may be, how each will share the story, and how he or she discerns the call to action.

■ Leading the Group toward Re-entry

■ Conversations on Going Home

Be intentional about providing the time and space for reflection as participants prepare to go home. In the final day or days of the trip, include some unstructured time that may be



used for play or informal relating, as well as for the necessities of packing and organizing for the return travel. Play is a creative act. In some ways it is akin to certain kinds of meditative practices where the mind is distracted by a mantra, a chant, or an object such as a candle. With the mind ostensibly focused on the mantra or object, the spirit is free to mull and muse and, sometimes, emerge with increased clarity. Playing together is a good way to affirm the traveling

community. Consider ending the trip with an element of celebration. This might be a special dinner or a ritual of some sort. The closing worship may be a celebration. You may hold the celebration on the same evening that you have a time for evaluation and a last reflection period, but keep these elements distinct from each other. As part of an intentional ending, include these components in any order that seems appropriate:

- final opportunities for reflection as a community
- an evaluation of the experience
- play time
- celebration
- worship

It may be helpful to schedule the play time early or to intersperse the other elements with several opportunities for more fluid, unprogrammed time, creating a rhythm that assists the total dialogue about going home. It is a good idea to reserve a full day at the end of the trip for this more spacious time.

The final reflection time may incorporate any number of things. The essentials include the following:

- a final opportunity for participants to process what they have experienced
- an evaluation of the trip
- a conversation about re-entry issues
- the generation of group ideas about interpreting the experience
- an opportunity to begin thinking about personal plans for action

- ways to encourage others to act after hearing participant's story

See Resources for Preparing to Re-enter Our Culture, pages 123–145, for suggested activities that will help participants prepare for going home.

■ Interpretation, or “How Was Your Trip?”

Participants on trips sponsored through the national offices of the denomination have made a commitment to share their experiences with others. Most participants on mission or study trips sponsored by congregations, presbyteries, or synods have made a similar commitment. Participants may need your assistance in order to understand what such a commitment means, and to know how and what to do. Since each person is different and is going back to a different setting, each will fulfill the commitment differently. There is no one way to do trip interpretation. Suggest that participants find what works well for them, but encourage them to stretch a bit, to go beyond what is most comfortable.

Spend enough time talking with the group about possibilities for interpretation and sharing ideas about interpretation so that each participant feels at least informed about doing interpretation, if not totally comfortable with the notion. The goal is that participants will go home with enough information about interpretation and how to do it that, when asked to give a presentation, they will be able to put one

together. Interpreting to others is how participants “go and tell,” how they witness to the death and resurrection they saw on their trip. In *Resources for Preparing to Re-enter Our Culture* you will find activities you can do with the group that will help participants focus on how to do interpretation. The activities correspond to Handout 7, “Interpretation Tools and Tips.” This handout will be a good reminder for the participants when they are at home.

■ Action and Involvement

Participants will discover as they go about interpreting that some people will be especially moved by the presentations and will ask what they can do. Offering ways for listeners to become involved is important. But continued action and involvement are important for the participants as well. Action and involvement are a natural result of a mission or work trip. Having seen with their own eyes, having heard with their own ears, having touched with their own hands, and having been emotionally touched by the people and issues, participants feel the need to do something. The “end” of the trip is not the same as some other endings in life. In many ways the end of the trip is the beginning of new opportunities for action and involvement. Likewise the people who hear a presentation, who have learned new information, who have had their

consciousness raised, are often eager to become involved. Refer to *Resources for Preparing to Re-enter Our Culture* for activities you can do with the group that will help them think about possibilities for action and involvement both for themselves, and for the people who will hear their presentations. (The activities related to action and involvement correspond to Handout 8, “Ideas for Action and Involvement.”)

■ Closing Worship

Closing worship may be short or long. However, in order to set it apart as an important occasion celebrating the total experience of the group, it would be good to adopt a different format than your usual morning and evening prayers.

You may want to design the experience yourself, choosing themes, experiences, hymns or chants, and portions of liturgy or Scripture that have been helpful during the trip. Once you have planned it, ask participants to take various leadership roles. Or you may ask for two or three volunteers to create a service reflecting the group’s experience.

The closing worship time is an opportunity to pray and sing together, offer insights, claim places of growth, and make commitments in the context of the community and in the sacred moment of worship. One way to invite this sharing is to

select, as the central text for the service, a Scripture that links with the experience the group has had. You might tell participants ahead of time what the text is and give them an opportunity to read and reflect on it in preparation for worship. When it comes time for the sermon or meditation, participants can take two or three minutes to relate the Scripture to their experience of the trip. It may also be appropriate to select two or three Scriptures and invite two or three people to reflect a little longer on the intersection of God's story and their story in terms of the trip experience.

If you have chosen to make a covenant commitment, it may occur as a separate piece of ritual in the service or it may be presented at the time of the offering. If you chose not to do this or not to use it as a part of the offering, you may want to ask people to write on a piece of paper what offering of their lives they will make as a result of this trip. These commitments may or may not be shared, depending on the preference of the worship leader. You may choose to celebrate Communion as part of the closing worship. If you do, you will need to receive permission to do so from a governing body prior to the trip. (Normally a session or a presbytery would grant this. See *Resources for Worship*, page 147, for a sample form requesting permission.) Consider using elements you have commonly found on your meal table during the trip. If you have continually eaten a certain kind of bread, you may want to use

that as the Communion bread. In Mexico this may be a tortilla, in Hungary, a crusty loaf, in Palestine, a piece of pita. If you celebrate Communion with wine, also provide a juice option for participants.

You may want to close with a time for participants to offer a blessing to one another. This may be done by passing the blessing around the circle. One person turns to the left and offers a blessing (either the same or different blessings may be used) to her or his neighbor. That person then turns to his or her left and blesses the neighbor, and so on around the circle until the one who began the blessing is blessed. Or you might select a spoken blessing that the group speaks together and follows with the passing of the peace. Another way is to have one person in the circle step into the circle and face the person next to her or him, offer the blessing and move to the next person repeating the blessing or offering one specific to that person. As the first person moves to bless the fourth person in the circle, person 2 blesses person 3 . . . and so on. The circle "peels around" until the first person has become the last person to be blessed by the whole group. This takes some time, but allows each person to be eye to eye as the blessing happens.

■ Love the Questions

Consider planting a few questions in participants' hearts as they head home. Here are some suggestions.

1. If you could relive one moment of the trip again, what would it be? Why?
2. What word or phrase from all that you heard still echoes in your head and heart?
3. What do your memories of the trip reveal to you about why you were on the trip and what you are to do beyond the trip?
4. What part of you has grown the most, or which part of you has come alive in the past days? How will you continue to nurture this growth and keep alive what has been stirred in you?
5. In the dialogue between your inner journey and the outer journey, which part did more of the talking? What is the most important thing that was said in this conversation between yourself and the world?

After the Trip

Chapter 6

The Journey at Home

- Encountering God
- The Journey at Home
for the Scattered Group
- Love the Questions

... so you say.
Tell me old ones.
How did you do it? How did you return the world
to a circle without fear?
And they smile
listen
hear what they say to you
We struggled
We held out our hands and touched each other
We remembered to laugh
We went to endless meetings
We said no
We put our bodies on the line
We said yes
We invented, we created
We walked straight through our fears
We formed the circle
We danced
We spoke the truth
We dared to live it.

—Miriam Simos

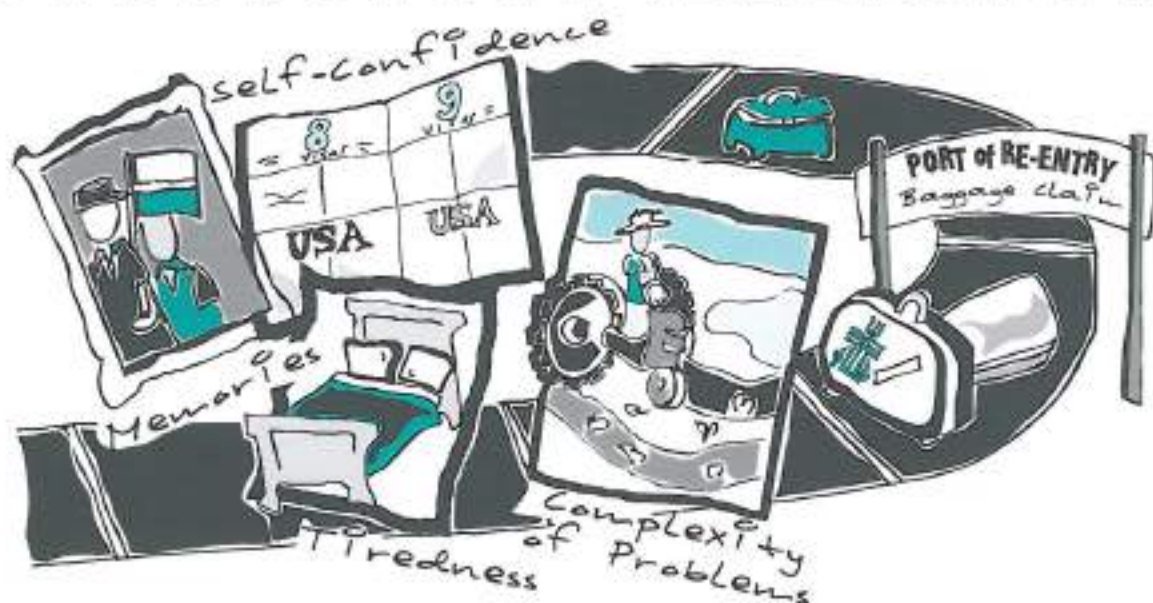
In Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen, *Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to Global Education* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991)

There comes a time when we must rise up with all the conviction that is in us and shatter the rationalized, pragmatic procedures that typify our society. We want bread for our friends. We will not wait until morning. We will not cool our compassion or our tempers. We will not listen to "reason." We will not go through "proper" channels. And we will disrupt and disturb the slumber and the apathy of our culture until justice is served.

—Clarence Jordan
and Bill Lane Doulos

In Anne Broyles, ed., *Ways of Justice, Ways of Prayer: Words to Sustain the Spirit* (Washington, DC: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1993)

The Journey at Home



■ Encountering God

■ Living with Christ

Read Galatians 2:20.



"It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." The ultimate transformation is that the Christ begins to live in us.

Christ guides our lives and governs our attitudes and actions. Christ, the authentic human, is the reality in which we live. In this ultimate transformation, we indeed become part of the body of Christ as feet and legs, fingers and hands, heart and head, mouth and ears. The peace of Christ emanates from us; the justice of Christ is established through us; the joy of Christ is manifest in us.

The ultimate transformation is not a moment in time, though it may appear as

a momentary conversion. Rather, it is a journey to one moment and a longer journey to the next moment of perceivable growth and decision, and longer still to the fullness of Christ, until literally we are so full of Christ that there is nothing left of our small ego; there is only our "person-ality," our full personhood complete with skills, talents, wisdom, gifts, the WHO of us. What is primary is the "holy who" in us who is available to the presence of God in all times, places, and people, able to discern the call of God in each moment, ready to respond by offering the particularities of one's personality, ready to lead further and learn even more of what it means to be a holy human in the world God created and loves. The holy who in us is always ready to wait or willing to act, to be patient or to be pushy, as the Spirit gives counsel to us. The holy who in us is willing to give something as small as a smile or as large as one's job

or friends or family or life, if that is the cost of discipleship.

Not many of us are wholly holy whos. The journey made to a place of the world's need or pain has no doubt revealed something of how far away we are from being completely holy whos. In this measuring of the distance between who we are and who we may become, we may have stretched ourselves onward toward the Christ. However, the growth process is different for each of us. What was a painful stretch for one will be a tiny, easy step for another. As you and the participants return to your home places, work places, church places, community places, you may discover that you have made larger steps than you knew. Perhaps you mention to the folks at home something that became obvious to the group about an injustice they encountered, the source of that injustice, and their complicity in that injustice. When you voice this new wisdom back home, you may be met with stares of disbelief, with conflicted conversation, with challenge and with anger. You may experience anew the cost of Christ being resident in you, body and soul.

■ Reflection Questions

1. As you are in the process of returning home, not just geographically, but spiritually, mentally, emotionally, what changes do you perceive in yourself?
2. As you become aware of those changes, are you also aware of others sensing you have changed? What is

their response to you and the changes they see in you?

3. How costly are the changes or transformations in your life? Will change or transformation cost you a relationship, employment, or other benefits of your life?

Take a moment to ask yourself these questions:

- How has this experience moved me along on the journey of transformation?
- How has this experience opened me up and created more space for Christ in my life?
- How has this experience invited Christ to infuse my life with holy Spirit, to seep into even the hardest stone of myself, to permeate my being to the very core of who I am?

You may want to offer the questions to participants also.

■ The Journey at Home for the Scattered Group

Nelle Morton said, "The journey IS home."⁹

As a trip leader, you have two primary follow-up responsibilities. One is to encourage the prophetic ministries of the participants through interpretation and action when they return. The second is to offer support and comfort through the initial re-entry process. It is hoped that you will read this section before you leave, that you will read this whole manual and

9. Nelle Morton, *The Journey Is Home* (Boston: Beacon Press), 1985. Emphasis added.

understand the leadership you offer on a continuum of before, during, and after the trip. To carry out the follow-up responsibility, you need to observe, get acquainted with, and listen to the participants before you go and during the trip so that you can begin to know who is stretching in what ways, and for whom the experience was a deepening, and for whom it was diving into the living waters of God's justice. In fact, you may have discovered yourself doing more extensive stretching than you had anticipated. It may be good for you to find a friend, a pastor, a spiritual director who will encourage, support, and comfort you through re-entry, and possibly help you see new directions as well.

■ Group Journal

Duplicating the group journal, if that was part of the experience, may or may not be your responsibility. If it is, do it as quickly as possible. First read through it and correct the spellings of names and places, if necessary; then send it to participants while they are still re-entering their home lives. The journal will not only provide a continuing connection with the group and the experience, which can be supportive and affirmative, but will also serve as the source of names and places a participant may have missed along the way or forgotten.



■ Personal Notes

Write a personal note to each of the participants. Spend a few moments recalling each individual, his experiences, her contributions, the insights, worries, and joys of each. Read the individual's observations, comments, and insights in the group journal on the day when she or he was the writer. Personalize each note expressing gratitude for certain contributions, affirming specific gifts, or highlighting specific experiences. You might mail the notes out with the group journal, or mail them separately, perhaps within the first two weeks following the return.

■ Group Letters

After you send out the journal and the personal notes, you may want to write a letter, or a short series of letters, to the group as a whole. Lifting up group memories, conversations, and appreciations for the group reconnects participants and keeps those experiences fresh and alive for people as they live into their home routines.

This might be the time to copy and send out things the group wrote on the trip such as ideas for interpretations and the covenant for continued connection. These letters also might contain copies of materials sent to you by participants relating to interpretation of the trip (sermons, articles, workshop outlines, or other resources

pertinent to the trip that may be used for interpretation). You may want to share some personal reflections about your own stretching and growing during the trip. To do so would model for the group the idea of continuing reflection and remind them that the journey is not over simply because they have returned home.

Another letter (short is better, not more than a page, perhaps), may include some specific questions for people to think about as they move further away from the experience. Things can begin to look and feel different as people meld into their home environment. We are forgetful people (which must be one of God's continuing concerns for us); we forget so easily what we once learned hard and well. It may also be time to ask the group to send copies of written materials used in interpretation or a list of activities in which they have engaged. This request serves two purposes: to continue group sharing of resources and ideas, and to nudge people along in their interpretation and action responses to the trip.

■ Love the Questions

Here are some sample questions that you may include in the letter(s).

- What is most challenging about your interpretation of the trip?
- What is most rewarding about your interpretation of the trip?
- Is there one person or group who has responded with unusual enthusiasm to a presentation or conversation?
- How have you assisted—or how can you assist—persons in making a personal connection to the stories you have told or in committing to work on the issues you have raised?
- What action steps have you taken in response to the trip yourself? How have you felt about your involvement?
- What questions have come up for you since the trip that you would like to share with the group?
- As you have continued to reflect on the trip, have you gained further insights which you would like to share with the group?
- What question (or questions) remains unresolved and continues to nibble at your mind, heart, or spirit? How patient are you with this question?

Keeping in touch for a couple of months following the trip is a healthy way to end the trip and continue the journey. However, it is difficult for some people to end the trip. They may seem to need to continue to live in the trip experience and resist moving forward on the journey. While it is important to honor the community that may have formed on the trip and to maintain contact and support, co-dependence is not desirable. In a second or third letter it may be necessary for you to include a final paragraph encouraging the journey while ending the trip. From then on trip participants may choose to keep in touch with each other, but without your facilitation.

Here are some questions for your own reflection. You may choose to share them with participants.

1. What has been the most difficult adjustment to being home, at work, at church, and in the United States culture again? How hard has it been to resume your routines?
2. In entering another culture at the beginning of the trip, some things may have seemed strange. In returning home from that culture, what part of our culture now seems strange as you look at it with fresh eyes?
3. Are there things in our culture for which you have a new appreciation? a new gratitude? a new understanding? How has being away helped you give thanks for people, material things, and intangible things? According to Brother David Steindl-Rast, "Gratitude is the heart of prayer."¹⁰ How are you praying your gratitude?
4. In your prayer time since your return, what has been the most frequent petition or intercession for the place and people you met on the trip?
5. Are there ways in which your prayer life has changed because of this experience? Do you continue to "read the morning headlines with a prayer" (Avery and Marsh), rather than just reading them?
6. In his letter to the Roman church, Paul says, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26). What have you sighed about since your return? Have you found yourself with "sighs too

deep for words" as you remembered events or people you met on the trip? Do you notice yourself sighing when you look at things here at home? You may want to record those moments of sacred sighs and see if there is a pattern. If you discover a pattern, it may give new direction to your prayer. If the sighs redirect your prayer, you may want to ask further questions of God's Spirit, questions of discernment: "What am I to do with the sighs, the prayers? Am I called to a particular response? Am I called to change my life in some particular way?"

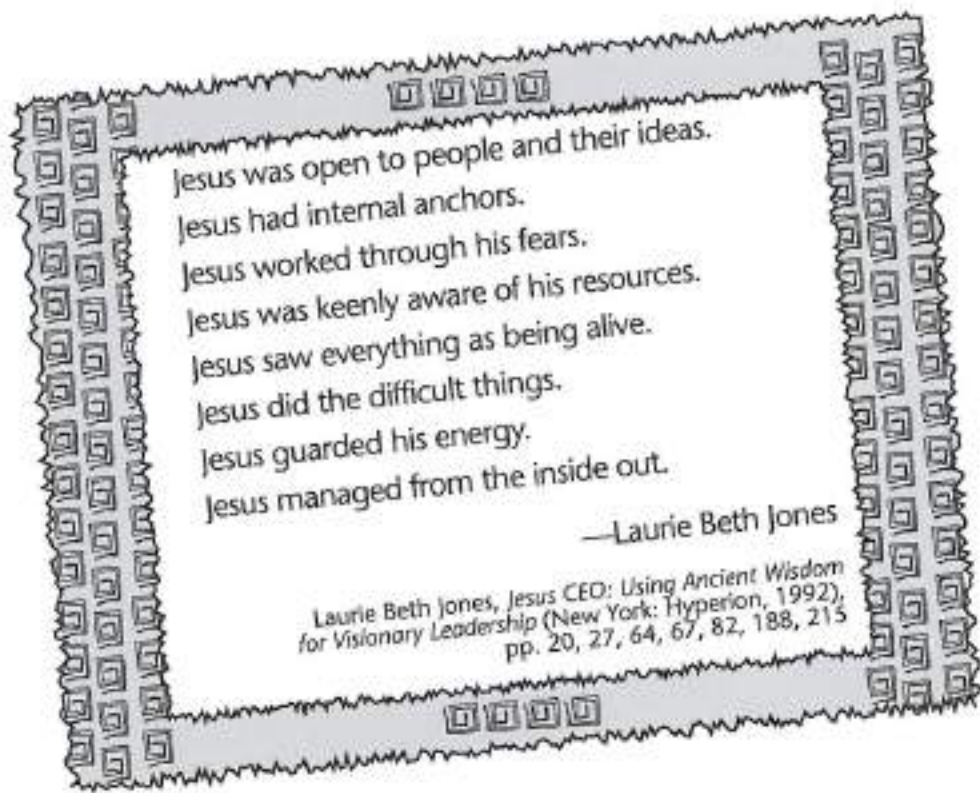
7. Since returning home, where have you noticed injustice? What group or individual have you noticed working for justice?
8. Which issue from the trip are you committed to work on? How do you see this issue playing out in your daily environment? Who is already working on this issue? How can you get involved?
9. If you are already involved in working on an issue, what are your short and long-term goals?
10. What is the relationship between your faith and your commitment to work on an issue?
11. How is your congregation involved in mission partnerships? Are there areas in which you could nudge the congregation toward partnership or some other form of deeper commitment to God's mission in the world?

¹⁰ See *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer: An Approach to Life in Fullness*, by Brother David Steindl-Rast (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), for an expanded reflection on this thought.

Chapter 7

Leader self-Review

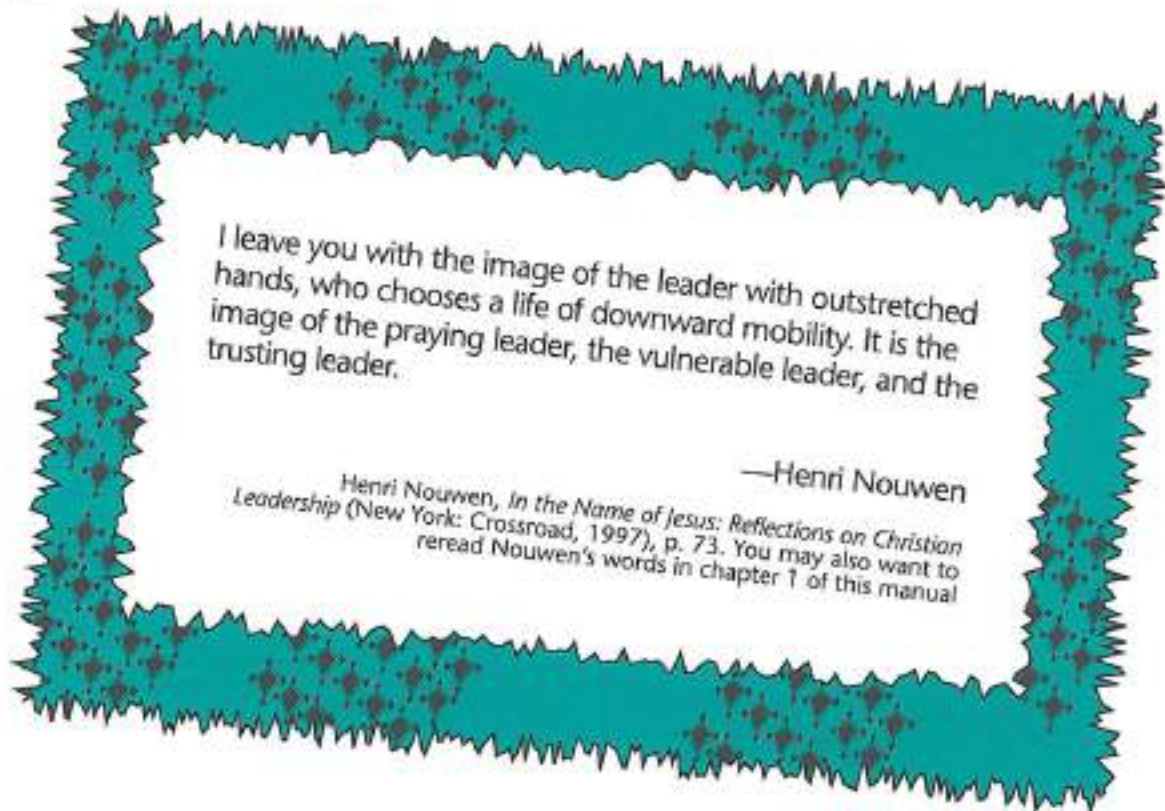
- Encountering God
- An Opportunity for self-Review
- An Opportunity for spiritual growth
- Love the Questions



Jesus was open to people and their ideas.
Jesus had internal anchors.
Jesus worked through his fears.
Jesus was keenly aware of his resources.
Jesus saw everything as being alive.
Jesus did the difficult things.
Jesus guarded his energy.
Jesus managed from the inside out.

—Laurie Beth Jones

Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership* (New York: Hyperion, 1992), pp. 20, 27, 64, 67, 82, 188, 215



I leave you with the image of the leader with outstretched hands, who chooses a life of downward mobility. It is the image of the praying leader, the vulnerable leader, and the trusting leader.

—Henri Nouwen

Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), p. 73. You may also want to reread Nouwen's words in chapter 1 of this manual

Leader self-Review



■ Encountering God

"Well done, good and faithful servant."

(Matthew 25:21 RSV)

Read Matthew 25:14–21 and Romans 7:15.



Most good leaders, Paul included, hope for the best, in themselves, in others, and for those they lead.

Sometimes we're at our best

and sometimes we're not. How do we assess our leadership? How do we assess whether we have used our talents well? How do we reflect on whether we have indeed been "faithful servants?" This last section of the manual is a section for you alone, an opportunity for your own "life review" and "leadership review."

■ An Opportunity for Self-Review

1. Think about the hopes you had for the trip. Write them down, so you can see them before you.
 - Think about the hopes you had for yourself as a leader on the trip. Write them down.
 - Look at both lists. How were your hopes fulfilled, or not fulfilled? You may want to write about this, or you may prefer to give yourself some uninterrupted time to think about it.
2. Begin at the beginning of the trip and glide through the days, asking both what went well and what didn't go well. List your responses. Then review the lists.
 - Look first at the "went well" list. Try to identify what contributed to things "going well"? Perhaps it was how you approached a particular situation, or how you related to participants and

others that you met. Perhaps it was your prayerful preparation that allowed you to be available to God and ready to listen for the nudgings of God's Spirit.

- Look at the "not well" list. Identify what you did not have control of in terms of influence, choice, input, etc. What would you have done differently in the places where you did have some potential impact on the outcomes? How will you do this differently if the opportunity presents itself again?
3. Overall, how did your role as trip leader enhance or detract from your total experience? Recognizing that sometimes your leadership role may have enhanced and sometimes detracted, think about why. At points of enhancement, how did your leadership make a difference? At the points of detraction, how did your leadership make a difference? What would you say to others assuming the responsibility of trip leader?

■ An Opportunity for Spiritual Growth

1. How and where did you feel God's presence on the trip? Is there any pattern to the places you name? In what sorts of situations, in what relationships, are you most available to God? Were there places where you felt that God was absent? Is there any pattern to where or when you feel the absence? How could you be more available to God in the places of absence?

2. Think of one person or one place where you heard the voice of God speaking to you. You may want to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for that gift of awareness and communion.
3. What challenges were presented to you—either expected or unexpected? How did your relationship with God help you meet those challenges?
4. Which "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22) did you use most—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? Which did you find least present in you? In which did you grow most? In which would you like to grow more?
5. What is the one thing you bring home as a nonmaterial, spiritual "souvenir" of this trip? How will you allow this spiritual souvenir to continue to gift you as you move on in your life and as you continue to offer leadership to the people of God?

■ Love the Questions

Now it is your turn. YOU provide the questions for your own reflection. Think about what questions this trip has raised for you. What are the most important, the most haunting? How will you live the questions so you can receive them as a gift and love them as instruments of God's shaping your life and molding your leadership?

Resources

Ideas, activities, and
handouts for
group preparation,
reflection, and action

1. Resources for orientation and preparation
2. Resources for experiencing the trip
3. Resources for preparing to re-enter our culture
4. Resources for worship

1. Resources for Orientation and Preparation

- Basic Introduction Exercises—Getting to Know One Another
- Community-Building Activities
- Inner/Outer Journey Activities
- Cross-Cultural Perspectives and Perceptions—Activities
- *Handout 1*
 - Developing Aptitude for Mission Participation
- *Handout 2*
 - How We View the World
- *Handout 3*
 - *Seeking to Be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement*
- *Handout 4*
 - *Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership (Policy Statement)*
- *Handout 5*
 - Resources from the General Assembly

■ Basic Introduction Exercises—Getting to Know One Another

Here are a few basic introductory exercises that work well either with a local group or a group gathered from various places.

■ Hi, My Name Is . . .

- Have everyone line up according to their first names, A to Z. In line, ask them to share briefly one fact about themselves (how many children they have, the work they do, their favorite television show, whatever) with the person to their left. Have the first one in line give his (or her) name, plus one fact about himself, and then introduce the person next to him. The second person introduces the third person, and so on.
- Have everyone line up according to last names and repeat the process as before.
- You can do this with any number of characteristics: middle names, oldest to youngest, birth dates, etc. Each time the line forms, people meet a new person and names are spoken, heard, and affirmed. In a local group, you may be able to skip the name sharing and concentrate on producing some bits of personal information that will give participants a “handle” to hang on to for other people, a means of connection. Even within a congregation folks may not know more than one another’s names, if that. Even with folks who know each other well, this can be a way to share some fun facts that will evoke laughter. Laughter is a great community builder!
- A variation on this theme is to name a particular interest, such as music, and gather the lovers of classical in one corner, jazz in another, country in another, pop in another, new age in the middle, etc. This gives people an opportunity to discover several folks with a common interest.



■ Where We've Been

Delineate an imaginary map of the United States, pointing out a corner of the room to become Maine, one to become Florida, one to become California and one to become Washington state. You may also designate a place in the room to represent places in the world beyond the United States. Ask people to place themselves approximately in the place they were born and then to share, with others near them, their names and one memory from childhood. Shuffle folks by asking them to move to the place they spent their high school years. With those around them invite them to share their names and one funny thing that happened to them in high school. Shuffle one more time and ask folks to place themselves

where they currently live (local groups may want to skip this or invent a different option—or just go with everyone in the same spot). Share names and ask them to tell one “fast fact” about their life in the present (number of pets, last vacation spot, favorite book or movie).

■ What We’ve Done

Gather the group in a circle. Ask people to share their names as you go around the circle, and to divulge two or three “fast facts” about themselves (a favorite sport, the last book they read, who their current “hero” is). Give out small slips of paper. Ask each person to write one more “fast fact” on a slip of paper and put it in a hat or bowl or envelope. Pass the envelope around the circle and have each person retrieve one slip of paper. It doesn’t matter if they draw their own. Go around the circle and have people read aloud what is written on the slip of paper. Ask the group to guess who fits the “fast fact.”



■ What’s in a Name?

Ask participants to clump themselves in groups of three or four. Invite them to tell one another about their names: first name, last name, middle name, nickname. They might tell if their name has a special meaning, or if they were named for someone or something. If they don’t like part of their name they can tell why and what they think would be better. They can tell how they got their nicknames. This would be a good opportunity for participants to make clear to one another what they prefer to be called.

The intent of each of these “games” is to use names as many times as possible so that people are able to put names and faces together and to begin to connect with one another and discover their common interests. On trips where there is lots of time spent traveling in a van from place to place or on a work trip when no work is done in the evening, such pieces of information may become building blocks for deepening community ties.

■ Community-Building Activities

■ Invite Participants to Share Their Reasons for Coming on the Trip

Early in the orientation period, whether it is before the actual departure, or is on the day of travel, or is the first day in the context of the trip, reserve an adequate amount of time for this sharing. You may want to ask people to prepare for this sharing by considering one or two of the questions listed in the journal writing preparation section, pages 96–97, and focusing their sharing as a response to that question. You may want to offer participants a time frame for this sharing, for example asking them to take 3–5 minutes to make their response. The time frame equalizes the experience for those for whom talking out loud in a group is easy and for those for whom public sharing is difficult.

■ Share Pictures and Prayer Concerns for the Country You Will Visit

Ahead of time invite participants to select one article or picture that represents their prayer preparation, and to bring it with them to share with the group. You may do this at a local orientation or at the beginning of the trip. It is one way of introducing one another and building a community from the group of individuals who are praying in common for the health and wholeness of a particular place.

■ Construct an Experience the Group Can Do Together

Here are two activities you might try; or use your own ideas.

■ *Collage Commentary*

Invite the participants to make a group collage that expresses the group's understanding of its mission for the trip. Provide poster board or fabric on which individuals may glue their contributions. Have lots of different items that people may work with, such as different kinds of paper, fabric scraps, paints, markers, pipe cleaners, odds and ends. When it is complete, ask the group to stand back and look at it. Invite participants to comment on what they see. You can use this activity as a springboard for discussion.

■ *Purpose Points*

Ask each person to write a sentence about what he or she understands the purpose of the trip to be. Then ask the participants to work together in pairs or threes and to develop one statement, which they all can agree to, about the purpose of the trip. Invite the small groups to share their statements with the large group. The final step is to construct a statement that belongs to the whole group. The key is that all the individuals must be willing to agree to the common statement that emerges. This will evoke significant conversation and clarification. What at first might have seemed like a clear purpose—for instance, to build a school—may be deepened through this exercise. It may emerge after the exercise as “to build bridges with another culture while building a school.” This activity can be done either at an orientation prior to the trip itself or on one of the first days of the trip.

In both these experiences, you lay the groundwork for reflection throughout the trip. What you as a leader model here will influence other times of reflection during the trip. If you allow ample time for reflection and response at the beginning, you set that expectation for later. If you talk a little and listen a lot, you will communicate that you are open to others’ opinions and that there is not a set “leader agenda” with which participants must contend. You also will model a style of sharing that others may follow. If you are willing to be flexible with this time and are attentive to participants’ needs to share, question, explore, and clarify, you may find them more willing to share, question, explore, and clarify later.

■ *Share Hopes and Fears*

One further way of “going deeper” and connecting participants with one another is to ask the group to number off 1, 2, 1, 2 . . . around the circle. Then ask the ones to form a circle in the middle of the room, and ask the twos to form a circle around them. The ones then turn outward and the twos remain facing inward. Ask them to pair up—each person in the outer circle facing someone in the inner circle. Prepare a series of questions that relate to the trip such as the following:

- What is your deepest desire for this trip?
- What is your greatest fear about coming on this trip?
- Who among your friends or family will be most interested in your experience on this trip and why?
- What is it you had to give up in order to come to make this journey (what is the hidden cost of this trip for you)?
- What are you most looking forward to on the trip and why? (This may be a place or a person or an experience or simply getting away from home for a time.)
- What is the one word you would use to talk about your preparation for this trip and why?
- Of the material you have read as background for the trip, what has touched you most and why?

You may want to construct questions specific to your trip experience as well.

Ask one question of the group. Give the group two minutes of talking time. The ones share first with the twos for one minute. Then the twos share on the same question for one minute. The outer circle then moves one person to the left and everyone has a new partner. Ask a second question and repeat the process. Ask enough questions so that the outer group has an opportunity to talk with everyone in the inner group. If you have a group of twenty, this takes only about 30 minutes. When you are finished, each person has had at least a moment of in-depth connection with half of the group.

Community is built on willingness to experience and to share at a deep level. The trust that begins in such activities is an investment in trusting one another with “not-knowing” and other vulnerabilities as the trip progresses. It is in such times of sharing that individuals grow and that the miracle of community really happens!

■ Inner/Outer Journey Activities

■ Journey Inward: Meditation

Going a level deeper, you may want to invite the group into a time of meditation. After a brief silence in which persons may center themselves, becoming aware of their breathing, the breath of God's Spirit in them, you may ask them to move backward and to silently describe themselves to themselves—in physical, external terms of race, gender, and ethnicity—as they knew themselves at age five, representing childhood. For some, this may mean only a description of being a boy or a girl. Ask how they felt about themselves. Invite them forward to age thirteen, the beginning of adolescence. Ask them to describe themselves by external categories and how they felt about themselves. This may now include an awareness of race, ethnicity, and sexuality. Move ahead again into the early twenties and invite them to describe themselves and their feelings about their identity. Finally, ask them to locate themselves in the present and to respond again to the external descriptors and their feelings about those descriptions. At this point ask two questions, allowing a moment of silence following each of them: What are the gifts of being who you are according to this description? What are the limitations of being who you are according to this description? Now ask participants to think beyond the categories and select at least three descriptions of themselves that do not relate to the "categories." Finally, ask participants to think of themselves as a whole person, not ignoring the specifics of their identity that are "given," but also including the aspects of themselves that they have chosen to emphasize or develop. Ask participants to think about any issues they bring with them to the trip because of who they are, issues that may or may not be problematic for them or for the group. Ask them to identify what gifts of themselves they bring to the group because of who they are. Close the meditation by inviting them to visualize God's light surrounding them and God's love cradling them. Remind them that they are the beloved people of God and that at any time they can return to this visualization and restore the wholeness of themselves in God's Great Embrace.

This meditation may be used as a way of calling participants to awareness following the conversation concerning the journey inward/journey outward encounters with systemic injustice and its affect on us, in our lives. As such it can stand alone. This meditation may also be used to begin the conversation or to lead the conversation into some shared personal reflection about systemic injustice in our lives as you begin the trip. You may refer to it again if the group uses this lens as a way of processing the events and experiences of the trip.

■ Noticing

We go through life at a fast pace. The terrain around us becomes a blur. We eat fast food and hardly taste it. We talk to someone while “multi-tasking”; but our attention is scattered. We do not pick up voice nuances or visual clues to what is happening with the other person beneath or beyond the words. Stopping to notice becomes a discipline. This is true at home. This is also true on a trip. The outward journey is not just collecting information. It is gathering impressions, vignettes, “moments in time” which will be burned in our memory like a brand on cattle.

Noticing has two dimensions. First, it is slowing down enough to be truly attentive. Second, it is allowing ourselves to experience fully what is at hand. Noticing is savoring the now, letting it make an imprint on us like a thumb pressed into wet moss. It is receiving rather than acting.

If you are together for an orientation time prior to the trip, you may want to practice noticing with the group.

■ *I Spy*

With everyone seated comfortably, invite participants to notice inanimate, nonliving, things with their eyes. This would include things such as what they can observe of the weather outside the window, lighting indoors and out, furniture, walls, objects on the tables, shelves, the floor. Take turns with people mentioning something they see, or play the I Spy game. In the game the individuals give a mini-description of something they see—for example, I see something small and red—and the group tries to guess what it is. The individual may add clues one at a time until the group guesses. Invite the group to do the same thing again, this time noticing living entities.

■ *Sense-ational*

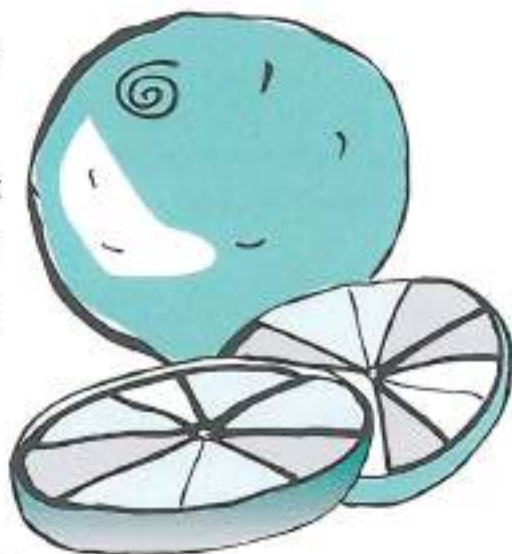
This activity involves noticing through hearing, touch, smell, and intuition. Invite the group to sit comfortably in a circle, hold hands, and close their eyes. Invite them to spend a few moments noticing what they can hear (both in the room and from the outside), what they can physically feel (such as heat/cold, humidity, the fabric of the chair, a breeze, the warmth of the next person), what they can intuit (for example: I’m picking up a lot of nervousness, or there’s an air of camaraderie in the room), or what they can smell. After a time of tuning-in, take turns going around the room with each person expressing one thing she or he hears, feels, smells, or intuit with eyes still closed. You might begin. After you have spoken, squeeze

the hand of the person to your left. That person may speak and then squeezes the hand of the next person. Anyone may pass by squeezing the hand of the next person. You may want to go around the room two or three times, depending on the amount of stimuli in the area.

Expand the group's noticing practice. Go to a busy street corner, or to a mall, or to another crowded area with a variety of sights, sounds, smells, things to taste and touch. Determine the amount of time for this activity and the place where the group will regather. Encourage participants to notice as much as possible in the given time, and then to report back with their observations.

■ *The Orange*

Invite the group to sit silently in a circle. Tell the group you are going to offer them an opportunity to eat an orange: fully, deeply, taking in all of the sensations that go with eating a textured, juicy, sweet, sticky, fragrant fruit. After a moment of quiet, pass the orange around the circle, inviting everyone to hold it a moment as it comes to them. Invite them to enjoy its color and to feel its shape and the texture of its skin. When the orange returns to you, take a knife and slice the orange into circles, then cut the circles in half. Place them on a plate or cutting board. Invite the participants to watch as you do this. Pass the plate or board around the circle, inviting each person to take a slice. Ask them not to eat it right away, but instead to enjoy its smell as they hold it until all have their slice. By this time, the aroma should be pervading the room. When each person has had the opportunity to take a slice and savor the smell, invite participants to slowly eat their slices, savoring the taste. Encourage people to lick their fingers if they'd like! Or not. For some the feel of sticky orange juice may have a particular sensate pleasure all its own. Finally, pass around napkins or wet cloths to let them wash up.



You can use this experience by itself, or you can group it with the next two exercises done in sequence. If you choose to group it with one or both of the other “noticing” exercises, you may either process each exercise separately with the group, or you may talk about the experiences as a whole at the end of the series. In each instance simply invite people to speak about what the experience held for them. Go around the circle once, then allow the conversation to flow until it seems right to close this part of the time together.¹¹

■ *Experiencing a Room*

Have a 3- by 5-inch card ready for each participant.

Cut an inch-square hole in the middle of it.

Participants will use this card to “frame” their experience of the room. Start with silence. When people are ready, ask them to put the card to one eye and wander around the room, looking at it from this narrow and focused perspective. You may also do this on the first day of the trip as you gather in a place that is new to everyone. Encourage participants to pay special attention to what they see and how it

looks different when seen through this “lens.” Ask participants to raise questions about how the room may be used, who uses it, what the room says about the people who usually gather here, and so on. Give them five to ten minutes to do this exercise. They will be playing detective to learn to see things “up close” that usually escape them completely.¹²



11. This suggestion is adapted from an article by Matthew Fox titled “Dancing the Orange” that first appeared in *Creation* magazine, March–April 1987, pp. 24–26.

12. Mission volunteer Bill McAtee uses this technique as part of an orientation for trips to Cuba. He begins with a daylong retreat in Nassau and uses this exercise as a means of inviting people to be aware of their total surroundings as they step into a culture that is not their own.

■ *What's in a Shopping Mall?*

If it is possible to do an orientation for the group in advance of the trip, take the group to a shopping mall. Ask them to use in the mall what they have learned from eating the orange and from the 3- by 5-inch card exercise. They don't have to take the card to the mall, but you can hope they take the heightened awareness they found through that experience. Ask them to try to step outside themselves and their relationship with our culture and to come to the mall as strangers to discover what it means to be "American." Give them an hour to NOTICE everything. Give them permission to taste the foods and to touch the marble walls or the water in the fountain. Ask them to collect the smells of the mall, everything from perfume samples to the wafting aromas of the Italian restaurant. Encourage participants to be attuned to the colors and textures and sounds that the mall provides. Tell them to take mental notes only. When they return, offer them paper and pencil to write down the most significant "moments," visuals, sounds, whatever struck them.



■ *Taking It on the Road*

When you arrive at your trip destination, you may want to repeat these experiences in that location. Use a specific food to practice the slow savoring of its taste. Take the group into a marketplace and ask them to "actively notice." Invite them to gather clues to the culture through this focused looking. You may also offer them some hints of what to look for in their observation. Invite them to consider questions such as these: Who are the shopkeepers? Who are the shoppers? Who are the service people? Who are the town officials? What ages are present in the public places? What do they notice about gender roles from watching the people in the market? You may think of other questions that are particularly appropriate to the place you are visiting.

■ Cross-Cultural Perspectives and Perceptions—Activities

■ Do You See What I See?

Place an object of some complexity (a flower arrangement, a small three-dimensional figure, a candle in a holder) in the middle of the circle. Give participants two minutes to look at the object. Then give them three minutes more to describe in writing *what they see*. Do not be specific about focusing on the object.

After the three minutes of writing, pass the papers around the circle, and say “stop” when the papers have traveled enough so that they won’t be identified with the writer. Or collect them, shuffle them, and start them around the circle again, each person taking one off the top. One by one, without comment, read the descriptions people have written. Ask the group to listen for what is consistently named and how it is described. Ask them to listen also for what is not named.

When all the papers have been read, ask the group to talk about what they heard. You may invite persons at this time to “claim” their description and say what they saw first and what they “see” now, after hearing the other versions. Ask people to consider how their own vision was expanded and augmented by other participants’ perspectives. Include an observation about whether they focused only on the object itself, or also included other things they saw when they looked at the object. For instance, did anyone name, as part of their view, the persons sitting directly across from them or, further, what was behind those persons in the room? Did anyone mention things that would be considered “peripheral” in their perspective, something happening to the left or the right of the circle as they were gazing directly ahead?

As you process this, you may point out that often in our experience of a new situation, place, or person, we see only what is directly in front of us. We consider only the current event or the “current person,” forgetting that this event or person has a context—a history, a web of relationships, dreams for the future. To judge this person solely on what is seen is unfair. To assess this event without knowing what came before is incomplete. Invite participants to develop larger perspectives, to include peripheral awareness in their way of encountering a place or person, to look, not just straight ahead, but also down alleys and up stone staircases, to notice signs on buildings and highways, and to notice the smaller signs of life in the marketplace and living scenarios of a neighborhood.

Point out how much we need each other in the group to adequately describe the experience we are having. One person's view or glancing or noticing may add a detail or observation to the whole group's common experience. It may also serve to raise a question that the total group has missed. Another person may have heard something others did not and may thus contribute that to the collective understanding of the group.

Duplicate Handout 2, "How We View the World," and give copies to the group, either as an item to be read with the preparation material or as a handout after this exercise. See page 99.

■ Mutual Invitation

Eric Law offers a different approach to conversation: mutual invitation.¹³

■ *The Technique*

As the leader, you will begin, not by talking, but by choosing one person in the group to begin talking in response to a question, a reflection piece, an event, or an experience the group has had. This person has permission to maintain silence long enough to think about what she or he will say. The person may decide to speak or to remain silent. After speaking or after deciding to remain silent (passing), that person then chooses the next person to speak. This continues throughout the conversation. Always, there is permission to begin with a moment of silence before speaking; always there is the option to pass; always the person who has been chosen most recently is the one who chooses the next person.

For most of us this is an unusual manner of conducting a conversation. It may seem artificial, even awkward, at first. The group may need to practice this method of inviting conversation several times before it begins to feel more natural and the participants see the value of the process.

Challenge the group to give it a chance to work. Used wisely and well, this conversation mode opens up the conversation to people in a way that allows them to participate more fully and freely in the reflection times of the trip. For further consideration of this approach and detailed instructions for employment of it, see Eric Law's book, pages 113–114.

13. Eric Law, *The Wolf Shall Lie Down with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in Multicultural Community* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993), pp. 79–88.

■ *Uses of the Technique*

You may use this approach or technique with the participants at either a pre-trip orientation or as part of orientation upon arrival. You may also use it at other times during the trip, either as a way of expanding participants' perspectives or as an invitation to discuss conflict that has already arisen from varying perspectives. It will enhance, rather than corrode, the group experience.

This technique is highly effective when holding discussions with members of the host church or community. At an international church meeting, participants engaged each morning in Bible study in small groups. The groups were intentionally "mixed" with participants from different countries and cultures. Translators were provided. For the first two days, the small group discussion of the text was "open" to anyone who had something to say. During the remaining days, participants were instructed to use the "mutual invitation" technique. Participants expressed their surprise and joy at the difference the technique made to their discussion! Everyone participated fully by being invited to speak. All were enriched by the variety of insights and perspectives brought to the text.

In any group discussion, some participants are more at ease than others, more confident that they have something of value to contribute. Mutual invitation grants each a voice and also serves to limit those who sometimes talk too much.

Developing Aptitude for Mission Participation

1. Develop a Willingness to be “Teachable” (*John Calvin*)

Sheldon Kopp says “even a stone can be a teacher.”¹ If we are willing to learn, there is nothing, literally nothing, in God’s creation that cannot be a teacher for us: a stone, a flower, a poor widow looking for a coin. Recall Jesus’ words when the Pharisees challenged him on his entry into Jerusalem. He said if the crowds were silent, “the stones would shout out” (Luke 19:40). In the Sermon on the Mount he pointed to the waving grasses and said, “Consider the lilies of the field . . .” (Matthew 6:28). Later, when asked about God, he said God was like a woman who having lost a coin would search for it until she found it (Luke 15:8–10). Wisdom “cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance to the city gates she speaks” (Proverbs 1:20–21). As God’s people, we are to be teachable: willing to learn. We are to go, not armed with answers, but disarmed, vulnerable, open, ready to let go of our assumptions and to leave behind our already formed opinions.

2. Practice Dialogue as a Primary Form of Interaction

Dialogue: dia = across; logue = word(s)

Discuss: dis = apart; cuss = shake

Dialogue is when words move across the spaces between—that is, between contexts, between cultures, between places, between people. Dialogue is different from discussion. To dis-cuss is to shake apart, cut apart, or scatter. Dialogue brings things together.

There are two kinds of dialogue that may lead us toward transformation.

■ Your Story and the Stories You Hear

The first is learning to let your own story dialogue with the story of the people you meet and the places you go. Muriel Rukeyser says: “The universe is made of stories.” The more you are in touch with your own story, with your own wounds, with your own desires, with your own mysteries, with your own questions, with your own joys, with your own life experience, the more you have available to connect with other people’s stories and life experience. This does not necessarily mean sharing your story at every turn. It may not mean sharing it at all. To do

1. Sheldon Kopp, *Even a Stone Can Be a Teacher: Learning and Growing from the Experiences of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1985), p. ix.

so may not be appropriate. But to know what it is to lose one's house, because your own house has burned, means there may be feelings available that allow you to stand in sympathy with another who has lost a house. Indeed, remaining silent and hearing their story may help to heal your own hurt. Where appropriate, sharing your story may also make a healing connection with another person, either within the travel group or with someone the group meets.

■ Connections to God's Story

The second kind of dialogue is the dialogue of your story with God's story. In the immediate experience of the trip, in the midst of your story happening in the now, there may come a revelation because you are able to connect your story and God's story. Here is an account of such an experience which arrived on a Christmas card from Dare Cox, a participant in a trip to South Africa.

The Christ child came to me this year on a cool November night in Cape Town, South Africa. With a group of friends, I walked up the hill to St. Paul's guest house from the restaurant where we had had a sumptuous East Indian meal. We carried Styrofoam containers of "too much" food which, unasked for, the waiter had thrust in our hands as we left. It was our last evening in Africa and we had reminisced over our journey and laughed a bit and wept a bit too. As we walked, laughing in the darkness, we were silenced by a cry—unmistakable—the sound of a very new baby. It came from a narrow alley where we could see silhouetted in a dim light a woman cradling it in her arms. She sat huddled in a pile of something, perhaps cardboard, that seemed to give some shelter. A man stood beside her. "Jesus," I cried out. It rushed past my lips, both curse and prayer. And also recognition. It was indeed Jesus, lying in his mother's arms, making tiny cries in the night, his father standing watch.²

Dare was able within the moment to make the connection between the lively Word of Scripture and the Living Word of God in the present. When we can recognize the Scripture story in this way, as interacting with our own lives on a daily basis, it comes alive for us in new ways. We come alive in new ways. We move, as if in a dance, from the Story, to our immediate experience of it, to response to it. But we have to be listening—to God's Story, to our story, to the story of others with whom we interact. We have to be in dialogue.

2. Used with permission of Dare Cox.

3. Practice Disciplines of the Spirit

Spiritual disciplines are intended to “teach” us. We are disciples of Christ. A disciple is one willing to learn; a discipline is a way of learning. Spiritual disciplines are intended to teach us how to live more fully in the Spirit of God and in the community of the Christ. For travelers, out of their home context, the disciplines help ground the experience. As with any “big event,” like running a marathon, it is essential to “exercise” and “practice” before the event begins. No one would try to run 26.2 miles without training. Practice these disciplines, engage in these exercises, not only on the trip itself, but as preparation for the trip.

■ Prayer

William Temple said: “Prayer increases the volume of love in the world.”³ Prayer changes us. Prayer opens us to God. Prayer opens us to the world. Prayer opens us to each other. Prayer may also change the world, but first it changes us. It softens the hardened and crusty places. It strengthens the timid and uncertain places. It reduces hatred and violence. It increases compassion.

As a traveler, you may encounter places where hatred and violence have “gathered” in a place and settled there with such lingering presence that you can feel their power even months or years after an event. Then, the ability to pray together may be the only response, to call on God’s love in the midst of that manifestation of the worst of human nature, of gathered “evil.” For instance, standing by a mass grave in Croatia, a travel/study group simply formed a circle, held hands, and stood together in silent prayer. When words were spoken emerging from the silence, they prayed for healing for the loved ones of the victims and for the perpetrators of the violence. To pray with this wholeness, encompassing both the wounded and the wounders, is to pray with God for healing. It is to take into ourselves the “breadth and length and height and depth” (Ephesians 3:18) of God’s love. It is to be enfolded in the great embrace of God.

■ Community

David Spangler says: “Community is the deeper reality within which I move and have my being. It is one of the names of God. Community is the gift of myself that I give in endless participation with my world.”⁴

3. As quoted in Anne Brayles, *Ways of Justice, Ways of Prayer: Words to Sustain the Spirit* (Washington, DC: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1993).

4. As quoted in Corinne McLaughlin and David Davidson *Builders of the Dawn: Community Lifestyles in a Changing World* (Shutesbury, MA: Sirius Publishing, 1986), p. 9.

Community is more than just being a member of a group. Community involves engagement with one another at a deep level. It requires vulnerability. It develops intimacy. A group can exist without either engagement or vulnerability. It can avoid intimacy and shy away from sharing those things that lead to intimacy: questions, wonderments, bewilderments, ponderings, wounds, dreams, hopes, failures, struggles. There is very little to bind a group together. The members of a community, however, are bound together in love for one another that rises from sharing the ups and downs of life, the mysteries that seem unsolvable, the pain that seems unbearable, and the hurts that seem unhealable.

No matter the type of mission trip, it is important to form a community. Often during a trip, participants may discover that in hearing other persons' stories, their own is called forth. Having a community in which to share assists participants on their journeys. Participants who are having their first experience in a different culture may confront their own culture with new and critical eyes. When companions think through new awarenesses together, they support one another's stretching of self and soul.

■ Attentiveness

Nelle Morton says: "Maybe 'journey' is not so much a journey ahead, or a journey into space, but a journey into presence. The farthest place on earth is the journey into the presence of the nearest person to you."⁵

Most North Americans have grown up in the world of the 30-second commercial, the 30-minute sitcom, the instant microwave, the rapid response of e-mail. Attentiveness takes time: more than 30 seconds; sometimes more than 30 minutes. Attentiveness is not possible if "instant" is the only time frame in our vocabulary. Attentiveness is not possible if waiting for a response is not within our repertoire of relationship. To be attentive requires a willingness to watch slowly, to keep oneself awake as if waiting for the first signs of dawn, to continue to be present to an idea, a person, or a situation as an act of love. It is an aptitude for listening that allows us to really hear what is being said in another's story, an aptitude for speaking with careful seeking of truth in the telling of one's own story, an aptitude for silence that grants persons room to respond.

The experience of travel to another culture often makes us aware of how fast we move in the United States. Slowing down is difficult for some people. In Merida, Mexico, a group building a playground for the Down's Syndrome Institute, waited two hours for a bus to take

5. Nelle Morton, *The Journey Is Home* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985). As quoted in Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen, *Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to Global Education* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991).

them to small villages for a weekend as guests in local homes. In order not to carry anger about North American expectations into the next experience, they had to remember to be attentive to the moment, to let waiting be its own learning. Another form of attentiveness is necessary as we meet many people in a day. There is a tendency to lose the initial interest and eagerness to listen and hear. To practice attentiveness on a trip is to remain alert and available to persons whom we meet, ever anticipating that it may be that person who has something we in particular need to hear. If we have “fallen asleep,” tuned out, gone blank like the screen of a computer at rest, we may miss a gift.

■ Nonviolent Speech

Gerard VanderHaar says: “Something significant is at stake whenever we talk.”⁶

The violence in the world that causes so much pain has many levels. Its most clear manifestation is in outright war and physical assault, whether that produces injury or death. Violence, however, begins long before the outward actions of physical harm. One of the initial stages is verbal violence, both the use of words that intend to wound and words that validate violence as acceptable in our world. It may be informative to simply watch your everyday speech for a day, to listen to yourself talk. How often do you say things that could wound another, intentionally or in jest? How often do you use militaristic language to express yourself? For instance, it is sometimes said that we are “targeting” a particular cause. “Target,” however, is the way we find an object in order to kill it. Other forms of violent speech have to do with words, phrases, references that perpetuate oppression or prejudice.

On a trip that is intended to promote healing and peace, the discipline of nonviolent speech seems only appropriate. It became clear on a trip to the Middle East that even the term “Middle East” revealed a perspective of the world and assumptions about our place as “Westerners” in the makeup of the world community. Learning always to say Israel and Palestine in referring to the areas in which Palestinians and Israelis live was important for the travelers. To use the term Palestinian National Authority, rather than the Israeli reference to the Palestinian Authority, was also important. When we are sensitive to language issues in general and in particular, two things happen. We honor those whom we visit by using the preferred vocabulary hewn from their experience, and our own awareness is jolted in a way that allows us to learn about local perspective from the use of language.

Language structures reality. Language also reveals who we are and what we think. Most of the time, we really do mean what we say. Our willingness to examine and discipline our speech is both a confessional activity and an opportunity for spiritual growth as people of God.

6. Gerard A. Vanderhaar, *Active Nonviolence: A Way of Personal Peace* (Mystic, CN: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), p. 24.

■ Life Review

Wendy C. Schwartz says: “To find the way to make peace with ourselves and to offer it to others, both spiritually and politically, is the most important kind of learning. To accept our abilities and our limitations, and the differences of others, this is the contentment that gives life its highest value. It frees us to grow without restraint and to settle without pressure.”⁷

Life review is also known as “daily examen.” It may also be called a kind of confession. It is the practice of looking at one’s life at some point in each day and assessing how far what we have done and been is from both where we would like to be and where God would like us to be. It is the practice of acknowledging truthfully who we are, complete with flaws and foibles, complete with talents and gifts to share. It is a way of becoming whole, of finding peace in ourselves. When we are truly willing to say who we really are, there is nothing to hide—from ourselves or from others. We are free to grow because we don’t waste time and energy on covering up mistakes, pretending to be who we are not, putting on a false front. When we can let go of the past on a daily basis and embrace the future on a daily basis, we find a flow of forgiveness that allows us to start fresh each day and continue on the journey.

On a trip like the one you will take, there may be times when you and those in the group are confronted with your own complicity in the problems you encounter. You may need to “make confession,” individually or corporately to acknowledge the complicity. Confession or acknowledgement will allow you to move into a more creative frame of mind in which you may be able to discern the nature of your partnership with God and the action you need to engage in for change. To “make confession” is not just to say what is wrong. Its original intent was “to reveal” the self, not only to acknowledge what we would like to change, but also to claim our “aha” experiences and the gifts we have been given to develop along life’s way.

■ Benevolent Glancing

“Mother Teresa, is there something that ordinary people can do to make the world better?”

“Yes. Smile at one another.”⁸

Benevolent glancing, also known as “seeing through peaceful eyes,” is akin to the Benedictine vow of hospitality. Everyone who comes to a Benedictine monastery is received as if she or he were the Christ. The Benedictine practice of holy hospitality flows from Matthew 25:31–46 (“When did we see you . . . ?). To meet each person as if he or she were

7. As quoted in Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen, *Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to Global Education* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991).

8. As quoted in Anne Broyles, ed., *Ways of Justice, Ways of Peace: Words to Sustain the Spirit* (Washington, DC: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1993).

the Christ is to welcome stranger and friend alike as someone who may reveal God to us.

“Benevolent glancing” or “seeing through peaceful eyes” is practiced in other cultures and religious traditions as well. It is a holy hospitality not bound by geography and not dependent on actually greeting a person who comes to visit. You may practice it anywhere there are people: on the street, in a grocery store, on a bus. Gently glance at the people who pass you on the sidewalk, with whom you stand in line, or with whom you inhabit a particular public place, and silently bless them. The blessing may be an inaudible standard phrase you speak in your heart such as “I bless you with God’s peace.” Or it may simply be an “intention” as you encounter persons in the daily routines of life, a thought that surrounds them with God’s peace, joy, love, and hope as you pass or wait or share space. In some cultures it is not appropriate to make eye contact. In some places it may be dangerous to make eye contact with someone. Eye contact is not required for benevolent glancing, nor is it the purpose of the practice. The intent is to “take in” the stranger, to acknowledge our “inter-being” and connection with all people. By doing this, we affirm that we are sisters and brothers in the human family and are inextricably linked in the love of God.

■ Reading the Morning Headlines with a Prayer

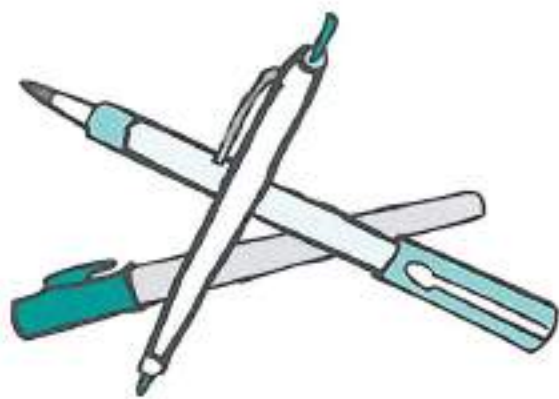
Some years ago Richard Avery and Donald Marsh wrote a song and included the phrase “reading the morning headlines with a prayer.”⁹ It is a concept they borrowed from theologian Karl Barth, who said that as Christians we should have the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Now, of course, we need to add the radio, the television, and the Internet to the list of sources for news of our world. The point is, however, that we need to pray for the world daily. One way to do that is to “read the morning headlines with a prayer.” Each day check the newspaper for stories about the place(s) you will be visiting. As you learn about the country or situation or people, pray for them. You may pray generally for the healing and well-being of the people and place, or you may pray specifically that something happen; for example you could pray for a negotiation process that would bring stability and peace in Northern Ireland.



9. From “When You Least Expect Him,” by Richard Avery and Donald Marsh, in *Songs for the Easter People* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1972).

■ Journal Writing

In preparation for the trip you may want to reflect on why you are going on this particular trip or why you have sought out this experience. Some people are natural writers and already keep a journal. If you are one of these, you may want to select a special notebook to record your thoughts regarding the trip. Maybe you have never tried writing a journal or diary. Maybe you dislike writing or find blank paper intimidating. Maybe you've never written anything just for yourself, only assignments for others. Take courage and give journaling a try just for the short term of the trip. There are no requirements. You put down whatever you want, to suit yourself, and nobody else has to see it. Here are some hints for getting started.



■ A Little Practice

Set aside a quiet time and place, and try to write a little bit each day. You are practicing for the trip. You might begin by taking one question a day from "Questions for Journal Reflection," below, and writing a response. Make it short or long. No need to use complete sentences. You may write individual words, make a list, doodle a picture, or create some other representation of your response. If you can't get into the questions, write about some thought you had about the trip—a hope, a fear, a question of your own, how you are getting ready for the trip, or even a to-do list. There is no "right" way, no "wrong" way. You are free to develop your own style. Do what is helpful and meaningful for you.

■ The Short Report

Pick one person to whom to send a postcard each day with the "short version" of the day—details or impressions, descriptive or reflective. Having someone to write to can help focus the writing as well as the day's events. You can then collect the postcards from the friend or family member when you get home. Or write a postcard a day to yourself. What fun to read one's own words, addressed to oneself, and to recall in flashback fashion a particular day of the trip.

■ Questions for Journal Reflection

- When did I first begin to think about this trip? What was the initial attraction to making this “pilgrimage”?
- Why to this place? What is there about this particular place, people, or situation that connects with my life story?
- What feelings of anticipation do I notice as I prepare myself for this experience? Fear? Excitement? Uncertainty? Determination? A mix of feelings?
- What do I expect to give as a participant on this trip? What do I expect to receive from the experience?
- What one thing do I not want to miss as I go through this experience? (This may be an event, an encounter, a place to experience, a question to ponder . . . or something else.)
- How does going on this trip fit into my ongoing spiritual journey?
- Do I have a sense of God’s presence in the decision to go, the preparation, the anticipation?
- Are there things I know will be difficult for me on the trip (emotionally, physically, intellectually, or spiritually)? How will I find support for doing those difficult things before, during, or after the trip?
- How do my family and friends feel about my going on this trip, having this experience?
- Is there one person here at home with whom I could covenant to “companion” me on this journey? To encourage me, challenge me, support me, pray for me, receive my reports and listen to my stories when I return in a way that will assist me in noting my own growth and making commitments in response to the experience?
- To whom do I feel “accountable” for my experience?
- What are the questions I am taking with me? (You may want to ask one question a day in your journal as a way of “priming the pump” for the trip. Such sacred curiosity whets the appetite and prepares us to receive the most from the experience.)

■ Questions for "Going Deeper"

- What is your deepest desire for this trip?
- What is your greatest fear about coming on this trip?
- Who among your friends or family will be most interested in your experience on this trip and why?
- What is it you had to give up in order to come to make this journey (what is the hidden cost of this trip for you)?
- What are you most looking forward to on the trip and why? (This may be a place or a person or an experience or simply getting away from home for a time.)
- What is the one word you would use to talk about your preparation for this trip and why?
- Of the material you have read as background for the trip, what has touched you most and why?

How We View the World

Ethnocentricity and the World Christian

Ethnocentricity is characterized by

- Narrowness of thinking
- Fear of other peoples
- Not wanting to change
- A desire to impose one's own views on the rest of the world
- A feeling of being "right"
- A sense of superiority
- The notion that the farther away something is, the less important it is

An ETHNOCENTRIC worldview says:

- Our country is the best.
- America is at the "center" of the world.
- Our way is morally better—other ways are inferior or morally contaminated.
- Our belief system should be imposed on others—for their own benefit.

A WORLD CHRISTIAN view says:

The world around us is a complex and changing "quilt" of different ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and cultures. In Christ, we are constantly being renewed, being made new in the midst of this flux.

We allow God to change us as we come into contact with other cultures and experience the world's diversity and complexity.

A WORLD CHRISTIAN has greater awareness of others and deeper vision of their needs. We no longer wait for others to come to us, rather, we reach out to others. We can be glad and rejoice in the wonderful variety and diversity that God has created in skin color, language, customs, music, and art.

We no longer see ourselves at the center of God's plan, but become vehicles for God to reach out to others. We "decrease" so that others may "increase."

When Americans bathe, they soak, wash and rinse their bodies in the same water—through they would never wash their clothes and dishes that way. The Japanese, who use different water for each of these steps, find the American way of bathing hard to understand, even "dirty."

An orthodox Hindu from India considers it "dirty" to eat with knives, forks, and spoons instead of with his own clean fingers.

Is it dirtier to spit and blow your nose on the street or to carry it around with you in a little piece of cloth that you keep in your pocket and reuse regularly?

Which is better or worse? Neither—they're just DIFFERENT!

1. From "Short Term Mission Trips: Preparing The Team," by Stan de Voogd, Presbyterian Border Ministries. Used with permission.

Seeking to be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement

Adopted by the 204th General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), published by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, PC(USA), 1993.

*In a spirit of trust and love,
we promise we will . . .*

"Give them a hearing . . . listen before we answer" (John 7:51 and Proverbs 18:13).

1. Treat each other respectfully so as to build trust, believing that we all desire to be faithful to Jesus the Christ;
 - we will keep our conversations and communications open for candid and forthright exchange,
 - we will not ask questions or make statements in a way which will intimidate or judge others.
2. Learn about various positions on the topic of disagreement.
3. State what we think we heard and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to be sure we understand each other.

"Speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

4. Share our concerns directly with individuals or groups with whom we have disagreements in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus' teaching.
5. Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence or integrity;
 - we will not engage in name-calling or labeling of others prior to, during, or following the discussion.

6. Share our personal experiences about the subject of disagreement so that others may more fully understand our concerns.

"Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3)

7. Indicate where we agree with those of other viewpoints as well as where we disagree.
8. Seek to stay in community with each other though the discussion may be vigorous and full of tension;
 - we will be ready to forgive and be forgiven.
9. Follow these additional Guidelines when we meet in decision-making bodies:
 - urge persons of various points of view to speak and promise to listen to these positions seriously;
 - seek conclusions informed by our points of agreement;
 - be sensitive to the feelings and concerns of those who do not agree with the majority and respect their rights of conscience;
 - abide by the decision of the majority, and if we disagree with it and wish to change it, work for that change in ways which are consistent with these Guidelines.
10. Include our disagreements in our prayers, not praying for the triumph of our viewpoints, but seeking God's grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly, and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.

Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership

2003 General Assembly Policy Statement Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Summary Statement

As heirs to God's grace in Jesus Christ, and joint heirs with all who confess him Lord, we affirm our place as Presbyterians in the whole Body of Christ, the Church.

We understand "Mission" to be God's work for the sake of the world God loves. We understand this work to be centered in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and made real through the active and leading power of the Holy Spirit. Recognizing our human limitations and because of our fundamental unity in Jesus Christ, we believe we are called to mission through the discipline of partnership.

The practice of partnership guides our whole connectional church. It guides us individually as members, officers, and pastors. It guides us collectively as congregations, presbyteries, synods, General Assembly ministries, and related institutions.

In doing mission in partnership, we seek to be guided by certain principles:

1. Shared Grace and Thanksgiving.
2. Mutual Interdependence.
3. Recognition and Respect.
4. Open Dialogue and Transparency.
5. Sharing of Resources.

As heirs to God's grace in Jesus Christ, and joint heirs with all who confess him Lord, we affirm our place as Presbyterians in the whole Body of Christ, the Church. We give visible recognition of our belonging to one another as one denominational family. We give this recognition as Presbyterians through our connectional system of congregations, presbyteries, synods, General Assemblies, and related institutions. The one table around which we gather is God's table and the one mission to which we are called is God's mission.¹

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) declares that wherever one part is engaged in God's mission, all are engaged.² Whenever and wherever one engages in that mission, one bears witness to the saving love of God in Jesus Christ. Through this love, empowered by the Holy Spirit, all are made one. This unity is a gift of God's grace that extends across cultural, linguistic, economic and other barriers that divide us within the Body of Christ and across the human family.

1. In Latin, *missio Dei*.

2. *Book of Order*, G-9.0103.

Mission

As Christians, we understand "Mission" to be God's work for the sake of the world God loves. We understand this work to be centered in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and made real through the active and leading power of the Holy Spirit. The "where" and "how" and "with whom" of mission is of God's initiative, sovereign action, and redeeming grace. The message we are called to bear is the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The PC(USA) claims responsibility for bearing the Good News in this way: "The Church is called to be Christ's faithful evangelist

- (1) going into the world, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all he has commanded;
- (2) demonstrating by the love of its members for one another and by the quality of its common life the new reality in Christ; sharing in worship, fellowship, and nurture, practicing a deepened life of prayer and service under the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- (3) participating in God's activity in the world through its life for others by
 - (a) healing and reconciling and binding up wounds,
 - (b) ministering to the needs of the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the powerless,
 - (c) engaging in the struggle to free people from sin, fear, oppression, hunger, and injustice,
 - (d) giving itself and its substance to the service of those who suffer,
 - (e) sharing with Christ in the establishing of his just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world."³

Partnership

As Presbyterians, we recognize the Reformed tradition as one part of the larger Body of Christ, the Church. Other communions in the household of God have equally unique and valued places at the table of God's mission. Recognizing our human limitations and because of our fundamental unity in Jesus Christ, we believe we are called to mission in the discipline of partnership. We believe that doing mission in partnership broadens our awareness of how interconnected God's mission is at the local, national and global levels.

³ *Book of Order*, G-3.0300.

Jesus invites us as friends to follow his commandment of love and bear fruit that will last (John 15:12–17). Like Paul and Titus, we become partners with each other and with Christ in united and mutual service (II Corinthians 8:16–24). Guided by Christ’s humility, we work to empty ourselves of all pride, power, sin, and privilege so that God may be glorified (Philippians 2:5–11). Within and beyond our connectional community, doing mission in such true partnership opens us to opportunities for mutual encouragement, mutual transformation, mutual service, and mutual renewal.

The practice of partnership guides our whole connectional church. It guides us individually as members, officers, and pastors. It guides us collectively as congregations, presbyteries, synods, General Assembly ministries, and related institutions. Through prayer, humility and a mutual openness to one another, we develop a cooperative witness that exalts the Lord we serve.

The discipline of partnership assumes that mission can best be done by joining hands with those who share a common vision. Partnership in mission involves two or more organizations who agree to submit themselves to a common task or goal, mutually giving and receiving and surrounded by prayer so that God’s work can be more faithfully accomplished. Theologically and biblically, partnership is based on the fundamental belief that God’s love for the world is greater than any one church can possibly comprehend or realize.

Knowing the breadth of God’s love for the world, we affirm that there are different forms of partnership with different patterns of cooperation. We may join around a common goal with other churches, with secular organizations, or with other faith communities. In any case, work for the common good extends partnership—and the service of God’s mission—to all people.

Principles of Partnership

In doing mission in partnership, we seek to be guided by certain principles:

1. **Shared Grace and Thanksgiving.** Partnership *calls* all partners to confess individual and collective failings, to seek forgiveness for complicity with powers of injustice, to repent from histories of shared exploitation, to move toward common celebration of Christ’s sacrifice of reconciliation, and together to give thanks and praise to God for all gifts of grace and renewal.
2. **Mutuality and Interdependence.** Partnership *calls for* interdependence in which mutual aid comes to all, where mutual accountability resides, and no partner dominates another because of affluence or “expertise.”
3. **Recognition and Respect.** Partnership *calls* all partners to respect other partners in Christ, and to recognize one another’s equal standing before God.

4. Open Dialogue and Transparency. Partnership *calls for* open dialogue where a common discernment of God's call to mission is sought, where Scripture is the base for prophetic challenge, where local initiative is respected, where differences are mediated in a Christ-like manner, and where all partners are transparent with regard to their activities and support.
5. Sharing of Resources. Partnership *calls for* the sharing of all types of resources: human, cultural, financial and spiritual; especially including friendly conversation and faith-transforming life experiences.

Partnership Commitments

Doing mission in partnership, we commit to be guided by these principles both individually and collectively. In the spirit of candid evaluation, we commit to asking ourselves discerning questions. For each principle, certain approaches are suggested:

Shared Grace and Thanksgiving.

- . . . Is there courage to confess human sins and confront the forces which deny the abundant life God promises to all in Jesus Christ?
- . . . Is God's forgiveness mutually shared in Jesus Christ?
- . . . Does the community of partners join in thankful worship to celebrate God's gift of grace and renewal?

Mutuality and Interdependence.

- . . . Is each partner's self-reliance affirmed, with mutual giving and receiving?
- . . . Is there space for all partners to be guided by self-determination?
- . . . Beyond unhealthy dynamics of power and dependency, is there openness to new dynamics of mutual service and mutual renewal?

Recognition and Respect.

- . . . Is there recognition of the self-affirmed identities of each partner?
- . . . Are the unique contexts of all partners recognized and respected?
- . . . Are gifts and needs of all partners affirmed and respected?
- . . . Are cultural differences being mediated with sincerity and in a Christ-like manner?

Open Dialogue and Transparency.

- . . . Is there local initiative in mission discernment and mission activity?
- . . . Does God's Word shape us to lovingly confront one another's failings and prophetically challenge the world's systems of power and domination?
- . . . Is there transparency with all partners about what is being done in mission, even if there is disagreement?

Sharing of Resources.

- . . . Do partners minister to and inspire one another, listen to and critique one another?
- . . . Is there mutual accountability in the exchange of all resources, including human, cultural, financial and spiritual?
- . . . In trusting relationship, have partners moved beyond two-way relationships into open mission networks and ever-expanding webs of mission relationships?

As heirs to God's grace in Jesus Christ and joint heirs with all who confess him Lord, we commit to wrestle with these questions. We look toward the promise of Christ. We count on the subtle power of the Holy Spirit to guide and limit us. We hope, standing firm in common praise to the Triune God, that our practice of partnership may be transformed; that our participation in the *Missio Dei* may more fully contribute to the abundant life that God promises all people and all creation.

Resources from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Helpful Sources of Mission Information

Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Produced annually. Contains information on PC(USA) mission, both in the United States and internationally. Order the latest edition from PDS.

Children's Mission Yearbook. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Produced annually. For children in grades 3–6, for personal and family devotions or for use in programs with children. Contains stories and mission information. Order the latest edition from PDS.

To order from Presbyterian Distribution Services (PDS) call 1-800-524-2612.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Web Sites

Presbyterian Peacemaking Program
www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/

National Volunteers Office
www.pcusa.org/nvo/

Posts opportunities for U.S. Mission trips. Site links to PC(USA) presbytery and synod Web sites to provide access to information about ministries in different geographical areas of the U.S.

Worldwide Mission in Partnership Program
www.pcusa.org/worldwide

Includes information on church ministries and partners by country and program.

www.pcusa.org/missionconnections
Includes letters from our mission workers. The letters are full of concrete

examples of ministries and challenges in the areas where our personnel live and work. Mission speakers also are posted on this site.

Staff Helps

Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

International Peacemaking and Travel Study Seminars
Call 1-888-728-7228, ext. 5702 or 5786.
Also see the Web site:
www.pcusa.org/peacemaking

Worldwide Mission in Partnership Program

Includes currently serving mission workers and mission positions that are being recruited. (For faster service, check the Web site first.) For the appropriate staff person, contact PRESBYTEL, the church information line, at 1-800-UP2DATE (1-800-872-3283).

Includes area offices (by geographic region) and the Direct Mission Involvement Office. They can assist with information on countries, partnerships, and ministries. Staff of the International Evangelism Office can assist with information about these particular ministries of the PC(USA). (For faster service, check the Web site first.) For the appropriate staff person, contact PRESBYTEL, the church information line, at 1-800-UP2DATE (1-800-872-3283).

Relief and Development

This includes International Health Ministries, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People Program. (For faster service, check the Web site first.) For the appropriate staff person, contact PRESBYTEL, the church information line, at 1-800-UP2DATE (1-800-872-3283).

2. Resources for Experiencing the Trip

- Activities for Inclusive Group Conversation
- Activities for Nurturing Dialogue, Reflection, and Recommitment
- Cross-Cultural Activities
- *Handout 6*
 - Quotations for Reflection

■ Activities for Inclusive Group Conversation

■ Talking Stick

You may want to suggest the use of a “talking stick.” In American Indian tradition one may speak in a gathering when one has possession of the talking stick. You can use just about anything as a talking stick. It can be a “talking stone” found on a beach or a “talking coin” from the country where you are visiting. Or you may want to take along an object from home that could function as a talking stick. Pass the talking stick among the group as an invitation to share. Tell participants that they may talk when they have the stick or they may choose to remain silent and pass the stick to another person. The talking stick insures that everyone has an opportunity to speak and that only one person speaks at a time.

■ A Penny for Your Thoughts

Another way to even out the conversation, especially if there are one or two overly talkative participants, is to distribute pennies or pebbles or something similar to each participant. Each person gets, for example, ten pennies. Each time a person speaks, she or he puts a penny in the center of the circle. When they run out of pennies, they run out of talking time. This invites others to use their pennies without feeling they are competing with the confident conversationalists. This allows everyone to put her or his “two cents in” and more, without monopolizing conversation. However, it is never necessary for anyone to speak who chooses not to enter the conversation. “Pass” is always an option.

■ Equal Opportunity

If you do not use a “talking stick” or the penny method, you may want to appoint a member of the group to help you notice who has spoken and who has not. Gently invite into the conversation those who have not spoken.

■ Mutual Invitation

Use the mutual invitation technique discussed in Resources for Orientation and Preparation, page 75.

■ Activities for Nurturing Dialogue, Reflection, and Recommitment

■ Journal Writing

Share the writing of the group journal. Pass the journal around the group, with each participant having a certain part of the trip to write about, recording the facts and features of the day as well as personal ruminations. The journal will reflect the variety of perspectives and styles of the group. Individuals may also be keeping personal journals. Many participants enjoy writing in response to a thought or meditation. Offer a question—for the group journal or for individual journal keeping—which is geared to the day's activities.

To read more about the potential of journal writing, see the section on this in *Having An Excellent Adventure* (Bibliography, page 152).

■ Reflecting on Quotations

Invite participants to reflect on one or more quotations that fit the specific context of the trip. They might share their reflections either verbally or in writing as they choose, and as appropriate to the situation. The quotes may also be used to evoke a group sermon as part of worship. Read the quotation and have it on a piece of paper, perhaps paired with a Scripture passage. Give participants five or so minutes to “dialogue” silently with the quote and passage, relating it to their experience on the trip or their sense of emerging calling as they go home. Some may wish to make notes to remind themselves of their reflections. Invite a time of group sharing about what the quotation, or the interaction of the quotation and Scripture, stirred in them. Quotations are in Handout 6 on page 120. You may want to copy the sheet and pass it out to the whole group or copy the page and cut up the quotes to use one at a time.

■ Naming the Experience

Begin a go-round (always offering the option to pass) that asks people to briefly identify an agony or ecstasy (or both) of the trip so far. This “naming” of an experience moves participants beyond simple reporting of facts into an emotional or spiritual response to a fact or event. Even so, one person may demonstrate more of a heart orientation and another more of an intellectual orientation. For instance, a man may have been deeply moved by the sight of a Palestinian child throwing stones in the Old City of Hebron. A woman may hear devastating statistics concerning the number of incidents in which persons were arrested for curfew violations. One person may respond with great delight to the variety of fruits and

vegetables, pastries and sweets displayed in the market. Another may find joy in hearing the commitment of a peacekeeper in that area.

Once you have given people an opportunity to identify an agony or ecstasy, you may want to gather more impressions by asking another question.

It may be appropriate to pursue some of the responses, extending them, deepening them, inviting people to follow them further, to mine them a little more for the meanings they hold. For instance, the man who responded to the child throwing stones may be asked what it was that so disturbed him about that small scene in the back street of a large city. He may find beneath the surface event a sad sense that this child has already incorporated the violence of the world in which she lives. Likewise, the woman confronted with arrest statistics may identify a recognition of what they mean in terms of freedom to move about one's home city. The artist among the participants may appreciate the value of aesthetics and find it fun simply to encounter the cross-cultural experience of the Souk, the market. That person may be invited to compare the experience in the Hebron market with a mall in his hometown. The person who hears the story of the peacekeeper may be asked what it was that sparked a connection for her. The group may find out that what that person heard was that this Norwegian peacekeeper had served also in Bosnia-Herzegovina and that in the previous year, the participant had traveled there as well. Linking is then possible between two places of violence, so that participants can compare, contrast, and seek a deeper understanding of how and why violence breaks out, how and why it is perpetuated, and how it may be healed.

■ Group Questions

There are a couple of ways to use group questions as a means of helping participants to move from reporting to reflection. One is in verbal "popcorn" fashion. Ask a question of the whole group and invite a response, allowing silence until someone feels moved to speak, and then letting others follow in no particular order. Give everyone a first opportunity to speak before someone speaks a second time. A second way is to write/pass/talk. Ask a question of the whole group and invite participants to write their response in a few sentences. When they have had time to write, ask people to pass the papers around the circle. Or put all the responses in a hat and have each participant draw one out of a hat. Whether you pass or draw, invite participants to read aloud the responses they have ended up with. At this point the responses are anonymous. In the extended conversation that follows, persons have the opportunity to "own" their statements or not.

■ Raising the Hard Questions

Once the first layer of sharing has happened—with its initial exchange of information, impressions, questioning, and reflections—the hard questions may arise easily and naturally, almost on their own. Participants may have identified significant issues with which they are wrestling. If so, pursue what they have already put “on the table.”

If you need some pump primers, here are a few generic question suggestions. Some of the questions may be more appropriate for journal writing suggestions as a beginning point. Later they may be part of a group processing or reflection time as the group deepens its community relationship. The purpose of the questions is to invite participants to make the most of this experience as a journey both inward and outward. They may examine how the inward journey affects the outer journey by coloring our perceptions, prejudicing our responses, seeking to heal someone else in order to heal ourselves, and so on. Use the following questions as examples or starter questions. Revise or extend them to fit your situation. Add questions that are particular to the trip you are leading. Love the questions.

■ Questions about the Cross-Cultural Experience

- Identify positive aspects of the culture you are visiting. Which of these do you find missing in the culture from which you come?
- What aspects of this culture, political system, economic system, and social system would you identify as negative?
- What disturbs you about the culture you are visiting? Do you know why?
- What are you missing most from home? What are you enjoying most about being here?
- Are there particular aspects of this culture that you do not understand?
- In general, how would you describe the life/lifestyle you encounter here?
- In general, how do you think someone from this culture would respond to being in our culture?
- Are there elements of life/lifestyle, culture, religion, politics, and economics that you hold in common with people here?
- What would be most difficult for you if you moved to this culture? What would be most appealing?
- What are the cultural, social, religious, political, and economic clues that help you enter this culture so that you feel more familiar with it?
- How does being in this culture make you feel about your own culture?

■ Questions Relating to Persons beyond the Group

- Of the people you have met so far, whose words (or perspective or story) have disturbed you most?
- Of the people you have met so far, whose words (or perspectives or story) have inspired you most?
- Whom have you met who reminds you of someone you know, of someone you respect, or of someone you find challenging to deal with?
- Is there someone whom you have met whose story links with your own? Who? How?
- How does the sense of partnership with the people you meet help or hinder your experience of the culture you are visiting, the work you are doing, the encounter with individuals and groups? How do you feel about being in mutual relationship with the people you meet?

■ Questions about Faith Journeys, Worship Experiences, and Other Churches

- How have you connected with other people's faith journeys in the place you are visiting? What sense do you have of their experience of God, of who God is for them?
- What differences do you find in worship in the culture you are visiting? What is similar to your own worship experience?
- What have you been able to sense of the "church" in a particular place beyond its worship life? How is the church involved in community life? How do individuals of a particular denomination or faith tradition fit into the secular culture in which they live?
- How have you experienced being together in the body of Christ when you visited Christian churches?
- If you have visited worship places and/or sacred sites of other religious traditions, how have you responded to the experience?

■ Questions about Your Relationship with God

- How was God present in your decision to come on this trip?
- Where have you encountered God along the way? Is there a place you felt God's presence with particular strength, or is there a person through whom you heard God speak with particular clarity?
- Is there a specific faith or life issue you have been working on before this which has been either helped or hindered by this trip experience?
- What theological or spiritual questions has this trip raised for you?
- How is this experience affecting your attitude and action in prayer?

■ Questions with a Service-Learning Focus

- How is the work you are doing here similar to or different from the work you normally do (either paid or unpaid work)?
- When you are at home, what is your role in your work context? What is your relationship to the management structure and production process? Are you solely in charge? Are you accountable to someone else? Do you share responsibility with someone for particular tasks? Are you a maker of decisions? Do you produce something specific, provide a service, run a household or a business? How is this similar to or different from your experience on the trip? How does the similarity or difference feel to you?
- What is most fulfilling about this experience?
- What is most disappointing about this experience?
- What is the most important thing you are learning about yourself through this experience?
- What is the most important thing you are learning about someone else, or the place you are in, or the people you are meeting, or the world and life in general through this experience?
- What gift are you being given through this experience?
- If God seeks peace, justice, and joy for all people, and if you are working in partnership with God, what do you think you are contributing by being here?

(Some of the questions that follow are also appropriate for service-learning trip participants.)

■ Questions with a Travel/Study Seminar Focus

- What were the three most important questions with which you began this trip? Where are you in regard to those questions now?
- What are the three most important questions you are now asking because of this trip?
- Thinking about the interest that spurred you to join this trip, the information presented to you prior to the trip, and the experience you are having here, what changes have you noticed in your thinking about the issues, situations, problems, place, or people as a result of the trip?
- Which particular scene, so far, has touched you deeply, at heart level? Why do you think it was a moving moment? What is bringing you joy in this experience? What is bringing sadness? Do you find yourself responding more out of hope or despair to what you see, hear, feel, or think about?
- Have you discovered disparate viewpoints among the people with whom you have talked? How are you dealing with the disparities of information, experience, and perspectives given you?
- What is the gift you are being given through this experience?
- What do you think you are contributing to the group's experience?
- What do you think you are giving to the people you meet?

■ Questions about the Group/Community Experience

- How does the group experience support your personal experiences on the trip?
- What gifts do you bring to the group and how do you offer them within the context of this experience?
- Do you feel appropriately challenged and stretched by the questions the group is willing to ask?
- How would you describe your role in this group?

■ Questions for Personal Reflection and Journaling

- Is there a person in this group whose questions, perspectives, or opinions particularly enrich your own understanding of this experience? Who? Why?
- Is there someone with whom you naturally connect in the group? What is the source of that connection?
- Is there a person whom you find to be more or less difficult for you to deal with, who presses your buttons, who annoys you? Why do you think that is?

■ Recommitment

As the group moves through the time together, as it matures into a trusting community, and as it comes to the culmination of the experience, an important aspect of your leadership is in providing opportunities for participants to recommit themselves as Christ's disciples. This may be as simple as inviting a silent offering of their renewed commitment at the closing worship. It may be a covenanting with spoken commitment to do a specific thing that is then honored in a ritual at some time during the trip. You may want to take enough envelopes for the whole group. You can ask each participant to write on a slip of paper her or his commitment or renewal statement. Each person can then self-address the envelope, place the slip of paper inside, and give it back to you to mail at some later date as a reminder of the immersion and conversion.

■ Cross-Cultural Activities

■ Code of Conduct

Depending on the size of your group, choose one, two, or three people to leave the room. The rest of the group then decides on a code for behavior that the people outside the room must uncover. For instance, the group may decide that everyone will be seated when the outside group returns. Every time someone from the outside group says the word “and” they will all stand up and then sit down again. It is up to the outside group to figure out what the “clue” is for the behavior. When they discover it, they join the inside group and others are sent outside. The code may be as simple or as complex as the group desires. In fact it is fun to start simple and increase the difficulty with each round. For instance, the second time around, the inside group could decide that every time someone in the outside group (or a particular person in the outside group) says “and,” they would stand up if they were sitting and remain standing until the word was said again. So, as the game continued, some people would stand up when “and” was said, and some would sit down when “and” was said. A third time around, the inside group could decide that every time someone in the outside group touched their head the men in the inside group would say “Alleluia” and the women in the group would say “Amen.” If the person actually scratched her or his nose, both men and women would shout together “Praise God!”

This game can be used to help folks understand that in the culture they are encountering, there are similar “codes” of conduct that they as outsiders do not see. The “insiders” of the culture know the code. They live by cultural norms and play by its “rules.” In some cultures, only women do the shopping in the market. In some religious traditions, only men enter the most holy places in the worship space. In some cultures, girls go bareheaded only until a certain age. In some cultures, boys wear hats and girls do not. As you enter the country and culture of your trip, discovering the “cultures codes” is an important part of your learning about the culture. It is also important to discover the “cultural clues” in language or gesture. For instance, to bow in a gesture of respect is an important means of honoring people in some cultures.

If you play this game as a group during orientation or as one of the early exercises during the trip, you can alert people to look for cultural clues and codes. A day or two later, take time to share the observations people have made. You may or may not be able to decipher all the clues or codes yourselves. Then it may be appropriate to ask your local host or guide for help.

■ Seeing Structure

This exercise offers a way of looking at the structure of society and how it functions. Begin by noting that it is often easier to find something if we know what we are looking for, which sounds like a simple statement. However, when we are in a new place and are overwhelmed by so many sights and sounds and smells and sensations, it may be difficult to sort things out. This exercise invites participants to look for particular things in the makeup of the society they are in.

Give each participant a grid that looks like this:

	Political Office	Religious Leader	Business Owner	Service Sector	Market Vendors	Office Workers	Add Your Own
Men							
Women							
Children							
Old							
Young							
Race/Ethnicity							

Ask participants to keep notes for a few days on who does what. Who holds political power and position? What seem to be the qualifications for a religious leader? Who owns the factories? Who sells vegetables in the market? Who else sells in the market? Who shops in the market? Who sweeps the streets? Who drives the buses? Who are the doctors?

After a few days, invite the participants to compare notes and talk about what they have seen. Acknowledge that each of you travels with a built-in set of blinders called "cultural assumptions" (learned in your own culture). Much will be hidden from you as an "outsider" in the country you visit. When the group thinks it has a picture of the social structure, check it out with your local guide or host.

■ Looking for Red Spades

Morton Kelsey, an Episcopal priest and counselor, tells a story called “The Red Six of Spades.” In an experiment, a red six of spades (card players will know that there is no red spade of any number in a card deck; they are all black) was placed in a normal deck of cards. Individuals were invited to look at several cards at a time and then taken to a second room and asked to tell a second researcher what cards they saw using number, suit and color. Everyone was shown a red six of spades; however, few said they saw a red six of spades. We tend not to see what we think does not exist, and we tend to interpret things so that they conform to our sense of reality.

Tell the story to the group. Select one thing (this will require you as a leader to have “found” such a thing in your careful observing before using this exercise) in the culture that may not appear in our own—and so people may “miss” it. Or select one thing that may appear similar to our culture, but which has a totally different meaning or function in another culture. Share this with the group, and ask them to explain it. It may turn out that something that looks simple has great depth and meaning, or something that looks ritually important is just a habit passed on from generation to generation with no real significance except that “they have always done it that way.” Talk about assumptions we make as outsiders in a culture. Invite people to do their own looking and to bring back examples to look at with the group. Ask persons who live and work in that place to help you interpret your observations.

Quotations for Reflection

The first day or so we all pointed to our countries. The third or fourth day we were pointing to our continents. By the fifth day we were aware of only one earth.

—Sultan Bin Salmo al-Saut

There is, in fact, no other way to God for our time but through the enemy.

—Walter Wink†

People say, what is the sense of our small effort. They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time.

—Dorothy Day†

Who is a holy person? The one who is aware of others' suffering.

—Kabir†

Groaning in painful hope, God is giving us new birth, bringing us into ways of being who we are, empowering us to live our lives. God is drawing us into the terror and wonder of being human, of finding God in ourselves and in the world . . .

—Carter Heyward*

It is practically illegal to be an authentic Christian in our environment . . . precisely because the world which surrounds us is founded radically on an established disorder before which the mere proclamation of the Gospel is subversive.

—Archbishop Oscar Romero*

There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.

—A. J. Muste*

Prayer increases the volume of love in the world.

—William Temple*

I hope you come to find that which gives life a deep meaning for you. Something worth living for—maybe even worth dying for. I can't tell you what that might be—that's for you to find, to choose, to love.

—Ita Ford, M.M., killed in El Salvador, 1980*

To think that one small heart can experience so much, oh God, so much suffering and so much love. I am so grateful to You, O God, for having chosen my heart, in these times, to experience all the things it has experienced.

—Etty Hillesum, who died in a concentration camp in Germany*

Real prayer leads to involvement; real involvement leads to prayer. Deeper spirituality impels to action; action impels to deeper spirituality, and the circle continues and deepens. The mystic becomes prophet, the prophet becomes mystic.

—Katherine Marie Dyckman, S.N., J. M and L. Patrick Carroll, S.J.*

In our African language we say "a person is a person through other persons." I would not know how to be a human being at all except I learned this from other human beings. We are made for a delicate network of relationships, of interdependence. We are meant to complement each other. All kinds of things go terribly wrong when we break that fundamental law of our being. Not even the most powerful nation can be completely self-sufficient.

—Bishop Desmond Tutu†

. . . Justice is truth in action.

—Benjamin Disraeli*

A mission of reciprocity is a dance.

—Young Lee Hertig (quoted from a presentation given at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Dayton, Ohio, January 2000)

What you do is insignificant. But it is very important that you do it.

—Gandhi

Celebrating life when death is the norm is to be a community of resistance.

—Sojourners Community†

Like Jesus, we are called to a radical activity of love, to a way of being in the world that deepens relation, embodies and extends community, passes on the gift of life. Like Jesus, we must live out this calling in a place and time where the distortions of loveless power stand in conflict with the power of love.

—Beverly Wildung Harrison†

Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.†

If I go as a Hindu, I will meet a Muslim or a Christian. If I go as a socialist, I'll meet a capitalist. If I go as a brown man, I'll meet a black man or a white man. But if I go as a human being, I'll meet only human beings.

—Satish Kumar†

*Quotations found in Anne Broyles, ed., *Ways of Justice, Ways of Prayer: Words to Sustain the Spirit* (Washington, DC: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1993).

†Quotations found in Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen, *Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to Global Education* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991).

3. Resources for Preparing to Re-enter Our Culture

- Activity Plan for Processing and Evaluating
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■ Activity Plan for Processing and Evaluating

1. **CENTERING.** Gather in a circle. Perhaps you will want to invite each person to bring an object or souvenir that has been purchased, received as a gift, or found during the trip. These items may be used as the centerpiece of the circle or retained for initial sharing. Begin in silence. Suggest that the participants center themselves in the place and in the presence of God.
2. **VIEWING THE PERSONAL "VIDEO."** After a couple of minutes, invite the participants to review the trip as if it were a video passing before their eyes. Give them suggestions along the way to provide a skeletal focus. Something like: "Begin as you left home . . . what were you feeling . . . thinking. . . . Recall your arrival at the group meeting place and your first encounters with other travelers. . . . Think about the first day . . . the surprises . . . any difficulties . . . the general feel of the initial exposure to a new place." Proceed with specific reminders of the events of the trip, some of the people you met, places you visited, work you did, things you learned. Name times of laughter and tears, great joys or deep sorrows common to the whole group. Allow pauses between the suggestions in order for individuals to fill in the blanks with their personal experiences. As you come to the end of the trip, invite the participants to survey the totality of the experience and to pick one person and one place (be rigid about this; choosing is difficult, but not to choose in this case is to waffle and lose the potency of the exercise). Allow a brief time of silence again and then invite the group to return their attention to the circle.
3. **GIFTING THE GROUP WITH NAMES.** In a quick go-round, ask each person to share with the group the name of the person they chose. Do not allow cross-talking or commenting. In a second quick go-round ask individuals to name the places they chose. Again, do not allow cross-talking or commenting. Simply allow the names and places to be honored as nonmaterial gifts of the trip. It is not necessary for members of the group to explain to one another the why of their choices; much more will happen in the iceberg of self underneath the surface of this minimalist sharing. Later, in informal conversation, some participants may choose to share with one another why they chose a certain person or place. Or someone may refer to their choice in the reflection time. At this point, however, simply receive the choices.
4. **OFFERING OBJECTS.** If you have asked participants to bring objects, invite them in "popcorn" fashion (not a go-round) to display their objects for the group and in a minute or two say why they chose the object (it may or may not relate to the person or place). Some people may have chosen something in joy, some in sorrow, some in humor, some after intense wrestling. All are gifts of the experience. When the last person has shared, you may want to

pause for a spoken prayer that gives thanks for these object-gifts, the people-gifts, the place-gifts and all the gifts of the trip to which these gifts also point.

5. **TALKING ABOUT LEARNINGS.** Having affirmed gifts, you may want to open a conversation that focuses on primary learnings of the trip, persisting questions, revelations, insights, wonderings, dreams, and hopes that have emerged. This may also be a good time to begin to introduce the question of what commitment to interpretation and action participants will make.

6. **EVALUATING.** At this point, a stretching break may be in order. When the group returns, pass out the written evaluation forms. Give the participants a brief overview of the evaluation, noting the general categories, and telling them when you want the completed forms. (Hint: Pick a time prior to departure for the airport!) For a sample trip evaluation form, see *When God's People Travel Together: A Trip Leader's Planning Manual*, pages 63–64.

You may want to allow a short time for oral evaluation by the whole group. What went well? What was disappointing? What was most important in terms of their growth? What parts of the itinerary or work project did they appreciate? What was least helpful? What would they recommend to the next planners and leaders if such a trip is done again? You may also invite the group to evaluate itself. How attentive were they as a group? How well did they listen? How carefully did they respond? Had they done their homework before coming so that they could ask appropriate questions and seek helpful information? How well did they support one another and care for one another? Did they become a community or remain a group of individuals?

Add questions to personalize the evaluation and ignore those that do not apply.

■ Making a Graceful Re-entry

■ Make a Manifest

Turning toward home means not just packing bags and ensuring the safe travel of souvenirs, it means also thinking ahead to the re-entering of one's home culture, family, friendship circle, local community, church, workplace, and daily routines. It may be helpful to construct a "manifest" of what the group is carrying home. (A manifest is a list of what a ship or plane is carrying.) To make a group manifest, give each participant a piece of paper. Tell the participants not to put their names on the papers. Invite the group to think of the NON-material things they are taking home with them. Each person writes an item at the top of the sheet and passes it to the left. Again, each person writes an item on the sheet and passes it to the left. This continues until there are no more items to list, or until you think that most people have "declared" what they are taking into the home place with them. It may be that

some people finish their “luggage list” before others. They then can simply pass the paper on. Go around the circle and have each person read the list that she or he ended up with. A sample list could include specific vivid memories that seem to haunt or linger, a recognition of the complexity of the problems of the place visited, a new self-confidence from having had a first experience in international travel, a feeling of exhilaration from completing the trip, an immense tiredness from too little sleep and too much input. This exercise gets people thinking about the invisible things that they carry home and offers an initial opportunity to think about how they will deal with them as they begin re-entry.

You may want to introduce some specific words of wisdom about going-home plans. Here are a few suggestions—words of wisdom for you to remember, words of wisdom for you to share with participants.

■ Things to Remember

Go through the following reminders with the participants. Ask them to make a note of the four points. Invite participants to take a few moments to write down things they will do when they get home in response to the four points.

1. **THE TRIP MAY BE OVER, BUT THE EXPERIENCE WILL CONTINUE TO UNFOLD.** New thoughts, feelings, insights, and awarenesses will continue to arise in odd moments for days, weeks, and months after you get off the plane. It is important to make time and space for continuing reflection and debriefing to happen.
2. **THE PEOPLE YOU COME HOME TO HAVE ALSO HAD EXPERIENCES WHILE YOU WERE AWAY.** Ask the person who picks you up from the airport what has happened in her or his life while you were gone—and listen to the response! It is important to listen to how the soccer game went, what a spouse did to get the washing machine fixed, how a friend is doing in a job search. It is important to remember you are rejoining an ongoing stream of life, having been out of it for a time. Collect the stories your family, friends, and coworkers want to tell as a means of reconnecting. They will want to hear from you too, but perhaps not immediately, and perhaps not as much as you need to tell.
3. **REST. REST. REST.** Returning home, whether or not it includes some jet lag, means honoring your body’s need to relax after the trip, and your mind’s need to pull back from the intensity of the intellectual activity in which you have engaged, and your heart’s need to process all you have seen and heard, and your spirit’s need for some spacious and open time.

4. **BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF.** Don't expect to fit right back into things immediately. Ideally, it is a good practice to allow yourself at least a day or two, to re-enter before you have to function at peak performance. If that is not possible, at least reduce your expectations and let yourself off the hook of having to perform at the same intensity and level as before you left.

■ Transition Tools

■ Writing

Participants have been writing on the trip, in the group journal, in individual journals, and on postcards. Encourage participants to continue to reflect on their experiences through writing. Writing serves a double purpose. Some people may choose to write a newspaper or magazine article, a sermon, or a poem to share in the church newsletter as a means not only of continuing their own reflection, but also of interpreting their experience to others.

■ Talking

Participants have had the support and challenge of the group for the time of the trip itself. Being home alone—without the group—may be difficult. Encourage each participant to identify one person who will listen to the participant's reflections without needing to comment, respond, or tell his or her own story. Participants can arrange for their personal listeners before they begin the trip. It may be that the listener is the same one to whom the participant has sent the journal-postcards of the trip. See postcard suggestion in *The Short Report* under *Journal Writing* on page 96.

■ A Meditation

(Note: You may choose to lead the group through this meditation. You will find several dots (.) throughout the meditation. They are a signal that this is a place to allow a time of silence for participants to reflect on the question. A shorter string of dots indicates a shorter pause. Invite the participants to sit comfortably, to relax, and to focus on something that will help them to center themselves for the next few minutes.)

Close your eyes if that is helpful to you. Breath deeply: in and out . . . in and out. . . Gently let this question arise with your breathing, arise out of the silence: "How will you re-enter?" For a moment, simply let the question hang there and notice what begins to appear to you as you think about it.

Think ahead to the first couple of days back home. Will someone meet you at the airport? . . . Who? . . . Is it someone you can talk to immediately about the experience you

have had . . . or is that person just a ride home? . . . Is it someone who may need your immediate attention for themselves?

Who awaits you when you arrive home? Will you be alone? . . . Will your family be there? . . . Will friends be there?

What is the first day like, the first week? How full is your schedule? . . . Are home or work worries already buzzing in your mind? . . . What do you HAVE to get done? . . . What could you let go of, if you need to?

What are you most looking forward to? . . . Is there anything you are not looking forward to?

During the first days of being home, what will you miss about your time on the trip?

Which people, either in the group or others whom you have met along the way, would you like to keep in contact with?

What changes do you want to make in your life as a result of this experience? . . . How will you begin to make those changes happen?

What is the most important thing you want to remember about what you have witnessed, done, experienced?

In one more moment of silence, simply let all the questions and your thoughts in response to them settle in your mind. Click the "save" option on your internal computer. Now return to the group.

(Without processing the whole meditation or expecting everyone to share something, ask, "Are there any 'ahas' out of this meditation that you want to share with the group?" There may be none. Or a few. Or a lot. Just let the conversation go as it will for whatever time seems appropriate to the need to share.)

If you have worked the previous section as a whole, it is probably a good time to take a break before working with the last two aspects going home.

■ Exercises for Interpretation Tools and Tips

With the group do a series of exercises to help them think through their responses to the question, "How was your trip?" These exercises correspond to the material on Handout 7, "Interpretation Tools and Tips."

■ What to Interpret

Ask the group to think about what is the most important thing they want to communicate about the trip. Invite responses to this around the circle. In verbalizing a response to this question people begin to hear themselves speak in the interpretation mode about their experiences. Encourage participants to write their answer and to refer to it often as they prepare their interpretation events, writings, conversations, etc. Mention, however, that with time their idea of the most important message to communicate may change.

■ How to Interpret

Ask the participants to consider the different ways in which they might interpret the experience. You may give some suggestions to help stimulate thought: Speaking? Writing? Preaching? Teaching? Invite participants to share some thoughts on this. As one person hears another's list, she or he may find a new mode for interpretation.

■ To Whom

Ask the group to come up with ideas about who their audience might be (for example: children, youth, adults, special interest groups, congregations, presbytery, community organizations, or the general public). When you think about the "who," you come up with different questions about methods and resources. You may want to talk with the group about thinking through what the presentations might be, and how the preparation they do for one group will be different for another. Doing a children's sermon on the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina will require different sensitivities than addressing a gathering of residents in an older adult assisted living center. Speaking to a church group that shares theological language is different than speaking to the public where there may or may not be a theological or faith base.

■ Where to Interpret

Invite group conversation about the interpretation commitment in general. If some participants have had previous experience with interpreting, ask them to tell about some of their successes and flops (both are instructive). There may be a great well of group wisdom about how to get an article in the local paper, how to get on the docket of the presbytery,

how to “market” yourself to other congregations in the presbytery (for adult education, family night potluck, or youth group presentations, for example), how to make contact with Presbyterian Women groups in the presbytery for local programs or presbyterial presentations, how to let a community college or local university know of your experience so you may share in a class. Ask participants to think about how they could utilize the Christmas letter as a tool of interpretation. Appoint a scribe who will take down all suggestions. Keep the list and send it out to participants after they are home. Individual participants also might think about developing Web pages about their trip and placing their photos on their sites. Help people think outside the box.

■ The Thirty-Second Response

Invite participants to develop a thirty-second response to “How was your trip?” After they have had a chance to develop their answers, ask for volunteers to role-play the situation. One person can ask the question “How was your trip?” and another can practice his or her thirty-second answer. The questioner can then listen (or not) and make some response. The role play will give participants an opportunity not only to try out their thirty-second interpretive piece, but also to anticipate different responses to it, from the shutdown, to “Hey, great. Gotta go,” to “Tell me more,” to “Would you come talk to my Rotary Club about that?”

■ The Five-Minute Moment for Mission

Ask the group to divide themselves into smaller groups of about three persons. Talk about the three things they can strive to put into a five-minute moment for mission (one trip story, a connection to a biblical story, the connection with the partnership work of the PC(USA). Ask each individual to select a story from the trip. Invite people to share their stories with the others in their small group, and then to brainstorm Bible stories or passages that would relate to the individual trip stories. Then ask participants, still in their small groups, to help one another describe the PC(USA) commitment in the area and how the PC(USA) works in partnership with churches and other groups there.

■ The Longer Presentation

Ask the participants to continue in their small groups as they think about how they could engage their listeners’ five senses in a longer presentation. Invite them to make lists of items they are taking home that could be used to help interpret the trip. Ask the small groups to share their ideas with the larger group.

■ Action and Involvement: Answers to the “What Can I Do?” Question

When trip participants give presentations, some listeners will want to know what they can do, how they can help, how they can be in partnership, how they can become involved.

Participants need to have a handy list of ideas they can share in response to the “What can I do?” question. The list should span a range of possibilities from the simplest to the most involved, including the suggestion that the questioner go on a similar trip. Of course, the To-Do list is not just for other people. It also can be a list of ways the participants can remain involved after the trip. The following activities correspond to material on Handout 8.

■ The To-Do List

Ask participants to divide themselves into groups of four or five people. Invite each smaller group to develop its list of suggested things to do. Then have the groups share their lists aloud with one another. Encourage individual participants to write their own copies of the list. When they get home they can edit their list, duplicate it, and hand it out at their presentations.

Talk with participants about the resources available to assist them in their interpretation through the offices at the Presbyterian Center in Louisville and other resources that may be helpful as they engage in telling the story.

■ Conversation Starters

As the participants wonder about how they will be able to witness to what they have seen and heard on the trip, you might help the process by initiating conversation around the following topics.

PRAYER. You may want to point participants to Walter Wink’s book *Engaging the Powers*. He presents a helpful way of understanding prayer as a political power tool, opening possibilities where God may act through opening ourselves to the power of love. He says that when we pray “we are engaged in an act of co-creation, in which one little sector of the universe rises up and becomes translucent, incandescent, a vibratory center of power that radiates the power of the universe. . . . History belongs to the intercessors who believe the future into being. If this is so, then intercession, far from being an escape from action, is a means of focusing for action and of creating action.”¹

1. Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), pp. 303–304.

Some possible conversation starters:

- How is prayer an act of co-creation?
- As intercessors, how do we believe the future into being?
- What power does prayer have?

PERSONAL LIFESTYLE EVALUATION AND CHANGE. As participants assess their own lives in light of what they have seen and experienced, and with the insights they have brought home, some of them may be led to make personal changes. This may range from changing the way they talk about the world (revisit with them the power of language), to choosing to live on less (living more simply so others may simply live).

Some possible conversation starters:

- What insights have you gained about lifestyle?
- What changes might you wish to make, if any, in your lifestyle?
- Why would comfortable North Americans want to change their lifestyle?

FACING ISSUES. It may take some work to sift through the mass of information the group has obtained (perhaps some of it conflicting) and to boil down the emotional content to discover and distill the specific issues of the trip (for example, misuse of power, habitual hatreds, war). When the issues become clear, challenge the participants to commit to addressing these same issues each in her or his own life and context. It may not be possible to make a difference in the politics of Guatemala (for example) after one trip and from our vantage point back in the United States, but it is possible to address the same issues in our own backyard that we find in Guatemala.

Some possible conversation starters:

- At this point, what issues do you think we have encountered on this trip?
- Pick an issue. How could you address this issue at home?

MONETARY AND TIME COMMITMENTS. Invite the participants into a conversation about making monetary and time commitments as a way of staying connected and involved with the place or issues of the trip.

Some possible conversation starters:

- How can you maintain your involvement through monetary and time commitments?
- What possibilities are there for monetary and time commitments?

PARTNERSHIP AND NETWORKS. Have a conversation with the group about the possibilities of partnering and networking through the denomination. Contact information is in Handout 8.

ADVOCACY. Having been moved and changed, even transformed in their understanding of a situation in a particular part of the world, participants may choose to advocate for that area or group of people. Invite the participants to brainstorm avenues of advocacy, different ways that they can advocate. Help participants understand that there are many ways to go about advocacy, and that they may choose to advocate in the way that is most appealing to them or that fits their personality best.

■ Covenant for Continued Connection

The group may want to make a covenant to keep in touch for a period of time following the trip. This would maintain community, albeit scattered, for the re-entry time. It is a good thing to remain in touch with someone who knows your experience, to whom you do not need to explain everything, who will understand your “shorthand” about the trip, and who has real-life references for your memories. It also allows interchange of ideas about interpretation and action. If the group chooses to make such a covenant, be clear about who will serve as a primary instigator of communication. This may be you as the leader, but it may also be someone else in the group. Strive for clarity on exactly what it is that the group and individuals in the group are committing to do. For example, the participants might agree to send samples of interpretive pieces to one another, or to pray for one another, or to contribute to a round-robin letter by e-mail or postal mail once a month for a certain number of months. Or the commitment might include specific assignments that participants take on (I will do such-and-such by this date) to which they are willing to be held accountable.

Affirm the covenant for continued commitment during the group’s final worship. You might have someone write the covenant and invite everyone to sign it. During worship the participants can present the covenant as an offering. After you get home send a copy to each participant.

Some groups have found it useful to create e-mail groups as a way to stay in touch. Electronic, e-groups limit membership and access to those invited to participate, in this case, participants of the trip. You can set up free e-groups through many major servers, such as Yahoo! groups.

■ Naming the Gifts

You might do this activity as part of the closing worship. One by one, speak the name of each person in the group. Invite members of the group to identify what the individual named has given to the group (or to them personally). Often persons don't recognize the gifts they bring to a group; more often, groups don't take the time to acknowledge the gifts of their members. Let participants speak in popcorn fashion. If you alert people ahead of time that you will be doing this activity they will have a chance to thoughtfully consider the contributions of others.

Interpretation Tools and Tips: Short and Long Answers to “How Was Your Trip?”

Participants on trips sponsored through the national offices of the denomination have made a commitment to share their experiences with others. Most participants on mission or study trips sponsored by congregations, presbyteries, or synods have made a similar commitment. Since each person is different and is going back to a different setting, each will fulfill the commitment differently. There is no one way to do trip interpretation. Find what works well for you, but stretch a bit, too; go beyond what is most comfortable.

You may want to begin with some questions like the following:



What?

What is the *most* important thing you want to communicate about your experience? Write your answer and refer to it as you prepare your interpretation events, writings, conversations, etc. But keep in mind that with time your idea of the most important message to communicate may change.

Ask the people who invite you about what information or aspect of the trip they want most to hear. Try to connect your presentation with the concerns of the congregation or group where you speak. If your own congregation has a mission priority of education, speak about the schools you visited in Palestine refugee camps. If your presbytery has a partner relationship with a presbytery in Hungary and you visited a Hungarian Reformed congregation in Eastern Slovenia on your way from Zagreb, Croatia to Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, speak of the experience of those Christians during the recent war.

How?

How will you interpret the experience? Perhaps it will be through speaking, writing, preaching, teaching, or drama. What other ideas do you have. Write down the ways that are possibilities for you.

One thing people tend to overlook when they list possibilities for interpretation is the informal contact with family and friends. One frequent traveler does her interpretation by inviting friends or family for lunch. She is not a photographer, so she selects items she has gathered on the trip to place on the table as a centerpiece. She prepares food of the country or region she visited, then as luncheon conversation she talks about the objects she has placed on the table and tells the story that way.

Another often overlooked opportunity is the annual Christmas letter. If you write one, you may use it as a prophetic tool as well as a way to keep in touch. With technology, the old Christmas letter has all sorts of new possibilities. Or how about developing a web page about your trip and scanning your photos onto it. Think outside the box.

How long?

Find out how much time you have for your presentation. If you are speaking as part of the morning worship service, you may have a “Moment for Mission” which gives you only five minutes to touch the hearts, minds and spirits of folks gathered in that place. Perhaps in that case choosing one significant story as an illustration of the purpose of the whole trip allows you to connect with people in the context of worship and opens the door to further conversation during the fellowship hour. Within the church context, it is important—even with only five minutes—to refer to a familiar passage of Scripture which holds the essence of the call to mission in the region you visited. If you were in Egypt traveling to small villages where CEOSS (Christian Evangelical Organization for Social Services) is assisting people by drilling wells deep in the desert, you may want to quote the image from Isaiah 35 which speaks of the desert blooming. Then, you may use that image again to conclude your story with a phrase that says something about your experience of seeing “the desert bloom” through the work of this organization. Mention also the PC(USA) partnership with CEOSS and the denomination’s commitment to work with them in this region of the world, allowing God’s love to flow to the people in the form of “living water.”

To Whom?

To whom will you be interpreting this trip? Some possibilities are: children, youth, adults, special interest groups, congregations, presbytery, community organizations, or the general public. Thinking about the “who” raises questions about methods and resources. In what ways will doing a children’s sermon on the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina require different sensitivities than addressing a gathering of residents in an older adult assisted living center? Speaking to a church group that shares theological language is different than speaking to the public where there may or may not be a theological or faith base. Have your audience in mind as you prepare. Consider the audience’s attention span, their ability to understand the content, the experiences they may have had that helps them relate to, and understand, your trip experience.

In all these situations, linking your personal story of a short-term mission trip to the larger vision of God and the church, and particularly the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is an important function of your interpretation. This opens the possibility of your presentation

being more than a report of your travels, more than a testimony about your own experience of growing awareness and personal transformation, and more than a one-time connection with the people you met. Through you, people who have not known about the wider mission of the church may come to new understanding of how their own mission money is used by the denomination. For persons who have been seeking ways to offer themselves in acts of service or study, your story may open the door of possibilities and give them the impetus to explore such opportunities for themselves. Through you, people may also hear the Good News of God in a way that transforms their own lives, then and there, without ever leaving home. It may be just what they needed to find hope in a world where the news can lead one to a regular diet of despair.

Where?

Perhaps you can write an article for your local paper, or get on the docket of the presbytery. Perhaps you can “market” yourself to other congregations in the presbytery (for adult education, family night potluck, or youth group presentations, for example). Perhaps you can make contact with Presbyterian Women groups in the presbytery for local programs or presbyterial presentations. Or maybe you can let a community college or local university know of your experience so you may share in a class.

You may have the opportunity to tell your story to civic groups, the Optimist Club, a Girl Scout troop, or the Garden Club. In these contexts you cannot rely on the listeners’ knowledge of the biblical story of God’s love for the world, nor can you expect their awareness of the church’s call to mission in the world to be a manifestation of God’s love. Listeners may or may not have a religious or church connection. If they have church connections, they may or may not be familiar with Presbyterian polity and vocabulary. You will need to construct your presentation more carefully and be aware of places that may need more explanation than you would offer in a Presbyterian setting. The concern for explaining Presbyterian vocabulary and ecclesiastical structure holds true if you visit a church of a different denomination as well. This said, invitations to any of these and other places not related to the church (or to the Presbyterian Church) provide a wonderful opportunity to educate people about the overall mission concerns of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

One important caution: If you have visited “sensitive areas,” the mission worker and/or local church may be put in harm’s way if you share verbally and in print what you have heard and seen. Think through all the ramifications of what you put in a newsletter, on a Web page, or in other widely distributed media (such as television or radio interviews).

How Was Your Trip?

■ The Short Answer

Many people will ask, “How was your trip?” While the question is genuine, the person may not expect more than a brief comment. You have about thirty seconds to respond in such a way that the person will listen longer, or pursue it at a later date, or return to you with more questions after she or he has mulled over your initial response. Consider ahead of time how you might respond in just thirty seconds. Don’t get frustrated if someone doesn’t want to hear more. Thirty seconds is thirty seconds. We never know exactly what God will do with the seed we plant in that seemingly short period of time.

■ The Longer Answers

THE FIVE-MINUTE MOMENT FOR MISSION. You may be asked to do a quick five-minute speech about your trip. If you plan carefully you can make the most of five minutes. Consider three things you can include in a five-minute speech: one trip story, a tie-in to a biblical story, the connection with the partnership work of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). If you are doing a moment for mission in a service of worship, perhaps you will know the Scripture passages ahead of time and will be able to connect one of your trip stories with one of the biblical passages that will be read. While it is still fresh in your mind, describe the PC(USA) commitment in the area you have visited and list for yourself examples of how the PC(USA) works in partnership with churches and other groups there. You will be able to refer back to this as you prepare for interpretations.

THE LONGER PRESENTATION. You probably will have at least one opportunity to give a longer presentation. You will be able to tell more stories, show more pictures, and go more into depth about the country and the issues it faces. You also will run more risk of putting your audience to sleep. Consider ways you can engage the listeners’ five senses. What tangible things are you taking home that could be used to help interpret the trip? How can you make the presentation lively, relative, and interactive for the audience?

In whatever time frame and context you speak about your experience, include several ways for people to connect with your story. Some people will respond to the story itself as you tell it. Others will respond to a few of your carefully chosen slides that illustrate your points and assist you in making transitions in your presentation. Still others will be willing to look through a photo album. Some may respond to the tactile elements of the culture and will connect most directly by handling objects you brought back: a seashell from the Sea of

Galilee, a shell casing from Sarajevo, a board and nails from the building you built in Mexico, the backstrap weaving you brought home from Guatemala, a newspaper from Beijing. Teach people a song you were taught by a church you visited in Brazil. Wear or display a piece of traditional clothing you brought home from Africa, India, or Korea. Others will enjoy a taste of the cuisine you sampled along your journey. You don't need to leave this to settings where a meal is served. Bring some spices from the market near the Old City of Jerusalem, some fig jam from Cairo, fruit tea from eastern Europe. Have a pot of Equal Justice coffee from Colombia ready for folks as you talk about the economic justice issues in that country. Be creative in your presentation and invite your audience to use all their senses.

Ideas for Action and Involvement: Answers to the “What Can I Do?” Question

■ The To-Do List

Though some listeners tune out after thirty seconds, there are many others who will respond to your story or presentation with the question, “What can we do?” Be prepared with suggestions. It is a good idea to have handy a short list of “things to do.” This To-Do list may range in involvement from short term, to intermediate, to long term. The list can include options for both prayer action and political action as appropriate, as well as opportunities for a monetary response if that is possible and appropriate. Encourage the listeners to go on a trip themselves by including information on how to find out about trips and how to apply for them, and on how to organize a work trip.

■ Staying Involved

Interpreting the trip is one form of action. Telling the story is a beginning. Beyond interpretation, there is the question: What can I do as a witness to death and resurrection as it has been shown me through this trip? Remembering that this has been a journey inward and a journey outward, here are a few suggestions for your consideration.

PRAYER. You may want to read Walter Wink’s book *Engaging the Powers*. He presents a helpful way of understanding prayer as a political power tool, opening possibilities where God may act through opening ourselves to the power of love. He says that when we pray “we are engaged in an act of co-creation, in which one little sector of the universe rises up and becomes translucent, incandescent, a vibratory center of power that radiates the power of the universe. . . . History belongs to the intercessors who believe the future into being. If this is so, then intercession, far from being an escape from action, is a means of focusing for action and of creation action.”¹

Why would prayer be important to a witness such as yourself?

What new insights or feelings do you have about prayer since your trip?

1. Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), pp. 303–304.

PERSONAL LIFESTYLE EVALUATION AND CHANGE. Assess your life in light of what you have seen and experienced. What insights are you bringing home with you? Perhaps you are thinking about making personal changes. What might those changes be? Thinking of the power of language, maybe you are changing the way you talk about the world and the people in it. Perhaps you are choosing to live on less (living more simply so others may simply live). If you wanted to change, how could you sustain a change if it put you at odds with society?

MAKE LOCAL-GLOBAL CONNECTIONS. It may take some work to sift through the mass of information you have obtained (some of it may even be conflicting information) and to boil down the emotional content to discover and distill the specific issues of the trip (for example, misuse of power, habitual hatreds, war). When the issues become clear, challenge yourself to commit to addressing these same issues in your own life and context. It may not be possible to make a difference in the politics of Guatemala (for example) after one trip and from our vantage point back in the United States, but it is possible to address the same issues in our own backyard that we find in Guatemala. Why is it important to address the issues in our own backyard?

MONETARY AND TIME COMMITMENTS. One way for you to continue a relationship with the people and place you visited is by setting aside a portion of your stewardship money to send to relieve suffering, rebuild houses, restore communication and trust. Pledging a certain amount of time, dedicating an hour a week to keeping current with the situation, or writing a letter to someone you met on the trip are other ways to continue the connection. (See Handout 9, "Responsible Giving.")

PARTNERSHIP AND NETWORKS. When participants return from a trip, some are eager to ask their congregation or presbytery to establish a partnership relationship through the channels of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This may mean taking others to see what you have seen, or it may mean inviting people from another country to come to this country, for example through the Mission to the U.S.A. program. Another form of partnership is to establish a prayer covenant and a study covenant in relationship to a country, a presbytery, or a church.

For some countries or regions, "networks" have been established through Worldwide Mission in Partnership Program of the PC(USA). These networks of individuals, congregations, presbyteries, and/or synods have a particular interest in, and commitment to, a given country. They stay informed about developments, share information with one another, advocate on behalf of certain issues, and meet together every two to four years for face-to-face conversation. If you want to know if such a network exists for the country of interest to you,

contact the Worldwide Mission in Partnership Program. For more information on either partnerships or Mission to the U.S.A., contact 888-728-7228, ext. 5024.

ADVOCACY. Having been moved and changed, even transformed, in your understanding of a situation in a particular part of the world, you may want to advocate for that area or group of people. This may be an advocacy within the realm of the church, such as asking their session to write and adopt a resolution concerning the gospel of peace, justice, and joy in relation to child labor in Honduras or El Salvador or the Philippines. This may go further to a whole presbytery or further to the General Assembly. Advocacy may also be in the secular realm: writing letters to congresspersons, asking them to pass legislation prohibiting import of clothes made with child labor. It mean that you seek out organizations already doing this kind of work and work with them. In our denomination, participants may want to contact the Presbyterian United Nations Office at 212-697-4568 or the Washington Office at 202-543-1126.

Of course, these options for engagement and involvement are open to all who hear the stories you have to tell. Which of these have you included on your To-Do list?

Responsible Giving

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has stated its method of “doing mission” through a policy statement entitled “Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership,” which was adopted by the 215th General Assembly (2003).

This statement emphasizes that our mission relationships within this country and around the world are most faithful when they proclaim and incarnate these things:

- our shared grace in Christ and thanksgiving to God
- our mutuality and interdependence
- recognition and respect of our identities
- open dialogue and transparency of action
- two-way sharing of resources, human and financial

This 2003 statement is congruent with many ecumenical statements and principles concerning relationships or partnerships between church bodies and institutions. These documents call us all

- to answer God’s call in mission, *not serve our own needs by “doing good”;*
- to be independent (self-propagating, self-supporting, self-governing) church partners with a mission vision, *not dependent churches focused on survival;*
- to meet the holistic needs of churches and people(s), *not serve narrow agendas;*
- to honor the integrity of the church context, structures, and social dynamics, *not to subsidize another’s central church life nor exert undue pressure to change or conform.*

These documents call us to seek

- opportunities for initiatives in mission by any partner, *not one-sided efforts;*
- mutual respect, *not paternalism;*
- interdependent partnerships that are of benefit to all partners, *not one-sided, dependent relationships;*
- mutuality, *not one-way mission;*
- opportunities and recognition for “the least of these,” *not exploitation to the benefit of the more powerful;*

- a growing web of partnerships, *not exclusive or private relationships*;
- open dialogue, prophetic challenge, and mediation of differences, *not coercive or manipulative imposition of solutions*.

Financial Gift-Giving Concerns

While Presbyterians are encouraged to give generously to mission endeavors, financial gifts to partners cause more problems and controversies than any other single issue. Some of the concerns are as follows:

- Respect for the priorities and mission vision of the partner should guide the financial commitments, rather than ministry being “donor-driven.”
- Competition and jealousies are frequently engendered within the partner church because of large financial gifts.
- Power dynamics within the partner church or institution are greatly affected by the infusion of outside funds, even to the point of dividing the church!
- Giving financial gifts can create dependency on, or indebtedness toward, the donor.
- Inappropriate giving can decrease the dignity and self-esteem of the receiver and inflate the self-importance of the giver, both of which make a mutual, equal relationship impossible.
- It takes time and attentive listening and observing even to begin to understand the dynamics of another place and culture. “Transparency” and “accountability” require much dialogue to determine how they are understood on each side and what specific practices will be considered by both to be practical and necessary.
- Sustainability over the long term is a practice to be planned for, whether in outreach ministries or evangelism/church planting.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from over fifteen years of experience in the international presbytery partnership program; they can help to minimize problems in making financial commitments.

1. Refrain from making financial commitments for at least the first two years of a mission partnership.
2. Limit the amount of the financial commitment, set any commitment to the scale of the local economy, and develop clear, agreed-upon guidelines for the use of funds, administration, and reporting.
3. Be aware of—and try to minimize—the divisive impact that gifts to only one part of a partner church or institution can have on the whole. Consult with the national governing body prior to making commitments.
4. If congregational partnerships are developed within a presbytery partnership, there should be agreements on the limits of funds shared between congregations.
5. Plan toward longer-term sustainability of joint projects. This includes refraining from paying the salaries of personnel, whether pastors or other staff.
6. Send funds through the appropriate channels to optimize transparency in the relationship.

4. Resources for Worship

- Commissioning Service (before departure)
- Group Covenanting Service (at orientation)
- Communion Permission Form (for use prior to trip)

Commissioning Service

This service can be used during a service of worship in a participant's congregation. Duplicate and send to each participant, or to participants' ministers, before the trip.

Worship Leader: *(addressing the participant or participants):*

Throughout history, God has called women and men to particular forms of ministry. Today we acknowledge the call God has made to you to take your faith journey into a new place, to experience first hand the joys and sorrows, hopes and dreams, needs and gifts of people created in the image of God and whom God loves, and by your travel to extend your own sense of being God's family throughout the world. As we send you forth, we ask you these questions:

Do you receive this call as a gift of God's Spirit and will you rely on that Holy Spirit to support, sustain, comfort and challenge you on the journey you are making?

Trip Participant: I do and I will.

Worship Leader: Will you be faithful in your participation in this experience, seeking to build Christian community among fellow travelers, remaining attentive to both the agenda of the trip and to the spontaneous intervention of God's surprising Spirit as you go, and as fully as possible bearing witness to the love, compassion, and justice of Jesus Christ wherever you find yourself?

Trip Participant: I will.

Worship Leader: Will you return and share the knowledge, wisdom, impressions, questions, and imperatives for action which are the fruit of the journey you are taking?

Trip Participant: I will.

Worship Leader: *(addressing the congregation):*

Will you, the home congregation of (this/these) traveler(s), hold them in prayer, keep them close in your awareness and hearts, and surround them with the love of God while they are away, thereby maintaining our connection and unity in the body of Christ?

Congregation: We will.

Worship Leader: Will you receive (this/these) participant(s), [namely] _____, as they return and listen to their stories, encourage them in their growth, and support them as they reconnect with family and friends and with this congregation?

Congregation: We will.

Worship Leader: Let us join together in unison prayer.

[A laying-on of hands on the heads of the participant(s) may be appropriate here as they receive this prayer of blessing.]

All: Holy God, you are at once in this place and in all places. We ask your blessing on _____ and all those who will travel to _____. May they sense your presence and power as they meet new people and learn new things. May they hear your living Word through the voices of persons who speak your truth and seek your peace. May they experience the mystery of the body of Christ, which is alive across national boundaries and cultural differences. May they be encouraged and renewed daily by your energetic Spirit so that the refreshment of your grace is present with them always. Amen.

Worship Leader: Go then, in the name of God, in the way of Jesus, and in the trust of the Holy Spirit. Be in joy, be in justice, be in peace each step of your way.

["Here I Am, Lord" is an appropriate hymn with which to close this commissioning service.]

Group Covenanting Service

Leader: Hear these words of Scripture:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (1 Corinthians 4:12–13).

Participants: We, though many and diverse, seek to be one in spirit, held together as the body of Christ, by God's Spirit.

Leader: As we travel together, will you seek with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your body, with all your soul to love one another as friends in Christ?

Participants: Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4–7). We will seek to bear witness to this reality in all we do together.

Leader: Then let us covenant together to be a community and to love one another as God has loved us. Let us covenant together to share stories and to share our lives, trusting in the unity of Christ living and present among us.

Participants: We make this covenant with joy. We will live this covenant in peace.

All: Alleluia! Amen!

[You may want to sing together "Blest Be the Tie That Binds," "Though I May Speak," "Called as Partners in Christ's Service," or some other appropriate hymn affirming the covenant community you intend to be.]

Communion Permission Form

The *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) requires that permission be given for the celebration of the sacrament of Communion prior to that event. Submit the form in time for action to be taken before the trip begins.

Send this form to the session of your congregation if your trip is sponsored by the congregation.

Send this form to your presbytery's Worship Committee or General Council if your trip is sponsored by the presbytery.

If the trip is sponsored by the synod or a General Assembly division, you may ask a session for this approval.

During our Travel/Study Seminar / Service-Learning Trip in _____
we would like to celebrate Communion together to affirm our unity in the
body of Christ.

I/We request permission for the Rev. _____
to celebrate Communion on _____.

Thank you.

Please return this form to _____
_____ by _____.

Permission has ____ has not ____ been granted.

Signed _____ Date _____

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