



Pre-Trip Training & Team Meetings Outline

Hello, Team Leader!

We're excited to have you and your group serve with us this year! This document contains a basic outline for **four pre-trip meetings** for your group. Each outline gives space for you to come together, connect as a team, and participate in **EM's Healthy Service Training**, which will help prepare you to enter any community with posture of a servant and interact with the people you will meet in a healthy way. Each meeting outline also includes time to **introduce the community** where you will be serving, plan for service opportunities like **Kids Club** (if applicable), and handle **logistical details** among your group.

While you are not required to go through these outlines exactly as they appear here, ***we strongly recommend you set aside enough time to watch through the training videos and discuss them as a group.*** These short videos are designed to spark helpful conversation and introduce ideas that may be new to you and your group. Skipping them could cause your team to miss out on an integral part of your mission trip experience, and to potentially enter your service opportunity without the proper mental and emotional preparation. So, don't miss these!

As you go through these pre-trip trainings, we would love your feedback! Email missiontrips@experiencemission.org with any thoughts, encouragement, or feedback you may have about the content provided here. Thank you!

— ***The EM Team***



Pre-Trip Outline: Meeting #1



Breaking the Ice

Start the first pre-trip team meeting with an icebreaker activity, especially if some members of your team are new to your ministry/community or don't know each other well. Let the bonding begin early!

Intro to EM's Healthy Service Training

This Pre-Trip Team Meetings outline includes pre-trip training in the form of EM's 7 Healthy Service Principles, explored through easy-to-process statements, longer descriptions, and 3-5 minute videos. It is our hope that teams will go through all 7 principles, discussing each video with the questions provided, before you come to serve. Below is an introduction to these principles that you can read aloud to your team during this first meeting as a way of introducing these themes and setting a framework for the training videos and discussions to come.

"However you've come to serve, we believe everyone desires to participate in change, growth, and renewal in this world, experiencing God's "shalom" that brings wholeness, reconciliation, and justice. But, ultimately, these things will not be the product of what we do, but rather how we do it.

EM's Healthy Service Principles bring our attention to the approach and posture we take when serving on mission trips. Serving this way allows us to enjoy the journey, see God work in real time, and love our neighbors authentically and whole-heartedly, while remaining open to what is already present and what might be."

Note: It would be ideal if those facilitating each pre-trip meeting went through the content ahead of time, so you are better prepared to help facilitate a conversation with the discussion questions provided after each video.

EM Healthy Service Training

1. Read aloud Healthy Service Principle #1:

We release the desire to make this experience about ourselves.

We choose to approach each opportunity for service and community involvement with open hands, letting go of our expectations (both intentional and unintentional) about what we think will happen. This includes everything from our desire to accomplish big things to our hope for how each personal interaction will play out. This is an act of humility that removes ourselves from the center of the story and allows our eyes to be open to all the unexpected ways God will move in and around us.

2. Watch the video together (3-4 min.): <https://vimeo.com/763959539>

3. After the video, discuss the questions as a team below, allowing a few minutes to hear from different people after each question.

- > *Take a minute to think about all the expectations you have about your upcoming mission trip or service experience. How would you feel if some (or all) of those things didn't happen in a specific way?*
- > *If you find yourself upset by this thought experiment, consider, is it possible you have made yourself (or your team) "the center of the story" of this trip?*
- > *What might it look like to completely let go of your expectations and approach this experience as a blank canvas, ready to see what God has in store?*

Introduction to Mission Trip Community

Take a few minutes to share about the **community** you will be serving in! Talk about the **potential ministry and/or work projects** as well as anything recreational your team may be doing while you're on the trip.

Discuss your hopes and concerns while you practice releasing the desire to make this experience about yourselves.

Optional: Show a slideshow or video from the community (EM has these for select communities, downloadable through your online MyMission trip portal if available).

EM Healthy Service Training (cont.)

1. Read aloud Healthy Service Principle #2:

We remember we are visitors and guests, not consumers and tourists.

When we serve on a mission trip, we enter an established community of people as visitors and, hopefully, as welcome guests. As a respectful guest, we choose to intentionally assimilate into a community's overall function, pace of life, orientation to time, and way of doing things, rather than expecting the community to bend to what makes us comfortable. We show up eager to listen and learn from hosts, partner ministries, and local community members instead of asserting our own agenda or insisting on being the loudest in the room. This will come with a level of discomfort that we are willing to embrace. We see the difference in cultures as beautiful. Though something may be different, it is no less valuable. We will honor it, learn from it, and value the incredible God-breathed diversity of our world.

2. Watch the video together (3-4 min.): <https://vimeo.com/763963933>

3. After the video, discuss the questions as a team below, allowing a few minutes to hear from different people after each question.

- > *Do you agree with the above statement about what it means to be a respectful guest? What would you add to these ideas? How is this different from being a tourist?*
- > *Being a good guest is not always comfortable or easy. What does it require of us to be a good guest? Is this something we do for ourselves or others?*
- > *How might you translate your ideas of what a good guest looks like into guidelines for approaching your upcoming service experience?*

Administrative Details

Use this time toward the end to communicate payment deadlines and non-refundable amounts (based on what's required of you on the [EM Payment Policy](#)), pass out paperwork, and collect information.

Pass out the following **paperwork** with a clear DUE DATE (make sure you communicate when these need to be returned to you or completed):

- > Online **Team Member Registration** Forms
- > **Background Check** Forms (for team members age 18 or older)
- > **Permission for Minors to Travel Abroad** (international trips only)
- > Any additional paperwork used by your church/organization

Info to collect (if needed):

- > Info for booking flights—full legal name, date of birth, etc.
- > Info for EM—your team's collective construction experience/skills, ability to lead musical worship during the trip, and any food restrictions.
- > T-shirt sizes (if you're planning to order your shirts for your team)

Prayer

End each team meeting with a time of prayer. Ask God to begin teaching the your team something new about their faith and the world in preparation for the trip. Also pray over any financial worries or for final fundraising events to go smoothly.

Note: If you plan to mail in trip payments, be sure to allot extra time as you assign deadlines to your group. Discuss fundraising opportunities or any group fundraising plans (for group and individual fundraising ideas, check out [EM's Fundraising Guide for Mission Trips](#))



Pre-Trip Outline: Meeting #2



Breaking the Ice

Start with an icebreaker activity or team building exercise to get the team moving and getting to know one another. Team bonding is huge!

EM Healthy Service Training

1. Read aloud Healthy Service Principle #3:

We view this experience as a privilege, not a purchase.

*It is from a position of privilege that we are able to travel and serve in someone else's community. This is why we choose not to view this experience as **transactional**—to be consumed or checked off of our bucket list—but instead as an **opportunity** to learn, serve and grow while giving our time, attention, and resources to the work and ministry of local community partners and Experience Mission.*

2. Watch the video together (3-4 min.): <https://vimeo.com/763961624>

3. After the video, discuss the questions as a team below, allowing a few minutes to hear from different people after each question.

- > *Do you find yourself more encouraged or offended by this idea? If offended, why do you think so?*
- > *What are the core differences between “consuming” and “serving”?*
- > *How might viewing your trip as a privilege (regardless of what it may have cost you personally) change your approach to the experience?*

4. Read aloud Healthy Service Principle #4:

We prioritize people over projects.

People are the most important part of every service experience. We will remind ourselves that every person we encounter is our equal, living a life as complex as our own, with hopes, dreams, giftings, mistakes, ambitions, sorrows, value, worth, and dignity. We will take time to be thoughtful about those we are serving and acknowledge our tendency to push people aside in order to be problem solvers. We will be curious and ask questions when we don't understand and resist the urge to make a judgment and forge ahead on our own. Genuine human interaction will be our priority over the completion of a project or the expression of our own ideas.

5. Watch the video together (3-4 min.): <https://vimeo.com/763964986>

6. After the video, discuss the questions as a team below, allowing a few minutes to hear from different people after each question.

- > *Have there been times in your life when you've put a goal or project ahead of the feelings and well-being of others?*
- > *What can you do to approach your service experience with a people-first mentality?*
- > *How might a “people over projects” approach change your definition of success as it relates to your service experience?*

Administrative Details

Use this time to...

- > Share any updated information about the **trip** or **community**.
- > Update your team on **finances** and any **fundraising goals** and/or events.
- > Collect all **paperwork** and documents required for the trip. **Remind any team members and leaders who don't have their paperwork in to complete it ASAP!*
 - > Online **Team Member Registration** Forms
 - > **Background Check** Forms (for team members age 18 or older)
 - > **Permission for Minors to Travel Abroad** (international trips only)
 - > Any additional paperwork used by your church/organization

Highlight any final fundraising opportunities. You may also consider providing an informal invoice or note that lets students (and their families) know how much they still need to raise for the trip.

Prayer

End with a time of prayer, asking God to show your team how you can better love and serve those you will encounter. Pray that God would open your hearts to every person present in the community you're traveling to, changing your posture from that of a tourist or consumer to that of a humble guest in someone's home. Also pray for finances and details that might not be in place yet.



Pre-Trip Outline: Meeting #3



Team Building

Start this meeting with a team building exercise to get the team moving and getting to know one another better!

EM Healthy Service Training

1. Read aloud Healthy Service Principle #5:

We trust God is already present.

We acknowledge we do not “bring God” anywhere. We come with open hearts, to see, experience, and participate in the beautiful ways God is and has always been present. We remember that many communities have experienced historical trauma caused by Christian missionaries in the past. Because of this, we engage expressions of faith different from our own with respect and wonder, as opposed to judgment and correction. We tread sensitively when sharing our personal views about expressions of faith and theology (or our opinions about social issues and life in general), trusting that God is working in ways we may not always see clearly or understand.

2. Watch the video together (3-4 min.): <https://vimeo.com/763966922>

3. After the video, discuss the questions as a team below, allowing a few minutes to hear from different people after each question.

- > *Is this a new idea for you? How does it affect your approach to serving to know that God is already working in the community you’re going to visit?*
- > *What might it look like to approach ALL new and different situations with respect and wonder, looking for what we may learn as opposed to what we disagree with?*
- > *In what ways might you work toward the healing of past traumas created by people who claimed to represent God but acted in harmful and damaging ways?*

4. Read aloud Healthy Service Principle #6:

We resist the temptation to tell simple stories.

As humans, we all have struggles. Some struggles are more visible than others—like poverty, lack of education, substance abuse, or living without a home—while others are hidden inside our hearts—like pride, greed, prejudice, apathy, or self-centeredness. By being transparent with the struggles present in all of us, we acknowledge no one is “better” or “worse”, but rather on an equal footing with each other. We all fall short of the life we were intended to live. Understanding our common human struggles allows us to learn and grow together, making space for God to bring hope and change in our lives through our honest interaction with one another.

5. Watch the video together (3-4 min.): <https://vimeo.com/763975401>

6. After the video, discuss the questions as a team below, allowing a few minutes to hear from different people after each question.

- > *What emotions does this principle bring up for you?*
- > *If you’re honest, have you ever fallen into the trap of looking down on “those less fortunate” or seeing people in those circumstances as less valuable than yourself? What are the consequences of this kind of thinking?*

- > *In which ways have you personally struggled in your life? How might you begin to see those experiences as a jumping off point for solidarity with those experiencing more visible and outward struggles?*
- > *What preconceived notions or ideas do you have about the trip, the community or the people you're about to meet? You likely have an expectation that is not 100% accurate.*

Administrative Details

Use this time to...

- > Collect all **paperwork** and forms not yet turned in:
 - > Online **Team Member Registration Forms**
 - > **Background Check Forms** (for team members age 18 or older)
 - > **Permission for Minors to Travel Abroad** (international trips only)
 - > Any additional paperwork used by your church/organization
- > Communicate important details:
 - > If applicable, begin planning and working on **Kids Club** lessons. Delegate responsibilities among your team.
 - > Talk through the **packing list, clothing guidelines, rules and expectations** for the trip (i.e. cell phone use, dress code, etc.)
- > Discuss any pending finances:
 - > Highlight any final fundraising opportunities.
 - > Consider providing an informal invoice or note that lets students (and their families) know how much they still need to raise for the trip.

*You can check how many **Team Member Registrations** have been completed on the **Trip page** for this trip on your online **MyMission** account.*

*If applicable, **Kids Club** lessons will be assigned to your team several months before the start of your trip.*

Prayer

End with a time of prayer, asking God to continue softening the hearts of the all participants on your trip. Pray for a continued understanding of how wide and deep God's love and grace is for you. Pray that it would fuel your team forward in the way you offer that same grace and love to others. Also pray for financial troubles, team dynamics, and final details to come together.



Pre-Trip Outline: Meeting #4



Team Building

Start this meeting with a team building exercise to get the team moving and getting to know one another better!

EM Healthy Service Training

1. Read aloud Healthy Service Principle #7:

We recognize and honor the image of God in everyone we meet.

We cherish the richness and diversity present in all of humanity, each of us bearing the “imago Dei” (image of God) given to us by our creator. This compels us to see all people as God does—with compassion, empathy, and love—and makes it impossible to write people off, look the other way, or ignore injustice present in their lives. We let the truth of God’s love for all people in all places work in our hearts and cause us to seriously consider what it looks like to bring the Kingdom of God from heaven to earth.

2. Watch the video together (3-4 min.): <https://vimeo.com/763980540>

3. After the video, discuss the questions as a team below, allowing a few minutes to hear from different people after each question.

- > *What emotions does this statement bring up for you?*
- > *Have you ever considered the fact that God created you in His image? How does that make you feel? What about the fact that every person who’s ever existed also bears the “Imago Dei”?*
- > *Our world says it’s perfectly okay to “write people off” for any number of reasons. How might our lives look differently if we refused to ignore injustice, leaning into God’s compassionate love for ALL people (regardless of circumstances)?*
- > *“Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus said these words while teaching his disciples to pray. How can you begin to be a part of God’s Kingdom coming to earth in all aspects of life?*

4. Read aloud the preface to the final video:

Putting It Into Practice: “Marci the Martian”

The final video is one woman’s story. As you listen, think about your own experiences of feeling like you’re on the outside, seen as different, like an “other”—or when you may have viewed someone else as separate or different than you. Let this story be a way of practicing all the things you’ve talked about as a team so far. Consider what it might look like to open yourself up to the story of someone else with humility, compassion, and understanding. Write down anything that sticks out to you in the video or simply watch the video and let the words sink in to reflect on before your trip.

5. Watch the video together (10 min.): <https://vimeo.com/382686419>

6. Since this video is a little longer and may hit team members in different ways, consider not debriefing the video as a large group and instead giving team members a time to sit in reflection, journaling or praying about what the video has stirred up in them and how it might affect the way they approach their time of serving.

Administrative Details

Use this time to...

- > Collect final payments / fundraising money from team members
- > Collect all **paperwork** and forms not yet turned in:
 - > Online **Team Member Registration** Forms
 - > **Background Check** Forms (for team members age 18 or older)
 - > **Permission for Minors to Travel Abroad** (international trips only)
 - > Any additional paperwork used by your church/organization
- > Finalize Kids Club preparation (if applicable):
 - > Make sure craft supplies are purchased / assigned to be purchased
 - > Stories and songs have been run through and practiced multiple times
 - > All responsibilities for the lessons have been delegated
- > Talk through **travel** details:
 - > Departure time and expectations (where to show up, when, with what)
 - > Answer any packing list questions
 - > Reminder to bring spending money / travel money
 - > Reiterate rules and details about cell phones and cameras
- > Lastly, share any updated details about the trip and community that are important or interesting for the team to know!

*You can check how many **Team Member Registrations** have been completed on the **Trip** page for this trip on your online **MyMission** account.*

Prayer

End the time in prayer, asking God to be in, over and around you on this trip! As you step into this new community, ask God to continue to challenge your team to love boldly, serve selflessly, and be examples of hope to those you engage with. Also, pray that your team would be open to receiving the same love, service, and hope from those you meet and work alongside. Pray that final details would come together, that you would have safe travels to your community, and that God would be with you on this new, exciting adventure!