

Fostering Social Responsibility & Missional Living through Short-Term Mission Experiences

Global Mission Experience Curriculum Development Project

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*“There are those who seek knowledge in order to serve; that is love”
–Bernard of Clairvaux*

THESIS PARAGRAPH

Margaret Mead, the world-renowned cultural anthropologist of the 20th century, insists that one should “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world” and that actually, “it’s the only thing that ever has” (Mead). Short-term-missions (STMs) are full of people who want to do something to change the world. However, for STMs to benefit those they intend to serve and ultimately make real positive change in the world, big picture mindsets must be applied to these short-term trips. These big-picture mindsets will be acquired through critical thinking, reflection and learning on the part of the participants in STMs. Missions, when prepared for in this way, have the potential to act as catalysts for missional living.

INTRODUCTION

For a nineteen-year-old Washingtonian who had scarcely ventured farther than the Midwest, a summer-break trip to the other side of the world was bound to be a lifechanging experience. I had wanted to go to Tanzania specifically since I was a little girl, and when presented with the opportunity to do so through a short-term-mission (STM) with my university, I jumped at it. The summer following my freshman year at Northwest University, I and seven other students made plans for our STM to Arusha, a North Eastern city in the East African country of Tanzania. Our friend and team leader had grown up outside of Arusha, and the goal under his leadership was to help build a church in his village with the money we raised, and to help in whatever other ways we could. After six months of fundraising and preparation, a night

exploring Dubai and a long layover in Kenya, we landed in the Kilimanjaro airport, eager to begin our STM work.

Now if you asked me on that trip if I would have called myself a missionary, I would have been quick to tell you no. I was intrigued in the idea of seeing more of the world, of gaining new perspectives, doing service, and seeing God at work in a new place. But I knew that I was far from qualified to call myself a missionary. I knew that I didn't know how to build a birdhouse let alone a church, I knew that my faith was not strong enough to do the evangelism that STMs are known for. I figured that this trip would be more than anything, an amazing learning experience and an opportunity to meet new people across the world, assuming that deep down, we all knew better than to think of ourselves as *real* missionaries.

Upon arrival though, it was clear that many of the Tanzanian nationals had different perspectives about who we were and what we were qualified to do. We were immediately, without establishing any sort of credibility, being asked to get up in front of schools and speak, classrooms to teach, churches to preach. We were regularly approached by people asking for prayer, some of whom even claimed that they were troubled by demons or witch doctors, as if our prayers held special favor with God. Our mission host knew we wanted to serve, and did everything he could to make that happen for us. This ended up looking like an ongoing process of buying school supplies, clothes, and candy, and passing them out to kids in surrounding villages, sometimes doing menial tasks like painting fences or washing the floors. Any time we were out in the poorer villages aimlessly passing out the things we brought, he would take pictures of us passing out the supplies, asking children who received them to smile for pictures with us. It was as if he "knew the drill" of an American STM, as if he knew that's what we wanted. Early on I started to feel discomfort with the power dynamics at play. Of stories being

told, even implicitly, that were far from the truth. Stories that put us as white Christians in a place of spiritual, intellectual, material superiority, that put us on center stage. It all felt uncomfortable, but I did not have the knowledge or language yet to articulate why. I got the sense that too many things were going unsaid, unexamined. It was here in Tanzania that I started to analyze and question the practice of STM— what the impacts were on us as American Christians, and what the impacts were on the local communities who received our STMs.

Pulling out of the orphanage driveway that last July morning heading back to the Kilimanjaro airport, I promised myself I would come back— but not in the same way. I wanted to go back because quite honestly, I did love it there. I loved the atmosphere, the people, the food, the music, the pole pole, *slowly slowly* lifestyle. But I also felt like I needed to come back to redeem myself of the STM trip. I wanted the people that I met there to matter to me for more than just a week. I wanted to begin the process of setting the record straight about who I was and who they were. I wanted an un-mission trip.

The questions that I started asking on this trip and continued asking long after are what landed me in the International Community Development (ICD) program at Northwest University. It wasn't until joining this program that I was able to fully articulate the things I felt, seeing more and more the disparities between how we engaged in global missions and what I was learning about transformational development. I saw this information explored and talked about in development and missiological literature, but I saw no changes in what was actually happening on the ground. This was further solidified in the two additional international STMs I participated in while a student at the university. I continually noticed incongruencies between what we said we believed and wanted to accomplish through STMs and what was actually happening. I saw these incongruencies also in how we treated local communities on our STMs,

and how we treated foreigners here in our own country. I was heartbroken by the observation that “tourists withdraw from social others in their own suburbs, but pay to engage social others abroad” (Priest 442). As I delved into topics of poverty and systemic injustice in ICD, I was warned by authors like Cynthia Moe-Lobeda that “charity may become a blinder, obfuscating the systematic roots of suffering” (92). I started to see the ways that my individual actions and the actions of my country played into the suffering of the very people we wanted to serve through STMs. I wondered how STMs, a widespread ritual of the American church, could be harnessed to actually make a positive difference in the world and our own communities. How we could use them to stop playing into this suffering. I wondered what that difference would look like.

This questioning led me to begin my field research for the ICD program targeting this idea. Time and time again I read in research that STMs had the potential to bring about transformational change in participants and global communities when prepared for efficiently. Pioneers in STM research like Robert Priest, assert that when an STM, or an “immersion experience” are “connected with the right sorts of orientation and coaching, significant change is possible” (444). So, what do we need to do to get there? How is this orientation and coaching done well? Over the summer of 2021, I sought to address these questions in the context where my first STM journey began, Northwest University. Research on this topic and knowledge gleaned from qualitative research ultimately led me to the Global Mission Experience Course (GMEC) at the university, a course that every student takes prior to embarking on their STM. My integrated project (Appendix A) is a redevelopment of this curriculum, seeking to equip thoughtful and committed students to make positive change not just in their two-week STM, but in their everyday lives. This thesis will unpack the concepts taught in in the redeveloped GMEC, exploring ways that STMs in Christian faith communities can harness their ability to spark

constructive change in their home communities and the world. It will examine the current practices and criticisms of STMs, explore the potential in STMs, and discuss the lessons and reflections that qualitative research brought me.

BACKGROUND OF STMS

The ritual of the STM is deeply engrained into the life of the American church. They are most commonly practiced in US, with up to 2 million annual participants (Haynes 67). Despite the widespread participation in the Christian Church today, STMs as we know them now actually didn't come into popularity until the 1960s" (Parker 57). They are the modern-day response to the Great Commission in Matthew 28 to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (ESV). With the emergence and accessibility of technology in the 20th century, the nations became reachable. Long-term missionaries were no longer the only ones capable of going to the end of the earth. Now, groups of teenagers and college students began joining in the mission on spring and summer breaks. Nevertheless, STM have their own share of "sacrifice", with each participant spending an average of \$1000, (excluding transportation, which is often also \$1,000+) in expenses for their service trips (Haynes 67). The goal in STMs is always in part to serve in some capacity, often through relief or development work in global south countries. STMs can be very spiritual experiences for participants, and often have a deeply "sacred" tone to them, as Priest suggests:

Like pilgrimages, these trips are rituals of intensification, where one temporarily leaves the ordinary, compulsory, workaday life "at home" and experiences an extraordinary, voluntary, sacred experience "away from home" ... unlike other forms of pilgrimage, these STM trips explicitly intend to serve and help others in distant places... they aim not only for self-transformation, but for change in the places to which they go (434).

These trips average at eight days long, where again, the goal is always rooted in “making a difference” (Haynes 67). Participants do anything from street evangelism, to painting fences, to holding VBS’s (Vacation Bible School) to building churches. It is estimated that “at least a third of all STM trips abroad from the USA travel to somewhere in Latin America — a very large number to Mexico alone”, though STMs take American Christians all over the world.

Criticism of STM

Although STMs in the American church have been around for the last 60 years, there is still a minimal amount of empirical research on them. STMs *have* however, been acquiring a fair amount of criticism in recent years. The emergence of groups like *No White Saviors (NWS)*, activists who are committed to “disrupt[ing] the White Savior Complex in international development, aid, and missions” have brought issues with long term and STMs to light in non-evangelical contexts (NWS). The movement sprung up in response to American missionary Renee Bach who, though having no medical training, “attempted to treat children for various illnesses and performed medical procedures” in Jinja, Uganda. Tragically, “As a result of the treatments she administered in the unlicensed facility, 105 children died under her care” (NWS). Criticisms of both long-term and STMs can be found anywhere from Christian publication networks like the Gospel Coalition, to the New York Times. While STMs in particular don’t have the scope to cause wounds as deep as those in the Renee Bach story, “most criticism of the short-term mission movement rests on the fact that the trips benefit the missionaries more than the missionized” (Trinitapoli & Vaisey 124). Sarah Garat, a campus ministry leader at Northwest University remembers a conversation in which a student remarked ““who would want to go serve in [an American city]? That sounds like such a boring place”. “We hype up the global trips” she said, “because it’s a lot more exciting to say ‘come to Cambodia!’ Than to say ‘come to Seattle’”

(Garat). This example shows that often even our *own* perceptions of missions are that they are for us, the “missionaries.” While STMs might not be accomplishing everything they are setting out to or even claiming to do, research shows that they are not slowing down by any means. In one study of 120 seminary students at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, fully 97.5% of them anticipated participation in STMs in the future (Priest 434). There is plenty literature showing STMs, as we practice them now, are infective and often even harmful. So why are so intent on continuing them in this way, or at all?

One explanation as to why we continue with STMs is that they have become the manifestation of our biblical interpretations. They have become our response to the biblical commands to go to all nations and the ends of the earth to preach the gospel. They are an attempt at faithful, costly obedience. An additional explanation that I think can largely account for our continuation in global STMs this way, is the fact that they are profoundly transformative for their participants. Dr. Joseph Castleberry, president of Northwest University having been an international missionary for many years himself, recalls receiving at least thirty STM teams in his time as a missionary. “You get what you can out of it for the people on the ground, but I never understood them as being primarily for that” ... “You think it’s mostly for the people going then?” I asked, “Oh yea”. He replied, “It will change their lives. It really does” (Castleberry). Castleberry made it clear that participating in STM, even for just a matter of days, had profound positive impact on participants, carrying over in to their lives back home.

While STMs often advertise themselves as opportunities to serve and transform the communities they visit, the opposite seems to happen most often— rather than STM participants being agents of change on these trips, they themselves become deeply changed. Positive change in our lives, argues Brenda Salter McNeil, often starts with catalytic events which are “often

painful but necessary experiences that happen to individuals and organizations that serve to jump-start the reconciliation process” (46). Catalytic moments, according to Salter-McNeil, are the “primary vehicles for moving people out of old patterns, assumptions and perceptions and into transformative cycles of change” (40). We become so comfortable with our “social circles and homogeneous units” she says, that “we need a catalyst to shake us up” (51). Social entrepreneurship experts David Bornstein and Susan Davis agree, claiming that “people are less likely to develop relationships that challenge their worldviews or expand their empathy and understanding for other groups (72). But STMs do exactly this, which is why they can be so positive for both participants and the broader global community. Through STMs, young American students are confronted by new people, cultures, faith practices, relationships. One of my informants described STMs in his own words as “catalyzing moments where you are outside your comfort zone” (Crane). STMs are a jumble of catalytic moments, taking students far out of the homogeneous units and comfort zones that they come from. This is why students leave their STM experienced so deeply changed.

Problems with STMs aren’t always the outcomes of the STMs themselves, as the implications of the internal change depicted above are profoundly positive for both participants and the rest of the world. Rather, problems have come largely from a lack of honesty about who these trips are really for and who they primarily benefit. For example, global STMs are often upwards of twenty-thousand-mile trips both ways. The environmental impact of this for each student should, at the very least, be acknowledged. Greenhouse gas emissions from air travel contribute to the climate change crisis that affect many of the countries that STM teams visit: “Rising sea levels and strange new weather patterns” due to climate change, “have already altered the ecosystem in parts of Bangladesh, forcing thousands of “climate refugees” to flee to

India” (Clawson 79). Before even arriving at the destination, STMs have in many ways contributed to harm of the communities they seek to serve. How is it that the western Church has largely failed to consider the hurt they can, and do cause through STM trips? I would argue that it is because the narrative we hold and stories we tell about STMs. Salter-McNeil reminds us that “one of the most helpful ways for members of a group to expand their understanding of who they are is to look at their stories and metaphors” (79). In looking at the language that we use regarding STMs, you will see words like service, sacrifice, and obviously, mission. Like this thesis will address later, putting ourselves in positions of “helper” “server” or even unintentionally, “savior” undermines the fact that many of our day-to-day habits here in America keep people in the very positions of poverty that we are attempting to relieve through STM work.

Problems with STMs also come with the incongruencies in how we engage with the “other” on international trips, and how we engage the “other” in our own communities. “When you talk about missions abroad, people feel charitable and proud to participate. When you talk about social justice here in the US, people feel implicated and defensive. Why is that?” (Crane). Returning to the fact that a large number of STMs go to Latin America, Robert Priest reminds us that Latin America actually isn’t just over there, it’s here. “The number of Latinos/Hispanics living in the US is greater than the total populations of Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia combined. There are more Latinos living in the US than Spaniards living in Spain, more Latinos in the US than Canadians living in Canada” (443). Ashlee Thomas, coordinator for local community engagement at Seattle Pacific University, grapples with this as well. “You [Americans] will literally vote for policies that specifically harm Latinx communities but then you’ll go to Guatemala to an orphanage. You don’t actually care about those people” (Thomas).

The stories we tell regarding STMs often don't tell the full or honest story about who we are and who the people we visit on STMs are. There needs to be an internal change within the minds of STM participants, and Salter-McNeil argues that "personal change entails an alteration of those metaphors and the stories we've been telling ourselves" (79). In the context of Northwest University, I wondered what would be needed to tell the truer story about ourselves and the people we visit through our STMs, believing that these present realities regarding STMs did not need to be the way things remained. We needed to change the narrative and stories of STM work, and some of the narratives and stories about ourselves. In doing this well, staying honest about realities of STMs, they could have the potential to be positive not just for us, but for the global community as well.

FIELD RESEARCH

Context

Northwest University (NU) is a small liberal arts school located in Kirkland Washington affiliated with the Assemblies of God, the world's largest Pentecostal denomination. It has often been dubbed "the university with the soul of a church". Having spent the last four years living on campus completing my bachelors in intercultural studies and sociology, I can concur. "Northwest is so interesting" said informant Christian Dawson, the former campus pastor. "Its's a parachurch but it's not a church. It's a bunch of followers of Jesus so therefore they're a church but also its functions aren't only the functions of a church" (Dawson). The mission statement reads as follows: "we, the people of Northwest University, carry the call of God by continually building a learning community dedicated to spiritual vitality, academic excellence, and empowered engagement with human need" (Northwest University). It was here that I had my first

experience with STM in my trip to Tanzania, and here that I went on to travel to Mexico and Costa Rica, for two more STMs.

Part of understanding the context of Northwest University is understanding the *people* of Northwest University. As Dawson pointed out, NU is a faith community, a “bunch of followers of Jesus”. For being in the midst of one of the most de-churched cities in the country, this is unique (Barna). Students come to Northwest University largely for this faith community aspect but ultimately, as Phil Rasmussen, V.P. of Church Relations / Spiritual Formation at NU points out, “they are here to get a degree”. Phil told me that the average time spent at NU is now is four semesters, “which only gives us two years” to make any real change (Rasmussen). Students are young and naïve, and coming in with 18 years of things they’ve already been told, informants all reminded me. They are working, they are trying to pay their bills. With all this in mind, one of the common questions that came up with during fieldwork was essentially, *how much can we really expect out of these 18–22-year-olds?*

I realized though, that there is actually *immense* opportunity within the demographic of college students, and Northwest Students in particular. Northwest Students, at the time that this study takes place, are all part of Generation Z, which are a particularly social-justice-minded generation. Al Tizon says “Millennial and Generation Z Christians have already fully embraced social justice as integral to God’s mission” (144). NU students are widely generous not only with their time, but their money. In a normal (non-COVID-19) school year like 2018-2019, the small student body of “broke college students” gave \$6,469 to non-profits and ministry efforts in the area just in chapel gatherings (Netherton). Living on campus at NU for four years gave me the participant observation I needed as primer for this study. No matter the context, change making and culture shifting is hard. But the unique thing about college students is that they are where

they are because they *want* to learn, they *want* to change, they *want* to grow. In hopes of making change in the broader American church, this small, though passionate faith community is a fantastic place to start.

Fully understanding Northwest University also means acknowledging its position in its surrounding context. “The American church has neglected to see that the world has shown up at our doorstep”, claimed Nick Steinloski, a professor in the ministry department at NU. (Steinloski). As Nick points out here, there is great opportunity cross-cultural ministry right in our surrounding community. Nick mentioned that in Tukwilla, a city just 19 miles south of Kirkland lies a high school with “the most languages spoken at it west of the Mississippi” (Steinloski). In my time interning with World Relief Seattle, a local refugee resettlement agency, this truth was brought even closer to home. I was shocked to learn that there were refugees living right in my Kirkland community— just miles from where I studied. One in particular that stood out to me was a woman who was only a couple years older than me, who had fled her country due to religious persecution. She asked if I would ever come and have lunch with her, because she had no friends, family, or community in this new land she inhabited. A similar story was brought up by an informant who said his friend, an immigrant from Pakistan, was unable to make any friends for his first *three years* living in the US (Gomez). At NU specifically, we have international students who come from all over the world. Lisa Russi, a professor in the intercultural studies program remembers a trip with her evangelism outreach and mission class: “I watched two Chinese girls, when we did our little trip, and no one talked to them. And they’re all ministry majors” (Russi). While NU students boarded planes to serve overseas, we overlooked and abandoned the people right here in our own home needing support, community, and honestly for us just to acknowledge their presence. I was reminded of the words of Liz

Nelson, the outreach coordinator at World Relief Seattle, who said “I think mission...is the way that you are present in your community...noticing where people are falling through the gaps...”. My fieldwork experience here at NU over the summer of 2021 was spent collecting qualitative data primarily through interviews, trying to understand how this faith community at NU could harness its people and positionality to make positive change in the world and its community, addressing those falling through the cracks.

Qualitative Research Process

Qualitative research is a type of research in which *words* as opposed to numbers are used as data. Rather than through purely statistical techniques, these words are “collected and analyzed in all sorts of ways” (Merriam & Tisdell 6). In qualitative research, “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam & Tisdell 16). Thus, listening intently to the stories, experiences, and wisdom of my respondents was the majority of my fieldwork process. These interviews became, as qualitative research expert Brené Brown articulates, “data with a soul” (Brown).

Qualitative research itself comes in many different forms, and I felt that an approach called Appreciative Inquiry (AI) would be the most fitting. AI is a strategy to changemaking that essentially argues that in order to make something better, we must acknowledge what is already being done well, and to do more of those things (Hammond 7). In this light, the goal of my research was to find things in the Northwest University missions program that were working, and find ways to capitalize and expand on those things. I asked my interviewees questions like “What are we doing well?”, “What are the spaces and systems we could build upon?”, “What could we do more of?”, “What are the opportunities in our realm of influence?” The AI approach emphasizes the importance of including the voices of people on all levels into data collection. AI

practitioner Sue Hammond asserts that the process must “capture multiple realities” (25).

Through my four months of fieldwork, I sought to interview people on all levels at Northwest University and the greater Seattle area, anyone who had connection to the STM conversation, and anyone I knew was passionate about the issue. My informants ended up being a mix of students, professors, former missionaries, campus ministries leaders, campus pastors, the university president, etc. I made sure that the voices at the top, the bottom, and everything in between were heard and accounted for.

Before beginning this deep dive research into the topic of STMs in the American church, I knew that literature in this area was already widely present. I read the classic, *When Helping Hurts* before my first STM, which was a large contributor to the feelings of dissonance on that trip, realizing that what we were doing directly opposed what I had learned. My conversations with informants showed that people on most levels had heard and understood these concepts, many experiencing the same feelings that I did on their STMs. We had *all* read the books like *When Helping Hurts*, *Toxic Charity*, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*. Yet we all saw the persistent reality of these concepts failing to be applied on the ground. Somewhere along the way these concepts were getting trapped in the conceptual world, never being brought down into anything practical. Still, some informants were hesitant that anything needed to be changed at Northwest, unsure that there was anything wrong with our posture or approach to STMs. The words of Brenda Salter-McNeil reminded me that “we are prone to resist change” ... and that “we have a tendency to deny information that conflicts with our beliefs” (52-53). This hesitancy in itself solidified the need for change in our understandings and practice of STM.

Hammond argues that “people have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known)” (24). I knew that in order

to have the support of all key stakeholders in the STM conversation at NU, I would need to efficiently carry part of the past into any future change. One large piece of this that came up frequently in fieldwork was the topic of language. “Words have power” said Dr. Bill Prevette, professor of intercultural studies, “You say that [you are a missionary] to 90% of people, and they immediately go back to reading their book...the word missionary communicates ‘oh he’s got a Bible and he’s gonna thump me with it’” (Prevette). The participants in my research grappled with the truth that language shapes our realities, and that the language that surrounds STMs might not just be unhelpful for student participants, but also the people we hope to reach.

Ashlee Thomas, the coordinator of the outreach program at Seattle Pacific University, shared that the university has ceased from using “mission” language at all. “It’s savior-y” she said, “when I think of missions in the church it’s like “I’m going to go save these people... and that’s not what we’re doing” (Thomas). I realized through research just how much baggage the word “mission” held to our modern context, and what it meant to a lot of people. Commenting on a trip to South Sudan, Melani McAlister remarked, “this was hardly a typical short-term trip...I thought it unlikely that we would be painting a church or building a useless wall” (McAlister). Similarly, Micah Lorenz, current campus pastor commenting on STMs at NU said “we don’t want to do the stereotypical “go build a house in a poor country and then leave and then nobody is there to do any follow up”. What I found interesting and almost heartbreaking, was the way Thomas contrasted outreach work at SPU from traditional missions:

One thing that is very important to us is that in serving, ‘your people become my people’...and maybe for some students it does feel more like a mission at first, but the hope is that throughout this time, they leave, these people will be their people...I guess I don’t really see it as missions (Thomas).

While many NU stakeholders agreed that a shift in language could be helpful, we also agreed that our context of Northwest would not be receptive to this shift quite yet, if ever. We would need to shift our actions while keeping some of the traditional language around missions. In asking Christian Dawson about the “mission” word, he replied “it’s just a word. But it *is* language that most church cultures understand, even cross denominationally, it’s a word that makes sense” (Dawson). It became clear that this was something we would need to carry forward into future change.

The point of grappling with hard questions like these through qualitative research, while seemingly insignificant in the grand scheme of the world, was ultimately an attempt at making positive change in broader society through our particular context. I could feel the excitement of each informant to this goal. Everyone was ecstatic at the thought of change, of new opportunities to serve and love people well, and it was something that fueled me through my research.

Reflexive Thoughts

During and after my first trip to Tanzania, I began some intense questioning of the American church and my place in it. I started to see the Western Church tied with centuries of hurt and oppression. I saw the way it had “made disciples of all nations” by way of paternalism, conquest, and ethnocide” (Tizon). I became aware of how, as Bennett Judkins puts it,

The White Church has historically often become aligned with and supportive of those systems that take advantage of the most vulnerable people in society, whether it be Native Americans during the early years of America, African Americans during the era of chattel slavery, the civil rights movement, Jewish people in World War II, workers during the early stages of capitalism, or the poor at many points in history (29)

I saw us continually (most often unknowingly) participating in things like STMs, that held power dynamics and inequalities in place. All of this led me to a point where I was ridiculing and degrading the faith community to which I belonged. As Hammond points out, “we are very good at talking about what doesn’t work”, and at this, I was an expert (7). But thankfully, this posture is not where I remained. A professor pulled me aside one day, reminding me that if I actually wanted to make change, I would have to alter my approach. She challenged me to follow Jesus’ model of change, which involved stepping further *into* the mess of the world, rather than distancing from it. As Jon Huckins and Jer Swigart put it, “rather than walking away, God *immersed* into creation” (37). Immersing into creation, Jesus used the tools that his surroundings offered. He capitalized on what was already there, partnering with people in his mission who weren’t even necessarily *good*, talented, or intelligent people. In some cases, they were people who even worked with the oppressors of their day. The common thread, however, between all the people that Jesus involved, was simply humility and willingness. Looking back on that, I realized that an appreciative inquiry approach was a fitting model of change to utilize in my research. If Jesus used broken systems and messy people to create change, so should I. I realized that while American Christians (like any human beings) were flawed and sometimes ignorant, most participated in STMs because of genuine willingness. With both the appreciative inquiry and Jesus’s model of change approach, “the entire system is invited to participate”, regardless of qualifications (Hammond 25). I realized that through inviting, the willing would join, and to see a positive change, I must begin with already existing systems and structures. I must begin with the tools that my surrounding offered. With NU being a faith community but at the end of the day, an academic institution, I realized that this is where I should begin.

CURRICULUM PROJECT

On the back end of my fieldwork, in the “now what?” phase, I was initially drawn to the idea of creating my own course to introduce at NU. I would teach the concepts that I learned in my research and fieldwork, having complete freedom to go in whatever direction I wanted during the 2 credit hours. I was really drawn to the idea of a *missional living discipleship* course, pulling from research on STMs that showed that “participants in organizations that didn’t emphasize pre- and post- trip discipleship training were consistently lower on almost all positive beliefs, attitudes and behavior change scores”, and that STM experiences are “a unique teachable moment in the life of a participant” (Friesen). I was simultaneously reminded through ICD that “the best sort of knowledge is that which makes a difference in people’s lives” and that to make a real difference in people’s lives, my project would have to be “tied to particular people, places, needs and challenges” (Fieldwork & Integrative Project Guide 12). I realized that while creating my own curriculum sounded fun, and in many ways easier, it wasn’t necessarily needed. Going this route would have allowed the curriculum to be vague, and it would have allowed me to apply it in different contexts. But doing so would also mean it would be less tied to the particular people, places and challenges of NU. I was encouraged by Lynch & Walls to *reinvent* rather than *rebuild* (63). In the AI approach of building upon preexisting structures, I was brought back to the Global Missions Experience Course.

Course Overview

The Global Missions Experience Course (GMEC) is a two-credit spring semester class, one that any student engaging in a global or domestic STM takes as a prerequisite to their trip. Drawing from interviews of students who had taken the course, my own experience taking it, and input from professors connected to the course, I realized that it would be an incredible opportunity to make change at NU. The original course curriculum is largely based on self-

guided learning and team meetings that focused heavily on group dynamics and ministry preparation. Taking it myself in 2018, I remember feeling like I should have learned more, or just *different* things from the course. Asking students about this in my research, I received similar feedback. We had all read our Bibles, done research papers on the countries we were visiting and learned how to say “hello” and “thank you” in the language of our host community, but we were not prepared for some of the deeper confrontations on our STM. We not prepared to encounter and respond to unequal power dynamics at play. We did not know any different than to go along with the aimless passing out of clothes and candy to rural villages. We weren’t equipped with the knowledge of our own poverty, or the way that the systems we benefited from contributed to the poverty of the people we were visiting. There were holes in our understanding.

In communication with a professor in the intercultural studies program, she voiced that she had already begun a conversation with the university about updating the course. Rather than inventing my own course, this was an actual need, something that could be built upon. The course needed an update not because it was bad or incomplete, but because “innovation and change demand the recombination of knowledge— new recipes, not just more cooking” (Bornstein & Davis 73). As Charles Voyles, author of *The Art of Community* says, if we want to see an improved future, we can not continue “simply towing the past” (65). So, this is where all my qualitative fieldwork found itself after the summer of 2021, culminating in the course curriculum update project, which is Appendix A of this thesis.

The updated curriculum of the GMEC builds upon much of the structure that was already in place for the course, while also including an expansion on all of the concepts that my fieldwork and research highlighted a need for. The biggest change in the course is that it is “designed to challenge student’s assumptions of; poverty and the poor, the way they think about

themselves in relation to others, and the way they think about mission” (Oates). The course takes students through five total sessions; three before their trip, one during, and one upon return.

There are eight course outcomes, which are outlined in Appendix A, and will be taught through a combination of reading material, group discussion, personal reflection and research, and storytelling. Rather than using most of the credit hours on self-guided learning and team meetings, most hours are allocated to whole-group discussion, guided learning, and reading.

Each of the five sessions have a reading assignment, a discussion, and a research/writing assignment. The overall purpose of the revision is to better equip students to understand

- a) why they are engaging in missions at all, (to be critical thinkers),
- b) how to posture themselves and engage in their short-term mission experiences as learners, and
- c) how to use this missional event as a catalyst for further missional living (Oates).

To understand why they are engaging in missions at all, students are taken through an exploration of “God’s Big Story” through a biblical theology of mission. This is done with the help of Christopher Wright, a missiologist and Old Testament scholar. Students will read a section of his book *The Mission of God’s People*, where Wright explains mission as a theme in the whole of the Bible in a palpable way. In the original GMEC, students were assigned a “Bible Reading Journal”, where they were required to read and write a summary of ten different sections of the Bible. The goal was for students to see the theme of mission through contemplating on larger sections of the Bible rather than the few missional verses in the New Testament. The problem with this strategy however, is that many students don’t have the tools or knowledge to be able to trace themes through the whole of the Bible on their own yet. Taking this course personally and reflecting with peers, we remember this assignment being somewhat

of an aimless read through the Bible, without truly grasping the point, just to get the grade. In the updated curriculum, the heart of this Bible Reading Journal assignment remains, but the learning is much more guided. Students showcase their knowledge by completing a “Big Story Summary Paper”, where they put the mission of God throughout the whole Bible into their own words.

To understand the importance of humble learning posture, which is another prominent goal of the updated GMEC, students are taken through a series of challenging previously held assumptions about themselves and the communities they are visiting. Brian Fikkert, a leading voice in Christian development work, heavily influences this learning. Students will read his book *Becoming Whole*, which argues that the “opposite of poverty isn’t the American dream” (Fikkert & Kapic). This reading assignment is meant to act as a mirror held up to each student and American culture in general, walking students through self-examination and critical thinking before ever attempting to turn outward. Reflecting on the ways that they themselves experience poverty and the ways that they as Americans contribute to the poverty of those that they seek to serve, helps students understand the importance of assuming a humble learning posture on STMs.

Students will also learn the “3 C’s”, which are contextualization, copowerment, and collaboration, learning practical examples and strategies to cross-cultural engagement that is dignifying and effective. The “Team Context Exploration Project” will supplement this learning, where students work with their teams to explore the historical, cultural, political, and religious context of the communities they will be visiting. One aspect of this assignment requires teams to schedule a virtual meeting with a local host community member/missionary, to practice learning *from* rather than just *about*.

Finally, students learn how to use their STM and GMEC learning as catalysis for further missional living and social responsibility. Julia Clawson's *Everyday Justice* is a book students will be assigned to read all the way through, and will begin much of the discussion around what missional living and Christian social responsibility looks like. Through the "Life Tweak" assignment, students are asked to tweak one thing about everyday lives here in the US that are in some way connected to injustice in the context they will be visiting. This could be abstaining from non-fair-trade coffee for a STM to Honduras, or choosing to only shop second-hand and boycotting fast fashion brands for a STM to Cambodia. The hope for this assignment is that it will become a habit in students, one that will carry into their everyday lives even after completion of the course.

Christopher Wright recounts a mission mobilization congress he attended once where the slogan was "'just go!' His first reaction was instead, 'just hold on.' Even Jesus spent three years training his disciples before he told them to 'go'" (39). Writing this new curriculum made me wish that I had the three years that Jesus did to train and prepare students for their STM and lives of missional living. There were so many readings, lessons, and concepts I wanted to include that two mere credit-hours just does not permit. Through the process of writing this curriculum, I learned that I would have to leave things out. I did not have the capacity to include everything that I wish I could, and I had to be really thoughtful with what I did include. Because of this time limitation, my goal ended up being to help students understand that their learning should not end with the course. Instead of focusing on *what* to learn, students in the GMEC will learn *how* to learn. The goal is that this two-credit class would set the tone for a life of learning and humble engagement with the world, equipping students with tools and the posture to continue this journey long after completing the GMEC. The rest of this thesis explores each of the major

concepts taught in the GMEC: God's Big Story, Challenging Assumptions, the 3 C's, Posture, and Missional Living.

God's Big Story

The first thing that students in the GMEC will do is to recenter their understanding of why we do missions at all, what this thing we call "mission" even is. The struggle is that "we're going against 18 years of what they've already been told- what they've already been walking in" says Micah Lorenz, campus pastor. While there are all sorts of debates in missiology, (like whether proclamation or demonstration of the gospel is most important), this course seeks to simply point students back to the heart of missions, back to what "God's Big Story" has to say about our place in them. The course does this primarily through biblical theology.

There are many ways to study the Bible. Systematic theology, historical theology, apologetics and practical theology all offer strategies of understanding "the bestselling and most studied book of all time" (Alexander). Biblical theology is just one. According to Desmond Alexander, "biblical theology is principally concerned with the overall theological message of the whole Bible. It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole" (Alexander). Biblical theology most simply, is a way of analyzing themes in the bible in light of its bigger story. This approach to biblical study is essential to a conversation about missions for a few reasons.

When evangelicals talk about mission, they usually reference two main verses: Matthew 28:19: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (ESV Bible) and Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (ESV Bible). During my interviews with informants, these are the verses I heard brought up again and again regarding STMs. The problem is that

when we base our understanding solely on these two verses, we forget that mission doesn't actually start here, and it doesn't end here either. Rather than starting in the second half of the Bible, "the Bible actually begins with the theme of missions in the Book of Genesis and maintains that driving passion through- out the entire Old Testament and on into the New Testament" (Parker 53). Looking at the theme of mission from the first book of the Bible, we start to see the centrality of mission to the story of God and His people. We see from Genesis 3 that God's mission is to bring about *blessing to the nations*:

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (ESV Bible, Gen. 12.3).

With this new biblical theology lens, we watch this theme be traced throughout the whole biblical narrative, culminating, but not ending in the gospel accounts of Jesus, ending in a vision for the future when all nations are reconciled to each other and God: "After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (ESV Bible, Rev. 7.9). With this framework, our responsibility to mission becomes much greater, and often a lot simpler. We are blessed to be a blessing.

When our understanding of mission comes purely from two small verses in Matthew and Acts, it makes sense that our response would be to in all efforts "go to the ends of the earth". This compartmentalized understanding of mission has led to a compartmentalized *practice* of mission, and we see this in the structures and rituals of Christian faith communities. We have

separate “missions pastors”, occasional “missions weeks” and of course, what author Darren Carlson coins the “golden calves of American evangelicalism”, STMs. (Carlson). Missiologist Chris Wright agrees, saying “we so easily fall into compartmentalized thinking, splitting up our world into different zones. The very word “mission” often comes along with the notion of “the mission field”, which normally means “foreign countries out there, but not here at home” (Wright 27). Al Tizon proposes that rather than ridding verses like The Great Commission in Matthew 28 from our missional understanding, we just need to “identify other ‘greats’ in the Bible to fill in, deepen, beautify, and complete” this understanding. When we look for mission in the whole story, we realize that key characters in the Old Testament like Joseph, Moses, Elijah, & Jeremiah were missionaries too. We see God calling his people to participate in His mission by doing righteousness and justice (ESV Bible, Genesis 18.19). We see God give instruction and guidance in righteous and just living by caring for the widow, the orphan, the poor. We see that mission isn’t just about going to the ends of the earth, it’s also about leaving some crop in the edges of your field for the poor (ESV Bible, Lev. 23.22). It’s about welcoming the sojourner, because we were once sojourners (ESV Bible, Exodus 22.2). By looking at the lives of God’s people through the Big Story of the Bible, we learn a lot about how we are to engage in mission today. Katongole & Rice remind us that “because this vision of reconciliation is rooted in the story of God’s people, we can grasp the vision only as we learn to inhabit the story”; the *whole* story (46). Knowing the whole story of God’s mission enables us to live it out. “Before you go”, says international missionary Carissa Alma, “understand God’s heart for the world. Understand God’s Mission on the earth” (4). Upon completion of the course, students will understand God’s heart and mission on earth a little better than they did walking in.

Challenging Assumptions

“So we must begin where we are, with ourselves” says Bryant Myers, “know thyself” is a useful reminder for any development worker” (107). The second course outcome of the GMEC is to challenge assumptions about poverty, the poor, and ourselves. Although Myers encouragement to “know thyself” speaks to an audience of development practitioners, the same truth should be applied to really any people-oriented field/practice. I was taught early on in ICD to “do the work of self-understanding to better understand others” (Inslee). One of the foremost tasks that the GME course is designed to achieve is to challenge, and quite honestly uproot a lot of the assumptions that Northwest University students will be walking in with.

Assumption # 1 – What Poverty Means

The first assumption that must be debunked is a western understanding of what poverty itself means. Doing this work inevitably teaches us about ourselves, reminds us of the poverty in our own lives, communities and systems. On the first day of class in the GMEC my freshman year, we did an exercise where we wrote down what we thought poverty meant. I remember writing things like “lack of access to basic necessities like food, water, medicine, and education.” This turned out to be a “very typical understanding of poverty to the American thinker” according to Community Development professor Dr. Brian Fikkert, “as we tend to define poverty in America as a lack of some material thing” (Fikkert 04.15-04.20). Bryant Myers defines poverty simply as “the result of relationships that do not work” (143). These relationships are “our relationship with ourselves, with our community, with those we call “other” with our environment, and with God” (144).

It is common to think that we as affluent Americans are not in poverty and the materially poor are. But as we learn from Myers, poverty is at its core *relational* not material. “If our understanding of poverty focuses on its material manifestations, so does our response” (64). And

this understanding *has* largely shaped our response, with many STMs being an ongoing transfer of goods from the “haves” to the “have-nots” often in materially poor countries and areas, while we completely neglect other manifestations of poverty, even in ourselves. It is imperative for students to get out of this two-dimensional thinking to understand poverty in a more holistic sense, acknowledging the poverty in their *own* personal lives and communities.

Myers goes on to argue that “broken relationships prevent us from ever understanding ourselves fully, and misinforms our response to and posture towards others (148). This is something that many of my informants in research seemed to be already keyed into, acknowledging that the surrounding community of Northwest University is full of material affluence but also spiritual and emotional depravity. “We need to be more aware of our own need and stop assuming that we have it all together... we need to take the log out of our own eye” said Sarah Garat, a student at NU. Dr. Bjorge, dean of nursing at NU, reminded me that our community also has pervasive *systemic* poverty.

In nursing, we talk about how African American populations oftentimes have higher rates of obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Well, where do the majority of African American population live? In urban areas. How many grocery stores do you see in urban areas? And if you do see a grocery store, how many of them have fresh fruits and vegetables?” (Bjorge).

Together, informants and I started asking questions like— what would it be like to do missions to our rich neighbors? To address the poverty that manifests itself as addiction and material bondage? What would it be like to do missions on systemic levels? The practice of challenging our assumptions about what poverty means, though present in the original GMEC, are built and expanded upon heavily in the revised curriculum, making it a more central lesson to the course.

Assumption # 2 – The Part We Play in Poverty

I wish “Western coffee consumers understood that the drink they are enjoying is the cause of all our problems” remarked a coffee farmer in Kenya, quoted in Julia Clawson’s *Everyday Justice* (35). Students in the GMEC will be reading this book throughout the course, being confronted with stories like this and coming to understand, maybe for the first time in their lives, how tied their consumer habits are to people around the world. With a newfound understanding of poverty as fundamentally relational, we come to acknowledge that a cause of *our* poverty often manifests itself in the oppression and exploitation of others. Furthermore, this poverty tends to be (for the oppressor) ignorable. STM participants must confront the part they play in the very poverty their hearts are breaking over if they ever want to see real change. If we are passing out socks to the houseless population in Seattle yet “ignoring the systematic factors that have made them hungry and homeless”, we fail to ever address the real issue (Moe-Lobeda 57). Additionally, we must challenge the belief that the poor are the poor by their own doing and on the same coin, that we, the rich, are rich by our own doing. The reality is that generations of history play into the way things are today. Katie Willis reminds us that “political and economic colonialism changed the social structures, political and economic systems, and cultural norms in many places both North and South (Willis 21). “The colonial period may be over in formal political terms, but the inequalities in power and influence remain” (Willis 26). We must remember that many of the countries we visit on STMs are countries that were under colonial occupation not so long ago are still building their identity and independence. All this to say, global relations are much more complicated than “these people are poor so we need to go help them”. Bryant Myers says that “we need to make our assumptions explicit and to ask God’s help

to see the poor and the circumstances of the poor more truly” (106). Historical context is helpful in seeing the poor and the true circumstances.

Assumption # 3 – People Need Our Help

Continuing in the “know thyself” exercise, paternalism is a concept that must be examined within our engagement in STMs. This concept is often described as a savior/messiah complex, and is essentially is the assumption that people in material poverty *need* our help. This is an assumption that flows out of a fragmented understanding of poverty and our mutual brokenness with those we call poor. Katangole and Rice explain it as triumphalism:

The tendency toward triumphalism erodes our capacity to be self-critical. This raises, once again, the problem of starting with the “what do we do?” question. The problem with this question is that it never interrogates the “we”. But we need to be questioned — even broken— so that we might be transformed (87).

In the context of STMs, a posture of paternalism perpetuates unequal power dynamics rather than leveling them out. It is often seen in teams of westerners flying across the world to do tasks through STMs that locals can do on their own. As Katangole & Rice make clear, people don’t need our help with these things. They need us to be willing to be questioned and broken so that what is *actually* needed becomes clear. Aside from understanding that people don’t need our help, the reality is that they often don’t *want* our help either. Research on construction teams after Hurricane Mitch in Honduras in 1989 “found that Honduran Christian agencies that rebuilt homes likely had a more positive impact on local communities than homes built by short-term mission teams from the United States” (Huang 59). It was the locals, not the foreigners that had the positive impact on the community. Students have to realize that although they have a heart to help, they are not going to be the best people to respond in most international crisis situations. In

a case like this of natural disaster, an influx of foreigners is most likely going to create more harm than good. Foreign teams use up valuable resources that are already scarce in situations like these, and really just get in the way. This is largely due to the fact that “we can never know all that we need to know to serve efficiently in a cultural context that is not our own” (Inslee). Although paternalistic tendencies tell us otherwise, we are really just not the best people for the job. Although the voice of desire to serve tells us to go, a voice of knowledge will often tell us to stay. We must learn to listen to this voice of knowledge.

Assumption # 4 – We Are Ready to Help

Even in situations where outside help is justified, students must acknowledge their positions as 18–22-year-old college students embarking on STMs, remembering the possibility that “we don’t, as we are now, have much to offer, and may even do more harm than good” (Alma 17). Just because we love Jesus and feel called to serve people doesn’t mean we are equipped in all capacities yet. The Bible reminds us that “desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way” (ESV Bible, Proverbs 19.2). Dr. Prevette remembers interactions with college age missionaries in Bangladesh years ago where he had to remind them, “you’re not here to really do ministry. You’re here to start to begin the process... to be a missionary you’re looking at 10 years of engagement in a community and you gotta have some way to get started” (Prevette). This is why, as students will learn later in the course, that learning postures are essential to these short-term trips.

Assumption # 5 – We Can Help

This point requires a brief anecdote to hit home: During that first STM to Tanzania my freshman year, we stayed at the orphanage our friend and team leader had grown up at. At the orphanage there were “aunties” who would help out with the kids, make meals, and do whatever

housework that needed to be done. Every night the aunties would prepare dinner. They often killed a chicken out of the back yard, sent some of the kids out to pick collard greens from the garden, and milked the cow, but they spent the *most* time making chapati. Chapati is a thick naan-type bread, made right over the fire. We ate it every night and, and *lots* of it. I always admired the way the aunties would spend so much time making the chapati every evening, slightly jealous of the kids that got to eat it every day. It wasn't until one of the last nights of the trip that this perception was turned slightly upside down. We learned that chapati was actually a special occasion food. The kids definitely did not get to eat this every day and I don't think they even got any while we were there because we ate it all! Not only were we the only ones in the orphanage getting to enjoy it, but these aunties were also working extra hours so that we could have it every night.

To this day I reflect on that trip and see more and more examples like this. The aunties would clean our rooms and make our beds every day, often even cleaning our shoes and clothes. They had milk and coffee out for us at every meal (even dinner) because they knew Americans loved coffee. The orphanage rented beds so that we would all have somewhere to sleep, and they drove the eight of us around everywhere in their own vans. They translated for us, helped us barter for the best price in all the souvenir shops, and went through every extra mile to serve us. I was sheepishly reminded of Proverbs 11:2: "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom" (ESV Bible). We were in no way disgraced, but these realizations were humbling to say the least.

Chris Wright says, "we simply cannot succeed in the work God has called us to do unless we can first become the persons God called us to be" (27). This process of challenging assumptions is meant to be an exercise of removing all possible lies, barriers and blinders that prevent deep

transformation from happening within ourselves. The ultimate goal is that through this humility and honesty, we would become a little more like the people God calls us to be. This process, though focused on in the first session of the GMEC, is meant to be ongoing, continuing long after the student completes the course.

The 3 C's

After doing the work of understanding mission through God's Big Story and confronting their assumptions, students will be taught strategies for healthy and dignifying cross-cultural interaction. These are the 3 C's, which are contextualization, copowerment, and collaboration.

Contextualization

A common downfall in STM work and even in secular development work, is a lack of contextualization. Richard Twiss, author of *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys* defines contextualization as "the attempt to communicate ideas across cultural differences in ways that make sense to a particular audience" (47). Contextualization is a foundational value of the ICD program, a concept essential to healthy and effective cross-cultural development work, one that I felt needed to be present in the updated curriculum of the GMEC. Miriam Adeney gives an example of what happens when contextualization *fails* to happen.

In the 1960s, the Huaorani believers had constructed their own churches. But by the 1990s, they were depending on foreign construction teams to do that. In the 1960s, they had run their own discipleship classes. By the 1990s, they were waiting for short-term mission teams to come in and teach them. They had developed dependency. They had come to believe that God values tin roofs more than thatch roofs, and Bible training camps run with imported resources more than those using local resources (466).

What happened in this example, was that development workers and mission teams failed to contextualize churches and discipleship classes to the Huaorani community. They had imported western strategies, ones that were foreign to the Huaorani people, leading them to believe that they needed the westerners and skewing their perception of God. Lindsay Huang claims that failing to contextualize even leads to ethnocentrism in participants of STMs, because “the socio-historical identity of the local community is valued much less (or often almost completely ignored) than the activities of the trip itself” (58). When we don’t do contextualization work, we settle for shallow understandings of the communities we visit, and act based off on those shallow understandings. American ethnographer Dwight Conquergood is an example of contextualization done *well*. In an attempt to share information about a pressing and preventable health issue among a Hmong refugee camp, Conquergood realized that he would need to use culturally appropriate materials and methods to suit the Hmong people in their context. The end result of this realization was a performance, which was already a natural rhythm and practice and proved to be effective among the Hmong people (Conquergood 225). These performances proved to be not only successful at sharing information in the Hmong community, but also widely enjoyed. It is important to note that this contextualization work was done only after developing deep understanding of the context and people.

A critique of STMs is that “Rather than removing barriers, STM packaging too often makes it difficult for students to examine history, context, and culture closely” (Howell). Informant Ryan Crane echoes, saying “so many missions trips don’t do the front-end work: the language learning, learning customs, learning the history of the place. Learning the complicity of the United States in the instability of that place so you go in with humility rather than paternalism” (Crane). He makes an interesting point that a lack of contextualization not only

leads to ineffective programs, but also paternalistic posture. The GMEC is an attempt to counter this pattern and update this “STM packaging”. The redeveloped course teaches contextualization primarily through the “team context exploration” assignment, where students are challenged to research the historical, cultural, political and religious contexts of the communities they are visiting. Good contextualization requires knowing a people well- knowing their culture, their beliefs, their history, etc. However, proficient contextualization ultimately takes more than learning *about* people, it takes learning *from* them.

Copowerment

The next of the “3-C’s” is copowerment. In Dr. Forrest Inslee’s words, copowerment is a “dynamic of mutual exchange through which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other” (Inslee). Copowerment, unlike *empowerment*, must be predicated by an acknowledgment of mutual brokenness, a topic addressed in the “challenging assumptions” portion of the course. As discussed earlier in the text, STMs offer individuals cross-cultural experiences that are transformative to their perspective on life. This is because in stepping outside of our homogenous circles, (what we often call the “NU bubble” at Northwest), we are presented with catalytic experiences that challenge our assumptions and push us to see other perspectives. Thomas Friedman argues that “The principal factor promoting historically significant social change is contact with strangers possessing new and unfamiliar skills” (Friedman). Because of the false narratives we hold about STMs, we often snuff out this opportunity, neglecting the gifts and lessons that host communities have to give us before they are even given. Carissa Alma asserts that “many missionaries tend to see themselves as benefactors: givers of money, givers of wisdom, givers of knowledge, givers of truth. Very few see themselves as receivers” (69). If we never engage in copowering relationships with people

outside our circles, false narratives that we hold will never be challenged. By ignoring the mutually beneficial opportunity of STMs, we not only miss out on all that can be gained through the experience, but we also perpetuate power dynamics and promote savior complexes.

Additionally, we miss the opportunity to speak life into the people we hope to serve. Bryant Myers says “If the holistic practitioner believes people have gifts and a contribution to make, then people will make this discovery, too” (18). We must remember that only when we acknowledge our mutual brokenness can we assume a posture that allows this mutually beneficial relationship to happen. The playing fields have to be equal.

Collaboration

The last of the 3 C’s, collaboration, is a more widely understood concept. At its core, it means simply that we do things *with* people and not *for* people. A good example of collaboration is found again in the story of Conquergood in the Hmong refugee camp. Conquergood believed that it was imperative for the refugees and relief workers to “enter into a productive and mutually invigorating dialogue, with neither side dominating or winning out, but both replenishing each other” (Conquergood 228). This is a pique example of collaboration, and Conquergood proved to be an effective development worker because of this approach. STMs often seek to offer quick relief by providing people with things that they need to succeed. But as Brian Fikkert and Kelly Kapic say, “when ongoing handouts to able-bodied people are devoid of empowering relationships that build upon the people’s own gifts and efforts, they tend to create unhealthy dependencies” (100). As the well-known proverb goes, if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, if you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. This concept addresses two things. First, it shows that knowledge and skill sharing are the more meaningful and sustainable pursuit. If people don’t ever learn how to fish and we just keep bringing them fish through our good-will,

we are really not serving them at all, no matter how good our intentions. Additionally, the concept reminds us that in any given situation out of our own context, we will not know the water. Teaching someone how to fly fish like we do here in the lakes and rivers of Washington State won't work for the Indian Ocean. If we want to ever make positive change in any community that is not our own, it must be done in collaboration with the people of that community who know the water.

The common denominator in each of these concepts is relationship. Over and over in ICD we are taught that relationship building is the foundational requirement to any and all positive change-making. That it is not enough to serve people; we are called to love them too. And we can't really love people we don't know. God's greatest command to His people as reiterated by Jesus is that they would love Him and love their neighbor. "Our responsibility as Christians," insists Martin Luther King Jr., is to discover the meaning of this command and seek passionately to live it out in our daily lives." (qtd. Moe-Lobeda 167). This leads us to our next course outcome.

Missional Living

"The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning."

– *Emil Brunner*

The last and hopefully most *lasting* concept taught in the GMEC is missional living. Missional living is a not a contrast of missional events like STMs, but rather a continuation of them. STMs, or missional events, should act as catalysts for this continuation. The concept of missional living will be woven throughout the whole course. In Julia Clawson's *Everyday Justice*, students will learn missional living concepts, and complete a "life tweak" assignment, where they will commit to changing one thing about their everyday lives to serve their STM

context here in America. This could look like abstaining from non-fair-trade coffee, buying strictly ethically sourced produce, or even abstaining completely from plastic consumption. These readings and assignments seek to teach a holistic sense of mission rather than a compartmentalized one. Al Tizon exposes the danger and hypocrisy of compartmentalized practice of faith, asserting that

As “Sunday Christians,” we can affirm belief in Jesus as our highest priority but continue to conduct business as usual Monday through Saturday even if business means taking advantage of the poor. We can sing “I Surrender All” but continue to amass great wealth and live in luxury while the global majority lives in desperate poverty. We can say our prayers for peace but continue to hate our enemies and justify war against them. We can claim Jesus as Lord of all but continue to view people of other races and ethnicities as inferior. We can commit to God’s global mission but continue to support policies that keep out immigrants and refugees in the name of protecting national interests (135).

Just like “Sunday Christians”, we can easily become “mission-trip Christians”, where our care-for, service, and sacrifice are reduced to our two-week international trips and put away the other fifty weeks of the year. This is why we must be rooted in God’s mission, which is holistic, far-reaching, and every day.

“The mission of God is God’s determination, through the whole of the biblical narrative, to bring about the redemption of His whole creation from the ravages of sin and evil” (Wright 240). Sin and evil are concepts that can seem somewhat abstract to the American mind, but are actually very simple. Sin and evil are the fact that, for example, some 2-3 hundred children were found “making garments for major U.S. clothing companies, like Wal-Mart, Hanes and JCPenney, at a factory in Bangladesh...forced to work fourteen-hour shifts and sometimes,

twenty-hour, all night shifts for around six cents an hour” (Clawson 128). Sin and evil are the fact that “landfills and illegal waste dumps do not checker the landscape randomly; more often than not, they are places in areas that are home to low-income communities populated with people of color (Pellow 103), that “there are more slaves in the world today than there were during the 400 years of the African slave trade during the colonial era” (Clawson 59) and that “American’s use and discard cell phones at a faster rate than any other nation”, cell phones that are “made with raw materials from Central Africa that are nonrenewable, were mined in inhumane conditions, and then sold to fund a bloody war of occupation” (Moe-Lobeda 85). Consuming plastic, getting iPhone upgrades, and shopping at H&M are normal parts of our culture. It is “not so easy to spot evils presence” when it is “intermingled in our culture, education, and religion– events or behaviors regarded as normal, common, even good” (Ivone Gebara qtd. Moe-Lobeda 68). But this is the sin and evil that we need redemption from. And like we learn in God’s Big Story; we are meant to be partners in God’s mission of bringing about this redemption. “The power of this privilege rests in its invisibility to those who possess it”, says Lindsay Huang (68) This is why we need to intentionally learn, intentionally see, and make this evil visible so that we can do something about it.

Moe-Lobeda says “where the neighbor suffers because of injustice, love with not simply bind up the wounds of the suffering. Love will seek to undo the injustice” (178). STMs are often a practice of binding up wounds. While we can continue to do this work, we cannot stop there. We must love our local and global neighbor enough to also work to undo the injustice. This is the work of missional living. We live missionally by boycotting businesses that utilize child labor and unethical working conditions. By shopping fairly traded products, reducing our plastic consumption and living simply. “Train yourself to be satisfied and content with little” says

Carissa Alma, “this will also allow you to better identify with 90% of the entire rest of the world” (49). This goes against the grain of our consumer, bigger is better, more is better, new is better culture, but we as Christians must remember that our ethical choices, “whether at an individual level or as communities of God’s people... are “always linked to the effectiveness of our mission” (Wright 95). If we as Northwest students on STMs share the good news of Jesus yet continue in lifestyles that feed into the harm of those very people, our message loses weight. Wright says, “a church that is bad news in such ways has no good news to share. Or at least, it has, but its words are drowned out by its life” (95). We have the opportunity to live on mission throughout almost every sector of our lives. This is not work that can be done in two-week increments. In truly understanding the heart of God’s mission, the conversation goes from “how can I best serve the people of Tanzania on this two-week trip?” to “how can I best serve the people of Tanzania with the *rest of my life?*”. The GMEC is an attempt to spark that question in the hearts of every student participating in STMs at NU.

Posture

Ultimately, the point of the GMEC update and all the new things students will learn is to encourage a posture of humility and learning when engaging on STMs. Rather than an outward focus, the updated course is much more of an internal reflection experience. We need to embrace the fact that while some may be called to long-term international missions, for most, college STMs are opportunities for us to learn. With this acknowledgement, we and the communities we visit have the potential to take something truly valuable from this experience. Desire for copowering and collaborative relationships with people around the world will begin the process of setting straight the unequal power dynamics between the global north and global south that

STMs often perpetuate. I like the language and idea of “pilgrimage” that Katongole and Rice use. They say;

Pilgrims are slowly confronted by a different world that begins to interrupt their own...The goal of a pilgrim is not to solve but to search, not so much to help as to be present. Pilgrims do not rush to a goal, but slow down to hear the crying. They are not as interested in making a difference as they are in making new friends (91).

The contrast between traditional STM posture and the posture of the pilgrim that Katongole & Rice advocate for is similar to what William Easterly says about Planners and Searchers:

A Planner thinks he already knows the answers; he thinks of poverty as technical engineering problem that his answers will solve. A Searcher admits he doesn't know the answers in advance; he believes that poverty is a complicated tangle of political, social, historical, institutional, and technological factors. A Searcher hopes to find answers to individual problems only by trial and error experimentation. A Planner believes outsiders know enough to impose solutions. A Searcher believes only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions are home grown (6).

The distinctions that each of these authors make is of posture. The posture of one assumes they have all the answers and are quick to impose solutions, valuing problems-solved and quantifiable outcomes over people. The posture of the other slows down to listen to, to sit with, to eat with, to value over anything else. The posture that the GMEC teaches students to take is the one that easterly calls the “Searcher”, and Katongole and Rice call the “pilgrim”.

The story of Mary and Martha in the gospel of John is a helpful tool for understanding this concept. In this story, while one sister hurries around working and trying to do all the right things to serve Jesus, one sister simply sits at his feet. She sits there earnestly listening, taking in

His teachings, longing to know Him and spend time with Him. While Mary will not always sit here at the feet of Jesus, it is a prerequisite to anything else she does, and Jesus calls it necessary. (ESV Bible, Luke 10.38-42). American culture is fast paced and efficiency oriented, and we fall easily into these task-completion favoring mindsets. However, many global south countries visited through STMs are much more relationship oriented. This is something that Melani McAlister learned on her trip to South Sudan:

Before we left the States, I had asked Dick [the trip leader] exactly what the group was going to do in Sudan. This was a “particularly American question” he responded, to which he only had “an African answer”. The plan was to visit their Sudanese friends, he said, to be with the other Christians and “encourage” them ... they were there to be in fellowship with Sudanese believers, to learn from them, to see the work that they were doing, and to pray with them. I was there to try to understand (McAlister).

This is something that American students need to try to understand as well. Just like Mary in the gospel of Luke and “Dick” the trip leader portray, often the most valuable use of time is learning and fellowship. However, these pursuits take slowing down, reflecting and pondering, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and leaving tasks at the door. Only with this sort of approach- a humble posture and an intent to learn, rather than to achieve a quantifiable result, can long-term transformation happen. We are to replicate a God who “inaugurated his reign in hidden, humble ways” whose life and ministry was profoundly relational, and anything but glamorous (Wright 42). Missions in Jesus’ model are built upon relationships, community and discipleship. Our postures on STMs must reflect this model, valuing slow, humble, reflective and honest engagement.

REAL WORLD IMPLICATIONS

Though this won't be shared in the course, it is important that we explore research on positive outcomes of STMs, showing the potential that they have for change-making in the personal lives of their participants, and in broader society.

Personal

One of the most common things you will hear from a student returning from a STM is “*I feel like I got back so much more than I gave*”. The resounding agreement of current and former students through my fieldwork process told a similar story. Students shared how formative their STMs have been to their outlooks on life and personal discipleship. This research has been done on larger scales as well, one study finding that “well-over half of the missionaries reported positive changes in their lives as a result of the trip” (Trinitapoli & Vaisey 124). These positive changes are often spiritual in nature. Study by Trinitapoli & Vaisey found that “individuals who went on a mission trip are significantly less likely to report that they are unsure about their belief in God...Students also agreed, significantly, that participating in service gave them the opportunity to grow spiritually (138-139). Aside from spiritual formation, positive personal changes from STMs are also the paradigm shifts and worldview expansion they offer participants. Bornstein & Davis assert that “a child growing up in the suburbs may reach college without once encountering a poor person in the flesh. When too many people across society have difficulty taking the perspective of others, polarization and political stagnation result. (Bornstein & Davis 73). STMs expose students to ways of life that they have never encountered before, and the things that they learn translate into the ways that they live their lives. Studies have shown that “going on a religious mission trip was a robust predictor of all four different forms of youth civic action—political participation, donating to causes, informal volunteering, and formal

volunteering” (Beyerlein, Trinitapoli, & Adler 792). So while they may have gotten back more than they gave, what they “got back” has proved to benefit those in broader society.

Societal

As David Wright says well, “the good work to which God calls us makes us better people” and at the same time, “the good work to which God calls us makes the world a better place” (52). Understanding the mission of God in a broader context and seeing this broader context firsthand helps students to understand themselves as global citizens, ones who are responsible to love their neighbor here and across the world at all times. A study by Giles and Eyler showed that

As a consequence of service participation, students become more strongly committed to helping others, serving their communities, promoting racial understanding, doing volunteer work, and working for nonprofit organizations. They also become less inclined to feel that individuals have little power to change society (Hopkins 9).

Interestingly, students who participate in religious service trips “have been shown to be more engaged local and global citizens, participating at significantly higher rates in both religious and secular volunteer service” (Beyerlein, Trinitapoli, & Adler 791). Though STMs are a religious experience, they benefit a broader context. The Giles and Eyler study also showed that “Participants in the service ministry group maintained their gains in social responsibility over time” (Hopkins 39). There seems to be significant correlation between STM experiences and social responsibility.

These findings point to why the STM conversation has to be taken very seriously, even for outsiders of the Christian community. If STMs are a predictor of civic engagement and political participation, then these are the voices that are ultimately going to be heard in the public sector. These are the voices that are going to shape the nature of our communities, our country, our

world. This is almost 2 million voices in the US that have the power to create positive change, and this is why we need to invest in the STM preparation process. David Pellow argues that “social movements have extraordinary power and can change the policies and practices of some of the world’s largest corporations and most powerful governments” (14). STMs are a social movement that have the same opportunity to do so. Moe-Lobeda reminds us that “while individuals’ actions will not alone dismantle systems of evil, those systems will only be dismantled if individuals do act” (Moe-Lobeda 98). Students, upon completion of the GMEC, will be better equipped to be these individuals who take action.

CONCLUSION

While my research and curriculum development project have focused solely on the particular practice of STMs, the ultimate objective really is to inspire in students a new way of interacting in their communities and the world. With the big picture mindsets that students are given through practice of critical thinking, reflection, and learning in the updated GMEC, STMs at Northwest University will be catalytic and transformative for students, challenging them in the day-to-day of the rest of their lives, ultimately benefiting both the communities they visit and the communities they inhabit. Bornstein & Davis assert that “students enlisted to think about creatively about improving their school, community, or city will grow into more powerful citizens” (86). Students taking the GMEC are people that given a few years, will be the leaders in the marketplace, education, medicine and ministry. The GMEC will challenge these students and future leaders to think critically and creatively not just globally, but at home too, understanding that their actions here *will* have global impacts. Upon completion of the course, students will walk away with a call to participation in God’s Big Story to which a two-week trip will not suffice. By the time they step of the plane, when the work may have seemed finished, they will

now understand that “in fact, it has just begun” (Parker 67). STMs at NU have the potential to make a positive difference in the world if this updated curriculum is implemented at the University.

While the course is catered to the particular context of Northwest University, I think it could be transferred well into other universities, and even, with some adjustments, a church setting. The idea of “fostering changemakers, rather than mere graduates”, is the hope for this course (Bornstein & Davis 88). Fostering changemakers can be done in any setting, when contextualization to that setting is done well. Although there has been talk of changing language to more learning-postured language like “vision” trips or “pilgrimages”, Dr. Prevette encouraged me to always “use language that people in your context will use”. The course contents and language may have to be updated and tweaked in order to be applied in different contexts, and could even be made accessible to non-evangelical settings, as many of the concepts are essential just for the broader American population. Eventually, I think it would be beneficial to consider the GMEC as a core class at NU. Every program at the university requires an international trip for graduation, and the concepts taught in the GMEC would be extremely beneficial to these students both for their trips, and as they step out into the marketplace upon graduation.

As Lynch & Walls contend, “If it is not measured, it is likely not something that you are trying to improve” (131). We must care about the people we visit on STMs and our own personal formation enough to continue measuring and critiquing the way that we engage in STMs domestically and abroad. Just as the first GMEC curriculum was revised and updated with the new insights learned from research this year, updates and revisions will need to be made in this curriculum in the future as well as we continually learn more and measure outcomes.

APPENDIX A:

Breathing New Life into Northwest University Global Missions Experiences:

Course Curriculum Update

Project Introduction

It has been long supposed that short-term missions “benefit the missionaries more than the missionized” (Trinitapoli, and Vaisey 124). This has been an increasing criticism for such trips both inside and outside of evangelical communities. This criticism has not stopped American Christians from ever increasingly embarking on STMs however, with 1,600,000+ participating each year (Howell 206). Among these annual STM participants are undergraduate students at Northwest University, who take a Global Missions Experience Course for two credits and embark on international travel that takes them all over the world; often out of the US for the first time.

For the project portion of my thesis, I have redeveloped this Global Missions Experience Course in order to best equip participating students for their STM and future STM’s that they will likely participate in (Priest 434). This curriculum seeks to guide students through a balance of theory, story, and application for a holistic learning experience and understanding. The purpose of the revision to the Global Missions Experience Course curriculum is to better equip students to understand a) why they are engaging in missions at all, (to be critical thinkers), b) how to posture themselves and engage in their short-term mission experiences as learners, and c) how to use this missional event as a catalyst for further missional living. The updated course is designed to challenge student’s assumptions of poverty and the poor, the way they think about themselves in relation to others, and the way they think about mission. Affirming the assumption that STM’s often impact the missionary just as much if not more than the missionized, the content of the revised course aims largely at the posture and mindset of the traveler.

The following document is this curriculum, an updated version of the NU Missions Global Experience Course. The main elements of the curriculum include required readings and

resources, a course description and overview, course outcomes, assignments and grading, a course outline, attendance and participation policy, academic honesty, and a works cited. This course operates out of the belief that short-term missions should not have short-term mindsets, vision, or impacts. Upon completion of the course and its subsequent global trip, students will be better equipped and further inspired to live missionally in all areas of life.

NORTHWEST UNIVERSITY
NU Missions Global Experience – INCS 1234
Spring Semester

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Required Texts:

Fikkert, Brian, and Kelly M. Kapic. *Becoming Whole: Why the Opposite of Poverty Isn't the American Dream*. Moody Publishers, 2019.

ISBN-10: 0802401589

ISBN-13: 978-0802401588

Clawson, Julie. *Everyday Justice: The Global Impact of Our Daily Choices*. IVP Books, 2009.

ISBN-10: 9780830836284

ISBN-13: 978-0830836284

I recommend buying books second-hand through places other than Amazon! Here are some good places to look:

- <https://www.secondsale.com>
- <https://www.thriftbooks.com>
- <https://www.abebooks.com>
- <https://www.christianbook.com/?navcat=toplogo>
- <https://hpb.com/home?&size=025&#product-panel-home>

Required Multimedia:

Helping without Hurting - Part 1: Reconsidering the Meaning of Poverty. Life Church, 014,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=a339VZRE3CM.

Provided Reading Resources:

H., Wright Christopher J. *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Zondervan, 2010. Chapter 2

Myers, Bryant L. "Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies." *The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies*, Sage Publications. Myers, Bryant L.

Myers, Bryant L. "Progressive Pentecostalism, Development, and Christian Development NGOs: A Challenge and an Opportunity." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 39, no. 3, July 2015, pp. 115–120. *EBSCOhost*,

Course Description:

The NU Missions Global Experience is an opportunity for students to engage in and learn from communities outside their own through a short-term international excursion. The prerequisite to this trip is a three-week course designed to prepare students for international learning and community building. Students are given an introduction to missional living through new understandings of Biblical theology of Mission and sound development practices. The course also prepares students for cross-cultural sensitivity and international travel safety. The student applies the knowledge and skills gained during academic study to practical community building and learning in a new culture under the supervision of carefully selected and experienced missionaries and faculty.

Course Overview:

This course will cover a brief Biblical Theology of Mission, or "God's Big Story" and how we can participate through missional living and missional events. Students will learn about poverty from a Biblical perspective and challenge their assumptions about poverty, the poor, and themselves. Students will be asked to explore the context that they are visiting for their short-term excursion and identify the ways that their lives here in the US may impact those across the world. By the end of the course, students will be prepared for their global experience, and more equipped to live missionally at home in the US.

Course Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will:

- ❖ Gain an introductory understanding of Biblical Theology of Mission and how we get to participate in "God's Big Story."
- ❖ Challenge assumptions and understandings of poverty and the poor, and ourselves.
- ❖ Understand the concepts of co-powerment, collaboration, and contextualization.
- ❖ Explore the cultural, historical, political, and religious contexts of the communities that will be visited.
- ❖ Be prepared to travel overseas & cross-culturally safely and appropriately.
- ❖ Learn from host community and community members.
- ❖ Engage in mutually supportive community with team members & leaders.
- ❖ Walk away with a missional living understanding and approach to participation in God's big story.

Course Assignments & Grading

Reading:	Assignment:	Due:
Becoming Whole: Chapters 1 & 2 The Mission of God's People: Chapter 2		March 17 th
Becoming Whole: Chapters 3 & 4 Everyday Justice: Intro, Chapter of Choice	Big Story Summary Paper	March 31 st
Becoming Whole: Chapters 4 & 5 <i>Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies Pages 115-120</i>	Life-Tweak Proposal	April 14 th
Becoming Whole: Chapters 6 & 7	Team Context Exploration Project	April 28 th
Becoming Whole: Chapters 8-10 (bring with on trip)	Trip Journal	Due within 1 week after trip
	Post Trip & Life-Tweak Reflection Paper	Due within 1 week after trip

Grading:**Point Scale**

Item	Points
Attendance	100
Big Story Summary Paper	150
Life-Tweak Proposal	100
Team Context Exploration Project	250
Trip Journal	150
Post Trip & Life-Tweak Reflection Paper	200
Class Participation	25
Course Evaluation	25
TOTAL	1000

Grading Scale

A	100-94%	C	76-74%
A-	93-90%	C-	73-70%
B+	89-87%	D+	69-67%
B	86-84%	D	66-64%

B-	83-80%	D-	63-60%
C+	79-77%	F	59% and below

Late Work

Make every effort to complete your work by the deadlines. Please refer to Discovery for all deadlines. If you encounter difficulties or an emergency arises and you will not be able to submit your work on time, please contact the professor as soon as possible prior to the deadline, to make an arrangement. Late work will lose 5% per day late. After one week, a grade of zero points will be assigned

Course Outline

This outline is only an approximate guide. Specific dates are available on the Discovery site for the course, and you should trust that as your primary source of information about this course. Dates for certain topics may change and material may be added or deleted.

Session One: March 17th**Course Outcomes Addressed:**

- ❖ Gain an introductory understanding of Biblical Theology of Mission and how we get to participate in “God’s Big Story”.
- ❖ Challenge assumptions and understandings of poverty and the poor.

Reading:

Brian Fikkert. *Becoming Whole*. Chapter 1, 2

Christopher Wright. *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Chapter 2.

In-Class Activity: Confronting our Assumptions**In-Class Discussion: We Don’t Bring God****Assignment 1: Big Story Summary Paper – Due March 31st****Session Two: March 31st****Course Outcomes Addressed:**

- ❖ Understand the concepts of co-powerment, collaboration, and contextualization.

Reading:

Brian Fikkert. *Becoming Whole*. Chapter 3, 4

Julia Clawson. *Everyday Justice*. Introduction, Chapter of Choice.

In-Class Discussion: Missional Living & the 3 C's**Assignment 2: Life Tweak Proposal – Due April 14th**

Referring to examples from Julia Clawson, choose one practical “tweak” to make in your life that is tied to the context you will be visiting. For example, team members visiting Honduras might choose to abstain completely from non-fair-trade coffee. Team members visiting Cambodia might boycott fast fashion clothing lines whose products are produced in unethical conditions. Submit a 1-page proposal that briefly states the social issue you found in your context, and the life tweak that you will carry out for the duration of the semester to seek justice for the people in your host country.

Session Three: April 14th**Course Outcomes Addressed:**

- ❖ Explore the cultural, historical, and political context of the communities that will be visited
- ❖ Be prepared to travel overseas & cross-culturally safely and appropriately.

Reading:

Brian Fikkert. *Becoming Whole*. Chapters 4, 5

Bryant Meyers. “Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies.” Page 115-120

In-Class Discussion: Learning Posture**Assignment 3: Team Context Exploration Project – Due April 28th**

With team members, make a 10-minute presentation exploring aspects of the context you will be visiting. Must include historical context, cultural context, political context, and religious context. Explore historical roots of the present-day issues of this context. What is the culture like? What are the major religions? What languages are spoken? What foods are eaten? Schedule a zoom meeting with host missionary to get insight from and check

knowledge with a local. Record presentation and delegate one team member to submit via Discovery by May 5th.

***In Between Session Three and Trip Reading: ***

Brian Fikkert. *Becoming Whole*. Chapters 6, 7

Session Four: (ON TRIP):

Course Outcomes Addressed:

- ❖ Learn from host community and community members
- ❖ Engage in mutually supportive community with team members & leaders.

Reading:

Brian Fikkert. *Becoming Whole*. Chapters 8-10

Team Discussion: Leader led

Assignment 4: Trip Journal – Due within one week of return

Throughout the duration of the trip, keep a journal of your experiences through once-a-day check-ins. Discuss what you have learned, what you observe about your host community's culture and how it differs from your own. Where do you see God already working in this context? What can Americans and American Christians learn from your host community? How have you used or seen the concepts of collaboration, contextualization and co-powerment so far? What has surprised you? What is beautiful about your host community's culture? Team leader will collect and submit to instructor upon return.

Session Five: (Team & Instructor meeting 1 Week Post Trip):

zoom will be acceptable for those who cannot meet in person

Course Outcomes Addressed:

- ❖ Walk away with a missional living understanding and approach to participation in God's big story.

Team Discussion: Long-term vision for a short-term trip

Assignment 5: Post-Trip & Life-Tweak Reflection Paper – Due within one week of return

Write a 4-page paper reflecting on what you learned on your trip– what you learned from your host community, about yourself, and about your *own* culture through comparison and reflection. Were any assumptions further challenged? How do you plan to carry what you have learned on your trip out in your life? Explain your experience with your “life tweak” and how you plan to continue living missionally in your own context.

Attendance and Participation Policy:

Class attendance is extremely important for student learning and achievement of specified course outcomes. Hence, attendance at all class sessions and group meetings are expected. At minimum, students absent for a class session will need to make up any missed assignments or exercises, complete the expected readings, and watch Panopto recordings of the class if available. A grade penalty will be applied if more than one class session is missed. Additional policies and consequences are at the discretion of the individual professor of the course.

Academic Honesty:

Northwest University has intentionally developed a learning community that includes Academic Honesty as a foundational value and expects honesty from faculty and students in all areas, including academic lives.

Northwest University considers dishonest academic conduct by students to include any activity that allows a student to take an unfair advantage of fellow students. Examples of academic dishonesty by students include the following:

- Cheating on assignments or examinations.
- Submitting material that has been prepared by someone else or failure to give full credit to material prepared by someone else (plagiarism). Plagiarism is defined as “using someone else’s ideas or phrasing and representing those ideas or phrasing as our own, either on purpose or through carelessness” (MLA).
- Arranging for another person to serve as test-taker.
- Seeking help from another person or source during a test in which collaboration is not permitted.
- Submitting the same (or essentially the same) paper in more than one course without prior consent of the current assigning professor(s).
- Making false statements in order to acquire special consideration from an instructor.

- Sabotaging another student's work.

Additionally for faculty, academic dishonesty includes altering a student's grade or awarding points when not earned.

The Academic Honesty policy functions at Northwest University on an honor basis so faculty and staff agree to academic integrity standards upon hire and acknowledge willingness to enforce the policy and report misconduct. Academic dishonesty may result in the student failing the assignment, receiving an "F" in the course, or possibly being dismissed from the University. Instances of academic dishonesty are typically reported to the Provost's Office. Any student disciplined by a faculty member for alleged academic dishonesty has the right to appeal the disciplinary action. The student should initiate his/her appeal according to procedures outlined in the Northwest University Student Academic Appeals Policy, which is available in the Provost's Office or the Student Development Office.

Teach Copyright Notice:

The materials for this course are only for the use of students enrolled in this course for purposes associated with this course and may not be retained or further disseminated.

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