

THE ROLE OF TRAINING IN SHORT TERM MISSIONS

by

Joel A. Hoff

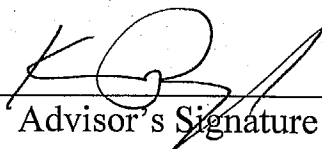
A Senior Project Submitted to

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the Master of Divinity degree

Professor Kenneth Cherney, Advisor

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Advisor's Signature

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Abstract

This project's objective was (1) to research the training that volunteers in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) receive for short-term mission trips and (2) to determine whether existing training manuals can be used to better prepare WELS short-term mission volunteers. A questionnaire was used to obtain data on the training offered to seventy-one WELS short-term mission volunteers. Students enrolled at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Martin Luther College (MLC), and Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC) participated in this study. The participants served on a short-term mission trip between 2001 and 2011. The length of these trips ranged between two weeks to two years and included both foreign and home missions. The results of this study reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the training short-term missionaries are offered in the WELS. The conclusion from this research is that pre-trip, on-site, and post-trip training are essential for short-term mission volunteers. The volunteers, the host mission, and the sending church benefit when this threefold training process is administered. Existing training manuals provide material that would better prepare WELS short-term mission volunteers. These manuals include application forms, general background information, devotions, team-building activities, case studies, preparation checklists, journal topics, debriefing questionnaires, and additional suggested resources.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
PART I. THE BASIS FOR SHORT-TERM MISSIONS	
Chapter 1. The Scriptural Basis for Short-Term Missions	3
Chapter 2. The Missiological Basis for Short-Term Missions	9
Chapter 3. The Statement of Purpose	16
PART II. LITERATURE REVIEW	
Chapter 4. Mission Objective in Literature	16
Chapter 5. Pre-trip Training in Literature	17
Chapter 6. On-site Training in Literature	18
Chapter 7. Post-trip Training in Literature	19
PART III. METHODOLOGY	
Chapter 8. Proposed Methodology	20
Chapter 9. Procedure	21
Chapter 10. Results	21
Chapter 11. Limitations	26
Chapter 11. Discussion	27
Chapter 12. LCMS Short-Term Mission Manual	28
CONCLUSION	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY	36
APPENDIX	39

Introduction

A century ago, being a missionary required a commitment to years of difficult service. In his essay, “The Character of Short-term Mission,” Gene Daniels writes that anyone who made such a commitment was considered to be “a strange person who was a cross between theologian, professional linguist, and National Geographic explorer.”¹

Times have changed. The concept of what a missionary is and the work a missionary does has changed as well. This becomes evident when one considers the training missionaries receive today. Theological training, though still considered a necessity,² is often overshadowed by the practical training in language study, inter-personal communication, evangelism, missiology, and leadership. In David Parker’s article, “The Truth about Missionary Training”, he writes that survival and success for foreign missionaries also requires “cross-cultural training which addresses issues directly related to life and ministry on the foreign field. This includes topics such as spiritual warfare, coping strategies for culture stress, interpersonal relationship training, and training in culture and worldview.”³

The comparative ease and affordability of travel has replaced long-term commitment with short-term mission trips.⁴ Where it used to take a month or more to cross seas, let alone oceans, now only takes a matter of hours. Where it took a significant investment of funds, logistics, and time, we are now endowed with the ability to travel half way around the world provided you have your passport and appropriate shots.

¹ Gene Daniels, “The Character of Short-term Mission,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMQ)* 303 (Apr 2008).

² David Parker, “The Truth About Missionary Training: Taking Responsibility for Missionary Attrition,” *Biblical School of World Evangelism* 181 (Aug 2008). <http://www.bswe.org/resources/missions-articles/181-the-truth-about-training>

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ In his article, “First do no Harm,” Richard Slimbach states that while “short term” typically denotes a limited length of time (2 days to 2 years), many other elements capture the distinctive character of this mass phenomenon. These would include the frequency, purpose, and type of trip; its guiding mission philosophy; the motivation, field roles and relationships of participants; and the nature of their witness.

At one time, short-term missions served as a stepping stone for long term service. Don Parrott believes that short-term missions have now become the final destination.⁵ David Forward states that “there are currently fewer long-term missionaries going out from western nations than at any time in the twentieth century.”⁶ On the other hand, there are more opportunities for youth and lay members to be actively involved with mission work.

Short-term missions appeal to mission-minded Christians who are searching for practical ways to be personally involved in mission work. These trips allow believers an opportunity to experience a glimpse of life in a foreign culture and to receive a taste of ministry in a mission field. For these reasons alone it is no surprise that local churches, mission organizations, and Christian colleges annually sponsor thousands of short-term mission trips.⁷

Daryl Smithgall comments how short-term missions can be a wonderful experience for those who serve, as well as for those who are being served. He also realizes the sad reality that “trips (short-term) can compromise and even set back ministry.”⁸ For this reason, the short-term mission movement attracts considerable scrutiny. When Smithgall asked missionaries and mission partners around the world their perspective on what destroys a short-term ministry, three major themes kept coming up: (1) lack of preparation, (2) cultural insensitivity, and (3) people who insist on meeting perceived needs, not “real” needs.⁹

The underlying question when debating the pros and cons of short-term missions is whether they cause more harm than good. Smithgall’s research shows the lack of preparation as being one of the primary reasons short-term missions have negative effects. Proper training, therefore, will play an essential role in resolving this problem. This project seeks to demonstrate

⁵ Don Parrott, “Managing the Short-term Missions Explosion,” *EMQ* 126 (Jul 2004)

⁶ David Forward, *The Essential Guide to the Short-Term Mission Trip*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 13.

⁷ Randall Gary Friesen, “Improving the Long-term Impact of Short-term Missions,” (based on the doctoral thesis, “The Long-term Impact of Short-term Missions on the Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviours of Young Adults”, University of South Africa, 2004), 2. http://www.mbmission.org/files/staff/rfriesen/friesen_stm_thesis_summary.pdf.

⁸ Daryl Smithgall, *Short-term Mission Participant Handbook: Preparation & Field Guide* (Palo Alto: Footsteps Missions, 2006), 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*

that pre-trip, on-site, and post-trip training is essential for WELS short-term mission volunteers and should not be overlooked when equipping the saints for short-term ministry. Before the value of short-term missions is considered, it is essential that a clear understanding of the biblical basis for short-term missions is established.

The Scriptural Basis for Short-Term Missions

“[God our Savior] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Ti 2:4). With these words the Apostle Paul provides the Scriptural basis for short-term missions. This passage also reveals the very heart of God. The salvation of mankind is what God wants. It has been his desire from the beginning that all people know him perfectly and live with him forever.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, the perfect image of God with which they were created was lost. The perfect relationship between Creator and creation no longer existed. Suffering and death entered the world. Job describes the result of sin when he says, “Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure” (14:1-2). With similar words, the Psalmist describes the brevity of man’s difficult life on earth when he says, “The length of our days is seventy years – or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away” (Ps 90:10).

Sin destroyed God’s perfect creation. No sinful man could ever repair the damage done in Eden. Yet, in love, God intervened. He promised to send his one and only Son to save all men from the eternal death they deserved. Jesus came to conquer Satan (Ge 3:15), to remove the sins that separate men from God (Ps 103:12; Jn 1:29), and to conquer death itself. In John chapter 14, Jesus assures his disciples of the eternal life they possess through faith in him when he says, “...because I live, you also will live”.

Jesus is “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). Jesus is life and he came so that all men may have life (Jn 10:10). God wants all people to trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and to treasure the good news of salvation that comes only through Christ (Jn 11:25,26) .

Man’s salvation is not only something God wants but this is something that God made possible. All men have been justified, that is, declared not guilty freely by God’s undeserved love through the redemption that came from Christ Jesus (Ro 3:24). Jesus won forgiveness and

eternal life for the whole world (Jn 3:16). However, because all people are born spiritually blind this wonderful truth must be revealed. As Paul states in Romans chapter 10, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?” For this reason, God has given us the Scriptures which “are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (Jn 20:31).

God has not promised to work saving faith in anyone’s heart apart from the proclamation of the gospel. The gospel is the message that Paul confesses in Romans 1:16 is the “power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes”. Therefore, we trust God’s promise that “faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of God” (Ro 10:17). We rejoice that the blessings of forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation are offered through the Sacrament of Baptism where the gospel is proclaimed in and with the water. After all, this gift of salvation was intended to be for all people of all nations. As Peter says in Acts chapter 2, “The promise is for you and your children”.

There is urgency to carry out this work. Christ promised that he would come again to judge the living and the dead. When this time comes and each person stands before God in judgment, those who do not believe will suffer the punishment of eternal death and separation from God for all eternity. Therefore, now is the time of grace God gives all men to come to know and believe in Jesus as their Savior from sin. Now is the time believers have to profess with their lips the faith which was worked in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (1 Co 12:3). Now is the time to use the temporary resources God has blessed us with to reach eternal souls with the gospel. Now is the time to glorify God as we carry out the Great Commission and “go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mk 16:16). Short-term missions are simply one means by which believers glorify God by declaring what he has done for the salvation of all people. They are one means by which we reveal the heart of God to those still walking in darkness.

The Reluctant Prophet

“The first short-term cross-cultural missionary recorded in the Bible, a rather reluctant one, was Jonah”.¹⁰ The prophet’s reluctance was on account of his knowing that the Lord is “a

gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity” (Jnh 4:2). Although the prophet knew God’s desire for all men to be saved, Jonah took it upon himself to determine who was worthy or unworthy of God’s grace. This is why Jonah literally ran the opposite way when God told him to go to Ninevah. Jonah didn’t want God to show this love and mercy to the Ninevites, those unmerciful enemies of Israel.

God corrected his wayward prophet by sending a fish to swallow him. From inside the fish, the humbled prophet confessed his sin. He also acknowledged that “salvation comes from the Lord” (Jnh 2:10). Jonah was reminded that he was no more deserving of God’s grace than the wicked Assyrians. He was also reminded that salvation comes from the Lord and God desires salvation to be for all people.

The “three day walk” in Ninevah most likely refers to the time it took Jonah to complete his missionary journey. During his short-term mission journey Jonah proclaimed, “Forty more days and Ninevah will be overturned” (Jnh 3:4). The powerful Word of God had its effect. The people believed God and they repented. God forgave them and they were spared. “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened” (Jnh 3:10). The account of Jonah is one example of how God used a short-term missionary to carry out his will.

The Disciples

Scripture records two occasions when Jesus sent his disciples on short-term mission trips. The first occasion is recorded in Mathew 10 and Luke 9. Jesus sends out the Twelve after teaching them to pray for laborers to be sent into the harvest (Mt 9:38). Jesus answered the disciples’ prayers by sending them into the harvest field.

In his essay “Short-term Missions: Biblical Considerations”, Bryan Slater notes that before he sent the disciples into the mission field, Jesus modeled all that they would need to do as they went (Mk 1:39 and Lk 8:1-3).¹¹ Jesus told them where to go: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel” (Mt10:5,6).

¹⁰ Ronald L. Koteskey, “Reentry after Short-Term Missionary Service,” *Missionary Care* (2010), under E-books for download, http://www.missionarycare.com/ebooks/Short-Term_Reentry_Book.pdf

¹¹ Bryan A. Slater, “Short-term Missions: Biblical Considerations,” *EMQ* 122 (Oct 2000)

Jesus gave them a clear mission objective: “So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere” (Lk 9:6). Jesus instructed them on what to say: “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near’” (Mt 10:7). He told them what to bring: “Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep” (10:9,10). He even told them what to expect: “Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles” (10:17,18).

The second occasion is recorded in Luke chapter 10. This time Jesus sent out seventy-two on a short-term mission. The training for this group was very similar to that of the Twelve. The objective had not changed. Their objective was to preach the gospel. The location, however, was different. Jesus sent the seventy-two to towns and places he was about to go so that they could prepare the way for him. The seventy-two entered their mission field in pairs. In this way, the disciples always had someone to encourage and strengthen them in their work. As with the Twelve, Jesus gave them careful instructions about lifestyle and about the message they would preach. When the disciples returned, they were debriefed. Jesus wanted them to talk through and rejoice in what had happened and then get some rest before being immersed in ministry again.¹²

Philip and the Eunuch

In Acts 8:26-40, God sent Philip on a short-term mission trip. Philip was one of seven men selected by the apostles to help managing the physical affairs of the body of believers in Jerusalem so the apostles could concentrate on the ministry of the word of God (Ac 6:3-7). We also know that was a man filled with the Holy Spirit and is referred to as Philip the evangelist in Acts 21:8. The angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road – the desert road – that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza... Go to that chariot and stay near it” (v.26, 29). When Philip ran up to the chariot he heard the man reading from the book of Isaiah. In this way, Philip was given the opportunity to reveal God’s heart as recorded in the book of Isaiah to the eunuch. He “began with that very passage of Scripture and told him [the eunuch] the good news about Jesus” (v.35). That day, the eunuch came to know Jesus as his Savior who suffered and died for his sins.

¹² *Ibid.*

The most faithful law-abiding Jews, the eunuch was ceremonially unclean and would have been ignored. To God, this man was a lost sinner who needed to know the truth for salvation.

The Apostle Paul

Perhaps the greatest example of a short-term missionary is the Apostle Paul. Although Paul served as a full time minister of the gospel, he only stayed a short time in any particular location. The second longest stay of his missionary journeys was a year and a half spent in Corinth. The Lord also allowed Paul a considerable amount of time in Ephesus. In Acts chapter 19, we read that Paul spent three months in the synagogue “arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God” (Ac 19:8); then, when the usual opposition arose, he took the new believers with him and taught daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. “This went on for two years,” Luke tells us (Ac 19:10). In his farewell to the Ephesian elders, Paul reminds them, “For three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day” (Ac 20:31).¹³

It was common for Paul’s mission stops to last for only two or three weeks. When Paul visited Antioch in Pisidia, he was invited back the next week, but then run out of town after he did so (Ac 13:13-52). During his second missionary journey, Paul spoke three Sabbath days in Thessalonica and was then run out of town (Ac 17:1-10). Paul and his companions were often forced to leave; but not before, even in the face of stiff opposition, they had “spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord” (Ac 14:3). David Valleskey writes,

To think of what God accomplished through Paul in just a few short years boggles the mind. In about ten years’ time (47-57 A.D.) he established churches in at least four provinces of the Roman Empire—Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia—very likely also in Syria, Cilicia, and Illyricum, so that he could say, “From Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ” (Ro 15:19). At no time before or after has the church expanded so rapidly and into so many cultures in such a short time.¹⁴

The Apostle Paul served as God’s chosen instrument bringing the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. Opposition to his ministry and to the Lord often resulted in unscheduled short-term

¹³ David J. Valleskey. *A Portrait of Paul: With application to current trends and methods in mission work* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House 1992), 2.

¹⁴ Ibid.

visits. In their mission team handbook “Servant Formation”, Mark and Anita Cassidy note how Paul trained other believers for the work of short-term missionaries as he traveled.

During Paul’s first missionary journey, Barnabas took Paul with him (Ac 11:25; 13:2). Later Barnabas took John Mark with him (Ac 13:5; 15:37-39).

Paul follows Barnabas’ example on his second missionary journey. Paul took Silas along in Acts 15:40 and 18:5. Paul took along Timothy and companions in Acts 16:3 and 18:5. Paul took Luke, author of Acts (16:10) and was accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila in 18:18.

During his third missionary journey, Paul took along Timothy and Erastus (Ac 19:22; 20:4-5; Ro 16:23). He took along Gaius and Aristarchus (Ac 19:29; 20:4-5) and was accompanied by Sopater and Secundus, Tychicus, Trophimus, and Luke (Ac 20:4-5; Ro 16:21). Some of Paul’s apprentices faithfully stayed with him when he was in prison. Paul frequently sent them out on different missions. They were: Luke and Aristarchus (Ac 27:1-2; Col 4:10,14; Philemon 24), Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7), Timothy (Ro 16:21; Phil 1:1,19; Col 1:1; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1; Philemon 1), Epaphras (Col 4:12; Philemon 23), John Mark (Col 4:10; Philemon 24), Demas (Col 4:14; Philemon 24), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25; 4:18), Onesimus (Col 4:9; Philemon 10), and Justus (Col 4:11).

Paul also trained Titus (2 Co 8:16,17,23; Tit 1:4), Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1), Lucius, Jason, Tertius, Quartus (Ro 16:21-24), Crescens (2 Ti 4:10), Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia (2 Tim 4:21), Artemas (Titus 3:12).¹⁵

The Universal Priesthood

The biblical basis for any mission trip, no matter the location or the length of time, is to fulfill Christ’s command and proclaim the good news to all people. Jesus’ commission in Matthew 28 to “go and make disciples of all nations” applies to all believers of all times. Paul says that believers are “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pe 2:9). What better way is there to declare the praises of God than to share what he has done for our salvation? Every member of the body of Christ can use their unique God-given gifts to carry out this divine command in different ways. The motivation to serve God in this way comes from everything God has done for us. We share God’s love with others, because God first loved us.

¹⁵ Mark and Anita Cassidy, “Servant Formation: A Mission Team Handbook,” (Canada: Serving In Mission 1984), 9.

The church's mission is to preach the gospel. Therefore, believers will always want to be prepared to give to an answer to the hope they have in Christ Jesus (1 Pe 3:15). "There is no doubt in our minds that God wants His Word to spread around the world so that everyone may come to faith in Him and have everlasting life".¹⁶ Short-term mission trips are one means by which believers can serve as God's light to those living in darkness (Mt 5:14-16). Short-term missions provide opportunities for believers to build bridges that may one day allow them to share the gospel.

The Missiological Basis for Short-Term Missions

"Short-term mission trips have passed from fad to phenomenon and show no signs of letting up in the near future."¹⁷ The two organizations credited with initiating this shift in missiology are Youth with a Mission (YWAM) and Operation Mobilisation (O.M.). YWAM, an international non-profit Christian organization, and OM, an Evangelical Christian organization, share the vision to provide Christians without extensive theological training the opportunity to proclaim the gospel while experiencing mission work in another culture firsthand.

In the late 1950s, OM Founder George Verwer began mobilizing young people for summer missions. By the summer of 1963, over 2,000 people joined the first short-term mission teams.¹⁸ YWAM began in the 1960s under the leadership of Loren Cunningham. Today, YWAM has grown into one of the world's largest Christian mission organizations.¹⁹ Like Verwer, Cunningham was eager to discover new opportunities for young people to serve as short-term missionaries. What he originally envisioned was using mission work as a means for young men

¹⁶ David A. Witte, "The Biblical Basis for Evangelism: A Review Of The Great Commission With Special Emphasis On The Active Greek Verbs That Indicate A Speaking Of The Gospel Message": Essay Number I [WELS Evangelism Convocation, August 15-17 1975, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin], 1.

¹⁷ A. Scott Moreau and Mike O'Rear, "All You Ever Wanted on Short Term Missions," *EMQ* 40 (Jan 2004)

¹⁸ "The History of OM," Operation Mobilisation, <http://www.om.org/en/about/history>

¹⁹ "The History of YWAM," Youth With A Mission International, 2010. <http://www.ywam.org/About-YWAM/Who-we-are/The-History-of-YWAM>

and women in college to find meaning in their life. Ultimately, these mission trips allowed youth an opportunity to share the true meaning of life with others.

In 1951, Bill and Vonette Bright created the organization "Campus Crusade for Christ". This organization was among the first to participate in short-term missions in both the United States as well as overseas. Seth Barnes founded Adventures in Missions in 1989. Barnes started AIM in a small office in his garage, and it has since expanded to over 100 full and part time staff and over 8,000 people taken out on short-term missions every year.²⁰

During the 1980s and '90s, mission-minded churches began to take a project approach to missions. This idea revolved around finding a perceived "need" that the mission itself was unable to meet.²¹ The projects include anything from digging wells in Nigeria to provide fresh water for a village to sending a clean-up crew to help with damage control after a natural disaster. Such projects not only serve the community but they help build new relationships which may lead to opportunities to share the gospel.

In his article "Are Short-Term Missions Good Stewardship?" Robert J. Priest remarks how difficult it is to measure the significant growth short-term mission have experienced over the last ten to twenty years.²² Sociologist Christian Smith reports "that 29 percent of all 13- to 17-year-olds in the U.S. have gone on a religious missions team or religious service project, with 10 percent having gone on such trips three or more times."²³ His data indicates that far more than 2 million 13- to 17- year-olds go on such trips every year. Include the number of adults participating in short-term mission trips and there may be as many as four million Americans taking foreign short-term mission trips annually.²⁴

²⁰ Mike Price, "The History of Short Term Missions," 2009. <http://missions.wrecked.org/?filename=the-history-of-short-term-missions>

²¹ Seth Barnes, "The Changing Face of the Missionary Force," *EMQ* 245 (Oct 1992)

²² Robert Priest is a professor of mission and intercultural studies and director of the PhD program in intercultural studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

²³ Priest, R. J. "Are Short-Term Missions Good Stewardship?" *Christianity Today*. (Jul 2005)

²⁴ David Livermore. *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-term missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 2006), 14.

The WELS has become increasingly more involved with short-term missions as well. In his essay “First Do No Harm: Toward a Philosophy of Ministry for Short-Term Missions”, Professor Kenneth Cherney writes,

There are other Christian agencies—even single congregations—with vastly more experience in this area than we have in the WELS. Our own body of experience is growing, however. Projects Timothy and Titus have now provided short-term mission experiences for a large number of young people. Various projects funded through WELS Kingdom Workers have made these experiences available to people at nearly every stage of life.²⁵

The Project Timothy and Project Titus programs²⁶ are two ways the WELS ministerial schools provide students with hands-on experiences in ministry. These programs especially involve work in a cross-cultural setting. Most of the area Lutheran high schools offer similar programs designed to increase mission awareness and to give students hands-on experience in evangelism and outreach. In addition to these programs, MLC offers numerous opportunities for students to teach English as a second language in other countries, to learn foreign languages by studying abroad, and to spend vacation time assisting in outreach efforts in various parts of the United States and Canada. WLS offers similar opportunities through its summer vicar program and senior assistant program. These programs are designed to give students a better understanding of the mission of the church, the opportunities God gives for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, and helpful information on how students can keep mission work and evangelism as the focus of their lives as Christians and at the heart of what they do in their future ministry.

With growing interest in short-term missions has come “many poorly organized and missiologically weak cross-cultural assignments that often do more harm than good.”²⁷ Richard Slimbach expresses his concern that mission trips may become little more than Christian tourism.

²⁵ Kenneth A. Cherney Jr., “First Do No Harm: Toward a Philosophy of Ministry for Short-Term Missions,” [Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Vol 105, No. 2, Spring 2008]

²⁶ The Project Timothy program is offered at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, WI. The Project Titus program is offered at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, MI.

²⁷ Randall Gary Friesen, “Improving the Long-term Impact of Short-term Missions,” (based on the doctoral thesis, “The Long-term Impact of Short-term Missions on the Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviours of Young Adults”, University of South Africa, 2004), 3. <http://www>

He lists the following as five of the most commonly perceived problems with short-term missions.²⁸

The corporate style, the prepackaged events and programs, and the fake friendliness of short-term missions confirm the suspicion that the church or mission agency is really not that different from any for-profit organization.

There is rarely any emotional tie between the host missionary and the short-term missionaries. This gives the impression that their relationship is mainly instrumental and impersonal, or even rehearsed.

Instead of “citizen” autonomy, short-term missions end up producing “client” dependency. Because short-term groups often want to solve problems quickly, they can make the people they are called to help feel incapable of doing things on their own. This is particularly true when working in a foreign culture.

There is a vast social and cultural gap to bridge. It is unrealistic to believe that such a gap could conceivably be bridged during a two-year mission venture let alone a two week trip. A volunteer who spends two weeks in a foreign culture will barely be able to get over initial culture shock let alone get a realistic picture of the mission work or make a substantial contribution.

In 1982, Jim Reapsome wrote an article in which he questions whether the short-term experience spells long-term disaster. His primary concern is short-term missions sacrifice seasoned leadership at the altar of immediate expedience.²⁹ Because it is easier to recruit, assign, and support short-term missionaries, there is the belief that in some cases we have succumbed to the easy way, preferring more workers for shorter terms to fewer workers with longer terms. This also raises the question whether short-term mission trips are truly beneficial on account of the valuable time they take from career missionaries who host them.

Then of course there is the cost. Short-term missions are expensive. It is believed that they currently receive more financial support than long-term missions.³⁰ The cost of travel, living expenses, insurance, and housing are only a few expenditures that lead some to question

[.mbmission.org/files/staff/rfriesen/friesen_stm_thesis_summary.pdf](http://mbmission.org/files/staff/rfriesen/friesen_stm_thesis_summary.pdf).

²⁸ Richard Slimbach, “First Do No Harm,” *EMQ* 122 (Oct 2000)

²⁹ Jim Reapsome, “Editor’s Analysis: Does Short-term Experience Spell Long-term Disaster?” *EMQ* 234 (Apr 1982)

³⁰ Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, *Maximum Impact, Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded Repetitive Deployment of Sift, Temporary Nonprofessional Missionaries* (Minneapolis: STEM 2003)

whether this significant financial commitment is worth paying especially when one considers how little expertise many mission teams provide. Jo Ann Van Enge maintains that short-term missions can be worth every penny if they mark the beginning of a long-term relationship. She writes, “Money invested in learning about the causes of poverty in developing nations and what can be done is money well spent.”³¹

The pros and cons of short-term missions will be debated as long as they exist. These debates are beneficial as long as their purpose is to understand what we are doing well and where we can improve. Randall Freisen provides a list of questions that have a tendency to ignite debates. Similar questions should be considered by WELS short-term missionaries:

- 1) What is the long-term value of the growing short-term missions phenomenon?
- 2) Does short-term missions experience have a significant and lasting impact on a participant’s beliefs, attitudes and behaviors?
- 3) What impact do variables such as length of assignment, level of pre-trip discipleship training, and location of mission assignment have on the degree of positive spiritual change in the lives of short-term mission participants?
- 4) In what ways are discipleship and the process of growth in spiritual maturity advanced through short-term missions?
- 5) Do repeated short-term mission experiences increase participant’s interest in serving fulltime in missions in the future?³²

Benefits of Short-term Missions

Short-term missions require a considerable time and financial commitment. Yes, there is a cost. But financial costs are insignificant compared to the greater cost those who do not know Jesus as their Savior will pay when they stand before God in judgment. “Winning the lost for

³¹ Jo Ann Van Enge, “The Cost of Short Term Mission,” *The Other Side January* (Feb 2000), 23. <http://ajs-us.org/joannsarticle.pdf>

³² Randall Gary Friesen, “Improving the Long-term Impact of Short-term Missions,” (based on the doctoral thesis, “The Long-term Impact of Short-term Missions on the Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviours of Young Adults”, University of South Africa, 2004), 2-3. http://www.mbmission.org/files/staff/rfriesen/friesen_stm_thesis_summary.pdf.

Christ's glory is always primary. Benefits to us are secondary."³³ Yet they are many. When done well, short-term missions can be a blessing to both the church and the mission team.

Benefits for the church include:

- Involves the whole church in mission work
- Sharpens the focus of the target group
- Increases a burden for the lost at home and abroad
- Enhances giving to both the general fund and missions
- Team members often return with enthusiasm to promote missions, do local outreach or serve on the missions committee

Don Parrot sees short-term missions as a positive means for creating stronger church relations.³⁴ When short-term teams return home, they bring valuable cross-cultural experiences and new enthusiasm for global outreach to their home congregations. Through presentations, they connect their home congregation with a greater identification with the field workers and their needs. This often leads to increased prayer and financial support for mission work. More importantly, it connects them to the brothers and sisters in Christ they may never meet this side of heaven.

Benefits for the mission team include:

- Provides first-hand exposure to cross-cultural evangelism
- Provides opportunity in an unreached people group
- Provides a realistic view of missionary life
- Builds cross-cultural relationships
- Encourages missionaries by contributing to their work
- Gives a boost to the starting of churches and ministries

³³ Mark and Anita Cassidy, "Servant Formation: A Mission Team Handbook," (Canada: Serving In Mission 1984), 10.

³⁴ Don Parrott, "Managing the Short-term Missions Explosion," *EMQ* 126 (Jul 2004)

- Serves national churches
- Helps you develop a passion for lost people beyond your home country
- Helps you discover God’s will in missions
- Helps you prepare for future missionary service
- Helps you pray effectively for workers (Lk 10:1,2)
- Helps you mobilize others for missions

Investment in short-term workers is an investment in long-term kingdom work because short-term missions are considered to be the best recruiting device for career missionary service. Although this point is debated, it is evident that short-term participants return to their home churches aflame with a mission vision and a burning desire to reach the lost.

Although there is the concern that short-term missions provide inadequate exposure to cross-cultural missions, Spickelmier is convinced that it is better than no exposure at all.³⁵ Livermore views short-term missions as a means to increase one’s cultural intelligence³⁶ as one experiences church and life in another culture. Short-term missions provide volunteers with a new appreciation for their own and other cultures and a more mature view of church and mission work. Serving in a short-term mission can open your eyes to see the outreach possibilities that exist all around you. The man living next door who does not know Christ has as much need to hear the gospel as the man living a thousand miles away.

Short-term missions face harsh criticism, and some of it is warranted. Some say too much emphasis is placed on the task at hand (e.g., building a house) and the travel (e.g., going to Mexico) instead of true “missionary” work, and perhaps they’re right. Often, there is no visible ministry left behind after a short-term trip. But this criticism may also be shortsighted. At their core, mission trips are about connecting with people and searching for ways to share the gospel. This can be accomplished in a single day.

³⁵ Jim Spickelmier, “Invest in Only the Best”, *EMQ* 234 (Apr 1984)

³⁶ Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is the ability to work effectively across national, ethnic, and even organizational cultures. The goal is to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity and will help transform individuals and organizations into effective intercultural communicators of the gospel. (Livermore, 106)

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to (1) research the training that volunteers in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) receive for short-term mission trips and (2) determine whether existing mission training manuals, namely, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's (LCMS) World Mission and Global Impact Manuals, can be used to better prepare WELS volunteers for short-term missions.

Mission Objective in the Literature

Focus on one thing and do it well! This was the encouragement Dawn Lewis-Anderson wrote in her article "Doing One Thing Well: Stepping through the Short-term Mission Experience".³⁷ Anderson recognized that failure to create a clear mission objective often results in poorly organized trips. A church that has a clear mission objective will focus on the most important ministries. Williams and Gangel write that that people will be more motivated to serve if they can see the direction the church project is moving and understands why the church carries out its various ministries.³⁸ Clear objectives also provide a basis for evaluating results. When the mission trip has been completed it will be easy to assess when the mission objective was obtained, or not.

The national or home congregation creates their own mission objective. After all, they know best the needs of the people and what the best way is to build relationships in their community. Once the mission objective has been created, the congregation will present this objective to the sending mission agency together with their request for a mission team (WKW). When the sending agency is aware of the mission objective, they can provide training for the mission team with an emphasis on the work with which the team will be involved.

Two problems arise when there is no specific objective. (1) It isn't really possible to be specific in what the mission hopes to accomplish. (2) The mission team won't know what is expected from them.

³⁷ Dawn Lewis-Anderson, "Doing One Thing Well: Stepping through the Short-term Mission Experience," *EMQ* 306 (Jan 2004)

³⁸ Williams, Dennis E. and Kenneth O. Gangel. *Volunteers for Today's Church: How to Recruit and Retain Workers*, 14.

Training will appear irrelevant unless the team is being trained for a specific purpose and has a clear objective in mind. Also, it is important to have the goal of the trip be practical for the length of the trip. For example, “if your goal is to develop fully mature Christians in a 9 day trip, that goal is likely unattainable. If, on the other hand, your goal is to encourage Christians and make new contacts for the missionaries, your goal is achievable.”³⁹

Pre-Trip Training in the Literature

A short-term mission is not an isolated event in time. It is a process over time (pre-trip, on-site, post-trip) that involves many participants.⁴⁰ Pre-trip training is an important step in the journey of serving in a short term mission. The location, extent of time, and certainly the objective of the mission will determine the training offered to short term missionaries.

Pre-trip training removes assumptions that could have been disastrous for the short-term mission trip. For example, because a team of volunteers are recent graduates from a Lutheran high school there may be the assumption that everyone in the group has experience canvassing. If they hit the streets before the individuals have been properly trained, then the end result may prove to be disastrous for the congregation and for the volunteers. Pre-trip training helps prevent disasters like this from happening.

Pre-trip training gives confidence to the individual and their abilities to carry out the tasks. Insufficient training may result in disappointment in an individual’s or team’s performance because they did not know how to perform the responsibility entrusted to their care.⁴¹ Several participants expressed the fact that they felt very well equipped to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to them.

- I was just assisting a coach at a soccer camp and handing out flyers; I didn’t really need any training for it.

³⁹ Craig Ford, *Short-Term Mission Trips: Worth the Cost?* (Mar 2010)

⁴⁰ Roger Peterson, “STEM Team Member Training Manual: An Eight-Session Training Curriculum for your Short-Term Mission”, (Minneapolis: STEM Ministries 2007), 33.

⁴¹ Williams, Dennis E. and Kenneth O. Gangel. *Volunteers for Today’s Church: How to Recruit and Retain Workers*, 91.

- I'm not really sure what would have helped, since I have canvassed many times before through my church at home.
- Whatever I was lacking was easy enough to make up on-site. For the TCW trip, all I really needed to know was what to pass out and/or say, and what neighborhood to go to. For the position in Hays, I was ready for it just by my experience with TCW and ministry training up to that point.
- Everything we did was easy to learn the day we arrived.

Anderson notes that a properly prepared and trained short-term mission volunteers will be knowledgeable on the host country and culture, be involved in team building activities, be aware of the trip details, and will have had an opportunity to ask any questions before arriving on-site. Pre-trip training is critical to the overall impact of the mission experience on the participant. The pre-trip training can prepare both the heart and the head of a participant to be teachable throughout the mission experience. A teachable attitude gives participants the ability to work through relational conflict, cross-cultural misunderstandings, assignment difficulties and many other challenges which characterize most short-term mission assignments.

On-Site Training in the Literature

The majority of literature concerning short-term mission training is intended to be used as pre-trip training or as part of the debriefing process. The training a short-term missionary receives on-site should be provided by the host pastor or team leader. Training that is specific to the location where the volunteer serves will better equip them to address questions commonly asked or situations faced in that area.

On-site training will be determined by the nature of the mission trip and the length of service. This training will be specific to the objective of their mission. If a mission team's primary responsibility is canvassing then the host pastor can use role-playing evangelism visits as a way to prepare them for their work and to review the experiences they encountered at the end of each day.

Pre-trip training helps the team members build relationships. On-site training allows the mission team to do the same with their host pastor and members of their host congregation. This training provides opportunities for members of the congregation to be encouraged by their brothers and sisters in the faith who share their same mission goal and have come to serve.

Post-Trip Training in the Literature

Anderson sees debriefing as an integral part of post-trip training because it helps short-term mission volunteers normalize and process their short-term mission experience.⁴² Part of the debriefing process begins with asking basic questions for the participant to answer:

- Where did you go?
- What did you do?
- How was your trip?
- What was the best thing about it?
- What was the hardest part for you?
- How will this experience help you in your future ministry?

Debriefing sessions are designed to help short-term missionaries discuss highlights and frustrations from their trip. Taking the time to think through these questions and topics will help short-termers process the negatives and positives of what happened. Plus, after they have thought through their experiences, they will be better prepared to give a meaningful answer when others ask the same questions.

Williams and Gangel write that the main purpose of debriefing is to help find better ways to do the work.⁴³ For this reason, it is important that two debriefing sessions take place. First, the receiving church should have some form of debriefing with the mission team. This will help them evaluate how well they are keeping in line with their mission objective. It also provides them with an outsider's perspective on their mission goals.

The participant should also have a debriefing with the sending agency when they return home. This will allow them to discuss any concerns or challenges they may face as a result of culture shock or re-assimilating back to life in the United States. This obviously only applies to short-term mission volunteers serving in a foreign mission field. Debriefing will also provide the sending agency with valuable information on how the train future teams sent to that location.

⁴² Dawn Lewis-Anderson, "Doing One Thing Well: Stepping through the Short-term Mission Experience," *EMQ* 306 (Jan 2004)

⁴³ Williams, Dennis E. and Kenneth O. Gangel. *Volunteers for Today's Church: How to Recruit and Retain Workers*, 38.

The debriefing process helps participants sharpen the purpose for why they are on the mission field. It forces the receiving congregation to evaluate the past year and gives them direction for the year to come. Collecting this kind of information will help evaluate the effectiveness of this approach, so that together they can continue to make short-term mission trips more beneficial for everyone involved.

Summary

Effective short-term missions require consideration and planning, not only for the “goers,” but also for the “senders” and the “receivers.” All three mission participants need to plan carefully for their responsibilities toward each other before, during, and after the outreach.

While there are differences of opinions, a consensus in the literature seems to be that pre-trip training is the most important. Pre-trip training should (1) provide activities to build team relationships, (2) provide general information on travel and preparation, (3) provide suggestions on personal devotions for spiritual growth, and (4) provide journaling ideas to help team members document their experience.

On-site training will often naturally take place. It is important because it provides specific information to that mission field that cannot be provided in a workshop or classroom. On-site training also strengthens the relationship between the host pastor and mission team.

Debriefing is crucial because it allows the participants to vocalize any unresolved questions that arose during the trip. It serves as a time for reflection on how well the trip matched the mission’s objective.

Methodology

As a method of gathering data I have used a semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended and closed questions. This format provided an opportunity to obtain quantitative and qualitative information. The questions were designed to ascertain (1) general information on the mission trips and length of service, (2) the responsibilities each mission trip required, (3) whether or not the participant was aware of the mission objective, (4) whether they received any training pre-trip and what training was beneficial, (5) whether they received any training on-site, and (6) whether they were debriefed during the trip or when they returned.

Procedure

Questionnaires were sent via email to the entire student body at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) in December 2011. 39 students responded. 27 surveys were completed and tabulated. In January 2012, the questionnaire was sent to students attending Martin Luther College (MLC) and Wisconsin Luther College (WLC) who participated in a short-term mission trip within the last ten years. Five students from WLC and 39 students from MLC completed and returned the questionnaire. An explanation of the purpose for my research was included in this email with the assurance that all comments would remain anonymous.

To avoid biased questions, I refrained from including any personal statements or statistics in the questionnaire. Neutral questions were framed in such a way so as to determine each participant's opinion concerning the clarity of the mission(s) they participated in, the training they received, and the effectiveness of that training. A "non-applicable" option was provided for any question I perceived a respondent would not be able to answer due to the nature of their mission trip. General questions were asked before specific questions. For example, participants were asked to mark "yes" or "no" if they received any formal training before they arrived on location. The following question gave them an opportunity to describe the training they received or to share what training they believe would have been beneficial.

I tabulated the results for each item. The total number for each question was inserted into a Microsoft Excel[®] spreadsheet which automatically calculated the percentage of respondents who chose that particular answer. The four charts included in this paper contain the results of the four yes/no questions that I identified to have the most significant value for this study. The first graph shows the percentage of participants who entered their mission trip with a clear understanding of the mission objective. The following three graphs show the percentage of participants who received pre-trip training, on-site training, and post-trip training.

Questionnaire Results

71 students participated in a total of 133 mission trips. 30 of these mission trips were to foreign countries. The three responsibilities most required of the participants were (1) to assist with canvassing, (2) to make evangelism calls, and (3) to participate in the congregation's Vacation Bible School program. Other responsibilities included teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, leading youth groups, building projects, preaching and leading liturgy,

teaching Bible study, serving as camp counselors, creating church websites, organizing special events for children’s programs, and providing medical assistance.

- When asked to rate how important it is to offer specific training to short-term missionaries on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being “essential” and 1 being “waste of time”), 72% responded with a score of 6 or higher.
- When asked, “Was the objective/purpose for your short-term mission trip made clear to you before you arrived on location?” 91% responded “yes”.
- When asked, “Did you receive any formal training before you arrived on location?” 34% responded “yes”.
- When asked, “Did you receive training from the host pastor/missionary while on location?” 70% responded “yes”.
- When asked, “Did you have a debriefing when you returned from the STM?” 55% responded “yes”.

Figure 3.1 – Clear Understanding of Short-term Mission Objective

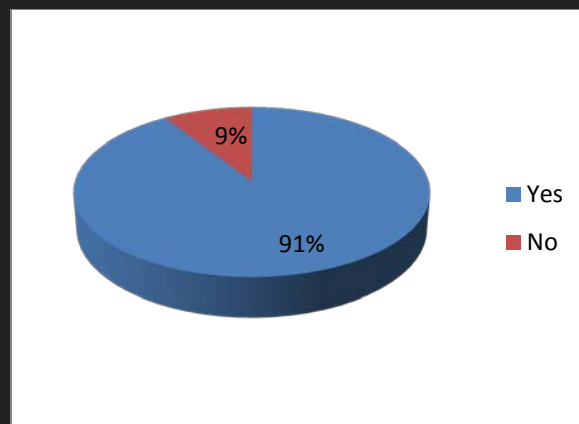
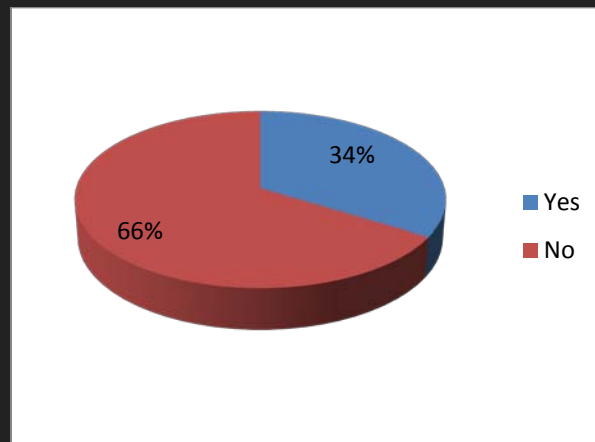


Figure 3.2 – Received Formal Pre-trip Training



The following is a summary from respondents who received formal pre-trip training. For the full list of quotations, see Appendix 1.1.

WELS Kingdom Workers gave us a presentation on the ‘rules’ of Travel Canvass Witness (TCW) and Member Ministry Assistant (MMA) trips. At this time we received general information on what to expect during our mission trips and recommendations on how to conduct ourselves while in the mission field.

Other respondents commented on the two hour meeting that was held with all the TCW groups and the Evangelism Day Workshop they attended. These sessions gave us opportunities to practice basic communication skills and rehearse conversations when canvassing. Staff training for day camps and several weeks of English as a Second Language (ESL) training were also offered.

Our foreign mission training included cultural, theological, and technical training. We discussed what to expect from culture shock as well as the challenges of teaching with a language barrier. We also received a brief history of the people and culture with which we would be living.⁴⁴

This next collection of quotations is a summary from respondents who did not receive formal pre-trip training. For a full list of these quotations, see Appendix 1.2.

We would like a canvassing 101 seminar. Role playing different canvassing scenarios gives us examples of what to do and how to respond in specific situations. Understanding dangerous streets and time management when canvassing would also come in handy. The

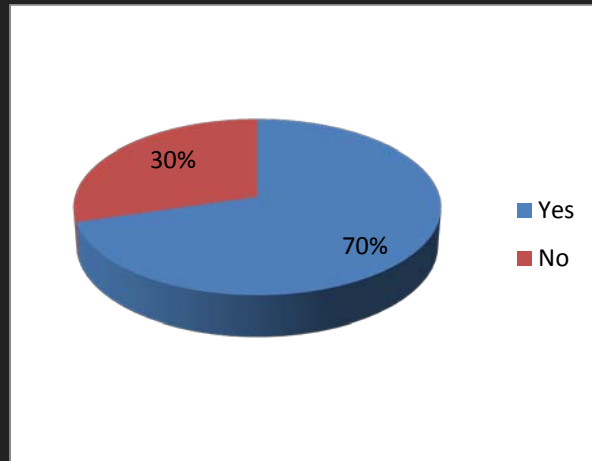
⁴⁴ (survey with WELS short-term volunteers who received formal pre-trip training, 2012)

objective of this seminar would be to teach short-term volunteers how to transition from basic conversation to “faith talk”.

Materials for teaching VBS or Bible classes should be provided prior to arriving on site to allow for more effective planning. The mission team should be aware of how they are to categorize their findings when conducting an ethnographic survey/canvassing for the benefit of the host pastor/congregation. Also, make sure the short term missionaries are aware of any special driving force behind each visit. It would also be helpful to know about the church they are representing to be prepared to field any questions they may be asked while on the streets.

As far as foreign mission work is concerned, a weekend workshop would provide insights into the cultural background of the foreign mission field. A list of do’s and don’ts specific to the culture in which we will be working would help prepare us for the tasks at hand. Finally, we can always use additional training on how to better lead a Bible study in a foreign country.⁴⁵

Figure 3.3 – Formal Training Received During the Mission Trip



The following is a collection of quotes from respondents who received on-site training. For a full list of these quotations see Appendix 1.3.

WELS short-term volunteers share what on-site training they received in a foreign mission:

I received mostly informal Japanese cultural “training”.

⁴⁵ (survey with WELS short-term volunteers who did not receive formal pre-trip training, 2012)

In Ukraine, we were instructed on what to teach and what the best approach would be to teach certain lessons to the children. Our training was primarily on how to deal with Ukrainian children.

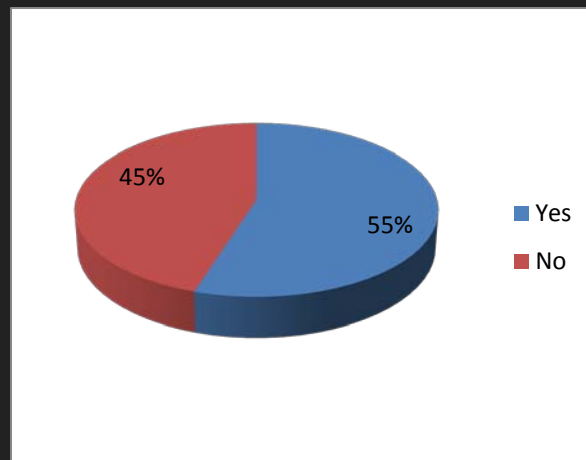
In Mexico I had a partner who had already done everything for 6 months before I arrived. So I just followed his lead, and then when he left, I did the same for the guy behind me. It helped a lot with Spanish, cultural customs, and how to lead classes and everything. They helped us with our Spanish and prepared us for the culture.⁴⁶

WELS short-term volunteers share the on-site training they received in a home mission:

For the most part, we learned by seeing them operate. The pastor told us “how to canvass” and sent us out with people who had gone canvassing before just so that we could observe them in action and learn that way. The materials we would use/hand out were explained to us. We did some “practice calls”. We were shown how to do door-to-door evangelism and how to use various tools for mass outreach efforts.

We were given detailed information about the VBS program along with different methods of teaching we could use. We organized the VBS program and assigned roles to the team members. As a camp counselor, I was given a crash courses in appropriate discipline, First Aid/safety, planning, description of duties, etc. We were told how to teach the soccer camp and spent a few hours the day before camp running through procedures. We were basically just given a stack of fliers and trained within 5 minutes.⁴⁷

Figure 3.4 – Debriefing Received Upon Completion of Mission Trip



⁴⁶ (survey with WELS short-term volunteers who received on-site training in a foreign mission, 2012)

⁴⁷ (survey with WELS short-term volunteers who received on-site training in a home mission, 2012)

John Boeder, the Campus Pastor at Martin Luther College, states that the debriefing at MLC often consists of three questions: (1) Where did you go? (2) What did you do? (3) How will this experience help you in your future ministry?

Participants fill out a survey with those questions and then discuss them as a group. The following is a collection of quotes from respondents who were debriefed.

After a number of the visits on location, we would debrief, but once we got back to school, I think only once was there a traditional “debriefing.”

We would have smaller debriefings while on the trip—at the end of the day or something like that, and those were very helpful.

We received brief, almost “crash courses” in what they wanted us to do. But it worked. They let us learn by doing and then afterwards, we met and discussed our findings and methods – which proved to be helpful in subsequent visits.

Limitations in this Study

A major problem I faced during my research was that I did not limit my topic enough. This was challenging because there are times when a clear distinction should be made between the training offered a volunteer in a foreign mission to the training offered a volunteer in a home mission. Significantly more research could have been done on cross-culturally training as well. The project could have focused on one stage of the training process. Instead, I covered three stages of training in two very different contexts, that is, the home and foreign mission setting.

A limitation of the method: Only one questionnaire was used to collect data in this study. A follow-up survey would allow the respondents to explain in detail the specific training they received and how it benefited them. Further research would help clarify what, if any, formal pre-trip training is beneficial for every short-term missionary. I regret not having the opportunity to conduct interviews with on-site missionaries to gain their perspective on the benefits of short-term mission trips and whether the teams that are sent are adequately prepared.

A limitation of the results: Quantitative (statistical data) and qualitative (quotes and opinions) research was conducted in this project. The statistical data is not an accurate representation of the entire population because only 71 students participated in this survey. Any conclusions to be drawn can only be tentative.

A limitation of resources: The greatest limitation was the fact that my original objective was to research the training WELS volunteers receive for short-term missions. There is a plethora of short-term training resources accessible online and published works. The WELS, however, has no official training manual or program.

Recommendations

For further research on this topic I recommend that a larger population be surveyed. This could include (1) graduates of MLC, WLC, and WLS, (2) individuals who have participated in mission trips through the WELS Nursing Association or Friends of China, and (3) members of WELS congregations who have served in a short-term mission trip.

I recommend that interviews be conducted with home and foreign missionaries who have hosted short-term mission trips as well as administrators who organize and coordinate short-term mission trips. These interviews would provide a different perspective on how efficiently mission teams are trained when they arrive on-site.

I recommend that further research be more specific. This project's focus was too general. I made no distinction between the training a volunteer receives whether he serves on a 2 week mission trip in the United States or a 2 year mission trip in China.

Discussion

A reoccurring theme from the respondents was that many believed the training they received in school sufficiently prepared them for their short-term mission experience. For others, this was their first short-term mission experience and there were feelings of trepidation as a result of insufficient training. While we rejoice that the Christian education many young men and women receive today is equipping them to serve as God's witnesses at home and abroad; we also recognize that this is not always the case.

The following 3 points are areas where I believe the WELS can improve on when training volunteers for short-term missions: (1) Provide sufficient general information, (2) Provide activities for team building, and (3) Provide material that encourages personal spiritual growth.

LCMS Short-Term Mission Manual

A manual is not required for training short-term missionaries. There is no specific manual that would adequately train each mission team. However, training manuals can serve as resources for equipping short-term missionaries.

As a result of my research, I have concluded the following three problems regarding WELS short-term missionary training: (1) They provide insufficient general information; (2) they provide little to no activities for team building; and (3) they provide little to no material that encourages personal spiritual growth.

I believe the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) has published short-term mission training manuals that offer solutions to these problems.⁴⁸ They are “LCMS World Mission: Short-term Team Training Facilitator Guide”, “Global Impact: Team Coordinator”, and *Global Work and Witness: Team Member*”. These three manuals provide beneficial information for WELS short-term missionaries who are serving in a home or foreign mission field.

What To Know Before You Go

The general information provided in the LCMS manuals may seem obvious to those who have previous short-term mission experience. However, these manuals provide information and documents that will help the mission trip run smoothly. The material supplies everything you need to know before you even go. Perhaps not everything, but it’s a good start.

This includes an Individual Application Form. This form asks for your personal and medical information. Any known allergies should be listed. Besides potentially saving your life, including this information will save the host pastor time as he organizes the living accommodations for the mission team for the duration of your trip.

Inside the LCMS *Global World and Witness* training manual is an Individual Application Form. With this form the applicant is expected to include the Adult Liability Release Form, Minor Liability Release Form, Minor Chaperone Agreement Form, Medical Release Form, Mission Policy Agreement Form, Notification of Death Form, and Pastor or Leader Recommendation Form. These forms are not to be considered a pointless exercise.

⁴⁸ Bruce Wall, “Global Work & Witness: Team Member,” Lutheran Hour Ministries and LCMS World Mission (2007).

They are a legal requirement and they help the church fulfill its mission objective in a fitting and orderly way.

The Global Impact: Team Coordinator training manual also includes a chapter titled, “Health and Travel.”⁴⁹ This chapter provides valuable information regarding the following:

- **Team Nurse/Medic:** Recommend that each team provides their own nurse or medic. Inform this individual of any personal health issues.
- **Before You Leave:** Visit your physician. Ask for a medical summary listing of any medical problems, operations, allergies, etc. Make a list of any medications you are taking, using both generic and brand names, and be sure to pack enough medication for your trip. Check your medical insurance policy and health plan for coverage of illnesses or accidents outside the United States, as well as how to get medical attention and return home if you become ill.
- **Food/Water:** Eat only food you have brought or food that has been approved by the host country staff. Do not consume anything from street vendors! Drink only bottled water or water that you have been told by the host country staff is safe. Some of the guesthouses will provide bottled water, and sometimes the team can use a water filter system. Remember to brush your teeth with bottled or filtered water and NOT water from the tap.
- **Shoes:** Always wear shoes as a preventative against parasitic infection. Never go barefoot, even indoors. Bring sandals for the shower or for bathing.
- **Sun/Heat:** The sun is very intense in tropical countries. Wear sunscreen at all times when you are outside. It is easy to become dehydrated in hot climates, so drink, drink, drink lots of water, even if you don’t feel thirsty.
- **Jet Lag:** This section provides a definition of jet lag, the symptoms that often occur and tips with dealing with it.
- **Immunizations/Vaccinations:** This section explains what the Immunization Record is, encourages you to investigate what immunizations are required for your trip if any, and recommends that you have your physician or local health department evaluate your records for specific immunizations.

⁴⁹ Global Impact Teams Team Coordinator Manual – Rev. October 2009

- **Travelers First Aid Kit Contents:** This section provides a detailed list of medical supplies recommended for traveling by American College of Emergency Physicians.⁵⁰

What follows are tips on safety and travel regarding flight preparation, traveling with money and a passport, obtaining a visa if necessary, and crossing customs. This information applies primarily to short-term missionaries traveling to foreign countries. But it also includes general tips that really apply to any short-term missionary on what to pack, what to wear, and what to do in case of an emergency.⁵¹

There is an open section in the manual for “Country Info”. This material should be provided by the receiving congregation and will be specific to the location the team is being sent. This is the receiving congregation’s opportunity to communicate their mission objective with the sending agency as well as the volunteers.

The LCMS Global Impact Team Coordinator manual also provides cross-cultural training. Though limited, it contains important information for short-term missionaries and seeks to make them aware of cultural cues to the specific culture they have been called to serve.

Regarding cultural awareness, the manual states:

You are more than a tourist. You are a Christian who serves the same Lord as the people you have come to serve. Be aware of cultural cues as you enter the country. We do not always like to think of it, but some of our North American ways are offensive to people in other lands. The citizens of other countries do not always understand us, with our warm, outgoing manner and our natural curiosity. It is a good idea to ask about areas of special sensitivity for which you should be on guard.⁵²

As part of the cross-cultural training the manual discusses what culture shock is, how you can prepare for it, and what you can do if it happens to you. It briefly covers cultural differences in educational methods, problem solving methods, time, personal space, greetings, food, animals, and clothes. The LCMS World Mission Short-term Team Training manual also includes a culture quiz that tests the participant’s knowledge of other cultures. This is a creative and fun way to

⁵⁰ LCMS Global Impact Team Coordinator (2009), 51-66.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² LCMS Global Impact Team Coordinator (2009), 16.

demonstrate the differences of cultural norms. As a short-term mission member, the manual describes how the behaviors, values, and beliefs of the people may differ greatly from those with which you are familiar.

Cultural differences might be pictured as two cliffs: on one cliff is the North American way of life and on the other is the way of life found in the host country. In between is a large chasm. In order for the two to meet and understand one another, a bridge must be built. Building the bridge involves a number of things you should think through before going, as well as others you can work on while you are there.⁵³

Building Bridges

Building the cross-cultural bridge takes time and crossing that bridge is unlikely for a short-term missionary. Even though formal training may not help you cross that bridge during your two week journey, it may keep you from burning it.

The first bridge you will build is your mission team bridge. A significant purpose of pre-trip training is to help mission teams form a relationship. The goal it serves is to have each participant meet the other members of their team and work together before they travel, live, and work together for the allotted time in an unfamiliar setting.⁵⁴ This training will create a unified team that stands firm when faced with challenges and encourages each other even when their work seems to be in vain.

As the body of Christ, every member will seek to work together to carry out the mission objective. Specific team building exercises will help individual team members recognize their own strengths and weakness, remove anxiety of walking into the unknown, and encourage the team to communicate with one another before the trip even begins.

The LCMS World Mission Short-term Team Training manual does this well in several ways. One effective way this is done is through case studies. The following case studies are found in Session 3: Team Roles and Responsibilities.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁴ Bruce Wall, LCMS World Mission Short-term Team Training Facilitator Guide, (Training Manual), 1.

Case Study 1

Each day your team takes a bus to a work site. The team leader gets a bout of food poisoning and is unable to go. You're not sure how long he or she will be sick. Who will lead the team for the day? Will you select one individual to make the decisions or will you make joint decisions?

Case Study 2

Your team has to share bathroom facilities. Every morning someone has to wait for one person, who always seems to take an inordinate amount of time. Everyone on the team is complaining about it to each other. How do you handle the situation?

Case Study 3

Your team is in an undeveloped country and staying in very rugged conditions. You have no electricity, and the food has been difficult to eat. One person is continuously complaining about the living conditions to the point where it's simply become whining. It's getting on everyone's nerves.⁵⁵

Case studies can be created to address realistic situations a mission team may encounter no matter where they are stationed. This would be material the receiving pastor could include in the section "Country Info." The host missionary or past mission teams can use their experiences to create scenarios for future case studies. As seen from the examples above, the case studies provide realistic situations in which your mission team will work together to handle the crisis at hand. This may result in re-evaluating what your responsibilities as a team member are and how well you will be able to adapt if the situation changes.

The seven session LCMS short-term training manual provides a variety of activities that encourage team building. The activities help the volunteers understand their team roles and individual responsibilities. Role playing can help alleviate the anxiety of canvassing as they rehearse conversations they may encounter. It also gives opportunities for them to practice sharing their faith and making that transition from everyday conversation to "faith talk".

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

Personal Spiritual Growth

The best preparation for short-term missionaries whose purpose is to share God's Word with others is to assist them in their own personal spiritual growth. The LCMS short-term mission training manuals do this in two ways: personal journaling and devotions.

Each session includes suggestions for a Bible study and journaling questions. Journaling is encouraged to help the participant fully understand the transformations they will experience in their life from this trip. It helps them understand what these experiences and emotions mean and provides a way to deal with the concerns, excitements, and conflicts faced on the trip. Most importantly, the journal and devotions provide an opportunity for the Word of Christ to dwell in each volunteer richly.

The following are two examples of the personal bible studies and journaling questions suggested for the short-term missionaries during their pre-trip training. These are selections from the LCMS World Mission Short-term Team Training Facilitator Guide.

Session 1: Role and Identity

Bible Study:

Romans 12:3-8, Romans 8:31-39, Colossians 3:23-24

Write what you learned from one or more of these passages.

Journaling Questions:

How can I fulfill my role as a servant? Learner? Guest?

How did God call me for this mission trip? What has He called me to do?

How can I anticipate God using this experience to help me be a missionary when I get home?

Session 6: Sharing Your Faith and Returning Home

Bible Study:

Matthew 6:31-34, Luke 21:14-15, Romans 1:16-17, Isaiah 55:10-11, Luke 12:12

Write what you learned from one or more of these passages.

How do these Bible verses encourage me when I have an opportunity to share my faith?

Journaling Questions:

What frightens me most about sharing my faith?

How has God already helped me share my faith?

How am I feeling as the trip nears? How is my family feeling?

What can I do now to prepare myself and my family and friends for my return?

The Global Impact Team Coordinator Manual offers suggestions for pre-trip devotions, during trip devotions, and post-trip devotions. See appendix 2.1 for a sample devotion.

Pre-Trip Devotions

Devotion 1: Evangelism – Taking it to the Streets

Devotion 2: A Servant’s Heart

During Trip Devotions

Devotion 3: Holy Living

Devotion 4: More Holy Living

Devotion 5: Strengths and Gifts

Devotion 6: Counting the Cost

Devotion 7: Humility – God’s View of Ambition

Devotion 8: Dependence on the Holy Spirit

Devotion 9: Saying Yes in the Midst of the Mess

Devotion 10: Representatives of Christ

Devotion 11: Focusing on Christ

Devotion 12: Reaching for the Goal

Devotion 13: Work of the Servant

Devotion 14: The Right Relationship with Others

Devotion 15: Saying Goodbye: Entrust

Post-Trip Devotions

Devotion 16: Returning Home by a Different Route

Devotion 17: Looking Back and Moving Forward

Devotion 18: Remembering the Journey

Devotion 19: Homecoming

Devotion 20: Integration

Devotion 21: Reverse Culture Shock – Losing that Loving Feeling

Devotion 22: Sharing the Story

Scheduling time for personal devotions can easily be overlooked, especially once you arrive at your mission field. These brief devotions direct the reader's heart back to what is most important, back to the very message they intend to share, and back to the very reason they have left home for a short time. They are there to direct others to their Savior Jesus Christ and to the eternal home that Christ has prepared for them in advance.

Conclusion

Short-term mission trips are one strategy the church uses to carry out the Great Commission today. They can be positive experiences for the participants, receiving congregation, and sending agency. Even though no existing manual provides perfect training for every possible mission team, we seek to use the resources available to provide our WELS volunteers with the best training possible. This means WELS short-term mission volunteers will receive pre-trip training to prepare them for their mission objective, on-site training to encourage their personal spiritual growth, and post-trip training to help them process their mission experience.

Although we don't place our trust in any one strategy for outreach, we do place our trust in the promises of our Lord. God reassures us that his Word will not return to him empty. "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Is 55:10-11). The role of training in short-term missions, then, is to equip WELS volunteers with God's Word. For God promises his Word will accomplish what he desires – the salvation of all who believe.

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Appendix 1.1

WELS short-term volunteers with pre-trip training in a foreign mission responded:

I received/attended:

- Four weeks ESL training on the MLC campus.
- Cultural, theological and technical training over the course of several weeks, with full days of training five days a week.
- Three weeks of orientation on various topics – culture shock, language and history, leading Bible studies, teaching ESL.
- A brief overview of the cultural differences and things that we were likely to encounter. We were also told a little bit about what we should prepare for devotions.
- A meeting about what to expect and how to act. It was fairly short (30 min). People shared their stories.

Before leaving, we

- Were trained at WLC for a few hours about Ukrainian culture and teaching VBS.
- Prepped our lessons in Spanish and prepared the crafts and packages to give away.
- Worked almost every week on our Spanish Bible stories and crafts.

WELS short-term volunteers with pre-trip training in a home mission responded:

I received/attended:

- TCW training and a week-long staff training for day camps.
- A meeting at MLC with all the TCW groups. There they informed us of some of the things we could expect on such a trip. However, since every church does it differently, they told us they could only provide general information.
- A one hour presentation on the ‘rules’ of TCW/MMA trips. It was very general, mostly giving information about Kingdom Workers, and not at all trip specific.
- Evangelism Day workshops and a WKW Saturday meeting.
- A four hour seminar discussing what was expected and the procedures that would be followed.

Before leaving, we

- Practiced basic communication skills.
- Made lesson plans and had to get them approved to go along with the theme of camp.
- Were told how to dress and what to say when canvassing. We were instructed on what to teach and what the best approach would be to teach certain lessons to the children.
- Practiced our lessons with each other for the VBS. For the canvassing—the pastor basically talked us through the whole process of how he devised the strategy and taught us what to do. Most was informal but good.

Appendix 1.2

WELS short-term volunteers with no pre-trip training in a foreign mission responded:

We would have liked:

- More role play or scenario training would have been helpful for evangelism calls, especially for Project Timothy when I was younger.
- To have had a basic course on lesson planning and design. Going into teaching VBS for my first time in front of a class ever while in a foreign country was a bit intimidating. Also some insights into the cultural background of the area would be useful, but not (in my opinion) as useful as teacher training.
- Some sort of weekend work shop on basics of culture.
- Training on “how to teach” the subject material in a foreign culture.
- To learn more about the Canadian culture and how we could better reach them. We worked with children, so I felt very comfortable talking to them about Jesus.

However:

- For the position in Mexico, there were a lot of cultural things, and you really can't teach most of that before you get there.

WELS short-term volunteers with no pre-trip training in a home mission responded:

We would like:

- If they would have actually done an example of an average experience, it would have helped greatly.
- Some sort of training in order to help reach out into a community while canvassing. It was disheartening at times canvassing all summer long and continually getting the door slammed in your face.
- Simply going through what we were doing and giving more examples of what to do and how to do it. That could've helped take away some of the trepidation.
- More training on how to better lead a Bible study. I was still in high school and hadn't given it much thought until then. It was made more difficult because I was speaking to many people who were speaking English as a second language, although they were fluent for the most part.
- A course on the basics of preparing and leading a Bible Study.
- A list of do's and don'ts for ESL teaching. Canvassing (particularly in a large city) is a very different thing as well. Understanding dangerous streets and time management when canvassing would have come in handy.

- To receive materials for teaching VBS or bible class, prior to arriving on site to allow for more effective planning.
- More info about what is being done while on the trip.
- Some insight into how to approach individuals of other religions. Many times we were thrown a curve ball as to the religion they practiced and were unsure how to continue with a meaningful and effective conversation. It also would have been helpful to know more about the church we were representing, as many individuals asked us questions.
- An outline of canvassing principles and questions. For camp counselors- lessons in how to discipline some children (school rules).
- Practice transitioning from basic conversation to “faith talk.”
- A Canvassing 101 seminar would be useful in preparing people to serve.
- A brief explanation of how things should go would have helped out.
- A little bit of preparation on how to teach classes, especially ones with young children, would have helped a great deal.
- Experience in canvassing. I really had no idea what to say the first time; even a quick ‘practice’ would have been very helpful.
- Training in what we would do as camp counselors (day-to-day duties, discipline, planning, etc.) Training in how to door-to-door canvass.
- Some brief communication training in the sense of discussing the purpose for what you’re doing, etc.

However:

- I was just assisting a coach at a soccer camp and handing out flyers; I didn’t really need any training for it.
- I’m not really sure what would have helped, since I have canvassed many times before through my church at home.
- No specific training was necessary. We were just told of things to be aware of while on the trip and the kinds of people we would be dealing with (so kids for VBS and other adults for canvassing).
- Whatever I was lacking was easy enough to make up on-site. For the TCW trip, all I really needed to know was what to pass out and/or say, and what neighborhood to go to. For the position in Hays, I was ready for it just by my experience with TCW and ministry training up to that point.
- The Pastor did a great job of getting me ready for my responsibilities when I got there. I’m not sure of any specific things that would have helped before that.
- Everything we did was easy to learn the day we arrived.
- We were basically just told what to do and given some advice on how to do it. There’s a lot to be said for letting people figure the “how” out on their own when it comes to evangelism.

Appendix 1.3

WELS short-term volunteers share the on-site training received in a foreign mission:

- In Ukraine, we were instructed on what to teach and what the best approach would be to teach certain lessons to the children.
- Our training was primarily on how to deal with Ukrainian children.
- In Mexico I had a partner who had already done everything for 6 months before I arrived. So I just followed his lead, and then when he left, I did the same for the guy behind me. It helped a lot with Spanish, cultural customs, and how to lead classes and everything.
- They helped us with our Spanish and prepared us for the culture.
- I received mostly informal Japanese cultural “training”.

WELS short-term volunteers share the on-site training received in a home mission:

- For canvassing, I was basically just given a stack of fliers and trained (told what to say) within 5 minutes.
- We received some information about how to conduct ethnographic interviews.
- We had a brief, almost “crash courses” in what they wanted us to do. But it worked. They let us learn by doing and then afterwards, we met and discussed our findings and methods – which proved to be helpful in subsequent visits.
- The missionary taught me how to teach Bible studies.
- The pastor basically just described what we should do when we got to the doors and how in-depth he wanted us to take the conversation.
- We would talk about what we were doing, and then at first go out with the pastor or some other leader who had been doing it for a good period of time and just observe and learn that way.
- We were shown how to do door to door evangelism and how to use various tools for mass outreach efforts.
- We went through the material that we were handing out and did some role playing to practice going door to door.
- They informed us of the area, the desires of the congregation, and their expectations for us and what we would do.
- For the most part, we would learn by seeing them operate. They would describe the activity (ESL, VBS, Canvassing) and we’d see them be successful in their methods and get the hang of it gradually.
- We simply sat down and went over the objectives specific to the work we’d be doing.
- They told us what to expect from the people we would run into and gave us basic canvass training.
- We had a few short meetings/classes that explained what we were to expect and do.

- We were taught how to ask questions on a door to door survey and were shown around the neighborhood. As a camp counselor- I was given crash courses in appropriate discipline.
- We were told how to teach the soccer camp and spent a few hours the day before camp running through procedures.
- Practiced canvassing with one another; Observed the VBS and Sunday School programs before resuming full responsibilities; Historical presentation on the culture of the Southwest and the Navajo; Including a trip to a reservation.
- The Pastor told us “how to canvass” and sent us out with people who had gone canvassing before just so that we could see how it was done.
- The pastor sat down with us and shared ways to approach people and ask them about their religious life. He also went with us for the first few doors, helping us along until we were confident enough to go by ourselves.
- We spent a week in training for being camp counselors – First Aid/safety, planning, description of duties, discipline, etc.; also got acquainted with kitchen and house-keeping duties for the camp. We received training on how we were to canvass.
- We were given reminders of what to do, tips for working with people, and shown how to do a survey.
- The pastor told us that he wanted us to hang door hangers on knobs and he gave us a list of things we could say if we talked to people.
- We organized how the VBS would go, and who would do what during the week. The pastor also prepared us for what to expect and what to say when canvassing.
- He told us about his experiences with the Apache people and how much they do not want to hear about Jesus.
- We were given detailed information about the VBS and how to teach along with different methods of teaching we could use. We also were told how to canvass the neighborhood and where to put the informational packets we were handing out.
- I wouldn’t really call it training, but he did specify what we were supposed to do and what dynamics of the area were like, and therefore what kind of reactions we could expect.
- We would discuss the tasks for the week, the demographics, the logistics, and the like. We also had some training when we made phone calls to prospective members and did some “practice calls” to team members.

Appendix 2.1

Global Impact Teams Trip Devotions

Devotion 1: Evangelism – Taking it to the Streets

For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. -Acts 4:20

We all have something to evangelize about. We rave about our new favorite restaurant to our friends. We convince them to order their double death by chocolate dessert. Evangelism is the church's way of pointing out that people are spiritually thirsty, and we found the water. We want to share this finding with others.

Question:

What is your favorite restaurant? What do you usually order? What is another thing you love telling people about, or attempt to try telling them?

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” - Matthew 28:19-20

Questions:

- How can experience motivate you?
- What words do you think of when you hear the word evangelize?
- What are some of the primary fears you have that stop you from telling people about Jesus?
- How can we overcome these fears?

Prayer:

Lord, give us opportunities to be your witnesses on this trip. Send your Holy Spirit to inspire us to use our gifts and talents for the Kingdom. Open the hearts of the people we come in contact with who do not know You. Amen.