

Northwest University

Improvement of Short-Term Missions Experiences  
for Participants, Pastors, and Host Missionaries  
from the Northwest Ministry Network

A thesis submitted to  
the faculty of the College of Ministry  
in candidacy for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in Missional Leadership

by

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July, 2013

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was based upon phenomenological research, using an interpretive approach in order to better understand how individuals and groups comprehend the effectiveness of short-term mission experiences (STM). This research specifically related to the observations of STM from three distinct perspectives: STM participants, pastors of sending congregations, and missionary hosts. All participants, residing in the state of Washington and northern Idaho, were from the Northwest Ministry Network (NWMN) of the Assemblies of God (AG).

The participants' vantage point was obtained via two different methods. Surveys were gathered both by email through a third party and in person at a local church. Face-to-face interviews were also conducted with youth team participants, medical doctors who had engaged in numerous HealthCare Ministry trips, and construction team members.

Several pastors were interviewed in order to obtain information concerning the effects of STM on a local congregation. These ministers work in communities and churches of various sizes and are from different parts of the NWMN. The perspectives of lead pastors, missions pastors, and a youth pastor with wide experience in leading STM teams were obtained.

In order to discover the perceptions of those on the field who host the teams, a few missionaries also participated in in-depth interviews. To obtain the widest possible spectrum of experiences, interviewees were chosen who work in very dissimilar regions of the world: Europe, Latin America, Northern Asia, and Africa.

Following the collection of data, the surveys and interviews were analyzed to find common themes from each perspective. From this feedback, I was able to discover perceptions concerning the things STM does well, what it does poorly, and how the experience can be improved for future STM teams and individuals from the NWMN.



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## Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

Short-term Christian workers have been an effective part of long-term missionary efforts and an aid to the work of national churches around the world for decades. Although short-term missions (STM) focuses on recruiting lay men and women who would like to donate their abilities, time, and assets to work in other nations or cultures through short journeys and narrowly-defined obligations,<sup>1</sup> it also presents an opportunity for pastors, who would not normally have the opportunity, to serve in overseas ministry for brief periods of time.

The definition of STM is “intentionally limited, organized, cross-cultural mission efforts for a pre-determined length of time without participants making a residency-based commitment of more than two years. That is, STM field presence ranges from a few days to a maximum of two years.”<sup>2</sup> These short-term volunteers come in an array of ages from teens to octogenarians, and they perform such valuable services as leading vacation Bible school programs, teaching specialized workshops, construction, conducting medical examinations, dispensing prescriptions, and the list goes on and on.<sup>3</sup> One elderly grandmother has even made arrangements for a group of her contemporaries to serve as self-supported nannies for missionary families who are in

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<sup>1</sup> Rolando W. Cuellar, “Short-Term Missions Are Bigger than You Think: Missiological Implications for the Glocal Church,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 278.

<sup>2</sup> Enoch Wan and Geoffrey Hartt, “Complementary Aspects of Short-Term Missions and Long-Term Missions: Case Studies for a Win-Win Situation,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 65.

<sup>3</sup> The researcher has observed this age range and all of these services plus many others performed by short-term missionaries during her tenure as an AGWM missionary in Africa.

language school.<sup>4</sup> There are many more needs for short-term Christian workers than there are volunteers, and any talent or aptitude can be successfully utilized.

### **Qualifications of the Researcher**

My husband and I have been Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) missionaries for the past 28 years. Over the last quarter century we have hosted a number of STM teams and individual short-term Christian workers. I have personally viewed and have heard from other missionaries about valuable teams and individual workers who put great effort into crossing cultural barriers, getting involved with the local people, and doing as much as possible to advance the established ministry, leaving improved conditions when their allotted time on the field expired. I have also experienced and overheard reports of STM teams who arrived with bad attitudes, reluctantly participated in the work, complicated things for their long-term hosts by ignoring their instructions, and left a bad taste in the mouths of missionaries and nationals alike when they departed.

One cannot help but wonder if—upon returning to their home churches—those ineffective groups behaved in much the same fashion as the 10 Israelite spies who gave a bad report to the community and delayed their mission of conquering the Promised Land (Numbers 13). What constitutes the difference between enthusiastic and effective groups and those who sour the experience for everyone involved, and how can these STM ventures and their results be improved for all?

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<sup>4</sup> Tom Telford with Lois Shaw, *Missions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Getting Your Church into the Game* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers/United World Mission, 1998), 70.



## Purpose of the Study

STM has become a vast industry with an estimated four million Christians from the United States alone participating in overseas trips annually.<sup>5</sup> Half of those sent are teams comprised of teenagers.<sup>6</sup> The churches in American currently disperse an equal amount of money for short-term missions trips as they do on long-term missions support.<sup>7</sup> With such a large investment of monetary and human resources involved in STM, it is vitally important that the funds and people of the Northwest Ministry Network (NWMN) be channeled in such a manner that our churches are the best possible stewards of the resources God has provided. By studying the experiences of those from the NWMN who have previously been involved in STM, as well as the writings of others who have utilized and studied STM as a channel of ministry, it may be possible to avoid previous mistakes and to build upon their knowledge of best practices in future short-term missionary endeavors.

The objective of this project was to analyze short-term missions from three different perspectives among the congregations and personnel of the NWMN—those of the STM participant, the sending church, and the long-term missionary host—discover what facets of STM trips are the most impactful from all three aspects of the experience, and find ideas for improving the endeavor for everyone concerned. In the process of conducting research, I surveyed 23 STM participants who have worked on an overseas mission project within the past

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<sup>5</sup> David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 12.

<sup>6</sup> Eliseo Vilchez-Blancas, “Short-Term Missions: A Sign of Mutations, Tensions, and Challenges in Mission,” *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no.2 (2007): 160, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=11&hid=5&sid=2f50b6aa-0d74-4489-aece-07ec884105b8%40sessionmgr4> (accessed April 19, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Livermore, 12.

five years. In addition, I conducted one-on-one interviews with six additional STM participants. The purpose of these interviews and surveys was to discover how their STM experiences impacted the participants' lives, how they felt the trips could have been improved, if their STM affected their lifestyle once they returned home, and—if so—the changes made in their attitudes and actions which correspond to that change of heart. Appendices A through C detail the survey questions used and display the informed consent forms signed by both survey responders and interviewees.

In addition, I conducted face-to-face interviews with five pastors from churches who have sent out STM teams and/or individuals within the past five years. In these interviews I tried to determine the effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of the trip upon the participating congregants, discover if the participants' enthusiasm for missions or lack thereof has “rubbed off” on others in the church, find if the church's enthusiasm level for outreach has increased their desire to touch different cultural and/or social groups within their community and abroad, and learn how the pastors felt the STM experience could be improved for future congregants. These interview questions and the corresponding informed consent form are available in Appendices D and E.

Furthermore, I conducted personal interviews with four long-term missionaries who have hosted STM teams and/or individuals within the past five years to determine their ideal team and its work, hear about positive and negative experiences that have taken place among the teams they have hosted, and grasp any suggestions they have for improving the STM experience for everyone involved. These interview questions and the parallel informed consent form are shown in Appendices F and G.

After all the data was collected, it was analyzed to find patterns of events and practices shared by the various groups and individuals. I also examined any oversights or conflicting opinions mentioned which have created negative associations for those involved in all aspects of the STM experience: the participant, the sending church, and the receiving missionaries who hosted the teams. Research from pertinent literature, conversations with additional missionaries, and some of our own experiences in hosting STM teams were also incorporated into the study. Before one can appreciate the survey and interview results, it is first necessary to have an ample background in the workings of STM both within the AG and outside it.

### **Opportunities to Serve through STM within the Assemblies of God (AG)**

Unfortunately, short-term missionaries are not as effectively employed by either AGWM or Assemblies of God U.S. Missions (AGUSM) as they could be if sending churches in America would better connect with available opportunities. A recent article in *AG News* observed that it is “not uncommon for the local Assembly of God missions coordinator or pastor to be unaware of all the opportunities that exist”<sup>8</sup> to assist long-term missionaries and ministries overseas and in the United States. Keith Kidwell<sup>9</sup> confirms that “even with thousands of missionaries working around the globe, and more than a thousand U.S. missionaries, he frequently hears of churches and church teams that choose to support and/or travel as a group to help a non-AG missionary or ministry, many times simply because they didn’t know a similar AG missionary ministry already existed.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Dan Van Veen, “AG Missions Offers Church Teams Surprising Array of Opportunities,” *AG News and Info*, news@ag.org #2178, December 7, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Keith Kidwell is the AGWM administrator and a NWMN missionary.

<sup>10</sup> Van Veen.

Kidwell points out that though the goal of many other agencies is the same—reaching and touching people for the Lord—there is often dissimilarity in how funds are spent by various charitable organizations. “With AG missions ministries, you know that your support dollars are carefully accounted for, you know that the gospel preached is Pentecostal and absolutely true to God’s Word and you know that if a mission trip is planned, that the ministry you’re traveling to help actually exists.”<sup>11</sup>

The STM explosion has met with its share of abuses and charlatans. Those who choose not to work with organizations that have long-term personnel on the ground—people who know the actual circumstances and needs of the area—are especially prone to exploitation. One author writes of personally viewing or hearing of a number of adverse manipulations of short-term experiences in different parts of the world: Latin American housing projects that have been repainted by 20 different STM teams; bogus Ugandan orphanages that only operate when a supporting team comes for a tour; Indian internet centers that exist only to ask for funds; African children who are physically maimed by parents to make them more effective beggars; a church in Cameroon built with architectural plans from New England that is only used when the builders visit the community; groups who fly to Africa for the sole purpose of cuddling small orphans for a week but otherwise give no support to the orphanage; and teams that lead annual open air evangelistic crusades in the same town with the same attendees, claiming to have 5,000 decisions for Christ year after year.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Van Veen.

<sup>12</sup> Darren Carlson, “Why You Should Consider Cancelling Your Short-Term Missions Trips,” *The Gospel Coalition* (June 18, 2012):1, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/06/18/why-you-should-consider-cancelling-your-short-term-mission-trips/> (accessed March 24, 2013).

Thus, sometimes teams are taken advantage of by local people, but on occasion nationals are unintentionally abused by insensitive or uninformed visitors. For example, the director of an InterVarsity team to Guatemala was once asked by a local pastor if his team could tear down a pavilion that a previous team had just completed. It had been constructed without input from the pastor or congregation and was poorly placed, interfering with a previously planned church project.<sup>13</sup> In another instance, a pastor from the Dominican Republic had begun to build momentum for locally-operated Bible camps among the children in the villages near his church. After an American STM team held a day camp one summer, at which they gave away candy and toys and used colorful teaching aids which were not available locally, none of the children wanted to return to the pastor's camp.<sup>14</sup> These examples reveal that at times there is mismanagement of STM as it is frequently carried out today.

For that reason when channeling family members and resources through an agency, it is wise to thoroughly investigate its reliability.<sup>15</sup> The chosen organization should be one "whose primary reason for being is to serve, assist, and enable the local church to accomplish its mandate and calling."<sup>16</sup> If the desired result of STM is to form durable and affirmative changes "within a long-term relationship of accountability and encouragement . . . [teams] need to do everything

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<sup>13</sup> Leigh Jones, "Go As Learners: Experts Encourage Students to Avoid Pitfalls of Short-Term Trips by Seeking to Learn, Not Just to Serve," *World on Campus* (March 26, 2012), [http://www.worldoncampus.com/2012/03/go\\_as\\_learners](http://www.worldoncampus.com/2012/03/go_as_learners) (accessed May 31, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Telford, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Jack Larson, "Selecting a Sponsoring Agency," in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 113.

possible to ensure that they are partnering with organizations, missionaries, and churches that are involved in excellent, life-changing long-term work with those they serve.”<sup>17</sup>

Both AGWM and AGUSM maintain an evolving list of short-term opportunities for teams and individuals, and both departments would be delighted to steer interested inquirers toward openings that suit the team’s interests and capabilities, as well as the areas of greatest need within their available timeframe and budget. If funds for service are limited, the team leader could contact AGUSM about an opportunity to serve in America. Domestic urban settings are geographically closer; involve minimal travel expenses; provide opportunities for ongoing involvement and investment; present fewer language and culture barriers; have the potential to accrue many of the same benefits to participants; and can more easily be turned into steady mutual relationships and partnerships because of their potential benefit to all involved, including senders, hosts, churches, and communities.<sup>18</sup>

### World Missions Summits

The World Missions Summits—jointly sponsored by Chi Alpha and AGWM—are one recently-developed means of recruiting short-term Christian laborers from secular colleges and universities across the United States to work with AG missionaries and projects at home and abroad. These weekend conferences—taking place during winter vacation and attracting up to 6,000 students—have taken place three times since December, 2005. At the most recent summit held in Fort Worth, Texas, on December 28–30, 2012 (<http://twms3.com/>), “1,066 young men

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<sup>17</sup> Kurt Alan Ver Beek, “Lessons from the Sapling: Review of Quantitative Research on Short-Term Missions,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 494.

<sup>18</sup> Rick Richardson, “The Impact of Urban Short-Term Projects on the Social Connections of Evangelical College Students,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 533.

and women [came] forward to declare their intent to give one year of their lives to missions.”<sup>19</sup> The motto of these summits is, “Give a year and pray about a lifetime.” In the past few years—largely due to this fresh emphasis—the composition of recently recruited long-term AGWM missionaries is changing. The number of new missionaries from a Chi Alpha background is expanding, although that number has not yet surpassed those who originate from one of the 19 AG colleges and universities in the United States.<sup>20</sup>

Missions Abroad Placement Service, Missionary Associates,  
and Ambassadors in Missions

Among a variety of short-term opportunities offered by the Assemblies of God is the Missions Abroad Placement Service (MAPS), which allows either single adults or couples without children to work alongside long-term missionaries for a period of one to 11 months (a maximum of 364 days).<sup>21</sup> “*Service* is the defining concept, attitude, and action of the program and of each MAPS volunteer.”<sup>22</sup> The goal of the initiative is to make a contribution toward global evangelization by providing structure and openings for committed short-term volunteers to function within a framework of continuing missionary effort.<sup>23</sup> MAPS volunteers are ambassadors of Jesus Christ, not the United States, and they are not to attempt to change the culture. Instead, they are instructed to endeavor to lead the local people to Jesus Christ and have

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<sup>19</sup> Melanie Lynch, “More Than 1,000 Volunteer to ‘Give a Year,’” *AG News and Info*, news@ag.org #2188, January 14, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Rick Johnson, email message to author, January 21, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Rick Johnson, ed., *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months* (Springfield, MO: Personnel and Family Life/MAPS, February 13, 2012): 1, <http://goag.org/Docs/MAPS/MAPSManual1to3Mos.pdf> (May 12, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid* (emphasis in original).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*.

confidence in the Holy Spirit's ability to promote needed transformation in the values of those to whom they minister.<sup>24</sup>

Wide Open Missions—the AGWM Missionary Placement Services website (<http://www.wideopenmissions.org/goag/ma>)—states that more than 550 missionary associates who are considering a career in missions are currently participating in one- to two-year projects in over 140 countries. A place is available for each volunteer to use his or her distinctive gifts and talents to support career missionaries and long-term projects.<sup>25</sup> However, the bulk of STM participants do not remain on the field that long. As previously stated, opportunities to serve through the MAPS program are for 11 months or less.<sup>26</sup> Most STM team trips last about two weeks. For minors who wish to participate in missions first-hand, young people under age 18 can contribute through the AIM (Ambassadors in Missions) program.<sup>27</sup>

According to Rick Johnson,<sup>28</sup> the MAPS office annually processes an average of 12,000 short-term teams of various sizes and ages for service abroad.<sup>29</sup> These teams and individuals serve for time periods ranging from a few days to several months. If a team is working with a recognized AG missionary and/or organization, everything its members need to know about connecting with a project; registering the team for liability purposes; obtaining insurance for the duration of the trip; getting passports, visas, and travel vaccinations; and answers to many other

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<sup>24</sup> Rick Johnson, ed., *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months*, 2–3.

<sup>25</sup> Rick Johnson, ed., “What Is a Missionary Associate?” Assemblies of God World Missions, <http://wideopenmissions.org/goag/ma> (accessed January 16, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Rick Johnson, ed., “FAQ,” Assemblies of God World Missions, <http://wideopenmissions.org/goag/ma/faq> (accessed January 16, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Rick Johnson is the Director of Personnel and Member Care at AGWM and a NWMN missionary.

<sup>29</sup> Rick Johnson, email message to author, January 21, 2013.



questions and concerns can be found at the Personnel and Member Care website:

<http://wideopenmissions.org/goag/teams/teams/>.<sup>30</sup>

AGWM recently announced a new online application process intended to streamline and accelerate the synchronization of nearly all facets of STM team trips.<sup>31</sup> MAPS office personnel acknowledged the necessity of making the application process more efficient and created an online instrument for team coordinators to submit all the needed documentation.<sup>32</sup> The newly-created site (<http://mapsteams.wideopenmissions.org/default.aspx>) simplifies the legal paperwork and enables the team to automatically submit their insurance fees.<sup>33</sup> Registering one's STM team through the MAPS office greatly reduces liability to the local church in the event of an accident or death while the team is traveling abroad, and *this process is required for all AG teams and individual short-term workers.*

### Engage

One unique opportunity for college students to get involved in missions and concurrently continue their education is the Engage program, developed by NWMN missionaries Steve and Amy Shoop (<http://www.engagemylife.com/>). Through this venue, students have the capacity to obtain as much as two years of college credit online while living abroad; learning a foreign language; performing hands-on, cross-cultural ministry; and participating in a discipleship program facilitated by their long-term missionary hosts. Furthermore, if students choose to study

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<sup>30</sup> Rick Johnson, ed., "Teams," Assemblies of God World Missions, <http://wideopenmissions.org/goag/teams/teams/> (accessed January 16, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> "AG World Missions Team Missions Travel Now Faster, Easier," *AG News and Info*, [news@ag.org](mailto:news@ag.org) #2200, February 27, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

through one of the seven AG colleges and universities who have agreed to sponsor Engage, they can obtain up to a 50 percent tuition break, depending upon the institution. Sites are currently operating in Latin America, Europe, and Eurasia, and the first Africa site will open in the near future.

Engage students are considered to be MAPS workers, and as such must process their applications through both the MAPS and Engage websites, as well as the institution from which they choose to study. Since the majority of Engage participants are working on their general education credits, they are able to obtain financial aid through their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). However, since they are also considered short-term missionaries, relatives and friends can receive tax credit for any contributions made toward their travel to and from the field, as well as ministry and living expenses while abroad.<sup>34</sup>

### **Opportunities for STM through Christian Colleges and Universities**

Christian colleges and universities have not always promoted and trained STM participants. In his classes, Robert J. Priest<sup>35</sup> often compared short-termers to dogs trotting through a museum that “see everything but understand nothing.”<sup>36</sup> That was before he found that nearly all of his students had previously participated in STM or planned to do so in the near future. He had drastically miscalculated how widespread the occurrence was among his pupils and recognized that he and other missiologists did not completely comprehend the object of their

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<sup>34</sup> Steve Shoop, “Director’s Report” (paper presented at the Engage site directors’ meeting, Valley Forge Christian College, Phoenixville, PA, October 18, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> Robert J. Priest is Professor of International Studies, Mission and Anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Priest and Joseph Paul Priest, “They See Everything and Understand Nothing,” *Missiology: An International Review* 26, no. 1 (January 2008): 54.

ridicule. He also realized that his antagonistic attitude towards STM could be “pedagogically counterproductive” and add to the ostracism of missiological studies in seminary and Bible college curricula.<sup>37</sup> A more positive attitude would be beneficial to the STM movement and “have distinct pedagogical and missiological advantages.”<sup>38</sup> He noticed a particular need for ministerial training in organizing and leading STM journeys, which is frequently one responsibility in a youth pastor’s portfolio.<sup>39</sup>

In recent years many Christian colleges and universities have begun to facilitate STM experiences. Approximately 75 percent of those graduating from AG colleges and universities “will have completed at least one overseas STM trip by the time they graduate,”<sup>40</sup> many due to the requirements of their program. For a major such as intercultural studies, an internship and/or a semester abroad is required to complete the degree. However, it may be necessary at times for the staff of AG colleges and universities to further scrutinize the programs in which their students are required to take part. In his D. Min. project concerning STM for Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, David J. Moore<sup>41</sup> discovered that “AG colleges both embrace and avoid STM. They embrace it by requiring students to participate in STM experiences. They avoid it by failing to investigate the actual design of the programs in which students participate.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Priest and Priest, 54.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>40</sup> David J. Moore, “A Strategy for Leading Summer Mission Experiences for Assemblies of God (AG) Undergraduate Students,” (D. Min. project, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2011), viii.

<sup>41</sup> David J. Moore is the president of American Indian College of the Assemblies of God, located in Phoenix, Arizona.

<sup>42</sup> Moore, 125.

The resources available at a Christian college or seminary can greatly assist with selection of a location for STM, as well as screening and training of team members.<sup>43</sup> At times students who participate are able to obtain college credit in conjunction with their trips by reading books to supplement the experience, submitting a journal, and/or writing a research project that complements the student's ministry involvement.

At Northwest University in Kirkland, Washington, 65 students are currently training for STM experiences, which will take place in eight different nations in the coming months. These students must raise their own funds for the journey and are required to participate in a 15-week orientation course designed to prepare the young people for their intercontinental journey and equip them for the situation in which they will minister.<sup>44</sup>

The Northwest University Ministry Association's missions projects have a double objective: "an emphasis and global awareness within our community, while also providing opportunities for students to participate tangibly."<sup>45</sup> A campus-wide effort is underway to involve staff and students alike in cross-cultural missions.<sup>46</sup> Response to this endeavor has more than doubled over the past year. Only 25 students participated in NU's STM journeys last year.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, *TransforMission: Making Disciples through Short-Term Missions* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 220.

<sup>44</sup> Phil Rasmussen, "Students in Service," vol. 1, emailed to NU alumnae, February 28, 2013.

<sup>45</sup> Northwest University Ministry Association, "Missions," Northwest University, <http://www.northwestu.edu/numa/missions/> (accessed March 1, 2013).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

## Statistics from the Northwest Ministry Network

“The STM phenomenon . . . is transforming the way in which churches in the United States see the missionary work today.”<sup>48</sup> At the same time that short-term missions experiences are on the rise within our constituency, the perspective amongst AG pastors and congregants in the NWMN towards traditional long-term missionaries is also in the process of undergoing change. While 85.8 percent of the AG churches in the Northwest actively support long-term AGWM personnel on a monthly basis at this time,<sup>49</sup> many churches rarely welcome missionaries into the pulpit. When they do, “face time” is often limited to a five- or ten-minute “window,” thus reducing the congregants’ exposure to the work of long-term missionaries and—one could argue—diminishing their burden for the unreached at home, as well as in other countries.

The burden of effective missions “windows” is two-fold. First, to appeal to today’s congregations the missionary presenters must give a succinct depiction of the effectiveness of their ministry and its results with accompanying visual evidence (a well-designed, concise video and/or appropriate candid photographs). Second, when missions is actively endorsed by the pastoral team and windows are presented with an attitude that long-term missions is a necessity and reaching the lost is the very heartbeat of God, these opportunities to share a burden for the lost can be significant.

However, if a window is tacked onto the service order without the pastor’s passionate promotion of missions at that moment as well as in other ministry venues, windows are

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<sup>48</sup> Miguel Ángel Palomino, “‘If Everything Is Mission, Nothing Is Mission’: Reflections on Short-Term Missions,” *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no.2 (2007): 209, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&hid=5&sid=727b02da-6d58-4139-87fe-6b34806335d5%40sessionmgr4> (accessed April 19, 2012).

<sup>49</sup> J. Melvyn Ming, ed., “2012 Church Giving Report,” Snoqualmie, WA: Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, 2013): 1–9.

unproductive. The “Church Giving Report” statistics reveal a disturbing downward trend in long-term missions backing within our Network. AGWM missionary support was undertaken by 4.2 percent fewer NWMN churches in 2011 than just two years previously, as stated in the 2009 Church Giving Report.<sup>50</sup> Even more startling was the nearly four percent drop in AGWM support during the calendar year 2012.<sup>51</sup>

This precipitous descent in AGWM support among our churches can be traced to several recent trends: the economic depression America has experienced in recent years, which has diminished many churches’ operating budgets; a reduced missions emphasis in church services and at network functions, such as Annual Conference, special seminars, and cohort training sessions; and a rise in the number of churches among our constituency that have chosen to exclusively support STM rather than long-term efforts.

### **The Individual Church as a Sending Organization**

A few churches—and that number is gradually increasing—have decided to operate their own missions programs. In choosing to do so it is probable that they will make identical errors and need to absorb equivalent lessons to those missions agencies have already learned through decades of overseas experiences. Regrettably, this additional tutelage is unnecessary.<sup>52</sup> Traveling as a church team “may feel empowering, but it also may mean ‘reinventing the wheel.’ It may divert energy to building new structures when that energy otherwise could have been devoted to

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<sup>50</sup> J. Melvyn Ming, ed., “2009 Church Giving Report” (Snoqualmie, WA: Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, 2010), 1–9. In 2009, 93.9 percent of Northwest Ministry Network churches supported long-term missionary efforts through AGWM.

<sup>51</sup> J. Melvyn Ming, ed., “2011 Church Giving Report” (Snoqualmie, WA: Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, 2012), 1–7.

<sup>52</sup> Stan Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2000), 4.

loving people.”<sup>53</sup> The authors of *TransformMission* compare this paradigm to fighting a war with soldiers who are sent out by and report to their hometown mayors. The result can be chaotic for those on the front lines because of lack of a common vision and accountability.<sup>54</sup>

These churches’ chosen missionaries are usually short-term laborers who are on the field for a time period ranging from a few weeks to a couple of years. When that is the case, the following questions beg for answers:

- ❖ How effective are missionaries who are not in an area long enough to successfully master a new language and culture, cultivate friendships, make converts, disciple new believers, and leave a foundation to build upon and a network of Christ-followers behind at their parting who can continue the process?
- ❖ “How can one who has never lived in or studied a culture know how to respond to complicated issues such as work ethics, marriage customs, or elements of faith where religion is characterized by incredibly delicate and complex issues?”<sup>55</sup>
- ❖ How can short-termers address inequity, inhumanity and other immoral behaviors, which necessitate continuing engagement and effort and can only be resolved through an enduring obligation?<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Miriam Adeney, “The Myth of the Blank Slate: A Check List for STMs,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 141.

<sup>54</sup> Wilder and Parker, 38–39.

<sup>55</sup> Glenn Schwartz, “Two Awesome Problems: How Short-Term Missions Can Go Wrong,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 20, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 31, [http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/21\\_1\\_PDFs/27\\_34\\_Schwartz.pdf](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/21_1_PDFs/27_34_Schwartz.pdf) (accessed May 18, 2012).

<sup>56</sup> Marcos Arroyo Bahamonde, “Contextualization of Mission: A Missiological Analysis of Short-Term Missions,” *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007): 230, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=6&sid=30cdef48-a8cc-431d-81ad-7da1988bafed%40sessionmgr10> (accessed April 19, 2012).

While not the focus of my project, these questions must be responded to by every church that makes the decision to become a private sending missionary organization.

The author of “Two Awesome Problems: How Short-Term Missions Can Go Wrong,” lists various aspects of communication that are significant in a cross-cultural setting.<sup>57</sup> They include oral and written language, art forms, body movements, audio, silence, artifacts, touch, optical, spatial, time, olfactory, and eye contact. Short-term team members have very little realization of the significance of many of these types of communication in a cross-cultural setting and consequently may offend their hosts with their actions and speech even while attempting to share God’s gracious plan of salvation.<sup>58</sup> Without an adequate orientation to intercultural communication a church that chooses to become a private sending agency can make terrible mistakes that can actually be counter-productive to the spreading of the gospel message.

During our missionary career, my husband and I have hosted numerous short-termers for periods ranging from two weeks to three months. They have participated in church planting campaigns with children and adults; constructed basic church structures and Bible school buildings; trained youth ministers; performed street skits for evangelistic purposes; preached for various church meetings; conducted health and eye clinics; taught English as a Second Language courses; played basketball and soccer with the youth of our city; aided in the organization of the Bible school library; built a sound-proof studio for *The Voice of Hope Radio*, erected two radio antenna towers, helped diagnose problems, and maintained the station’s equipment. Their assistance has definitely moved the work ahead in ways we could not have accomplished on our

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<sup>57</sup> The source quoted by Schwartz in his article was the video series *Vision for the Nations*, narrated by cultural anthropologist Lloyd Kwast.

<sup>58</sup> Schwartz, 30.



own strength. We are blessed to have never accommodated a bad team during our missionary career, although from time to time one or two individuals seemed to be more focused on themselves than on the people with whom they came to work. However, we know from hearing other missionaries' horror stories that is not always the case.

A couple of years ago a missionary colleague recounted to my husband a problem his team faced in the West African nation where he serves. The country is 94 percent Muslim, and while proselytizing is not illegal there, witnessing must be undertaken with a great deal of sensitivity. Work had cautiously begun among an unreached people group (UPG)<sup>59</sup> with an English language center, and the team had made enough positive contacts in that area to instigate more open evangelistic efforts. Unbeknownst to the long-term missionaries, a North American AG church had decided to "adopt" that same tribe, had come into the area with a container filled with medical equipment, and had begun operating a free clinic for the local people as a hasty and imprudent means of gathering a crowd to listen to the gospel message.

When the long-term AG team and several local pastors arrived in the same community to make a gospel presentation, the tribal leaders informed them that they would only listen to their message if they also received something free in the same manner as had occurred in their contact with the other Christians. This church's impulsive and ill-advised actions had effectively inoculated the entire community against accepting the gift of salvation. The long-term missionaries later heard that the group had closed the clinic and were searching for another

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<sup>59</sup> A UPG is "a people or people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize the rest of its members without outside (cross-cultural) assistance." Patrick Johnstone, "People Groups: How Many Unreached?" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 7, no. 2 (1990): 37, quoted in Alan R. Johnson, *Apostolic Function in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 130.

means of operating in the area. Still later they learned that the church's teams were actually working with another mission organization.

Although pastoral leadership knew there were long-term AG missionaries working with that particular UPG from the inception of their outreach, these occasional short-termers thought they knew better and chose to "do their own thing." They visited the long-term team's English Center during one of their early trips to the country and rejected that type of relationship-building outreach, deeming the process too slow. Even when the two teams found themselves in the same restaurant during a recent STM stopover in the country the returning short-term team refused to have further contact with the AGWM career team.

After this colleague made a presentation in a Midwestern church about their UPG work during his recent furlough, a woman approached him and asked him to spell the name of the tribe with which he was working. When he did so, he found out that she and her family had recently moved to that community and congregation from the same church that had sent the STM teams to his area. She informed him that the congregation at her previous church was told that the short-termers from the church were the *only* missionaries working among this tribe. He explained that there were at least five long-term mission organizations, including the AG, working with them.<sup>60</sup> Apparently this is a common practice among churches that become private mission sending organizations. According to Wayne Meece,<sup>61</sup> "Short-term workers have been known to enter an area and ignore the missionaries working there. Claims are made as if the Gospel had

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<sup>60</sup> We received an update on the situation at a missionary retreat in March, 2013, so this report reflects the ongoing situation within this Muslim nation.

<sup>61</sup> Wayne Meece is Field Coordinator at Team Expansion in Louisville, Kentucky.

never reached the area. There seems to be a deliberate policy of not working with the established church.”<sup>62</sup>

While the above scenario is rare, it illustrates several unfortunate outcomes that can take place when individual churches send out their own short-term workers without interaction or advice from long-term personnel who are already working in the same nation. Short-termers are often more interested in quick results that can be reported at home within a few weeks than in laying a solid foundation for church planting, discipleship, and maturity of new believers in their area of ministry. Teams that do not coordinate their work with long-term personnel, who understand the situation and the culture, risk making costly mistakes that can actually prevent people from turning to God.

### **Finding a Healthy Missional Focus**

Many churches and pastors in America limit their involvement in missions because they do not have a clear understanding of the missionary process and a vision statement that directs their churches’ giving. Of course, sending organizations have a written values statement, but churches also have “a missiology, even if it is not formally expressed, but implicit.”<sup>63</sup> Missiological choices are made in each decision of the church’s missions committee. “A missions policy helps a church decide where they want to go in missions, what kinds of

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<sup>62</sup> A. Wayne Meece, “Was Paul a Short Term Missionary?” in *The Gospel Unhindered: Modern Missions and the Book of Acts*, ed. Doug Priest, Jr., (Pasadena, CA: William Cary Library, 1994), 209.

<sup>63</sup> Alan R. Johnson, *Apostolic Function in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 32.

ministries and people they want to support, and in what parts of the world they want to focus. No church can do everything,”<sup>64</sup> and a vision statement helps the church chart a course of action.

While most missions organizations have the goal of finding the lost and leading them to Christ, very few have as extensive an outreach system as AGWM with such diverse opportunities for involvement. Since the NWMN is a part of the larger AG movement, it is hoped that a focus on expanding the work in other nations would be a central goal of our churches.

There is a necessity for basic instruction about the purpose of missions, and perhaps this is a task for AGWM and its missionaries to undertake. Mission agencies should lead the way in instructing church leaders about best practices, while building relationships both at home and abroad and showing compassion to those in need in their areas of ministry. Those missionaries and agencies at the vanguard of relationship building at home and abroad will also have their support needs met.<sup>65</sup> In searching the Scriptures, one cannot help but realize that God’s purpose for the church “has an outward focus—it’s all about mission—going out, sending out, discipling those who are found . . . Everything the Church does should be seen through the eyes of mission (Matthew 28:19, 1 Thessalonians 1:5–7, John 20:21, Mark 16:15, 16).”<sup>66</sup>

A healthy missional focus is birthed in the heart of God and transmitted to those who are attached to the Lord, who can thereby “bear fruit” (John 15:4). It begins in the church’s neighborhood (Jerusalem), gets involved with the needy who live nearby (Judea), reaches across cultural barriers within the community (Samaria), and sends out both long- and short-term

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<sup>64</sup> Telford, 36.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>66</sup> JoAnn Butrin, *From the Roots Up: A Closer Look at Compassion and Justice in Missions* (Springfield, MO: Roots Up Publishers, 2010), Amazon Kindle electronic book, location 450.

workers to touch those outside the Gospel's reach in other nations around the globe (Acts 1:8). A call to missions is first of all a call to return to the believer's "first love" (Revelation 2:4).

When a congregation is disinterested in mission, the roots of its malady are fundamentally spiritual. The remedy is conversion, not to a cause or task, but to a Person, the Person who is the Lord of creation. When one gives one's life to the Lord, one shares the Lord's concerns, participating in his love for what he has made and redeemed. If we love Christ, we love and want Christ's best for those whom he loves. It's as simple as that. Mission is nothing more and nothing less than a love affair.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Tim Dearborn, *Beyond Duty: A Passion for Christ, a Heart for Mission* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1997), 53.

## Chapter Two: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Varied Perspectives

Opinions about the utilization of short-term Christian workers in missionary activity vary widely. Latin American church historian Eliseo Vilchez-Blancas believes that STM experiences are one of the most significant tools currently being used in evangelism to bring about world-wide revival.<sup>68</sup> In their extensive survey of former Short-Term Evangelical Missions Ministries participants, Roger P. Peterson (founder of STEM Ministries) and Timothy D. Peterson quote Isaiah 43:19a. “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”<sup>69</sup> They illustrate the passage by indicating that STM may be one of the Lord’s “new things.” Their conviction is that a well-designed, organized and executed STM is strategically valuable.<sup>70</sup> Tom Telford<sup>71</sup> agrees with Vilchez-Blancas and the Petersons when teaching that Jesus’ Great Commission “marching orders” are for every believer.<sup>72</sup> If this is true then STM may be one of the easiest means in which to get laypeople involved in outreach to the lost in other countries.

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<sup>68</sup> Tito Paredes, “Short-Term Missions: What Can Be Rescued, What Can Be Criticized, and the Challenge of Contextualization,” *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no.2 (2007): 250, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=102bcdec-7309-4e8a-9d31-4d3b04d08868%40sessionmgr4&vid=4&hid=3> (accessed April 19, 2012).

<sup>69</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are quoted from the New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984).

<sup>70</sup> Roger P. Peterson and Timothy D. Peterson, *Is Short-Term Mission Really Worth the Time and Money? Advancing God’s Kingdom through Short-Term Mission* (Minneapolis, MN: STEM Ministries, 1991), 30.

<sup>71</sup> Tom Telford is the Vice President of Mobilization for United World Mission located in Charlotte, North Carolina.

<sup>72</sup> Telford, 154.

Among the benefits of STM listed by Tito Paredes<sup>73</sup> are the following: providing an intercultural Christian encounter and the opportunity to learn about God's global family, finding how to relate with believers from other cultures with differing gifts and functions in the body of Christ, making an effort to include socio-cultural and ethnic diversity from both nations in the experience, preparation and training for God's global mission, and attempting to fit into the gospel's paradigm of contextualization in mission.<sup>74</sup> Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker<sup>75</sup> call STM the epitome of "dissonance theory . . . an approach focusing on life and perspective change—through coming to grips with the discrepancy between what should be and what is."<sup>76</sup>

Increasing numbers of pastors believe that STM trips are the best way to involve their congregations in the global missionary endeavor. Mike Gibson<sup>77</sup> writes that congregations of any size can get involved in STM, as long as the participants have a vision of how they fit into God's plan to win the world and feel that their roles and responsibilities correspond with their capabilities.<sup>78</sup> While these short-term ventures are a tremendous opportunity to involve ordinary

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<sup>73</sup> Tito Paredes is a leadership and missions trainer in the nation of Peru.

<sup>74</sup> Paredes, 255–256.

<sup>75</sup> Michael S. Wilder is the Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies in the School of Church Ministries at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and Shane W. Parker serves as Associate Dean of Graduate Education at Lancaster Bible College and Graduate School.

<sup>76</sup> Wilder and Parker, 140.

<sup>77</sup> Pastor Mike Gibson serves at Christ Lutheran Church in Costa Mesa, California.

<sup>78</sup> Mike Gibson, "Short-Term Missions Transform Congregations!" *Missio Apostolica* 18, no. 1 (May 2010): 23, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=ffb78f07-2c5a-41e0-b0f1-3d646722d027%40sessionmgr13&vid=4&hid=2> (April 19, 2012).

Christians in outreach, Rolando Cuellar<sup>79</sup> underlines the fact that STM participants and their sending congregations actually “receive more benefits than the receptors of mission.”<sup>80</sup>

Some authors—especially writers who share the perspective of the receiving churches—speculate that far more could be accomplished by simply sending money to the mission field and hiring local workers who are in need of employment to undertake the tasks in which STM teams would like to participate.<sup>81 82</sup> Richard Slimbach<sup>83</sup> reminds the participant that the benefits of and desire to travel do not always warrant the expense and the ecological damage of an enlarged carbon footprint, especially when the ticket price for a team’s two-week visit could provide several nationals’ salaries for an entire year!<sup>84</sup>

Kim Hurst and Chris Eaton<sup>85</sup> indicate that the funds used for short-term travel and projects are not derived from regular mission giving. Instead, these monies “usually come from vacation savings or from the donations of family and co-workers who would not normally give

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<sup>79</sup> Rolando Cuellar is the pastor of Emmanuel Presbyterian Church in Chicago, Illinois. He is a Pentecostal pastor from the nation of Peru.

<sup>80</sup> Cuellar, 280.

<sup>81</sup> Hunter Farrell, “Short-Term Missions: Paratrooper Incursion or ‘Zaccheus Encounter’?” *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007): 72, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&hid=2&sid=fbb78f07-2c5a-41e0-b0f1-3d646722d027%40sessionmgr13> (April 19, 2012).

<sup>82</sup> Rodrigo Maslucán, “Short-Term Missions: Analysis and Proposals,” *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no.2 (2007): 145, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=7&hid=23&sid=e31d045c-b8e5-4d06-bd9c-8a50ca68226b%40sessionmgr13> (accessed April 19, 2012).

<sup>83</sup> Richard Slimbach chairs the Department of Global Studies and Sociology at Azusa Pacific University.

<sup>84</sup> Richard Slimbach, “The Mindful Missioner,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 176.

<sup>85</sup> Kim Hurst and Chris Eaton founded the popular Vacations with a Purpose (VWAP) ministry at Seattle’s University Presbyterian Church.



to church-related activities.”<sup>86</sup> However, Alex G. Smith<sup>87</sup> points out that STM can undermine support of long-term cross-cultural workers. Certain vocational missionaries have lost significant funding due to the channeling of resources into local churches’ STM programs. These career missionaries with depleted budgets protest that it is far simpler to obtain financial backing for STM than to find engaged supporters of long-term missionaries.<sup>88</sup>

Ironically sometimes the STM participants who receive funding from a local church for their travels are new believers or infrequent attenders. An expensive overseas missions trip probably should not be a new convert’s “first testing ground for involvement in ministry.”<sup>89</sup> Requiring volunteers to partake in the church’s community outreach endeavors would reveal their intent for deeper participation, as well as add to the number of workers in local ministries.<sup>90</sup>

Critics of STM describe the phenomenon in a variety of ways. Missiologists Ralph Winter and Alan R. Johnson call short-term missionaries “amateurs.”<sup>91</sup> David A. Livermore<sup>92</sup> indicates that the trips can lead team members “to make wrong assumptions about the cultures

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<sup>86</sup> Kim Hurst and Chris Eaton, “Financing Your Mission Experience,” in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 83.

<sup>87</sup> Alex G. Smith is a long-time missionary to the Buddhists of Thailand

<sup>88</sup> Alex G. Smith, “Evaluating Short-Term Missions: Missiological Questions,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 54.

<sup>89</sup> Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), Amazon Kindle electronic book, location 2555.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Robertson McQuilkin, “Lost Missions: Whatever Happened to the Idea of Rescuing People from Hell?” (quoting Ralph D. Winter in an unnamed source), *Christianity Today*: 50, no. 7 (July 1, 2006): 41, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=5f5fd4b6-ac0e-4a66-b595-d679df2fa3c0%40sessionmgr13&vid=4&hid=2> (accessed May 10, 2012). Alan R. Johnson, 199.

<sup>92</sup> David A. Livermore is Executive Director of the Global Learning Center, the training arm of Barber Scotia College in Concord, North Carolina.

visited because of viewing occurrences through the participants' own cultural lens."<sup>93</sup> Other authors define STM trips as superficial;<sup>94</sup> self-entertaining;<sup>95</sup> a military incursion;<sup>96</sup> self-focused with a short-term impact;<sup>97</sup> "ecclesiastical tourism,"<sup>98</sup> in which participants return home while "still in the 'tourist stage,'"<sup>99</sup> and an experience with illusory results that is buffered "from the reality of culture."<sup>100</sup> A number of writers on the topic have accused STM participants of seeking to help themselves,<sup>101</sup> being neocolonial,<sup>102</sup> paternalistic,<sup>103</sup> ethnocentric and imperialistic,<sup>104</sup> imposing ideas that STM participants consider superior,<sup>105</sup> a fulfillment of the participants' career ambitions,<sup>106</sup> and unidirectional (north to south).<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Livermore, 70.

<sup>94</sup> Guthrie, 114.

<sup>95</sup> Francisco Cerrón, "Short-Term Missions: An Initial Assessment from Experience," *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007): 32, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=5&sid=727b02da-6d58-4139-87fe-6b34806335d5%40sessionmgr4> (accessed April 19, 2012).

<sup>96</sup> Edwin Zehner, "Short-Term Missions: Toward a More Field-Oriented Model," *Missiology* 34, no. 4 (October, 2006): 512, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=15&hid=5&sid=2f50b6aa-0d74-4489-aeeb-07ec884105b8%40sessionmgr4> (accessed April 19, 2012).

<sup>97</sup> Peterson and Peterson, 2.

<sup>98</sup> Farrell, 72.

<sup>99</sup> Cuellar, 282.

<sup>100</sup> Kyeong Sook Park, "Researching Short-Term Missions and Paternalism," in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 518.

<sup>101</sup> Vilchez-Blancas, 170.

<sup>102</sup> Palomino, 220. Paredes (quoting Robert Priest in an unnamed source), 251.

<sup>103</sup> Park, 506 and 508.

<sup>104</sup> Paredes, 256.

<sup>105</sup> Arroyo Bahamonde, 241.

<sup>106</sup> Dearborn, 12.

Several authors do not even believe STM deserves to be labeled “mission.” Miguel Ángel Palomino<sup>108</sup> thinks that they often lack the missionary aspect of evangelism. Furthermore, he believes STM experiences should not be designated as “missions” trips because they lack the virtues of renunciation and self-sacrifice.<sup>109</sup> Another Latin American author assertively writes that the title “is a mistake, a distortion of the very nature of the mission of God and the mission of the church.”<sup>110</sup> One East African church would rather designate the journeys as an “experience” because the participants experience God, the global body of Christ, ministry in a different environment, and the Holy Spirit’s work through their lives.<sup>111</sup> Peruvian pastor Serapio Ruix calls the short-term teams he hosts “support groups that give their time and money to serve God’s church.”<sup>112</sup> To long-term missionaries who have spent decades of their lives among the materially poor, dodging disease and, at times, bullets in their task of reaching the lost by any means possible, it is almost offensive when someone who has participated in a handful of two-week trips to Mazatlan blithely announces to them, “I am a missionary, too!” (This scenario was taken from a confidential interview with a NWMN missionary, April 24, 2012.)

JoAnn Butrin<sup>113</sup> expresses admiration for young adults who have begun a non-profit organization and plan to “make a difference somewhere in the world”<sup>114</sup> often through the means

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<sup>107</sup> Palomino, 221.

<sup>108</sup> Miguel Ángel Palomino is a Peruvian pastor and graduate school director.

<sup>109</sup> Palomino, 215–218.

<sup>110</sup> Arroyo Bahamonde, 235.

<sup>111</sup> Zehner, “Short-Term Missions: Toward a More Field-Oriented Model,” 512–513.

<sup>112</sup> Palomino, 223.

<sup>113</sup> JoAnn Butrin is a former AGWM missionary to Zaïre, one of the founders of both HealthCare Ministries (HCM) and The Global AIDS Partnership (GAP), and AGWM Area Director for International Ministries.

of STM. Nevertheless, she is also troubled about these young people's lack of knowledge and wonders how to give them an adequate foundation about best practices that will neither "stifle [nor] slow down their enthusiasm."<sup>115</sup> Since team members return from their trips with a different perspective on the rest of the world and "a desire to put others before themselves more diligently,"<sup>116</sup> discontinuing STM would stop a vital initiative builder in the realm of foreign missions. However, it may be necessary to make some changes on all sides to improve the system. Those who have studied STM have discussed their effectiveness or lack thereof in a variety of publications.

### ***The Raison d'Être for STM Experiences***

STM is a means of getting more people than just "professional" clergy involved in missions. "If there is one aspect of STM that should never change, it is its dynamic missionary force directed to the lay people."<sup>117</sup> Pastor Mike Gibson, who has used STM to transform his congregations' vision for missions, compares going on a missions trip to riding his motorcycle. He states, "Where I look, I will go."<sup>118</sup> If Christians only regard the interior of their church sanctuary, they are content to spend their funds and energy there. However, Jesus' last words to the disciples before his ascension urged believers to go beyond their comfort zone to reach and disciple people from every ethnic group and nation (Matthew 28:18–20).

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<sup>114</sup> Butrin, location 1637.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Amy Green, "Missions Boot Camp: As These Teens Prepare for Short-Term Trips, They Learn More than How to Talk about Jesus," *Christianity Today* 52, no. 2 (February, 2008): 63, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&hid=1&sid=b6fa7f25-d35a-4ddb-a560-d257f3fbdde3%40sessionmgr14> (April 19, 2012).

<sup>117</sup> Cuellar, 285.

<sup>118</sup> Gibson, 25.

Discipleship of the participants is one aspect of STM that is not always fully pursued by team leaders. Sometimes planning the trip and finishing the project become the focus of the team's leadership to the detriment of the team members' spiritual growth. When spiritual formation becomes an integral part of the orientation, the STM itself, and the team's debriefing, positive transformation is seen among the team members. Bill Hybels<sup>119</sup> reports that the recipients of STM ministry are not the only beneficiaries of these missions trips; the hundreds of participants from his congregation who travel abroad each year are also changed. "We've learned that one of the most powerful enhancers of spiritual formation among members of our congregation [is] these cross-cultural ministry experiences."<sup>120</sup>

Wilder and Parker believe that since Jesus' last charge to the church was to disciple believers, perhaps the definitive method and progress goal of STM experiences should lie with the discipleship of the participants.<sup>121</sup> Discipleship involves both teaching and following Jesus' ministry model of servanthood and care for the materially poor. Therefore, sanctity and offering oneself in service are linked. They contend that genuine discipleship needs to include regular acts of loving service to others.<sup>122</sup>

This sort of discipleship is especially important for teams composed of Millennials who are in the process of growing in their ability to evaluate and decide principles, taking charge of their own development, and learning to investigate and ask questions profitably. During the

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<sup>119</sup> Bill Hybels is the author of several books about Christian leadership and serves as lead pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois. This Chicago-area congregation is the third largest church in the USA.

<sup>120</sup> Dearborn, v.

<sup>121</sup> Wilder and Parker, 4, 36–37.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 22, 45.

course of the extended journey the participant acquires a stronger faith as he or she works through many of these issues as an essential part of the maturation process.<sup>123</sup> It is necessary for growing believers to “develop a coherent, sustainable Christian worldview that will carry them through the unpredictable challenges of a world that is changing with exponential rapidity.”<sup>124</sup>

In an era where children and young people are frequently coddled and over-protected, the church’s “youth are all too often ‘underchallenged’ in our ministries while starving for edgy, dynamic ways to contribute to something bigger and more significant.”<sup>125</sup> STM journeys are one means that the Lord has used to involve young adults and teens in ministry. At times participants are called into full-time ministry and long-term missionary service as they “test the waters”<sup>126</sup> during their mission experiences. On occasion the participants on these STM adventures realize that they have not actually given their lives to the Lord and do so during the trip, sometimes being baptized in water and filled with the Holy Spirit in their host countries. “In this case the ‘missionaries’ have been evangelized.”<sup>127</sup>

“Experience” is a word frequently associated with STM. Most believers are not prepared to throw away another career to move to the African Sahel, the Amazon jungle, or even a European city filled with skeptics. If participants are not ready to take a giant step, “offer a

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<sup>123</sup> Fran Blomberg, “From ‘Whatever’ to Wherever: Enhancing Faith Formation in Young Adults through Short-Term Missions,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey), 600.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 603.

<sup>125</sup> Wilder and Parker, 38.

<sup>126</sup> Vicki Gascho, “Supervisors for Short-Term Mission Experiences: Thinking about Selection,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 617.

<sup>127</sup> Maslucán, 144.

smaller step; if they're not ready for a small step, offer them a baby step.”<sup>128</sup> The key to STM is having a firsthand involvement in hands-on ministry where participants are able to also experience God's working through their lives.<sup>129</sup> Once these volunteers have savored the sights, sounds, and flavors of the mission field and made relationships there, they often have a great desire to continue to participate in this type of outreach.<sup>130</sup>

If the premise of STM is to involve laity in the Great Commission, that means promoting it as “not just the activity of a few specialists, but the passion of the people of God who allow their hearts to beat in harmony with God's heart.”<sup>131</sup> Throughout Scripture, the Lord places a strong emphasis on caring for those who are unable to care adequately for themselves: orphans, widows, and those who are from a different culture (Exodus 22:21–22, Leviticus 24:22, Deuteronomy 10:18, Psalm 68:5, Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 25:35, Acts 6:1–3, Hebrews 13:2, James 1:27). “The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow” (Psalm 146:9a). The church's task is accomplished by following Christ's example in showing through speech and action “that Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords who is bringing in a kingdom of righteousness, justice, and peace. And the church needs to do this where Jesus did it, among the blind, the lame, the sick and outcast, and the poor.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Todd Alexander, “Conducting a World Hunger Day at Your Church,” in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 198.

<sup>129</sup> J. Mack Stiles and Leeann Stiles, *Mack & Leeann's Guide to Short-Term Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 22.

<sup>130</sup> Jim Burns, “Igniting Volunteers to Become World Christians,” in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 31.

<sup>131</sup> Dearborn, 76.

<sup>132</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 623.

## Involvement

During the 1970s, STM trips became increasingly popular as an approach to missions, particularly among movements such as Calvary Chapel and Youth with a Mission (YWAM).<sup>133</sup> Statistically it has been an extremely successful strategy. “While the number of long-term missionaries from North America has stayed basically static, the number of American laity involved in short-term projects grew from 22,000 in 1979 to more than a million today.”<sup>134</sup>

The largest boost to the ranks of STM personnel may have come on the heels of Christian recording artist Keith Green’s untimely death in a fiery airplane crash during the summer of 1982. He and his wife Melody were intense and dedicated believers who from their earliest days of faith had put their convictions into action by taking drug addicts, runaways, and pregnant teenagers into their family home, leading them to the Lord, and discipling them in the faith.<sup>135</sup> The couple had never been overseas until a few months before Keith’s death. Although their trip was supposed to be the European vacation of a lifetime, it instead became an extended visit to a series of mission stations and projects. They returned to America with a vision of recruiting 100,000 STM participants for YWAM and other organizations.<sup>136</sup>

At one of his last concerts, Keith proclaimed, “This generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of souls on the earth . . . I don’t want to see us stand before God

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<sup>133</sup> Youth with a Mission (YWAM), which began in 1960, has concentrated chiefly on STM trips for young people, although “many of [their] short-term efforts have grown into long-term endeavors.” From “About YWAM” on the Youth with a Mission International website: <http://www.ywam.org/About-YWAM> (accessed May 10, 2012).

<sup>134</sup> McQuilkin, 41.

<sup>135</sup> Melody Green, *Keith Green: The Ministry Years, 1980-1982*, vol. 2, accompanying booklet (Chatsworth, CA: Sparrow Records), 2.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 10–12.



one day and say, ‘But, God, I didn’t hear You [sic] call me.’ Well, you don’t need to hear a call. You’re already called! In fact, if you stay home from going into all nations, you’d better be able to say to God, ‘You called me to stay home, Lord. I know that for a fact!’” He believed that those who elect to worship God are also obligated to help others find salvation in the Lord.<sup>137</sup> Over 300,000 people heard Keith’s final challenge at the Keith Green Memorial Concert tour during the two years following his death,<sup>138</sup> as well as in the reading of his biography,<sup>139</sup> and many—including my husband and myself—responded to this call.

It cannot be denied that more Christians than ever before are becoming involved with the task of worldwide missions. Each year many churches in North America raise funds for a summer STM team or several of them. Church members become the prayer and financial supporters of the team’s members. “When fundraising is done well, the entire church becomes involved in the plans of the short-term missionaries . . . By becoming shareholders, these donors literally have stock in the success of that short-term mission.”<sup>140</sup>

Did missions trips become increasingly popular as a result of the conviction of the Holy Spirit while studying Scripture? Or, in looking at the phenomenon from another point of view, is this manifestation simply a reaction to available travel opportunities and a means of mustering ordinary people to become personally involved in missions?<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Moore, 17.

<sup>138</sup> Melody Green, 14.

<sup>139</sup> *No Compromise: The Life Story of Keith Green* by Melody Green and David Hazard (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, revised and expanded in 2008).

<sup>140</sup> Hurst and Eaton, 75.

<sup>141</sup> David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 50.

Nearly a third (29 percent) of American young people assisted in a type of “cross-cultural service project” before their high school graduation.<sup>142</sup> While such trips have become “a rite of passage for many young evangelicals,”<sup>143</sup> not all of these summer teams travel to another country. For example, following the destruction unleashed by Hurricane Katrina, many churches and civic organizations answered in a tidal wave of volunteer laborers. Among the more than 16,000 who responded from Southern Baptist churches alone, 75 percent were university and high school students.<sup>144</sup>

Each year many teams of young people work on reservations with Native Americans, in inner city missions, and in district affiliated churches with limited resources. For example, in the Ohio Ministry Network teams of about 60 fifth and sixth graders have participated in summer ministry teams each year since 2005. In a program called Missions Extreme, the children have “worked in homeless shelters, clothing banks, given out bottled water, washed police cruisers, washed and cleaned in parks, even held a reverse garage sale (all items free). There's no limit to what [they are] willing to do in community service.”<sup>145</sup>

The STM phenomenon is spreading to more and more countries as other nations take up the call to touch the unreached of the world. The nations who send out the most missionaries are still the USA and UK; however, Korea and Brazil follow closely,<sup>146</sup> and many developing

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<sup>142</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2, quoted in Livermore, 43.

<sup>143</sup> Amy Green, 62.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>145</sup> Dan Van Veen, “Hope from an Unexpected Source,” *AG News and Info*, news@ag.org #2113, July 2, 2012.

<sup>146</sup> Livermore, 40.

nations are also sponsoring both short- and long-term missionaries. Reaching the lost is the duty of emerging nations and not just the West.<sup>147</sup> Palomino suggests that in some cases STM functions best in a multinational team because in certain locales American and European Christians are not the wisest personnel choices.<sup>148</sup> In his 2010 MAML thesis, Ron Boehme called this “amazing array of ministry specialties and people of many nationalities” the “Third Wave of Modern Missions.”<sup>149</sup> In the current era, missionary service has become a global endeavor, with Christian workers from nearly every country serving humbly in many other lands.<sup>150</sup>

STM participants need to realize as they travel that their “destination is not a blank slate. Christians probably exist there. Cultures certainly exist there. And—of importance for American teams—perceptions of Americans exist there.”<sup>151</sup> Unfortunately, those perceptions can damage participants’ ability to be a witness for the Lord before they even open their mouths, so STM teams must be especially careful to display the grace and mercy of God through their actions. Short-termers need to always keep in mind that their purpose is to be colleagues and co-mentors with the people they have come to serve.<sup>152</sup> As sisters and brothers from diverse backgrounds

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<sup>147</sup> Palomino, 222.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ron Boehme, “The Fourth Wave: The New Look of Missions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (MAML Thesis, Northwest University, 2010), 56.

<sup>150</sup> Sam George, “Diaspora: A Hidden Link to ‘From Everywhere to Everywhere’ Missiology,” *Missiology: An International Review* XXXIX, no. 1 (January, 2011): 51.

<sup>151</sup> Adeney, 122.

<sup>152</sup> Hannah Notess, “Impact on Reentry: Study Shows Summer Trips Have a Long-Term Effect,” *Response* 35, no. 1 (Spring, 2012): 40.

work together in unity, one of the first things these STM apprentices will come to understand is that the stereotypes of the cultures they have come to serve are usually incorrect.<sup>153</sup>

Rather than come with a preset agenda, teams must work within the “core values and customs”<sup>154</sup> of the local people and whenever possible under the direction or co-direction of the local church.<sup>155</sup> “At a minimum, the STM team needs to be seen as an extension of local organizations rather than as independent, outside agents.”<sup>156</sup> This can only be accomplished by teaming with long-term Christian workers, either a locally-based organization or missionaries working under the guidance of the national church. Indigenous teams that are already in place should not be supplanted but involved in the project, as the visiting team shows “mutual respect, deference, and willingness to learn”<sup>157</sup> from local personnel. With mutual compliance, both groups must make an effort to work as a unit instead of just checking off another item on the annual calendar.<sup>158</sup> In a spirit of reciprocal submission, the host church gains momentum, maintains “the burning flame of passion for those who are lost,”<sup>159</sup> and is able to further the task after the STM team’s departure.

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<sup>153</sup> Noel Becchetti, “The Inner-City Plunge,” in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 162.

<sup>154</sup> Palomino, 224.

<sup>155</sup> Arroyo Bahamonde, 242.

<sup>156</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 2396.

<sup>157</sup> Apolos Landa, “Short-Term Medical Missions: A Summary of Experiences,” *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007): 109, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=9&hid=5&sid=2f50b6aa-0d74-4489-aeeb-07ec884105b8%40sessionmgr4> (accessed April 19, 2012).

<sup>158</sup> Joaquin Alegre Villón, “Short-Term Missions: Experiences and Perspectives from Callao, Peru,” *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007): 137, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=13&hid=5&sid=2f50b6aa-0d74-4489-aeeb-07ec884105b8%40sessionmgr4> (accessed April 19, 2012).

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

As a phenomenon, STM tends to involve “Christian travelers going *from* highly resourced countries *to* countries and/or destinations with [fewer] resources”<sup>160</sup> and not the reverse. Living in comparative wealth, Americans often feel as though we must bless the rest of the world with our bounty. This spirit of largesse, sometimes leads teams to go overboard in extravagant generosity, which—as mentioned previously—can actually have harmful effects on the area the team is trying to help.<sup>161</sup>

### An Urge to Help the Materially Poor

During the first three decades of the twentieth century there was a movement among evangelical churches to separate themselves from the tendency they perceived among the mainline denominations to make the “social gospel” the focus of mission, rather than the Good News of salvation. Leading proponents of the social gospel in the USA were Washington Gladden,<sup>162</sup> Charles Sheldon,<sup>163</sup> and Walter Rauschenbusch.<sup>164</sup> The writings of Rauschenbusch later influenced Martin Luther King, Jr. in his battle for civil rights through nonviolent civil disobedience and Anglican bishop and social rights activist Desmond Tutu in the struggle against Apartheid in the Republic of South Africa.

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<sup>160</sup> Kersten Bayt Priest, “Women as Resource Brokers: STM Trips, Social and Organizational Ties, and Mutual Resource Benefits,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 259 (emphasis in original).

<sup>161</sup> Landa, 106.

<sup>162</sup> Washington Gladden was the pastor of the First Congregational Church in Columbus, Ohio, from 1882–1918.

<sup>163</sup> Charles Monroe Sheldon, pastor of Central Congregational Church in Topeka, Kansas, was the author of *In His Steps* (first published in 1897)—the source of the slogan “What Would Jesus Do?”

<sup>164</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch was a Baptist pastor in the New York City neighborhood called Hell’s Kitchen, authored several books about the social gospel, and was later a professor at Rochester Theological Seminary.

Rauschenbusch and his aforementioned contemporaries taught that effective Christianity must meet society's physical necessities, as well as the soul's spiritual requirements.<sup>165</sup> In disagreement with the obvious corporeal focus of the social gospel movement, when evangelicals distanced themselves from this course, they "ended up in large-scale retreat from the front lines of poverty alleviation. This shift away from the poor was so dramatic that church historians refer to the 1900–1930 era as the 'Great Reversal' in the evangelical church's approach to social problems."<sup>166</sup>

The twentieth century saw many liberal churches become "so caught up in not wanting to look like fundamentalists that they walked away from the core of the gospel, *evangelism*."<sup>167</sup> Because of their lack of a missional focus, most mainline churches have reported increasingly declining memberships over the past 30 to 40 years.<sup>168</sup> Today's church leaders must recognize the need to synthesize social action with a missional focus in order to maintain healthy, growing churches.

While Pentecostal missionaries have often included medical and educational facets to their ministry, until recently they have often needed to justify that part of their work to leadership as a means of opening doors for gospel presentation. During our first term of service in West

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<sup>165</sup> Christopher H. Evans, "Walter Rauschenbusch: The Heritage of the Social Gospel," *The Voice Magazine.com* (2011): 1, <http://www.thevoicemagazine.com/christian-living-christianity/christian-history/walter-rauschenbusch-the-heritage-of-the-social-gospel.html> (accessed April 24, 2013).

<sup>166</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 671.

<sup>167</sup> Jim Burns, "Igniting Volunteers to Become World Christians," in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 38 (*italics mine*).

<sup>168</sup> Rebecca Barnes and Lindy Lowry, "7 Startling Facts: An Up Close Look at Church Attendance in America," *Church Leaders/Lead Better Every Day* (2012): 4, <http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/139575-7-startling-facts-an-up-close-look-at-church-attendance-in-america.html?p=1> (accessed March 13, 2013).

Africa 25 years ago, the field lost a missionary family because of this very issue. They had a great burden for compassion ministries, but the mission leadership refused to sanction their medical involvement without a direct tie to evangelism. In the past a number of missionaries have begun the urgent works that were needed to save many lives without advance permission, realizing that their denominations would get behind them once they saw the value of the compassion ministries in which they were involved. In our own movement, the Lillian Trasher orphanage in Assyut, Egypt,<sup>169</sup> which has raised and educated thousands of impoverished children since its establishment in 1911 ([http://www.ltochildren.org/Main\\_Page\\_E.aspx](http://www.ltochildren.org/Main_Page_E.aspx)), and the Calcutta Mission of Mercy Hospital,<sup>170</sup> founded by NWMN missionaries Mark and Huldah Buntain in 1977 (<http://www.calcuttamercyhospital.org/about>), are both examples of this.

“If we confine our faith to ‘spiritual’ concerns, we erroneously reinterpret and spiritualize the vast socioeconomic and political teaching of Scripture.”<sup>171</sup> Believers often forget that the first words of the Great Commission are, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). This means authority over every aspect of the universe we live in: “authority over kings, governments, earthquakes and gravity. A first-century listener could not have heard [Jesus’ words] without being challenged by the radical political and social implications of his

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<sup>169</sup> Beth Prim Howell, *Lady on a Donkey* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1960), 76.

<sup>170</sup> “Dr. Mark Buntain, Founder, Mission of Mercy,” ZoomInfo, (2013):1, <http://www.zoominfo.com/p/Mark-Buntain/82916209> (accessed June 26, 2013).

<sup>171</sup> Dearborn, 46.

teaching.”<sup>172</sup> As believers in Christ, we need to reply to challenges in each of these realms with the authority God has given us as his children.

Whenever a natural disaster strikes anywhere in the world, some of the first responders are from the United States. Americans citizens should be applauded for their readiness to assist the needy. Our presuppositions about living as a world inhabitant contain generosity to charities and philanthropic organizations.<sup>173</sup> Providing relief in the wake of a tsunami or tornado is sometimes an excellent opening for an STM. It is hoped that in “carry[ing] each other’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2), those touched with compassion will be able “to see the God who in his great kindness bears our sin and sorrow.”<sup>174</sup>

There are many pitfalls to be aware of on both sides of the equation in the rush to aid victims of natural disasters, as well as those who live in poverty every day of their lives. “Most STM groups are only vaguely aware that they [may be] traveling to a socioeconomic context where more than half the population struggles to live on less than \$2 a day and 20 [percent] live on less than \$1 a day.”<sup>175</sup> With Washington state’s latest minimum wage hike to \$9.19 per hour,<sup>176</sup> that means that a teenaged employee flipping burgers at a fast-food restaurant for eight hours a day during his/her summer job in the Pacific Northwest makes *37 times as much* before taxes as a day laborer in most of the developing world! While volunteerism through STM is “bringing together cash-strapped charities and non-governmental organizations with affluent

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<sup>172</sup> Dearborn, 44.

<sup>173</sup> Schwartz, 29.

<sup>174</sup> Dearborn, 58.

<sup>175</sup> Farrell, 80.

<sup>176</sup> Lynette Holloway, “10 States to Increase Minimum Wage in 2013,” *The Root* (January 1, 2013): 1, <http://www.theroot.com/buzz/10-states-increase-minimum-wage-2013> (accessed March 11, 2013).



[Westerners] who want more than a standard vacation,”<sup>177</sup> it takes abundant sensitivity to cross that kind of socioeconomic chasm without causing either great offense or considerable damage.

The average STM participants are stunned by the apparent insufficiency found in the countries they visit. In comparison, North Americans are some of the most wasteful users of the earth’s resources. Within our borders five percent of the entire world’s population consumes 24 percent of its energy. Every day Americans eat 200 billion more calories than necessary—enough to feed 80 million additional people—and an additional 200,000 *tons* of edible food are tossed in the garbage daily. The average American uses more than six times as much water each day as over half of the world’s population has access to.<sup>178</sup> It is no wonder that short-termers from the USA are shocked at the way the rest of the world lives.

“Materially poor are trapped by multiple, interconnected factors—insufficient assets, vulnerability, powerlessness, isolation, and physical weakness—that ensnare them like bugs caught in a spider’s web.”<sup>179</sup> The challenge of STM teams is often to resist taking control of a situation of which they know little, especially when they have limited time to work, and the local people are not moving quickly enough to accomplish what the team feels it needs to make happen within their trip’s time frame.<sup>180</sup> The concern of the team “must not result in doing for others what they can and should do for themselves.”<sup>181</sup> Low-income communities are usually

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<sup>177</sup> Charles A. Cook, “Short-Term Missions and the Law: Lessons from Canada,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 378.

<sup>178</sup> Paul Ehrlich, “Consumption by the United States,” *Mindfully.org*: 1, <http://www.mindfully.org/Sustainability/Americans-Consume-24percent.htm> (accessed March 13, 2013).

<sup>179</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 1044.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, location 1737.

<sup>181</sup> Schwartz, 32.

capable of planning, managing and directing enterprises in their area,<sup>182</sup> and they frequently are situated “in the midst of resources which are adequate, not only for themselves, but for the work God is calling them to do.”<sup>183</sup>

The type of cooperation needed between teams and their host churches requires more advance planning than STM leaders may be used to doing, but the outcome of the project will be much more likely to succeed. Instead of overshadowing the hosts with resources and America’s culture of power, the team needs to be reminded that Jesus told his disciples to sit in the lowest place (Luke 14:8–10) and demonstrated an attitude of service by washing his disciples’ feet (John 13:4–17).<sup>184</sup> In that same sense of humility outsiders cannot come into an unknown culture and situation, size it up with Western eyes, and immediately instigate the righting of wrongs about which they have no idea. “The best way to know what people need is to ask them. The best way to know them is to live among them and be in relationship with them.”<sup>185</sup> STM trips to assist the materially poor rarely produce long-term benefits unless performed in close proximity with those who live on location—long-term missionaries and established national churches and organizations—that have firm connections with the people who are assisted by the project.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 1737.

<sup>183</sup> Schwartz, 30.

<sup>184</sup> Edwin Zehner, “On the Rhetoric of Short-Term Missions Appeals, with Some Practical Suggestions for Team Leaders,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest, 197 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008).

<sup>185</sup> Butrin, location 298.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, location 304.

In *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself*, authors Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert<sup>187</sup> spell out several methods of engaging STM recipients in conversation in order to ascertain that the aid given is what is actually needed in that situation. It is highly recommended that the leaders of STM teams read this book in preparation for their journey.

- ❖ Asset-based community development emphasizes the gifts that the community already has which can be put into use in making improvements in their area.<sup>188</sup>
- ❖ Asset mapping (inventorying) uses the interview method to catalogue the assets of the community.<sup>189</sup>
- ❖ Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) employs “group exercises to engage and energize community members in thinking about their community’s history, assets, survival strategies, and goals.”<sup>190</sup>
- ❖ Appreciative Inquiry (AI) emphasizes the positive aspects of an area’s former days in order to generate a more productive time in the future.<sup>191</sup>

Durable and profound transformation is time consuming; involving the receiving community in the planning process takes a great deal of time. However, “if donors do not want

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<sup>187</sup> Brian Fikkert is a Professor of Economics and Community Development and the founder and Executive Director of the Chalmers Center for Economic Development at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia. Steve Corbett is an Assistant Professor of Community Development at Covenant College and is also associated with the Chalmers Center.

<sup>188</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 1816.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, location 1940.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, location 1976.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, location 1904.

the equipment to rust in the fields [because it is not what the community really needs or wants], they are going to have to accept a slower process.”<sup>192</sup>

The best STM experiences are those with “clear objectives and aims” which are jointly planned by the hosts and the team leaders and include the participation of visitors who work alongside nationals.<sup>193</sup> “The goal is for the work to be done primarily by the community members with the team in a helping role.”<sup>194</sup> A project that has the likelihood of being enthusiastically received and sustained by the indigenous people is one in which “they have been full participants . . . from the very beginning.”<sup>195</sup>

### Raising the Bar

Every initiative undertaken by the church needs to be done for a purpose, with set objectives to be accomplished. A program that continues year after year because “it has always been done that way before” will not achieve its anticipated aim; it is simply another event on the calendar. In the same way, the intended goals for STM experiences must be prayed over and considered long before the location, project, and personnel are chosen. Without foresight and planning the trip will not bring about the desired cross-cultural outreach, accomplishment of a chosen undertaking, and transformation among the participants that the pastor and mission committee leadership hope for.

For a church that does annual STM trips, Wilder and Parker recommend considering the journeys to be a type of discipleship program. In team training meetings, participants should be

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<sup>192</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 2182.

<sup>193</sup> Maslucán, 146.

<sup>194</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 2529.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, location 2087.

taught that all phases of the STM experience—laying the groundwork, sending the team, and returning to the home culture—are *pieces* of a program that God is using to mold both participants and the group that is the ministry focus. The missions trip is not an occasional, insulated escape from normal life.<sup>196</sup> Rather than thinking of STM experiences as “frivolous, optional programs requiring no risk, major sacrifice or strong sense of call,”<sup>197</sup> teams should be challenged with the fact that Jesus told his disciples, “Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38, TNIV).

In *Beyond Duty: A Passion for Christ, a Heart for Mission*, Tim Dearborn<sup>198</sup> repeatedly emphasizes the fact that a calling to mission is not a calling to a task, but to the Person of Jesus Christ.<sup>199</sup> To presume to make mission the *purpose* of the church is a form of idolatry, focusing on the productivity of our own effort and measuring our worth by our achievements and disappointments.<sup>200</sup> The church can “become weary in doing good” (Galatians 6:9) if its members feel that God has given them mission as a duty. “It is not the church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a church in the world.”<sup>201</sup> Only God is able to transform lives. Furthermore, the congregation’s concern for mission will not be piqued enough to involve them in outreach by hearing about deplorable circumstances in the developing world or with attempts to influence their emotions through the telling of shocking stories. It is

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<sup>196</sup> Wilder and Parker, 201.

<sup>197</sup> Stiles and Stiles, 55.

<sup>198</sup> Tim Dearborn serves as Director of Faith and Development Programs for World Vision International.

<sup>199</sup> Dearborn, 4.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, 2.

only through a growing hunger for Jesus Christ, “so that the passions of his heart become the passions that propel our hearts,”<sup>202</sup> that an intense desire to become involved in missions is birthed.

Gibson cites several benefits of STM ventures that he has personally witnessed in his own congregation. First, the participants grasp a global perspective of the sovereign work of God in their place of ministry when they realize the Lord was present in the community drawing people to himself long before their arrival.<sup>203</sup> Second, the participants find “an expanded attitude of gratitude”<sup>204</sup> when they realize how blessed they are. Third, many short-termers who work side by side with those from another culture while overseas become willing participants in intercultural outreach in their own communities after returning home.<sup>205</sup> Fourth, the faith of STM participants is stretched and strengthened as they witness God’s provision for needed funds.<sup>206</sup> Fifth, both financial and prayer support for long-term missionaries increases among those who have been on the mission field and seen the needs and work firsthand.<sup>207</sup>

In the next pages, I would like to emphasize three frequently cited paybacks resulting from STM experiences: an increased burden for the lost, an improved focus on prayer for missionaries and the places in need of adequate gospel witness, and better support of the church’s missionary endeavors—both long-term and short-term.

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<sup>202</sup> Dearborn, 4.

<sup>203</sup> Gibson, 25.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

## Burden for the Lost

In his monograph, *Apostolic Function in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Missions*, Alan R. Johnson<sup>208</sup> writes of the tragedy of missions' unbalanced focus on churched areas while 40 percent of the world's population has no near-neighbor witness.<sup>209</sup> By definition short-termers do not have either the experience or the time available to reach the 1.8 billion people who are living in areas where there is no possibility of obtaining an adequate witness of the gospel.<sup>210</sup> Unreached people groups (UPGs) exist for several reasons: they are hard to reach geographically, it is difficult to cross the cultural and/or political boundaries that have set them apart, and/or they have isolated themselves through their religious practices.<sup>211</sup> Because of UPGs' inaccessibility, "our million-plus North American short-termers minister not among the unreached, but among the reached, where the church already exists."<sup>212</sup>

For these reasons and others—such as the language barrier—STM experiences frequently focus on humanitarian needs in tandem with the local church, which focuses more closely on the aspect of evangelistic outreach. Social outreach is an integral part of spreading the Good News because "there is an identifiable correlation between degrees of human poverty and disease, and

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<sup>208</sup> Alan R. Johnson is a long-term AGWM missionary to Thailand from the NWMN and a respected missiologist.

<sup>209</sup> Alan R. Johnson, 29–30.

<sup>210</sup> McQuilkin, 41.

<sup>211</sup> Bill Shaw, interview by author, Port Orchard, WA, March 13, 2013.

<sup>212</sup> McQuilkin, 41.

the areas of the earth historically least affected by the power of the gospel.”<sup>213</sup> The millennial generation, which has come of age in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,<sup>214</sup> is perhaps the age group that is most interested in meeting physical needs through hands-on ministry. Since the beginning of this century, the percentage of STM teams working with relief, development, and educational agencies have exceeded those involved in evangelism.<sup>215</sup> However, the church must remember in this postmodern age not to forget that the center of the gospel message is the gift of God’s Son, “that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). The purpose of pouring out love to others through STM is not just to make the lives of the materially poor temporally better, but also to liberate offenders from everlasting punishment in the lake of fire.<sup>216</sup>

Promoters of frontier mission activities among unreached people groups cautiously state that other types of missionary work are valuable and important, yet those remarks are quickly overcome by persuasive rhetoric about the most serious need—touching those beyond the reach of the gospel.<sup>217</sup> Unfortunately this thrust has produced a “short-term viewpoint with a limited focus that discourages looking at the broader issues of developing vibrant churches.”<sup>218</sup> Alan R. Johnson suggests that missionaries’ work not duplicate the efforts of local believers, but rather

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<sup>213</sup> Daniel W. O’Neill, M.D., “Short-Term Medical Missions: A Practitioner’s Perspective on Effective Strategies,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 303–304.

<sup>214</sup> Margaret Rouse, “Millennials, Millennial Generation,” *WhatIs.com* (March, 2011): 1, <http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/millennials-millennial-generation> (accessed March 13, 2013).

<sup>215</sup> A. Scott Moreau, “Short-Term Missions in the Context of Missions, Inc.,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 16.

<sup>216</sup> McQuilkin, 42.

<sup>217</sup> Alan R. Johnson, 159

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*



concentrate on a task that enables local Christians and churches to participate together in God’s worldwide mission.<sup>219</sup>

“If one truly grasps the message of ‘whole gospel,’ it doesn’t seem necessary to use the word *priority* when speaking of evangelism and social outreach. It doesn’t seem that Jesus was doing an either/or ministry but rather a both/and, at the same time. ‘Your sins are forgiven . . . Get up and walk’ (Matthew 9:5).”<sup>220</sup> While it is not required that spiritual outreach and the meeting of physical needs be accomplished in conjunction with each other, in the fundamentals of mission the presentation of the gospel has consequences for society as people are called to turn away from their old lifestyles and show agapé love for others. Furthermore missionaries’ contributions toward righting the wrongs of society have evangelistic import as they testify of Jesus’ amazing grace.<sup>221</sup>

### Prayer

A comprehensive survey of past STM participants by Short-Term Evangelical Missions (STEM) Ministries reveals a substantial increase in targeted “prayer for missions and world evangelization” from an average of 6–10 minutes per week to 11–30 minutes.<sup>222</sup> During a missions trip participants’ lives are interwoven with a missionary family’s life and ministry, albeit briefly. They are able to experience the challenges and struggles of living cross-culturally, possibly in an under-developed part of the world. They become acquainted with some of the local people—within the church and outside it—and they hear of their life stories and trials. This

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<sup>219</sup> Alan R. Johnson, 36.

<sup>220</sup> Butrin, location 144 (*italics mine*).

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, location 168.

<sup>222</sup> Peterson and Peterson, 7.

condensed mission experience cannot help but change the short-termers' perspective and priorities, frequently giving them an increased burden to pray for the missionaries with whom they worked and the people with whom they interacted while abroad.

It is difficult to pray over a set of statistics. However, missionaries with whom believers at home have a relationship often “serve as a conduit of people’s prayer for a particular part of the world—drawing . . . attention to the conflict between the kingdoms of light and darkness in that region.”<sup>223</sup> Missionaries who frequently host STM teams have a greater number of advocates for their ministries, and prayer for these cross-cultural workers and their tasks in nations throughout the world are fervently lifted to the Lord by those who have briefly labored beside them.<sup>224</sup> Even in closed countries, where open proclamation of the Good News is illegal, prayer still makes inroads.<sup>225</sup> Every believer can adopt a specific nation in prayer, with the additional possibilities of supporting outreach endeavors in that location and/or working there on a short- or long-term basis.<sup>226</sup>

A congregation’s involvement in STM can be an excellent opportunity to teach believers how to pray more effectively. As teams prepare for ministry abroad, Pastor Mike Gibson recommends that each member recruits a group of individuals to pray for them as they travel and minister. While the church’s loved ones are away, “the prayer life of the congregation increases . . . The larger the prayer team, the greater the impact.”<sup>227</sup> The team members can also be taught

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<sup>223</sup> Dearborn, 81–82.

<sup>224</sup> Gibson, 27.

<sup>225</sup> Dearborn, 25.

<sup>226</sup> Boehme, 77.

<sup>227</sup> Gibson, 26.

to pray more effectively. This is especially important for young people who participate in STM. In group discussion about the injustices team members see around them, there are no definitive answers that can be incorporated in such a short period of time. But the young adult can be taught “how to assess, react and pray in light of such profound discoveries.”<sup>228</sup>

The *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual* reminds participants that God’s work is accomplished through prayer, and it is necessary to have “open communication with God . . . before trying to work for Him.”<sup>229</sup> STM can be one of the most enriching experiences in a person’s life “if bathed in daily communion with the Lord in prayer and Bible study.”<sup>230</sup>

Dearborn echoes the above when he emphasizes that prayer is not groundwork for combat; it *is* combat and our chief supply of strength.<sup>231</sup> Prayer is not a ritualistic exercise but a means of bringing our convictions to the Lord to obtain his guidance in how to apply the scriptural insights He has given us to a particular location.<sup>232</sup>

### Giving

While many pastors enthusiastically commend STM as one means of increasing missions giving from their congregants who participate, several of my sources point out that greater giving is not necessarily a benefit of STM. Hunter Farrell<sup>233</sup> states, “Participation in STM does not increase participants’ financial support of missions, does not decrease their materialism, and is as

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<sup>228</sup> Blomberg, 606.

<sup>229</sup> Rick Johnson, *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months*, 6.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Dearborn, 82.

<sup>232</sup> Alan R. Johnson, 48.

<sup>233</sup> Hunter Farrell is the Director of Presbyterian World Mission in Louisville, Kentucky.

likely to increase participants' ethnocentrism as it is to decrease it."<sup>234</sup> Roger Peterson of STEM Ministries finds no correlation between the quantity of short-termers sent out by STEM and contributions to the agency.<sup>235</sup>

Robert Priest and Kurt Ver Beek<sup>236</sup> recognized that many survey findings that cite increased prayer and financial support of missions following an STM are subject to the halo effect,<sup>237</sup> in which people believe and say they are doing more than they actually are.<sup>238</sup> Livermore calls this outlook through rose-colored glasses "idealistic distortion."<sup>239</sup> Participants who assert that their lives were transformed are actually speaking of altered awareness, approaches, and sensitivities, rather than a transformation of their conduct.<sup>240</sup>

In one particular study of Kentucky Baptist STM participants, a dissertation for Asbury Theological Seminary stated that giving to missions by STM participants had increased 90 percent over the years 1980–1992. However, when the numbers were adjusted for inflation, it was found that giving to missions by the surveyed short-termers actually increased by only 11

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<sup>234</sup> Farrell, 71.

<sup>235</sup> Robert Priest and Kurt Ver Beek, "Are Short-Term Missions Good Stewardship?" *Christianity Today* 49 (July 5, 2005, Web-only): 2, [http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/july\\_web-only/22.0.html?start=1](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/july_web-only/22.0.html?start=1) (accessed May 26, 2012).

<sup>236</sup> Robert J. Priest is Professor of International Studies, Mission and Anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and Kurt Ver Beek is Professor of Sociology at Calvin College.

<sup>237</sup> Barnes and Lowry, 1.

<sup>238</sup> Priest and Ver Beek, 2.

<sup>239</sup> Livermore, 188.

<sup>240</sup> Richardson, 549.

percent. Considering that some of those funds were used to pay for additional STM trips, there was a barely perceptible bump in giving.<sup>241</sup>

According to Dearborn, it is the personal connection that makes a difference in giving to missions. People are more likely to respond to real people's needs, not just statistics about world problems.<sup>242</sup> Despite the previously stated lack of connection between former STM participants with STEM Ministries and giving by them to the same organization, STEM's 1991 survey indicates that following a missions trip, participants' giving to missions doubled. Four times as many participants give "sacrificially" and systematically to missions after taking part in a short-term mission experience. Participants' enlarged donations may actually become stronger over time, rather than declining following the emotional high of the STM venture.<sup>243</sup> Pastor Tom Steller of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis agrees, stating that STM widens "the pool of informed missions supporters" by including both returning team members and their "support networks."<sup>244</sup> Hurst and Eaton feel that investing in STM will pay off in the future through discipling an internationally-informed believer; money contributed for a missions trip at this moment almost certainly reproduces later as the STM volunteer grows into a mission sponsor.<sup>245</sup>

Giving by team members while they are on the field is another area of concern. Team members should be cautioned about giving to every beggar and wide-eyed pleading child they meet on the streets. It is wiser to invest in the local economy by purchasing items in the local

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<sup>241</sup> Tommy Purvis, "Partnership in Cross-Cultural Mission: The Impact of Kentucky Baptist Short-Term Volunteer Mission" (D. Min. project, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1993). Quoted in Richardson, 549.

<sup>242</sup> Dearborn, 20.

<sup>243</sup> Peterson and Peterson, 11–12 and 23.

<sup>244</sup> Guthrie, 89.

<sup>245</sup> Hurst and Eaton, 83.

markets or to give extra funds through the missionary representative or local church's benevolence fund, so those on the ground can ascertain that it is distributed to verifiable needs.<sup>246</sup> The host church is generally pleased with resources and project monies left behind by the STM team because they "greatly benefit their ministries."<sup>247</sup>

Even so, several authors caution teams to give wisely. North Americans cannot assume that their gifts—which may be inappropriate for the culture and infrastructure—will always be welcome. Palomino advises participants to be careful to not give in a "patronizing manner" in which the assets may be dispersed illogically and naïvely.<sup>248</sup> The wisest use of funds is to donate in such a means that local organizations are reinforced and the poor are empowered.<sup>249</sup> Capricious donations given to simply gather an audience can result in making "rice Christians"—those who become church members for personal gain—instead of discipling true believers.

### **What Does STM Do Well?**

Miguel Ángel Palomino believes that the place where short-termers achieve the best results is when disaster strikes. In those situations where immediate relief is needed, STM teams can help construct emergency housing, care for orphans, and give urgently needed medical

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<sup>246</sup> Samuel Melo, "What I Wish Every Team Knew before Coming: A Field Representative's Perspective," in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 130.

<sup>247</sup> Chris Eaton and Kim Hurst, *Vacations with a Purpose: A Planning Handbook for Your Short-Term Missions Team, Leader's Manual* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1993), 38.

<sup>248</sup> Palomino, 221.

<sup>249</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 1934.

treatment. Interestingly, Christians have been doing those sorts of projects all along, but it is only in recent years that they have come to be called “short-term missions.”<sup>250</sup>

Investing in lasting friendships while on the mission field is far more important than completing a particular project. The MAPS orientation manual advises its volunteers not to allow cultural and language barriers to prevent this from happening. Smiles and a pantomime can often convey as much meaning as words. Working and playing together is an excellent means of developing fellowship.<sup>251</sup> Laboring in tandem with fellow believers in both skilled and unskilled tasks improves one’s ability to serve.<sup>252</sup> While practical proficiency may be necessary at certain points in a project, most construction should be completed side by side with local workers. It is much simpler for an experienced contractor to put up a structure with a familiar crew using his mother tongue to communicate, but toiling together with local workers in brotherly love is the only means of really ministering to national sisters and brothers as a construction team.<sup>253</sup>

STM represents “an awesome opportunity to help large numbers of ethnocentric North Americans develop global awareness” about many of today’s pressing international issues.<sup>254</sup> The trips foster improved ethnic understanding, spiritual profundity, and “greater commitment to the cause of world missions” and give the teams’ home churches a direct tie with the mission field.<sup>255</sup> Raising the funds for the trip stretches the participants’ faith,<sup>256</sup> and the journeys, which

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<sup>250</sup> Palomino, 215–216.

<sup>251</sup> Rick Johnson, *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months*, 5.

<sup>252</sup> Livermore, 96.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 149. My husband and I viewed this while hosting construction teams in both Ghana and Chad.

<sup>254</sup> Priest and Priest, 67.

<sup>255</sup> Zehner, “Short-Term Missions: Toward a More Field-Oriented Model,” 510.

“can be effective and intentional tools for the faith formation of young adults,”<sup>257</sup> are a wonderful opportunity to disciple those who participate.<sup>258</sup> The church is more likely to retain young people who focus on outreach, serving others, benevolence, and cross-cultural missions throughout their university years.<sup>259</sup>

Through an extensive survey of Bible college and seminary students, Priest and Priest discovered that STM has several advantages over study abroad programs. Two thirds of those who participate in semesters abroad are young ladies, but in STM men and women are equally represented.<sup>260</sup> Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Caucasians all participate in STM at nearly the same level (slightly over half of those surveyed), and 29 percent of African American students also join in. This is a much higher level of involvement than for study abroad programs, in which only one percent of all students can afford to participate.<sup>261</sup> Since STM participants are “funded by a broader Christian community in systems of pooled support” most student partakers pay less than a quarter of their expenses on the trip.<sup>262</sup>

STM teams are able to provide large pools of volunteers for a huge event, such as evangelization at the World Cup or the Olympic Games.<sup>263</sup> In restricted access nations, STM personnel can blend in easily with long-term “tent-making” staff members. They are able to take

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<sup>256</sup> Gibson, 27.

<sup>257</sup> Blomberg, 598.

<sup>258</sup> Wilder and Parker, 208.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid, 221.

<sup>260</sup> Priest and Priest, 55.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, 57–58.

<sup>263</sup> Wan and Hartt, 67.



part in “prayer walks, friendship evangelism, English teaching, organizational support, hospitality, conference administration, and evangelism at public events where the long-term missionaries cannot be seen.”<sup>264</sup> Getting involved in hands-on intercultural ministry in this manner appeals to the postmodern generation, whose members would rather experience mission for themselves than simply be told about it.<sup>265</sup>

### **What Does STM Do Poorly?**

More than a quarter of the world’s population (1.8 billion people) live outside the reach of Christian witness, and it is nearly impossible for these unreached people groups to be touched by short-term personnel. Ironically, the textbook used in YWAM’s widely taught *Perspectives* course teaches that STM is most valuable when it works in tandem with a long-term organization. This permits evaluation and follow-up to take place, and the fruit of the team’s labor to be conserved and directed. When a local church attempts to penetrate a UPG in a short-term manner, their labor predictably misses the mark.<sup>266</sup> Since teams are extremely limited in language skills and cultural familiarity, STM is an artificially designed experience, which necessitates the use of a locally-based liaison that does have the desired expertise—usually a long-term missionary.<sup>267</sup>

Concerns reported by national churches who hosted teams in Africa and Latin America include lack of appropriate cultural orientation before the team’s arrival, inability to follow up on

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<sup>264</sup> Wan and Hartt, 94–95.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>266</sup> Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 731.

<sup>267</sup> Alan R. Johnson, 19.

evangelism adequately due to lack of time, more time spent with other team members than with the local people, the displacement of indigenous workers and professionals by short-termers, and economic dependency that can develop through repeated short-term visits to the same location.<sup>268</sup> STM answers to “the interests and aspirations . . . of those who grant funds. Locals do not feel at liberty to hold them accountable,” even when the initiatives do not reflect the needs of the local church.<sup>269</sup> For example, a 2005 Peruvian field survey exposed the fact that STM projects were primarily unilateral, planned by sponsoring organizations which function outside the nations they serve, that do not consider the conditions, expectations, or the wishes of the local community.<sup>270</sup>

Disciple development in a cross-cultural setting takes time and effort, and Jesus commands his followers to form disciples, not to simply make converts.<sup>271</sup> Alan R. Johnson communicates clearly that “the greater the sociocultural distance between the Gospel messenger and the listener, the more difficult and complex the task” of discipleship is.<sup>272</sup> The greatest difficulty resulting from local churches that choose to bypass mission organizations and send their own short-termers into the field is a limited knowledge of cross-cultural complexities which may result in unproductive ministry and can cause expensive errors in creative access locations.<sup>273</sup> By definition, STM implies quick results. While short-term ministry abroad is

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<sup>268</sup> Zehner, “Short-Term Missions: Toward a More Field-Oriented Model,” 510–511.

<sup>269</sup> Landa, 110.

<sup>270</sup> Vélchez-Blancas, 171.

<sup>271</sup> Arroyo Bahamonde, 232.

<sup>272</sup> Alan R. Johnson, 115.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 159–160.

effectively used for certain projects, “bang for the buck thinking does not work in the pioneer settings that remain in our world”<sup>274</sup> because a preliminary infiltration by the gospel message is insufficient. Neglecting a young and inexperienced church movement can easily lead to its demise.<sup>275</sup>

Nine months of field experience are necessary before the cross-cultural worker starts to realize just how much effort and prayer are necessary “to bear fruit . . . that will last” (John 15:16).<sup>276</sup> Relationship building is one of the primary tools used in discipleship, and in some countries trust is acquired through a lengthy process. For example, in an Asian setting forming genuine friendships can take up to 10 years, and maturity is respected more than youthfulness.<sup>277</sup>

My language professor in Albertville, France, explained to his stumbling students that we should not expect to be fluent French speakers by the conclusion of our studies. It takes one to two years to learn the basics of a new language, not including the nuances, gestures, and idioms that enrich communication in another culture. Francisco Cerrón<sup>278</sup> noted from his experience in hosting STM teams that lack of language skill is the chief hindrance to communication between team members and Peruvians. In his opinion, either a basic language course should be undertaken by STM participants or missions trips should be restricted to Christians who speak the local language of their ministry location.<sup>279</sup> The language difficulties cannot be entirely

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<sup>274</sup> Alan R. Johnson, 222.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>276</sup> Smith, 55.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>278</sup> Francisco Cerrón is the Director of the Alliance Bible Seminary in Peru.

<sup>279</sup> Cerrón, 25.

remedied by the utilization of national interpreters because their language skills in English may not be adequate, and the cultural value of community friendships may take priority over the task at hand. Joaquín Alegre Villón<sup>280</sup> noted that the worst problem during a major outreach in Callao, Peru, was indifference and intermingling of the local interpreters with each other, which diverted their attention and decelerated the efforts of all.<sup>281</sup>

Another pastor from Latin America lamented the lack of witnessing ability among STM team members: “When young people from the United States come, we allow them to do everything except go out to the streets to witness. They don’t have a clue how to do it, but we do.”<sup>282</sup> For this reason it would be wise to include a basic evangelism course in STM orientation.

From the perspective of national believers, it is not always easy to collaborate with STM teams. An African acquaintance of Miriam Adeney<sup>283</sup> once told her a parable, which he indicated was a metaphor for working with STM teams. Two animals who were good friends—Elephant and Mouse—decided to host a celebration one day. They prepared refreshments and invited all their animal friends. Everyone ate, drank, and danced together, and the most exuberant partygoer of all was Elephant. When the soiree concluded and the guests had departed Elephant enthused, “Mouse, did you ever go to a better party? What a celebration!” But there was no reply from Mouse. Elephant found his unfortunate friend at his feet squashed flat in one of his own footprints! The African raconteur concluded his tale by comparing dancing with an elephant to

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<sup>280</sup> Joaquín Alegre Villón serves as lead pastor of Iglesia Alianza Cristiana y Misionera del Callao in Peru.

<sup>281</sup> Alegre Villón, 135.

<sup>282</sup> Palomino, 221.

<sup>283</sup> Miriam Adeney is an internationally known author, speaker, and instructor who holds teaching positions at Seattle Pacific University, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Regent College and visiting professorships in several colleges around the world. In addition, she serves as a mentor to Christian authors in Asia and Latin America.

working with some STM teams from America.<sup>284</sup> It is easy for an enthusiastic collaborator with comparatively huge resources to completely overwhelm partners in mission in the majority world.

“One of the reasons that STM teams sometimes dance like Elephant is that the teams are unaware of what happens when cultures collide.”<sup>285</sup> There is already a heightened tension between traditional values and modern ones, as well as a generation gap in many cultures. The visit of a group of foreigners may aggravate intergenerational pressures. In hosting teams it is the hospitable indigenous people and their society—not the outsiders—who feel they must make adjustments.<sup>286</sup>

Most Westerners have been raised with an innate sense of cultural hegemony—a deep-rooted sense of supremacy and a feeling that they are able to accomplish tasks better than people in developing countries. It is no wonder that those in other nations sometimes think of US citizens as “ugly Americans” when a feeling of dominance has been implanted in our psyche since the day we began communicating in English.<sup>287</sup> Perhaps it is because of that upbringing that it is sometimes so difficult to convince short-termers of appropriate comportment and dress within another culture. Immature behavior, absence of cultural understanding, immodest clothing, unsuitable conduct, and public displays of affection can embarrass both the nationals with whom the team works and the long-term missionaries who host the team.<sup>288</sup> Short-termers’

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<sup>284</sup> Adeney, 132.

<sup>285</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 2330.

<sup>286</sup> Slimbach, 171.

<sup>287</sup> Schwartz, 30.

<sup>288</sup> Smith, 48–49.

inappropriate actions will frequently not be corrected because local pastors do not want to jeopardize the team's financial assistance with the project.<sup>289</sup>

Perhaps the worst example of a team's refusal to follow their long-term hosts' instructions took place in Afghanistan in 2006. A group of short-termers from South Korea were told that their activities needed to be "under the radar;" there was to be only friendship evangelism and absolutely no distribution of literature. Instead of following their hosts' instructions, team members threw tracts over compound walls into private residences and held open-air crusades. The team ruffled so many feathers that its members were deported. The following year, another Korean team suffered the consequences of their predecessors' lack of propriety when 23 team members were kidnapped by the Taliban and held for 42 days. The Korean government negotiated directly with the terrorists and paid handsomely for their citizens' freedom, thereby painting a large target on the backs of future teams who work in the Muslim world.<sup>290</sup> "Taliban spokesman Yousef Ahmadi informed the Associated Press that the Taliban would ' . . . *do the same thing with the other allies in Afghanistan, because we found this way to be successful.*'"<sup>291</sup>

Compassion for those in need is frequently the motivating factor for organizing short-term workers, and a natural disaster usually leads to an outpouring of aid for the devastated area. However, teams that are not actually attached to a relief organization should avoid rushing to the cataclysmic scene. If the team does not have specific duties assigned, they have to search for somewhere to serve, often hindering genuine relief endeavors. Since housing and food is often

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<sup>289</sup> Zehner, "Short-Term Missions: Toward a More Field-Oriented Model," 511.

<sup>290</sup> Miriam Adeney, *Kingdom without Borders: The Untold Story of Global Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 265–266.

<sup>291</sup> Cook, 371 (emphasis in original).

scarce in areas where a typhoon, earthquake, or tsunami has wiped out assets, nonessential helpers often absorb resources needed by inhabitants and emergency personnel.<sup>292</sup>

### **What Can Be Improved?**

Authors of articles in an issue of *Journal of Latin American Theology* devoted specifically to studying STM within its local context (volume 2, number 2, 2007) came to a consensus concerning the necessity of joint planning on the part of the team's leader and the host church. In the past, STM participants have frequently arrived on the field with their own ideas of what they would like to accomplish during their stay and have taken slight interest in the desires and needs of the local congregation and its community.<sup>293</sup> Visitors often unconsciously become "owners" of the ventures that occupy their time on the STM trip because when the nationals are not intimately involved in a project from its inception to its completion, they will not take responsibility for it once the team departs.<sup>294</sup>

"The further we are from serious planning and coordination with local churches, the greater the risk of investing millions of dollars in 'religious tourism' that could well be used in more effective ways for establishing the Kingdom."<sup>295</sup> Without joint planning efforts an STM's project can easily become "irrelevant and costly."<sup>296</sup> In fact, the best way to guarantee that the locals take ownership is to allow the national church to lead and form the project, inviting short-

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<sup>292</sup> Butrin, location 600.

<sup>293</sup> Mashucán, 141.

<sup>294</sup> Schwartz, 30.

<sup>295</sup> Cerrón, 31.

<sup>296</sup> Livermore, 94.

termers for their involvement instead of incidentally becoming hosts of a team that brings its own agenda.<sup>297</sup>

Short-termers, such as MAPS workers, are requested to be both learners and servants, to be good listeners, and to ask for assistance when needed. Unfamiliarity does not indicate that an idea or procedure is either inferior or wrong. Displaying the attitude of a servant shows openness and teachability, as opposed to being judgmental and closed-minded. It is the correct approach for building relationships.<sup>298</sup> There is wide agreement that the most important aspect of STM involvement is not the project the team wants to complete during its stay, but rather the relationships forged between the team members and the hosts, missionary and national alike.<sup>299</sup> Team members should be taught “to go as learners, not teachers (and especially not as shoppers). They . . . are going primarily to listen and learn.”<sup>300</sup> The *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual* teaches short-termers to *not* allow themselves to feel “at home.” Instead, they should watch closely and become accustomed to the local lifestyle.<sup>301</sup>

Perhaps humility is the most important attribute an STM volunteer can exhibit. When David humbled himself before the Lord his sins were forgiven, and God was able to use him once again. “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). If teams arrive in their host country with an overconfident spirit,

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<sup>297</sup> Livermore, 94.

<sup>298</sup> Rick Johnson, *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months*, 5.

<sup>299</sup> Martín Hartwig Eitsen, “Short-Term Missions: Latin American Perspective,” *Journal of Latin American Theology* 2, no. 2 (2007): 45 and 47, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.nu.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=4&sid=5bc62f1a-f4c4-4a4a-b0fb-695bfd7604e7%40sessionmgr4> (April 19, 2012).

<sup>300</sup> Schwartz, 33.

<sup>301</sup> Rick Johnson, *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months*, 7.



they may learn that superiority is not harmonious with the faith in Christ of which they testify.<sup>302</sup> It is true in other nations, as well as in America, that a co-worker is most willing to consent to another's ideas when he is also attentively listened to.<sup>303</sup> Active listening to the ideas of sisters and brothers in Christ shows that team members are able to pay attention, as well to give instructions.<sup>304</sup> Short-termers who travel as learners with a humble attitude may achieve more than advocates who feel they must leave a completed project behind at their departure.<sup>305</sup>

In his explanation of how to use cultural intelligence in cross-cultural settings, Livermore describes cultural intelligence as “being sensitive and appropriate with our actions and behavior as we engage in a new culture.”<sup>306</sup> An old adage may serve the short-termer well: “Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible that some people will ever read.” Though American Christians can be very casual in their choice of clothing and conduct, the *MAPS Volunteer Orientation Manual* cautions that “standards of dress” and behavior in other countries are frequently “more conservative than in the States.”<sup>307</sup> It is imperative to dress modestly in nations where decorum is important to the culture. The STM team needs to find out what that entails for the place where they will be working. For example, Egyptian woman must always wear high necks and dresses with sleeves, while in several other Muslim nations women are not allowed to wear trousers unless the seat is covered by a knee-length tunic.

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<sup>302</sup> Schwartz, 30.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Livermore, 154.

<sup>307</sup> Rick Johnson, *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months*, 7.

The manual also warns against consuming “alcoholic beverages . . . regardless of the social situation you may find yourself in.”<sup>308</sup> While social drinking may not be considered sinful among certain fragments of western Christendom, in many other countries it is often considered a sure sign of being outside the Kingdom. In the last country to which my husband and I were assigned, we saw both short- and long-term missionaries’ credibility dismissed by the locals for this exact indiscretion. “Therefore . . . make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister” (Romans 14:13b, TNIV).

Research shows “that a central factor in increasing the potential for STMs to have positive, long-run impacts on team members is for there to be a training process that includes pre-trip, on-the-field, and post-trip components.”<sup>309</sup> Preparation for an STM should include far more than making travel arrangements. David J. Moore found that the difficulties with STM are plentiful and diverse, but all the problems are connected in one way or another to laying an unproductive foundation for the journey.<sup>310</sup> Among my survey and interview subjects, the most frequently cited problem by participants, pastors, and missionaries alike was the issue of inadequate orientation—pre-field training meetings which include a thorough explanation of the local culture and values, along with the team’s schedule and a description of their responsibilities.

For instance, one thing STM participants should be taught is that it would improve communication greatly if they consciously slowed their rate of speech (instead of increasing the

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<sup>308</sup> Rick Johnson, *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months*, 7.

<sup>309</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 2563.

<sup>310</sup> Moore, viii.

volume) and carefully chose their conversation topics.<sup>311</sup> Cultural taboos that need to be avoided in certain parts of the world may include pointing and other gesticulations; talking with one's hands in pockets; showing the bottoms of one's feet; crossing the legs; patting a child on the head; using the left hand to gesture, pass food or water to someone, etc.

Inadequate debriefing following the STM is nearly as bad for the team member as insufficient preparation. Many leaders feel that their job is concluded once the team members have been collected at the home airport, but that is certainly not ideal. In a conversation with one Seattle pastor's wife, whose college-age daughters had both been on several overseas journeys, she conveyed the idea that when the trip concludes, it is definitely *not* over. Participants still have to process everything they have seen and experienced—both emotionally and spiritually—and that can take months. She advises that family members and team leaders be prepared to actively listen to participants after their return. It is frustrating to team members when others are not fully engaged in hearing the story of their journey.<sup>312</sup> “The motivation for successful transformation during this tension-resolution process is tied to the need to confront and resolve tension in thoughts, attitudes and/or actions through critical reflection.”<sup>313</sup>

Debriefing should begin on the field with individual assessments of the journey and a group meeting where each report is shared with co-workers. Dialog about improvements for future STM experiences should follow, with group composition of a final team assessment. “Prayer, worship, thanksgiving, confession and asking forgiveness” should conclude the

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<sup>311</sup> Moore, 158.

<sup>312</sup> Sue Berger, telephone interview with author, Seattle/Port Orchard, WA, October 22, 2011.

<sup>313</sup> Wilder and Parker, 127.

meeting, allowing each participant in the project—visitor, as well as national—to close the journey in peace, prepared to labor together in harmony for the enlargement of God’s family.<sup>314</sup>

### **Four Emergent Themes**

Reggie McNeal<sup>315</sup> calls this current time period the “age of Missional Renaissance.” Cross-cultural missions are in the process of undergoing a paradigm shift. This is a period when parishioners and individual churches are capable of doing what was formerly left up to church movements.<sup>316</sup> The phenomenon of using short-term workers for international outreach is still somewhat novel, and while much has been written about it, a comprehensive study has not yet been undertaken. It does seem, however, that the Lord of the Harvest has provided believers in some parts of the world with sufficient wealth to enable them to journey into materially poorer areas to aid the needy. A biblical example of the same type of assistance is found in Acts 11:27–30, when the Antioch church sent Saul, Barnabas, and a generous offering to believers in Jerusalem.<sup>317</sup>

Eliseo Vilchez-Blancas<sup>318</sup> considers STM to be one of the most substantial tools currently being used in evangelism to bring about world-wide revival.<sup>319</sup> Some short-termers simply endure 351 days of normal life for the two weeks spent on annual STM journeys. If they return to the same location each year, they are rewarded when they witness increased health and

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<sup>314</sup> Maslucán, 155–156.

<sup>315</sup> Reggie McNeal serves as Missional Leadership Specialist at the Dallas-based Leadership Network.

<sup>316</sup> Gibson, 24.

<sup>317</sup> Palomino, 213.

<sup>318</sup> Eliseo Vilchez-Blancas is a professor of Church History in Lima, Peru.

<sup>319</sup> Vilchez-Blancas, 167.

education in the community where they have concentrated their efforts.<sup>320</sup> STM trips can indeed be a highly effective tool if they are used strategically, wisely, and in loving friendship and cooperation with the team's host church.

Nevertheless, there are still some concerns voiced about STM. Eaton and Hurst see two very different prospects for the future of the phenomenon:

- 1) Thousands of teams attempting to find a “spiritual high,” overrunning and exploiting the poor of the world as they seek “adventure and vicarious fulfillment. The potential for damage could mitigate all the benefits.”<sup>321</sup>
- 2) Thousands of teams “functioning as the Body of Christ—building and bearing one another up. Teachability and servanthood would be the marks of the teams . . . equipped to interact with love and sacrifice toward their brothers and sisters abroad. The entire venture would lead the members to a deeper understanding of what it means to call oneself a follower of Jesus Christ in the age of the global village.”<sup>322</sup>

Every church and individual that participates in STM must be aware of potential problems with the movement. Travelers should make every effort to be humbly teachable and have the heart of a servant as they work together with sisters and brothers in the Lord, who live in another country. Relationships among team members and across ethnic lines can *both* be a challenge during STM.

The biggest problems in short-term missions are not technical or administrative. The biggest challenges lie in communication, misunderstanding, personality conflict, poor leadership, and bad teamwork . . . We learn the dos and don'ts about how to act when we go somewhere, yet it seems to make little difference in how we actually interact cross-culturally.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Kersten Bayt Priest, 272.

<sup>321</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 181.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Livermore, 14.

Within the scope of this literature review four themes concerning STM have emerged: forging relationships, making STM a joint effort, better stewardship of missions resources, and the need to focus on least evangelized people groups.

### Forging Relationships

First of all, the primary duty of STM workers is not the project they are tasked to accomplish, but rather forging relationships with the local people. God's mission is not dependent upon human plans and efforts. God is sovereign and will carry on his effort to liberate the world whether or not we add our own frenzied sense of urgency to the work.<sup>324</sup> With adequate training, the national church, which remains behind at the team's departure, is easily able to carry the project to its conclusion.<sup>325</sup>

Within the scope of these relationships, teams must be careful not to foster dependence with their giving. Nonbelievers who are presented with gifts or free medical care will listen to the message offered by the team but not from a desire to hear it. Instead they pay attention because they are interested in the "goodies," not the gospel, or because they feel that they must listen to the message to receive the benefits the team brings. When the team departs, these uncommitted and undisciplined followers will usually also leave the church.<sup>326</sup>

On the other hand, a first-generation church that is still learning how to rest on the Lord's promises and shine a light for its neighbors should not have a wealthy group of outsiders assume responsibility for what should be their local ministry. Instead of bringing relief to people who are

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<sup>324</sup> Livermore, 66.

<sup>325</sup> Maslucán, 148.

<sup>326</sup> Hartwig Eitzen, 39. Landa, 113.

*not* destitute, teams should be trained in rehabilitation and development efforts<sup>327</sup> in order to help the local people learn self-sufficiency and follow indigenous church principles.

#### Joint Effort

Second, an STM project should be undertaken only when desire and invitation have been expressed by the host church, and planning for the project should be a joint effort. To ask for input after setting things in motion is the paternalistic action of a colonialist. Without local involvement “we often end up doing irrelevant and costly work. Local ownership . . . means letting the local churches actually direct and shape what we do in our cross-cultural efforts.”<sup>328</sup>

#### Better Stewardship

Third, the Western churches need to be better stewards of the resources God has so graciously provided. It has been estimated by some that “as many as four million Americans take short-term missions trips out of the country annually; and American churches now spend as much on short-term missions trips as on long-term missionaries.”<sup>329</sup> At an average of \$2,500 per person, STM expenditures from the American Church alone add up to a whopping \$10 billion per year!<sup>330</sup> When projects do not result in lasting fruit in the lives of either participants or recipients, this is monumentally poor stewardship. Perhaps it would be better if participants were chosen more carefully than accepting the first several people who collect the required amount of

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<sup>327</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, locations 1605 and 2438 (*italics mine*).

<sup>328</sup> Livermore, 94.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>330</sup> Palomino, 211. Palomino’s approximation is that every STM participant spends \$2,500–\$3,000 on each missions trip. This figure is based on the lower end of the expense scale using Livermore’s estimate of 4 million American STM participants per year.

money for the trip. Not only should candidates be carefully screened to find the best team members, but in most cases teams should also be small (10 or fewer members).<sup>331</sup> Furthermore, instead of investing all the available funds during the brief duration of the STM, Livermore suggests spending an equivalent amount or more on the functioning of the local project as on the team's travel expenses.<sup>332</sup>

### Need to Focus on Least Evangelized People Groups

Lastly, it is apparent that the majority of STM trips (84 percent) take place in tandem with well-developed national churches instead of among the least-evangelized people groups of the earth, who receive only 3.5 percent of all STM teams.<sup>333</sup> If the primary purpose for outreach “should be that *God's glory be seen, that He be worshipped, and that these things take place among every people group on the earth,*”<sup>334</sup> then STM groups are largely ignoring those peoples who are most in need of the Good News. There are logical and logistical reasons for this disparity, but many more teams should make the effort to work among UPGs, whatever it takes to do so.

When William Carey arrived in India 220 years ago, the world contained only one Bible-believing Christian to every 49 unbelievers. Currently the ratio is a more hopeful one to nine, and most of that phenomenal church growth is taking place in the global south. However, in regarding “the sheer numbers of people” who have no near-neighbor witness and no chance to

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<sup>331</sup> Schwartz, 33.

<sup>332</sup> Livermore, 98.

<sup>333</sup> Priest and Priest, 65.

<sup>334</sup> Wilder and Parker, 16 (emphasis in original).



receive the Truth at this time (1.8 billion),<sup>335</sup> the undertaking appears desperate. Both these facts are necessary: The continuing responsibility is much larger now than it ever has been prior to today. However, the means and impetus to complete the Great Commission are also superior.<sup>336</sup> It is estimated that evangelistic outreach to the remaining UPGs will take another two to three generations, but discipling all the resultant new believers will take much longer<sup>337</sup> and require more than short-term efforts. Reaching UPGs must grow into a focused effort of the church in order for believers to “engage a people” and influence them to turn from darkness to the Lord of life. Simply “adopting a people group” is not enough to make lasting change.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> The Unreached, Café 10/40, [http://www.cafe1040.com/apply\\_theunreached.php](http://www.cafe1040.com/apply_theunreached.php) (accessed March 16, 2013).

<sup>336</sup> Guthrie, 70–71.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 192–193.

<sup>338</sup> Jonathan Morse, “In Their Own Language,” in *The Gospel Unhindered: Modern Missions and the Book of Acts*, ed. Doug Priest, Jr. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1994), 16.

### Chapter Three: METHODOLOGY

My project was based on phenomenological research, using an interpretive approach in order to better understand how individuals and groups comprehend and appreciate the occurrence of short-term missions. This research specifically related to the STM experience from three different perspectives: the viewpoints of participants, of pastors of sending congregations, and of hosting missionaries. The goal of the research was to identify and evaluate the questionnaire responders' and interviewees' unique outlooks on this type of ministry.<sup>339</sup>

I chose to use qualitative research because it helps to answer the question of “why” certain behaviors and events take place as opposed to merely documenting how often a circumstance occurs.<sup>340</sup> The results of qualitative research are framed with words more often than with numbers, and these perceptions are often gathered from interviewees and/or surveys of participants through the asking of open-ended questions or conducting case studies.<sup>341</sup>

Qualitative research often explores the significance people attach to a certain problem or situation. Interviews and observations usually take place in a naturalistic setting in order to understand the phenomena from the perspective of the participant. These records are then analyzed “inductively building from particulars to general themes”<sup>342</sup> before the researcher is

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<sup>339</sup> Joseph J. Saggio, “Re: Log-In Questions: Unit 3 Methodology, Part I of My Response,” CMIN 6203: Research and Evaluation Methodology, Northwest University, July 6, 2012, <https://discovery.northwestu.edu/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=24555> (accessed July 6, 2012).

<sup>340</sup> Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 151.

<sup>341</sup> John. W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 3–4.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

able to adequately interpret the data's meaning. The construction of this type of report is flexible, focusing on "individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation."<sup>343</sup> Some of the more common approaches used in qualitative research are ethnography (study of a cultural setting), grounded theory (taken completely from the viewpoint of the research participants), case studies, phenomenological research, and narrative research.<sup>344</sup>

In phenomenological exploration, the researcher uses the descriptions given by the study's participants in order to identify and understand a particular phenomenon.<sup>345</sup> In this case the study was of the elements that constitute a successful STM experience from three sides of the operation. The literature has provided "a useful backdrop for the . . . issue that has led to the need for the study."<sup>346</sup> My experience in hosting teams and individual STM workers in West and Central Africa over the past quarter century and maintaining contact with many of those participants gives me a somewhat unique perspective as a researcher.

This study was guided by the following research questions. First, have STM trips made a fundamental difference in the lives of those in the Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God who have participated in them? Second, have positive changes been made in the lifestyle of the participants and in their giving habits? Third, has the testimony of those involved increased interest in missional projects among the members of the sending congregations, both in the local community and abroad? Fourth, how could the experience be improved for participants, sending churches, and receiving missionaries?

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<sup>343</sup> Creswell, 4.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid, 26.

In order to find the answers to these and related questions, I surveyed 23 participants from several different NWMN STM teams whose participation in mission has taken place during the past five years. I attempted to include a wide age spectrum: young adults (some of whom participated in STM as high school students), middle-aged people, and retirees. I also tried to gather information from an assortment of representative ministries: outreach, construction, and medical ministry teams. Survey participants attended a variety of churches of different sizes and lived in various communities scattered across the NWMN.

The survey questions were open-ended and the shared results anonymous. This allowed participants to freely communicate their memories and feelings about the experience in which they were involved and give suggestions about improving the journey for future participants. I chose six additional individuals for personal interviews in order to obtain more comprehensive answers from several different viewpoints. These interviews were digitally recorded and conducted with a young adult who had previously participated in several youth teams, a youth team chaperone, two members of construction teams, and two physicians who had conducted medical ministry abroad. After the surveys were gathered and the interviews transcribed, the records were analyzed building from specifics to general themes. Then the data's meaning was interpreted.

I also conducted personal interviews of five NWMN pastors whose churches have sent out STM teams over the past five years. I chose pastors from churches ranging in size from 65 to 1,000, located in both urban communities and small towns in various localities around the network. Two of the interviewees were lead pastors, two were missions pastors, and one was a youth pastor with wide experience in leading STM teams. Those interviewed ranged in age from approximately 30 to over 60. The interviews took place in a naturalistic setting—each pastor's

church office—using open-ended questions. These interviews were digitally recorded, so that nothing was lost in replicating the notes. A transcript of the interviews was typed before particulars and general themes were noted and analyzed. The questions I asked the pastors whom I interviewed are listed in Appendix D, and the informed consent form they completed is in Appendix E.

Furthermore, I also interviewed four NWMN missionaries who have hosted STM teams in the past five years to find out about the experience on the field from their point of view and how they believe future teams' involvement could be improved. The missionaries I spoke with were from all corners of the globe: Latin America, Europe, Northern Asia, and Africa. Two of those interviews were conducted in person with missionaries who are now on furlough. Two additional interviews were conducted via Skype. As much as possible, these conversations took place in a naturalistic setting, so they would feel relaxed and comfortable with the locale and share their insights freely.

All of the interviewees were emailed the questions in advance, so they would be able to consider their answers and give the most thorough responses possible.

The participants' surveys were conducted via email and/or in person, and the participants were also from several churches of different sizes around the NWMN. Most of the surveys (16) were gathered via email from a third party's address. Before presenting the surveys and consent forms to me, that person printed the pages, separating the informed consent forms from the surveys, and mixing up both stacks of papers separately in order to maintain confidentiality.

At one church, which my husband and I visited during our recent furlough, we learned that several teams had been sent out to various locations during the previous year. After obtaining permission from the pastor over Saturday night supper, my husband spoke briefly

about the project in the introduction to his message the following morning. Following the service, eight STM participants gathered in the overflow area at the side of the sanctuary, where I explained the purpose of the questionnaire and presented the survey along with an informed consent form used as a cover sheet. Since one of the participants was under the age of 18 and her parents were not available to give consent, she was asked not to take part and left the room. Then the others were given pens and began to complete the forms. After they finished, I collected the surveys and consent forms separately and mixed them up in order to preserve anonymity. Appendix A contains the questions used in both surveys and interviews of STM participants. Appendix B is the informed consent form used by participants who completed questionnaires, and Appendix C is the participants' face-to-face interview informed consent form.

During the time period of several weeks during which I was collecting and analyzing participants' questionnaires, I interspersed the data accumulation with personal interviews of pastors and missionaries. As we were able to arrange our schedules, I personally interviewed four long-term missionaries who have recently hosted STM teams to obtain their unique perspective on the phenomena of STM involvement. Those questions are located in Appendix F, and the informed consent form utilized is in Appendix G. This project met with a favorable reception, and almost everyone I contacted wanted to contribute to its realization. Only one missionary couple declined to be interviewed because they have not hosted as many teams in recent years as in the past.

All survey and interview results were shared anonymously. In the case of personal interviews with participants and pastors, I presented the findings using a pseudonym and gave a general description of the sending church's size and setting (for example, "Pastor Bob, who is the missions pastor at an urban church with 500 in attendance"). Likewise, the missionaries'



identities and fields of service have been disguised. Only a pseudonym and the region of the world where each one works have been given.

The results of these surveys and interviews involved the personal opinions about the phenomenon of STM from the perspective of those who responded. However, I also heard intriguing narratives of field experiences, the consequences in the lives of participants, the effects on receiving churches, and how any life changes have impacted the congregations who sent these teams. Some of those illustrative vignettes have been incorporated into the paper.

## **Chapter Four: FINDINGS**

### **Participants' Surveys and Interviews**

Of the approximately 40 surveys sent out and personally given to STM participants in churches of various sizes and configurations all across Washington and northern Idaho, I received 23 responses. I also completed face-to-face interviews with six STM participants in the following categories: two from youth teams (a college student and a sponsor), two from construction teams, and two physicians from HealthCare Ministries teams. Those who participated in both survey and interview were allowed to take as much time as needed to give thorough replies, and each person mentioned several items in answer to most questions. The responses of all 29 participants were arranged in spreadsheet format, in order to determine how many responders gave similar or identical answers to each question. In the following pages are listed the codes from the participants' replies.

#### **Question 1: Participant Survey/Interview**

The first question asked in both the survey and the interview was the following: *"In what ways has/have the STM trip(s) you were involved in made an impact on your life?"* A total of 111 responses were gleaned from the 29 survey and interview responders, or an average of approximately four answers per person. The complete list of replies and number of answers given to each—in order from most frequently to least often cited—is as follows:



Table 1: Impact on Lives of STM Participants

15	Expanded and refined worldview
10	Changed perspective on the poor whom God loves
10	Appreciation and advocacy for full-time missionaries and their resource needs
9	Faith in God and Scripture expanded
9	Increased burden for missions and international development
7	Increased awareness of and burden for global church
6	Reorientation of priorities leading to increased giving
5	Calling and passion to prepare for ministry
5	Increased prayer for missions
5	Received challenge and tools to witness and evangelize
4	Appreciation for blessings of home
4	Experienced God's supernatural power in reliance on the Holy Spirit
4	More patience with people from diverse backgrounds
3	Concept of leadership development expanded
3	Increased compassion and love for others
2	Ability to participate in the Great Commission and help others
2	Greater love for orphans and desire to foster/adopt children
2	Relationships with teammates and people in other parts of the world
2	Saw need to make Gospel culturally relevant
1	Disdain for American prosperity gospel
1	Increased value for local outreach
1	Learned to adapt to climate changes
1	Opportunities to travel

## Question 2: Participant Survey/Interview

The second question in the survey and interviews did not receive as many responses. There were only 58 answers, or two per person, to the following question: *“In your opinion, is there anything that could have been done by you, the leader of your team, or your hosts that would have improved the experience or results of ministry conducted on your STM trip?”* The complete list of replies and number of responses given to each—in order from most frequently to least often mentioned—is as follows:

Table 2: Desired Improvements to STM Experience

19	Better orientation and coordination needed
6	More time spent with hosts and local project recipients (including children)
6	No changes necessary
5	Stronger focus on personal and corporate spirituality
3	Better screening of applicants and team leadership
3	Acceptable standards for lodging/food
2	Prepare for the unexpected
2	More local food
2	Not enough work for the entire team to keep busy
2	Team should specialize instead of replacing local workers
1	Focus on encouraging long-term missionaries
1	Follow leading of Holy Spirit
1	Improved punctuality
1	Include 1–2 days of sightseeing
1	Journal for later reflection
1	Not try to understand nationals’ behavior by personal background
1	<i>Perspectives</i> course should be a prerequisite
1	Trip should have been longer

### Question 3: Participant Survey/Interview

The third question received an almost identical number of responses as the second. There were 60 answers or an average of just over two per person. The question asked, *“In what manner, if any, has your STM experience affected your lifestyle after your return home? Or has it?”* The complete list of replies and number of responses given to each—in order from most frequently to least often stated—is as follows:

Table 3: Effects of STM on Post-Trip Lifestyle

11	Simpler lifestyle
10	Deeper and more meaningful devotional life
9	More grateful and better steward
5	Became an advocate for missions and compassion ministries
4	Conscious of disparity between America and emergent nations
4	Greater desire to help others and make a difference
3	Gives more to missions
2	Found that joy is a choice
2	More culturally aware
2	More compassion and love for the unlovely
2	Reflective of what took place and how God worked
2	Temporary “high” of feeling closer to God
1	Actively pursuing vocational ministry
1	Disenchanted by apathetic church after STM
1	New view of poverty in America
1	Shares about trips at every opportunity

#### Question 4: Participant Survey/Interview

The last question had the fewest individual replies (50, or fewer than two responses per person) and widely diverse reactions. It asked the participant: *“Please share anything else that has not already been addressed on which you would like to remark concerning your STM experience.”* Five people did not respond to this question. The complete list of answers is as follows:

Table 4: Further remarks and suggestions by STM Participants

6	Positive and impactful learning experience
5	No response
4	Desire to go on another STM
4	Every Christian 18+ should go at least once
4	It changed my life
4	Relationship building for future investment
4	Training in spiritual disciplines
3	Cost factor is a roadblock to many locations
2	Children benefit from STM experiences
2	Importance of debriefing after trip
2	Importance of flexibility in scheduling
2	Relationship joys and frustrations
1	Bring extra cash for projects
1	Do not bring your own agenda
1	Emphasis on service
1	Joint teams with members from small and large churches
1	Leadership growth
1	Match team members to needed skills
1	Need for better orientation materials
1	Take extra clothing to give away

## Pastors' Interviews

The second group of interviewees was composed of five NWMN pastors of churches that sent out STM teams within the past five years. These five gentlemen received the most in-depth interviews in all of my study. In speaking with them I hoped to uncover evidence of the ways in which team members were affected by their overseas experiences. I also wished to unearth the manner in which the teams' formal presentations to the churches and informal discussions with acquaintances within the congregation following the trips affected the rest of the church. I wondered if the congregation's community outreach programs had expanded or if its support of long-term overseas missions had increased. I also asked the pastors if they had any suggestions to improve the STM experience for future teams and for any further comments about STM on topics about which I had not inquired.

### Question 1: Pastors' Interview

The first question posed to the interviewed pastors was as follows: *"Discuss the aspects of effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness which the STM experience had on your participating congregants. Be specific."* On the spreadsheet I was able to code 20 responses, or an average of four answers per pastor. Here is a complete list of what these pastors observed from their teams and the congregation's reactions following interaction with them:

Table 5: Effectiveness/Ineffectiveness of STM on Participating Congregants

5	Raised missions interest in church community
3	Showed the pastor that better debriefing and application is needed
2	Showed the pastor that better orientation is needed
2	Saw God miraculously provide for the trip
1	Children/youth benefit from participating in STM
1	Establishes trust in long-term missionaries and projects
1	Impact on family/colleagues of team members
1	Positively impacted local economy
1	Revealed extent of participants' faith
1	Showed the pastor that screening of applicants needs improvement
1	Showed the pastor that some funds may have been spent unwisely
1	Shows variety of overseas ministries available

Question 2: Pastors' Interview

The second question I asked the pastors had to do with how much the team members' excitement about the trip had influenced others in the congregation. *"In what ways, if any, has your participating congregants' enthusiasm for missions influenced others in your church?"* I wondered if there was an increased passion for missions following the teams' venture abroad. I received only eight responses from the five pastors, or fewer than two per person. A log of their answers follows:

Table 6: Effect of STM Participants' Enthusiasm on Other Congregants

4	Vocal and visual promoters of missions
1	Desire to return to location of established relationships
1	Discouragement at lack of response
1	No additional missions spark from STM
1	Realized they could make a difference

### Question 3: Pastors' Interview

The third question posed to the pastors was *“In what ways, if any, has the participants’ enthusiasm for STM impacted your church’s passion to reach different cultural and/or social groups within your neighborhood and community?”* Each pastor gave one answer to that question, and there were only two types of responses, as follows:

Table 7: Impact of STM on Cross-Cultural Outreach within the Community

3	Missional outreaches to community
2	Little to no impact

### Question 4: Pastors' Interview

The pastors’ fourth question was *“How has the STM experience impacted your church’s vision for increased involvement in missions abroad?”* The pastors’ responses to this query are as follows:

Table 8: STM’s Impact on Overseas Missions Involvement

2	Future STM trips will be to more difficult and strategic locales
2	Greater investment in finance, prayer and resources
1	Assistance should be provided for those who cannot afford to go
1	Helps people to see globally
1	Influential participants share their vision

### Question 5: Pastors' Interview

In reply to the pastors’ fifth question I hoped to receive their ideas for refining the manner in which STM experiences have been conducted by their churches. I asked, *“Do you have any suggestions for improving the STM experience on future missions trips?”* The pastors had definite opinions on this topic, giving two recommendations per person.

Table 9: Pastors' Suggestions for Improvement of Future STM Experiences

2	Better spiritual and cultural orientation
2	Find the right situation at the right time
2	Train team leaders
1	Develop a long-range plan for future teams
1	Field focus on the missionary more than the local pastor
1	Multi-generational team
1	Need for debriefing
1	Plan local projects for wider involvement
1	Team members should not room alone

Question 6: Pastors' Interview

The last question posed to the pastors was this: *“Please share anything else that has not already been addressed on which you would like to remark concerning your STM experience.”*

Each pastor gave an average of two distinct answers to this question.

Table 10: Further Remarks and Suggestions by Pastors

1	Be more strategic
1	Better communication between team and missionary hosts
1	Better understanding of missionary challenges
1	Cannot replace long-term missions with STM
1	Children benefit from going on STM trips
1	Every Christian should participate in STM
1	Most Americans do not understand poverty
1	Short-term teams can do riskier things
1	STM trips are a “taste test” for further involvement
1	The trip is just one piece of the STM experience



## Missionaries' Interviews

The last group of people interviewed for this project was composed of four NWMN missionaries who work in four very different parts of the world: Latin America, Europe, Northern Asia, and Africa. Each one has hosted numerous STM teams and individual short-term Christian workers over the past five years. All are greatly appreciative of the contributions of STM to the long-term effort on their respective fields. However, each one also had beneficial ideas about how to make these joint efforts even more productive. Depending upon the location of the missionary, the responses were somewhat varied.

### Question 1: Missionary Interview

The first question posed to the missionaries was the following: *“Describe the ideal team and its work.”* There were a total of 18 responses to this question or an average of nearly five per missionary, and their answers described the team’s size, its preparation, and its work.

Table 11: Missionaries’ Description of the Ideal STM Team

4	Team that fits needs on the field
3	Manageable size
2	Brings project budget
2	Culturally sensitive
2	Flexible
2	Service oriented
1	Effective trainers in ministry
1	Needs to be an effective Christian example
1	Strong leadership

## Question 2: Missionary Interview

In the second question, I hoped to hear some specific incidents that described both wonderful and problematic team scenarios. I asked the missionaries to *“Identify some of the positive and negative experiences that made hosting the STM teams a blessing to the field and/or difficult to cope with.”* The answers I received were more than thorough, and I was able to list 12 positive contributions from the teams to the field, as well as 11 negatives (an average of three benefits and almost three difficulties per missionary interview).

Table 12: Blessings and Difficulties Inherent in Hosting STM Teams

Positive Experiences		Negative Experiences	
2	Brings expertise to a project	3	Insufficient orientation
2	Flexibility	1	Coming without a work budget
1	Ability to do big projects	1	Empty promises made to nationals
1	Effectiveness depends on leadership	1	High maintenance team members
1	Follows guidance of missionary	1	Inability to work well as a team
1	Generosity	1	Lack of stamina among older team members
1	Many hands make light work	1	Missions “junkies”
1	Respect for older team members	1	Non-Christian team members
1	Servanthood	1	Stressful type-A team members
1	Validates a local ministry		

## Question 3: Missionary Interviews

The third question posed to the missionaries asked for specific enhancements that could be made to the STM experience for all parties associated with the process. I asked, *“What suggestions would you make to improve the STM experience for everyone involved?”* The missionaries gave 17 answers to that question, or roughly four responses per person.

Table 13: Missionaries' Suggestions for Improving STM Experiences

3	Better orientation materials
2	Missionary orientation on field
2	Prompt communication with missionary
2	Regular team meetings/debriefings
1	Balance between short-term and long-term missions
1	Have a clearly designated team leader
1	Maintain contacts with nationals
1	Make certain that the team is needed
1	Missionary may be replicating him/herself
1	Plan budget well in advance
1	Send work funds ahead of team
1	Sightseeing is not the priority

#### Question 4: Missionary Interviews

The final question asked of the missionaries was this: *“Please share anything else that has not already been addressed on which you would like to remark concerning your STM experience.”* The interviewees gave 10 diverse responses to this question, almost three per person.

Table 14: Further Remarks and Suggestions by Missionaries

1	Can trigger a call to long-term missions
1	Communication is the key to success
1	Consider a return visit to the same location
1	Effectiveness reduced without language
1	Link project with goal of evangelism
1	Need for flexibility and graciousness
1	Opportunity to practice language
1	PRAY before, during and after trip
1	Sightseeing is not the priority
1	Team's purpose is to assist strong national churches

In the following chapters I will further study each of these responses, clarifying the interviewees' meaning, highlighting and linking responses to various questions, and supplementing the results with information from the literature and illustrations from the field.

## **Chapter Five: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS IN PARTICIPANTS' SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS**

In a 1990 study of STEM Ministries' participants, it was discovered that young adults comprised the majority of team members, with 82 percent under the age of 35. Only 17.6 percent were middle aged, and the rest were past retirement age.<sup>347</sup> For the purposes of my study, STM participants younger than 18 were not included in either surveys or interviews because minors cannot legally give informed consent without written parental approval. Even so the majority of the STM team members who participated were young adults. Ten were between the ages of 18 and 25, and five were between 26 and 35. Most of the remaining participants were middle aged. Two were between the ages of 36 and 45, six were between 46 and 55, and five were between 56 and 65. Only one interviewee was past 65 years of age.

According to General Superintendent George O. Wood, nearly 40 percent of American AG constituents are under the age of 25, that is 1.1 million of the 2.8 million total attendees in our churches. "Our Fellowship is blessed with a new generation of believers poised to impact our world."<sup>348</sup> Many of the 60,000 AG congregants who graduate each year from high school<sup>349</sup> will participate in STM trips and have their lives impacted through their experiences as they strive to make a difference in other parts of the globe.

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<sup>347</sup> Peterson and Peterson, 5.

<sup>348</sup> George O. Wood, "Strategic Investment," In *Core Values: Serving Christ's Cause with Effectiveness and Excellence* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2007), 35.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

While Priest and Priest found that men and women were equally represented among STM participants,<sup>350</sup> that fact was not apparent among those who completed my survey. Although I interviewed three male and three female STM participants, nearly twice as many women as men (15:8) responded to my survey. That could reflect the fact that more women are willing to share openly about their views than men are, as pollsters discovered while conducting telephone surveys before the 2012 presidential election.<sup>351</sup> In that Knox College study, approximately two thirds of those willing to be interviewed by telephone were women, a nearly identical percentage to my survey participants.

Responders were able to give as thorough an answer as they desired. Consequently, each person may have mentioned several items in response to each question, and there were as many as two dozen diverse responses to any given inquiry.

### **Participants' Question 1**

The first question asked of STM participants in both survey and interview was the following: *"In what ways has/have the STM trip(s) you were involved in made an impact on your life?"* There were 23 different responses to this question, or an average of nearly four per person. Just over half of those queried (15) mentioned gaining "an expanded and refined world view." While this aspect of STM may not be thought of by many as primary, it is certainly important, especially to typical white, middle-class Americans. To the majority of Caucasians in our country,

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<sup>350</sup> Priest and Priest, 55.

<sup>351</sup> Sydney Stensland, "Women More Willing to Share Views: Poll Response a Matter of Influence vs. Privacy," Galesburg.com (October 28, 2012), <http://www.galesburg.com/news/x470412865/Women-more-willing-to-share-views> (accessed March 18, 2013).

ethnic ancestry plays no role in their day-to-day lives—indeed, it plays virtually no part in their self-identity whatsoever. As a result, it is difficult . . . to appreciate the foundational role such identities often play in the lives of people in much of the rest of the world, and how these identities can affect almost every sphere of their lives—social, cultural, political, and economic.<sup>352</sup>

However, our nation is becoming more culturally diverse every day, and learning how to cross social barriers is now essential in work, school, and community settings.

A woman whom I first met when she was on an STM trip in West Africa as a college student once wrote me the following message:

I didn't become a missionary to a foreign field, but the foreign field came to me. I supervise a staff of ten individuals who bring their culture and diversity from all over the world to me, including a Muslim from Libya, a Korean, a Vietnamese, [an] African American and [several] Latinos . . . I believe my short term missions trip prepared me for this career path and enriched me to be receptive and sensitive to cultural diversity.<sup>353</sup>

Michael S. Hyatt, former chairman and CEO of Thomas Nelson Publishers, recently blogged about his STM trip to Ethiopia with a group that included pastor and author Max Lucado. On the last day of their trip they visited a widow who had been helped to climb from abject poverty by a series of micro-loans through World Vision. While still living well below American standards, Wosne (the widow) now resides in a little house with one electric light, has adopted two more children in addition to her own four, and feels like the happiest person in the world. Those who heard her testimony felt that their “entire worldview was turned on its head.”<sup>354</sup> As they traversed the Atlantic Ocean on their way home, they could scarcely speak to

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<sup>352</sup> Steven J. Ybarrola, “Avoiding the Ugly Missionary: Anthropology and Short-Term Missions,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 104.

<sup>353</sup> Jane Andrew, email message to author, October 16, 2011.

<sup>354</sup> Michael Hyatt, “When You Realize You’re Living in a Bubble,” *Intentional Leadership* (August 2, 2012): 1, <http://michaelhyatt.com/when-you-realize-youre-living-in-a-bubble.html> (accessed August 3, 2012).

each other without crying. They felt as though their souls were “in a word, wrecked.”<sup>355</sup> That is the kind of effect cross-cultural ministry can have on those who participate in short-term ministry trips.

One third of participants (ten) surveyed/interviewed mentioned coming home with a changed perspective on the poor whom God loves. The realization that God loves and cares for everyone in the world—even those who live in abject poverty—is sometimes as big a revelation to today’s Christians as it was to those who heard Jesus teach in first century Palestine. To those who believed wealth was a sign of God’s favor, imagine hearing for the first time, “[God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45). One interviewed woman was surprised to find, “When you go over there, they tend to have a lot less, but they're a lot happier. Here we are, we're all stressed yet we have more.” A female survey responder remarked, “It opened my eyes to what poverty is really like; how much we take for granted coming from a land of prosperity.”

Another third (10) returned home with a renewed appreciation of long-term missionaries and have become advocates for them and their resource needs. One man who is now a member of his church missions committee and has led a number of STM teams from his church commented, “There's a world out there in really bad shape, and too many of our church resources are staying home.” He directed me to an editorial in *World* by Gene Edward Veith titled, “Who Gives Two Cents for Missions? We Do, to Our Shame.” In it Veith exposed the fact that only

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<sup>355</sup> Hyatt, 1.



two percent of all funds collected in American churches is spent on overseas missions projects,<sup>356</sup> which signifies that 98 percent stays at home.

Nearly one third of participants (nine) said that their faith in God and Scripture were expanded. One Teen Mission participant interviewed by Amy Green indicated that on his trip to Africa he was able to let go of many of the things that distracted him from his faith in America and prioritize the things that are truly important. He found that African Christians were more focused on God than American Christians because they could not rely on their own wealth and abilities, as Americans often do, and had to rely on the Lord to meet their needs. “While we were out there God really showed me myself . . . It was a challenge, really seeing myself.”<sup>357</sup>

Nine people also noted that they came away from their trip with an increased burden for missions and international development. Relief—such as supplying emergency food and shelter after a natural disaster—is simpler than development, and it is easier to raise money for people who have lost everything they own due to an earthquake or tsunami than to interest donors in a long-term rehabilitation or development project.<sup>358</sup> However, applying relief to an area where people could—with a little training—care for themselves makes the community dependent on outside aid and can potentially destroy the local economy. One author describes development by quoting a Chinese proverb:

Go to the people  
Live among them  
Learn from them  
Serve them

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<sup>356</sup> Gene Edward Veith, “Who Gives Two Cents for Missions? We Do, to Our Shame,” *World* (God’s World Publications © 2013: October 22, 2005): 1–2, [http://www.worldmag.com/2005/10/who\\_gives\\_two\\_cents\\_for\\_missions](http://www.worldmag.com/2005/10/who_gives_two_cents_for_missions) (accessed January 9, 2013).

<sup>357</sup> Amy Green, 63.

<sup>358</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, locations 1770 and 1772.

Plan with them  
Start with what they know  
Build on what they have.<sup>359</sup>

JoAnn Butrin teaches that development is an active progression that enables the local population to recognize the origin of their difficulties and find permanent solutions to them from indigenous sources through continuing tactical organization.<sup>360</sup> She adds “Development from a missions point of view . . . is about people. It’s about transformation of the whole person, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.”<sup>361</sup> Such a metamorphosis does not occur overnight. Corbett and Fikkert call development a “long and sometimes grinding haul.”<sup>362</sup> In order for STM groups to participate successfully in the work of development it is necessary that teams return to the same area repeatedly to strategize with the local people about what is truly needed and how needs can be met using appropriate technology and sustainable resources. These assets are “designed with special consideration to the environmental, ethical, cultural, social, political, and economical aspects of the community for which [they are] intended.”<sup>363</sup>

One fourth of those surveyed described an increased awareness of and burden for the global church. One middle-aged man stated, “[Missions trips] have bonded me to my brothers and sisters worldwide.” A woman of the same age group agreed. “It allowed me to see . . . how others see and love [the Lord].” A younger woman wrote, “[STM] showed me how no matter where in the world you are if you are a follower of Christ we are united and working towards the

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<sup>359</sup> Greg Johnson, “The Church Participating in Development,” in *The Gospel Unhindered: Modern Missions and the Book of Acts*, ed. Doug Priest, Jr. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1994), 61.

<sup>360</sup> Butrin, location 641.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid, location 647.

<sup>362</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 1775.

<sup>363</sup> Butrin, location 1411.

same mission.” Martín Hartwig Eitzen<sup>364</sup> describes STM trips as a family visit with long lost siblings.<sup>365</sup> In a typical family visit, relatives help each other out with the things that need to be accomplished, and that is what STM journeys do. “Thus the body of Christ will be strengthened and the Kingdom of God will be extended.”<sup>366</sup>

One out of five who responded (six people) indicated a reorientation of priorities leading to increased giving. It was interesting to note that four of those donors were middle-aged, and two were in the 26–35 age bracket, while none were under the age of 25. One man remarked, “Hopefully [the influence of STM] ripples down to how you spend your time and how you spend your money. If it doesn't change those two things, it hasn't changed much.”

Five people (17 percent of responders) either felt a call to ministry or believed that they were better prepared for that calling after participating in an STM venture. One young woman described her experience in these words: “The Lord spoke to me on that trip and said that I wouldn't live a normal life, that some people wouldn't agree, but to keep going as he led, and that it would be [a life] full of adventures.” The same young lady followed up her STM with a discipleship program to which she is still attached as a staff member.

Five also mentioned that they spent more time in prayer after returning from their STM trips. “I KNOW that there are needs, and I keep it at the forefront of my mind,” one young lady declared. The same number of responders indicated that they felt they had received both a challenge and tools to witness and evangelize. Another woman in the youngest age group said,

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<sup>364</sup> Martín Hartwig Eitzen is a professor at the Bible Institute of Asunción, Paraguay (part of the Facultad de Teología de la Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay network).

<sup>365</sup> Hartwig Eitzen, 47.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

“[Missions trips] have shown me that there are many practical ways to share the Gospel and that people everywhere have the same basic needs and hurts.”

Four participants (about 14 percent) mentioned feeling a greater appreciation for the blessings of home. One young man recounted how that even though his group stayed in a hotel, team members were not allowed to “flush the toilet paper.” It must be true that it is the little things in life that make a difference! Pastor Mike Gibson believes that an “expanded attitude of gratitude” is one of the benefits of STM participation evidenced among his congregants.<sup>367</sup> Inevitably team members will compare their lives in America with the way people exist in the developing world. It is hoped that participants will also search for comprehension of the roots of insufficiency and how to assuage its effects,<sup>368</sup> but unfortunately that is not always the case. Slimbach indicates that “the vast majority will simply observe the cruel hardship of others’ lives and come away feeling ‘blessed’ or ‘lucky’ that divine providence or fate has permitted them to be born in privileged circumstances and not as one of those ‘made to suffer.’”<sup>369</sup>

The same number of responders (four) conveyed that they experienced God’s supernatural power in reliance on the Holy Spirit while on their STM journeys. This included the witnessing of miraculous healings and baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues for the first time. Another four reported returning from abroad with more patience for others as evidenced by the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds.

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<sup>367</sup> Gibson, 25.

<sup>368</sup> Landa, 108.

<sup>369</sup> Slimbach, 163.

Three people (ten percent) indicated that their concept of leadership development was expanded. Edwin Zehner<sup>370</sup> wrote about the necessity of choosing a team leader of good character. When that is the case, irrespective of the team's composition, the STM goes well.<sup>371</sup> Eaton and Hurst add that the team leader sets the tenor for the entire team. When he or she is composed despite unforeseen happenings, the team also remains calm. If the director displays the fruit of the Spirit and emotional stability, the team members will echo similar behavior. However, if that person is negligent, grumbling and gossipy, assessments of the trip will reveal it.<sup>372</sup> Vicki Gascho<sup>373</sup> approaches the leadership question from the opposite side. "Should a man or woman exhibit large numbers of deficits going into a supervisory role, probably no amount of human preparation and monitoring will turn them into leaders who reproduce themselves in healthy people and effective work. Obviously a good selection assessment is in order."<sup>374</sup>

Ten percent of participants also mentioned coming back from their STM trips with increased compassion and love for others. "Short-term missions often serve as a wakeup call to the injustices in the world around us: the hazy awareness from the evening news transformed into grizzly reality."<sup>375</sup> Tony Campolo<sup>376</sup> writes of accompanying a group of students to the Dominican Republic where their job was to dig a mass grave for children who had died in an

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<sup>370</sup> Edwin Zehner is Professor of Anthropology at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California.

<sup>371</sup> Zehner, "On the Rhetoric of Short-Term Missions Appeals, with Some Practical Suggestions for Team Leaders," 198.

<sup>372</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 43.

<sup>373</sup> Vicki Gascho is a missionary trainer at Greater Europe Mission (GEM).

<sup>374</sup> Gascho, 614–615.

<sup>375</sup> Stiles and Stiles, 108.

<sup>376</sup> Tony Campolo is an Eastern University Sociology Professor, as well as a popular author and speaker.

influenza epidemic. The most macho team member—a star basketball player—had tears flowing down his face. “His heart had been broken by the things that broke the heart of Jesus.”<sup>377</sup> The unfairness of life in the developing world cannot help but shock team members. Serving others in some small way is an essential quality for Christians, an “outward extension” of our relationship with God.<sup>378</sup>

Each of the next four items was only mentioned twice: feeling privileged to participate in the Great Commission, developing a greater love for orphans and a desire to foster or adopt children in the future, partaking in relationships with teammates and new friends in other parts of the world, and realizing the need to make any gospel presentation culturally relevant.

The following impacts were only cited one time for each item: coming home with a disdain for the American prosperity gospel, discovering an increased value in local outreach in the area where they live, an ability to adapt to climate changes, and an opportunity to travel.

## **Participants’ Question 2**

The second question asked of STM participants was this: “*In your opinion, is there anything that could have been done by you, the leader of your team, or your hosts that would have improved the experience or results of ministry conducted on your STM trip?*” There were only 58 responses, or an average of two per individual to this question, which reveals that, for the most part, participants were happy with their experiences.

The largest answer to this question with three times as many responses as the next category was the need for a better pre-field orientation and coordination. Two thirds of all

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<sup>377</sup> Tony Campolo, “Challenging the Church with Missions,” in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 22.

<sup>378</sup> Butrin, location 436.

responders (66 percent) indicated this necessity. A middle-aged woman who was the designated photographer on a trip to a communist country commented, “I didn't find out about the current political situation. I didn't know the history . . . I didn't really know what I'd be comfortable taking pictures of.” A young lady who had participated in STM with her youth group remarked, “The leaders knew [the situation], but the knowledge really wasn't passed on to the students involved with the trip.”

Much has been written about ensuring that an STM team participates in an adequate orientation. The most effective teams train together before the trip.<sup>379</sup> This instruction needs to be extensive enough that it *cannot* take place in one brief meeting. Mission representative Samuel Melo recommends “several sessions,”<sup>380</sup> Glenn Schwartz<sup>381</sup> indicates that the best orientations involve exhaustive discipleship studies that last at least three months,<sup>382</sup> and Hunter Farrell describes “a challenging eight-month orientation process that identifies the cultural baggage, often ethnocentric and sometimes even racist, that US Americans often unconsciously carry into cross-cultural missional encounters.”<sup>383</sup> Orientation sessions must be taken seriously and made a priority in the lives of team members. Team orientation meetings should be required, not suggested. Those who do not wish to participate in preliminary preparation will probably not be

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<sup>379</sup> Smith, 53.

<sup>380</sup> Melo, 123,

<sup>381</sup> Glenn Schwartz is Whiting Professor of Archaeology and Director of the Undergraduate Archaeology Department at Johns Hopkins University.

<sup>382</sup> Schwartz, 29.

<sup>383</sup> Farrell, 78.

good learners during and after the trip.<sup>384</sup> If not properly equipped, a team member is not ready for the STM experience and should not be allowed to participate in the journey.<sup>385</sup>

What should be included in orientation? Melo advises teaching a “basic understanding of the history, culture, geography, and climate of the country.”<sup>386</sup> If someone who has previously visited the country is available to share experiences and pictures that would be an ideal supplement to the sessions. The team needs to hear the account of how the gospel may have already spread in that area. At times previous gospel presentations—whether effective or insensitively done—can impact how well the team will be received.<sup>387</sup> An improperly oriented, ineffective short-term team “can actually harm the missionary cause.”<sup>388</sup>

The *MAPS Volunteer Orientation Manual* tells candidates to “read everything you can about the country you are going to by checking out books and internet resources”<sup>389</sup> prior to the trip. Orientation will continue once the short-termers arrive on the field, and the best way for team members to learn cultural cues is from the nationals with whom they work and the missionary hosts, who are also knowledgeable sources of information.<sup>390</sup> Research should be done on how the culture deals with conflict, as well as proper ways to interact with officials and

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<sup>384</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 2567

<sup>385</sup> Wilder and Parker, 204.

<sup>386</sup> Melo, 123.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>388</sup> Ybarrola, 110.

<sup>389</sup> Rick Johnson, *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months*, 2.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*



people of the opposite gender.<sup>391</sup> The hosts—whether missionaries or national churches—should make the following information available to the team well in advance of the trip: climate, proper apparel, elevation of the area where they will be working, and temperature.<sup>392</sup>

It is also advisable to learn about the local food and how it is consumed by those who live where the team is going. Lessons on using chopsticks or eating with one's fingers may be an appropriate addition to the orientation curriculum.<sup>393</sup> Team members may need to be cautioned about food preparation, cleanliness of water, and foods to avoid. Certain items, such as lettuce and watermelon, cannot be guaranteed sanitary in the developing world because of their growing conditions. Even brushing one's teeth with unfiltered water can give team members travelers' diarrhea. "A small amount of bad water can have a profound effect on the ministry effectiveness of your group. Not following even small instructions can devastate your group's health."<sup>394</sup>

One special way to close the orientation and send the team on its journey is for the supporting church or organization to conduct a commissioning service. In it several team members could share about why they feel led to go, how the Lord provided for their budget, and what they hope to learn while abroad. Perhaps the team has a skit or song in the native language to share with the congregation. At the service's conclusion, the church leaders and team

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<sup>391</sup> Livermore, 133.

<sup>392</sup> Maslucán, 150.

<sup>393</sup> Stiles and Stiles, 80.

<sup>394</sup> Melo, 127.

members' families could gather around the participants and pray for safe travels, relationships to be formed on the trip, and a "fruitful ministry upon arrival at the field."<sup>395</sup>

While six participants (just over 20 percent) said they would not change anything they experienced on their STM, another six wished they had spent more time with their hosts and the local people (including children) who were the recipients of their project. As previously stated, both African and Asian nationals have expressed concern over the amount of time STM team members spend with their own team rather than with the local residents who host them.<sup>396</sup>

Five team members (17 percent) wished that their teams had a stronger focus on both prayer and devotions (personal and group) during their trip. One of the physicians that I interviewed stressed how important it was that the journey be "bathed in prayer" before, during, and after the STM. Participants have need of private group meetings each day, both to talk through the inner challenges each one encounters and for team prayer. These separate gatherings enable them to transfer what they have assimilated on the field into their life at home.<sup>397</sup>

Three participants (10 percent) said that there should have been better screening of applicants for the teams on which they played a part. There seems to often be a team member who cannot make friends with her own colleagues but has no problem getting along with the nationals.<sup>398</sup> Careful selection of team members may prevent the inclusion of those that Satan

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<sup>395</sup> Ken Garland, "Cooperating with Church Leaders," in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 92.

<sup>396</sup> Zehner, "Short-Term Missions: Toward a More Field-Oriented Model," 510–511.

<sup>397</sup> Farrell, 78.

<sup>398</sup> Cerrón, 29.

might attempt to include in order to “disrupt and derail a mission project.”<sup>399</sup> Some team members seem to be more needy than those they have come to serve, and they’ll do their best to get others in the group to focus their attention on them instead of the ministry project.

In considering potential team members, there are several things to ponder:

- ❖ The candidate’s testimony and desired purpose in taking part in STM
- ❖ At least three letters of recommendation
- ❖ A police report on the potential applicant’s background,<sup>400</sup> which is especially important for teams that include minors and at times necessary for visa processing
- ❖ Medical conditions or food allergies which could be problematic on the field
- ❖ “Emotional or psychological difficulties” which are evidenced in the interview<sup>401</sup>

While it is not easy to tell a candidate that he or she is not suitable for the STM, it is quite possible that the trip would be “more effective through curtailing the volume of participants and increasing the quality.”<sup>402</sup>

One participant added that the team *leader* was a poor choice. “Our leader was a little unaware of how he was sounding in public areas, [yelling] at students, caring more about getting stuff handed out than what God was doing.”

Another three mentioned the necessity of having an acceptable standard for lodging and food in order to prevent team members from becoming ill. Obviously “acceptable” to some Americans is considered palatial in many other parts of the world. Paraguayan seminary students

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<sup>399</sup> Larson, 113.

<sup>400</sup> Cook, 384.

<sup>401</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 71–72.

<sup>402</sup> Smith, 36.

who were surveyed about the topic could not understand why teams would rather sojourn in an expensive hotel when they could develop a relationship with local believers by staying in their homes. The survey's results indicated that 79 percent thought teams should stay in homes while only seven percent supposed a hotel was acceptable. Another five percent believed teams should camp out in tents.<sup>403</sup> One of my interviewees, a doctor who has been on a number of STM trips in many parts of the world, laughingly said that when nationals arranged the housing for the team, "it could be a little interesting. I won't say unmanageable—just interesting."

If orientation prepares the team for what they are expected to encounter, the team will be less likely to offend their hosts through their reaction to conditions on the field. One author gave the example of a team that was sent to the Peruvian jungle where a good portion of the local diet includes a dish called "suri" (grub worms that are eaten either cooked or raw). The reaction of the team to their food caused a massive rupture between the local population and the team.<sup>404</sup> At times only the indigenous people are able to stomach the local diet. "This is an area in which [the team] must trust and respect the advice of the field representative without hesitation."<sup>405</sup>

While it is not necessary for the team to stay in a posh resort setting, if housing is such that participants come away with a negative perception of STM, their report can inoculate the church against further involvement for a very long time. Two interviewees described the first missions trip that their church had been involved in as "the STM from hell." This happened to be a trip where the national church arranged the housing. Fifty participants were all lodged in one large home. There was enough space for everyone to sleep, but there was only *one* bathroom for

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<sup>403</sup> Hartwig Eitzen, 43.

<sup>404</sup> Cerrón, 27.

<sup>405</sup> Melo, 128.

all to use. It was necessary to hang sheets as room dividers to separate the shower area from the toilet and sink, and there were times when someone would be washing up on one side of the curtain while another member agonized with intestinal problems on the other side. Since the lead pastor's brother was one of the participants who suffered through that expedition, his report to the church leadership meant that the church had minimal involvement in overseas ministry for over a decade. Without the persistence of several missions committee members who saw the value of STM, there may never have been any other teams sent out by that congregation.

Two people observed that team members should be prepared for the unexpected. Flexibility is one of the qualities Eaton and Hurst speak of in their discussion of the “teamwork factor.” The remainder of their acrostic reads: teachable, encouraging, appreciative, motivated, willing, open, refreshing, kindred spirit, agreeable, cooperative, thoughtful, obedient and rational.<sup>406</sup>

Two mentioned that they would have enjoyed eating more local foods. A woman who had been in a communist nation, where the population was granted ration coupons for their daily nutritional allotment later learned that the church had been given extra rations in order to impress the team with the “abundance” in the country. She wished they would have known that in advance, so they could have allowed their local hosts to keep some of the meat and other provisions for their own families. Sometimes the hosts served several varieties of meat at a meal—much more than the team members were used to—and they wished they could have blessed the church members' families with the bounty.

Another two spoke about making sure there is enough work to keep everyone on the team busy. A young man told of making several trips with his youth group to the same location. One

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<sup>406</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 92–93.

year the pastor asked the team to move a pile of dirt from one side of the church compound to the other. The next year he had them move it back. The young man was sure the pastor had a plan for how he wanted the church to develop, but there were too many team members to keep everyone occupied without finding them busywork. Michael J. Anthony<sup>407</sup> told a similar story of a team on which he participated that traveled to a Caribbean island. Team members were kept busy by digging a deep trench and consequently were unable to spend much time developing relationships with the residents. When he returned to the same location the following year, he realized that the trench had been filled in and had never been used. From the experience he “learned some valuable lessons: . . . not all projects are created equal; not all projects are necessary; as volunteers, we had the right to get something of value from the short-term mission experience; some projects are better left to nationals.”<sup>408</sup>

Anthony’s remarks touch on the next code. The team should specialize instead of replacing local workers, indicated two participants. In many parts of the world hiring day laborers is relatively inexpensive but means a great deal to those who are engaged. A team composed of those with specialized abilities can easily employ local church members and jobless residents of the community to complete the labor needs at a construction site. In the instance of a medical team, it is best to supply specialized techniques, such as plastic surgery, fistula repair, eye examinations, or cataract surgery while working alongside a group of national health care workers.

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<sup>407</sup> Michael J. Anthony serves as Research Professor of Christian Education at Biola University in La Mirada, California.

<sup>408</sup> Anthony, 54.

The last eight replies to this question were only mentioned one time each. The team should focus on encouraging long-term missionaries. The female interviewee who made this remark added, “That is the best way to reach the people there because long-term missionaries have well-established relationships with the people.” Another said the team needs to follow the leading of Holy Spirit. There needs to be improvement in the area of punctuality, indicated another survey responder. The younger woman who spoke of promptness may be an executive assistant who believes in the American adage, “Time is money.” In Africa when someone has an appointment and either receives a visitor or meets an acquaintance en route, the person takes priority over the occasion. One middle-aged woman wanted to include a day or two of sightseeing in the trip, saying that after spending all that money to get there, it would be a pity not to be a tourist for at least one day. A younger woman advised that team members keep a journal for later reflection. Another young lady thought it best not to attempt to understand nationals’ behavior through her own cultural lens. A different young woman wished the trip had been longer.

The last remark was from a middle-aged man who thought that the *Perspectives* course should be a prerequisite to STM. While *Perspectives* holds much useful background information, I also understand from others who have gone through the lecture series that some of their figures are not current. I have not taken the seminar myself, but in the introductory service at our home church, the special speaker—who also taught the first class session—gave two examples of tribes where he said there was “absolutely no Christian witness” in his sermon. Ironically, in both cases I personally knew long-term AG missionaries working with those people groups and furthermore, that New Testament translations were in progress in those languages. Therefore, I concur with my sources concerning the use of dated information in the course.

### Participants' Question 3

The third question posed to the participants was this: *“In what manner, if any, has your STM experience affected your lifestyle after your return home? Or has it?”* More than one third (11) of those who responded mentioned living a simpler lifestyle after their return to America. “I no longer indulge myself,” stated one young man. “Now any time I want something superfluous, I always think twice and usually change my mind,” a young woman indicated.

After staying in places where typical western niceties are not available, short-termers may realize that many things they have become accustomed to thinking were necessities are actually excessive embellishments to their lifestyle. “Back at home, malls and super-sized grocery stores are overwhelming, if not disgusting. [Their homes] and possessions seem a lot nicer than they ever did before—maybe a little too nice.”<sup>409</sup> Conspicuous consumerism fits uncomfortably into the short-termer’s new worldview.

One third (10) of the participants cited having a “deeper and more meaningful devotional life” following their journey. One middle-aged man declared, “It has intensified my burden and prayer life as I only have one opportunity in history to make a difference.” Perhaps the emphasis upon individual and group devotions which most teams have—beginning during orientation and continuing during the STM itself, as well as in follow-up meetings<sup>410</sup>—has contributed to an improved spiritual life for many short-termers. In *Vacations with a Purpose*, Eaton and Hurst stress the impact of developing an improved devotional life by reflecting on the things God is trying to teach them, reading the Word regularly, spending time in prayer every day, and

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<sup>409</sup> Stiles and Stiles, 159.

<sup>410</sup> Farrell, 79.



responding through obedience to the lessons they are learning *before* landing in another country.<sup>411</sup> The *MAPS Volunteer Orientation Manual* draws the same conclusion. “Prayer is still God’s method of accomplishing His work, so be a prayer warrior. Open communication with God is necessary before trying to work for Him. This assignment, if bathed in daily communion with the Lord in prayer and Bible study, can be the most enriching experience of your life.”<sup>412</sup>

Nearly a third of responders (nine) indicated that they are now more grateful for their blessings as well as better stewards of the gifts God has given them. One young lady confirmed that her STM experience “certainly took away any feelings of ‘entitlement’ for what [she has] been given.” A middle aged woman stated, “Seeing the ‘joy of the Lord’ in places where people have nothing or it’s illegal to gather puts things in perspective and causes me to revisit my priorities and not take for granted my freedoms.” It is expected that short-termers will return to their home environment with the realization that they are blessed to live in their own culture, but some never unpack the sources of the insufficiency they have witnessed or try to understand how changes can be made.<sup>413</sup>

Five participants (one sixth of the responders) have become advocates for missions and compassion ministries since their STM experiences. “A few individuals, thoroughly infected with the Lord’s passion for his creation, can joyously spread the ‘condition’ to the entire body.”<sup>414</sup> At their local churches they may be members of the church missions committee. They might organize the annual missions convention or fund raisers for missions projects. They may

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<sup>411</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 97.

<sup>412</sup> Rick Johnson, *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months*, 6.

<sup>413</sup> Landa, 108.

<sup>414</sup> Dearborn, 79.

raise awareness concerning long-term missionaries and various overseas projects among their acquaintances. Perhaps they take a class about missions, recruit capable participants for the church's next STM venture, or learn a needed skill themselves.

Churches and ministries should be ready to plug short-termers into their service programs within the community and/or abroad when they return from the mission field thinking, "I had this epic experience. Now, what do I do with it?"<sup>415</sup> If there is no prospect of involvement, these volunteers will experience discouragement and frustration.<sup>416</sup> It is conceivable that there may be an opportunity for community involvement that crosses cultural barriers; it is quite possible that one could find pockets of people from the same ethnic group to which the team has ministered while overseas somewhere within the Pacific Northwest. Surprisingly, the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in the United States is in neither Los Angeles nor New York City. It is in Seattle's Rainier Valley where 59 different languages are spoken by the 40,000 people who dwell within the six square miles that comprise the 98118 zip code.<sup>417</sup>

Four people expressed a previously unknown consciousness of the disparity between America and emergent nations. One of the doctors that I interviewed returned from a medical missions trip to East Africa just before Thanksgiving. She told me, "It was really hard to come [home] into Black Friday [sales when] . . . in Africa we had to wait till later in the day in order to get some gauze sterilized to do dressing changes . . . The whole paradox is almost too much." Those who return to western civilization may not feel very much like Americans for a while.

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<sup>415</sup> Notess, 41.

<sup>416</sup> Wilder and Parker, 147.

<sup>417</sup> Sabra Gertsch, "Census Bureau: 98118 the Most Diverse Zip Code in US," *South Seattle KOMO* (April 5, 2010), <http://southseattle.komonews.com/news/arts-culture/445093-census-bureau-98118-most-diverse-zip-code-us> (April 4, 2013).

“They may openly question the assumed values of the majority . . . or have difficulty knowing where they fit within the greater social game. They re-enter their home culture but stand on the periphery, viewing the world through new lenses acquired abroad.”<sup>418</sup> The short-termer may feel that enough is not being done and deeply desire to leave home and change the world.<sup>419</sup>

Another four participants expressed a greater desire to help others and make a difference. One young lady wrote, “I am blessed with everything I have, and it makes me want to help others and their conditions even more.” Fran Blomberg<sup>420</sup> encourages short-termers to stay involved and work towards another ministry opportunity. “Reflection accompanied by continuing experience at home will increase confidence that one’s ability to serve and make a difference wasn’t just a fluke, but a gracious gift of God that should be heartily cultivated through ongoing ministry opportunities.”<sup>421</sup>

Three responders indicated that they give more toward missions than they did before their STM experiences. The two doctors that I interviewed have traveled extensively to bring medical care to those who would otherwise go without it. In my interview with the male doctor, he stated emphatically, “It’s a great investment, and we’re investing in souls.”

Two participants found that joy is a choice during their STM. One young lady wrote, “This experience taught me that emotions are fleeting, and that regardless of our circumstances

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<sup>418</sup> Murray S. Decker, “Student Sojourners and Spiritual Formation: Understanding the Intersection of Cross-Cultural Adjustment and Spiritual Disorientation,” In *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 584.

<sup>419</sup> Farrell, 82.

<sup>420</sup> Fran Blomberg is Adjunct Professor of Missiology at Denver Seminary.

<sup>421</sup> Blomberg, 607.

... we can choose joy.” When a team sees delight on the faces of those in village churches in a majority world nation, they cannot help but realize that joy is *not* circumstantial.

Two feel that they are more culturally aware following their trip, and two others sense more compassion and love for the unlovely. “It has given me a new appreciation for how Jesus loves ALL people around the world,” wrote one young woman. Two mentioned spending a great deal of time reflecting on what took place and how God worked during their STM venture. One middle-aged woman who had chaperoned a youth STM expressed her thoughts like this: “I tend to go back and look at [my journal] and reflect. I try to read the things that ministered to me or spoke to my heart and try to reiterate them in my life.” This woman had unconsciously followed the advice of David Livermore who wrote that a trip journal should not merely be a log of events. Instead, he advises that the journal be used to analyze cross-cultural signals and exchanges. He advises short-termers to think “about the meaning behind these observations and experiences. Writing allows us to understand our lives and others in ways that few other things do. It forces us to slow down and become aware of our surroundings.”<sup>422</sup>

One slightly negative perception of STM was also mentioned by two individuals who both said that they received a temporary “high” from the trip that made them briefly feel closer to God. A young woman wrote that she has “noticed for [herself] and others that usually that high goes away after a few weeks or months.” Without a well-developed program of debriefing and follow-up, this is unfortunately a typical reaction after an STM trip. Concerning the alleged transformational changes in participants’ lives, they might seem momentous at the time, but they

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<sup>422</sup> Livermore, 137.

usually do not last very long.<sup>423</sup> As youth ministers are aware, the same feelings can occur in the weeks following either a summer camp or a winter retreat.

Each of the last four items was mentioned only once. A young lady is actively pursuing a calling to vocational ministry. Another young woman became disenchanted by her apathetic church after participating in STM. A third young lady came home with a new view of poverty in America, and a middle-aged woman takes every possible opportunity to tell others about her STM experiences.

#### **Participants' Question 4**

The last request made of the 29 participants was this: *“Please share anything else that has not already been addressed on which you would like to remark concerning your STM experience.”* There were only 45 answers to this question, and five people gave no additional response. Therefore, there were fewer than two replies per individual and 19 completely different reactions to this query. While participants are largely satisfied with their STM experiences, they still have a number of suggestions to make to improve future trips.

Six individuals (20 percent) thought their STM was a positive and impactful learning experience. One middle-aged woman said that her heart and intellect were engaged and she received an education by walking with “boots on the ground” in another country. An older man said he had enjoyed the cultural diversity and visiting new places. Four others (14 percent) expressed a desire to participate in another missions trip. This number is low because several participants already mentioned this desire in response to other questions. Four individuals indicated that the STM had changed their lives.

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<sup>423</sup> Zehner, “Short-Term Missions: Toward a More Field-Oriented Model,” 510.

Another four mentioned that they had received training in spiritual disciplines while on their trip. In his interview, a young college student stated, “There comes a time when you’re not always accepting your mom and dad’s faith, and you have to figure it out on your own.” Another young man was baptized in the Holy Spirit during his STM. One middle-aged man mentioned that the emphasis placed on prayer and fasting brought greater effectiveness for his team. Another man in the same age bracket was greatly impacted by listening to the early morning prayer meetings that took place on the Bible school campus where his team had stayed.

Four others believe strongly enough in STM to declare that every Christian over the age of 18 should participate at least once. Four people looked at the relationship-building side of STM as an investment for future ministry opportunities in the same area. A middle-aged man mentioned that he was conducting research to find an overseas outlet where he could put his specialized training to use.

Three people (10 percent) consider the costs of traveling to many parts of the world to be a roadblock to STM teams’ working in those locations. A middle-aged woman wondered if AGWM would be able to assist the teams in finding better airline rates, while a middle-aged man guessed that if churches chose to just send the funds, that it would be much more difficult to raise money for their project. Most people would rather participate in hands-on ministry, and if folks could not go on the trip they would spend the money on something else.

Two of the participants (seven percent) who have taken part in multi-generational teams mentioned that children can benefit from STM participation. A young woman who had partaken as a student said that an STM journey helps the younger participant find a life focus. A middle-aged man mentioned that his “sons would like to continue to travel and either work or volunteer

overseas in some capacity.” I will talk more about this concept in the analysis of the pastors’ interviews.

Another two individuals spoke of the importance of debriefing and follow-up after the STM journey. A young lady indicated, “I think that the post-trip follow-up is so important. I felt this was overlooked and not a focus on the trip I went on. When we were back the trip was over.” In *TransforMission*, Wilder and Parker speak often of the dissonance between life in the West and the conditions frequently discovered on STM. “This tension and struggle are not the transformational goal but simply a vehicle to reach it . . . Dissonance is a tool to be used in pursuit of life change.”<sup>424</sup> Without adequate follow-up, this useful tool’s purpose is lost.

Debriefing after an STM is critical to properly synthesizing the experience. It takes a savvy team leader to direct discussions, point out pertinent Scriptures, and allow the Holy Spirit to convict participants into making life changes stemming from their short-term experience. “Comprehensive follow-through provides an environment for commitment to mission to be established and animated for long term devotion.”<sup>425</sup> Ver Beek compares the returning short-termer to a young tree sapling which can easily be curved into a different shape and held in that position for a couple of weeks. Once released, it quickly returns to its previous form. Participants must continue to be reminded of their experience, in effect “held in place for a much longer period of time for the change in growth to become permanent.”<sup>426</sup>

The importance of flexibility in scheduling was mentioned by two participants. No matter how thorough the planning, a minor detail that does not fall into place can completely change the

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<sup>424</sup> Wilder and Parker, 227.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid, 233.

<sup>426</sup> Ver Beek, 491.

team's agenda. It is practical—not pessimistic—to have in mind that things can go wrong on the mission field.<sup>427</sup> Someone could become ill; team members might have a falling out with each other; there could have been a misunderstanding between the leader and the hosts in the planning stages; there may be weather, supply, or political delays, or difficulties with transportation for the team; perhaps there is a stolen passport or money or lost baggage with essential supplies.<sup>428</sup> Whatever the case, when a door closes, another opportunity for ministry generally opens for the team. If the STM has been placed in God's hands, then the Lord is the administrator of the change in direction.

In an original approach to the issue of flexibility, a middle-aged man suggested that an American church desiring to have a long-term relationship with a sister organization in another country develop a rotating schedule for participants that would permit an almost constant flow of cross-cultural laborers to be involved in the project.

Two survey responders also mentioned experiencing relationship joys and frustrations. A young man expressed frustration at leaving behind those with whom he had developed relationships during his stay abroad. An older gentleman who has been on multiple medical missions trips spoke of developing lasting friendships among others who often participated with him and his wife.

The last eight responses were each mentioned by only one person. A middle-aged woman advised that team members bring extra cash for projects. "We helped with some needs there, but I wished I'd had more money," she stated. A younger woman counseled participants to not bring their own agenda along on the STM. "Part of the growth opportunities on STM comes from

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<sup>427</sup> Melo, 125.

<sup>428</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 129–134.



laying down our independence and relying on God's leading." Another young lady mentioned that she had experienced growth in leadership skills.

A middle-aged woman emphasized that team members should keep in mind that they are there for service. "STM is about serving, not being served," she stressed. According to Jim Burns<sup>429</sup> "Every Christian leader must stoop to positions of service. Radical Christianity leads to servanthood. [The team leader's] job is to give the people around [him or her] the opportunity to serve and experience ministry. God's job is to break their heart with what breaks his heart."<sup>430</sup>

One middle-aged woman suggested that smaller churches join with larger churches in STM. A man in the same age range advised that team members be selected on the basis of their skill set, matching team members to the field assignment. "Mission trips that take advantage of the diversity of skills and talents of each team member help ensure a more meaningful trip for all."<sup>431</sup> The trip is a waste of time and money unless appropriate people who have applicable abilities put their talents to work in particular ministries.<sup>432</sup> A middle-aged woman expressed frustration at the lack of orientation materials for the members of her team, and the same woman advised that team members take either inexpensive new or gently used clothing that they would be willing to part with along on the trip to leave for needy national colleagues.

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<sup>429</sup> Jim Burns is Executive Director of the HomeWord Center for Youth and Family at Azusa Pacific University in Azusa, California.

<sup>430</sup> Burns, 39.

<sup>431</sup> Michael J. Anthony, "Focusing on Priorities: People versus Projects," in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 60.

<sup>432</sup> Wan and Hartt, 91.

## **Chapter Six: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS IN PASTORS' INTERVIEWS**

*Vacations with a Purpose*, by Chris Eaton and Kim Hurst, lists three benefits of STM for sending churches. First, those churches acquire a missional focus, instead of merely meeting their members' perceived needs. It is hoped that STM-sending churches will be able to use their experiences abroad to discover means of touching the underprivileged and unreached members of their own cities. Second, STM teams can spread the longing to pursue and work for the Lord to the remainder of the congregation, thus energizing the church anew. Third, the necessity of teamwork during an STM trip can encourage unity and strengthen harmony back in the home congregation.<sup>433</sup> In the pastors' interviews I hoped to discover if the benefits listed above would be found among the churches of the NWMN. Their interview was the most thorough of the three groups, containing six questions.

I have given the pastors pseudonyms that each begin with one of the first five letters of the alphabet. Pastor Aaron lives in a small town in central Washington, where he leads a church of about 65 people. He has a heart for missions and as a young man desired to be a missionary, but God led him in a different direction. He has been on a number of missions trips in combination with other church groups, and several people from his congregation and family have gone along at various times. He is in his early 60s.

Pastor Bob is currently the missions pastor at a strongly mission-minded church of approximately 500 in urban western Washington. His job description includes raising missional awareness among church members, planning the church's annual missions emphases, scheduling

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<sup>433</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 29–30.

missionary speakers, organizing outreach in the community and abroad and at times participating in and/or leading STM teams. He is about 60 years old.

Another missions pastor, Carl, is on staff in a suburban church of nearly 1,000 members in western Washington. Prior to coming to this church he worked for a college-age discipleship and short-term mission agency. Consequently, the congregation has a strong focus on STM in addition to the support of long-term missionaries. Pastor Carl's portfolio includes the same types of tasks as Pastor Bob's, and he is approximately the same age.

The youngest of the five pastors interviewed is Pastor Dan who is the youth minister at an urban church of about 1,000 in eastern Washington. In his previous position, he worked for an STM agency that specialized in sending young people on overseas missions trips. Despite his age (around 30), he brought a great deal of experience in planning, leading, and participation as a short-termer to the interview.

Pastor Eric is the lead pastor of a church with 200 attendees in a wealthy, old neighborhood in a western Washington city. He has not had much overseas experience himself but counts several long-term missionaries as good friends. His church has recently sent some teams to Latin America, and he would like the next STM teams that they sponsor to go to more difficult areas of ministry. Eric is about 40 years old, and this is his first lead pastorate. He is still in the process of developing a missions philosophy for his church to follow.

### **Pastors' Question 1**

The first request made of each of the five pastors was this: *"Discuss the aspects of effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness which the STM experience had on your participating congregants. Be specific."* The pastors gave me an average of four responses to this question. All five said that STM raised missions interest within the church community. Carl, the suburban

missions pastor, stated, “Some of the people who have gone have really benefitted. Their world vision has been expanded, their heart for Christ has been expanded, and their desire to serve in the local church—as well as abroad—is expanded.” Those are words every STM-sending pastor would like to hear about the results of their teams’ trips.

However, the pastors’ next two most frequent answers revealed that STM experiences among the NWMN churches need improvement. Three pastors replied that they have realized that better debriefing and application is needed following their church’s STM trips. Dan the youth pastor mentioned, “Sometimes that transition is not done very well . . . [Participants wonder,] ‘OK, now what do we do to take what we just did and apply it here?’” Pastor Eric, the younger of the two lead ministers protested that, “It’s won and done. They go down there, and they get the experience. Then they don’t necessarily do much with their own mission field back here in their city.”

Two ministers recognized that their teams needed better pre-field orientation. Pastor Carl noted, “Those who do a good job on the front end seem to benefit more from [STM] than those who don’t. [The church] benefits more when the people have had a great experience, which goes back to the pre-trip preparation.”

Two other pastors responded that God had miraculously provided for the trips. Pastor Aaron, from the smallest of the five churches represented, told me the story of a woman with a non-Christian husband who felt led to join a short-term team. She had no idea how she could raise the money, but the day before the deadline, her husband was unexpectedly moved to pay her way. Pastor Dan explained, “The pre-trip raising funds and the sacrifice of it all are a huge thing. It’s not spoon-fed to [the young people who participate].”

The remaining eight responses to the first question only garnered one person per code, although certain answers were somewhat related to others. Pastor Aaron indicated that children and youth benefit from participating in STM. He spoke extensively about the impact an STM had on his son. “He came back with a larger worldview, wanting to do something for the kingdom of God.” Aaron’s son is involved in ministry today because of that trip. The pastor’s only regret is that he did not take all his children on STM journeys during their teenage years. It was also Aaron who talked about the impact STM could have on family/colleagues of team members. Following her STM to Africa, a woman’s unsaved spouse told her, “You’re never going again without me.” Her trip made such an impact on *his* life that he later became a believer.

Pastor Bob believes that the STM teams from his church positively impact the economy of the community where the team ministers. For example, at a construction site, their teams hire local laborers to work with them. He also stated, “We will purchase the items there, just trusting that the pastors or missionaries have the best connections and leads, and they’re building . . . bridges.” On the other hand, it was also Bob who wondered if some of their STM funds had been spent unwisely. “Could we have taken all that money that was invested in the going part and just have sent that directly to the missionaries, so they could invest?” he wondered. Then he answered his own rhetorical question, admitting that his church would not be nearly so enthusiastic about missions without STM involvement.

Pastor Dan spoke about how short-termers were able to see and participate in a wide variety of overseas ministries through STM. “Going from [a kids’ camping program in Ireland] to a trip in Northern Asia where you’re not talking about Jesus at all to anyone but are under cover handing out tracts shows a broader picture of what ministry can look like.” While the main

task of short-termers is to assist the nationals, another objective is also important: revealing to participants the extensive range of service prospects in overseas ministry.<sup>434</sup>

Pastor Eric explained how STM can reveal the extent of the participants' faith. "Some had to learn a little bit more about the richness and deepness or lack thereof of their faith; so there was some growth in prayer, and I think that was all good. It was very team building."

Along a similar vein, Eric also mentioned that the screening of applicants needs improvement. In whatever selection process was used in his church, he did not "really get a chance to vet people and their maturity and their faith. So some people went and grew, and some people went and became a clique."

One of the things Pastor Bob mentioned was that missions giving is frequently based on trust. People will not give to a long-term missionary or an overseas project unless they feel that those who will be handling the funds are trustworthy. When a short-term team is able to visit a project site and/or work with a missionary, they come back and report to the church about the effectiveness of the ministry, and it establishes confidence in long-term cross-cultural workers and their projects. "Trust is probably the bottom line in whether people are going to give to missions, particularly among young givers," he explained.

### **Pastors' Question 2**

The second question posed to the pastors was this: "*In what ways, if any, has your participating congregants' enthusiasm for missions influenced others in your church?*" To this question I only received eight replies, and half of them were nearly identical. Four pastors responded that team members became vocal and visual promoters of missions after their STM.

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<sup>434</sup> Anthony, 55.

The two missions pastors were the most emphatic about this point. Pastor Bob enthused, “There’s just something about hearing the story and seeing the pictures that is contagious!” Pastor Carl was a little more subdued in his response. “It needs to be captured quickly,” he answered. “It kind of dissipates quickly, so if you don’t catch people the first week or so after they’re back, their enthusiasm kind of wanes.”

Each of the other four replies was made only once. Pastor Carl continued his train of thought by explaining how teams share about their STM journeys at his large and active church. They will usually invite church members to attend a reception where team participants talk about their experience. The average attendance for these soirées is 40. “One of the reasons that the turnout is so low is that we have so many things going on at the church, and people can only do so many things.” He always tells his teams that they should be encouraged if they have 40 present because those are 40 highly supportive, interested individuals.

Murray S. Decker<sup>435</sup> wrote about the seeming lack of interest in overseas experiences by preoccupied American congregations.

The harsh realization that the majority of people will not take the time to listen to anything more than a two minute synopsis of your time abroad can be a devastating experience . . . Cultural re-entry, and the corresponding spiritual disorientation that frequently accompanies the experience are heightened when you realize that there is no one who honestly cares to listen. It can further bruise a soul that is already weary and hurting.<sup>436</sup>

Pastor Aaron spoke of the wonder expressed by his congregants when they realized that they could make a difference when they participated in STM. Pastor Dan mentioned the desire of people in his congregation to return to the same location where a previous missions trip from

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<sup>435</sup> Murray S. Decker is Professor of Intercultural Studies at Biola University in La Mirada, California.

<sup>436</sup> Decker, 583.

their church had taken place—even among those who had not formerly participated. Others had heard such wonderful reports about the relationships formed there that a desire was birthed to “go back to that spot, those people . . . I think definitely the enthusiasm of wanting to go back on *that* trip is contagious.”

Only Pastor Eric stated that STM had given no additional missions spark to his congregation. “We’ve had missionaries that have come to share their story—what they’re doing in other parts of the world—that has sparked more of an interest in a global reach [than the STM has].”

### **Pastors’ Question 3**

The pastors’ third question related to the application of STM principles to the community where their church is located. They were asked: “*In what ways, if any, has the participants’ enthusiasm for STM impacted your church’s passion to reach different cultural and/or social groups within your neighborhood and community?*” I received two distinctly different responses to this question. Two replied that STM made little to no impact on local outreach. Pastor Carl, who ministers in an upper class suburb, commented, “It’s very interesting that they don’t connect the dots that there are people here with similar needs that they could reach out to every day.”

Three of the pastors replied that their STM involvement had resulted in missional outreaches to their communities. Dan the youth pastor was uncertain how long his youth group could continue their involvement. “With youth ministry, to keep that up long-term is pretty difficult.” Eric’s city church congregants have exclaimed, “OK, now I get it! We need to come back here and work and serve.” The trips have “sparked a lot more interest in serving locally.” Bob, in a somewhat larger urban church, told of some practical things accomplished in their



neighborhood. “We did a medical compassion day, so we gave out free dental care. We’re trying to put those things into the same radar system [as STM].”

#### **Pastors’ Question 4**

The fourth question asked of the pastors was the following: *“How has the STM experience impacted your church’s vision for increased involvement in missions abroad?”* I received five different answers to this question, and two responses were given twice for a total of seven replies. Two ministers reiterated their desire that future STM teams be sent to more difficult and strategic locales. Pastor Carl’s church often sends short-termers to work among UPGs. He said, “When one of our teams goes to one of those people groups and comes back, I think it enhances the vision of the congregation for that people group and what we’re trying to do there, and for our efforts and our prayers and strategies.” Eric’s approach is still in the planning stages, and he is not certain how future teams will operate. “It might be spoken Word; it might be hands and feet. It doesn’t matter. The Gospel has to go out, and we’re all tasked to do it.”

Two other pastors indicated that the result of STM in their churches has been a greater investment in finance, prayer, and resources. Pastor Aaron displayed a certificate his church had received for being one of the top per-capita missions supporters in America. “For the size of our congregation, sure it would be nice to be number one, but we’re not there yet . . . God has given us a great opportunity to reach into places where we can’t necessarily go.” Youth pastor Dan talked about how the entire congregation had been challenged by STM. “If you’re a church that didn’t ever go and you just gave, I don’t think your giving would be increased. I think the reason why our church gives a lot is because we send out people a lot, and they come back with the stories, the experiences, the excitement.”

The three other responses were only mentioned one time. Pastor Bob would like his church to offer financial assistance to those who sincerely desire to go on a short-term trip but cannot afford to do so. “We’re trying to not just become a little elite club who gets to travel around,” he explained. Bob also talked about how their church has been blessed with people of influence who participate in STM. “We trust these leaders in our church. These are people who have great integrity . . . That really is what has carried the vision of missions in our church.” Pastor Eric added that STM helps people in his congregation “see globally.”

### **Pastors’ Question 5**

The pastors’ fifth question resulted in more than two answers per person. I asked the men: “*Do you have any suggestions for improving the STM experience on future missions trips?*” Two pastors replied that teams needed to have a better orientation, including aspects of both spiritual and cultural awareness. Pastor Eric dwelt on the spiritual aspect. He advised that team leaders “do a lot of spiritual preparation with the people before they go, so they don’t get ‘spiritual shock’ in realizing that if you don’t have a prayer life, it’s going to cost you.” Aaron mentioned one particular experience that he had not addressed in orientation. “I didn’t think about the soldier pointing a gun in the cab [of the pickup]. It doesn’t happen here in America, and I probably should have tried to think of some of those kinds of things without scaring the team half to death.”

Aaron also indicated that he did not think it was wise to have short-termers room alone, particularly on their first trip. He told about a woman who had been a “fifth wheel” on a team he had led. She had stayed in a hotel room by herself and suffered from insomnia and spiritual attacks because of the unknowns of the location. He felt that she would have been much better off with a roommate with whom she could have discussed the things she was going through.

Because she did not feel comfortable talking about what she was experiencing, he did not realize what was taking place until after the team had returned home. It would have been a good opportunity for pastoral guidance had he known. Critical choices are often made during STM trips because the experience is so impactful, but without group dialogue, a predicament in which a team member finds herself may not be brought to the team leader's attention. "Spiritual milestones are most effective when they are shared by the pastor and the individual."<sup>437</sup>

It was interesting to note that both missions ministers said that the team should "find the right situation at the right time." Pastor Bob's response focused on how long-term missionaries can assist teams in strategic planning. "Be honest with us. Can you really put us to work? We don't want to just come and be a headache." Pastor Carl stressed the importance of joint development prior to the trip. "If we can work with the field side up front before we even plan a trip and say, 'What is your need? How can we best help you?' then I think what we leave behind on the field is meaningful."

Two pastors also pointed out how vital it is to train the team leaders. Eric would like his church's teams to have "good leaders who are able to lead, not just manage. Not making sure everybody is happy, but stretching people and growing people." Carl talked about the leader's role in a series of orientation meetings. "If [the leader] can do team building, and they like the people they're going with, and enjoy being with them, enjoy praying with them, have a common heart for why they're going . . . [it makes] for a better short term experience for everybody and probably more impact." Carl also mentioned the need for debriefing following the STM. This is another task for a team leader who can skillfully direct the group through a series of questions such as, "What are your takeaways? What is your next step?"

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<sup>437</sup> Larson, 112.

Pastor Bob revealed that he had been pondering this topic for quite some time. He described two different strategies that he is attempting in order to enhance his church's missions program. First, he is in the process of developing a long-range plan for future STM opportunities. "Getting information out sooner is always going to be to our advantage." A brochure listing potential locations for future teams, cost estimates, and requirements is in the making. Second, he is making contacts within the community in order to plan local projects for wider involvement of congregants. It is impossible for everyone to travel overseas, but most have the ability to get involved in missional projects locally.

Frustration was articulated by Bob when he told about how some of his teams had focused on one local congregation over a period of years and had picked up that pastor's negative attitude toward long-term missionaries. He realized that the pastor and his church were reaping the benefits of the team's largesse, but that the short-termers were unable to see the big picture on the field because they had been drawn into a microcosm. For future teams he plans to connect with the long-term missionaries who are in each area where they send teams. By doing so, the STM groups will not "go into a country and do something that's going to create a step backward in what the missionary is trying to accomplish."

The last point made in reference to this question was by Pastor Dan, who described the effectiveness of a recent multi-generational STM. "It showed me a better picture of what missions should be like in the church context . . . Seeing an intergenerational experience was huge. I think it really ignited our church!" Hunter Farrell is an advocate of intergenerational teams. He writes, "The age mix will shape the missional community during the STM, and more importantly, after their return to 'normal life.' Young people's idealism and questioning of

traditional values keep the adults reflecting on the experience long after the actual trip. ‘It is a powerful dynamic, parents learning from their children who will inherit their parents’ world.’”<sup>438</sup>

### **Pastors’ Question 6**

I wrapped up the pastors’ interviews in the same manner as the participants’. *“Please share anything else that has not already been addressed on which you would like to remark concerning your STM experience.”* In response I received 10 distinct replies, or an average of two per minister. Pastor Aaron indicated that most Americans do not really understand the meaning of poverty until they have spent time in the majority world, and STM is one means of being able to fathom this reality. He believes that every Christian should participate in an STM.

Aaron also mentioned that short-termers come away with a better understanding of missionary challenges. The literature agrees with his assessment. Many STM team members think their experience is valuable and worthwhile, particularly when coming to an understanding of the difficulties of missionaries’ overseas lifestyle and their organizations’ involvement in the foreign field.<sup>439</sup> Pastor Bob emphasized that long-term missions cannot be replaced by STM. “We need boots on the ground that get that culture and are investing long-term . . . Hopefully the short-term things stir up the longer vision, and I think they do. I think it works for us.”

Several astute comments were made by Pastor Carl. First, STM needs to be more strategic in the future than it has been in the past. “Because of the economy and the dwindling American wealth, I think we need to look at [the phenomenon] more closely and see what the best use of these funds is.” Second, he believes STM experiences are a “taste test” for further

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<sup>438</sup> Farrell, 76–77.

<sup>439</sup> Smith, 47.

involvement. “This generation is not going to sign up . . . without first going overseas and doing something short-term.” Third, short-term teams can perform more hazardous tasks than long-term missionaries, especially in sensitive countries. “Our teams can go in and do some things that are a little bit risky that the local missionaries would never do for [fear] of being kicked out of the country or persecuted or . . . have doors closed.” Wan and Hartt also indicated that short-termers are somewhat expendable in creative access countries because they do not risk losing a long-term visa when they are put to use in evangelism.<sup>440</sup>

The recommendation of Pastor Eric is for better communication between the teams and the long-term hosts. He indicated that “Some missionaries aren’t prepared or don’t know what they would want when teams come.” Corbett and Fikkert agree with his assessment and go one step further. “The principle of participation implies that the community, church, or organization that receives the STM team needs to be the primary entity deciding what should be done, as well as how it should be done. Even more importantly, they need to be the ones requesting the team.”<sup>441</sup>

In his final evaluation Pastor Aaron reiterated that children benefit greatly from STM journeys. “If I could do anything differently I would have gone earlier when my kids were teenagers and taken each one of them along because it has an impact on how they view living and ministry.” Stiles and Stiles give some practical advice in taking one’s children overseas. If the entire family goes on a short-term experience,

the best way to prepare your kids is to prepare yourself. Children are flexible, and they adapt well, but they will pick up your attitudes. If you have a hard time on the trip, they will too. Know your limitations. If travel is stressful for you at home, it will be in a

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<sup>440</sup> Wan and Hartt, 95.

<sup>441</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 2457.

foreign country. If you can't stand dust balls in the corner, you won't like sleeping on a dirt floor. That's not to say don't go, but be prepared to be flexible yourself.<sup>442</sup>

The last piece of advice came from the youngest pastor in describing his church's STM cycle. "The trip is just a piece of the STM experience," he said. "We're planning our trip from November to August . . . because it's all the meetings leading up to it, really being more strategic in those meetings, trainings. The trip is just a piece of the whole missions trip because after we come home, we'll have three more meetings where we continue to talk . . . so it doesn't just die right after the trip."

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<sup>442</sup> Stiles and Stiles, 153–154.

**Chapter Seven:  
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS IN MISSIONARIES' INTERVIEWS  
AND ADDITIONAL REMARKS**

While STM teams sometimes go on their own or work with a national organization or pastor, the most effective short-termers are those who work in conjunction with a long-term missionary who knows the language, culture, and needs in the area. The *MAPS Volunteer Orientation Manual* advises their personnel to benefit from the chance to absorb insights from their involvement and understanding.<sup>443</sup> “AGWM career missionaries are people of experience and proven credentials who pass rigorous screenings and receive training before being approved for full-time service.”<sup>444</sup> They have lived overseas for a number of years and are accustomed to dwelling and forming connections in different nations.

Pastor Mike Gibson’s STM experience has shown, “With career missionaries pointing the way, the work done in country really makes a significant difference and contributes to a carefully prepared strategy to bring Jesus to a specific area.”<sup>445</sup> He goes on to list some of the benefits of working with long-term missionaries. They help organize the team’s program and give possibilities in which the team’s capabilities and funding will fit. Accommodation and local transportation arrangements are made by them. During field orientation they tell the team where they cannot safely go and give instruction on things they must not say or do within the culture.

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<sup>443</sup> Rick Johnson, *MAPS: Volunteer Orientation Manual, Assignments of 1–3 Months*, 2.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>445</sup> Gibson, 26.



They become the team’s translators, help them exchange dollars into local currency, “and even help us order off the menu!”<sup>446</sup>

From the viewpoint of the hosts, at times teams seem to interfere with their regular work, but they also breathe fresh air into an environment that can become stale without their visits.

Much missionary time and energy is consumed in preparing for STM and providing logistics—transportation, housing, and resources. However, from observing their youthful enthusiasm for mission, their vibrancy of faith, and their experiencing new cultures and societies . . . this interaction often provides them with insights into the home cultures and helps missionaries understand the current thinking of youth in their native lands.<sup>447</sup>

Benefits long-term missionaries receive from STM include demonstrating their daily work to the team; involving short-termers in their responsibilities, thereby spreading their vision to others; encouragement, affirmation, and new backing in prayer; friendships between short- and long-termers; influence on potential new long-term missionaries; and raising additional financial support from the team members, their sending churches, and their support networks.<sup>448</sup>

In order to obtain a wide range of perspectives I chose to interview four NWMN missionaries who work on four different continents in a variety of ministries and who range in age from 30-something to the late 50s. For the purpose of anonymity, I have assigned each one a pseudonym and will not name the specific countries in which they work.

Frank is in his late 30s and has completed two terms of service in Africa. He is married with three elementary-aged children. His interview was conducted in his home office via Skype. Unfortunately his wife was not able to be present at the time of the interview.

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<sup>446</sup> Gibson, 26.

<sup>447</sup> Smith, 42 – 43.

<sup>448</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 32–33.

Greg is in his upper 50s and has spent most of his adult life on the Latin American continent. He and his wife have two grown children. He was also interviewed via Skype following an evening service in a different community from where the couple lives. The interview took place in their hotel room. While his wife was present at the time, she chose not to participate in the interview.

Harvey is about 50 years old and works in a European Bible school. He and his wife have three small children. I interviewed him while their family was on furlough. My husband and I ate lunch with him and his wife, and the interview took place at his family's dining room table. His wife was present at the beginning of the interview, but she had to leave to pick up her children from school and consequently did not contribute to the conversation.

Irene and her husband work in a sensitive country in Northern Asia as English instructors. She is in her early 40s, and they are the parents of several teenagers. Irene and her husband stopped by our home following a meeting with a pastor in our neighborhood, and the interview took place over our dining room table. While her husband was present and made an occasional comment, Irene is the one who had prepared for the interview and gave the majority of the answers.

### **Missionaries' Question 1**

I first asked these missionaries to "*Describe the ideal team and its work.*" I received 19 answers to this question, or an average of nearly five responses per person. All four emphasized that the ideal team is the one that fits the needs on the field. Frank indicated, "When you had a project that you were trying to accomplish, obviously [it would be ideal] to have a team that's coming that has the skill set . . . to accomplish that effectively." Irene specified, "An ideal team . . . would be coming and partnering with us and working with an orphanage that maybe we're

already established at. But the *most* ideal team would be coming to the universities and doing English teaching.” Why is English instruction so important? Some restricted access countries are open to hosting English teachers because they place high importance on their populations’ knowledge of English as an international trade language. It is relatively easy for these instructors to make friends with their students and share their faith.<sup>449</sup>

Three of the missionaries indicated that ideal teams are of a manageable size. One did not give a specific number that indicated manageability. Irene said that 10–15 people would be manageable in their location, and Frank stated that 8–12 would be more practical in his setting. One author recommended a small group “of no more than ten members.”<sup>450</sup>

Size of the team often has to do with the availability of adequate accommodations and available transportation. For example, in our last post, we were limited to teams of no more than seven or eight individuals. We could house a maximum of six (three people to a room) in the AG guest house, and—if there was a married couple in the group—two could stay in our guest room. Our vehicle held five passengers plus the driver comfortably, and we also had access to a small Toyota pickup with space for two additional passengers. During our last couple of years in that country, some small buses were imported that performed daily runs between the capital city and our location. Most of the last team we hosted traveled to our city by bus with me, while two individuals drove home with my husband and everyone’s baggage.

Greg mentioned that in the past they had hosted teams that were so large that they needed to be split up into smaller groups and sent to several cities or put to work at different tasks. While

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<sup>449</sup> Doug Priest, Jr., “Holding Down Two Jobs,” In *The Gospel Unhindered: Modern Missions and the Book of Acts*, ed. Doug Priest, Jr. (Pasadena, CA: William Cary Library, 1994), 150–151.

<sup>450</sup> Landa, 116.

Frank's ideal team size was quite small, he also said, "Then again, we were able to do some stuff with the team of 30 that there's no way we would have pulled off with a smaller team." He referred to a children's rally that gathered over 800 kids. "So again, I think a lot of that has to do with what you are trying to accomplish," he concluded.

Two missionaries said that the ideal team is culturally sensitive. Harvey talked about how there are major cultural differences between Europeans and Americans, even though on the surface everything looks somewhat familiar. He said the ideal team is composed of "positive and energetic people who enjoy new experiences and avoid commenting on how weird everything is to them, even if they feel that way." The "right attitude, coupled with good training in cultural sensitivity, could well turn an otherwise negative experience into one that is positive."<sup>451</sup>

Two missionaries also indicated that the ideal team is flexible. "They are eager to serve in the areas of our greatest need without imposing their own preconceived ideas of what a missions trip should be," explained Harvey. Along a similar vein, two also mentioned that an ideal team is service oriented. Eaton and Hurst write, "Majority world churches receive affirmation by the visitors who come to their nation in an attitude of service. Their faith in God's mercy and provision is built up."<sup>452</sup>

The ideal team is one that brings their own project funds, stated two of the missionaries. Harvey, who often hosts construction teams coming to work on the Bible school campus where he and his wife minister, said that his budget is often strained when he has to find funding for the project in which a team wants to participate. In his opinion, the ideal team "brings the funds to

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<sup>451</sup> Schwartz, 34.

<sup>452</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 36-37.

complete their planned projects in order to minimize our ‘out of pocket’ costs that arrive while hosting them.”

Greg from Latin America feels that the members of an ideal team should be good at training others in ministry. “It’s always great when a team comes in and reproduces what they can do in the nationals, so they can continue that ministry after the team leaves.”

Because of negative experiences with unbelievers on teams, Harvey would like all future team members to be an effective Christian example. Modeling discipleship is important in his setting. Nevertheless, sometimes a team’s most influential evangelistic work is performed among its own members. When spiritual seekers participate in mission, they sometimes become believers and may even be baptized while on the mission field.<sup>453</sup>

Frank stressed the necessity of having strong leadership on the teams he hosts, “leadership that knows how to provide healthy communication between themselves—their team—and the missionary on the ground.” When several people hold positions of responsibility, everyone on the team must be aware of the flow chart.

### **Missionaries’ Question 2**

Next I asked the missionaries to “*Identify some of the positive and negative experiences that made hosting the STM teams a blessing to the field and/or difficult to cope with.*” On the positive side, two missionaries indicated that short-termers can bring expertise to a project. Frank said that in Africa “Somebody coming on a team may be able to really help us up our game, as far as what we are able to do in the local community.” Irene spoke of ESL helpers for their

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<sup>453</sup> Maslucán, 144.

classes. Local English teachers “never get to speak to anybody who speaks English at a native level,” so although they may know the grammar well, their pronunciation suffers.

Two also mentioned flexible teams as being an asset. Irene’s husband George enthused, “Our team that was the most fun to host was a group that said, ‘We’ll eat anything and go anywhere.’”

On a similar note, Harvey indicated that the attitude of a servant is a positive team attribute. Another encouraging attribute mentioned by him was generosity. A helpful trait mentioned by Greg was the ability to follow directions. They are willing to “follow the guidance of the missionary host.” Frank again touched on leadership in his response to this question when he said that the effectiveness of the team depends on leadership. “What the leader does—what his or her attitude is—generally is what you’re going to get from the rest of the team.”

The other three positive traits were all listed by Frank from his experience in Africa. An STM team gives a missionary the ability to do big events. “Sometimes we were trying to introduce something to nationals that they were not familiar with, so to expect them to come and work as volunteers and work effectively wasn’t going to be the case,” he indicated. In a similar theme, he stated, “Many hands make light work.” When a team arrives on the field ready to pitch in and “work hard, [it] can increase the missionary’s abilities exponentially.” Frank also mentioned that a team can validate a local ministry. “When we’d show up with a group of white people that were really willing to work hard and do what was needed, it caught people’s attention, especially where they’re not used to seeing that type of thing.” At times nationals will ask American teams to accompany them to government offices to lend authenticity to a project. This took place in South Africa when a local ministry wanted to commence AIDS education in a

rural school.<sup>454</sup> The same thing is true in other parts of the world. In Latin America teams that act as a draw for the local people are called *carnada* (bait).<sup>455</sup>

On the negative side, three hosts spoke of teams arriving with an insufficient orientation to the field. Harvey said one team was completely unprepared “for the challenges of culture shock.” Greg also talked about the inability to deal well with cross-cultural encounters. One team in particular had a very difficult time. The local people “that had worked with them wondered if they had done something wrong. It was just odd! They weren’t . . . prepared for the culture that they worked with.” Irene talked about having problems with people who simply would not believe the conditions in her country, possibly because they had worked previously in other nations. “Coming into a sensitive country is very different than going into a country that’s not sensitive . . . Sometimes they bring their own agenda, and it doesn’t matter what you say.” At one point it had been necessary to ask a team to leave early because they kept passing out literature, even after being warned repeatedly not to do so.

All the remaining negative aspects of STM were only mentioned by one missionary each. Frank’s first negative was coming without a work budget. “If they come with just enough money to cover [travel expenses] . . . that’s when we turned into tour guides.” Without sufficient funds to work on a project, his budget was incapable of doing anything else with that team. Well-resourced teams are capable of doing much more in the area they have come to serve and are

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<sup>454</sup> Kersten Priest, 271–272.

<sup>455</sup> Priest and Priest, 67.

more heartily accepted by long-term personnel.<sup>456</sup> Livermore suggests that teams spend an equivalent amount on support of the project as they do on travel expenses.<sup>457</sup>

Frank also spoke of the difficulties caused after a team's departure when participants have made empty promises to a national—such as helping that person obtain a visa to America—that they have no intention of fulfilling. “Any time there's any kind of hope, the national would hold onto that; then when the team's gone what happens is that always falls back on the shoulders of the missionaries.”

His last negative comment concerning teams was about type-A team members that cause stress during the STM trip. “They don't understand the culture, they don't understand the slow-moving pace of things, and that obviously can cause a lot of pressure . . . and unfulfilled expectations” for the team member. Harvey expressed a similar sentiment when he spoke of needy team members. “They were simply difficult, ‘high-maintenance’ people to begin with, and they brought this with them to the missions trip.” It was also Harvey who discussed the difficulties that can arise when a group of individuals is incapable of working as a team. “The personalities and issues that arose were played out in front of our students and left a less than positive impression of the church involved and the American church in general.”

Harvey also told about some teams that came to do specialized work on campus. Among their members were non-Christian relatives of other team members. They had the necessary skills to help out with the project, but it was very confusing to the students who observed their

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<sup>456</sup> Gibson, 29.

<sup>457</sup> Livermore, 98.



behavior, trusting that they were American believers. “This resulted in some difficult situations and awkward conversations after the teams departed.”

Both of the other negative remarks made about short-term teams came from the perspective of the missionary from Northern Asia. She has experienced repeat short-termers who come to the field time after time “to get a little ‘buzz.’” She calls them “missions junkies.”

Zehner described similar people in his article in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* “Adults who go on repeated humanitarian missions may ‘need to be needed.’”<sup>458</sup>

Irene’s and her husband’s ministry is the kind of thing that appeals to older short-termers because it does not involve manual labor, and they live in a temperate climate. While she is thankful for their help, it is also true that there is a lack of stamina among older team members. In the respectful Asian culture, “the young people love the older people when they come. That in and of itself is a great thing, but the negative side of it is their lack of stamina.”

### **Missionaries’ Question 3**

The third question asked of the missionaries was the following: “*What suggestions would you make to improve the STM experience for everyone involved?*” Three of the four stressed the necessity of better orientation materials. Frank suggested that all team leaders and as many team members as possible read *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. Irene spoke particularly about relationship building over meals, an important part of nearly every culture. “We’ve had officials be very offended at people who come, but they won’t eat anything [at a specially prepared banquet].” In Acts 10 the Lord used a vision of non-kosher food to convince Peter to visit

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<sup>458</sup> Zehner, “On the Rhetoric of Short-Term Missions Appeals, with Some Practical Suggestions for Team Leaders,” 192.

Cornelius, a Roman, in his home. “Studies show that adaptation to the culture and effectiveness of ministry improve through fellowship with the hosts over a shared meal.”<sup>459</sup>

Half the missionaries continued this thread, indicating that there needs to be a field orientation conducted by the missionary hosts as soon as possible after the team arrives. Frank expounded on this. “The difficulty is they’re always tired from travel . . . but we tried to do that as soon as possible after they were on the ground.” For one- to two-year assignments (MAPS or Missionary Associates), Greg mentioned a more thorough orientation lasting three days.

Two missionaries also mentioned the necessity of regular team meetings and debriefing during the STM experience. In the African context Frank explained how the nightly meetings generally took place. “We’d have an opportunity to discuss those [difficult] things, help them process their experience, and it generally helped the rest of the team members who would potentially see the same thing on another day.” He indicated that these meetings were especially important for younger team members who had a tougher time processing the injustice they witnessed. Greg added, “We’re always available to help with an occasional team member who just thinks it’s too dirty or too different or just not as comfortable as they would have hoped.”

Half the missionaries also talked about the importance of prompt communication between the team leader and missionary, especially during the planning stages of the STM trip. Greg said that for today’s missionaries that is the most important aspect of hosting the team, and closely following communication is relationship development. Harvey emphasized that most cultures “do NOT operate 24/7 like American society, and simple things like purchasing supplies can take much longer than you expect.”

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<sup>459</sup> Livermore, 145.

Each of the other eight responses to this question was only mentioned once. Harvey cited the same point as Frank had in his response to the second question: have a clearly designated team leader. “When the missions team leader is not the pastor, but the pastor is on the team, have a clear understanding of decision making and authority.”

Irene gave three additional responses to this question. Her first reaction touches on stewardship of resources: make certain that the team is needed. She expressed frustration that at times they were not given a choice in the matter. They were just told by mission leadership, “A short-term team is coming. Find a way to use them.” The team may want to come at a time of year when there really is nothing available for them to get involved in, so the missionaries “have to create something for them to do.” Wilder and Parker touch on this issue in *TransforMission*. “If a field is not equipped to handle short-term teams, that is not evil; it is simply the current reality. The missionaries and their agencies need to understand this and resist pressure to host teams they cannot support or [those that] would greatly disrupt what they are doing.”<sup>460</sup>

Irene’s second answer is directed toward individual short-termers: maintain contacts with nationals after departing from the field. “From my experience they’ve never kept in touch with any [national] person that they ever met!” According to Maslucán’s analysis of STM, three fourths of short-termers (76.4 percent) do not maintain contact with their hosts (missionaries and nationals alike) after the journey.<sup>461</sup> Short-termers tend to want to see tangible results (buildings

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<sup>460</sup> Wilder and Parker, 42–43.

<sup>461</sup> Maslucán, 156.

roofed and walls painted), but from God’s viewpoint “fruitfulness . . . is first and foremost found in our relationships—not in programs and tasks.”<sup>462</sup>

Third, Irene responded that a balance needs to be achieved between short- and long-term missions. “Teams are important; they are necessary. But I think on the financial end of it, it is frustrating to have a church sponsor a team to come, and you know . . . [for a whole team] that’s almost a four-year cash budget for a missionary on the money that’s spent.”

Greg made one more comment on the third question. The host missionary may be replicating him/herself in one of the team members. “They may be replacing themselves with a new missionary that could come back to their country, if we manage the teams well and make the experience positive all around.” Numerous long-term missionaries went on at least one STM journey before deciding to become career missionaries.<sup>463</sup> Short-term Christian service abroad often serves as a catalyst to move a basic understanding of missions “to the level of personal conviction where the follower of Christ has an open heart to receiving a call from God for special missionary service.”<sup>464</sup> Of the four missionaries interviewed for this project, at least one couple—Irene and George—was called into missions following an STM to the area where they now work.

Frank advises team leaders and hosts to plan the budget well in advance of the STM trip. In this back-and-forth exchange, they may well find that the particular field will not work because of the monetary needs involved for the trip. “Communicate budget and needs well in advance . . . before any kind of commitment is made.”

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<sup>462</sup> Dearborn, 13.

<sup>463</sup> Meece, 209.

<sup>464</sup> Moore, 27.

The last two remarks were both made by Harvey. First, sightseeing is not the priority for the STM team. Second, work funds should be sent ahead of the group. He reminded, “Missionaries and institutions rarely have ready cash available to prepare supplies for your arrival.”

Another Africa missionary (not from the Northwest) once told me a horror story about a team she and her husband had hosted. The leader of the group was told that all project funds and spending money needed to be sent to the field’s bank account well in advance of their arrival because in that country the laws only permitted them to exchange a limited amount of money each day. Instead of following the missionary’s instructions, the team not only brought all their project and personal funds on the airplane, but they put all the money—thousands of dollars—in the care of the team leader, who placed the entire sum in a carry-on bag that was positioned in the overhead bin on the flight across the Atlantic. When the team arrived after a lengthy journey, the leader was so groggy that she walked off the plane without that bag! Fortunately, she realized her mistake before the ground crew had finished cleaning the airplane, and she was able to reclaim it without any loss. Unfortunately, one of the host missionaries spent a couple of hours every day for the duration of the trip at the exchange bureau, in order to make sure that the team had adequate funds for their project and free time.

#### **Missionaries’ Question 4**

The last question asked of the missionaries was identical to that of participants and pastors. *“Please share anything else that has not already been addressed on which you would like to remark concerning your STM experience.”* I received 10 different responses to this question with no duplicate answers. Frank, from Africa, only made one further remark about communication being the key to success. “Communication plays a huge role in diffusing some of

that anxiety that they might be feeling.” Without adequate communication between the team and the missionary, the team may assume that their host has everything in order for their arrival, but that may not be the case. A back-and-forth dialogue between the two parties needs to take place throughout the planning process, as well as during the STM trip itself.

Irene from Northern Asia made two additional comments. First, she knows from personal experience that an STM journey can trigger a call to long-term involvement. She and George were called to their country of service through a trip that was originally intended to be “purely a cultural experience.” According to Linda Gawthrop, “Statistically speaking, unless short-termers have a really good experience, they won’t go long-term with the same organization.”<sup>465</sup> It seems as though AGWM is doing an excellent job of handling one- to two-year projects. Bob Friesen, AGWM Director of Research, states that nearly half of the new long-term missionary applicants in recent years have had experience as Missionary Associates. Among all current AGWM career missionaries, 24.5 percent have completed MA assignments. That figure is up from 15.1 percent in 2001.<sup>466</sup>

Second, Irene would like to remind teams that their priority for coming should not be sightseeing. However, since they are university English teachers they are able to use the students as tour guides, so they can continue their regular work and still allow short-termers to absorb some of the cultural richness of the area. Trustworthy local tour guides may not be available at all locations, and taking time away from their regular tasks may not be an option in certain places.

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<sup>465</sup> Linda Gawthrop, personal interview with author at WorldVenture (formerly the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society) in Littleton, CO, on June 20, 2012. Ms. Gawthrop is Director of Mobilization for the mission.

<sup>466</sup> Bob Friesen, email message to author, April 13, 2013.

Greg, the Latin America representative, gave three supplementary points of advice. The first two relate to language abilities. The effectiveness of short-termers is reduced without language skills. Because of this the Missionary Associates who have one- to two-year assignments in his area are required to take an intensive Spanish course before beginning their assignment. He also remarked on the fact that many people arrive in his area with high school language training thinking they'll be able to practice their Spanish and communicate effectively. They are usually overwhelmed because "they haven't heard it spoken as fast as they speak it in country."

His other observation may relate to Latin America more than to many other parts of the world. Although the balance of Christianity has shifted to the global South, with two thirds of Christians now living outside North America and Western Europe,<sup>467</sup> there are still many national churches that lack maturity in various parts of the world—churches in countries that have not traditionally had Christian backgrounds.

Greg would like to remind STM participants that their purpose in coming to his area as well as to numerous other nations is to assist strong national churches. "In some places where short-termers go, the Church has been in existence for decades (maybe a century or more) before short-termers arrive on the scene."<sup>468</sup> It is frustrating to national leaders who are taught by North American short-termers about the concepts that have helped grow megachurches in the USA, when those same teachers do not realize that there are "many churches that are far bigger in other

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<sup>467</sup> Livermore, 32.

<sup>468</sup> Schwartz, 30.

parts of the globe.”<sup>469</sup> STM teams that go to Latin America are probably not going to work among UPGs or debutants in the faith. “They sometimes think when they come that they’re speaking to people who don’t know anything about the Bible. I don’t think we’ve had a team where we haven’t had people in one of our countries working alongside them. For the most part the teams have always gotten that [concept] and have been great.”

The European missionary, Harvey, made four additional comments to the last question. First, he advised teams to consider recurring visits to the same location. “A return visit by some of your team members in subsequent years will build a stronger link between your team (church) and the local hosts.” At times this can lead to an enduring bond that lasts for many years.<sup>470</sup> There is a scriptural precedent for making return missions trips to the same area. In Paul’s first two missionary journeys about half of each expedition was spent in return visits to young congregations where his messages reinforced the believers (Acts 14:21–22; 15:41; 18:23). “During the third missionary journey there is no indication that Paul preached in any place where he had not previously been. He spent more time and energy encouraging and establishing churches than he did in starting churches.”<sup>471</sup>

Harvey’s second observation is that in whatever project the team chooses to become involved, they should make sure it is somehow linked to the goal of evangelism. That is not difficult to do. If part of the team’s objective is to dig a well, it should be located beside a church that oversees its maintenance, and its dedication is an opportunity to tell the community about the Giver of living water. If the team is doing construction at an orphanage, church site, Bible

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<sup>469</sup> Livermore, 73.

<sup>470</sup> Maslucán, 143.

<sup>471</sup> Meece, 213.



school, or house of refuge for victims of human trafficking, each of those places offers opportunities to touch others with the love of the Lord and share about the gift of salvation. If the team is participating in a sports camp or teaching English, they can forge friendships with students from other cultures and share their faith in God.

Third, Harvey stressed the need for flexibility and graciousness among team members. Things do not always go as planned because difficulties can arise from many sides: delayed flights, lost luggage, an accident, or an illness. “The positive overall attitude of the group is remembered after your departure—just as long as the project that was completed.”

Last, he counseled short-termers to PRAY before, during, and after the trip. “God, in his wisdom, will be faithful to provide amazing, serendipitous experiences for team members that [they] could never plan for, which will mark their lives for many years to come.”

#### **Additional Remarks**

Before closing this section, I would like to add one additional comment to the list. This may seem obvious, but the team leader must ascertain that all members have their passports up to date, the correct visas for their travels, all the required immunizations, and that prescription medications are placed in carry-on luggage. Another Africa missionary told me of a team’s arrival in the “banana republic” where she served. At immigration, the agent discovered that the *team leader’s* passport had expired! It is astonishing that all along the way, airline personnel, TSA agents, and other immigration officials did not make the discovery. The man was held by the local police overnight until the American embassy was notified when they opened for business the next morning, at which time he was granted an emergency passport. I know of two other occasions where short-term visitors were deported because their visas were not in order.

In an incident related by a colleague who works in Asia, one member of her family was not allowed to board a plane for a much-needed retreat in Thailand. That nation, as well as Israel and a number of other Asian nations, do not permit anyone to enter without at least six months of validity remaining on their passport. There are probably other countries of which I am not aware with similar policies. South African immigration officials have been known to turn away visitors who do not have at least four blank pages remaining in their passports. For these reasons and others, it is recommended that the team be apprised of such little known rules by long-term personnel on the ground in the nation to which they are traveling.

During our first term of service in West Africa a short-term visitor arrived, and her luggage did not come on the same airplane. She was a diabetic, and her insulin and artificial sweetener were in the lost bag. Fortunately, the missing suitcase came on the next flight, and she suffered no ill effects from her misadventure. Things could have turned out much differently, since we have heard of short-termers' baggage arriving on the field as long as a year after their departure—after roaming the globe for months without its owners.

It can be extremely dangerous—if not deadly—to travel without the correct vaccinations for the place a short-termers is headed. Obviously, one wants to be protected against the diseases that are endemic in the receiving country. In addition, if there are required inoculations to enter a nation, and a traveler arrives without evidence in his international immunization card of having received them, *the airport officials are legally required to administer the missing injection on the spot*. Since that is sometimes done with reusable syringes, the traveler could easily become infected with hepatitis, HIV, or another blood-borne illness, along with the vaccine.

My family once arrived in Côte d'Ivoire en route to another location in Africa. Since we had all gone through extensive physical examinations in Springfield during our furlough, and the

doctor in charge had allegedly updated all of our immunizations at that time, we had not closely examined our daughters' vaccination records before traveling. The health officer at the Abidjan airport discovered that the girls' yellow fever immunizations were overdue. It was mandated that she administer the shots; however, with one glance at all of our shocked faces, she took pity on our family and allowed us to enter the country without remedying the deficiency. We quickly took care of the situation at a private clinic, and ever since that time we have been diligent about making sure our immunization records are completely up to date whenever we travel.

## Chapter Eight: IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

### Implications of Findings

After compiling all replies from every survey and interview responder by identical and similar answers into one large spreadsheet, a number of themes concerning STM were discovered. Listed below are the top 10 responses, with some explanatory remarks.

Table 15: A Deeper Faith in God and Scripture

10	Participants	Deeper and more meaningful faith and prayer life
9	Participants	Faith in God and Scripture expanded
5	Participants	Calling and passion to prepare for ministry
4	Participants	Experienced God's supernatural power in reliance on the Holy Spirit
1	Participant	Went through a discipleship program and is pursuing calling to ministry
4	Pastors	Training in spiritual disciplines
2	Pastors	Saw God miraculously provide for the STM trip

1) Participants and pastors both spoke extensively about short-termers returning from the field with a *deeper faith in God and Scripture*. Mention was made 35 times of developing spiritual disciplines and focus, as well as of faith being strengthened through God's miraculous provision of funds for the STM. One pastor indicated that the journey would reveal the extent of the participants' faith or lack thereof. Christian maturity does not take place by accident. It needs to be an intentionally planned part of the STM experience. To inspire

lasting positive change in their own lives, STM groups need a structure of accountability and encouragement in place in order to translate their good intentions into action. Such structures will likely include components such as written goals that they share with the group, accountability pairs, mentors, regular newsletters and meetings where they could do a mixture of things including: share progress on goals, make plans as a group for continuing support, or pray and worship together.<sup>472</sup>

Table 16: A More Thorough Orientation Is Needed

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<sup>472</sup> Ver Beek, 494.

4	Participants	Training in spiritual disciplines needed before STM journey
3	Participants	Better orientation on project location
2	Participants	Better orientation on local culture/lifestyle
1	Participant	Better orientation on speaking through an interpreter
1	Participant	Better orientation about interaction with local people
1	Participant	Better orientation about culturally appropriate clothing
1	Participant	Better orientation concerning expectations
1	Participant	Better orientation on selfless service
1	Participant	Better orientation of local language acquisition
1	Participant	<i>Perspectives</i> course should be required
2	Pastors	Better orientation needed
2	Pastors	Training about spiritual and cultural awareness needed
2	Pastors	Team leaders need specialized training
3	Missionaries	Insufficient orientation makes hosting a team more difficult
3	Missionaries	Better orientation materials are needed
2	Missionaries	Missionary orientation on the field is needed
2	Missionaries	Basic language training needed

2) *A more thorough orientation is needed* before STM teams leave America, as well as by their missionary hosts when they first arrive on the field. This recommendation was made 33 times over the course of the study by people in all three groups (participants, pastors and missionaries). This comprehensive instruction would take place in a series of required team meetings over several weeks—or possibly months—before the team’s departure.

A comprehensive orientation should contain logistical information about costs, dates, visas, and packing. Orientation should also include screening of volunteers;<sup>473</sup> a “personality assessment, [and] cross-cultural awareness” training.<sup>474</sup> Basic missiology instruction should be

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<sup>473</sup> Judy Ten Elshof, “Selecting and Screening Volunteers for Service,” in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 68.

<sup>474</sup> Moore, viii.

built into the course,<sup>475</sup> as well as lessons “about the area’s political history, current events, religions, and customs.”<sup>476</sup> It would help participants to know some basic phrases in the local language.<sup>477</sup> Conversation about flexibility<sup>478</sup> and servanthood<sup>479</sup> are necessary for a successful STM experience. Physical and “emotional conditioning” would also be beneficial.<sup>480</sup> Liability issues must be discussed. The completion of insurance forms and waivers<sup>481</sup> from the sending church and the Wide Open Missions website (<http://wideopenmissions.org/goag/stma/application> process/) are *required* for all AG missions trips. Discussion of medical issues is another necessity; blood types of participants in the event of an emergency, required and recommended immunizations, allergy issues, and medications—both prescription and over-the-counter—must be addressed.<sup>482</sup> Fund raising is another area for dialogue; it can be accomplished as a group, as well as through sending support letters.<sup>483</sup> The most important parts of orientation are team bonding activities<sup>484</sup> and last—but definitely not least—spiritual preparation.

Team leaders need to thoughtfully choose passages and subjects for Bible study, thinking of outlines and themes for intercessory prayer on which they would like the participants to

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<sup>475</sup> Moore, viii.

<sup>476</sup> Slimbach, 170.

<sup>477</sup> Smith, 49. Moore, viii.

<sup>478</sup> Telford, 65.

<sup>479</sup> Priest and Priest, 61.

<sup>480</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 96–97.

<sup>481</sup> Cook, 388.

<sup>482</sup> Melo, 128.

<sup>483</sup> Eaton and Hurst, 76–79.

<sup>484</sup> Chin T. (John) Wang, “Urban Church Resources for Short-Term Mission,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 247.

concentrate.<sup>485</sup> “For [participants] in STM experiences, the initial thrust of biblical-theological application must focus inward—“for out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34).<sup>486</sup> Sufficient devotional materials should be prepared to continue studying individually and as a group throughout orientation and for the duration of the trip, as well as for the period of time during which debriefing sessions are scheduled following the team’s return from the field. This aspect of orientation ties directly into the third point.

Table 17: Expanded Worldview, Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity, Positive and Impactful Experience

15	Participants	Expanded and refined worldview
6	Participants	Positive and impactful experience
2	Participants	Saw need to make Gospel culturally relevant
2	Participants	More culturally aware after STM

3) Two groupings tied for the third most frequently mentioned item. An *expanded worldview, cultural awareness and sensitivity*, and—along a similar vein—*a positive and impactful learning experience* were mentioned 25 times by participants. As has been noted previously, the world is coming to America. Even if STM participants never again travel outside the USA, whatever intercultural experience they learn from their venture will be useful in interactions with colleagues, neighbors, and shopkeepers at home. “Cross-cultural experiences are one of the greatest ways to grow our ability to be adaptable. As we gain understanding about cultural dynamics, use that knowledge to reframe our assumptions, and persevere through the

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<sup>485</sup> Wilder and Parker, 205.

<sup>486</sup> Moore, 25.



continual challenges confronting us in cross-cultural communication and interaction, we begin to behave more appropriately.”<sup>487</sup>

Table 18: Advocacy for Long-Term Missions

10	Participants	Personal appreciation of and advocacy for long-term missionaries and their resource needs
5	Participants	Became advocates for missions and compassion ministries
5	Pastors	STM raised missions interest in church community
4	Pastors	STM participants become vocal and visual promoters of missions
1	Pastor	Realized that long-term missionaries cannot be replaced by STM

Also in third place with a total of 25 responses was *advocacy for long-term missions*. Short-termers have a better understanding of career missionaries and the variety of tasks they perform. They learn to trust in their judgment and stewardship; and they realize that STM teams cannot effectively replace career missionaries who have learned the language, are comfortable in the culture, and have made friends among the local people. “Experience indicates that short-term workers cannot establish churches. They may start them, but the infant churches wither without adequate discipling, and after becoming disillusioned and discouraged they soon die.”<sup>488</sup>

In American churches short-termers are often the most enthusiastic supporters of long-term missionaries, organizations, and projects. After having tasted and seen the effectiveness of the undertakings in which career missionaries are involved, they want to make sure those long-term workers and organizations continue to be supported in prayer and funded. “STM returnees

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<sup>487</sup> Livermore, 159.

<sup>488</sup> Meece, 210.



become advocates, essential to maintain and stimulate new prayer and recruiting. Relationships and connections are kept fresh” through these networks.<sup>489</sup>

Table 19: Relationships

6	Participants	Wish they could have spent more time with hosts and local project recipients
4	Participants	Relationship building necessary for future investment
2	Participants	Relationships with teammates and friends in other parts of the world
2	Participants	Relationship joys and frustrations
1	Pastor	Desire to return to location of existing relationships
1	Pastor	Need for better communication between team and hosts
1	Missionary	Maintain contacts with national acquaintances
1	Missionary	Consider a return visit to the same location

4) The fourth most frequently heard comment, indicated 18 times, concerned *relationships*. When the project becomes the focus of the trip, the most “essential missions ingredient”—people—is missing.<sup>490</sup> Short-termers who are project-focused partake as distant witnesses of the uniqueness of another culture instead of truly plunging into the environment, thereby missing a large piece of the experience.<sup>491</sup> To the local people “being together and getting to know one another” is much more important than the project.<sup>492</sup> The New Testament epistles remind us of the strong relationships Paul formed with people he had met on his missionary journeys, those he ministered to for a few weeks or months. His letters were filled “with love and affection” for those he had disciplined.<sup>493</sup> One of the missionaries interviewed wished to remind short-termers to

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<sup>489</sup> Smith, 51.

<sup>490</sup> Anthony, 55.

<sup>491</sup> Livermore, 146.

<sup>492</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location2405.

<sup>493</sup> Stiles and Stiles, 131.

remain in contact with STM acquaintances, while a participant indicated how much easier that is to do now than in the past. Her team keeps in touch with friends in the national church with which they worked via Facebook, Skype, and email, none of which were available in many places only a few years ago.

Table 20: Changed Priorities

6	Participants	Reorientation of priorities leading to increased giving
4	Participants	Greater desire to help others and looks for opportunities to make a difference
3	Participants	Give more to missions
1	Participant	Disdain for American prosperity gospel since STM
2	Pastors	Greater investment in finance, prayer, and resources

5) Sixteen responders from all three categories discussed *changed priorities* resulting from STM experiences. A change in lifestyle resulting from a perspective shift results in giving generously to the cause of reaching the lost and ministering to the impoverished. “God has called us to be a people who spend our lives for the sake of his glory among the needy outside our gates”<sup>494</sup> (Luke 16:19–31). Pastor and author David Platt believes that American Christianity contains a huge blind spot when it comes to our financial priorities. In the USA alone, the value of property and buildings owned by established church congregations is priced at more than \$230 billion.<sup>495</sup> All over the country parishioners drive to church from houses worth millions of dollars, filled with expensive non-essentials, in cars also valued in the millions. “Consider the cost for the starving multitudes who sit outside the gate of contemporary Christian affluence.”<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2010), 118.

<sup>495</sup> Platt, 118.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Platt cited the example of John Wesley who established a limited budget in order to have extra funds to contribute to the needy who lived near him.<sup>497</sup> After returning from a shopping expedition during which he acquired several pictures to decorate his living space, he encountered a chambermaid who was clothed only in a thin dress in the dead of winter. He wished to supply her with the funds to purchase a warm coat but realized he had spent what he could have given her for the pictures.<sup>498</sup> The experience so affected him that from that day to the end of his life—no matter how much income his writings and teaching produced—he lived at the same modest level and gave away the remainder of his earnings.<sup>499</sup> STM experiences can affect those who participate in much the same way. One interviewee expressed it in this manner: “Hopefully that ripples down to how you spend your time and how you spend your money. If it doesn’t change those two things, it hasn’t changed much.”

Table 21: Increased Burden for and Interest in Missions and Development

9	Participants	Increased burden for and interest in missions and development
5	Participants	Increased prayer for missions

6) The sixth most important result of STM, according to the surveys and interviews, was similar to the third (*advocacy for long-term missions*), although without the aspect of hands-on involvement. An *increased burden for and interest in missions and development* was expressed by 14 people. This included increased prayer for missionaries, as well as taking courses and reading about missions. Peterson and Peterson found similar results in their STEM Ministries survey. “One-third demonstrated increased mission-related education, such as the reading of

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<sup>497</sup> Platt, 194.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid, 126

<sup>499</sup> Ibid, 128.

books and magazines about missions and missionaries. More than three-fourths of respondents enrolled in at least one course about missions.”<sup>500</sup>

Table 22: Gratitude for the God’s Blessings and Becoming a Better Steward of Those Blessings

9	Participants	More thankful for blessings and desire to be a good steward
4	Participants	Appreciation for the blessings of home

7) Next on the list was *gratitude for the blessings of God and becoming a better steward of those blessings*, mentioned by 13 participants. “Deepened faith expresses itself in a grace-filled motivation to live with a more generous heart for all the incredible blessings received.”<sup>501</sup> This goes a step beyond simply feeling “lucky” to have providentially avoided birth among the materially impoverished.<sup>502</sup> It involves biblical study of stewardship, which “will keep us caring. Only the compelling love of Christ will turn us into ambassadors of reconciliation.”<sup>503</sup>

Table 23: A New Perspective on Poverty

10	Participants	Changed perspective on the poor whom God loves
1	Participant	New view of poverty in America
1	Pastor	STM team realized that they <i>could</i> make a difference

8) There was another tie for eighth place with a group of 12 participants and pastors gaining

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<sup>500</sup> Peterson and Peterson, 16–17.

<sup>501</sup> Gibson, 25.

<sup>502</sup> Slimbach, 163.

<sup>503</sup> Adeney, “The Myth of the Blank Slate,” 144.

*a new perspective on poverty* overseas—as well as at home—from their trip. “Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom [wholeness] in all its meanings.”<sup>504</sup>

Table 24: STM Needs to Be Strategic

2	Participants	Team should specialize instead of replacing local workers
1	Participant	Match team members to needed skills
2	Pastors	Future STM teams will go to more difficult and strategic locales
4	Missionaries	The most ideal team is one that fits the needs on the field
2	Missionaries	STM should bring expertise to a project
1	Missionary	Make certain that the team is needed

A mixed group of 12 participants, pastors, and missionaries pointed out that *STM needs to be strategic*, matching the talents and capabilities of participants with the tasks needing to be accomplished on the field. Amos Magezi from the Uganda Bible Institute declares that “the time is wasted . . . [unless] the relevant people with relevant skills come for specific ministries”<sup>505</sup> Furthermore, there are certain projects that are “better left to nationals.”<sup>506</sup> One of the gentlemen I interviewed told of a trip he took years ago in which the team ended up painting walls at a school. About halfway down one wall he realized that the team had spent thousands of dollars in travel expenses to do something that nationals could have easily been hired to accomplish at a fraction of the cost—not to mention providing jobs for local laborers.

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<sup>504</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, location 900.

<sup>505</sup> Wan and Hartt, 91.

<sup>506</sup> Anthony, 54.



Table 25: Simpler Lifestyle

11	Participants	More thoughtful of expenditures and have a simpler lifestyle after STM
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9) The next most frequently mentioned result of STM, indicated by 11 participants, is that they often adopt a *simpler lifestyle* after returning from the mission field. After observing the huge disparity between the West and the majority world, it almost takes a deliberate act against one’s conscience to return to the typical American consumer mentality. One of my interviewees explained this phenomenon well:

It’s given me a little bit of a disdain for American Christianity which was built around our abundance of things . . . God is our provider because we’ve been provided with so many things. Whereas I go into other countries—like in Africa—and I see that they are not provided with a lot of materialistic things, but they have a God who provides for them in a way that is maybe far more meaningful because of the amount of dependence they have on God. After my last few missions trips, it’s made me almost jealous to be there because of their intense need to depend on God. It gives them a deeper relationship, I think. So that’s how it’s changed me personally.

Table 26: Leadership

3	Participants	Concept of leadership expanded
1	Participant	Growth in leadership
2	Pastors	Train team leaders
1	Missionary	An ideal team has strong leadership
1	Missionary	Effectiveness of team depends on leadership
1	Missionary	Team should have a clearly designated team leader

10) *Leadership* and *compassion* tied for tenth place with nine mentions of each among my data. Growth in leadership skills was mentioned by participants, the necessity of training good leaders for the teams was spoken of by pastors, and missionaries cited the need to designate a definite team leader. Difficulties arise when strong leadership is missing or a confusing team structure is in place. “The biggest problems for most short-term mission teams are not technical

or administrative. The biggest challenges lie in communication, misunderstanding, personality conflicts, poor leadership, and bad teamwork.”<sup>507</sup>

Table 27: Compassion and Love for the Unlovely

4	Participants	Greater patience evidenced by new ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds
3	Participants	Increased compassion and love for others
2	Participants	More compassion for the unlovely because Jesus loves ALL people

*Compassion and love for the unlovely* was also indicated by nine participants. The literal meaning of the word *compassion* is “with passion, suffering with or feeling the distress of another.”<sup>508</sup> Compassion was modeled by Christ during his earthly ministry when he healed the sick (Matthew 9:35–36 and numerous other references), provided a miraculous repast for the hungry (Matthew 15:32–38, etc.), raised the dead (Luke 7:11–15, 8:49–56; John 11:38–44), and wept over the city of Jerusalem because he knew of its future demise (Luke 19:41–44). According to JoAnn Butrin, incarnational ministry is entwined with empathy for others’ needs. The outgrowth of exalting God in worship, is serving others with loving compassion (1 John 3:17, James 2:14–17).<sup>509</sup>

### Conclusion

As a phenomenon STM experiences are here to stay. At times a missions trip may do more for the participants than for those they come to serve,<sup>510</sup> but that is not entirely bad. STM

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<sup>507</sup> Livermore, 155.

<sup>508</sup> Henri Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill and Douglas A. Morrison, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, New York: Doubleday, 1983, quoted in Butrin, location 202.

<sup>509</sup> Butrin, location 436.

<sup>510</sup> Landa, 107.

can be an ideal way to disciple believers and open their eyes to needs they will not encounter while living in suburban America. It can increase compassion for the materially poor and help effect change in a way that perhaps no other experience can. In addition, STM is one means in which the postmodern congregation can find fulfillment. This age group does not simply want to be informed about missions; instead they wish to be proactively involved.<sup>511</sup> Short-term enthusiasts J. Mack and LeeAnn Stiles of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship believe that STM trips do not have to be justified “due to the good they do for long-term missions. They are good in and of themselves. They do powerful things for the kingdom—different from long terms—but equally viable.”<sup>512</sup>

Missiologist Ralph Winter only partially agrees with the Stiles’ point of view. The *Perspectives* course teaches that when done well, STM trips

can yield wonderful results. They can give people a much deeper understanding of the task remaining among unreached peoples. They can fire vision, quicken prayer and catalyze commitment to more permanent engagement. But any short-term activity finds its greatest value when it exists, not for its own benefit, but as an integral part of a long-term process. This allows the fruits of the short-term mission to be evaluated, and the good to be preserved and channeled. The mission effort of a local church inevitably fails when [it sets] out thinking that a people group can be reached in a year or two.<sup>513</sup>

It is certain that balance needs to be achieved between proponents of STM and those who support only long-term missions. In some respects and in a number of organizations, STM has become an industry. As in any bureaucracy, caution must be exercised to prevent it from becoming a self-supporting system that could lose sight of its original objective of effectively involving laity in God’s mission.

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<sup>511</sup> Wan and Hartt, 84–85.

<sup>512</sup> Stiles and Stiles, 38.

<sup>513</sup> Winter and Hawthorne, 731.



In order to be most useful, short-termers need to be as thoroughly prepared as possible for their cross-cultural encounter before their departure, as indicated in the section concerning orientation in the previous chapter (pages 159–161). Miriam Adeney suggests that short-term teams avoid the American ideals of productivity, haste, and purchasing power and instead “get to know the Christians where you are going, get to know the culture, and get to know what they really think about Americans. If long term help appears to be what they need most, consider how you can plug into that.”<sup>514</sup> In other words, build a relationship.

A Sudanese brother named Andrew once told David Platt<sup>515</sup> that his people were grateful for the aid that had been sent to their country by various agencies and organizations during the long years of civil war. Then he glanced up and asked, “Even in light of all these things that people have given us, do you want to know how you can tell who a true brother is? . . . A true brother comes to be with you in your time of need.”<sup>516</sup> While at times it may seem more efficient to send supplies or money to pay for a project to be completed by local laborers, in some cases coming alongside our sister churches in loving relationship better meets their need of fellowship and encouragement.

That being said, many church resources have been squandered on STM in the past. Sending short-termers who have been insufficiently screened and trained, immature individuals who purposefully draw the team’s attention and energy away from the ministry in which they have come to participate, team members who are not qualified for the effort needed, and larger teams than are necessary all waste massive amounts of resources every year. “It’s never easy to

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<sup>514</sup> Adeney, “The Myth of the Blank Slate,” 137.

<sup>515</sup> David Platt serves as lead pastor at The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>516</sup> Platt, 197–198.

say no, but when you're spending thousands of dollars of the Lord's money, it's an important part of recruiting."<sup>517</sup> Wise stewardship corresponds with discernment in the screening process.

It has been said that God only had one Son, and he was a missionary. During Jesus' earthly ministry he visited villages and towns throughout Judea preaching, teaching, and healing the multitudes of sick people who came to him. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field'" (Matthew 9:36–38).

Jesus did not tell his disciples to manage the crowds but to *pray*. He did not tell them to pray for the hurting souls that surrounded them, but rather for laborers to go into the harvest field—in other words, for the Church. "When Jesus looked at the harassed and helpless multitudes, apparently his concern was not that the lost would not come to the Father. Instead his concern was that his followers would not go to the lost."<sup>518</sup> Prayer for laborers—both short-term and career missionaries—is an imperative.

Praying with knowledge is more effective than a general or universal prayer. The apostle Paul advised the Corinthian church not to pray only in spirit but also with the mind. "I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding" (1 Corinthians 14:15, TNIV). A good place to begin praying with understanding for the unreached peoples of the world is AGWM's website "Beyond: The Unreached Peoples Imperative" (<http://agwm.com/upg/index.html>), which lists information about a few UPGs in each region of the world. Unfortunately, this list is far from comprehensive. For example, in the nation of Chad, Central Africa, alone there are 97

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<sup>517</sup> Telford, 47.

<sup>518</sup> Platt, 187.

UPGs,<sup>519</sup> but for the entire continent of Africa only seven of the least reached ethnicities are listed.

A far better source is a book by Patrick Johnstone called *Operation World*, with exhaustive data on every nation-state, encompassing figures on the religions of each country, recent information on Christian ministry in every nation, and special prayer needs from each area. Included is a daily guide to prayer for the world's peoples. "Over the course of a year, you will pray specifically and intentionally for every nation in the world"<sup>520</sup> when this plan is followed. The same information is available online at the Operation World website ([www.operationworld.org](http://www.operationworld.org)). From this site it is also possible to register for a daily prayer focus message to be sent to one's email address.

It seems blatantly simplistic, but *the key to missions is prayer!* "Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession" (Psalm 2:8, NLT, *italics mine*). With a monumental need for both career and short-term Christian workers in a world-wide mission field comprised of billions of lost souls, the obvious starting point of mission is to pray for laborers as Jesus asked his disciples to do. Then every believer must be prepared to follow the leading of the Spirit as he directs each person about where to go and with whom to share. "The God of mission has given his church to the world."<sup>521</sup> In the same manner as the Father sent Jesus, the Lord sends us to be his ambassadors to the nations (John 20:21).

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<sup>519</sup> Patrick Johnstone, "Chad," *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*, <http://www.operationworld.org/country/chad/owtext.html> (accessed April 20, 2013).

<sup>520</sup> Platt, 189.

<sup>521</sup> Dearborn, 2.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Short-Term Missions (STM) Participant Survey

- 1) In what ways has/have the STM trip(s) you were involved in made an impact on your life?
- 2) In your opinion, is there anything that could have been done by you, the leader of your team, or your hosts that would have improved the experience or results of ministry conducted on your STM trip?
- 3) In what manner, if any, has your STM experience affected your lifestyle after your return home? Or has it?
- 4) Please share anything else that has not already been addressed on which you would like to remark concerning your STM experience.

## Appendix B

### **Questionnaire Informed Consent Form: *Perceptions of Short-Term Missions (STM) Team Participants***

I am conducting research on the perceptions of STM participants for my master's thesis. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked for your age range, gender (for data purposes), and 4 research questions in a questionnaire by the researcher, Sonia Jordeth Shaw. You will be asked to provide written responses to each of these questions. Your participation in the study will last approximately 15 minutes.

This study involves personal disclosure through honest written responses. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential. Your written responses will not be shared with anyone besides the researcher. You will not be asked to write your name on the questionnaire, but simply to provide your gender and age range. Your written responses will be transcribed into the data section of the thesis. This study is expected to provide a greater understanding of the perception of the effectiveness of short-term missions within the Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God and why these perceptions exist. If you choose to take part in this study, you will contribute greatly to this increased level of understanding. If you do decide to participate in this study you have the option of withdrawing at any time for any reason without any penalty. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at Northwest University.

If you have any questions or comments about this study please contact me at 360-908-8809 or [sonia.shaw10@northwestu.edu](mailto:sonia.shaw10@northwestu.edu). You can also contact the chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Dr. Kevin Leach, at Northwest University at 425-889-5248 or [kevin.leach@northwestu.edu](mailto:kevin.leach@northwestu.edu).

You will receive a copy of this form.

Sincerely,

Sonia Jordeth Shaw  
Master of Arts in Missional Leadership Graduate Student at Northwest University

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I have been made aware of my responsibilities as a participant. Furthermore I have been made aware that I may withdraw from participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty whatsoever.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



## Appendix C

### **Face-to-Face Interview Informed Consent Form: *Perceptions of Short-Term Missions (STM) Team Participants***

I am conducting research on the perceptions of STM participants for my master's thesis. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked for your age range, gender (for data purposes), and 4 research questions in a face-to-face interview with the researcher, Sonia Jordeth Shaw. You will be asked to provide verbal responses to each of these questions. Your participation in the study will last approximately 15 minutes.

This study involves personal disclosure through honest oral responses. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential. The face-to-face interview will be digitally recorded; however, the recording will not be shared with anyone besides the researcher. Your responses will be transcribed and your name changed for the purpose of confidentiality within the thesis. The recording will be erased once the degree is conferred at the end of the study. This study is expected to produce a greater understanding of the perceptions of STM and why those perceptions exist. If you choose to take part in this study, you will contribute greatly to this increased level of understanding. If you do decide to participate in this study you have the option of withdrawing at any time for any reason without any penalty. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at Northwest University.

If you have any questions or comments about this study please contact me at 360-908-8809 or [sonia.shaw10@northwestu.edu](mailto:sonia.shaw10@northwestu.edu). You can also contact the chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Dr. Kevin Leach, at Northwest University at 425-889-5248 or [kevin.leach@northwestu.edu](mailto:kevin.leach@northwestu.edu).

You will receive a copy of this form.

Sincerely,

Sonia Jordeth Shaw  
Master of Arts in Missional Leadership Graduate Student at Northwest University

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I have been made aware of my responsibilities as a participant. Furthermore I have been made aware that I may withdraw from participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty whatsoever.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions for Pastors Concerning Short-Term Missions (STM)

- 1) Discuss the aspects of effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness which the STM experience had on your participating congregants. Be specific.
- 2) In what ways, if any, has your participating congregants' enthusiasm for missions influenced others in your church?
- 3) In what ways, if any, has the participants' enthusiasm for STM impacted your church's passion to reach different cultural and/or social groups within your neighborhood and community?
- 4) How has the STM experience impacted your church's vision for increased involvement in missions abroad?
- 5) Do you have any suggestions for improving the STM experience on future missions trips?
- 6) Please share anything else that has not already been addressed on which you would like to remark concerning your STM experience.

## Appendix E

### **Face-to-Face Interview Informed Consent Form:** *Perceptions of Pastors of Short-Term Missions (STM) Participants*

I am conducting research on the perceptions of pastors of STM participants for my master's thesis. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked for your age range, gender (for data purposes), and 6 research questions in a face-to-face interview with the researcher, Sonia Jordeth Shaw. You will be asked to provide verbal responses to each of these questions. Your participation in the study will last approximately 20 minutes.

This study involves personal disclosure through honest oral responses. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential. The face-to-face interview will be digitally recorded; however, the recording will not be shared with anyone besides the researcher. Your responses will be transcribed and your name and church disguised for the purpose of confidentiality within the thesis. The recording will be erased once the degree is conferred at the end of the study. This study is expected to produce a greater understanding of the perceptions of STM and why those perceptions exist. If you choose to take part in this study, you will contribute greatly to this increased level of understanding. If you do decide to participate in this study you have the option of withdrawing at any time for any reason without any penalty. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at Northwest University.

If you have any questions or comments about this study please contact me at 360-908-8809 or [sonia.shaw10@northwestu.edu](mailto:sonia.shaw10@northwestu.edu). You can also contact the chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Dr. Kevin Leach, at Northwest University at 425-889-5248 or [kevin.leach@northwestu.edu](mailto:kevin.leach@northwestu.edu).

You will receive a copy of this form.

Sincerely,

Sonia Jordeth Shaw  
Master of Arts in Missional Leadership Graduate Student at Northwest University

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I have been made aware of my responsibilities as a participant. Furthermore I have been made aware that I may withdraw from participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty whatsoever.

---

Print Name

---

Date

---

Signature

## **Appendix F**

### Interview Questions for Missionaries Concerning Short-Term Missions (STM)

- 1) Describe the ideal STM team and its work.
- 2) Identify some of the positive and negative experiences that made hosting the STM teams a blessing to the field and/or difficult to cope with.
- 3) What suggestions would you make to improve the STM experience for everyone involved?
- 4) Please share anything else that has not already been addressed on which you would like to remark concerning your STM experience.

## Appendix G

### **Face-to-Face Interview Informed Consent Form:** *Perceptions of Missionary Hosts of Short-Term Missions (STM) Teams and Individuals*

I am conducting research on the perceptions of missionary hosts of STM participants for my master's thesis. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked for your age range, gender (for data purposes), and 4 research questions in a face-to-face interview with the researcher, Sonia Jordeth Shaw. You will be asked to provide verbal responses to each of these questions. Your participation in the study will last approximately 15 minutes.

This study involves personal disclosure through honest oral responses. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential. The face-to-face interview will be digitally recorded; however, the recording will not be shared with anyone besides the researcher. Your responses will be transcribed and your name and mission field disguised for the purpose of confidentiality within the thesis. The recording will be erased once the degree is conferred at the end of the study. This study is expected to produce a greater understanding of the perceptions of STM and why those perceptions exist. If you choose to take part in this study, you will contribute greatly to this increased level of understanding. If you do decide to participate in this study you have the option of withdrawing at any time for any reason without any penalty. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at Northwest University.

If you have any questions or comments about this study please contact me at 360-908-8809 or [sonia.shaw10@northwestu.edu](mailto:sonia.shaw10@northwestu.edu). You can also contact the chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Dr. Kevin Leach, at Northwest University at 425-889-5248 or [kevin.leach@northwestu.edu](mailto:kevin.leach@northwestu.edu).

You will receive a copy of this form.

Sincerely,

Sonia Jordeth Shaw  
Master of Arts in Missional Leadership Graduate Student at Northwest University

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I have been made aware of my responsibilities as a participant. Furthermore I have been made aware that I may withdraw from participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty whatsoever.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Appendix H

### The Shaws' Comprehensive Travel List<sup>522</sup>

So you want to come to the DR Congo? This page is full of useful information on how to get here. Travel in Africa can be quite the interesting adventure so the best thing to pack is a *flexible attitude and an overdose of patience*.

*The overall political environment of the DR Congo and international travel can change quickly, so be sure to check with us before finalizing your plans to come. We try to keep this page up to date but things change so we cannot guarantee what you read here reflects the current reality.*

**Formal registration as a team:** Unfortunately we live in a litigious, "I will sue your pants off!" world. Registration as a ministry / construction team with our mission headquarters in Springfield, MO, is necessary to cover the liability release forms and temporary insurance in order to avoid undesirable complications in the future. This is done through the MAPS office, tel# 417-862-2781, ext. 2380 or online (<http://wideopenmissions.org/goag/teams/>). This takes several weeks to process so do not delay in starting this important step.

**Immigration/Visa requirements:** A passport and an entry visa are required for the DR Congo, and this must be obtained before arrival. I highly suggest you use a travel document service such as Travel Document Systems (<http://www.traveldocs.com/>) to process your visa application. They are fast and reliable. They do charge a handling fee but it is worth it. Follow the directions on this web page (<http://www.un.int/drcongo/visa.htm>), which gives the details on what is needed for a tourist visa. You will need to have a letter of invitation from us to include with your application, so do not wait until the last minute to get this from us and apply. Apply for a tourist visa and use the Washington DC office of Travel Document Systems. Overnight mail is a good idea and be sure you have the capability to trace your documents when they are mailed. This can easily take over one week, so be sure to leave enough mailing time. You must also arrive in the DR Congo within ninety days of the issue date of the visa for it to remain valid. The visa is good for one to six months after you arrive in the country. Make a photocopy of the inside information page of your passport and your visa page and carry it elsewhere in the event you lose the original. **BE SURE TO CONSULT BOTH THE TRAVELDOCS SITE AND WITH US AS VISA REQUIREMENTS CAN CHANGE.**

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<sup>522</sup> Bill Shaw and Sonia Jordeth Shaw, adapted from "Travel Information," Talking Drums Africa, <http://www.talkingdrumsafrica.org/pages.asp?pageid=112109#top> (accessed January 18, 2013).

No visa is needed for your stop in Europe, or in South Africa/Johannesburg if you should want to leave the airport or spend some time there after your visit. If you stop in Nairobi, Kenya and leave the airport there is a visa you can obtain at the airport. It costs \$50 US currency.

**Travel:** We have an international airport in Lubumbashi (airport code: FBM) so this should be your destination. **DO NOT** travel through Kinshasa as the experience of national flights from there to Lubumbashi is not one you want to have. Generally your best routes are to fly roundtrip to Addis Ababa, Nairobi, or Johannesburg and then book a round trip flight from one of these three cities to Lubumbashi. Kenya Airways has daily flights to Lubumbashi from Nairobi.

**Luggage limits:** Luggage limits are unstable so be sure to verify with your airline to avoid huge excess baggage fees. Be aware of changes in baggage allowances that can happen if you fly a different carrier from Europe to Africa. You want to check your bags in the USA and not have to retrieve them in your hub city in Europe. The same is true for Kenya Airways or another airline that flies from the hub cities of Johannesburg or Nairobi. Their luggage limits may be different from the other international airlines.

Should other items meant for the team (tools, food items, etc.) require additional space, use old suitcases purchased at Goodwill that you can leave behind. The medium size 24 gallon Action Packers, available from REI (Google it to check on the best price) are also good for travel and accepted by the airlines, as are Contico containers available in the automotive department of Wal-Mart. Either can be closed with a TSA-approved combination lock and a nylon luggage strap.

**Suggestion:** Check the Ethiopian Airways flight to Addis Ababa via Washington, DC. It is a long flight (13 hours), and for that reason may not be the best for some travelers. However, it may be the least expensive option. If you wish to spend additional time in Ethiopia on your way home, you will need to obtain a visa from their embassy in the USA before coming.

You can arrange extra days in your European hub city (Paris, London, Amsterdam) for tourism but *do this on your return flight*, not going over, since doing this on the way to Africa will change your baggage allowance.

**Travel agents:** We use SIAMA (<http://www.siam.nl/>) a Dutch company. We also check online for ticket prices through the usual travel websites (Travelocity, etc.) Electronic tickets are fine, but it is highly recommended to pay a bit more and have tickets that are at least date-changeable. The best is a ticket that is refundable. Stable political conditions are not guaranteed and anything can happen at the last minute which could delay your coming. To pay extra is better than losing the whole ticket if the trip is for some reason cancelled. Between mid-December to mid-January and throughout the summer are considered high season flight times. Tickets will be more expensive and seats scarcer, so do not wait too long to make your purchase.

**Packing:** Pack one change of clothes and basic toiletries in your carry-on in the event your checked bag gets delayed or lost. Any personal medications should be in your carry-on bag with prescriptions in the event you are challenged by customs officials. Valuables such as cameras and laptops should not be checked but carried on as well. Make sure your carry-on bag is not too large because airlines are more restrictive now than before. They may check oversize cabin bags at the boarding gate, thus defeating the purpose of having spare clothes in your carry-on.

*The general rule for international travel is to take half as much clothing and twice as much money as you think you will need!*

### **What to Bring:**

- 1) Mosquito net—single bed size. The best thing to do before coming is have someone sew an eight inch strip of cotton fabric (doubled over the net) around the bottom, so you can easily tuck it in under your mattress. We are firm believers in nets—before we used them we had malaria ALL THE TIME. After starting to use nets, we RARELY had malaria. NO JOKE!! This is more important than the malaria medications, but NOT a substitute. (We can purchase these from you when you leave if you wish.)
- 2) Set of single bed sheets
- 3) An Inflatable or a small regular pillow; a light blanket is optional.
- 4) Towels and wash cloth
- 5) Water bottle—dehydration is a problem so your own water bottle is a good idea. Salt tablets or Gatorade powder are a very good idea as well.
- 6) Cameras are not a problem, but video cameras are. Limit the video cameras to a maximum of two for the entire group, and carry them VERY discreetly.
- 7) Sun screen, hat, and sun glasses.
- 8) AA Maglite LED flashlight with extra batteries is very useful.
- 9) Zip-Lock type bags to keep the dust and moisture out of stuff.
- 10) 2–3 packets of moist towelettes or hand sanitizer.
- 11) Bandanna—seems to be a jack-of-all-trades, useful item.
- 12) For construction teams: Bring a pair of leather work gloves and an extra pair of the same quality for your Congolese coworkers. Check with us before bringing any other tools.

**Note:** Contact lenses are difficult to use due to the high amount of dust, and solutions are not available on site. Pack what you need but bring regular glasses in the event your contacts get contaminated.



Munchies of some kind can take the edge off the end of a day when you are exhausted, and the heat, dust or smell finally gets to you. Some comfort food is not a bad idea. (This is another place where zip-lock bags are indispensable-keeping the ants out of your junk food!)

### **Clothing:**

Construction work clothes—a pair of jeans or cotton trousers plus a tee shirt. Shorts are not really acceptable for Americans to wear in public, unless you want to be confused with the typical European grunge tourist who passes through occasionally. (In that case be sure to wear sandals and dark socks, and do not wash your hair!)

Dress shirt and slacks for Sunday are fine. Preachers can wear a shirt and tie. No coat is needed. Walking shorts for relaxing after work at the house. Sandals/flip flops, but you can buy a pair here for about \$2.00. Shoes—one pair to travel in and wear on Sunday and one pair to work in.

### **Women's clothing notes:**

AVOID shorts, sleeveless or open shoulder tops, low cuts. MODESTY is the key. Same as for men, with the following:  
1 nicer skirt or light-weight dress for use in restaurants or at church  
Another skirt (lightweight denim or sturdy cotton) useable for working or marketing  
Capris and slacks are permissible in public, but shorts are not  
Cotton undies and bras are more comfortable in the tropics than "silgies"  
Slip and lightweight sleepwear  
Feminine hygiene products are available, but if you have a preferred brand pack what you need.

We have a washing machine so a one-week supply of clothes will be enough.

### **Travel Budget:**

Airfare: Between \$2,000–\$2,300

Travel immunizations and visa: The visa is \$150, then immunizations around \$100–\$300

Local transportation: \$50

Food and Lodging: plan on \$20/day, includes meals taken at restaurants

Extras: (offerings, souvenirs) \$100

Int'l travel expenses: (overstay in Paris, etc.): variable

TOTAL: Between \$2,350–\$3,000

**Friendship gifts for co-workers:** You can bring some gifts for the church members who will be working with us if you wish. I suggest things like medium-quality ink pens, baseball caps, small tools, or another possibility would be clothing items-maybe something you brought but can leave behind. French is the official language, so any literature you bring needs to be in French.

There are also a few things we cannot get here for our own use and we would like each member of the team to bring some of these items, as space allows. (We will reimburse you for these articles.) A list will be provided before you come.

**Lodging:** You will be staying in a guest house, dorm-style with several people sharing the same room and having common bathing and toilet facilities. If the team is too large there is the possibility of sleeping on a mattress on the floor. Cold showers most likely but you will appreciate it. Do not expect AAA service—this is definitely Africa. NOTE: We have a 220 volt electrical system but will provide step down transformers for whatever electrical appliances you may have, so *there is no need to purchase transformers or special appliances for the trip*. Your American electrical stuff will work here.

**Food:** Most meals will be eaten in our home. An opportunity to eat Congolese food will be provided, and we will eat out in a restaurant once or twice. There is nothing to fear but fear itself. Remember—it all tastes like chicken!

**Money issues:** In the Congo American dollars are the preferred currency—in \$50 and \$100 bills. Newer bills (no older than 2007) are necessary, since the exchange bureaus will not exchange the older ones with smaller faces. Do not bring any torn or crumpled bills because they are not accepted. We can exchange any leftover local money with a dollar check at your departure.

Souvenirs can be purchased on the last day of the trip.

### **Medicines/Health issues**

Yellow Fever is the only required immunization. It may be difficult to find an office that will have it in stock, so take care of this as soon as you can. Check with your local county health department for this. You may be able to get it at a local pharmacy, but you will need a prescription from your family physician to do so. Some doctors also have this vaccination available in their office, if they do travel advisories there.

An international certificate of vaccination is required for entry (normally called the yellow card), so be sure to have this issued to you as well and bring it with you. The yellow fever vaccine is good for 10 years so if you have already traveled to Africa recently you should be covered.

Tetanus shots need to be up-to-date.

Your local health department or family physician will want to stick you with a variety of other vaccines (typhoid fever, various hepatitis inoculations, meningococcal, MMR, maybe even tuberculosis and rabies.) All of these diseases exist here, and it is a question of the odds. As missionaries we take all of these injections. The risk of exposure for us is greater since we live here all the time. You are only visiting for about two weeks, but all it takes is one little virus or

bacteria to make you sick. The decision to have these other vaccinations is yours and therefore the responsibility is yours as well.

We do recommend oral typhoid and meningococcal vaccinations.

Malaria prevention medicine is necessary, so follow your doctor's advice on which one. They will probably recommend Malorone, Larium (also called Meflaquine), or doxycycline. We do not recommend Larium/Meflaquine because it causes nightmares and depression. Doxycycline is the least expensive option by far, but some people are allergic to it. Malaria medicines are available over the counter here, but they will cost as much or more as in America.

It is good to know your blood type, so in the event of an emergency we know what to pump into your body!

**Allergies:** Please let us know by email if you have any serious food allergies that may require adjusting meal selections.

**Special note on medical realities:** Medical emergency facilities may not be at an American level of standards here in the DR Congo. You need to be in good health—NO EXCEPTIONS!! Any medical risks are increased significantly due to this fact so caution and common sense are the rule of the day.

**Over the counter drugs that may be helpful:** Melatonin, Excedrin [PM] or Tylenol PM to help you sleep and get over jet lag, some kind of headache relief, Tums and Imodium for stomach troubles, allergy tabs if you are prone to pollen-, dust- or mold-induced allergy attacks.

**Calendar/Ministry Plan:** It is our goal that your contribution be to not only build a building, but that you also experience fellowship with the Congolese believers. With this in mind, interaction with the local church members and community will be encouraged, and you will be working together with them. This requires more patience (language and cultural barriers can be a real pain), but in the long term it produces a better result. It is important to instill a sense of ownership, and this helps in the long-term development of the ministry here in the Congo. In short, we will not be trying to break the land speed record for the fastest building in Africa! Efficient is not always effective!

The schedule of activities will be finalized before the trip but again flexibility and expecting the unexpected are both survival skills. If your team is here for construction that will be the focus for the first week but will taper off as we get closer to your departure unless unexpected delays in construction hinder the progress of the work. If things move along well in the construction phase we will finish with some kind of evangelism or spiritual emphasis event.

And with all of that, you are now ready to come to the DR Congo!

## Appendix I

**Weather-Related Health Issues**  
**HealthCare Ministries Newsletter**  
**Thursday, January 10, 2013, sent to all AGWM personnel<sup>523</sup>**

*Since many of you around the world are hosting teams whose team members are not acclimated to the various weather conditions, it is vitally important for the host to be able to identify weather-related issues and know how to provide first aid.*

### **Hints for Health Winter 2013**

#### **Weather-related Health Issues**

#### **Part I – Cold Weather Health Issues**

#### **Hypothermia**

Hypothermia is a medical emergency that occurs when your body loses heat faster than it can produce heat, causing a dangerously low body temperature. Normal body temperature is around 98.6 F (37 C). Hypothermia occurs as your body temperature passes below 95 F (35 C).

When your body temperature drops, your heart, nervous system and other organs can't work correctly. Left untreated, hypothermia can eventually lead to complete failure of your heart and respiratory system and to death. It usually occurs when the body is exposed to extremely cold temperatures and/or immersed in cold water.

Signs/ Symptoms of moderate to severe hypothermia

- Shivering
- Clumsiness or lack of coordination
- Slurred speech or mumbling
- Stumbling
- Confusion or difficulty thinking
- Poor decision making, such as trying to remove warm clothes

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<sup>523</sup> Karen Herrera, email to AGWM personnel from HealthCare Ministries, January 10, 2013.

- Drowsiness or very low energy
- Apathy or lack of concern about one's condition
- Progressive loss of consciousness
- Weak pulse
- Slow shallow breathing

#### Risk Factors

- Older age (65 and older) is more vulnerable to hypothermia for a number of reasons. The body's ability to regulate temperature and to sense cold may lessen with age. They are more likely to have a medical condition that affects temperature regulation. Some older adults may not be able to communicate when they are cold or be mobile enough to move to a warmer location.
- Very young age. Children lose heat faster than adults do. Children have a larger head-to-body ratio than adults do, making them more prone to heat loss through the head.
- Mental problems
- Alcohol and drug use.
- Certain medical conditions. Examples include underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism), poor nutrition, stroke, severe arthritis, Parkinson's disease, trauma, spinal cord injuries, burns, neuropathy, dehydration, and any condition that limits activity or restrains the normal flow of blood.
- Medications i.e. antidepressants, antipsychotics and sedatives, can change the body's ability to regulate its temperature.

#### First-aid care for Hypothermia

- **Be gentle - don't massage or rub the person.** When you're helping a person with hypothermia, handle him or her gently. Limit movements to only those that are necessary. Excessive, vigorous or jarring movements may trigger cardiac arrest.

- **Move the person out of the cold.** Move the person to a warm, dry location if possible. If you're unable to move the person out of the cold, shield him or her from the cold and wind as much as possible.
- **Remove wet clothing.** If the person is wearing wet clothing, remove it. Cut away clothing if necessary to avoid excessive movement.
- **Cover the person with blankets.** Use layers of dry blankets or coats to warm the person. Cover the person's head, leaving only the face exposed.
- **Insulate the person's body from the cold ground.** If you're outside, lay the person on his or her back on a blanket or other warm surface.
- **Monitor breathing.** A person with severe hypothermia may appear unconscious, with no apparent signs of a pulse or breathing. If the person's breathing has stopped or appears dangerously low or shallow, begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) immediately if you're trained.
- **Share body heat.** To warm the person's body, remove your clothing and lie next to the person, making skin-to-skin contact. Then cover both of your bodies with blankets.
- **Provide warm beverages—non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated.** If the affected person is alert and able to swallow, provide a warm beverage to help warm the body.
- **Use warm, dry compresses- Apply a compress only to the neck, chest wall or groin.** Don't apply a warm compress to the arms or legs. Use a first-aid warm compress (a plastic fluid-filled bag that warms up when squeezed), or a makeshift compress of warm water in a plastic bottle or a dryer-warmed towel. Heat applied to the arms and legs forces cold blood back toward the heart, lungs and brain, causing the core body temperature to drop. **This can be fatal.**
- **Don't apply direct heat.** Don't use hot water, a heating pad or a heating lamp to warm the person. The extreme heat can damage the skin or even worse, cause irregular heartbeats so severe that they can cause the heart to stop.

### **Frostbite**

When exposed to very cold temperatures, skin and underlying tissues may freeze, resulting in frostbite. The areas most likely to be affected by frostbite are your hands, feet, nose and ears.

If your skin looks white or grayish-yellow, is very cold and has a hard or waxy feel, you may

have frostbite. Your skin may also itch, burn or feel numb. Severe or deep frostbite can cause blistering and hardening. As the area thaws, the flesh becomes red and painful. Gradually warming the affected skin is the key to treating frostbite. To do so:

- **Protect your skin from further exposure.** If you're outside, warm frostbitten hands by tucking them into your armpits. Protect your face, nose or ears by covering the area with dry, gloved hands. **Don't rub the affected area and never rub snow on frostbitten skin.**
- Get out of the cold. Once you're indoors, remove wet clothes.
- **Gradually warm frostbitten areas.** Put frostbitten hands or feet in warm water — 104 to 107.6 F (40 to 42 C). Wrap or cover other areas in a warm blanket. **Don't use direct heat**, such as a stove, heat lamp, fireplace or heating pad, because these can cause burns before you feel them on your numb skin.
- **Don't walk on frostbitten feet or toes if possible.** This further damages the tissue.
- **If there's any chance the affected areas will freeze again, don't thaw them.** If they're already thawed, wrap them up so that they don't become frozen again.
- **Get emergency medical help.** If numbness or sustained pain remains during warming or if blisters develop, seek medical attention.

## Weather-related Health Issues

### Part II – Hot Weather Health Issues

#### Hyperthermia (3 heat-related syndromes)

##### Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are painful, involuntary muscle spasms that usually occur during heavy exercise in hot environments. The spasms may be more intense and more prolonged than are typical nighttime leg cramps. **Inadequate fluid intake often contributes to heat cramps.**

Muscles most often affected include those of your calves, arms, abdominal wall and back, although heat cramps may involve any muscle group involved in exercise.

First Aid if you suspect heat cramps:

- **Rest briefly and cool down.**
- **Drink clear juice or an electrolyte-containing sports drink.**
- **Practice gentle, range-of-motion stretching and gentle massage of the affected muscle group.**
- **Don't resume strenuous activity** for several hours or longer after heat cramps go away.
- **Seek medical care if your cramps don't go away within one hour or so.**

### **Heat Exhaustion**

Signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion **often begin suddenly**, sometimes after excessive exercise, heavy perspiration, and inadequate fluid or salt intake.

Signs and symptoms resemble those of shock and may include:

- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Nausea
- Heavy sweating
- Rapid, weak heartbeat
- Low blood pressure
- Cool, moist, pale skin
- Low-grade fever
- Heat cramps
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Dark-colored urine



## First Aid for Heat Exhaustion

- **Get the person out of the sun** and into a shady or air- conditioned location.
- **Lay the person down and elevate the legs and feet slightly.**
- **Loosen or remove the person's clothing.**
- **Have the person drink cool water or other non-alcoholic, non-caffeine beverage**
- **Cool the person by spraying or sponging with cool water and fanning.**
- **Monitor the person carefully.** Heat exhaustion can quickly become heatstroke.
- **Call for emergency medical help if the person's condition deteriorates,** especially if fainting, confusion or seizures occur, or if fever of 104 F (40 C) or greater occurs with other symptoms.

## Heat Stroke

Heatstroke is the most severe of heat-related problems and often results from exercise or heavy work in hot environments combined with inadequate fluid intake.

Young children, older adults, people who are obese, and people born with an impaired ability to sweat are at high risk of heatstroke. Other risk factors include dehydration, alcohol use, cardiovascular disease and certain medications.

What makes heatstroke severe and **potentially life-threatening** is that the body's normal mechanisms for dealing with heat stress, such as sweating and temperature control, become inadequate.

### Signs and Symptoms

**The main sign of heatstroke is a markedly elevated body temperature — generally greater than 104 F (40 C)**

- Changes in mental status ranging from personality changes (irritability) to confusion and coma.
- Fainting, which may be the first sign in older adults

- Skin may be hot and dry — although if heatstroke is caused by exertion, the skin may be moist.
- Rapid heartbeat
- Rapid and shallow breathing
- Elevated or lowered blood pressure
- Cessation of sweating
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Headache
- Nausea

First Aid:

- **Move the person out of the sun and into a shady or air-conditioned space**
- **Call for emergency medical help.**
- **Remove excess clothing.**
- **Cool the person by covering with damp sheets or by spraying with cool water.**  
Direct air onto the person with a fan or newspaper.
- **Apply ice packs in armpits and groin if available**
- **Have the person drink cool water or other non-alcoholic, non-caffeine beverage, only if fully conscious**
- **Do not give fever reducing medications**
- **Once the body temperature lowers to 101 F, turn the person to recovery position on side.**

References:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/hypothermia/DS00333>  
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/first-aid-frostbite/FA00023>

<http://www.healthy.net/scr/article.aspx?Id=1291>

<http://www.healthy.net/scr/article.aspx?Id=8147>

“Hints for Health” is brought to you by HealthCare Ministries, the international medical outreach of AGWM. Learn how HealthCare Ministries (HCM) makes a long-term impact spiritually and physically through Health Initiatives. HealthCare Ministries offers a variety of outreaches that promote prevention of illnesses and improved quality of life. Connect with HCM to begin the collaboration to plan a unique health initiative outreach that will address the physical and spiritual needs in your area. Send e-mail to [healthinitiatives@healthcareministries.org](mailto:healthinitiatives@healthcareministries.org) or call 417-866-6311.

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### **HCM Health Initiatives**

HCM offers a variety of health initiatives that impact peoples' lives both physically and spiritually. One example is our Medical Outreach. Standard medical/dental/optical team's average team size is 15–20 people. Adaptations for smaller team are at the host's request or lack of professional volunteers available for specific outreach. Teams may be: counseling and optical, medical and dental, optical and health education, etc.

## APPENDIX J

### **Improving Relationships between Congregations and Long-Term Missionaries**

In her article, “The Myth of the Blank Slate: A Check List for STMs,” Miriam Adeney lists six practical steps that can be made in local churches to improve relationships between church members and long-term missionaries. Following is an adaptation of her suggestions with one addition by Tom Telford from *Missions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

- 1) “Make it easy to know a missionary.” Different churches may have varied approaches to meeting missionaries and hearing about their work.
- 2) Connect international news with missionaries supported by the church of the denomination’s work in that nation in the church bulletin or on its website.
- 3) Teach about what a good mission does and give specific results.
- 4) Connect locally with the international community.
- 5) “Advocate for a people” by developing a relationship with a specific ethnic group overseas through repeated visits to the same area.
- 6) Teach about biblical stewardship. “Only biblical teaching will keep us caring. Only the compelling love of Christ will turn us into ambassadors of reconciliation.”<sup>524</sup>
- 7) A church should invest in sending its pastor overseas because it gives him an international perspective, provides an opportunity for him to cheer long-term workers, and allows him to witness the necessities and trials of missionary life with which the congregation may be able to assist and pray. “Pastors are often more ignorant of missions

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<sup>524</sup> Adeney, “The Myth of the Blank Slate: A Check List for STMs,” 138–144.

than opposed to it.”<sup>525</sup> Effectively leading a church in missions is generally not a part of their training.

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<sup>525</sup> Telford, 68.