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C O V E N A N T



M I N I S T R I E S

RESOURCES FOR LEADERS

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I pray some of these resources may prove helpful for you. They are merely tools, so do whatever you wish with them!

C O V E N A N T

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TRIP PREPARATIONS

You can never start too early with your preparations!

PRE-TRIP

It is highly recommended for your group to send people/a person to the mission site in advance of your mission trip. MERGE will arrange housing, local transportation, introductions and showing the site. Videotape or take photos of the areas where you will be on the trip. This will give you a much better idea of knowing what ministries and work projects are available for your group. Every year your ministry site and opportunities change, so this pre-trip is helpful every year.

Make your pre-trip reservations with your Merge Trip Facilitator as early as possible.

MERGE TRAINING

The Covenant Merge Ministries staff is available to come to your church to train your group for your mission trip and to meet with parents to assuage fears they might have.

Reservations for available dates are made by contacting your Merge Trip Facilitator. Your group may assist in the staff transportation costs, if desired, but this is not expected.

The best way to prepare your group is to gather them together for training as organized by Merge staff.

A Merge training is broken into three parts:

- Personal & Team
- Cultural & Conduct
- Ministry Preparation Workshop.

The typical training is a four-hour course and includes small group discussion, role-plays, brainstorming, learning activities and plenty of time for questions. Shorter and longer trainings can be arranged.

Merge is available for training throughout the year, although summer months may be difficult.

If a pre-trip or training is not possible, you are welcome to invite Merge staff to your church for a mission trip rally, to speak at your church about the trip, and/or to meet with parents.

PHOTOS OF MINISTRY SITES

Your Trip Facilitator will send you photos of your ministry site. Photos can also be found on the Merge website at www.covmerge.org

MINISTRY FORMATS

Your group will be allowed to choose whether to focus on work projects, people ministry or both. Below are the possibilities; however you are welcome to come up with your own variation of the schedule as well.

WORK PROJECTS (HALF-DAY) & PEOPLE MINISTRY (HALF-DAY)

Your group may choose to spend half of the day participating in work projects and the other half of the day in people ministry. For example your group may run a people ministries in the morning, work on construction projects in the afternoon, and participate in people ministries in the evenings.

WORK PROJECT TEAM (ALL-DAY) & PEOPLE MINISTRY TEAM (ALL-DAY)

You may desire to split your group into two parts: a work project team and a people ministry team. The work project team would participate in construction throughout the day and your people ministry team would participate in people ministries throughout the day

WORK PROJECTS ONLY

Your group may choose to focus only on work projects during your trip

PEOPLE MINISTRY ONLY

Your group may choose not to participate in work projects and focus on people ministries, such as youth & adult programs, evangelism, specialized outreach teams (puppets, music, drama, sports, medical) or children's programs.

FOOD

There are a few options for food preparation for your team.

MERGE FOOD SERVICE

Your group can hire Merge to coordinate your food for your trip. The food fee includes all food, water and donations to the cooks and one meal out at a local restaurant. **Money not spent on food will be reimbursed to your group.** Merge food service includes:



- BREAKFAST - Every breakfast will be cold food including cereal, fruit, juice, sweet rolls, etc.
 - LUNCH - Lunches will be sandwiches, chips, cookies, fruit, vegetables & other assorted items.
 - DINNER - Dinner will be your one cooked meal of the day. Merge will hire local cooks to make authentic, regional dinners for your group.
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1. Merge food coordinators encourage your input on what your group would like to eat. Be sure to mention dietary restrictions, food allergies and vegetarians before you arrive.
 2. Merge supplies all water and ice - always purified.
 3. One meal at a restaurant is not included in the food service price. All additional meals at restaurants are not included.
 4. All money not spent on food will be reimbursed to the group at the end of the week.
 5. Eating local food meals makes your ministry more effective. The nationals appreciate your desire to understand and know their culture. Food is an important part of every culture.

MONEY

- Please bring cash in small bills (\$1's, \$5's, \$10's, \$20's). Many merchants will often refuse bills larger than a \$20!
- Exchanging money into the local currency is best
- Market shopping is in cash only, small bills only.
- Traveler's checks are very difficult to cash. DO NOT bring them.
- Credit cards can be used at some locations, but most team members would have little or no need for them. Some merchants will charge you more for credit card purchases.
- ATM machines are available in some areas. Make sure to talk to your bank about international withdrawal fees and notify them that you'll be using your ATM card out of the country.
- Plan to bring, in cash, the money that you will need while in country.

FIRST AID KIT

Please bring a basic first aid kit with you and carry it at all times. This kit should include: band-aids, antibiotic ointment, ace bandage(s), heat/cold packs, analgesic, decongestant, Pepto-Bismol, anti-diarrhea medicine, antihistamines, Benedryl, anti-itch, etc. Your appointed "team nurse" should be responsible for this kit and carry it/have it available to the team at all times.

TEAM LEADER/ADMINISTRATOR CHECKLIST

Use this form to keep track of tasks that need to be completed for your team. If you have appointed a Team Administrator, these tasks can be completed by that person on your behalf.

- _____ Determine dates and location of ministry with Executive Director Dale Lusk dale.lusk@covchurch.org
- _____ Initial Deposit sent to Covenant World Mission
- _____ Flights booked and information e-mailed to Trip Facilitator
- _____ Final numbers with a breakdown of males and females e-mailed to Trip Facilitator
- _____ Balance due to Covenant World Mission one month before trip begins
- _____ Responsibility/Parental Consent/Medical Forms handed out, completed thoroughly, collected
- _____ Emergency Contact Form completed, copies made (For Team Leaders and Church Office)
- _____ Have all airline tickets and passports in your possession (We suggest the Team Leader carries all tickets and passports for youth teams. Adult teams may choose to let individuals carry their own. In this case, make sure people have theirs before departure.)
- _____ Make 3 copies of each passport-picture page open (Individuals need to carry one copy on them at all times, Team Leader should carry one set at all times and one should be left with your church.)
- _____ Other:

LEADER'S TRAVEL DAY CHECKLIST

1. Confirm flight times and reservations at least twenty-four hours in advance.
2. Make sure each team member knows exactly where and when to meet. If the team is meeting at the airport, check with airline re: sufficient meeting time, allowing more time for a group. Stress promptness.
3. Identify the team luggage with a bright visible tag or tape of some kind.
4. Check in as a group. Do not have individual team members check in for the flight. The team is traveling as a group and the airline requires groups to check in together. Collect all the return tickets at this point. This avoids the possibility of someone misplacing their ticket and creating time delays for everyone.
5. Have all necessary cash you will need for the mission trip.
6. Have your own passport and copy of passport.
7. Make sure each team member has their passport and copy of passport. We suggest for youth teams that the team leader collect and carry all passports and tickets.
8. Have the phone number of the contact and an international calling card, in case there are delays and/or changes during your travel.
9. Leave emergency contact info, itinerary and flight info with your church office or other contact.

Be aware of any special medical needs of team members. You also need to be aware of anyone carrying their own prescription medication. Use form provided for this.

MINISTRY SUGGESTIONS

OUTREACH EVENTS

Plan a one-time or daily outreach event at a local church or neighborhood. Usually these events are evangelistic, but they can be discipleship oriented. The local pastors must be included in these events for there to be any effectiveness.

IDEAS FOR AN EVANGELISM EVENT INCLUDE:

- Videos - you may need to bring your own projection unit.
- Outreach Service - including music, dramas, testimonies and a message.
- Concert - special music concert including or not including vocals.
- Party - invite the people of the area to a dinner you prepare with games, a service and special events.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Some of the churches have youth ministries. Many of those have weekly youth group meetings or a weekly youth service. Your group can participate in these types of group meetings or plan a special one for the group yourselves. You could plan special youth group events 2-5 days in a row.

IDEAS FOR THE YOUTH MINISTRY CAN INCLUDE:

- Music - Sing a couple songs as a group. This is a regular part of the youth services. You could also teach a song for everyone to sing. Solos, or small groups singing, are also appropriate. Bring a guitar or keyboard for an instrument (a keyboard is preferred).
- Drama - Skits, plays, mimes, or Bible stories are appropriate.
- Testimonies - Always a favorite.
- Video - Bring projection equipment
- Game Show - Run a game show type event for the youth.
- Talk - Someone in your group can share a word. Talk to your Merge Trip Facilitator to see if it is culturally appropriate in your location for a group member to give a sermon during the youth service.
- Bible Studies - Lead a Bible study
- Party - Invite the youth group to a lunch or dinner.
- Special Trip - Plan a youth outing for the church youth group.
- Olympics - Plan a game day for the church youth group.
- Sports – Plan a sports activity or games.

YOUTH OUTREACH

Go to a local youth “hangout” area such as a soccer field, baseball field, or mall, and spend time getting to know youth from the neighborhood. Organize this in connection with a local church or youth group.

At the end of the week plan a special youth event to share Christ with the youth you developed a relationship with.

1. Plan this in connection with the local church/youth group. Have them participate for follow-up purposes.

2. Use the above ideas for youth ministry in planning this special event.

SPORTS MINISTRY/CLINIC

SPORTS TEAM - Set up a sports team from your group, such as a soccer, baseball, basketball, or volleyball team. The team could travel to different sites for prearranged games with teams from churches, orphanages, and/or neighborhoods.

1. Men generally play soccer. However, baseball and basketball are also popular sports for men in some countries..
2. Women enjoy playing sports as well, ask TF which sport they enjoy in your country of service.
3. Be sure to bring all of the sports equipment needed for this ministry, as the local area may not have the equipment you need.
4. During half time, or after the game, the team can present testimonies, a Bible message and develop relationships.
5. Plan an event at the local host church inviting all of the people you meet while playing sports. Have food, testimonies and give the local pastor an opportunity to share.
6. Try to mix the teams when possible. The locals will try to convince you to play USA/Canada vs. the world, but that is not a good environment for building relationships.
7. Make sure this is done in connection with a local church for follow-up purposes.
8. Plan a tournament with locals creating teams. Organize the schedule to have a round robin group of games with playoffs. Give out trophies and awards to the winning teams. Plan a special end-of-tournament celebration which includes food, testimonies, music, a short message from the local pastor, and give out the awards/trophies.

SPORTS CLINIC

1. Choose a sport members of your team play well, have experience at, or even have coaching experience. Organize a clinic just as you would in North America.
2. Choose a sport that is not well known in the area you are going to. In most countries that means not playing soccer, In others it could mean baseball. Teach a sport that is new for your area.
3. Bring all of the sports equipment you will need. You will probably not be able to find equipment in the area you are going to.
4. Give sports camp T-shirts to the people who faithfully attend.
5. Use Biblical principles in your coaching.
6. At the end of the week have a special program, possibly at a local church, to have a closing dinner, sharing and to give out certificates of achievement.

NEIGHBORHOOD MINISTRY

This ministry is only in connection with a church who is planting a new church in that neighborhood.

1. The group can purchase basic food for families, such as rice, beans, oil and flour at a local grocery store. The entire group will bag the food into grocery bags, then will go with pastors, or church members, into the area and hand out food door-to-door to homes designated by them.
2. Your group can also visit homes and hand out Bibles and flyers.
3. Your group can return to the neighborhood later and visit people again, play with children and run a children's ministry, or outreach program, for people on the street.

HOME VISITS

1. The group can find out from the pastor homes of church members or neighbors who have needs.
2. Groups can visit with the pastor or members from the church and spend time in each home. Have questions prepared in advance to further the conversation. Don't wait for the interpreter to do all of the talking. Notice your surroundings and the families of the home, so you can converse about them. Get to know people.
3. Ask for prayer requests and spend time praying for the family.
4. If you notice any specific needs your team may want to take care of talk to your group, the Merge staff, and the host leaders to see if it would be appropriate to return to the home and meet a specific need. This could include a variety of things (medicine, wheelchair, electric bill, food, etc.).
5. Don't let people you are visiting think you will provide any financial assistance for them. Make sure they know you are there to get to know them and pray for them.

MEDICAL TEAM

Set up a clinic at a church, orphanage, or in a poor neighborhood using the skills of the medical personnel on your team.

1. Merge can obtain permission from the local authorities for this ministry. Please ask the Merge staff about this in advance as it can take a lot of time to file all the appropriate paperwork.
2. Any medical outreach needs to be a part of the local church ministry, so the neighborhood sees it as an outreach of the church.
3. The most important type of medical personnel are specialists. Optometrists/Ophthalmologists, gastroenterologists, OBGYN, podiatrists, urologists, ear/nose/throat, nutritionists, dermatologists, pharmacists, etc. The medical team needs to concentrate on areas of care which can be immediately dealt with, as they cannot provide long-term care (See the list above for common important medical issues).
4. Second in importance would be generalists/family doctors. Since we can't give the people prescriptions for the long term and can't recommend them to a specialist, the team needs to focus on what we can do right away, or with short-term medications.
5. The team will probably have very rudimentary office space. It may not be very private. Tables will likely be regular flat tables. Power and lighting may be limited. Medical teams need to be prepared to be very flexible.
6. Each doctor should have a nurse to assist in all procedures.
7. It would be good to have non-medical team members helping out. Often the medical team needs other hands to help. Help can be provided in a waiting room, by providing food/water, entertainment, sharing & prayer, giving out Bibles & Christian literature, or whatever ideas the group may come up with.
8. It is important to come up with a plan for making appointments. The best process is to determine a fixed number of patients to be seen by each doctor during a 3-4 hour period of time (morning or afternoon). Numbers can be handed out as people arrive at the temporary clinic. Once the maximum number of patients arrives the others will be given numbers for the afternoon (or next day, etc.). Non-medical personnel can act as receptionists for this process.
9. The medical team would need to bring their own medications or purchase the medications in the host country. This can be a difficult process as each country has limits on how much and what type of medication can be brought into the country.
10. A prayer team for the medical clinic would be an important aspect of the ministry. Each team can bring non-medical volunteers for this.
11. The medical team could also consider visiting homes of the sick and elderly who cannot leave their homes to come to the clinic. The visit could include a check up or medical treatment, prayer, testimonies, and sharing. Home visits can be very effective and connect with the sickest people.

HEALTH SEMINARS

1. The number one ministry medical teams can provide is actually education. Health education and first aid is needed. Areas of concern are:
 - pre-natal & post-natal care
 - nutrition
 - pediatric issues & early childhood development
 - women's health issues
 - sexually transmitted diseases (AIDS)
 - ear/nose/throat issues,
 - gastrointestinal problems
 - orthopedic problems (spinal problems, posture, arthritis)
 - mental health - caring for the depressed/those with mental instability
 - CPR
 - Heimlich maneuver
 - eye care and glasses
 - dealing with high blood pressure
 - skin infections, foot fungus & lice infestations
 - allergies and sinus infections
 - diabetes
 - alcoholism
 - First Aid
 - Caring for special needs people
 - Gerontology – caring for the elderly
2. The medical team can organize and present seminars on various topics they feel comfortable with. CPR dummies and videos are very helpful.
3. Often it is possible to show videos to assist in teaching. Be sure to find videos in the language of the country you are going to.
4. Make sure the seminars are connected with a local ministry or clinic for follow up.

DENTAL TEAM

In most areas of the world dental care is inaccessible. Organizing a dental team is a way to quickly care for people in need. Many people have received no dental treatment in their lifetime.

1. Figure out what type of dental treatment your team can provide. Usually pulling teeth and cleaning teeth are two areas. Some teams have been able to bring simple equipment in order to do fillings.
2. Bring dental supplies to give to the patients.
3. It would be good to have non-dental team members helping out. Often the dental team needs other hands to help. Help can be provided in a waiting room, by providing food/water, entertainment, sharing & prayer, giving out Bibles & Christian literature, or whatever ideas the group may come up with.
4. It is important to come up with a plan for making appointments. The best process is to determine a fixed number of patients to be seen by each dentist during a 3-4 hour period of time (morning or afternoon). Numbers can be handed out as people arrive at the temporary clinic. Once the maximum number of patients arrives the others will be given numbers for the afternoon (or next day, etc.). Non-medical personnel can act as receptionists for this process.

5. Have your team present dental seminars for the community or for local schools. Teach children and youth how to brush properly and how to use dental floss. Use props and actual dental supplies to teach them.

VET TEAM

In areas where livestock is an important part of living for families veterinary medicine may be rudimentary. At the least farmers and ranchers have probably had limited access to veterinary medicine.

1. Purchase supplies for veterinary practices locally, as importing medication for animals is problematic.
2. With members of a local church, or ministry, visit ranches and offer assistance with any veterinary needs they might have. Ask about health issues of their animals and provide possible solutions.
3. Bring tools for practicing surgery.
4. Prepare and present seminars on modern veterinary techniques for ranchers. Concentrate on idea they can use that does not include needing a veterinarian and can be done without purchasing expensive medications.
5. Present seminars for families on how to increase production for smaller animals, such as chickens and pigs, by creating coops and pig sties. Give families an idea how to provide better for their families be showing them newer techniques for raising animals.
6. Offer to spade and neuter dogs in order to reduce the population in a community. This will lead to increased health benefits for humans as well.
7. When possible have local church/ministry leaders involved in order to create a relationship between the two parties.

AGRICULTURE TEAM

In many areas agriculture is the lifeline of the community. In poorer areas around the world small farmers may benefit from more modern techniques which could increase production for their plots of land. This will need to be done without them needing to purchase more expensive fertilizers and equipment.

1. Visit farmers while working on their lands. Offer to help. Ask questions and get info on how local farming is done.
2. Create a seminar with techniques that may increase production of local crops.
3. Help families create better producing gardens in the family plots of land around their homes. If families are able to produce their own vegetables and fruit they may be able to increase the nutrition value of what they eat as a family. Plus it will save the family money.

MEN'S MINISTRY

A special ministry to men as an outreach can be set up for your group. This ministry would take place at a church and include the pastor.

1. Have a BBQ for the men. Allow them to cook local meat dishes they enjoy.
2. Have a time of devotions/Bible study. Focus on issues for men.
3. Have a personal sharing and prayer time.
4. Special activity or sports.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

A special ministry to women as an outreach can be set up for your group. This ministry would take place at a church and include the pastor (if female) or the pastor's wife (if applicable).

1. Each day plan a different theme. Have a craft day, parenting class, basic health education; teach them how to cook American food.
2. Plan days when the local women teach your group skills from their culture, such as crafts, cooking, etc.
3. Have a time of devotions/Bible study that is well thought out and organized.
4. End with personal sharing and prayer time.

MUSIC CLASSES

If anyone in the group has musical training, is a music teacher, or has exceptional ability in music, consider holding classes for music training for church members who want to improve the worship leading at their church.

1. Churches usually have a keyboard player & drummer, but many are not trained or do not have an ear for tones.
2. Consider teaching other instruments such as flutes, trumpets, electric bass, drums, etc. Instruments will need to be provided by your team.
3. Using recorders, the keyboard, or other musical instruments, have members of your team-teach a music class to children, youth and/or adults.
4. Teach the basic fundamentals of music.
5. Prepare a presentation at the church or children's home.

ENGLISH CLASSES

In many areas of the world learning English is a high priority for finding better-paying jobs. Although many people study English few have opportunities to practice conversation with native English speakers. Giving them this opportunity can give them impetus for continuing to practice. Plus it is a great way to develop relationships.

1. Prepare or purchase English material that can be used as a guide for English conversation.
2. Break those wanting to practice English conversation into small groups of 1-3 locals with each mission team member. Have the mission team members utilize the prepared materials to guide their conversation.
3. Allow each small group to advance at the rate they are comfortable with.
4. Do not speak Spanish. Push the locals to practice.
5. Meet with the same people each day, so you know at what rate to advance in practicing English. This is also a key in developing good relationships.
6. Do not teach from in front. Teaching basic vocabulary in front of 30 people, and having them repeat after you, is not effective in learning to speak English.

DRAMA CLASSES

Organize the children, youth and/or adults into a drama team.

1. Teach the fundamentals of drama. Practice by doing spontaneous skits. Practice drama techniques.
2. Present a drama at the church, children's home, or in the community using locals and members of the mission team as the actors.

COMPUTER CLASSES

Computer skills are essential for children and youth to obtain decent-paying jobs in the future. Your team can teach some basic computer skills to the neighborhood, church members, children at the children's home, school, etc.

1. Bring laptops. Desktops are difficult to cross internationally, but each traveler can have one laptop.
2. Often church leaders want to learn how to utilize computers to enhance what they can do for worship and for creating brochures and informative materials for their church.

DANCE CLASSES

In locations where dancing is considered appropriate for Christians, your team can teach basic dance classes.

1. Depending on the skills of your team members choose a type of dance, such as ballet, folkloric, square, jazz, sacred or any other type of dance you think you could teach in an effective way.
2. Prepare your students to present a recital at the end of the week.
3. Bring the equipment and uniforms necessary for the students to learn.

MARTIAL ARTS CLASSES

In many areas around the world martial arts is becoming more popular.

1. At your ministry site prepare a class for the type of martial art your team is most experienced with.
2. Incorporate Christian character into your teaching.
3. Give your students an opportunity to present what they learned at the end of the week.
4. You may need to bring uniforms and equipment to help you teach. No mats will probably be available.

COOKING CLASS

In more urban areas people are interested in different cuisines around the world. Especially if they have access to ingredients and cooking appliances needed for the style of cooking.

1. The best type of food to teach is something ethnic from your background or area of the country.
2. You may have to bring ingredients from home to cook the items, but it would be good to find out what local ingredients are available that may be used as a substitute for the ingredients you normally use.
3. You will probably need to bring the appliances needed for ethnic cooking, but it would be good to find out what the local people normally use and figure out a way to adapt so they can cook similar style food at home.

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO CLASS

Many churches in urban areas are interested in utilizing photography or video for enhancing ministry or even employment.

1. You will most likely have to bring some equipment to use for teaching the class. However, some students may have their own equipment.
2. Teach individuals basic photography or video principles.
3. Give everyone an opportunity to practice using equipment you brought.
4. Evaluate and improve on what the students do.
5. Teach how to utilize computer programs for editing.

PRAYER WALK

Bring a team of prayer warriors and have them walk around the neighborhoods of a church praying for the people and ministry. Do this once or daily. Or have a prayer team walking and praying as the rest of the group is working or doing people ministry.

1. At a children's home walk to each area of the home and pray about a different aspect of the home (kitchen - food & health, dorms - each child as you visit their bed, school - education & future, chapel - spiritual growth of the children, playground - children's happiness & joy, staff housing - for the staff).
2. At a church walk to parts of the church and pray about a different aspect of the church (sanctuary - congregation as a whole & growth, classrooms - children & discipleship, kitchen - unity & fellowship, parsonage - pastor & family, neighborhood - for the neighbors to come to Christ, etc.).
3. Visit the homes of members of the church congregation you are doing ministry with. Visit with the family, ask for prayer requests and pray for the family. The team can also visit neighbors of the church who the pastor has indicated have needs.
4. Visit the homes of students of the Christian school you are doing ministry at and pray for those families.

IDEAS EXCHANGE

Bringing people of two cultures together, to brainstorm ideas for ministry, can lead to some new exciting ideas.

1. Prepare a subject to be discussed pertaining to an aspect of ministry. Make sure to utilize the expertise of members of the group.
2. Invite local leaders to participate.
3. Create a round table discussion format in which everyone gets an opportunity to share their perspective of the subject.
4. Try not to come across as the expert in an area. Keep an open mind and try to understand the cultural background everyone is coming from.
5. Be prepared to learn and implement ideas in your own church/ministry.

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

People in all parts of the world are fascinated by culture. Even presenting aspects of North American culture are fascinating to people, even though we may think they are mundane. Prepare to share an aspect of your ethnic background, or state/province.

1. Include cultural object which may be of interest.
2. Photos are usually interesting and can be used as aids.
3. Create an activity for the local people that is cultural. This may include a dance, game, food, or other types of activities.
4. As North Americans we often think we do not have culture to share, but be creative. We all have something unique to share.

CAMP/RETREAT

Take a group of children, youth, families or an entire church on a retreat, or to a camp

1. With help from the Merge staff reserve a retreat site. This may have some cost involved. It may, or may not, be appropriate to have the locals pay a part of the cost.
2. With the locals create partnership in a program for the retreat. Include spiritual challenges along with games, sports, special events, and other aspects of camp.

GAME NIGHT

Every culture has table games unique to their culture. Bringing together table games from the local culture and from the North American culture, is a great way to break down barriers and create relationship.

1. Bring games from your own culture. Make sure none of the game you play would be offensive in the local culture (like cards may be).
2. Invite the local people to bring their favorite board games. Learn new games and teach some of your games.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

In many areas of the world self-sustainable community development projects are a key to survival of people who live in the area.

1. Utilize Merge expertise in figuring out what is needed in a particular area.
2. Involve local community leaders in decision-making. Follow their lead in figuring out what is most needed and how a project can be self-sustainable.
3. Develop a plan that includes investment on behalf of the local people. Do not promise a 100% commitment on the North American's part. This will lead to the locals not having any personal investment in the continuation of a project.
4. See if Merge can help utilize the skills of community development organizations in the area.
5. Make sure you are looking long term. Most community development projects take years to put in place effectively.
6. Finding local leaders to oversee the project is key.
7. Use expertise in your mission team members to help further the vision and implementation of the project.
8. Be careful about creating dependency, not setting up a system of accountability, and accidentally creating a patronage system.

PUBLIC SCHOOL OUTREACH

Often public schools, in other countries, are open to visits from North Americans willing to present various subjects to enhance the education of the students. This is also a manner in which the local church/ministry can connect with students, teachers and the administration for outreach purposes.

1. Schools that have English classes enjoy having native English speakers available to do small group English conversation classes
2. Many schools have Physical Education classes. A team can bring equipment and teach a new sport to the students. Remember that PE is supposed to be educational, so you must have an educational component to your sport.

3. Science labs are usually not existent in many developing countries. Prepare science experiments the children can participate in and learn from. Make sure to be able to teach the basic scientific principles.
4. Music classes can be successful. Bring recorders and teach basic music theory to the students. There may even be the possibility of the students playing their recorders for the rest of the school at the end of the week.
5. Art classes are also often rare in public schools around the world. The goal would not be to teach a craft, but to use art to teach basic artistic principles, such as color wheels, perspective, shading, etc. Make sure to bring all of the supplies needed for the class, as they may not be available in the area you visit.
6. There may be other types of classes your team may have expertise in. Computers, history, or other types of classes could be presented. Check with the Merge Trip Facilitator of the options in the area your team will be going to.

WORSHIP SERVICES

1. Many Sunday morning services include Sunday school programs.
2. Remember time is not as much an issue. Be prepared for more than an hour service.
3. Your group most likely will be asked by the church pastor to participate in the service. Be prepared. Below are some ideas:
 - Music - Sing a couple songs as a group. This is a regular part of the worship services. You could teach a song for everyone to sing. Solos, or small groups singing, are also appropriate. Bring a guitar, or use the keyboard if there is one available.
 - Drama - Skits, plays, mimes, or Bible stories are appropriate.
 - Testimonies - Always a favorite.
 - Video - You may need to bring your own DVD player and TV or projection equipment
 - Sermon - Every service has a sermon from Scripture. If there is a pastor or willing team member in your group, he or she may be asked to preach.
 - Make sure the illustrations make sense in a cultural context. Try to avoid idioms.
 - Special Event - Invite the people to a lunch or dinner that your group prepares.

TRAVELING OUTREACH TEAM

A popular ministry for mission teams around the world has been to prepare a team that prepares an hour-long program that can be presented in churches, parks, children's homes, schools, and in other locations in a particular area.

1. This must be done in connection with a local church, or ministry, and include people involved in those ministries. They will be the ones following up on any contacts made. Random programs in various locations, without a follow-up plan, are not effective.
2. Dramas are often a great option for this program. Dramas can include mimes, pre-recorded dramas, narrated dramas, etc. Costumes, background music, and backdrops add to the effectiveness.
3. Children love puppets. If you have an excellent puppet team prepare a program. Obviously it must be in the language of the country your team will be doing ministry in. Make sure to practice this very well, as puppet shows can be difficult to present well, but are very effective. You will probably need to bring a stage. Incorporating music is also effective.
4. Music is international. People are attracted to music from various countries. Prepare a concert by your team. It can be a band or a classical group. Special numbers using various instruments are great as well. It depends on the musical talent and experience of your team.
5. Testimonies are something many people can relate to. This would be a good addition to the program.

6. Make sure to have a theme for your program and repeat it often. The goal is to have everyone learn one thing and learn it well.
7. Give the local pastor/leaders an opportunity to be up front. They are the key people for follow up. Often they feel comfortable sharing a message or praying.
8. Try to involve local people in your program as much as possible. If the church/ministry your team is basing your trip on has a drama team, for example, maybe they can participate in the program as well.
9. The overall goal is to create an hour-long program that includes various interesting elements that will attract attention. Have a theme and do your best to connect the people who attend with the local ministry leaders and pastors.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Every morning or afternoon your group can run a children's program at a church, orphanage, or neighborhood. These programs can reflect Vacation Bible School or day camp programs you have at your churches. Covenant Merge Ministries' staff will be available to help.

The program can consist of:

- Pre-Assembly - recruiting, games, bubbles, sidewalk chalk, etc. (30 minutes)
- Opening Assembly - music, drama, puppets, mime, contests, testimonies, Bible verses, learning activities, video, game show, etc. (30 minutes)
- Rotation or All Together
 - Crafts - split up by ages (20 minutes)
 - Games - split up by ages (20 minutes)
 - Bible Classes - split up by ages (20 minutes)
- Closing Assembly (20 minutes)

RECRUITING CHILDREN

The pastor will advertise your program, but you are the most important advertising tool. Split up into three groups.

1. Have one group be outgoing and go into the neighborhood to invite kids to the program. Dress in costumes, blow bubbles and pass out balloons. Invite kids to come as you meet them on the streets or at homes. One excellent way to meet children is to ask the ones already attending if they have any friends or relatives nearby. Go with them to the homes of their friends or relatives and have the children invite them. Go in pairs or a small group.
2. Have a second group play sports and games in front of the ministry site. Invite kids to come as they approach the area. Be excited as the children arrive. Give children nametags as they arrive for the program.
3. Have the third group do last minute preparation for the children's program.
4. Print out flyers in advance of the trip inviting children to attend your program. Information about what to print on the flyers can be obtained by asking the Merge staff (address, church name, etc.). These flyers can be passed out before or while recruiting children for the program.

ASSEMBLIES

The opening time run by your group can take place in the church sanctuary, room at the orphanage, or on the street. It can be any length.

1. Write out the order of the program and make sure all team members know it.

2. Prepare very well for your assemblies. Practice, practice, practice.
3. Run through your entire program once before each assembly.
4. Make smooth transitions. Don't allow any dead time. Otherwise the children will lose interest.
5. Have team members sit with the children.
6. Have team members be enthusiastic! Jumping, shouting and motions for songs are normal for the children.
7. Team members need to participate in the discipline of children. A simple way is to sit with the children during the program. Be sure that you are paying attention to the program and thus setting an example for the children.
8. Be willing to adapt from the curriculum you are using for your ministry situation.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The opening assembly can include but are not limited to the following:

MC

Choose someone from your group to lead the transitions of the assembly.

1. The MC must have excellent up front skills and be outgoing and enthusiastic.
2. Continually ask the children questions to see if they understand the content.
3. Do not expect the MC or the translator to discipline from the front.

THEME

Choose a daily theme for your opening assembly. It can be topical or a Bible character.

1. Have the entire assembly focus on the theme or Bible character, including the songs, if possible.
2. If choosing topical themes make it discipleship oriented. Most of the children attending the programs will have the basics of Christianity already. Avoid common Bible stories and try to choose some that the children may not have heard before.
3. Introduce the theme at the beginning of the assembly.
4. Ask the children if they can repeat the theme. Repeat it often.
5. Ask the children many questions about the theme to evaluate the understanding and reinforce the message.

SINGING

1. Choose a strong song leader.
2. Songs must be learned by the entire group before the trip.
3. Write out all songs on poster board.
4. Learn some songs from the kids and incorporate them into your music.
5. Bring your own guitars or other instruments for leading music.
6. Teach the songs slowly and repeat often.
7. Explain the meaning of the songs.
8. Sing each song three times through at a minimum. Children love to sing.
9. Come up with hand motions and different ways to make the songs fun to sing.

OBJECT LESSONS

As with any Bible school give the kids directions for a learning activity. Use objects that you bring (such as balloons, rocks, coins, etc.) that connect with the theme or have the children participate by finding particular objects which connect to the theme (i.e. find an object outside that represents how you feel about Jesus today). Have them share what they learned.

1. Have a magic show as an object lesson.
2. Do goofy "incredibly stupid" stunts as object lessons.
3. Have the children share in small groups.

TESTIMONIES

People from the group can share their testimonies.

1. Have a theme for your testimony.
2. It could be a part of the theme of the day, or can be evangelistic.
3. Do not tell your life story, unless it applies to the theme.
4. Choose a story that recently happened in your life to which the children can relate.
5. Have testimonies be short (5 minutes max).
6. Create and follow an outline. Practice. If you will be speaking with a translator, practice with him or her.
7. Be enthusiastic about your testimony.

DRAMA

Try funny skits, Bible stories, serious plays, a series of plays, mimes, modern day stories, etc.

1. Have all of the actors memorize their lines (Most effective).
2. Have a narrator tell the story while actors act out the story or use pantomime.
3. Have the children act out part of the story while a narrator tells them what to do.
4. Costumes add to any drama. Background for sets can be used. Use the whole church.
5. Have a lot of action in the dramas. Don't have too much talking.
6. Drama needs to be prepared very well for the children to really get the point. Practice.
7. Be loud and energetic. Exaggerate, and slow down.
8. The MC needs to introduce the skit.
9. Ask the children thought provoking questions about the skit (not just yes and no questions) and discuss the message to enhance their understanding.
10. Use music as background to your mimes.
11. If the children don't understand the drama or didn't pay attention, do it a second time so that they walk away knowing what the drama was about.

PRAYER TIME

1. Have children share prayer requests in large or small groups.
2. Have children pray in large groups or small groups.
3. Have children write down prayer requests. Have the team pray for the children.
4. Have the local pastor open and close the program in prayer.

5. Teach a short lesson on the meaning of prayer.
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VIDEO

Show a children's video in their native language.

1. Tie in the video with your theme of the day.
 2. Have a question time before and after the video to ensure comprehension.
 3. Please know there probably will not be TVs or DVDs available for your group at the ministry site. Ask if one is available first.
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MEMORY VERSES

1. Pick one that relates to your theme.
 2. Make them difficult, rather than easy.
 3. Write out the verse on poster board.
 4. Make sure the leader and all team members have the verse memorized in the native language before the program.
 5. Use different techniques to teach the verse. (games, boys vs. girls, motions, etc.)
 6. Explain the verse.
 7. Have different groups say it out loud (boys, girls, 13-year-olds, left side of room, etc.)
 8. Repeat the verse often, throughout the program and every day.
 9. Prizes can be given out to those children who memorize all of the verses. Hand out prizes at the end of the children's program or at the end of the week.
 10. Remember that most of the children will have memorized well-known verses, such as John 3:16. Try to choose verses that are less known.
 11. Have different teaching techniques for each age group. With little kids putting the verse to a tune and singing it is a great technique.
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PUPPETS

Bring your own puppets and stage. Stories can relate to the daily theme.

1. Puppets can act to a taped recording of the lines. This could have background music, etc. Be sure that the recording is clear.
 2. Have a lot of action and less talking. Make it fun and entertaining.
 3. If the puppets sing, make sure they act during the song.
 4. Ask children questions about what the puppets did or said.
 5. Have puppets participate in group singing.
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CONTESTS

It is acceptable to have prizes for things such as:

1. Bringing friends. It is important to have a system for keeping track of who brought friends. (For example – mark nametags in order to know who really brought friends for the first time, or give the kids a sticker, or write their names down, and then reward the kids at the closing assembly.)
2. Attendance.

3. Memory verses.

Be sure that you have a system ready to keep track of numbers, children who have already received prizes, etc.

GAME SHOW

Run a game show during the assembly.

1. Be creative, fun and extremely prepared.
 2. Tie in the game show with the theme of the day.
 3. Have as many children as possible participate.
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TEAM OPTION

1. Break the children up into three teams by age and gender. Recommended age groups are: ages 6 and under, ages 7-9, ages 10 and up. Be aware that very young children may want to stay with their older siblings. Be flexible.
 2. Assign each group specific mission team members as leaders, helpers and a person in charge of discipline for that group.
 3. Give each team a color or name and designate each child as a team member using stickers or nametags.
 4. Rotate the children through three areas of 20 minutes each: Bible stories/Bible verse, Games and Crafts.
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ROTATION OPTION

This option takes more planning and creativity than the team option, but can be more effective with the children.

1. Organize 7-8 stations for the children to visit every day. These stations can include crafts, games, memory verses, Bible trivia, puppet shows, learning activities, challenges, singing, snacks, etc.
 2. Every station is connected to the theme of the week. The stations reinforce the message and comprehension.
 3. The children choose when and where they visit each station and for how long. After 60 minutes have children return to a closing assembly time.
 4. You can repeat some or all of the stations every day.
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CRAFTS

1. Bring all of the supplies you need for crafts or you may purchase supplies on site. Please note that prices may be higher for items needed in other countries or you may not be able to find what you need.
2. Plan at least for 20 minutes of crafts per day.
3. Age groups will run from pre-school to junior high school age. Therefore you need to plan simple crafts for little children and more difficult crafts for older kids.
4. Keep your supplies organized. Package all needed materials per craft activity in plastic bags for each individual child. This makes distribution easy and children spend time doing the craft rather than waiting.
5. Be sure the leader of each age group is prepared for crafts.
6. Have enough helpers. Often crafts can be wild when there are many children. Everyone should be helping. Consider having alternative activities for children who complete the craft quickly. i.e. coloring pages
7. Practice the crafts at home before arriving. Make sure every team member knows how to do the craft they are helping with. Test the do-ability and durability of craft item.
8. Bring coloring books, puzzles, Bible storybooks and other "filler" activities.

9. Please provide creative, new crafts for the children.
10. When handing out craft materials have the children sit in a circle on the ground or around a table. Have at least one team member in charge of each group. Hand out the craft materials to the leader of each group who then distributes it. Have the team members in each group help the children make the crafts.
11. For purposes of sensitivity to people of lower incomes please do not use food to make crafts.
12. Do not make the wordless-book bracelets. They have been overdone.

GAMES

Bring your own balls and game supplies.

1. Organize a list of 5-7 games groups can play every day at the program. Be sure to have the right supplies. Have all game supplies ready to go and available throughout the game time. Have a different list of games for each age group.
2. Be as organized as possible. Often games can get out of control if the leaders are not in control. Make sure all team members know how to play.
3. Split the children into groups (6 years and under, 7- 9 years, and 10 & older).
4. Older children like sports, such as soccer, baseball, kickball, etc.
5. Do not just have free time. Have organized games.
6. Younger children enjoy playing with Frisbees, jump ropes, bubbles, etc.
7. Be creative! Play games other than Duck Duck Goose, Red Light Green Light, Simon Says, Red Rover, etc.
8. Have "back up" games planned in case the ones you have planned do not go well. Ask local staff if there is a game that the children love to play.

SNACKS

You can provide snacks for the children. Be sure to have enough for everyone. Protect the food so no one steals it. You will be responsible to bring or purchase snack food at your own expense. If you desire to provide water for the children your group is responsible to provide water, cups and ice for them at your own expense.

FOLLOW UP

Consider keeping a roster of the children who attend, including obtaining home locations and phone numbers (if applicable). This will allow the church or ministry you are working with to be able to follow up with home visits.

SPECIAL NOTE TO CHILDREN'S PROGRAM COORDINATORS

- Basically use ideas from your own Children's Ministries for use on your mission trip. The kids will love what you do, as long as it is prepared well. Be creative!
- Have everything prepared before arriving. Dramas and puppets should be well practiced. The entire group should know the songs and memory verses by heart. While work projects need to be very flexible, planning a children's ministry is less flexible and needs to be very well prepared. Please don't think that you can arrive and throw a program together. Many children's programs that are unprepared are boring and embarrassing to the national pastor/director and hamper future ministry. Organizing an effective children's program for another culture is extremely difficult. The Merge staff will be available to help you once you arrive. They can evaluate and help you be more effective in your children's ministry, if you are open to their direction.
- Present Old & New Testament Bible stories in a way that promotes a deeper understanding of the message. Most of the children attending programs have the basics of Christianity already. Challenge your group to present discipleship material that is thought provoking and builds a greater understanding of the character and strength of

God's people, Jesus, and God's love for us. Use material that will challenge the children to live their lives in an active faith obedient to God's Word. Be creative! Remember that the basics have been covered. For a quality program, deepen the message!

PUPPET TEAM

Have a puppet team travel to different locations throughout your ministry area, such as churches, orphanages and neighborhoods, and present a special program. Refer to the children's ministry section for puppet show ideas.

Please focus on deeper Christian themes rather than evangelism.

DRAMA TEAM

Have a drama team travel to different locations throughout your ministry area such as churches, orphanages, and neighborhoods, to present a special program. Refer to the children's ministry section for drama ideas.

1. Mime teams can be very effective in presenting a message.
2. Special services can be arranged at local churches each evening for your group to present your dramas.
3. Add in music, testimonies, and a special message to your presentation.
4. Drama teams must be connected with a local church for follow-up in order to be effective.

Please focus on deeper Christian themes rather than evangelism.

MUSIC TEAM

Have a music team travel to different locations throughout your ministry area, such as churches, orphanages and neighborhoods, and present a special program.

1. Four and Six-part harmonies, gospel music, and ethnic music is much appreciated by the local people. Music must have Christian lyrics and melodies, as secular music is unacceptable in most locations where we serve.
2. Concerts at local churches can be organized by the Merge staff for your group to present each evening.
3. Musical instruments are encouraged as well (i.e. saxophone, flute, trumpet, etc.). Your group can consider presenting a concert with instruments only as an outreach event for a church. Bring your own instruments.
4. Add in a testimony or special message with your concert.

CHILDREN'S FAIR

The object of the fair is to promote your children's program. It is also a tool to share Jesus with the people and develop relationships. The fair can take place any day. The best place is a site near or at the location where you will have your children's ministry. When you plan your fair, think of your local carnival and what it has to offer. Then devise your own plans. Your group is responsible to bring your own supplies for the fair.

Here are some ideas:

GAME BOOTHS

As in your local carnival, create games of skill in which children can win prizes. Ideas: Knocking over bottles with baseballs, dart popping balloons, water pistol shooting, relays, Polaroid shots, pie eating contests, basketball throw, ping pong ball in the milk can, fishing booth, etc. There are endless ideas. Think of challenges for different age groups.

1. Give out prizes at each booth for winners, or have children win tickets to turn in for prizes later. Make sure to have the prize booth organized and well-marked, as often this is the most disorganized part of a children's fair.
2. Do not give out an excessive amount of prizes. 5-8 per child is plenty.
3. Or you can give the children the type of tickets that have a duplicate with the same number (as in a raffle). After the fair take all of the children into a building (church, etc.) and hand out to each child a bag with the same exact prizes. Have a drawing for grand prizes that 5-10 children will win by having the same number of ticket drawn (like a raffle). This will eliminate the craziness of a prize booth.
4. Rope off your booth areas to keep kids from running all over the place. Design ways to create order.

BALLOONS

Kids love helium filled balloons. Or just blow a bunch up.

CLOWNS

Members of your group dress up as clowns and jugglers.

MUSIC

Stereo playing Christian music.

PUPPETS

A puppet show inviting the kids to go to VBS. Or you can use one of the puppet shows you'll have for VBS.

TESTIMONIES

A portable microphone and amplification equipment would be helpful here.

BUBBLE BLOWING

Children love to blow and pop bubbles.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY FLYERS

Make up flyers to hand out to kids and their parents, to promote your children's ministry. Information about what to print on the flyers can be obtained by asking the Merge Trip Facilitator (address, church name, etc.). These flyers can be passed out before or while recruiting children for the program.

OTHER IDEAS

Covenant Merge Ministries welcomes new ideas in ministry. Your group may have ideas for a type of ministry that you would like to try. Please discuss these ideas with the Merge Trip Facilitator for their feasibility.

WORK PROJECTS

Covenant Merge Ministries focuses on long-term work projects. *Most projects will not be completed in one week.* Instead, groups will be working under the authority of the host director. Most projects groups work on will be a continuation of construction started by the host ministry or other visiting groups. It is highly unlikely your group will be terminating a project during your time there, although it is possible. *So please be prepared to go home without seeing the project finished.*

The goal of Covenant Merge Ministries is not to create work projects so groups will be able to begin, construct, and complete a work project in one week. Instead, our goal is to provide long-term construction assistance to international ministries needing help. The hosts would like for us to build structures that are strong, long-lasting, and fit best into their ministry needs. In order to ensure quality construction it is usually not possible to complete a project in one week.

We are excited for your group to participate in our ongoing ministry to provide quality construction for the international ministries. Here is how you can best prepare and help us to prepare for your trip:

WORK PROJECT SKILL LEVEL & SET-UP

1. Work projects may be at churches, children's homes, Christian schools, or other ministry sites. Your group chooses where you will work.
2. The optimum number of people at each work site will involve 10-15 people. If you have more than 15 people who want to work, you need to consider dividing the group to do construction at more work sites.
3. Work projects will depend on the skill level of groups attending the trip.

SPECIAL SKILLS

Specialized skills may be useful at particular sites. Please contact your Trip Facilitator to identify the special skills your group can provide. Construction skills such as plumbing, electrical, and special carpentry are often needed. Other skills such as sewing, reupholstering, artistry & graphics are also worth mentioning. However, due to needs of the work site, it may not be possible to use those special skills.

SKILLED

Work projects for skilled construction workers, especially masonry work, cement work, and carpentry are plentiful. Merge focuses its work projects on long-term construction. Much of the work will be in block, cement, and related materials.

LOW SKILLED

There is work to do for everyone. There always is painting, cleaning, digging, mixing cement, and other lower-skilled jobs to do at various sites. Your group will probably be challenged to work on higher-skilled construction tasks than they are used to at home. This is often an excellent learning experience for your group.

Even if your group has little construction experience, it is important that they have the attitude of a willingness to learn and try something new. Group members may discover an interest or skill they had no idea they possessed.

PLANS OF WORK PROJECT

If requested, the Merge staff will find out any information you would like on your work project in advance of your trip. Drawings, plans & prices are all things Merge can do to help you prepare.

WORK PROJECT COORDINATION

1. The Merge staff will assist you in communicating with the host pastor/director about the work project.
2. The work project **must** be completed according to the wishes of the host pastor/director, not the mission team.
3. Be willing to build it the local way. Often times the work project will be organized and constructed in ways your group may not be familiar with. Patience is helpful.
4. It must be stressed that work projects often are changed unexpectedly at the last minute for many reasons. Working internationally is very different than working in the United States. Flexibility is key!
5. Often pastors, church members, neighbors and children will want to help you. Remember establishing relationships is very important. Take the time to get to know the people.

LOCAL FOREMAN

For many projects a local foreman will be hired or available to direct your team in constructing the project the way the local people or leader of the ministry desire. However, it is the responsibility of the mission team leaders to motivate their team members to work on the project site. It is **not** the responsibility of the Merge staff or local foreman to motivate the team members to work.

WORK PROJECT FUNDRAISING & TOOLS

Your group is responsible to raise the money for all materials and tools.

TOOL SUPPLY LIST

Merge and the host ministries have limited tools available. All have been donated by previous teams. If you would like to know what is available contact a Merge Trip Facilitator for a list of available tools.

All unavailable tools must be brought by the mission team or purchased in the area.

CONSTRUCTION TEAM TIPS

1. Ask for a needs list with details. Find out what equipment they already have. Plan ahead for the project - know what supplies are needed.
2. Be prepared for medical needs/accidents. The Merge staff will know where the nearest medical facility is.
3. It is very important that the nationals feel ownership and responsibility so be prepared to help them, not do for them.
4. Be humble; their way might be better.
5. Avoid comments about the "American way."
6. Be flexible.
7. Be prepared for God to change the plan - relationships are more important than goals.
8. Don't play with cement and materials that will burn your skin.

MATERIAL PURCHASING

1. If you send construction material money to the Covenant World Mission **four weeks in advance** of the trip, the Merge staff will do their best in purchasing the requested materials prior to the group's arrival.
2. Purchasing materials in some countries can be a slow and frustrating process. Be prepared to be flexible.
3. If you want to purchase more materials for the work project the Merge staff will assist you in purchasing materials and guiding you to stores.
4. Materials in other countries are often not similar to products found in North America. Please be prepared to work with materials you are not familiar with.

WORK PROJECTS CAN BE FRUSTRATING FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- Work projects are rarely started and completed in the same week. It may be frustrating for mission teams who have a need for completion in order to feel a sense of accomplishment. Together, with the hosts, and other groups, our goal is to complete these projects. However, North American culture is such that unless a project is completed NOW a sense of failure can set in, especially with adult males.
- Some groups are embarrassed, because they were unable to complete a project. They feel somehow that they let the nationals down, by not completing their task. Remember you are not expected to complete any project. You are a blessing whatever your group is able to accomplish. It is this encouragement of being a blessing that is as valuable as any work project.
- Sometimes groups are confused about the manners in which a work project is constructed. Other countries have different construction techniques and this can cause North Americans to be confused or frustrated. Groups should recognize that there are different ways to build things than the way North Americans are used to.
- Frustration with not having enough to do for all group members is common. Sometimes it is because of the technicality of the project itself. Other times it is because of the disorganization of the host pastor and/or local foreman. At times it is because of the excitement of the locals because your group is helping them, they participate in the work project and end up completing it themselves, without any regard to your group's desire to work.

Please know that Covenant Merge Ministries is dedicated to having plenty of work daily for your group members on projects that are quality and worthwhile. We work hard at purchasing materials and organizing the details of the work projects. This is our goal, but sometimes the reality is different. We are dedicated to empower the hosts and are not willing to fulfill the personal needs of any group leader at the expense of the hosts.

MINISTRY PREP

Ministry is the integration of your faith with action. It is reaching out in love and sharing the truth of the gospel in any and every way to draw all people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Ministry preparedness is one of the most important parts of your missions training. Because you will be on the field for short period of time, the more prepared you are, the more effective you will be.

Ministry needs to always include sharing Biblical principles in some manner, having the attitude of being a blessing and being flexible. Ministry can happen at any time on your trip. Be prepared. Each member should know how to lead someone into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They should be able to use their Bible and share the plan of salvation in a personal and caring way.

DEVOTIONS/QUIET TIMES

It is essential that each team member spend time alone with God before, during, and after the mission experience. While on the field, life will be busy and you will be tired, but time should be set aside to spend with God each day.

JOURNALING

Journaling is an individual's collection of memories from an experience...joyful, painful, frustrating, challenging memories and stories of God's faithfulness in the midst of it all! If you have never kept a journal...now is a good time to start! You are about to set out on an experience that will remain with you for the rest of your life. You will forget many details even after they occur as vivid, meaningful experiences. Those who journal will be able to process your experiences more completely, communicate with others about this experience more effectively and recall all that God has done through what you have written!!

ENCOURAGEMENT

How can you intentionally encourage each other while in this experience together? Encouragement is a powerful thing and will improve team unity and effectiveness on the field. The challenge for you is this: find creative ways to practice giving and encouragement.

DEBRIEFING

Debriefing with your team is very important. Studies show that the long-term impact that can occur after mission trips is non-existent in the absence of continued debriefing and follow-up. The following are things to remember while reentering your country of origin. Included you will find a “My Impressions of...” handout for each team member. This is an important tool in the debriefing process.

CHANGE

The person that started out on the mission experience is not the same one returning home. Each person will have changed in some way as they have seen God move in and through them during the mission experience. Team members will be looking at the world around them through different eyes. For example, they may have faced poverty for the first time in their life and now they consider, ‘Do I need...’ or ‘Do I want...’.

The changes will include both a shift in belief and perception as well as in behavior. In order to handle the changes, as a team leader, you need to help the team members to:

1. Recognize and accept that they have changed and how they have changed.
2. Identify which changes are temporary (negotiable) and which changes are permanent (non-negotiable).
3. Identify which changes in the team member will alienate them from their family and friends at home and why.
4. Identify which changes will attract people back home to Jesus Christ.
5. See Jesus as their model. He was very much a part of his society and yet part of a distinctly different culture.
6. See themselves not only as changed people but as change agents as well. They need help in introducing change in their spheres of influence.
7. Keep their faith in Jesus who is “the same yesterday, today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)
8. Recognize and expect Satan’s attacks to come and discourage. It is normal to experience a low after an intense focused time. Be aware that during this vulnerable time Satan will attempt to “steal, kill and destroy” (John 10:10).

IDENTITY/SELF-WORTH

Another related issue is self-worth. Transitions in life have a way of exposing what stuff people are made of at their core. The mission experience may have redefined the participants’ self-worth and perception of themselves. They may have felt valuable, needed and appreciated while away from home. Upon return, however, they may not receive the same affirmation. Or, the short-term mission experience may have stripped the participants of the things they consider important and the places where they have placed their worth and value. They may be returning with a new confidence.

The re-entry transition is a good opportunity to evaluate where a person’s self-worth lies. You may need to walk the participants through Biblical passages that address this issue (i.e. Psalm 139, 1 Peter 2:9-12, Titus 3:5).

EXPECTATIONS

The success or failure of the short-term mission experience is largely connected to the kind of expectations the team member brought to the mission. If most of the expectations were met, they will consider the mission experience a success. If the trip did not measure up to the expectations of the team member, they could feel like the mission was a failure. This may be a limited way of evaluating an experience, but such perspective affects the kind of reentry the team members will have.

It is very important, then, that expectations are realistic and shared with others on the team. The pre-departure orientation should cover the area of expectations: what they are, what to do when they are unmet, how and/or when to change expectations, etc. The post-return orientation should also cover the same topics.

Although participants are encouraged to expect great things from God, they may not be ready for mundane experiences. There should be a balance between expecting great things from God and having realistic expectations about the mission experience and about their return back home. Nothing is too insignificant for God to use to affect life-change...even lost luggage, cold showers, and bugs!!

The other side of expectations is the reentry part. What ideas and dreams did they have about returning home? Expectations may include positive or negative denial of life back home. Positive denial may include a glorified view of home, an inflated view of the interest people may have of the mission experience or an exaggerated view of how one will cope back home. Negative denial, on the other hand, may include thinking that people will not be interested in their stories, anticipating depression, loneliness, and anger, or being immobile and unable to cope with everything.

You can help team members develop realistic expectations about their reentry to their home culture. The following statements have been formulated to help short-term team members prepare for what realistic reentry may look like. Talk about them BEFORE, during and after the mission experience!

I will go through a re-adjustment period, parts of which may be difficult.

1. People will show initial excitement in my stories but will quickly diminish in their interest. I shouldn't be surprised or discouraged.
2. Stardom will feel great, but it is short-lived. Returning home may initially feel great, but I may feel alone at times and confused, sad, and misunderstood.
3. I should expect my renewed faith to be tested, tried and strengthened.
4. During the lonely times, I can expect God to be with me to comfort and guide me through this transition time. (Psalm 23) Be honest! It's OK to hit some lows.

SPIRITUAL CONCERNS

Issues of spiritual pride and struggles to reintegrate back into the life of the church may face team members. They may have had an enriched spiritual experience while away and are now down on the apparently mediocre commitments of Christians around them. It's important not to look down on others who haven't experienced this trip (Romans 12:3).

There may also be a crisis of faith for the team members during the mission experience, which needs to be addressed. They may have seen or experienced things that may have shaken their faith. Their reentry should be handled with compassion and understanding.

MY IMPRESSIONS OF...(REFLECTIONS FOR THE END OF YOUR TRIP)

Begin by remembering the different things you saw on your mission experience...both the expected and the unexpected. You may want to review your journal if you have kept one.

One thing is for sure – Your eyes were open while you were away. Does that sound like a ridiculous statement? How could one's eyes not be open? Yet very often in our everyday lives we go through our routines and never “see” things. We are too busy or too preoccupied to notice them. But it was different on your mission experience – you had prepared yourself to “see”. You were determined to observe the various things you would encounter each day. Take some time now to reflect upon what you saw.

THE PEOPLE

1. What did you see in the people that you did not expect to see?

2. What assets did the community have?

3. What aspects of their lives impressed you most?

THE COUNTRY

1. What things did you see in the country that were different from your expectations?

2. Is there any picture that quickly comes to mind? (Why has it stayed with you?)

Seeing is a discipline we need to develop. It is the first step in making a difference in our world. Unless one sees, one can never take responsibility. Because you were willing to keep your eyes open on the mission experience, you probably “saw” quite a bit. Not merely sights and sounds all jumbled together, but issues and concerns festering beneath the surface. We hope that what you saw will stick with you and, more importantly, you will continue to keep your eyes open.

Jesus admonished the disciples to “open their eyes and see” – an admonition well suited for His disciples today as well. So many Christians live without ever really seeing. Perhaps you were one of them before this mission experience. Now the question is not only whether you will remember what you saw in the country you were in, but whether you will continue to “see” in the country where you live.

3. What keeps you from “seeing” in your world?

WHAT I LEARNED

As your experience in and knowledge of the host country has grown, perhaps some ignorance in your perspective about the world and its inhabitants has been dispelled. We hope you took time to listen and learn from those you encountered. Take time to reflect upon what you have learned.

1. List two things you learned about each of the following:
 - a. The people
 - b. The country
 - c. The church in the country
 - d. The people on your team
 - e. Yourself
2. Which of the previous surprised you? Why?

Injustices do not simply appear out of nowhere. There are factors that contribute to their existence. If we understand these, we are better able to identify with people and work with them in seeking justice and mercy.

3. What factors have contributed to the conditions of the people you were with? (Think through the sociological, political, spiritual, emotional, and physical factors you may have learned)

Understanding our world requires effort. Far too often, people put forth no effort to become educated to the situations around them. Seeing injustice and oppression is a necessary beginning, but without understanding what we see we can be of little help. The question for you is, now that you have seen and understood the people's situation, will your life be the same as it had been before the trip?

4. What keeps people from learning about and understanding injustice in their world?

WHAT I FELT

The writer of the gospels tells us that whenever Jesus Christ encountered people in need and He was deeply moved by what he saw. He felt the pain of their situation. During your time in the country there were probably situations that caused you to feel deeply. As you saw a particular person or an incident, you may have been deeply moved. In those times you were most likely being challenged by God in some way.

1. Think of at least one situation on your mission experience when you really felt deeply about something. Write a description of the situation.
2. What was it you felt? (Try to describe the feelings you had at that moment.)
3. Were you surprised by your feelings? Why?
4. As you reflect back on that situation, what growth do you think God had in mind for you in those feelings?

Feelings come and go, there's no doubt about that. Yet, the feelings you experienced on this mission experience may be etched in your memory forever. Their memory may prompt you to feel deeply again and again in the world in which you live. God meant for you to go on this trip. He will continue to challenge you to grow. Will you pay Him the same sort of attention now, as you return home, as you did on your mission experience? He is not through with you yet!!

5. What factors may prevent you from being deeply moved in the world in which you live?

HOW I WILL RESPOND

Now comes the tough but exciting part – the application of what you saw, learned and felt. What are you going to do with your experience? How are you going to respond to the things God is teaching you?

It is one thing to go on a mission experience and have a great time. Many do. But it's quite another to go on a mission and allow the experience to change you and the world in which you live. The process of responding is an ongoing one that requires you to make decisions day by day. It requires ongoing action. Your mission experience only began a process. The process is not finished yet! In this section, instead of reflecting on the mission experience, think about the present and the future.

1. What changes have begun in your life as a result of what you've seen, learned, and felt?

2. Why those changes?

3. Think in terms of three areas of possible ongoing responses to the world you live in.
 - a. How might you use your time differently based on what you have experienced?

 - b. How might you use your money or resources differently based on what you have experienced?

 - c. How might you adjust your lifestyle based on what you have experienced?

4. What ideas do you have for remembering the people you met and the experiences you had?

SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH OTHERS

Remember that other people have not experienced what you have. They have not seen the things you have seen. As much as they want to relate and understand, they can't.

Here are some tips for relating to those at home:

- First, and most important, pray. Pray that God will give you patience and understanding with people who can't or won't relate to your mission experience. Pray that God will use you to open some people's eyes to Him and/or to missions through sharing your experience.
- Be patient with people.
- Give information in small doses. Do not try to dump everything you learned all at once.
- When describing your mission experience try to use specifics. Tell stories about individuals. Describe situations vividly. Weave details in the story so that the listener can visualize the scene (the squeaky chair, the smell of incense, children splashing in a puddle, your own feelings at that time).
- Avoid comparison statements that reflect negatively on your own culture since such statements might cause a listener to be defensive.
- Make notes about specifics while you are on your mission experience. Combined with pictures you take, notes will help you communicate your experience with sensitivity. (See journaling)

REPORT/PRESENTATION SERVICE

Show and tell is where team members carefully select an item from the mission experience as a "memory souvenir" and share why it has meaning to you. It may not have cost you anything but is maybe something you found or something a national gave them. Whatever it is, it must help you to explain a specific feeling, incident or memory of your mission experience.

During reports and presentations avoid:

- Generalizations. Your encounter with one police officer that wanted a bribe is not a portrayal of all residents of the country. Remember that what you say paints a whole culture to others.
- Travelogues or lists of places and people
- Emotional pleas to gain pity or impose guilt
- Inside jokes
- Telling all (In a public presentation, leave out gory details and life-threatening situations, unless it is in the context of glorifying God.)
- Being a martyr (Tell close friends about being eaten by bedbugs, but leave it out of public presentations.)

DEBRIEF ONE ON ONE

“How would you like to serve God this year?”

“How do you feel the Lord is leading you to serve?”

ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS

Before leaving or upon your return, have all team members form pairs for accountability, to check in with each other and to pray together. There may be times when team members can share best with someone who has been through the same experience. Having prayer/accountability partners provides another way for ministry to continue with each other after the trip.

TEAM REUNION

Plan a team reunion within one month of returning home. This can be an informal time of being together, sharing pictures, memories, food, worship, prayer and/or a challenge or encouragement. Your team will want to be together and it is healthy to gather as a group with a shared experience. You may want to schedule other reunions...3 month, 6 month, 1 year, etc. This is a great time to refresh each other about what God did and remind each other of commitments made, to enjoy being together and encourage one another.

TEAM BUILDING

The Bible talks of the body being made up of many functions and desires that we function as one in spite of our differences.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE TEAM

- Clear purpose and vision
 - Why are we going?
 - Recognition of gifts, abilities and personalities in each other
 - What gifts do you see in others?
 - Agreement on the plan
 - We will adhere to the agenda of our hosts, not ours
 - Environment of affirmation and appreciation
 - How can we do this?
 - Solid relationships
 - How will we accomplish this?
 - Trust
 - Are there any issues of trust we must address?
 - Able to manage mistakes
 - How will we act WHEN others screw up?
 - Good communication
 - What's our model of communication?
 - Selfless contribution
 - What area is it going to be difficult to be selfless in?
 - How can you encourage others?
 - Respect for others
 - What will this look like?
 - Free flow of information and communication
 - Communication is key
 - Develop positive attitudes
 - Culturally, how will this happen with a language barrier?
 - Commitment to learn. Never assume you know everything
 - What is one area you could stand to grow in?
 - Flexible
 - Is this an area you will have problems in?
-

ATTITUDES

Your attitude should reflect Christ at all times. Your words will often be validated or cancelled by your attitudes.

- Attack the problem, not the person. James 4:11
- Verbalize feelings. Don't act them out. Eph 4:25
- Forgive, in place of judging. Mark 11:25
- Give more than you take. Acts 20:35
- Let love dominate. Luke 10:27
- Humble yourself before the Lord. James 4:10
- Actions will speak louder than words. John 13:35
- Do not complain. James 5:9, 1 Thes 5:16

FLEXIBILITY

Being flexible is essential to survive cross culturally. Many things may seem wrong to you but they are just different. One huge example is time vs. relationships. North Americans value time and are driven by time. Most cultures of the world are driven by relationships. Without flexibility, both will seem wrong. Be open to learning what is important in other cultures and why it is important.

RELATIONSHIPS

The way you interact with each other is what will make your teamwork possible. Things to consider: team members vs. team leaders, best friends, cliques, nationals you will come into contact with, dating relationships on your team and/or in your host culture.

LEADERSHIP

What are the expectations of team leaders? Expectations of team members?

SERVANTHOOD

How will servanthood fit into your team? What does Phil 2:3-4 say and how can you apply it as a team?

TEAMWORK AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Your goal is not to have 10-20 people doing their own thing. Teamwork is essential. Pursue unity at all costs. Be prepared to handle conflict and adversity. Some things to consider about teamwork and conflict resolution:

- Keep short accounts with each other.
- Know and follow Biblical guidelines for conflict. Mathew 18
- Work out problems one on one as often as possible
- Involve team leadership if it cannot be worked out one on one.
- Prayer as individuals, small groups, and as a team are vital.
- Build team unity. Work at it. Commit to it.
- Realize conflict is not all bad. Sometimes, rightly handled conflict will bring you closer as a team.
- In conflict focus on the issue, not the personality or person
- Avoid blaming, anger and rage. Often these will cause deeper conflict.
- Do not attack, gossip, or avoid the conflict.

TEACHING THROUGH AN INTERPRETER

Interpreters are very special people. They clarify and provide understanding. Here are some tips on how to best utilize your interpreter:

1. How does the interpreter prefer to handle translation? Some prefer simultaneous translation, while others are more efficient when sentences or a paragraph are spoken by the English speaker and then translated. Generally, simultaneous translation is less effective for training workshops.
2. Review all technical terms and words important to the task of publishing, editing or writing. Also, talk about nuances, key sentences and ideas to be covered. Discuss any explicit and implied meanings.
3. If using an overhead projector and handouts, be sure to ask the interpreter or someone fluent in the language to translate and prepare these before the workshop. It is helpful if they are sent in advance of your arrival.
4. When using a chalk or white board, do some examples with the interpreter of what you intend to use. This lets the interpreter see how you handle the materials and where you will be positioned.
5. Interpretation usually means the English speaker will have about half the allotted time to share. So, if the time slot is 60 minutes, the spoken time for the translator will be closer to 30 minutes or less. Keep this in mind when preparing.
6. When working with a translator, be sure to watch the faces and eyes of the listeners. This will help you determine whether or not the subject, idea or illustration is being grasped. Be ready to repeat or re-phrase something said.
7. When working with interpreters, English speakers are more effective when care is taken with word choices and how sentences are formed and expressed.
8. Do not rush through what you want to say or share. You want your listeners to learn with understanding and insight. And you can help learners discover a truth by using an illustration or anecdote. Decide ahead of time what is essential and important.
9. Some interpreters prefer to work from a manuscript. Be cautious about a word-for-word translation. Good interpreters grasp ideas and concepts to give clarity to what is being said. Translation is more effective and enjoyable when the English speaker and interpreter are a synchronized team, as together they explain, explore, show and guide.
10. Interpreters must also be effective in handling translation from participants who raise a question, give comments and ask for clarification.
11. Interpretation is extremely demanding, so the English speaker needs to beware of overburdening the interpreter. If possible, the interpreter should have an alternate or backup person.
12. Never take your interpreter for granted. Always remember that without your mouthpiece—the interpreter—your words and ideas will remain beyond understanding and you will be out of touch with your listeners.

MERGE MEETINGS DURING THE TRIP

There will be areas of cultural learning required for your group. First, there will be two activities on culture, history, and the church led by the Merge staff. Second will be your group's reception of help from the church you are helping, according to what they have chosen as a congregation (if you are working with a church).

ON-SITE MEETINGS

Your group will be required to attend three on-site meetings with Merge staff to discuss areas about your country of ministry.

OPENING BRIEFING

The first meeting will take place soon after your group arrives. The content of this briefing is to review with your group the cultural issues, health & safety and personal conduct as detailed in this manual. Your group will meet the Merge staff and be asked questions pertinent to their projects and ministries.

PERSONAL ENCOUNTER/CULTURAL EVENT

The Personal Encounter is a guided small group discussion including nationals and internationals. Questions provided by the Merge staff will open the sharing. As the communication continues, groups will be free to talk about whatever subject interests them.

Some churches may invite you to participate in a cultural activity, home visit or small group. This is a time to get to know each other on a personal and cultural level. Ask questions!

CLOSING MEETING

This will be the last meeting with your group where team members will be able to begin debriefing and analyzing how their short term mission trip could have a long term impact on their lives. The opportunity to sign up for Merge newsletters, prayer and financial support, and to be a Merge volunteer or summer staff will also be presented.

LETTER OF CONSENT TO TRAVEL

To Whom It May Concern: I/We,

(Full Name(s) of Custodial and/or Non-Custodial Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s)) am/are the lawful custodial parent and/or non-custodial parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of:

Child's full name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

U.S. Passport Number: _____

Date and Place of Issuance of U.S. Passport: _____

_____, (Child's Full Name) has my/our consent to travel with:

Full name of accompanying person: _____

to travel to _____ during the period of _____.

During that period, _____ (Child's Name) will be residing at

Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s): Full Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Notary Signature _____ Date _____

MISSION TEAM COVENANT

We, the members of this mission team, believing that God has called us together to serve, agree to commit to the following: We desire to be a team of people characterized by Christ-like behavior exhibited through unconditional love, unselfish service and unified teamwork. Our ultimate purpose as a team and as individuals is in accordance with 1 Cor. 9:23.

"...I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized – whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ – but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!" 1 Cor 9:23 The Message

We believe that we can fulfill this covenant through the following commitments:

- To maintain a servant attitude to my hosts, my team leaders and the team.
- To remember we are guests working at the invitation of local churches/ministries.
- To be a learner, not a judge.
- To ALWAYS try to be as adventurous as possible.
- To refrain from such comments as "at home we do it this way!" We realize that our team is here for just a short while, but the local churches are here for the long term. So, we will respect their knowledge, insights and instructions.
- We will uphold our motto: Absolutely NOTHING can happen that can make me complain! Instead of whining we will be creative and supportive.
- We commit ourselves to resolve all team conflicts according to biblical principles. We will talk directly to those we have a problem with before we gossip to anyone else about it. Then, if necessary, we will get a leader involved. We also commit to pray through these situations.
- We commit to not being exclusive in our relationships. If my boyfriend/girlfriend is on the mission experience, we will make every effort to interact with all members of the team. If attraction to another team member develops, I will not pursue an exclusive relationship until after I return home and my parents support it.

- We commit ourselves to personal quiet times with God knowing that growing individually is essential to growing as a team.
- We all commit ourselves to work to the best of our God-given ability every day. We will encourage each other to work hard and we will make the time as fun as possible. We know that our attitudes while working are a huge testimony to the local community!

We recognize that _____ are the official leaders of our team. In situations of team concern, these leaders will be the team guides. We also recognize that this short-term mission experience is an opportunity for us all to develop God-given leadership ability.

I, _____, as a member of this short-term team will commit myself to abide by this covenant to the best of my God-given ability.

Signed _____ Date _____

DEAR MISSION TEAM FAMILY AND FRIENDS,

In a few short days, your family member or friend will be returning home from their mission experience. As they return, they will need help to re-enter back into life at home. They have experienced much on their mission trip and they will have changed. They will need to process through what they have experienced and what God has taught them. This will take time.

The re-entry is often overlooked in most short-term mission experiences. We are writing this letter to ask you to be a re-entry advocate – a person who will be there to listen, ask the right questions, acknowledge and recognize the work that God has done in and through their lives and encourage them to continue pursuing the commitments they made while on the “field”.

The following are a few suggestions to help them re-enter well.

1. Ask them to share their stories. Listen to them even if they are repetitious. Give them focused attention. Withhold any judgments.
2. Many times, mission team members get frustrated that others don't hold the same enthusiasm or “don't get it.” Please be patient with them, ask questions and affirm the change this has had in their life.
3. Avoid asking general questions like “How was it?” Instead, ask the following questions:
 - Which part of the mission experience did you like best?
 - What was the hardest part for you?
 - Would you go on a mission trip again? Why?
 - Tell me about...the work project, the ministry you were involved in, the food, where you stayed, who you met...
 - What did you learn about God, yourself, or others through this mission experience?
4. Understand that sometimes they may just want to rest and sleep.
5. Pray for guidance from God as to the appropriate time to listen and ask questions. Allow them to open up without being too inquisitive.

We trust that you will be blessed as you hear what God has done in and through your loved one on the mission field. We know this experience will be a life-changing, faith-building time. Thank you for supporting us in our exciting adventure to discover more about who God is, who He has created us to be and the wonderful world He has placed us in.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time with questions or concerns.

Because the World Needs to Know—

The Covenant Merge Ministries Trip Facilitators