

20 Mile Markers

Post-Field

Short-Term Missions for the Long Haul

Here are 20 simple ideas to use to inspire and invigorate the team after returning from the mission field. These meetings and ministries can help to integrate your team members more effectively into the church body and to include them in the great commission on a more personal and meaningful level.

There are enough Mile Markers for one each week throughout the fall and leading up to Christmas but you can use them any time of the year. Use all of them or only a few; change the order and customize. Some ideas can simply be added to other meetings that are already scheduled such as Sunday school, youth group or a small group meeting. Let the Lord lead you in this "follow-through" adventure.



Week #1

Live and Learn – a team meeting

(On-Field) Life and experience have a way of teaching all of us. Carve out an evening where the team can meet and share some of the lessons they've learned. Here are some sample questions:

1. What is one thing the Lord has pointed out to you about His heart for the nations?
2. What changes have occurred in your life (physically, socially, or spiritually) on this trip?
3. How has your understanding of people or culture deepened on this trip?



Week #2

Hindsight is 20/20 – a team meeting

(Post-Field) As soon as possible upon your return, schedule a debriefing meeting – a time for evaluation and reconciliation. Each team member can share a "high-light" and a "hardest thing" about their short-term mission journey so far. This is a good time to handout any evaluation forms or other post-ministry assignments.



Week #3

Live Report – a church service

Showcase the mission during a reporting home service. Tell stories of how God impacted your team and how God used your team to impact others. If possible, show pictures, give a taste of food from the region where you served, teach a song or play a game. A memorable service with a message will inspire others in their Christian journey.



Week #4

Focus on a Person – a team meeting

Everyone on the team will, most likely, have pictures from the ministry. Have each team member bring one photograph of a person who was special to them during the mission. Ask team members to share about the friendship and how that person has impacted their life. Take time to pray specifically for each of these friends.



Week #5

Names Night – a team meeting

Think about the people from the mission field who are not saved or who have great personal needs. Ask each team member to write these names on 3x5 cards and, if there is time, have them share about each name. Put these cards on a poster board and use this as a reminder pray specifically for those who need the Savior.



Week #6

Potluck With a Flair – a meal time

Arrange for a potluck at the home of someone in the church. Invite the pastor, staff and missions committee. Have the team arrange for food items native to the location where the team served. Plan a special word of thanks to the church for supporting and sending the ministry team.



Week #7

Foto Friday – a team meeting with an outcome

Don't settle for *just a picture party*. Have team members bring duplicate photos from their collection of ministry pictures. Combine everyone's photos and work together to create a topical or chronological photo album or scrap book to mail to the mission field. Include a thank you card with everyone's signatures.



Week #8

It's a Small World After All – a cross-cultural idea

No matter the size of your town, there are cross-cultural opportunities within. Lead the team in selecting one of these cross-cultural options: attend an ethnic church service, volunteer at a soup kitchen, put on an evening program at the rescue mission or invite foreign guests to a home meeting just to learn more about their country.



Week #9

Give 'em a Break – an act of service

The nursery workers and children's Sunday school teachers serve week after week. Have your team coordinate a "Give 'em a Break" Sunday and take over for them in all the classes. This could even be a "Give 'em a Break" month! Be sure to express gratitude to them for their ministry to the church.



Week #10

Just a Call Away – a conference call

Arrange a conference call with your missionary host and pastor. The time of this call may depend on the time difference at the location of your ministry. You will need a speaker phone. Ask for updates from the field and share life-change stories from the team. Invite the pastor and someone from the mission committee to join you.



Week #11

Fast and Pray – a day-long commitment

You have been away from the mission field and involved in your own daily routine. But, your hosts are still on the mission field doing the same ministry as when you left. How quickly we forget. Set aside one day where you will skip lunch and go somewhere to pray for your host and their ministry. Every time your stomach tells you that you're hungry, use it as a reminder to say a prayer for the field again.



Week #12

Missing You – a team meeting with an outcome

One of the criticisms of short-term missions is that team members never write back to the field. "*Been there, done that, and now it's back to normal life.*" So meet together and have everyone take time to write a letter to friends on the field. You may need to arrange for a translator to attend this meeting. The next day put the letters in the mail.



Week #13

Fire Up a Prayer Meeting – an act of service

Host a missions prayer meeting one night a week for an entire month. Have the team coordinate each night's theme, agenda and refreshments. Make the meetings memorable and allow for plenty of prayer time. Invite everyone in the church to attend and focus on missionaries that your church supports as well as on the ministry location of your short-term team.



Week #14

"Thanks Giving" Letters – a team meeting with an outcome

Write "Thanks Giving" letters to the host missionaries. If the hosts aren't from the United States, include a statement explaining the American custom of Thanksgiving Day. Include praise to God for the missionaries and for all He has done through the field and the short-term mission. Include personal life-change stories of the continuing spiritual pilgrimage for your team members.



Week #15

Giving Back – an offering

Plan a special missions offering or a fund raiser for missions. This event should be for the whole church and will require publicity and opportunities for involvement. The money raised could be for a need on the field where your team served or it could be for something in your area. This is a tangible way to demonstrate Christ's love and provision to those in need.



Week #16

The Power of Together – a team meeting with another team

Find another church that sent out a short-term team. Arrange for a home meeting, a reception or a youth group meeting where you bring the teams together. Each team can share testimonies of what God did and tell about the regions they served. Together, pray for the ministries and for each other.



Week #17

Written Prayers – an act of encouragement

Have the group get together and write "prayer letters" to God for their host missionaries or other missionaries in the church. These "prayer letters" are actually written prayers on behalf of the missionary and the ministry. They start with "Dear Heavenly Father," and end with "amen." Challenge the team to write meaningful and specific prayers.



Week #18

Adopt a Road – an act of service

Coordinate with your local county office to adopt a section of road in or near town. Adoption of a road includes cleaning the roadsides on a frequent basis and should be the commitment of the group, not the leaders. Consider crediting your host missionary's names or church name on the sign, if signs are available. Check with your local governing agencies for more information.



Week #19

Christmas Care Package – an act of encouragement

Have the team gather items related to the Christmas celebration. Put them in a box with a Christmas card signed by everyone on the team and send the care package to the missionary host. Ideas include Christmas-season scented candles, Christmas cards for them to use, Christmas music, favorite food items and so on. Have the team take an offering to cover postage.



Week #20

Penny War – an offering

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, have a competition between boys and girls or men and women. Collect as many pennies (or other coins) as possible for the mission field where the short-term team served. This can be a Christmas gift* to the mission for a known need. Place two large jars in the entrance to the church or a classroom and promote the opportunity to the whole church.

**Be sure this gift is given through the pastor or missionary on the field and not directly to the field.*