

POSTINGS

articles for missions mobilizers

Postings Classic Issue | by Ellen Livingood

Short-Term Ministry Ideas

How could individuals or a team on a short-term ministry trip from a local church make the greatest contribution to the work of field partners? Doubtless hundreds, maybe thousands, of creative ministries have been tried over the years. Perhaps one of the possibilities noted here may be a new avenue of service your short-termers can use to further Kingdom goals.

Why not note which types of expertise you could offer, then share this list with your field hosts to stimulate creative thinking. It is important to defer the final decision to those on site. They are best equipped to define how you can truly serve.

Note that some of these ideas are clearly suited to a Majority World context, and others fit a more developed situation. The level of expertise required for any given type of service will also vary from location to location.

Ways to Serve Missionaries and Nationals

Assistance to field workers

1. Provide pastoral care, encouragement
2. Pray together, do prayer walking
3. Discuss strategy without trying to influence decisions in areas where you have limited expertise
4. Assist with researching new ministry opportunities, locations, receptivity levels, etc.
5. Fix vehicles or appliances, or do home repairs
6. Paint, renovate home, landscape yard, assist with decorating
7. Help with packing, moving, unpacking
8. Stay with children while workers take some time away
9. Write field stories workers can use in prayer letters
10. Shoot a video workers can use on home assignment
11. Do office work
12. Upgrade computer hardware or software
13. Teach workers computer skills
14. Throw a baby shower or other special celebration
15. Send a skilled counselor to help individual workers or to assist a team to resolve issues
16. Send a person with teambuilding expertise to address team dynamics

Assistance to workers' children

1. Give children individual attention as a surrogate grandparent, aunt, or uncle
2. For home schoolers, offer educational modules on site, especially specialized topics for children in higher grades
3. Lead a VBS program for the MKs
4. Establish/Expand a library of English-language children's books
5. Send a specialist to assess children's educational needs
6. Serve as a nanny for children while parents are learning language or ministering
7. If your MKs attend an MK or international school, ask how you can contribute to the overall work of the school

Workers' field conferences

1. Provide nursery care
2. Lead a children's and/or youth program
3. Lead a women's or a men's retreat (perhaps alternate years)
4. Lead worship, provide music
5. Provide inspirational speaker(s)
6. Handle sound, recording, etc.

Workers' field conferences (cont.)

7. Provide prayer and/or counseling
8. Offer haircuts, massages, manicures/pedicures, chiropractic adjustments
9. Send someone to the field prior to the conference to help arrange the logistics; handle registration on site

Service to the workers' entire field

1. Provide bookkeeping services
2. Audit field accounts
3. Relieve field host/hostess for vacation
4. Relieve MK school hostel/dorm parents for vacation
5. Repair equipment

Service to indigenous church leaders and other ministry leaders

1. Come as humble listeners and learners
2. Become prayer partners; prayer walk together
3. Encourage believers' vision; fan the flame of what God is already doing there
4. Teach English
5. Teach a professional skill they could use to support their family
6. Share ideas and resources on children's, youth, women's, men's ministry (emphasizing that they can accept, reject, or adapt)
7. Train/Coach preachers and other workers
8. Mentor pastors' wives
9. Hold a leaders' retreat for their personal renewal
10. Assist in setting up a bookkeeping system—paper or computerized
11. Equip them to deal with crisis situations, epidemics, orphan care, etc., if you have people with expertise
12. Assist in researching a potential new target region or ministry
13. Lead marriage and parenting seminars
14. Help train leaders to launch support groups (addictions, bereavement, cancer survivors, those impacted by AIDS, chronically ill and their families, disabled or parents of disabled children, divorced/widowed)
15. Teach ESL specifically designed for believers who feel called to missions and for whom English will be the common language on international ministry teams

Outreach/Holistic ministry

1. Make friends; share Jesus
2. Provide support for nationals holding an outreach event (prepare and distribute invitations, set up venue and clean up afterward, undergird with prayer support, encourage national team, and/or participate verbally if asked)

3. Hold an evening program or festival featuring your country, i.e. a Canadian Festival or an American Nite, with decorations, foods, and activities from your country (can be reciprocated at another time by the nationals presenting a program for your team featuring their country that also draws/involves unbelievers)
4. Teach ESL or hold informal English conversation sessions
5. Lead English camps for youth, adults, families
6. Hold children's clubs or day-camp programs
7. Help run a street fair with clowning, juggling, face painting, illusionists, balloon art, stilt walking, all kinds of games, and family portraits (perhaps with native costumes)
8. Be tourists with a purpose; hire guides to see their country with the goal of initiating spiritual discussion
9. Take a survey to determine felt needs and initiate conversation
10. Minister to the homeless or street children
11. Minister to those in prison
12. Minister to those in hospitals (distribute baby blankets and diaper bags with supplies to new mothers)
13. Serve orphans or widows
14. Minister to the deaf
15. Minister to expats, especially English speakers
16. Distribute food or water
17. Remove graffiti
18. Clean public venues (if not taking jobs from nationals)
19. Engage in random acts of kindness
20. Team with nationals to do door-to-door visitation
21. Distribute literature, solar radios, the JESUS film, etc.
22. Show the JESUS video
23. Hang out with teens
24. Visit university classes (with prior permission)

Business

1. Teach sessions and provide individual mentoring on how to launch a small business, develop business plans, etc.
2. Work with nationals to analyze new business opportunities
3. Provide seminars on business marketing
4. Teach team building
5. Provide seminars on management—operational and personnel
6. Teach workplace safety
7. Offer seminars on business ethics
8. Teach bookkeeping/accounting for small businesses
9. Teach farming and animal husbandry
10. Help establish a micro-enterprise bank with training program

Computers

1. Provide seminars in basic/advanced computer skills
2. Teach programming
3. Teach computer game development
4. Teach IT business applications
5. Teach AutoCAD

The arts

1. Sponsor an exchange of worship teams
2. Send individuals or a group to perform concerts with at least some lyrics in the local language
3. Field a group which uses a musical style particularly popular in that culture
4. Support nationals in presenting drama by helping with set preparation, costumes, invitations
5. Do drama, mime, puppetry, ventriloquism and/or teach same
6. Teach some type of fine art or do art together with nationals
7. Stage an art show
8. Guide nationals to produce the types of art that could be sold in the West (note cards, decorated wooden pieces, etc.)
9. Use art with children, youth, or adults as post-trauma therapy
10. Offer instruction for piano, guitar, or other instruments

Medical

1. Hold medical and dental clinics
2. Provide community health service/training
3. Provide physical or occupational therapy training
4. Teach basic hygiene, baby care, etc.
5. Distribute prenatal and children's vitamins
6. Give immunizations
7. Provide mosquito nets
8. Test sight and give out eyeglasses, reading glasses, sunglasses
9. Test hearing and provide hearing aids
10. Teach abstinence/HIV/AIDS prevention
11. Equip people for HIV/AIDS ministry
12. Provide prostheses or wheelchairs

Sports

1. Staff sports camps
2. Hold sports clinics for youth
3. Bring sports pros to conduct sessions for adults
4. Mentor nationals in how to set up neighborhood recreational programs
5. Train/Mentor coaches
6. Train sports trainers

7. Hold sports tournaments
8. Sponsor Special Olympics type programs for disabled children or adults
9. Run sports tours that create opportunities to interface with nationals (biking, hiking, kayaking, surfing, snorkeling, etc.)

Education

1. Offer teacher training or mentoring at any level
2. Provide educational administration seminars or individual mentoring
3. Present curriculum development seminars
4. Offer professional-level training for local ESL teachers
5. Train nationals to develop distance learning opportunities

Crafts

1. Hold craft classes as outreaches for children or adults
2. Offer cooking classes or hair cutting or demonstrations
3. Advise national craftspeople in what to make that could be exported and sold in the West
4. Connect with local hobbyists (gardening, whittling, woodworking, making musical instruments, sewing and various types of needlework, pottery making, photography, model trains, genealogy, astronomy, calligraphy, antique cars, etc.) with the purpose of learning from each other and establishing contacts for local follow-up
5. Demonstrate simple craft ideas, perhaps for a Christmas or Easter outreach

Construction/Trades/Technical (done in collaboration with nationals, if possible)

1. Dig wells, install irrigation systems
2. Test water quality and provide purification systems
3. Build playgrounds
4. Build/Renovate schools: refurbish desks or benches, put up chalkboards, mend books, etc.
5. Build/Renovate churches, clinics, camps, homes, orphanages
6. Teach construction skills
7. Teach mechanical repair
8. Help develop/expand a landmine clearing program

Peer-to-peer visits for contact development

1. Visit town mayors, other elected officials, city planners, government administrators, judges, police, fire fighters, prison wardens, parole officers, EMTs, etc. as a representative of your city, civic group, or profession

Peer-to-peer visits for contact development (cont.)

1. Do a peer-to-peer visit with those who share mutual business involvements (restaurant owners, farmers, truck drivers, beauticians, shop owners, factory operations managers, salespeople in a certain trade, marketing specialists, HR managers, IT managers, etc.)
2. Visit professional peers (teachers, educational administrators, health-care professionals of all kinds, veterinarians, attorneys, graphic designers, ecologists, engineers, scientists, accountants, journalists, TV personnel, bankers, librarians, social-service personnel, utilities workers, those in the travel or tourism business, etc.)
3. Connect to alumni from your university living there
4. Bring musicians or artists together for a concert/exhibit
5. Set up an exchange program where nationals send a return delegation to visit your town, business, institution
6. Set up a Rotary or student exchange program

Reciprocal Short-Term Ministry Ideas When Partners Visit You

1. Ask your national partners to come and teach you how to minister to people of their cultural or religious background who live in your community or nearby city; hold an outreach to these people while your guests are visiting and utilize their leadership and involvement
2. Invite a national leader to preach, speak at a men's/women's retreat, participate in your staff retreat
5. Invite nationals to share their testimony, vision, and passion with many large and small groups in your church
6. Invite a singing group to present concerts for your church and the community
7. Engage national guests with your children and youth via classroom interviews or other activities
8. Invite visitors to teach you how to play their musical instruments, create art or crafts, perform their native dances, wear national costumes, or cook national dishes
9. Seek opportunities for peer-to-peer relationships in your community (professional connections, local political leaders, service clubs like the Rotary, etc.)
10. Pursue the possibility of a sister-city relationship
11. Invite your local newspaper or TV station to interview your visitors
12. Share your visitors with other churches in your area
13. See if your visitors can speak to your ministerium or other regional fellowships
14. See if your guests can visit high-school or university classes to talk about their country
15. Seek opportunities for your partners to address students or faculty at a nearby Christian college or seminary
16. Expose visitors to all kinds of ministries in your church; ask them for ideas of how you could improve, and give them ideas and resources they could use back in their ministry
17. Introduce your guests to other ministries in your area that might be of mutual benefit (homeless shelter, pregnancy center, drug rehabilitation program, food bank, prison ministry, etc.)
18. Offer to underwrite visitors' attendance at practical seminars such as training in counseling or lay caring ministry, peacemaking, financial management, recovery ministry, computer software use, etc.)
19. Involve them in training future short-term teams and improving your pre-field training program for these teams.

This inventory only begins to scratch the surface of possibilities. We want to compile a more complete list. Are there activities not listed here that your short-termers have used effectively to serve on the field or you have used to engage your partners in mutually beneficial activity when they visited you?

Share your ideas with us: info@catalystservices.org.

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