

# Preparing your group for their journey.....

Pre-Trip Reflections are one way to get your group thinking about their upcoming experience. Below are some suggestions for reflections for journaling and/or group discussions and exercises. The more that these issues are discussed before the traveler embarks on the journey, the better their experience will be once they arrive.

## What are you really considering doing?

You're embarking on a church-related mission trip or travel/study seminar; you're going to a country or community quite different from your own. Maybe the people speak another language and have vastly different social customs than yours. No doubt they view the world quite differently from you. You will be touched by this experience, perhaps transformed.

- Why are you thinking about doing this?
- What is your purpose in going?
- What are your hopes and dreams for this journey?
- How do you feel about traveling so far from home?
- What might it mean to you to offer a hand, not a handout?
- How do you think you would receive a hand on your shoulder?
- Whose needs are you meeting?
- How will your needs be met by this venture?
- Where are you planning to go?
- What do you know about the culture and/or the people there?
- In what ways are you motivated to learn more about the people and the culture before you go?
- What do you know about their history, politics, geography, languages, religions, employment, health issues?
- What are your present understandings about the country and the people you will visit?
- How did those understandings come to be?
- How do those understandings relate to your faith?

- How are you open to those understandings being challenged or changed?
- What joys are you anticipating from this journey?
- What fears do you have regarding this experience?

### ***Before you travel, make sure that you have:***

- A good understanding of why you are going, paying particular attention to your joys and fears.
- A basic understanding of the host country's history, politics, language, economic, situation, culture, religion, and US involvement in that region of the world.
- Information about staying healthy while traveling abroad.
- An effective, agreed upon decision-making process for your group.
- An understanding that prayer and devotional times are encouraged and that there is a sense of agreement about this within your group.
- Some ideas about what other people in the group want to do while understanding the need to be flexible and adaptable.
- A good understanding of conditions along the Mexican border and the issues impacting communities.

# Bringing the Mission Back Home

## PRE-TRIP IDEAS:

1. Consider naming a group photographer (s) who will be responsible for keeping a photo record of the experience. Decide whether you want slides, video, etc.. Digital photos are a wonderful way to share your trip with others.
2. Consider naming a reporter (s) to be responsible for keeping a diary of events and significant experiences during the trip.
3. Have all reporters and photographers meet prior to leaving to begin developing a plan for sharing upon returning home. This will help the team decide what kind of things they may want to record for posterity.
4. Pray for your hosts and for Mexico. Make it a regular event; each week or each month. Pray for particular people in particular locations and ministries as you become acquainted.
5. Make a bulletin board display. Show the map/area of Mexico and your destination. Share letters and other items. Spread the excitement.
6. Introduce the congregation to a hymn or song in Spanish.
7. Do a series of articles for your newsletter, including some written by your hosts. Publish letters written back and forth.
8. Begin supporting a mission project in the Mexican border area. *Contact the PBM office for ideas and resources on establishing these connections.*
9. Keep a church scrapbook of newspaper articles about Mexico. Who is the President of Mexico? How was he chosen? What is the population? What products are made in Mexico? What items are exported... what items imported? What is the income level of the people...the educational level? What is the status of women? How do the historical events of the country shape the life of the people today?

## PREPARATION FOR BACK HOME DURING THE TRIP:

1. Have the group review their journals for important lessons and spend some time sharing them as a group.
2. Questions which arise during daily reflection time may provide clues to how the insights can best be shared.
3. Your last evening together for reflection might well begin with "Now what?" or "What does the Lord require of us now?"
4. You might also give your reporting team the task of interviewing participants. They might begin with questions like: What have you learned that must be shared with your friends back home?
5. Other groups have specifically asked themselves how they might continue to support Presbyterian Border Ministry even if they never return to the border. As a result they begin to identify financial resources that they could make available to the ministry. This has come as a result of knowing an individual who is in a position to make a significant gift to mission. It has also come as a result of having a friend or acquaintance in a philanthropic foundation and sharing that information with the project or the Presbyterian Border Ministry office.
6. Some mission participants have discovered that they have talents which can be made available to the ministry. Mission participants have discovered, for instance, that they are natural public speakers and have agreed to share their experience with a broader audience. Beyond sharing their story with the local church they have offered to interpret the work of the border at presbytery meetings and other member churches of their presbytery.
7. Have your group discuss organizing a Border Gift Market, PBM's alternative gift market, which directly benefits the seven ministry sites. Please contact the San Antonio office of follow the links on PBM's website for more information: [www.pcusa.org/border](http://www.pcusa.org/border)
8. Serve and sell Just Coffee at your worship services (see [www.justcoffee.org](http://www.justcoffee.org) for more information.)