

Volunteer Mobilization Project Logistics

Creating Better Pathways for Greater Kingdom Growth

*“He said to them:
A large crop is in the fields,
but there are only a few workers.
Ask the Lord in charge of the harvest
to send out workers to bring it in”
(Luke 10:2, CEV).*

www.namb.net/logistics

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Introduction

During the past 30 years, Southern Baptists have made great strides in mission mobilization strategies. Old paradigms have not shifted. Instead, they have been expanded to include a broader definition of missions and missionaries. Career missionaries continue to be the backbone of Southern Baptist strategies for gospel expansion. However, today missionaries have a partner who can help them expand the field of ministry—volunteers. By inviting volunteers to join them for specific, well-defined initiatives, missionaries are able to multiply their Jerusalem ministry. The volunteer missions movement in the Southern Baptist Convention is one that gained strong momentum at the close of the twentieth century. As we see more people respond to volunteer mobilization mission opportunities, the twenty-first century promises to be a time of mobilization for Southern Baptists. It could not happen a day too soon.

In North America alone, some estimate that there are as many as 200 million lost people. Every nine seconds an American is born and every 13 seconds an American dies. The population of the United States is growing, but the number of churches is declining. The United States is on the verge of being a post-Christian nation. Canada, which has never had a strong Christian presence, is considered a pre-Christian nation. Southern Baptists cannot sit idly. Our mission heritage calls for action. Volunteer mobilization may well be the primary tool God uses to turn the people of North America toward Him. Our challenge is to create pathways for volunteers to get to the harvest. "He said to them: A large crop is in the fields, but there are only a few workers. Ask the Lord in charge of the harvest to send out workers to bring it in" (Luke 10:2, CEV). The Volunteer Mobilization Team at the North American Mission Board (NAMB) exists to "facilitate the movement of people between their understanding of God's call in their life and living out that call in a tangible faith experience." Our joy comes in helping people get in the middle of God's activity.

The focus of the Volunteer Mobilization Project Logistics manual is short-term volunteerism. The purpose is to help mission leaders plan a project that allows a volunteer to have the best experience possible. Not only do we want to make good use of a volunteer's time, but we want "repeat offenders"—people who repeatedly offend Satan through their obedience to Christ.

This manual is divided into two sections: one for those inviting volunteers to a location, and one for churches preparing to send volunteers. You will find much helpful information and checklists that should facilitate your planning process. This special online manual is designed for you to download, print out, and copy for distribution. You are welcome to customize its content to fit the needs of your church, association, or state convention.

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Part One

Inviting Volunteers

No matter what the task, there is power in numbers. If you want to get something done, invite people to join you. That is the essence of the front end of volunteer mobilization. God is at work throughout North America, and He has placed people in important locations to be stewards of ministry. Often, they need assistance that can come from short-term volunteer mission teams and individuals.

Who can issue an invitation to volunteers?

In Southern Baptist life, the call for volunteers typically comes from missionaries. Often, they are associational directors of missions, ministry center directors, resort area missionaries, and so forth. However, the ability to invite volunteers is not limited to those who have a missionary designation. Others might also issue the invitation.

Church planters frequently invite volunteers to assist them. At first, it may be to help with community survey work. Later, the church planter may issue an invitation for construction workers to come help build the physical structure that the church needs to minister in its community.

While new churches often are recipients of volunteers, established churches also issue invitations for volunteers to assist in church growth initiatives. State conventions often have major initiatives represented by partnerships. To meet the partnership needs, state conventions actively recruit volunteers. State partnerships provide some of the most fulfilling pathways for volunteers.

The invitation for volunteers can come from any one of many different leaders within the Southern Baptist Convention. Prayer and a clear understanding of God's will must precede an invitation. Likewise, each step of the mobilization process should be saturated with prayer.

Have you cast the vision?

First things first. The purpose of volunteer mobilization is not to mobilize for the sake of the volunteer. The purpose is to meet local objectives. For the person who invites volunteers to a locale, leadership begins with a vision for what God wants to accomplish. Mobilizing volunteers without a clear purpose and objective is a blind endeavor. When people are giving up vacation and family time to assist you, they need to see the big picture.

Before you consider inviting volunteers to assist you, it is imperative that you have a clear vision of what God has called you to accomplish in your place of ministry. It is unlikely that any single mission team of volunteers will complete the vision. They will work on "a piece of the pie."

You may invite a construction team to come help paint concrete block walls. There are many mission teams willing to do that. However, it would be a shame if that volunteer team leaves and never understands that the walls they are painting will some day house an alternative to abortion clinic, a church, or a ministry center.

As you begin talking to potential volunteers, be ready to answer the following questions:

- What has God called you to accomplish in your locale?
- What evidence do you see of God at work?
- What difference will the volunteers make?
- What do you believe the ministry will look like in five to ten years?

Have you defined the task?

Parallel to casting the vision is defining the task. What do you want the volunteers to do? In volunteerism, we often warn volunteers that they must be flexible. While that is true, volunteers are most often “flexed” due to poor planning. Poor planning can be avoided.

To help you define the task, be prepared to answer the following questions:

- What help is needed in this venue?
- What can volunteers do to help?
- What is the time frame for accomplishing this objective?
- What materials will the volunteers need?
- Can an individual accomplish it, or does it call for group participation?

For common volunteer requests such as Vacation Bible School or Backyard Bible Clubs, this is easy to do. You need a team to lead children in these Bible learning ministries. The number of volunteers you need will be based upon the anticipated enrollment. You can target a specific week for implementation. If you are in the midst of a church-building project, no single short-term mission team will erect the building for you. Teams will complete phases of the project. Through good planning, you can schedule the framing, roofing, electrical, plumbing, and finishing crews. Flexibility for volunteers is necessary in construction as projected work might not be accomplished in the desired time frame. That flexibility can be understood. However, volunteers have a hard time being flexible when permits have not been pulled and materials have not been secured before the volunteers arrive.

A clearly defined task increases efficiency, reduces anxiety for the volunteer, and contributes to repeat volunteers.

Taking the time to define the task for each volunteer and volunteer mission team may be the most important step in your planning process. Cutting corners at this stage will prove to be more harmful than beneficial, so take the time to define the task.

What are the lodging arrangements?

This is one of the first questions a host will be asked. Be ready with an answer. Lodging can be one of the greatest expenses for volunteers. If they do not receive assistance with lodging, it may prohibit participation. These questions will help you plan for lodging:

- How many people will come with the volunteer?
- What is the gender ratio of the volunteer mission?

- If a student mission team is responding, what is the student-to-adult ratio?
- Can the mission team afford to stay in a hotel or motel?
- Will volunteers need to bring sleeping bags, pillows, or other items?
- Is there a church in your community that will do home stays?
- Is there a church in your community that can house volunteers in their building?
- Is there a church camp in the area that might be available for lodging, showers, and meals?
- Can you rent space in a local school (during the summer) or community center to house volunteers?
- Will the volunteers have to pay for housing?
- Are shower facilities available, or will you need shower trailers?

Lodging is one of the most sensitive issues for volunteers. You do not have to make “luxury arrangements,” but volunteers do need a clear understanding before they arrive of where they will stay.

Many volunteer mission teams are willing to pay for hotels or other lodging arrangements. The financial arrangements for housing need to be clear up front.

Will meals be provided?

Volunteers work hard during their time on a project, and they can get very hungry. Breakfast is particularly important as volunteers will burn many calories during the day. Like every aspect of volunteer mobilization logistics, the food arrangements need to be clear up front. These questions will help your planning for meals:

- Will the volunteer team need to bring his/her own cooks? If so, where will they cook?
- Will the volunteer team need to bring portable cooking appliances?
- Can the host provide meals? How many each day?
- If volunteers do home stays, can their hosts provide one or more meals each day?
- What are the catering options?
- If volunteers are housed in rented school or community center space, can kitchens there be used for meal preparation? Can the kitchen staff be hired to prepare the meals?
- What is the estimated cost of meals for each volunteer?
- What menus would be appropriate for the volunteers?
- Will any volunteer require special dietary considerations?
- Can the local association (or churches in the association) provide meals?

Everyone likes home cooking. While you may not be able to provide that, any assistance you offer to ensure quality food service will be greatly appreciated by the volunteers.

What are the transportation arrangements?

Transportation should be one of the simplest arrangements made for volunteers. Typically, when mission teams come to help you, they travel in vans or buses. These vehicles become their “ride” to and from the work site each day. It would be best to have an understanding up front with volunteer mission teams that they must provide transportation during the week for each participant they bring to the project. That may sound simple enough, but transportation can become complicated if you have multiple work sites. Here are some preliminary questions you may want to ask:

- What will the daily transportation needs be for this project?
- Will you provide maps with directions to the work sites?
- Does the responding church have sufficient vans, buses, and automobiles to transport volunteers safely during the week?
- Will those vehicles be properly serviced before the project?
- Is the insurance current on those vehicles? Will the insurance papers be with the vehicles? Are there insurance restrictions on the use of the church’s vehicles?
- Do you have a backup plan to use local vehicles in case of breakdowns or multiple work sites stretching the resources of the responding church?
- If volunteers are flying, what arrangements will they need for ground transportation? Is it understood who covers the cost of rented vehicles?
- Have you provided an area map to the mission team leaders with markings to direct them to their lodging and projects?

When volunteer mission teams fly to the project, they typically are still responsible for local transportation, which means the responding church (volunteers) rents vehicles during the project.

Many associations and ministry centers receive so many volunteers during the year that they have secured vans and buses to facilitate local transportation. The more you are able to do as a host to help volunteers the better. Plus, it may increase the number of volunteers willing to assist you. But the key, as in all phases of project logistics, is to have a clear understanding up front with the responding volunteer mission team.

How large a mission team can you host?

No matter how great the task might be in your area of ministry, the number of volunteers you can invite will be determined as much by logistics as by the task itself. Hosting 100 volunteers when you only have room and meaningful work for 50 may create frustration for the volunteers and you.

Before issuing an invitation to volunteers, consider these questions:

- How many volunteers does the defined task require?
- Can each volunteer stay engaged in meaningful ministry during each day of the project?
- What sleeping arrangements will the responding mission team require?
- If volunteers in your church or community will be providing some or all of the meals, how many meals can the local volunteers prepare?

Do you need a covenant?

A covenant is an agreement between two parties that defines expectations and desired results. (The covenant agreement might also be called a letter of understanding.) While it is not a legal document like a contract, it does help facilitate communication between two parties.

A sample covenant is in the Appendix (Item A) that can be used as a model. It can be customized to meet your needs. To help customize the covenant, answer the following questions:

- Does the letter of understanding clearly state the objective (i.e., define the task) you are asking the volunteers to accomplish?
- Are dates of implementation included in the letter of understanding agreement?
- Does the letter of understanding clearly state agreements concerning meals, lodging, and transportation?
- Does the letter of understanding include a prayer commitment?
- Are all costs to be born by volunteers made clear in the letter of understanding?

The signing of the covenant agreement by the responding church can be done in a church service. Such a ceremony can help the responding church promote the project and serve as a call to prayer.

How will this initiative meet the spiritual needs of the volunteers?

A volunteer project can be a very special time in the life of a volunteer. Often, a volunteer project represents a period of time—usually one week—when a Christian is as focused on his/her understanding of God's will for his/her life as at any other time. While they are learning about missions experientially, the volunteer's growth may not be as complete if they do not have cognitive and spiritual learning as well.

Likewise, when a church issues an invitation to volunteers, the spiritual growth of the host church's members also must be a priority. Worship and mission education need to be a part of each volunteer initiative. A volunteer may learn how to put shingles on a roof, but they also need to understand the biblical basis for missions.

Much of the responsibility for ministry to the volunteers will fall on the leadership of the responding church. However, a host can facilitate the objective of equipping the volunteer for spiritual growth.

- Have you prepared a weekly schedule that includes time for worship, Bible study, and personal devotions (quiet times)?
- Will the volunteers have adequate facilities for worship and Bible study?
- Will Bible study and worship include members of the host church?
- Have you discussed plans with the mission team leaders for worship and Bible study? Is it clear whose responsibility this will be during the week?

Volunteer projects are often physically exhausting. The experience does not have to include long services or teaching times. Spiritual emphasis can come through work site devotions, evening debriefs and testimonies, maintaining daily journals, and small group sharing. NAMB produces mission education resources that complement volunteerism. These materials are available through LifeWay Christian Resources.

Do you have follow-up plans?

As a host to volunteers, you have asked them to join you in accomplishing the vision God has given you. As stated earlier, it is unlikely that any single mission team will be able to accomplish everything that your ministry needs.

Each mission team or individual will work on a part of the whole. Short-term volunteer initiatives may be short-term in presence, but the relationship does not have to be short-term.

Relationships are important to volunteers. They want to know you, their host. They want to understand the ministry and to feel a part of what God is doing there.

Also, they want to know that their labor will continue to build the kingdom of God.

- Do you have a newsletter? If so, consider offering to put each volunteer on your mailing list.
- Have you prepared a thank-you note to the volunteers? This does not have to be a personal note to each one, but it would be appropriate to send a note of appreciation to each one.
- Would it be possible to give a gift to each volunteer, particularly to the pastor and/or mission team leader? It does not need to be expensive. A simple gift that represents the community or region would be fine.
- Could you prepare certificates of appreciation for volunteers? Certificates can be designed on a computer.
- How will you follow up on the work performed by the volunteers, and how will the report of your follow up be reported to the volunteers?

An active follow-up plan helps affirm volunteers, show appreciation, and increase the possibility that the volunteers will want to return to help.

Do you have a medical response plan?

Accidents can happen. Accidents can even happen to good people while doing good things. Suffering an injury or illness while away from home creates anxiety for volunteers.

Most often, the incidences you face will include cuts, sprains, nausea, and cramps. These are relatively simple conditions to treat and will not require emergency medical response.

If you are inviting volunteers to your community—particularly if you have several mission teams coming over the summer—it would be good to establish a relationship with a general practitioner—preferably a Christian—who will agree to see volunteers who need medical attention. While the volunteer is responsible for all of their medical expenses, the arrangements you make may include a reduced examination fee. The physician will be a stranger to the volunteer, but the fact that you have a relationship with the doctor will be reassuring to the volunteer.

- Have you made prior arrangements with a local general practitioner to see volunteers who need non-emergency medical assistance?

- Will there be registered nurses or physicians traveling with the volunteers?
- Have you clearly communicated to the responding volunteers that they must provide proof of medical insurance, and that the volunteers are responsible for their medical expenses?
- Have volunteers provided their mission team leaders with medical release forms?
- Do the volunteer mission team leaders have a plan for dispensing medicines during the project?
- Do the volunteers have a first aid kit?
- Have you provided volunteer leaders with a list of local emergency phone numbers?

Good preparation can keep an incident from becoming an emergency. The plans you make in advance will be greatly appreciated by the volunteers.

What can the volunteers wear?

Dress codes can be a sensitive subject. Nevertheless, improper dress can inhibit Christian witness and, in some cases, contribute to injuries. On construction projects, volunteers will typically need to wear long pants, usually jeans or work pants.

Depending on the phase of construction, the volunteers also might need to wear work boots instead of tennis shoes. For some phases, volunteers might be encouraged to wear steel-toed shoes. As a host, the volunteer mission team will look to you for direction concerning dress, particularly casual dress.

- What type of clothing will present the best Christian witness in your community?
- Will jeans or shorts be appropriate?
- Will volunteers need “dress clothes” for any worship services they might attend? Or, will they be attending worship services where casual dress is acceptable?
- Will the volunteers be able to do laundry during the week?

Do not hesitate to communicate to volunteer mission teams that short shorts, shirts with thin shoulder straps, mini-skirts, and tank tops are inappropriate. You might also caution against T-shirts that have inappropriate messages.

What is the schedule?

A daily schedule is one of the most important logistical issues in volunteer planning. Volunteers who are coming at their expense and during their vacation to volunteer want to know what they will be doing. By working with mission team leaders to produce a daily schedule before the project begins, you are communicating to the volunteers that much thought and planning has gone into this project. You also will be encouraging the volunteers by telling them that their time will be well spent when they receive the schedule before they leave their hometown.

The following planning questions will help you prepare a work schedule:

- How much time will it take to accomplish the clearly defined task for this mission team?
- Is the work expectation realistic?
- Does the schedule include adequate rest breaks, devotion breaks, and time for lunch?

- Does the schedule include some supervised free time for shopping, sight-seeing, and recreation?
- Does the schedule include worship time with a host church?
- Does the schedule include “lights out” time?
- Does the schedule include times for detailed meetings or informational meetings, including an orientation when the volunteers arrive?

Volunteers do not respond to initiatives to stand around. They want to be busy and to contribute to your ministry. By making good use of a volunteer's time, you increase the value of the experience.

Who pays for what?

If there is any area of volunteer mobilization that can create bad feelings fast, it is money. Volunteers are not free. While you will have the benefit of free labor and expertise, there will be overhead costs to volunteers. Likewise, it costs a volunteer to respond to your request. Volunteers are glad to do that, but nobody likes surprises.

The best way to solve a problem is to avoid it. You avoid financial problems with clear up-front communication.

- Will lodging be provided for the volunteer in homes or at the church? If so, will there be a charge to the volunteer?
- Will volunteers need to stay in a local hotel or motel? If so, what will it cost the volunteer and what will be the rooming arrangement (i.e., how many volunteers to a room)?
- How many meals will the volunteer have to purchase while traveling and while on location?
- Will there be a “program fee” that covers, for instance, T-shirts for volunteers, honorariums for special speakers, or other expenses?
- Will the volunteer secure supplementary medical insurance? (Information is available through the North American Mission Board, 1 800 462-8657.)
- Does the volunteer understand that any sight-seeing or recreational aspects of the trip will be at his/her expense?
- Will the volunteer have opportunities to purchase snacks? How much money might he/she need for that?
- Does the volunteer need to bring tools? Which tools?
- Who provides project materials?

The issue of materials is particularly important on church-building projects. Typically, the host will cover the cost of building materials, educational materials, crafts, and other needed items. If the volunteers are expected to help with material costs, that must be communicated early and reflected in the covenant.

As a volunteer host, you would be wise to prepare a budget for each initiative. You might even want to share that budget with the mission team leaders of churches that respond to your initiative. A budget could help both you and the mission team leaders in the communication process.

What do people do around here for fun?

Volunteers like to see the area where they are serving. Seeing local landmarks, visiting museums, going to beaches and water parks, and shopping allows volunteers to see more of your community and what makes it unique. The more volunteers see, understand, and enjoy about your community, the more likely they will be to return and help again. Does this mean you have to be a tour guide? No. As a volunteer host, you can plan times of sight-seeing and recreation. With proper planning and directions, the mission team leaders may be able to handle getting the volunteers “around town.”

- Does the schedule allow for at least one free afternoon for sightseeing and recreation?
- What attractions in your area might volunteers enjoy?
- Will venues require advance reservations or ticket purchases?
- Can you provide maps for the mission team leaders?
- Can you or other church members go with the volunteers during their free time?
- Will the attractions in your area help the volunteer understand your local culture?
- If staying in a school, church, or camp facility, will the lodging facility be closed during free-time hours? When will it reopen? Will it be secure?

The free time activities you suggest to volunteers will vary with age groups. Adults might enjoy shopping, crafts, museums, or golf. Students would probably prefer more physical activities such as swimming, softball, or volleyball.

Do you have proper insurance coverage?

This may be one of the most unpopular topics for ministries. However, bad things do sometimes happen to good people while they are doing good things. It can create serious problems for everyone. An entity—church, association, state convention, or ministry—that invites volunteers to join them in ministry should consider having blanket liability and accident insurance policies.

- Have you evaluated the need for liability and accident coverage associated with your ministry?
- If you see a potential need, have you secured the liability and accident coverage?

There are risks associated in ministry. These risks should be calculated and minimized. However, these should not be obstacles to accomplishing the mission to which God has called us—the Great Commission.

Conclusion

It would be easy to look at volunteer mobilization and conclude that you, the host, have needs that only volunteers can meet. While that may be true, please be cognizant that volunteers also need you.

Volunteers need valid, substantial pathways through which they live out their calling. A host who issues a well-defined call to short-term missions helps create that pathway.

Volunteers need validation as ministers of the gospel. The pathway you blaze and the affirmation you provide does that.

Volunteers need to be faithful. The pathway you blaze can help them grow in faithfulness. As stated earlier, the purpose is not to mobilize for the sake of mobilization or to claim big numbers. The purpose is to meet valid, local ministry needs. When you define those needs and create the pathway, everyone wins.

Part Two

Volunteer Response

One of the most exciting movements in the last quarter of the twentieth century in the Christian church was the rise of volunteer missions. No longer the exclusive domain of “career missionaries,” volunteers—both laity and clergy—found that they have a significant contribution to make to missions. That contribution has become a significant part of their life’s calling.

Volunteer mobilization has become firmly rooted in Southern Baptist life. Whether responding to national or international initiatives, volunteers have become central to the strategy of ministries everywhere.

While the clarion call among Southern Baptists today is for each of us to be an on-mission Christian—one who regularly helps people come to Christ—many people will experience being on mission during a short-term mission project. During that time, they are as focused on being on mission as at any other time in their lives. Volunteers have fewer distractions that keep them from full participation during short-term projects. Short-term mission projects become a significant part of their lives.

Also, there are practical aspects of short-term volunteer projects that can enhance or inhibit the volunteer’s experience. The purpose of this section of the Volunteer Mobilization Project Logistics manual is to assist church staff and mission team leaders to plan a project that maximizes the volunteer’s time, meets the host’s needs, and honors God.

In volunteer mobilization, we have often reminded volunteers that they need to be flexible. That will always be true. Nevertheless, the flexibility reminder, more often than not, is an excuse for poor planning. When volunteers give time and money for a mission initiative, they do so with some expectations. Those expectations often are not difficult to meet.

As you prepare to lead a mission team from your church, or as you prepare as an individual to respond to a short-term mission request, this section of the online manual will help you ask the right questions to prepare for a great project.

Does the pastor and church staff support volunteer mission projects?

The idea to lead a mission team from your church on a short-term volunteer mission project can come from anywhere. Whether God lays it on the heart of mission education leadership, church staff, or others, eventually the initiative will need the support of the pastor.

Typically, securing the support of your pastor and church staff is simple. Pastors want their people to become involved in short-term mission projects. They know it will have a positive effect on the church. The projects often create spiritual growth in the participants and enlarge the participant's vision for kingdom work. However, there may be times in the life of a church when a mission project is not the right thing to do.

A short-term mission project should not be a point of contention in a church. It should be a time of unity, focus, and purpose.

Here is a checklist for getting pastoral and church staff support:

- Has the idea been presented to the pastor and church staff?
- Are there any objections or concerns on the part of the pastor and church staff? Have those objections and concerns been answered?

- How can short-term volunteer missions grow your church? What benefits will the church see because of its members being on mission through this initiative?
- What evidence is there that God is at work in this initiative?
- If now is not the right time for a short-term volunteer project, when might the time be right?

Often, the initiative for short-term projects will come from the pastor or church staff. That answers many of the above questions before they are asked. Still, this section points to the importance of communication and agreement within the church before launching a short-term project. Communication is the first step to successful logistical planning.

Who will be the team leader?

Leadership is key to the success of any project. Within your church, a volunteer team leader needs to be recruited, trained, and equipped. The volunteer team leader will take primary responsibility for the project logistics. If the team leader is not a member of the church staff, this person will work hand-in-hand with an assigned church staff person. It is this person's responsibility to keep everything on track and to maintain communication with the project host.

A successful volunteer team leader will be someone who:

1. Senses the call of God to be a mission team leader.
2. Has good organizational skills.
3. Has the respect and admiration of fellow church members.
4. Can work with others.
5. Intends to be involved personally in each phase of planning and implementation.

Project logistics is not the sole responsibility of the team leader. If a team leader tries to do it all by himself or herself, they will be risking burnout. Based upon the demands of the project, others can be recruited to serve on a planning team. Other areas of responsibility might include promotion, food services, transportation, materials, lodging, construction, medical and insurance forms, and so forth.

Churches have a tendency to load up responsibility on a few dedicated church members. Do not do that with this person. The attention that the team leader and his or her planning team give to details will have an effect on the success of the project.

Job descriptions will help everyone understand the role of the project leader and the team members. Job descriptions do not have to be long and deeply involved, but they will help clarify who is doing what.

The sooner a team leader is chosen, the better. The team leader should assist in the project selection process. For most churches, this takes place in the fall before mobilizing the following summer.

A church staff person will most likely recruit a church member to be the team leader. The following steps will help you recruit individuals for team leadership:

Tell the story. Describe the activity of God that would lead the church to do a short-term mission project.

Tell your story. Why are you involved? Why do you want to see this happen?

Define the task. What is the church attempting to do? Whom will the volunteers be helping?

Define the expectations. This will clarify more exactly what the team leader will be asking volunteers to do.

Describe the personal benefits. Help a potential team leader or team leadership member understand how God might grow them through this experience.

Pray with potential volunteers. Every step of the volunteer process should be bathed in prayer. No responsibility should be accepted out of pressure or obligation. It should come from a clear understanding of God's purpose for the individual.

Here are additional checkpoints to help your church choose a team leader:

- Decide whether the team leader will be a church staff person or a church member.
- If the team leader is a church member, which church staff person will be his or her liaison?
- Does the potential team leader have time to give to this leadership role?
- Will this project require a planning team? If so, how many, and what will be their positions?
- Will there be job descriptions for each position? If so, who will write them?
- What budget will the team leader have? Will that budget include the cost of a pre-site visit by the team leader and one other person?

There are many leadership styles. No single leadership style is better than the other for this assignment. The most important elements to volunteer project team leadership are one's calling and vision.

Which project should we choose?

There is no lack of possibilities for short-term student or adult mission team projects or adult individual projects. Your association and state convention offices have a list of projects from which you could choose. This may be the best place to begin your project search.

The North American Mission Board maintains a national volunteer needs list for short-term projects. This can be found by registering at the Web site *www.volunteers.namb.net*. For help, call 1 800 462-VOLS (8657) or e-mail *volunteers@namb.net*.

A project checklist can help keep you on track for choosing a project (see Appendix, Item B). While it is possible to pick a project in April and still have a successful mission trip, that is not the norm. Typically, planning for short-term summer mission trips should begin in the fall.

The projects you find listed come from missionaries, church planters, and sister churches that are requesting help for specific projects. Association and state offices review and verify the need before the project is posted nationally.

So, the challenge is not finding a project. The challenge is finding the project that is right for your mission team. Here are some qualifying questions:

- How far are you willing to travel?
- What skills does the project require?
- What will the project cost each volunteer?
- Will your church scholarship participants?
- What evidence do you see that God wants you to join Him in that locale?
- Are you satisfied that the need has been properly verified? Is this a project for which you can and will commit to pray for daily?
- How can the skills gained in a particular project benefit your church?
- Have you talked to the person requesting volunteers? Have they been responsive?
- Is this a project that can capture the hearts of your people?

The relationship that volunteer project leaders have with the host church or ministry is critical. The communication between project leaders and the host will be the single most important project logistics factor. An initial interview, even if by phone, can help you determine early on how ready the host might be to work with your mission team.

Is the task defined?

Every volunteer initiative should be preceded with a clearly defined purpose. That purpose begins with your host. If your host cannot clearly define the task to be accomplished, you might want to consider another locale.

Church leadership, and specifically the team leader, must be ready to define the task to the church from which volunteers will be recruited. The communication skills of the team leader become critical at this point.

To recruit volunteers within your church, be prepared to answer the following questions:

- Where are we going?
- What is the objective?
- How long will it take?
- How will we get there?
- What will it cost me?
- What will we accomplish in this amount of time?
- What do I need to take?
- How will it change me?
- What skills do I need?
- What will be the sleeping and eating arrangements?

Volunteers, particularly those on their first trip, often have anxiety about “the unknown.” The better you are able to answer their questions, the less anxious they will be.

No matter what project you attempt, there will always need to be flexibility on the part of volunteers. However, a clearly defined task followed by good preparation is less likely to “flex” your volunteers.

Should you make a pre-project visit?

A pre-project visit is a major step toward participation in a successful mission project. It will help a responding mission team’s leadership:

- Connect with their host.
- Understand the “lay of the land.”
- Improve communication.
- Help identify potential problems and pitfalls.

Participants in a pre-project visit should include at least two people, usually the mission team leader and the church staff liaison. If you are considering a construction project, you need to include a person with construction expertise. During the visit, shoot video and photographs of your host(s), the potential work site, and the community where you will serve. Collect local maps, newspapers, church bulletins, and other printed pieces that can be shared with your church to help them understand the area where the volunteers will serve. For construction projects, bring back blueprints. A pre-project visit should not happen less than two months before the project and should include attending a worship service. If, for some reason, your host does not want you to make a pre-project visit, you should consider another project. The pre-project visit includes another important dynamic. It helps hold the host accountable for their preparation. The cost of the pre-project visit belongs to the responding church. It is money well spent. When considering a pre-project visit, ask yourself the following questions:

- Have you selected the participants for the pre-project visit?
- Is the pre-project visit scheduled with your host? Is it on the church calendar?
- Will the representatives from your church go with video and still cameras?
- Have the representatives collected a list of questions, including ones from potential participants?
- When will the representatives from your church make a report to the church or volunteers?

How can our church prepare participants spiritually for this project?

Short-term volunteer mission trips can be significant experiences in the life of a Christian. While every Christian is called to be on mission every day, short-term projects allow volunteers to focus more intently on ministry. Often during short-term projects, God works mightily in the life of volunteers, giving them a vision for what He wants to accomplish through them beyond the project.

While experiential learning is one of the best mission education methods available to Southern Baptists, any volunteer project should be complimented with Bible study and spiritual preparation. Some mission initiatives, such as World Changers for students, requires a pre-project study. The study materials come with registration.

Any pre-project study should include practical training related to the initiative. If your volunteers will be leading Vacation Bible School, they need to teach that material at home before going on the road. Likewise, if your volunteers are participating in a prayer journey, they need to practice before leaving home. Each volunteer should have evangelism training.

- Have you chosen a teaching plan to prepare participants for their short-term project?
- Will that teaching plan include a review of the biblical basis of missions?
- Will the teaching plan allow introspection on the part of the volunteer? Will it lead the volunteer to place a “spiritual marker” in their life?
- How will the volunteers be able to “practice” their initiative before the project begins?

Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God by Henry Blackaby and Claude King continues to be one of the best studies for individuals and groups to discover God’s will for their life. These materials are available from LifeWay Christian Bookstores or can be ordered by visiting www.lifewaystores.com on the Internet.

Have you planned a commissioning service?

Volunteers go as representatives of a local congregation. They are your people sent for a special mission purpose. It is an important time in the life of volunteers. A commissioning service brings focus to the purpose of the volunteer mission project and its place in the life of the church and the volunteers. Most often, it is appropriate to commission volunteers the last Sunday they are in their home church before the project begins. A sample commissioning service is in the Appendix (Item C).

- Have you scheduled a date for the commissioning service on your church calendar?
- Do you have a plan for the commissioning service?
- Will the entire worship service center around missions and commissioning the volunteers?
- Have you arranged special music to complement the theme of the service?
- Will there be opportunity for one or two volunteers to share their testimony in the service?
- Will the commissioning service be followed by a reception?

While commissioning services can be significant in the life of volunteers, it is also important to others. Commissioning services signal that your church is on mission. They help reinforce a culture of missions, evangelism, and church planting. It helps everyone in the church to feel a part of missions mobilization.

Is your equipment ready for service?

Depending on the mission request your church chooses to fulfill, you may need to bring some equipment. This is particularly true with construction projects. Most of the time, the volunteers will have a supply of tools among them to meet most needs.

The most important equipment issue for a responding church may be transportation. Bus, van, or car breakdowns can be very frustrating, particularly when leading a mission team. Not all breakdowns can be avoided, but preventive maintenance can help avoid problems. An often quoted proverb says that “a journey of 1,000 miles begins with the first step.” The first step in your church’s “journey of 1,000 miles” should probably be toward a local mechanic shop. Often, churches do not have a church bus or van. Instead, these must be rented or leased during the project. If a church does not have a budget for leasing, the cost of leasing could be included in a participant’s fee.

- Have you secured sufficient vehicles to comfortably transport each volunteer?
- Is each vehicle’s maintenance current?
- What are the insurance arrangements on the vehicle? Do you have insurance papers with the vehicle? Are there policy restrictions related to drivers and usage?
- Is there a “to do” list in the event of an accident?
- If there is a breakdown, do you have a defined procedure or policy for repairs?
- If your team is flying to its project, how will it be transported locally? Who will pay for local transportation?

Getting to a project is one issue. Getting around during the project is another. Typically, the responding church provides transportation during the week equal to the number of volunteers it brings to the project.

Local transportation most often becomes a problem when a volunteer team flies to a locale. Unless you have made prior and specific arrangements with your host, local transportation costs belong to the volunteer. This is one of the most important issues to settle with your host before committing to a project. Some locations that receive many volunteers have vans for local transportation. Do not assume that your host will provide transportation.

Will we practice before we go?

A pre-project practicum is a great way to smooth out wrinkles before getting to a project. If you will be teaching Vacation Bible School, it gives participants a chance to test the curriculum. If you are doing a church-building project, smaller projects in your community give participants a chance to learn how to work with tools. It is also a good time to teach participants about safety issues.

- Have you planned a pre-project practicum?
- Is the pre-project practicum on your church calendar and in the budget?
- What materials will you need for the “practice” run?
- Will you require each potential mission volunteer to participate?
- Will there be a make-up session for those who cannot attend?

A pre-project practicum can become an opportunity to do a project in your community. Try to use the practicum as a launching point not just for projects away from home, but also for ongoing projects in your community.

What will the project cost each volunteer?

This question hits close to home. Volunteers are already donating their time. How much more will a project cost them? Volunteers typically understand that on a short-term project they will have costs. Depending on your church's capacity to scholarship or subsidize the trip, and the success of any fund-raising efforts, the cost can vary greatly. Use the following budget worksheet to help you project the cost to each volunteer: This expense worksheet can also be found in the appendix, Item D.

Expense Worksheet

EXPENSES

- Transportation _____
- Supplementary insurance _____
- Food on site _____
- Materials (VBS, BBC, crafts, etc.) _____
- Program materials (schedule, theme interpretation, spiritual emphasis) _____
- T-shirts _____
- Estimated out-of-pocket cost for meals en route _____
- Lodging on site and en route _____
- Recreation and sight-seeing _____
- Other _____

Sub Total _____

INCOME

- Church subsidy _____
- Fund raising _____

Sub Total _____

- Expenses minus income _____
- Divided by number of volunteers _____

TOTAL COST TO VOLUNTEER _____

As in all budgets, there are several variables. You cannot be sure when you begin how many volunteers will enlist. The cost projection could be made on past enlistment or the goal you set based upon the project host's invitation.

When many churches figure the cost of a project, they often make it a package that includes transportation and food at the site. Anything not included in the package should be clearly communicated to the volunteer. A sample checklist of items a volunteer might need to bring at his/her expense is in the Appendix (Item E).

A cost to the volunteer should be determined early and not changed. Typically, if there are cost overruns, the church Mission Committee covers those. However, with good planning, cost overruns can be avoided. Should volunteers have to pay to do a short-term mission trip? Yes. There should be some cost to the volunteers. The experience will mean more to them if they have made some financial sacrifice.

What insurance does a volunteer need?

Nobody likes insurance until they need it. Even when good people are doing good things, accidents happen. Every volunteer needs to have insurance coverage.

A volunteer should provide proof of a primary provider of health insurance. This would be the policy they use at home during any office or hospital visit. That proof of insurance should be documented and on file with the mission team leader. A sample medical release and insurance document is in the Appendix (Item F). Included in the Medical Release Form is permission for mission team leaders to act on the behalf of the volunteer. Besides providing proof of a primary health care policy, the North American Mission Board has made arrangements with an insurance company to provide secondary insurance. This is a policy designed specifically for volunteers on mission projects. It is supplementary, and costs less than 60 cents a day per volunteer in the United States. The church secures the policy directly. You can request information about this insurance by calling 1 800 462-8657 or e-mailing volunteers@namb.net. Churches may also deal directly with the insurance provider, Adams and Associates, by calling 1 800 758-1400. Other companies offer short-term supplementary policies. The insurance providers of your church might offer this option.

Besides health insurance, some volunteers must be covered under a vehicle policy. Most often, churches will have insurance on each of its vans and buses and clearly defined policies about the age of members eligible to drive those vehicles. If your church uses private vehicles to transport volunteers, confirm that its owner properly insures each vehicle. If your church responds to a mission project that provides local transportation, ask your host for a clear understanding of who is eligible to drive those vehicles.

Besides health and vehicle insurance, your church also may have a blanket liability policy. While it is unfortunate that churches need to consider liability policies, in today's society it is wise to do so. Make sure that any liability coverage your church has will include volunteer initiatives away from the church.

- Has each participant provided proof of health insurance and signed the medical release form?
- Has each participant purchased supplementary insurance through Adams and Associates or another provider?
- Has each potential driver provided proof of insurance and proper licenses?
- Does your church carry a blanket liability policy that will apply to mission projects?

Insurance issues are not fun. They cause us to think about all the bad things that might happen on a volunteer mission trip. Mission endeavors are not risk-free. Christ did not promise us a trouble-free life, even when in the midst of His will. If our fear of the unknown ever exceeds our fear of God, Southern Baptists will have to take down their mission banners.

Through project logistics planning, risk can be managed. Good insurance coverage can help smooth any bumps in the road.

Do we need participant covenants?

A covenant is an agreement between two parties that defines expectations and desired results. While it is not a legal document like a contract, it does help facilitate communication between two parties. While a covenant with participants may not be required, it will help volunteers understand what is expected of them.

The covenant signing can be a part of a church commissioning service. When signing a covenant with teenagers, the covenant might also include a signature from parents or guardians.

A sample participant covenant is in the Appendix (Item G). You can customize this participant covenant to reflect specifics of your project, like honoring curfew, participating in daily quiet times during the project, and so forth.

- Have you decided whether to have participant covenants? If so, who will write the covenant?
- When will the covenants be signed? Will it be part of the commissioning service?
- Will student covenants include their parent's or guardian's signature?

Will you need chaperones?

If mobilizing a junior or senior high student group, you will need chaperones. The ratio should be about 1:5 by gender. That means one adult male chaperone for every five student male participants.

For churches mobilizing less than 10 students, a male and female chaperone are recommended if the mission team still includes boys and girls. Responsibilities of chaperones include:

- Working and ministering alongside students.
- Maintaining discipline and rules.
- Monitoring safety and security.
- Providing spiritual counsel to students.
- Following the leadership of the mission team leader.

Short-term mission projects can be significant events for chaperones and the students they accompany. It is important that the chaperones chosen be people whom the students respect and with whom they can relate.

- Will your mission project require chaperones? If so, how many?
- Will the chaperones be required to participate in pre-project studies and events? How will this be communicated?
- Will chaperones be required to pay the same fee as student volunteers?

- Will married couples who are chaperones be able to stay together during the project? If not, do they understand those arrangements?
- If specific team assignments are made at the project, do married couples understand that they may not be assigned to the same team? Will they agree with these arrangements?

Chaperones should not bring their underage children unless special arrangements are made. Inappropriate behavior by a chaperone should not be tolerated any more than that of a student. Every team member should observe codes of conduct.

What code of conduct should volunteers observe?

A volunteer's code of conduct can help participants understand expectations. The volunteer's code of conduct can be reflected in a participant covenant. A volunteer's presence at a mission site is a witness, both in word and deed. There are certain behaviors that communicate a Christian witness; others inhibit one's Christian witness.

A code of conduct may change from one locale to another, reflecting cultural issues of the community where you serve. Before departing, mission team leaders should discuss conduct and cultural issues that the volunteers need to observe.

As a rule, a code of conduct covers the following:

- No smoking.
- No drinking of alcoholic beverages.
- No profanity.
- No weapons.
- No dating.
- No cut offs, tank-tops, spaghetti-strap shirts, mid-drifts, short shorts, or mini-skirts.
- No T-shirts with offensive or non-Christian messages.

The following check list can help you prepare and communicate a code of conduct for volunteers.

- Have you discussed a code of conduct with your host?
- Are there special considerations for the location where you will be serving?
- How will you communicate the code of conduct with potential volunteers?
- Will the code of conduct be included in a participant's covenant?
- What plan do you have for enforcing a code of conduct? Who will be the "enforcer"?
- If participants violate the code and need to be sent home, how will that be done? Bus? Plane?
- Who pays the expense of the return trip?

Rules are meaningless if not enforced. Discipline is not fun to enforce on a volunteer project, but it is better to face issues as they arise than to ignore them.

Will your mission team have a daily debrief?

The short-term volunteer mission trip experience is a significant event in the life of the volunteer. They are experiencing new things in their Christian pilgrimage. Volunteers need help understanding and expressing the things that they learn and feel.

A daily debriefing also will help mission team leaders trouble-shoot problems. There will always be issues that arise during projects that may need a mission team leader's attention. The attention that a mission team leader gives to these issues may make the difference in the quality of the volunteer's experience.

A debriefing should include asking about what went right and what went wrong that day. Ask about any special encounters with residents. How did volunteers see God at work today? How was their faith challenged today?

Besides the group discussion that takes place at a debrief, a short devotion can help further the spiritual development of the participants.

- When will you conduct daily debriefings?
- Who will plan and conduct the daily debriefings?
- Will you place time limits on the debriefing?

A debriefing is not meant to be a gripe session. Though problems are sure to surface, and they need to be addressed, try to keep this as positive as possible. By inviting people ahead of time to share a testimony of what God has taught them that day, you can help keep the atmosphere of the debrief upbeat.

What is the best way to involve the whole church?

A short-term mission trip is not just for the mobilized volunteers. The whole church can be involved by using the most important tool any volunteer will ever have: prayer. Before departing, the responding church can create a prayer chain. While it should definitely include the families of the volunteers, there is no reason why it could not include other church families.

A prayer chain will help the folks back home stay in touch with the volunteers and feel a part of the project. Each day, church members can be celebrating the good things that are happening and interceding for the challenges being faced.

In many churches, the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) leadership might be the best source for organizing the prayer chain. WMU has a rich history of prayer support for missions. This would be an opportunity to make praying for missions very personal.

- Have you decided to form a prayer chain to support the volunteers?
- Who will organize the prayer chain?
- Who will initiate the prayer chain from the volunteer team?
- Will the prayer chain operate daily?

Have you scheduled a celebration service?

Every volunteer has a story, but they are often anxious to share that story. Equally important to the commissioning service is a follow-up celebration service. Typically, no later than one Sunday after a volunteer team returns home, the church takes time in a service to hear reports about what God accomplished during the project.

Not every volunteer can tell his or her story during a celebration service. Time will not allow that to happen. It is important that celebration services be well planned, perhaps even rehearsed, before the actual worship time.

Be creative in your presentation. Use photographs and video to show church members what you did. Video segments could include statements from missionaries that you assisted in the project. Plan skits to reenact experiences from the trip.

- Will your church have a celebration service following the short-term mission project?
- Is the date of the celebration on the church calendar?
- Will the celebration be a portion of a service, or will it be the entire service?
- How many testimonies will be given? Will someone work with those giving testimony to help them organize their thoughts and to help them keep the presentation within a reasonable time frame?
- Will the presentation include photographs or video? If so, who will edit those programs and present them?
- Have you assigned a participant primary responsibility for documenting the project?

If making photographic presentations, try to avoid manual slide transitions with live commentary. This type of presentation is often boring. Instead, try to do a synchronized slide-tape presentation or scan the photographs into a computer PowerPoint presentation.

Keep the visual presentation exciting. Try to include images of everyone from your church who participated in the project.

Remember, whether planning a commissioning or celebration service, the first purpose is to worship and honor God.

What about odds and ends?

Sometimes the little things make a big difference. In your planning, do not forget to include possible things like:

Name tags. This is important if you are joining other churches in a project. Also, if your church is new or has many new members, the nametags will help team members get to know each other.

T-shirts. Everyone likes a theme T-shirt. A T-shirt made for a special occasion becomes a valued reminder of the experience for the volunteer. And when traveling, it helps the team leader keep up with everyone in plane terminals and restaurants when the team is wearing the same T-shirt.

Water bottles. Because most volunteer mission projects take place in the summer, volunteers will probably get hot. You might not be able to afford a theme water bottle for the project, but you might get a local vendor to donate water bottles for the project. At the very least, put water bottles on the “to bring list” for volunteers.

Curfew. Make sure you clearly communicate curfew times, particularly with student mission teams. Mission trips can be draining emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Rest is a must.

Rain gear. Most short-term projects happen in the summer. We expect the weather to be sunny and dry, but that does not always happen. Have a “rain out” plan, including ponchos or other rain gear for participants.

Emergency cash. A mission team leader needs to carry or have access to an emergency cash account. This arrangement needs to be made ahead of time with the church, along with a method for accounting for the funds.

What if things go “really” wrong?

Even with great planning, you can count on challenges. Volunteer teams have faced tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods. On a less threatening level, volunteers have planned initiatives and no one showed up, or too many people showed up.

It is not easy to plan for every possible scenario challenge. This manual cannot cover all of the possibilities. The best advice is prepare to be creative. This is where flexibility helps. And never underestimate your most valuable resource – prayer.

Conclusion

Volunteer mobilization is a valuable tool, not just to the mission field but also to responding churches. Experiential missions learning can be life changing. The time spent on a mission project is often an extended “teachable moment,” a time when the volunteer hears God speaking clearly. For many, it is a launching point to a lifetime of being on mission. Mission projects also can be an incomplete experience. The mission experience needs to be reinforced year round with mission education. Mission mobilization and education can build a mission consciousness in your church that brings new energy and excitement to the work that God has for you. Whatever pathway you choose to involve mission teams or individuals in short-term missions, pave it with prayer, planning, and praise for the activity of God in our world today.

APPENDIXES

Item A

Mission Trip Covenant

Covenant between Host and Volunteer Mission Team or Individual

This covenant to partner in a short-term volunteer mission endeavor is between

(Host) _____ and
(church or individual) _____.

While inviting (church or individual) to join God in His activity in our community, (host church, missionary, or ministry) agrees to the following:

1. To invite volunteers to join us in the fulfillment of God's call upon our life for ministry in this locale on (date).
2. To have a clearly defined task for the volunteers.
3. To pray regularly for the volunteers and their preparation for the mission project.
4. To provide significant ministry for volunteers who come to work with us.
5. To be available to mission team leaders to make logistical decisions related to this project, particularly concerning issues of cost to the volunteer, such as housing, transportation, and food.
6. To provide all necessary materials for the accomplishment of the assigned task.
7. To be available to minister alongside volunteers during the week.
8. To assist volunteers in any emergency they may face.

While participating in this mission trip, (church or individual) will seek to demonstrate our love for Christ and for others by agreeing to the following:

1. To work diligently with our host to accomplish the defined ministry objective.
2. To pray regularly for the mission project, our hosts, and God's work in the community where we will serve.
3. To seek opportunities to share Jesus Christ with the people of the locale.
4. To prepare diligently before arrival for the ministry at hand.
5. To arrive on (date) and to depart on (date).
6. To cover the following costs of this mission trip: (list may include transportation, lodging, materials, food, etc.).
7. To abstain from the use of tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, or illegal drugs.
8. To maintain a safe environment for my fellow participants.
9. To not have possession of or use fireworks, firearms, or knives.
10. To follow the mission trip schedule.
11. To stay together as a mission team in the designated mission trip area.
12. To respect the privacy of others.
13. To maintain a clean environment.
14. To demonstrate a Christ-like spirit and concern for all people.
15. To be aware of our witness 24 hours a day.

We have read the mission trip responsibilities listed above and agree to follow them.

Host _____ Date _____

Mission Team Leader/Individual _____ Date _____

Item B

Mission Trip Calendar Planning Checklist

8 months to one year before the project

- Survey the church to discover the members' desire to serve.
- Form a planning group.
- Prayerfully determine the goals for your project.
- Survey the needs lists at www.volunteers.namb.net. Become familiar with the needs of the missionaries.
- Determine where and when you would like to conduct your project.
- Contact the missionary from the needs list.
- Discuss issues relating to logistics like food, transportation, lodging, schedule, curriculum requirements, and orientation requirements.
- Send any deposits for lodging, food, orientations, and other things that may require a deposit.
- Confirm the church bus or van and send in deposits for your transportation.
- Agree on a date.
- Use a budget worksheet to determine the cost for each participant.
- Determine a fund-raising strategy.
- Determine a mission preparation schedule for the project.
- Determine how you will sign up participants for the mission trip and what will be the requirements.
- Present a budget to the proper person and/or committee.
- Conduct a first parent meeting in preparation for student mission projects.

4 months to 8 months before the project

- Calendar a commissioning service and a celebration service.
- Conduct personal soul-winning training for team members.
- Begin promotion and enlistment.
- Make your travel plans. Put deposits down for site-seeing and/or fun trips.
- Conduct a pre-project visit or orientation.
- Make arrangements for a local mission project (pre-project practicum).
- Design a schedule for the project.
- Determine the medical needs for the trip. Enlist a nurse or a person trained in first aid and CPR.
- Create a medical release form to be signed and notarized.
- Make a packing list for the participants.
- Enlist adults as sponsors or counselors.
- Begin your mission trip training.
- Begin your fund-raising.
- Conduct a second parent meeting for student projects.
- Create an official itinerary for the trip.
- Reserve church bus or van. Review vehicle insurance policies.

1 to 2 months before the project

- Conduct a local mission project (pre-project practicum).
- Start to collect any mission trip supplies you need.
- Have a well-stocked first aid kit ready.
- Enlist prayer partners or mentors for each participant.
- Call your missionary for updates.
- Mail a reminder note to all participants about money due, forms due, and other items that need to be turned in.

2 to 4 weeks before the project

- Conduct a commissioning service.
- Requests checks from financial secretary (lodging checks, food checks, petty cash, trailer rental, gas credit cards, etc.).
- Conduct the last parent meeting for student projects. Collect medical release forms and the balance due. Have a notary present to seal any forms.
- Check out all vehicles. Give them a test run and have them serviced.
- Make room assignments.
- Make a job assignment list.

The week of the project

- Be flexible.
- Pack and load van, trailer, etc. safely.
- Canvass everywhere.
- Represent the missionary well.
- Share your personal testimony at every opportunity.
- Present a clear gospel message at every opportunity.
- Model a servant spirit.
- Have an alternative plan (it may rain).
- Have an off day/fun day.
- Designate a photographer or videographer for the week.

The week after the trip

- Conduct your celebration service.
- Follow through on any decisions made during the week.
- Write thank-you notes to the missionary.
- Have a debriefing session.
- Think about what to do next year!
- Show all of your pictures and videos to the church.

Item C

Commissioning Service

Purpose of Service

- To inform the church about the ministry of the volunteer(s).
- To provide spiritual enrichment and mission education.
- To help develop a mission-minded congregation.
- To focus on prayer support for volunteers.
- To motivate others for volunteer missions.

Preparation for the Service

- Promote the service well in advance.
- Prepare a bulletin for the commissioning service.
- Plan a receiving line or a reception for the volunteers.
- Write brief biographical sketches on mission volunteers for use in your church newsletters.

Recognition Service

- Ask volunteers to share experiences of their mission projects.
- Display pictures or show videos of volunteers at work.
- Recognize volunteers with appropriate certificates, lapel pins, or plaques.
- Invite guest speakers from the North American Mission Board to emphasize volunteers in missions.
- Ask the pastor or a mission leader to challenge the church to further involvement in missions.
- Plan a banquet or fellowship time following the service.

Commissioning Service

- Invite a volunteer to share his or her testimony.
- Ask someone to give a brief description of the mission project, its purpose, location, and the length of time volunteers will participate
- Ask the volunteers to come to the front of the church so they can be presented to the congregation.
- Prepare a special responsive reading and prayer led by the pastor or missions leader. Allow the congregation to respond and pledge prayer and support to the volunteers.
- Encourage financial support of the congregation for mission volunteers.
- Enlist and recognize families committed to pray for specific volunteers.
- Plan a fellowship period for the volunteers following the service.

Sample Commissioning Service

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP	"Go Tell It on the Mountain"	Choir
INVOCATION		
HYMN NO. 572*	"I Love to Tell the Story"	Hankey/Fischer

WELCOME

HYMN NO. 146*	"O How He Loves You And Me"	Kaiser
OFFERTORY	"We Have Heard the Joyful Sound"	Owens/Kirkpatrick
SCRIPTURE READING		Pastor
SPECIAL MUSIC	"Send Me, O Lord Send Me"	Coggins/Hoffman
SERMON		Pastor

On Mission Christians

1. An On Mission Christian Spiritually Awakens – John 4:35-36
2. An On Mission Christian Continually Adjusts – 1 Corinthians 9:22
3. An On Mission Christian Evangelistically Activates – Romans 10:14
4. An On Mission Christian Passionately Advocates – Luke 10:2

HYMN NO. 285*	"Wherever He Leads, I'll Go"	McKinney
	*The Baptist Hymnal, 1991	

CHARGE TO MISSION VOLUNTEERS—Pastor asks the volunteer(s) to come to the front of the church. He addresses (him/her/them) directly during this part of the service.

Pastor: You have chosen to be an on mission Christian, to be a mission volunteer. God tells us that it is our responsibility to faithfully minister and witness at all times, wherever we are. Meeting needs and sharing Christ requires:

1. Daily communication with God.
2. Doing the task that He has called you to.
3. Discovering effective ways of showing others what Christ means in your life.
4. Inviting others to respond to Christ. God is the basis for your spiritual strength.
Will you communicate with Him daily through Bible reading and prayer?

Volunteer Response: I (We) will, with God's help.

Pastor: Will you permit God's influence to be felt in your work, and will you search for His will and let it be done in your day-to-day decisions and deeds?

Volunteer Response: I (We) will, with God's help.

Pastor: Will you continue to give expression to the spirit of Christ in all your relations with others, and will you live your life in such a way that others will want to know what Christ means to you?

Volunteer Response: I (We) will, with God's help.

Pastor: In a sympathetic, loving, patient manner, will you make a conscious effort to minister and witness across all types of barriers and, when conditions permit, will you invite others to receive Christ as Lord and Savior?

Volunteer Response: I (We) will, with God's help. (Pastor asks volunteer(s) to face the congregation and reads a Scripture passage chosen especially for the congregation. Col. 4:2-4 is appropriate, or others may be chosen.)

Pastor: This is God's command to those of us who stay behind and serve. We must be faithful in undergirding these with our interest and prayer support. If you join me in this commitment of support, will you stand?

Pastor and Congregation: We, the members of _____ Baptist Church, pledge to you our continuing interest and prayer support. When we pray, we will ask God to protect, encourage, and keep you. We will ask Him to give you wisdom, strength, and courage. We will ask Him to bless those with whom you minister.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Pastor

Note: The pastor invites all present to attend a fellowship period with the volunteer(s).

Item D

Expense Worksheet

EXPENSES

Transportation _____

Supplementary insurance _____

Food on site _____

Materials (VBS, BBC, crafts, etc.) _____

Program materials (schedule, theme interpretation, spiritual emphasis) _____

T-shirts _____

Estimated out-of-pocket cost for meals en route _____

Lodging on site and en route _____

Recreation and sight-seeing _____

Other _____

Sub Total _____

INCOME

Church subsidy _____

Fund raising _____

Sub Total _____

Expenses minus income _____

Divided by number of volunteers _____

TOTAL COST TO VOLUNTEER _____

Item E

Participant Checklist

What to Bring?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible | <input type="checkbox"/> Work clothes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Devotion book | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal toiletries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Missionary prayer calendar | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic bags for soiled clothes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sturdy shoes or work boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Socks and underwear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hat or visor | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal family insurance card |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mirror | <input type="checkbox"/> Snacks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insect repellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Tissues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chap stick | <input type="checkbox"/> Dress clothes for a Sunday worship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suntan or burn lotion | <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry supplies as needed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Towels and wash cloths | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction tools and equipment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pillow | <input type="checkbox"/> Swimsuit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work gloves | <input type="checkbox"/> Alarm clock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rain gear | <input type="checkbox"/> Money for your meals on the road |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camera and film | <input type="checkbox"/> Breakfasts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light jacket | <input type="checkbox"/> Lunches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handkerchiefs | <input type="checkbox"/> Dinners |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pen or pencil and notebook | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping bag | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air mattress | |

Item F

**Medical Release Form for Minors
Parent/Guardian Consent**

Name of Participant _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Name of Parent/Guardian _____

PERMISSION

I, _____ (parent/guardian) hereby give permission for _____ (hereinafter referred to as "the student") to travel with _____ (hereinafter referred to as "the church") to _____ (destination) during the following dates _____.

- I do hereby verify that the below information is correct and I do hereby grant permission for the church to obtain medical attention in case of sickness or injury to the student.
- I hereby grant permission for an attending physician or hospital to perform whatever care deemed necessary by the church for the welfare of the student until such time as you are able to reach me personally.
- I also hereby release, absolve, indemnify, hold harmless, and forever discharge the church, the organizers, sponsors, and supervisors from any and all claims, demands, actions or cause of actions, past, present, or future arising out of injury or damage while participating on this trip.
- I assume all risks and hazards incidental to the conduct of the activities and transportation to and from the area. In case of injury to the student, I hereby waive all claims against the organizers, the sponsors, or any supervisors appointed by them. I likewise release from responsibility any person transporting the student to and from the activities.
- I agree to provide medical insurance for my student(s) who are participants on this trip.

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

MEDICAL AND INSURANCE INFORMATION

Family Insurance Company _____ Policy # _____

Family Physician _____ Phone _____

Check if applicable and give appropriate explanations below:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Allergies | <input type="checkbox"/> Heart Trouble |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asthma | <input type="checkbox"/> Kidney Trouble |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bronchitis | <input type="checkbox"/> Sinusitis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes | <input type="checkbox"/> Stomach Upset |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Explain below) |

Immunizations:

- Tetanus: Date Received _____ Typhoid: Date Received _____

List any prescription drugs the student will be taking while on trip; include frequency and dosage for each.

Comments:

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION

Parent/Guardian _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Relationship _____

NOTARY

Dated this _____ day of _____, 20 _____. State of _____

On this _____ day of _____, 20 _____,

_____ (parent/guardian) personally appeared before me,

and in my presence executed the within and foregoing permission and release form.

Witness my hand and official seal this _____ day of _____, 20 _____.

My commission expires _____

.

Signature Notary Public _____

Item G

**Medical Release Form for Adults
Participant Consent**

Name of Participant _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

PERMISSION

___ I do hereby verify that the below information is correct and I do hereby grant permission for the church to obtain medical attention for me in case of sickness or injury.

___ I hereby grant permission for an attending physician or hospital to perform whatever care deemed necessary by the church for my welfare should I be unable to make reasonable and sound decisions for myself.

___ I also hereby release, absolve, indemnify, hold harmless, and forever discharge the church, the organizers, sponsors, and supervisors from any and all claims, demands, actions or cause of actions, past, present, or future arising out of injury or damage while participating on this trip.

___ I assume all risks and hazards incidental to the conduct of the activities and transportation to and from the area. In case of injury to me, I hereby waive all claims against the organizers, the sponsors, or any supervisors appointed by them. I likewise release from responsibility any person transporting me to and from the activities.

___ I agree to provide medical insurance.

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

MEDICAL AND INSURANCE INFORMATION

Health Insurance Company _____ Policy # _____

Family Physician _____ Phone _____

Check if applicable and give appropriate explanations below:

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- Diabetes
- Dizziness
- Heart Trouble
- Kidney Trouble
- Sinusitis
- Stomach Upset
- Other (Explain below)

Immunizations:

Tetanus: Date Received _____ Typhoid: Date Received _____

List any prescription drugs you will be taking while on trip; include frequency and dosage for each.

Comments:

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION

Relative/Friend _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Relative/Friend _____ Phone _____

Address _____

NOTARY

Dated this _____ day of _____, 20 _____. State of _____

On this _____ day of _____, 20 _____

_____ (participant) personally appeared before me,

and in my presence executed the within and foregoing permission and release form.

Witness my hand and official seal this _____ day of _____, 20 _____.

My commission expires _____

Signature Notary Public _____

Item H

Mission Team Participant's Covenant

Carefully read through the following list of responsibilities. Sign and date the form as a pledge of your commitment to ensure a fulfilling mission trip experience.

While participating in this mission trip, I will seek to demonstrate my love for Christ and for others by agreeing to...

1. **Keep myself healthy.** I agree not to use tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, or illegal drugs.
2. **Maintain a safe environment for my fellow participants.** I agree not to have possession of or use any fireworks, firearms, or knives.
3. **Work to the best of my ability.** I am excited about demonstrating my love for Christ by ministering and working hard for the duration of this mission trip. To the best of my ability, I pledge to work in a manner that would be pleasing to Christ.
4. **Follow the mission trip schedule.** I understand that any schedule changes must be made by or approved by the mission trip director or host. In respect to others and in order to receive sufficient rest, I will respect the lights out time each night.
5. **Stay in the designated mission trip area.** I agree to stay with the group at all times. I understand that I cannot leave the ministry site or lodging area without permission of the mission trip director. Note: Girls should not be in the boys designated area, nor should boys be in the designated area for girls.
6. **Respect the privacy of others.** I understand that the possessions of others must not be tampered with or taken. I expect others to grant the same measure of respect to my privacy and possessions.
7. **Maintain a clean environment.** I will do my best to keep all areas of the church, school, or campground free and clean from litter. I will respect the property and grounds serving as my home for the week. I understand that any property I damage will be my personal responsibility.
8. **Demonstrate a Christ-like spirit.** My attitude will be like that of Jesus (see Phil. 2:5). I will love those with whom I work and those around me throughout the week. I will not allow another's property or personality to be abused.
9. **Be aware of my witness 24 hours a day.** I understand my attitude at restaurants, at my lodging, or during free time is just as important as when I am "doing my mission assignment." I will serve with this maxim in mind: Do no harm.
10. **Share my faith.** I will come prepared to share my personal testimony with lost people and to make a clear, concise presentation of the plan of salvation to anyone I might meet.

I have read the mission trip responsibilities listed above and agree to follow these during the week I am participating in a mission trip. I understand that failure to do so will result in disciplinary action.

Signed _____

Date _____

Item I

Sample Mission Trip Celebration Service

PRELUDE

CALL TO CELEBRATE	“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”	Choir
INVOCATION/WELCOME		Team Leader
HYMN NO. 572*	“I Love to Tell the Story”	Hankey/Fischer
TESTIMONIES (3 participants – 3 minutes each)		
HYMN NO. 567*	“Share His Love”	Reynolds
DRAMA PRESENTATION (Demonstration of drama or mission activity used on mission trip)		
TESTIMONIES (3 participants – 3 minutes each)		
OFFERTORY	“We’ve a Story to Tell”	Nichol
SPECIAL MUSIC	“People Need the Lord”	Nelson
SERMON (10 Minutes)	<i>Four Answers to God’s Call</i> “Who, Me?” - Moses (see Ex. 3:11) “Not Me!” - Jonah (see Jonah 1:3) “Why Me?” - Elijah (see 1 Kings 19:4) “Send Me!” - Isaiah (see Isa. 6:8)	Pastor
PICTORIAL PRESENTATION	PowerPoint or video	
HYMN NO. 597*	“Here Am I, Send Me” *The Baptist Hymnal, 1991	Purifoy

CLOSING:

1. Invite all present to attend a fellowship period with the mission team members following the service.
2. Have church mission organizations arrange table displays where local, state, national, and global volunteer mission needs can be displayed. Contact the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board volunteer offices for updated lists of needs.
3. Have sign-up sheets available for those interested in serving on the mission team next year.
4. Have sign-up sheets available for those willing to provide resources for the mission team – refreshments, teaching materials, trip expenses, and other items needed.

NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD
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Alpharetta, GA 30022-4176

A Southern Baptist Convention entity
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