



Presbyterian Mission
World Mission



Short-Term Mission Trip Workbook

A word on short-term mission trips, study tours, pilgrimages and the like

Not all short-term, church-related trips outside of one's familiar, close-to-home comfort zone are considered (or called) mission trips. Some trips are considered study tours to learn about an issue, a people or a place. Some are called partnership trips because they are short-term trips carried out within the framework of an ongoing, long-term "partnership" between two church-related communities, often with a purpose of mutual learning and fellowship. Some churches call such trips "pilgrimages" or give them other names, because they want to steer clear of the word "mission," which means different things to different people, or because throughout history harm has been done in the name of "God's mission." And yet, the bottom line is not what the trip is called, but how it is planned and led that makes all the difference in the experience of the group traveling and the experience of the community that is hosting. You can read a lot more about trip planning, intentions and potential impact of short-term mission in the "Learn" section of the Short-Term Mission Trip toolkit: pcusa.org/toolkits/short-term-mission.

Whatever kind of trip you are going on, and whatever it is called, this workbook is intended for use by the participants of any short-term travel into a context and culture different from their own. Throughout the workbook, for simplicity's sake we will use the words "short-term mission" with the understanding that there are a variety of ways in which short-term mission is understood and named, and diverse ways in which Christians believe they are called by God into service. What does it mean to "do" mission? When you talk about the trip, do you speak of "your" mission or "your church's" mission? Or do you talk about participating in God's mission, in a place where God is already present with people who are different from you? Have you considered how the people who are hosting you on the trip might be "in mission" and ministry with you and to you? These are important, underlying questions to consider as you and your group (or team) prepare to travel on a short-term mission trip. What is this trip about, why are you going, and what are your expectations for the experience? This workbook will help you think through these and many other important questions before you go.

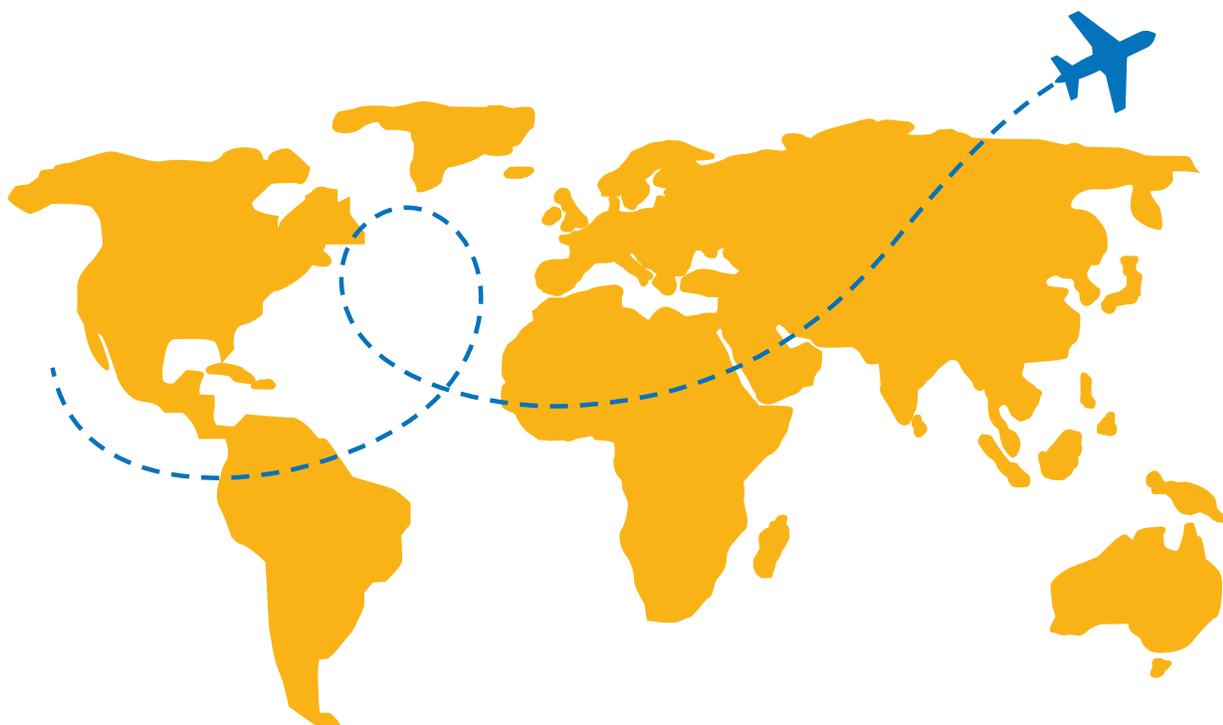


*God, please
guide me as I travel.
Help open my heart
to other people I meet,
different ways of doing
things, new friendships
and new insights along
the way.*

Introduction

So, you've decided to go on a short-term mission trip. Before you leave, there are some things you need to consider. Throughout this workbook, you are encouraged to seek answers to several challenging questions related to your upcoming mission trip. We hope the information, stories and your responses to reflection questions will encourage you and help guide you along your journey.

When you choose to embark on a mission trip or travel/study seminar, you are choosing to travel to a new country or community different from your own. The people may speak another language or have different social customs. Their view of the world likely varies from yours. As you step out of your comfort zone, this new experience might just transform you! You will see yourself in a new way as part of God's world.



Reflecting: Consider the following questions before your trip



Why are you thinking about going on a short-term mission trip?

Why are you going? What is your purpose for going on the trip?

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit, and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord.” — 1 Corin. 12:4–5

What are your hopes and dreams for this trip?

Partnership has taught me, again and again and again, that we all have something to give. And we all have something we need. And it works better when we share these things in relationships of trust and encouragement.”

— The Rev. Dave Carver, pastor of First United Presbyterian Church of Crafton Heights, PA

How do you feel about traveling to a new place?

What might it mean to you to offer a hand rather than a handout?

How would you receive a hand on your shoulder?

Whose needs are you meeting on this trip?

How will this trip meet your needs?

“As children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ, we are invited to partner through God’s global mission. We may have different gifts and outlooks, but we have the same goal — to work for God and achieve what God has put on our hearts, for God’s glory.”

— The Rev. Sevatt Kabaghe, general secretary of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Synod of Zambia

Where are you planning to go?

What do you know about the culture and the people who live there?

In what ways are you motivated to learn more about the people and the culture before you leave?

What do you know about their history, politics, geography, languages, religions, employment, health issues, etc.?

How did you come to understand these things?

Regardless of where you are going, you need to remember that you, your group and all the people you encounter are God's children in need of God's grace. Together you are global neighbors and God calls us to be in relationship with one another.

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it." — Psalm 24:1

What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." — Micah 6:8

What are you hoping or expecting to learn?

What do you currently understand about the country, community and people you will visit?



How did you come to understand these things?

“During my time of being your mission worker, I have observed many well-meaning congregations, presbyteries and Presbyterians — good people — desiring to share the Good News of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; but almost always as the ones who are the experts, the ones in charge; the bearers of the whole truth and nothing but the truth; the only ones who will pour out blessings of wealth, knowledge, technical know-how, spirituality and culture to a people who are void and deplete and who have little to nothing to offer.

But I speak to you from my heart when I say: STOP, BE STILL for a moment or two or three, SAY NOTHING and LISTEN to the voices — although often unspoken — of those with whom you wish to share your blessings.

Ask yourself and honestly seek an answer to the question: Am I willing to be laid bare? Am I willing to come to know and love another as truly my brothers and sisters? Am I willing to be shown another face of God? Am I open to be on the receiving end of this relationship, realizing that I have nothing that is wanted or needed by the ones I wish to partner with? Can I accept the fact that I am weak and that only in our shared humanity can we find strength?

I encourage you to learn how others live: what is life like in their shoes and, too often, what life is like when you don't have shoes? What brings joy to this family or community? What are the sources of their pain? What are their life struggles? What are their dreams for their families and community?

Sit with them, listen with your heart, and wait for the time when they feel that they are strong enough to go on. This, for me, is transformative partnership.”

— Leisa Wagstaff, PC(USA) mission co-worker serving in South Sudan

How do these understandings relate to your faith?

How are you open to these understandings being challenged or changed by your experience?

What joys are you anticipating?

What fears do you have?

Who will be going on the trip with you?

Will it be your friends, colleagues and/or members of your church or community?

What kind of diversity is there within your group? How might you encourage more diversity in your group?

If there are still spaces available, in what ways can you help recruit others to join the trip?

How many people in your group are experiencing a mission trip for the first time? How many are “seasoned” travelers? How about you?

What expectations for the trip have other travelers expressed to you?

What expectations have leadership communicated to your group?

“Therefore, encourage one another and build up each other.”
— 1 Thess. 5:11a

Are these appropriate expectations?

When are you planning to go on this trip?

What plans do you need to make to ensure your home or work life goes smoothly while you are away traveling?

What will enable you to fully enjoy and appreciate your new community?

How can you get better acquainted with the new community you will visit in the time you have before you travel?

If you haven't already done so, read up on the region you plan to visit, watch movies about or created by people in that region, read their literature and listen to their music to get better acquainted with the people who live there. Review resource pages and speak to people from that region to learn more about the culture. Some partner organizations may have recommended resources you can read and discuss with your team.

IMPORTANT NOTE:
With anything you find on the Internet, remember to have a discerning eye — some information may instill stereotypes or at the very least be outdated. Typically, information found on organizational (.org), educational (.edu) and governmental (.gov) websites are deemed the most accurate and useful.

How will you make this trip happen?

If you do not have adequate resources, what plans do you have to obtain them?

What fundraising methods have you thought about trying?

How do you plan to share the experience with others when you return home?

Writing Prompts:

Will I keep a journal?

Will I want to buy a digital recorder to capture sounds, noises, languages and music?

How will I start telling my story?

Will I want to use a slideshow or photo album or both?

Preparing yourself: What you should know before you go



This short-term mission trip is going to challenge you in ways you haven't imagined, so take some time to prepare your mind, body and soul.

Getting the most out of your preparation time

The goal for any cross-cultural experience is for you to return home informed and inspired. The hope is that you will see Christ in your global neighbors in ways that challenge and encourage you, and that you learn new ways God is at work in the world. Discover ways to act and be at home.

To ensure you are as prepared as possible for your trip, a good orientation should be completed with your traveling companions. Be sure to ask your trip leader about an orientation process.

Before you travel, make sure you have:

- A good understanding of why you are going, paying particular attention to your joys and fears
- A basic understanding of the host country's history, politics, language, economic situation, culture, religion and U.S. involvement in that region of the world
- Information about staying healthy while traveling abroad
- An effective, agreed-upon decision-making process for your group
- An understanding that prayer and devotional times are encouraged and that there is a sense of agreement about this within the group
- Some ideas about what other people in the group want to do while understanding the need to be flexible and adaptable
- A good understanding of conditions in a "two-thirds world" country

Suggestions for meaningful preparation

- Build community within your group of fellow travelers (play games, sing songs, share stories, etc.)
- Do some social analysis about your own country and your host country
- Review/practice words and phrases from your host country
- Learn some interesting facts about your host country (invite a speaker from that country to visit your group)

It's important that you limit your expectations and realize you're not going to be able to solve all of the world's problems during your trip.

Understand you will need to be flexible, adaptable, creative and open to unexpected changes in the trip schedule.

Be present with others by treating them as equals and with respect. You may not finish the work project you start. Building understanding and friendship is more important than building a new house. It is important to be present with the people in the host country.

Dealing with your feelings before you go

What motivates you and/or strengthens you when things are difficult or different than normal?

What is your biggest concern or fear regarding this trip?

Understanding that we all have fears and that courage exists within our willingness to move forward despite our fears, what kind of support from the group would you appreciate receiving to help you face those fears?

What are some things you're dealing with personally or professionally that could affect your trip? Do you need to let your trip leader know?

How can your faith in our loving God comfort you?

*“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.”
— Eph. 4:32*

Crossing into another culture, whether in the U.S. or internationally, can open you up to emotions that you may have under the surface due to past situations or trauma. You may witness things that will trigger negative feelings. The best way to help us deal with our fears or concerns is to lean on one another. Ask for help. Let your group members know what you need. Maintain a positive attitude and be forgiving of one another in your group.



The cultural iceberg was created in 1976 by Edward T. Hall, a cultural anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher (1914–2009). Read more at spps.org/cms/lib/MN01910242/Centricity/Domain/125/iceberg_model_3.pdf

Many models and images of the cultural iceberg can be found online.

Understanding culture

Culture is the glue that hold a community together. It is the way of life for a particular group of people at a particular time in history. Culture includes a group’s intellect, customs, ideas, traditions, symbols, social structures, values, language, arts and more. It can be celebrated in many ways, such as music, art, dance, food, literature, etc.

We are all shaped by the culture in which we were raised. It is inherited. Culture varies from community to community, but also family to family.

Think back to a time when you visited another culture or community different from your own. How did it make you feel? What were you aware of? What did you notice about your own culture?

It is important to understand that we all carry some type of cultural baggage and our view of the world is shaped by the culture in which we were raised. There is not a “one-size-fits-all” worldview. We all wear different lenses.

As a Christian visiting another country or even another city or state in the U.S., don't make assumptions about your host's situation based on your own. Be mindful that life in other areas of the world is very different from your own. As a visitor, you will need to be sensitive to these differences and trust that God will help you cope with any challenges. Have a sense of humor; laugh at yourself. Be inquisitive; ask local people why they do certain things. Learn from them and let them learn from you. Learning is a two-way street of dialogue and mutual understanding.

“I had the privilege of hosting 22 Presbyterians from the United States at my Guatemalan home base of San Juan Ixcay, Guatemala. These people were fresh off U.S. soil, and after living here for several months, seeing them on the muddy streets of San Juan made me feel like those wide-eyed Guatemalans who used to stare at me. Sure, they're human beings just like any Guatemalan. But they come from a very different world.

I know I'll never get the gringa out of my blood, but this group's visit made me realize how far I am from home. What stood out to me about these North Americans?

They are so tall!

Their eyes and hair are all different colors.

They have really nice shoes and warm clothes, but they don't seem to worry about getting sick from the cold and rain.

They like to throw things away.

They often try to solve problems with money.

They often have little idea of the source of the products they use.

Some women paint their faces and look like people on TV.

They are loud, even the ladies, and they like to laugh.

They don't seem to care about people judging them, and they are friendly to almost everyone, even the dirty kids who beg in the park.

They show a lot of emotion, and often cry, but not always from sadness.

They are always writing things down and some like to read for fun.

They talk about things that are so out of reach in Guatemala — punk music, graduate schools, oil refineries, brand-new cars.

They don't seem to be angry with or afraid of people who are different.

Sometimes their eyes look overwhelmed as they take in the mud homes, the dirt floors, the skeletal dogs and the toothless smiles. But I know they are ready for anything, from chili peppers to three-hour worship services.

— Written by Charity Thompson, a Young Adult Volunteer in Guatemala, 2003–04
(originally from “God's Mission Matters” podcast)

Suggestions on what to pack



Items for your carry-on bag

- Passport with visa stamp plus an extra copy of your passport
- Plane ticket
- Identification
- International Certificate of Vaccination, if applicable. It is a yellow booklet required for entry into some countries. You can obtain one from your local health department or doctor.
- Money and/or credit card (Check with your trip leader)
- Money belt or document pouch
- Notebook
- Toiletry items. Follow TSA's 3-1-1 rules

regarding liquids. To learn more, visit [tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/liquids-rule](https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/liquids-rule).

- Medical supplies and medication. Check TSA's current rules at [tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/medical](https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/medical).
- Personal hygiene items
- Change of clothes
- Phone charger and/or portable power source
- Emergency phone numbers. Trip leader should have a copy of every participant's emergency contacts and medical/health information.
- Copy of travel insurance policy. Check with your trip leader for suggestions.

Items for your checked bag

- Additional toiletries and medication (i.e., anti-diarrhea medicine, aspirin, Band-Aids) you may need during your stay
- Toilet paper and facial tissues
- Moist towelettes
- Bath towel and washcloth
- Water bottle
- Iodine tablets/drops or other water purification system, if applicable
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Sleeping gear (i.e., sleeping bag)
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Small sewing kit
- Utility tool knives
- Zipped plastic storage bags
- Several pairs of pants or long skirts, depending on how many days you plan to be there.

NOTE: Research local customs to make sure you don't bring something inappropriate (i.e., shorts or short skirts)

- Short- or long-sleeved shirts. Again, research local customs — sleeveless shirts may be considered inappropriate
- A couple pairs of comfortable shoes and/or sandals and closed-toed shoes (i.e., sneakers)
- An outfit appropriate for church
- Several pairs of underwear and socks
- Brimmed hat for sun protection
- Rain gear, such as a poncho or rain jacket
- Hooded jacket and/or sweater
- A Bible
- Notebook or Scripture journal (See page 21 for more details about journaling during your trip)
- Pens and/or pencils
- Camera with flash and extra batteries
- On-the-go snacks (i.e., granola bar or nut mix)

Additional items to bring

- Patience
- Humility
- Flexibility
- Sense of humor

Items to leave behind

- Stereotypes, prejudices and assumptions
- Concerns, stress and work (as much as possible)

For an alphabetical listing of all items you can or cannot bring, visit [tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/printable](https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/printable).

When in doubt about what to bring, contact your trip leader. The leader should be in touch with the host and know what would be necessary or acceptable to pack.

Regarding your health

Nothing can ruin your trip quite like an illness or injury. Use common sense, good personal hygiene and listen to your body to ensure you stay as healthy as possible before and during your trip. It's important to eat a well-balanced diet, drink plenty of water (bottled or treated water while on the trip) and exercise regularly to maintain your health.

To prepare for your upcoming trip, consider:

- Getting a physical exam
- Discussing your travel plans with your doctors to seek guidance
- Obtaining enough prescription medication for the entirety of your trip
- Having a dental exam and any necessary dental work performed
- Getting an eye exam and ordering an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses
- Researching the country before you go so you are familiar with their sanitation standards and practices
- Purchasing a medic alert tag or bracelet, if applicable (i.e., diabetes, food allergies, etc.)
- Writing personal health information (i.e., record of immunizations, allergies, your doctor's contact information, health conditions, blood type, etc.) on a card or notepad and keeping it on you when you travel
- Keeping a list of emergency phone numbers (Trip leader should have a copy of every participant's emergency contact list)
- Getting comprehensive travel insurance to cover medical emergencies.

Your health while on the trip

Make smart decisions about what you eat and drink while on the trip. Follow your group leader's recommendations regarding food/drink. Eat only fresh food and thoroughly cooked meat, poultry or fish. Fruits and vegetables that cannot be completely peeled should be boiled or baked. Do not consume unpasteurized dairy products.

When in doubt, use only treated or bottled water to drink or brush your teeth. Avoid using ice cubes. It is safe to bathe in untreated water as long as you don't get any in your mouth.

Depending on where you travel, you may need to use outhouses, latrines or even holes in the ground to relieve yourself. Toilet paper may not be available due to the expense so it's important for you to bring your own roll. However, be careful how you dispose of it. Toilet paper can cause sewage issues, so it is common in many countries to dispose of used toilet paper in a wastebasket that will be burned.

Traveling can be challenging both physically and mentally. It's important to prepare your body by exercising daily and staying in good physical condition prior to traveling.



A NOTE ABOUT IMMUNIZATIONS:

Contact the local Department of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control to determine current requirements. Many immunizations require a series of injections and must be administered weeks or even months in advance of your trip. An internationally recognized immunizations record may be required before entering the country in which you intend to travel.

Giving and Receiving

When traveling, well-meaning Christians often feel the need to provide cash or giveaway items (i.e., pens, notepads, clothing, etc.) to people of other cultures, but this sets up an unequal dynamic. Dependency can develop when “outsiders” are seen as “gift-givers.”

For example, let’s say a North American church group holds a fundraiser to collect clothes so they can distribute them to people they visit while in Honduras. No one asked the local organization hosting them if clothing was something people needed. The church group shows up and begins distributing clothing to people. Soon there are more people wanting clothing than they have available. People begin asking the church group for other items. This can create dependency and impact the local economy or culture.

If your group wants to provide small gifts, it’s best to coordinate with the hosting organization to find out what the community needs. Let the host give out the items to those in their community. Additionally, it’s important to discuss your group’s plan for giving gifts before you leave for the trip to ensure every participant understands.

Why are we motivated to help others?

- God calls us to help others.
- We feel that we are blessed and want to share our blessings with others.
- We want to fight injustice and help those in need.

But if we are being honest, we may want to help others because we want to feel better about ourselves. We may want to feel needed or liked and maybe even feel superior.

If you choose to send medications and other medical supplies, be sure to check the expiration date.

“As people with few resources, we tend to look at people from the U.S. as money-givers. This can create a dependency syndrome; then when the money stops, the project may stop. It can be wise to train and equip people to continue a project, regardless of whether the partnership continues or the cash stops.”

— The Rev. Sevatt Kabaghe, general secretary of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Synod of Zambia

The Latin American Task Force of the Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery first visited the village of Plan Grande 2, Nicaragua, in 2000 to assist in post-Hurricane Mitch reconstruction. For many of us, this was our first face-to-face experience with abject poverty. We saw people living in dirt-floored homes, whose children couldn't attend school for lack of funds for the required uniforms. We fell in love with these "humble peasants" and left determined to "help them improve their lives."

A few months later, I spoke before a group of Presbyterian Women. After viewing slides of those we'd met, together we hit upon what seemed a brilliant solution to their impoverishment: We'd equip them to sew! We'd purchase sewing machines, fabric, notions, and before we knew it, our friends would be sewing their way out of poverty!

Except — we hadn't included Plan Grande 2 in this conversation. In fact, it occurred to none of us that our friends might not be the least bit interested in our project. We had simply looked at them, perceived a need, and went about solving their problem not with them, but for them.

With a rather smug sense of pride in our ingenuity, I emailed a Presbyterian mission co-worker assigned to CEPAD in Nicaragua, the PC(USA) partner organization that facilitates our partnership. I was certain she'd share our enthusiasm. Imagine, then, my surprise when her response was closer to a rebuke. How could we make plans for women in Plan Grande 2 without input from them? Had we given consideration to any practical matters, including the fact that the community had no electricity? And where would items of such value be stored? What would happen when they inevitably required repair? Furthermore, did the women of Plan Grande 2 even want to sew? The wind abruptly escaped my sails. I felt completely deflated.

However, this created an opportunity for the first of many teachable moments. The mission co-worker helped open a door for dialogue that paved the way for a partnership — not charity, but a meaningful way for us to share our lives and faith. We hadn't given our friends an opportunity to speak. We were ready to try to make their world more like ours, without even attempting to listen to what they had to say.

And when we did listen, what did we learn? That these "humble peasants" were very wise and resourceful people whose business acumen had been established long before we arrived. We learned that what they really wanted was for us to work alongside them to change structures that were making their lives difficult. We also learned that the women of Plan Grande 2 weren't the least bit interested in sewing — they were interested in something that would benefit their community at large for generations to come. Their vision far exceeded that of our limited horizon.

-Kathie Sherman, part of a partnership between Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery and Plan Grande 2, Nicaragua (originally from the "God's Mission Matters" podcast)

As you experience another culture:

- Be present with and listen to the people who live there, especially those who are marginalized, oppressed or living in poverty.
- Try not to make snap judgments. If you do make a judgment, do so in light of social teachings of the church and the gospel.
- Remember that we are called to have a special concern for the poor and oppressed, but that justice requires equal respect.
- Be open with others on the basis of a common commitment and mutual trust.
- Remember that sharing not only includes money, people and goods, but also spiritual experience, theological insights, cultural heritage and numerous other gifts along the way.

"You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us friends."

— V.S. Azariah to the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910

Over the years, we've learned that mission is about partnership, accompaniment, interdependence, mutuality, accountability and global community. We've changed the way we do mission in the past two centuries because we've learned to listen to our brothers and sisters around the world who want a relationship of love, integrity and justice. In God's mission, we all serve together toward a common goal. We all have something to give and to receive.

Now ask yourself:

What are you hoping to gain from this experience

What are you hoping to share with others?

What are you hoping to receive from others?

What image comes to mind when you think of the word "partners" or "accompaniment?"

How do you anticipate life being different after you return home?

"Given the history of missionary efforts, many Presbyterians tend to underestimate the interdependent nature of mission and our commitment to doing mission in mutuality and partnership. The mission of the church thrives on continuous exchange and is nurtured by active involvement and intentional fellowship and hospitality."

— The Rev. Raafat L. Zaki, Synod Executive of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Synod of the Covenant

I was sitting with a Malawian colleague, a pastor who has a sincere heart for the Lord, for his people, and for the communities in which he's been planted. And this beautiful man was in tears. I asked him to speak about those tears, and he said, "Dave, the gospel came to Malawi in 1876 — well over a hundred years ago. And it has grown. And it has shaped me and my culture. But listen to this, Dave: My whole life, I've been taught that my church is filled with poor Africans who could only be recipients of mission. I've 'learned' that we don't have anything to offer anyone, and in fact that anything good that happens is because some nice, white Westerner has been willing to bring it to us. But now, I have learned that my church — the African church — can be a giving church. We are a mission sending church. Our brothers and sisters need something that we have — not what you have, Dave, but what we have. We can help. I am so happy. This feels so good."

— *The Rev. Dave Carver, pastor of First United Presbyterian Church of Crafton Heights, PA*

Remembering and telling the story

Journaling

Keeping a journal can be an important part of your cross-cultural experience. Note the colors, sights, sounds, smells, languages and smiles of the people you encounter. It is important to write down your observations while they are still fresh in your mind. Jot down new discoveries each day. What do you see that awakens your soul to new insights? What stories have you heard that make you laugh or cry? What do you see that calls out for God's justice? What do you believe God is telling you through this experience? What do the people you have met want you to know?

After being there for a few days, you will become more acclimated to your surroundings and can then begin to interpret your experience and analyze the situation. Take notes in your journal so you can reflect on them later. Jot down specific quotes from speakers (include the date, place, topic and speaker's name), poems or prayers you hear and questions that arise. For more on sharing your experience with others, please see "Crafting Mission Stories," part of this toolkit.

Your journal is a safe space to record your observations. You may find that you change the way you see things or how you feel after several days in this new location. Your journal can also help you evaluate your trip after you've returned home. You may find recurring themes and insights as you review what you have written. You may have some tips to share with future trip participants.

Remember this journal is yours and it allows you to reflect on your experiences and impressions. Others may not have the same experience and they may not agree with you — that's OK!

Photography and/or Videography

When appropriate, take photos and videos to help you share the story with others once you return home. Avoid being intrusive. Ask permission before taking someone's photo. Don't make promises to send them a copy of the photo unless you intend to do so.



IMPORTANT TIP:

If you are visiting a country that is experiencing unrest, be careful what you write about in your journal.

If you were to lose your journal, would anyone be offended by what you have written? Thinking about your writing and interpretation, would the people you are visiting be comfortable or offended by your reflections?

ANOTHER IDEA:

Consider creating a group journal.

Social Media

There are many blessings and pitfalls of social media use while on the trip. If you are constantly posting to social media, then you will not be as present. Additionally, social media is essentially self-promotion — posting images to obtain “likes.” Short-term mission trips can be an opportunity for people to humble themselves and get to know others from around the world without technology obstructing their connection. What you post online creates a narrative, which may or may not be dangerous. It’s important to tell the “whole” story rather than telling a “single” story. This can be hard to do on social media. Reflect on the dangers of a single story: watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk at [youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg).

Media

Encourage your group leader to contact your local newspaper and television and/or radio stations to schedule an interview upon your return. Local media outlets may be interested in sharing your story with others in your area.

More ideas on what to do once you are home:

- Tell your story to anyone who will listen and seek opportunities to share your experiences.
- Think of creative ways to stay in contact with the community that hosted you when possible and appropriate.
- Consider establishing a partnership or nurturing an existing one.
- Work with church leadership or your presbytery to invite someone from another country to be a guest in yours.
- Stay informed and advocate for those in another place.
- Continue to pray for those you met on the trip.
- Allow the trip to shape your lifestyle choices.
- Join a peaceful demonstration related to an issue you experienced while in another place.
- Write to state and federal officials to encourage policy changes that impact the people/place you visited.
- Boycott major corporations that have unjust policies for their workers.
- Attend or organize educational events related to the place and people you visited or an issue you witnessed while on the trip.

For more information or to find short-term mission trip planning resources, visit pcusa.org/toolkits/short-term-mission.



Adapted from *"People Places and Partnerships: A Workbook for Your Mission Abroad"* with permission from author, Sally Campbell-Evans.



Presbyterian Mission
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