

The ULTIMATE ROAD TRIP

*Volunteering in short-term missions is one of the most effective ways
believers can mobilize with far-reaching results.*

*It also can be a life-changing experience, altering the way
you view the world—and your purpose in it.*

By John Bailey and Carol Pipes

Missionaries and pastors are desperate for short-term volunteers to help them reach the three out of four people living in North America who don't know Christ.

When is the need the greatest? All the time.

Where is the need the greatest? Everywhere on the continent.

Families on the Gulf Coast need help rebuilding their homes and lives. That's an obvious need. But thousands of miles to the north, churches in Canada need help with outreach events like Vacation Bible School or servant evangelism. One mission experience develops as a reaction to unexpected and tragic circumstances; the other is centered on enjoyable—even fun—environments with meticulous advance planning. Yet volunteers are essential for both types of short-term mission experiences. From Ontario to Louisiana—and everywhere in between—the opportunities are endless

to volunteer for short-term missions that have far-reaching results.

ANSWERING HIS CALL

Missions is living out your faith in obedience to what God has called you to do. It's about changing your world by helping meet the needs of others, with the result of introducing them to Jesus. Being *on mission* is doing this in a deliberate, intentional way.

God has called all believers to step out of our comfort zones and mobilize for missions. And what greater adventure could there be than traveling across North America to share the gospel with people who need to hear about the saving grace of Jesus?

Could a mission trip be in your future? Fair warning—they aren't for the faint of heart. Living conditions can be uncomfortable—consider the volunteers who helped after Hurricane Katrina. Even helping with



PAUL OBREGON

Like any vacation, a mission trip allows families to spend time together, drawing closer and having fun. But in addition, family mission trips provide a shared experience for changing their world.

CHURCH MISSION TRIPS

One responsibility of all churches is mobilizing volunteers, a natural opportunity to provide the kind of hands-on experience that becomes a spiritual marker in the

life of a Christian. Also, short-term mission trips are an important step in the process of growing mature Christians who one day may be called to a career on the mission field.

Missions is the heartbeat of Faith Baptist Church in Bartlett, Tennessee. Using Acts 1:8 as a guide, they developed a missions strategy to reach the local community, their state and continent and even overseas.

“We encourage each ministry area to be actively involved in missions,” says Todd Pendergrass, associate pastor of administration and missions. “Every age group can participate in missions, and we even provide opportunities for families.”

Faith Baptist commissioned almost 2,000 volunteers in 2005, sending them as far away as Alaska, Brazil and the Philippines. Others stayed close to home, participating in Loving Our City projects. Each Sunday school class has a missions coordinator, and all classes are encouraged to participate in one local mission project per month.

When a new public school opened across the street, Faith Baptist volunteers were there to help teachers and administrators move in. Others spent time in downtown Memphis feeding the homeless and working at a clothes closet.

“Many volunteer with our multi-housing ministry,” says Todd. “We

planted Hope Fellowship Baptist Church at a local apartment complex, providing worship services, occasional block parties and tutoring for about 100 kids. The ministry has been so successful the owner wants a church planter at each of his 17 complexes. I’m excited to see our people put feet to their faith.”



STRATEGIC PLANNING

To effectively answer God’s call to take the gospel to all people, it’s vital for churches to develop a long-range plan. The North American Mission Board and its SBC mission partners has enlisted more than 1,400 churches to adopt an Acts 1:8 strategy, committing to year-round

missions to reach *their* Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. And, using present-day locations, where might that be?

Let’s use the example of Faith Baptist Church in Bartlett, Tennessee. Thinking of the Acts 1:8 locations as concentric circles, when Faith helped the school across

Baptist members traveling to Alaska were reaching their Samaria. And international locations like Brazil and the Philippines would correspond to the ends of the earth referenced in Acts 1:8.

For resources to promote a missions mindset at your church visit www.ActsOne8.com.

And remember: good mission projects don’t just happen. Following a few simple guidelines will help make the experience meaningful to the *on mission* volunteers as well as the people they serve. Here are fundamentals every church should consider when planning a mission trip.

- **Leadership** is the key to success. If the team leader is not on your church’s staff, recruit a volunteer from your membership to be trained and equipped to lead. To be successful, this person should have a call to missions, good organizational skills and the ability to work with and motivate others. The team leader will take primary responsibility for project logistics, keeping everything on track and maintaining communication with the on-site project manager.

- **To enlist a mission team**, make announcements about upcoming mission trips and encourage interested folks to sign up by a certain date. Then conduct an orientation meeting to lay out expectations, logistics and requirements. First-timers may have questions, so this meeting can go a long way toward alleviating their anxiety about “the unknown.” Also, this is the time to inform team members about required training, which is best developed around four areas.

1) *Spiritual preparation.* A Bible study on the basics of missions and service can be instructive and in-

spirational. Prayer and a personal relationship with Christ are prerequisites to being *on mission*.

2) *Task training.* Whether it’s how to teach children, how to paint a house or how to conduct a block party, task training is essential for a successful trip.

3) *Evangelism training.* All team members should learn how to share their faith. Provide opportunities to practice doing this, so they’ll feel comfortable before the beginning of the trip. There’s only one gospel message, but there are a variety of ways to share it. To be an effective witness, learn about the culture or people group you’re trying to reach. Most *on mission* Christians have a favorite evangelism tool, whether it’s a tract, witnessing bracelets or a written testimony. Some tools are more appropriate in certain situations than in others. Choose one that works best for your group and then practice using it.

4) *Hands-on preparation.* To provide experience beforehand, work together on a local project such as your church’s VBS. If your mission team will be doing construction, smaller projects in your community give participants a chance to learn how to work with tools. Be sure to involve the whole team.

- **Budgeting** boils down to three choices for financing a mission trip:



Faith Baptist youth group working in Alaska.

1) place the total cost of the project in the church budget; 2) designate the project as “total cost recovery” and charge sufficient participant fees to cover all costs; or 3) blend these models together. Many churches use the blended model with part of the total cost funded by the church budget, part charged to the participants and part recovered through sponsorships or fundraisers. This plan has the benefit of requiring serious commitments from both the participant and the church. To build a mission trip budget, consider costs such as transportation, lodging, food and ministry supplies. A free downloadable Volunteer Mobilization Logistics Manual with budget worksheets and planning checklists is available at www.namb.net/Logistics.

- **Implementing a successful mission trip** depends on how closely you work in advance with your project manager/missionary so there are no surprises when you arrive on site. If possible, key leaders should make a pre-project visit to the location. Ask the project manager/missionary how your team can best assist him or her in meeting the goals of the ministry. By working with that person you can design a schedule to maximize your impact and complement the established ministry.

Also, missionaries value teams who have high standards of behavior and dress during the trip. Consider establishing a dress code and covenant for conduct. Make sure you look at the trip with an eye toward maximizing safety and minimizing the risk of danger.

- **Involve the whole church** by holding a commissioning service before the trip. This will bring into focus the importance of missions for the entire church and remind volunteers that the body of Christ is sending them out. When you return, plan a follow-up celebration. This is the perfect forum for volunteers to share what God accomplished during the mission trip. Be creative in the presentation—use photographs and video to show church members what took place.

Today, hundreds of thousands of Southern Baptist volunteers are answering the call to short-term missions. For many, it’s a launching point to a lifetime of being *on mission*. Isn’t it time you answered the call? @

Resources

Visit onmission.com for more resources related to short-term missions.

John Bailey is manager of Student Volunteer Mobilization at NAMB. Carol Pipes is editor of On Mission.

Getting started

Opportunities to serve God exist nearly everywhere you go—beginning in your own community, across your state or North America and throughout the world. Here are nine basic steps for individuals, families or mission teams who want to be *on mission*.

1. Pray. Ask God to lead you through the process of finding a place to serve.

2. Be realistic. What do you feel called to do? Where do you feel called to serve? How much time can you commit? When is the best time of year for you, your family or team to go on a mission trip? What financial flexibility do you have?

3. Check with your church, local association or Baptist state convention for mission opportunities of interest close by. To learn more about opportunities throughout North America, visit NAMB’s volunteer mobilization website at www.thebridge.namb.net. Register and complete a user profile, then search for projects based on project type, region, key word or date.

4. Choose your project based on location, type of work and skills needed. Projects appropriate for families include Vacation Bible School/Backyard Bible Clubs, Resort Ministry, Campground Ministry, possibly even construction if older children are participating. Again, be realistic. Choose a project that has value and will allow you to accomplish the task, so you don’t leave frustrated.

5. Contact a local pastor or missionary. All projects listed on The Bridge have a project manager who will serve as the leader when you arrive. The project manager will help with logistics such as lodging plus provide cultural information to help you prepare your team in advance. Determine your project date as early as possible. For a summer trip, it is suggested that you begin planning the previous fall, and set a date by January 1.

6. Nail down logistics. Decide travel plans early, so if plane tickets are needed you can buy them in advance, maybe using websites offering specials. Book hotel rooms three months ahead (resort towns require more lead time). Search for family or group discounts, or consider options such as camping or staying at a church. Your project manager can help with housing, but you may need to provide meals.

7. Define your task and expectations in detail by phone and email with your project manager. Practice what you’ll be doing at home so you’re ready for what will take place on site.

8. Research the culture of the people you’ll be serving. People in Iowa will respond differently from people in Texas. Your project manager will be your best source.

9. Go. Serving through missions can become a life-changing experience.

ANATOMY OF A MISSION TRIP

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS CAN TAKE PRIDE IN WHAT WE ACCOMPLISH WHEN A HURRICANE ATTACKS THE COAST, SPITTING TORNADOES AND SPILLING FLOODWATERS. OUR MASSIVE DISASTER RELIEF EFFORT IS AN EFFECTIVE COMBINATION OF MINISTRY AND EVANGELISM.

By Carolyn Curtis

Some mission trips are planned in advance. But others? Well, they just seem to happen to us.

Disaster Relief can fit into both categories when DR volunteers return again and again to a storm-ravaged area to help with rebuilding... homes, businesses, lives, even hearts. Friendships form, trust increases. People once devastated by tragedy begin to see familiar faces once more, living up to their promises to come back, to help with the next phase... long after the government aid and the insurance checks have dried up along with the receding waters.

As the disaster subsides and the rebuilding begins, folks often confront a bigger danger to their well-being than any storm surge or 155-mile-per-hour wind: a future without Christ. And so the real hope begins.

In this issue on how to plan a mission trip, *On Mission* introduces to you a new feature. It’s an ongoing story we’ll be posting on our website, telling one *on mission* Christian’s experiences in West Virginia over several years.

Bruce Mundell, a native of New York now transplanted to Georgia, responded when floods in 2002 swept through McDowell County, West Virginia. Bruce’s first trip was a life-changing experience. He found himself responding to on-going problems as well as the immediate disaster. He returned often, four times the first year, sometimes alone, other times with help from a dozen or more from his church or workplace. Even his son, Seth, became involved. In five years, Bruce has been back eight times.

And so what began as a Disaster Relief effort grew into a longer-term calling. Bruce began to care about the coal-mining region and its mountain folk. Eventually God nudged him to do more to help them. A mission trip turned into a mission experience, a pattern we see emerging in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Bruce’s West Virginia stories will introduce you to people like Harry, whose combination work area and living space had been flooded out, and Ruby, mother to a Down’s Syndrome son. Bruce tells them about Christ as he ministers to their basic needs.

In his own life, Bruce has seen the results of missions work. He came to know Christ when he was a 20-year-old visiting his brother in Spain who was serving in the U.S. Air Force. His brother had recently accepted Christ as a result of the work of an American missionary and had been praying for an opportunity to share the gospel with Bruce.

God responded in a dramatic way. Bruce had just escaped from a hotel fire in Paris with his life and the clothes on his back. He traveled to Spain to borrow clothes from his brother and got more than he bargained for—a testimony and a gospel tract. Bruce accepted Christ that very night.

When he returned to America, God’s path led him to Georgia, where he lived at a Christian summer camp and met the woman who would become his wife.

Bruce wanted to serve the Lord, but at first he felt frustrated, thinking he needed to become a pastor or missionary or Christian school teacher to be effective. Yet he was skilled in working with his hands, having learned trades from his father, a bulldozer operator. “I was always the son who could be found with my little feet next to Dad’s big feet sticking out from under a broken machine, trying to learn all I could about how things work and how to fix them.”

Finally, Bruce realized that God needs his skills as much as He needs eloquent preachers. “God drew my heart to use my hands for the needs of people,” he recalls.

Join Bruce as he tells about the challenges and satisfactions of his mission trips to West Virginia. Go to www.onmission.com and click on Anatomy of a Mission Trip. @

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