



Mission Trip Planning: Sample Meeting Schedule

8-12 Months Before the Trip:

Once a destination is selected, contact should be made with the host diocese, bishop, or organization to explore dates, costs, projects and overall logistics. Many dioceses have a designated liaison who will work with groups interested in doing short-term missions work in the diocese. Primary contact may often be made by contacting the bishop of the diocese by letter written in both the local language and English, expressing interest in bringing a group there.

Approximately 8-12 months prior to a trip, it is a good idea to assemble a small leadership team of 2-3 people to do overall trip planning, although this may also be done by a single trip leader. It is generally easier to advertise and recruit for a trip if the destination and dates are pre-set and a rough idea of the estimated cost can be calculated.

Recruitment should begin at least 8 months prior to the trip. It is a good idea to utilize a simple application for prospective team members, containing general contact information. Set an application deadline and consider including a small (\$50-\$250) non-refundable deposit to secure firm commitments for a place on the mission team. It is also helpful to gather some background information for each applicant, such as their reason for wanting to join the team and their expectations for the trip.

To aid in team-building, it is useful to have between six and eight team meetings prior to the trip, not including fundraising events. Teambuilding exercises are a great way to start forming relationships within the team. It is advisable to set a firm deadline, especially after the team has met a few times, beyond which new team members cannot be accepted. After three to four meetings, it becomes increasingly difficult to integrate new members into a group that has started to bond with one another.

4-6 Months Before the Trip:

Meeting 1: Introductory Meeting

- Begin with prayer and utilize an icebreaker to help group members get to know each other.
- Present the details of the trip, as far as they are known, and address any questions or concerns.
- Gather applications, contact information and deposits.
- Cover group norms, rules and expectations.
- If the trip is international, request that each member check that his/her passport is valid for at least six months beyond the trip return date. Those who need to renew or apply for a passport should begin the process as soon as possible.
- Discuss the discernment process with team members. Help them to consider: What does global mission mean? Why do I feel called to go on this particular trip? What are my expectations for the trip?



GLOBAL MISSION RESOURCE

MISSION TRIP PLANNING: SAMPLE MEETING SCHEDULE

Meeting 2: Fundraising

- Begin with prayer and a team-building exercise.
- Be prepared with an overall budget for the trip, as well as the projected cost per person.
- As a group, devise a plan for fundraising.
- Every group member should participate in fundraising activities for the benefit of the entire group.
- Consider requesting that the church set up a fund specifically for the trip. This enables potential donors to donate directly to the church and receive the appropriate tax benefits.
- One possible fundraising model is for each member to provide a portion of his/her own financial support; the church (i.e. Mission Committee, Mission Fund, Discretionary Fund, etc.) to provide a portion; and parish-wide fundraising to provide a portion.
- Set specific fundraising goals, deadlines and event dates. Assign fundraising roles to each team member.
- Consider that mission fundraising is an excellent opportunity to involve and educate the entire church or community about the trip. Be intentional about bringing in as much church-wide participation as possible (i.e. clergy, vestry, youth group, choir, altar guild, mission committee, prayer groups, etc.)
- Choose a fundraising style (e.g. bake sale, fundraising dinner, parish-wide email campaign, letter-writing campaign, Sunday morning plate donation, raffle, car wash, silent auction, gala, crowdfunding, etc.) that fits well with your parish style and is achievable. Be realistic, but also aim high.
- Keep in mind that individualized, targeted fundraising appeal letters to parish members are often the most effective approach, in combination with other fundraising efforts.



3-4 Months Before the Trip:

Meeting 3: Practical Trip Preparation

- Begin with prayer and then a team-building exercise.
- Assign every team member a job for the trip. Examples include: Photographer, Journal Keeper, Water Manager, Safety/First Aid Officer, Chaplain (consider a layperson for this) and Entertainment Director. Larger jobs such as cooking and cleaning should be rotated or shared among the whole group.
- Go over the passport and visa requirements (if any) for the trip (look at <https://travel.state.gov> for International Travel Information by country). It is a good idea to collect a photocopy of the passport face page for each person. This helps to reconfirm that each team member has obtained a valid passport.
- Go over the immunization recommendations for the country to which the team will travel. The Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) has this information in its "Travelers' Health" area. Team members needing immunizations should make the appropriate arrangements with a physician or travel clinic.
- Provide and discuss a recommended packing list.
- Provide forms for legal issues such as parental permission (if needed) and liability waivers.
- Generally, it is advisable for the trip leader(s) to book all the flights together and obtain travel insurance for group members. Provide the specific flight and insurance information to the team, if available.
- If team members are to book their own flights, give specific information as to the exact date(s), timeframe and airport for arrival and departure. Encourage team members to purchase travel insurance that includes medical evacuation.
- Collect any group questions or concerns, and track down the answers.

GLOBAL MISSION RESOURCE

MISSION TRIP PLANNING: SAMPLE MEETING SCHEDULE

2-3 Months Before the Trip:

Meeting 4: Health & Safety

- Begin with prayer. Continue with team-building.
- Check progress on immunization, passports, etc.
- Go over health precautions (ex. water, food, sanitation, over-the-counter drugs, prescriptions such as antibiotics or anti-malarial, insect and sun protection, etc.)
- Establish personal and group safety procedures.
- Collect information from each team member on his/her medical needs, allergies, medications, and dietary needs.
- Obtain emergency contacts for each group member.



Meeting 5: Cultural Education & Spiritual Preparation

- Begin with a prayer for discernment: that the group may become aware of how God is working in them and through them before, during and after the trip. Pray for the group to become aware of how God is working in and through the people whom they will meet on the trip. Pray for the ability to discern and celebrate the abundant God-given gifts that already exist in the churches and people where the group will be traveling.
- Consider assigning a movie or book(s) for the group to read as preparation. Gather and discuss various aspects of the target culture. Consider having a movie night with discussion time.
- Consider inviting a native of the target country to speak about cultural perspectives and nuances.
- Discuss how the group will prepare spiritually and support one another before, during and after the trip (ex. journaling, bible study, group prayer, meditation, prayer partners, Daily Office, commissioning service, etc.)
- Discuss ways that the group will bring their experience of the trip back to the parish, deanery or diocese.
- Keep in mind that cultural and spiritual preparation may require more than one meeting.

2-4 Weeks Before the Trip:

Meeting 6: Last Minute Issues & Packing

- Begin with prayer.
- Determine how the group will get to the airport, and exactly when and where they will meet.
- Collect a cell phone number for each team member to assist in coordination on the day of departure.
- If there are donations to be carried, or gifts to the hosts, determine who will purchase and carry them.
- Plan how the money for the group (e.g. restaurant meals, group water purchases, airport entry/exit charges, transportation, etc.) will be managed. Generally, the group leader will carry and track the group funds and expenditures. Individuals should also bring a small amount of personal spending money.
- Discuss respectful norms for dress, if applicable (ex. slogans on clothing, headwear, tank tops, shorts, jeans, visible tattoos, flashy jewelry, footwear, appropriate dress for church services, etc.) Keep in mind that, in many countries, the dress tends to be somewhat more formal than in the US or Europe.
- Establish emergency procedures and communication protocols between team members during the trip. Establish an emergency contact and phone chain for communication with folks at home. Make family members aware that communication may be extremely limited or non-existent during the trip.
- If this is the last meeting, plan to end with a circle of prayer. Give each team member an opportunity to pray.

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Day of the Trip:

Travel Day:

- Gather the group outside of security.
- Check that all group members have their passports and boarding passes.
- Check bags. Some airlines will allow a group to check in together. Contact the airline in advance to determine whether this is possible.
- Just prior to security, have the team Photographer or a family member take a quick group photo, if possible.



Within One Week After Return:

Meeting 7: Debriefing

- **NOTE:** Be sure to schedule the date of this debriefing meeting prior to the trip departure.
- Begin with a prayer of thanksgiving for the trip.
- Have each group member describe which moment or experience was the high point of the trip for them.
- Have each group member describe the aspect that was most challenging for them personally.
- Have each group member tell where she/he saw God in the places or the people whom they visited.
- Be sensitive to the fact that some group members will be continuing to process their experience for a while, especially if it was an intense trip. It is common to have a wide range of emotions; this is actually a mild form of PTSD or reverse culture shock. Help the group to understand that this is normal and that it may take a few weeks or months to fully process their feelings and to understand and integrate new perspectives.
- Remind group members to be vigilant regarding any health concerns that arise within a month of traveling. It is important to share any symptoms with the wider group or group leader to determine whether there is a pattern of illness. Anyone receiving medical care should be proactive about informing their medical practitioners of the region and dates of travel.
- Create a way to share photos between group members. Designate someone to gather as many of the photos or videos as possible. If someone in the group has the energy and expertise, have him/her create a simple PowerPoint with 20-30 of the best images. It is not necessary for it to be elaborate with sound or captions.
- Choose a firm date as soon as possible within the month to share the trip (and, if possible, the PowerPoint) with the sponsoring parish(es). This is often best done in lieu of a sermon at a Sunday service or immediately after a service. One good approach is to have all the team members together to make the presentation, rotating among them to briefly describe each trip photo and give a bit of background. There are many variations, but simply being intentional about following up with the parish is the best way to celebrate the trip and to thank parishioners for their support. It also provides valuable closure for the participants.
- Another way to thank the parish is to have a designated team member write a one-page follow-up letter thanking members of the parish for their support and describing some of the highlights of the trip. This can be put in the parish newsletter or sent as an email blast to parishioners.
- Finally, brainstorm as a group some ways to nurture the new relationships that were created through this trip. Share contact information, social media and other possibilities for maintaining connections. Pray for God's guidance as the group discerns its next steps in growing these relationships.