

MISSION EXPERIENCE & PILGRIMAGE PLANNING

Is Your Group Called to a Mission Experience or Pilgrimage?

At least 12 months ahead

Prayerfully discern whether your faith community or youth group is called to mission experience or pilgrimage.

GETTING STARTED *with* PLANNING

11 to 12 months ahead

- Work with adult and youth leadership to determine mission or pilgrimage location.
- Once you have made the decision, contact the site to check if it's available. Ask for contact information from groups visiting previously.
- Contact previous group leaders to get a broader understanding of the site possibilities and whether it is a good match for your group.
- Recruit the Team and identify Youth Leadership.
- Develop an application and requirement sheet. Get details in order, including forms and healthcare expectations and international travel requirements.
- Start working on logistics. Secure lodging and negotiate transportation— airfare, ground transport (rental cars, bus services).

TO READ *from* EYIM

- Me, Called to Mission?
 - What is Mission?
 - Our Baptismal Promises
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- Determining a Mission or Pilgrimage Location
 - Social Action Projects: A More Excellent Way
-
- Identifying Youth Participants
 - Identifying Adult Leaders
 - Legal Concerns
 - Medical, Legal, and Media Release Forms
 - Traveling Internationally

- Contact hosting diocese to let them know you will be in the area. Local
- Diocesan staff may be a great resource for local support.
- Create a detailed budget and comprehensive fundraising plan.

GENERATING SUPPORT

10 to 12 months ahead

- Hold Meeting One with potential youth, adult leadership and parents/guardians to review general information about the mission experience.
- Develop community (and diocesan) support for your experience.
- Secure additional liability insurance.

SITE VISIT

8 to 9 months ahead

- Visit the project site, if possible.

PREPARING *your* GROUP

5 to 6 months ahead

- Set the date for the Commissioning Service; this can be done earlier depending on your community's scheduling protocol.
- Schedule adult Team training in Safeguarding God's Children and complete background checks.
- Start to plan the retreat or work days.
- Hold Meeting Two with the Mission Team and secure signed Covenant and forms from all participants.

- Connecting with the Host Community
- Creating a Budget
- Financial Support

- Team Communication
- The Importance of Planning Meetings
- Meeting One
- Involving the Wider Community

- Commissioning Services
- Retreats
- Recreational Theology
- Meeting Two
- Creating a Community Covenant
- Sample Covenant
- A Word About Technology

PREPARING *for the*
MISSION EXPERIENCE *or*
PILGRIMAGE

TO DO:

2 to 3 months ahead

- Start planning Commissioning Service.
- Start putting together the Mission Experience folder or workbook.
- Hold retreat/work day for your Team.
- Double check transportation and lodging arrangements.
- Hold Meeting Three with adult and youth Missioners to plan for site-specific needs.

PREPARING *your* ADULT LEADERS

1 month ahead

- Hold Meeting Four with adult Team to set baseline for communications, discipline, flow of day, and expectations.
- Determine a date for the Mission Team report following the experience.

FINAL PREPARATIONS

2 Weeks ahead

- Hold Meeting Five with Team and parent/guardians to review final details.

TO READ *from* EYIM

- Sample Commissioning Services
- Spiritual Resources
- While You Are Traveling
- Retreats

- Meeting Three

- Meeting Four

- Meeting Five
- Sample packing lists

CREATING SPIRITUAL SPACE

Sunday prior to departure

- Hold Commissioning Service.

GETTING READY *to GO*

Day Prior to Leaving

- Pack essential items and needed supplies.
- Leave complete itinerary, including flight and lodging information, with faith community office.

ON THE TRIP: STAYING CENTERED *and* MANAGING YOUR GROUP

During your Mission Experience or Pilgrimage

- Prayerfully and intentionally approach each day.

WHAT *to do* AFTER you RETURN

Post Trip

- Rest and reflect on the group experience in light of original mission and goals. Be in contact with Team members.
- Gather Mission Team for post-trip reunion.
- Gather Team members to evaluate experience.
- Have youth create a report of the experience to present to the faith community – either written, during announcements or during homily.

to READ from EYIM

- Sample Packing List for participants
- Sample Packing List for leaders
- Sample Itineraries
- While You Are Traveling
- Spiritual Resources
- Responding to Unpredictable Events
- Handling Discipline
- Recreational Theology
- What Happens After You Return Home?
- Evaluating Your Experience
- Reporting Back to the Wider Faith Community

ME, CALLED TO MISSION?

The first step in undertaking any mission experience is determining whether you are truly called to the undertaking. This is a prayerful and intentional process of discernment.

From the outside you should know that there are many reasons to undertake a mission experience: some will bear fruit; others, while they are filled with good intentions, will run into difficulty or worse, cause more harm than good.

Ask yourself, “What are your motives for undertaking a mission experience?”

- Did your Rector or Senior Warden tell you that a mission “trip” is part of your responsibility?
- Are the parents pushing the program to include travel?
- Does it seem like everyone else who has a great youth ministry program is doing mission work?
- Is there a desire to build something to help someone else who is “less fortunate”?

This is the time for honesty. If any of these questions – or these types of questions – are influencing your decision, you need to consider whether this is a firm enough foundation on which to base an undertaking of

this magnitude.

that it is entirely possible for a mission “trip” to do the very things you desire not to do, like damage or belittle people, cultures, and communities and/or be the cause of benevolent oppression. As harsh as it may sound, good intentions alone are not good enough.

As you begin your process of discernment about a mission opportunity, reflect on these questions:

- Does this mission opportunity match our understanding of mission, as outlined in the 5 Marks of Mission (read the section titled “5 Marks of Mission”), and
- Does this mission opportunity challenge young missionaries to embrace the promises made at Baptism? (Read the section titled, “Our Baptismal Promises.”)

Also keep in mind that any successful mission experience should center on two goals:

1. Lasting personal and communal transformation. Are you engaging in mission in order to make yourself open to individual and community transformation, not just to fix the hosting community?
2. A reciprocal understanding of partnership that involves working “with” the hosting

community rather than doing “for” them. Is your concept of mission based on collaboration and curiosity rather than an “us” and “them” mentality? There are four groups that should be positively impacted through your experience:

- The travelers,
- The sending community,
- The hosting community, and
- The context around those who accept the team—the neighborhood, wider church, or organization.

How will each of these groups be transformed if you undertake a mission experience?

Finally, consider who God is calling you and your community to become through this mission opportunity:

A Companion: God is calling our church, as a whole, to be a companion with other faith communities. Dioceses and congregations are living out their calling to become companions with others in our country and around the world. Individual missionaries

are ministering as companions in the places where they are called to serve. Literally, companions share bread together. Look at Matthew 14:14–21.

A Witness: “You are witnesses of these things,” said Jesus to his disciples. Witness in word means sharing the story of what God has done with us, in light of the story of what God has done in Christ Jesus. Such a witness is the natural and inevitable fruit of a life in Christ, and it is the heart of evangelism as a mission imperative. Look at John 4:1–42.

A Pilgrim: Episcopal missionaries today see themselves as pilgrims, growing in their knowledge of God through the perspectives of the people to whom they are sent, learning as much as they share, receiving as much as they give. Look at Hebrews 11:13–16.

A Servant: “I came not to be served but to serve,” said Jesus. Servanthood in mission means that we listen to the stated needs of our mission companions, look for signs of God’s work in them, and collaborate with them in discerning how God is guiding the implementation of mission

vision. It means that missionaries and the mission church put aside prior images of our companions, preconceived analyses of their situations, and ready-made solutions to their problems. Look at Philippians 2:1–11.

A Prophet: Episcopal mission pilgrims today often find their views of political, racial, and economic relationships in the world challenged and transformed. Experiences of poverty, suffering, and violence alongside experiences of affluence, oppression, and security often radicalize foreigners, whether they are long-term missionaries, visiting bishops, or short-term teams. These then prophesy to the sending church, prodding it to inquire more deeply into dynamics about which it may have become complacent or resigned. Look at Isaiah 61:1–4.

An Ambassador: In addition to witness in word and deed as ambassadors of Christ, the missionary and missionary community are ambassadors of the sending church. This calls for living out the highest ethical standards in personal honesty, respect for others, financial transparency,

and faithfulness in personal and professional relationships. Look at Timothy: 4:6–16.

A Host: “Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet,” said Abraham to the three strangers who appeared at Mamre. “Let it be to me according to your word,” said Mary to the angel Gabriel. In initiating mission, God is not forcible, but invites a response of hospitality. Look at Luke 10:38–42 or John 11:1–12.

A Sacrament: As the body of Christ, the church is a sacrament of Christ, an outward and visible sign of Christ’s inward and spiritual grace. As members of the body, all Christians participate in the communion of the saints and so are members of the sacramental revelation of God, embodied in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. A Christian on mission is a sacramental sign of God’s mission to reconcile all people with one another and God in Christ. Look at Luke 24:13–35.

Prayerfully work through each of these questions and concepts presented above. Consider asking your youth ministries team or committee to spend time in discernment with you.

If you have carefully considered each of the concepts presented above and you still believe you are called to mission experience, the remainder of this Manual will help you walk step-by-step through the process of planning this most transformational opportunity.