

Practical Guide to Short-term Mission

(Source: www.oscar.org.uk/opportunity/shorttermmission.htm)

**So you'd like to do go on short term mission but are not sure where to start?
OSCAR's practical guide to short term mission is here to help ...**

Short term mission is an excellent way to share your faith while helping others around the world. It can also be a stimulating and faith stretching experience.

Successful short term mission doesn't just happen. You will need to think through the various issues and plan your mission trip carefully to make the most of the experience.

Five important questions to consider as you plan your short term mission trip:

- 1. Why short term mission?**
- 2. When and for how long?**
- 3. Where in the world?**
- 4. What type of work?**
- 5. With which organisation**

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1. Why short term mission?

Are you looking to travel and experience other cultures? Do you want to do something 'real' to help others around the world? Are you looking for a new experience that will stretch your faith? Do you feel a sense of calling to do mission work and want to find out more?

There are many valid reasons for wanting to go on short term mission. It can be a 'stepping stone' to further Christian service, but it can also be an important catalyst for Christian maturity and wholeness.

There's no better way to understand God's love for his world and his global plan than to become an active part of it! Going on short term mission is an excellent way to achieve this.

Action: "Unpacking my reasons for going on short term mission" Share your ideas with those close to you and ask them to pray with you.

- Talk to your church pastor or church leader – ask for their advice.
- Talk to your church – ask about ways in which they could support you.
- Talk with others who have gone on short term mission – or have been involved with mission work.
- Pray. Be conscious of God's leading.

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2. When and for how long?

Do you have a certain amount of time available for your short term mission trip? How short term is short term? For example, will this be for a few weeks over a holiday or maybe for an entire gap year?

Generally, the more time you can give to your short term mission trip the more impact you will have and the more valuable the experience gained.

It is important to consider what impact going on short term mission will have on other areas of you life, such as your studies or work commitments, your family, your financial or practical responsibilities, any health issues you have.

Action: "Understanding the time I have available and the impact on existing commitments"

- Have a clear idea about the time you have available for your mission trip.
- Think through carefully how this trip will impact other areas of your life.
- Pray. Be conscious of God's leading.

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3. Where in the world?

Have the needs of a particular place or people touched your heart? Is there a region or country that fires your enthusiasm or interest? Do you have a preference for hot or cold countries?

You may already have an idea about where you would like to do short term mission, or you may be willing to go wherever God leads or wherever the needs are most.

Once you have a region or country in mind, it's good to find out all you can about the place and people. This will help you test whether God is leading you there and it will help you prepare for your mission trip.

Action: "Research my preferred location for short term mission"

- Start your research into different regions and countries at www.oscar.org.uk/opportunity/locations
- Get hold of a copy of 'Operation World'. The main focus of this book is prayer, but it's also an invaluable source of useful facts and mission information about every country in the world.
- Pray. Be conscious of God's leading.

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4. What type of work?

What sort of work would you like to get involved in on short term mission? Do you want to do front-line evangelism? Maybe you are more interested in practical Christian work? Do you already have skills or abilities that you want to use?

You may already have an established idea of what sort of work or activity you would like to do. If this is the case, you may want to skip this section.

However, if you're not sure what to do or if you'd like to find out whether there is something else that better suits your skills and abilities, you can take a short test to help discover or understand your gifts. This is a useful exercise for anyone discovering God's calling on their lives, short term or long term.

Action: "Understanding my God-given ability"

- There are a number of websites that can help you discover your God given abilities and talents. For a list of online resources visit www.oscar.org.uk/opportunity/vacancies/whoami.htm
- Talk to friends and family. Where do they feel your particular gifts lie?
- Pray. Be conscious of God's leading.

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5. With which organisation?

Selecting a mission organisation or project can be a daunting task! Where do you start? Do you really need to go with a mission organisation? Do you want to join a team or go on your own?

There are over 200 UK based Christian organisations who work overseas and many offer short term mission opportunities. You may already have one in mind, as it may have been the one that sparked your interest in the first place.

Many short term mission opportunities are team based, especially the very short trips (less than a month), but some organisations do offer individual placements, often to work alongside an existing missionary or national worker.

Established short term mission programmes are often arranged by experienced people, have good support structures, and many of the details are taken care of. A number of mission organisations now offer a commitment to high standards by adopting the Global Connections Code of Best Practice for Short Term Mission.

You may know of a project or church overseas that has a need, but no involvement from any UK mission organisation. In this situation, you will most likely have to arrange every aspect yourself and will often not have the support or backing from those with experience. If this is the route you plan to take, it's worth researching whether a mission organisation will take you under their wing – as many of them offer this arrangement nowadays.

Action: "Researching my preferred organisations and requesting further details"

- Using the links below, short-list your favourite organisations and dig a little deeper into exactly what these organisations have to offer.
- Find mission organisations offering short term mission opportunities that match your needs. Check that you are comfortable with their aims, values, beliefs and policies.
- Contact your short-listed organisations and request further information.
- Pray. Be conscious of God's leading.

Links:

- For a list of short term mission programmes advertised through OSCAR visit: www.oscar.org.uk/opportunity/vacancies/jobopportunities
- For a list of other websites where short term opportunities are advertised visit: www.oscar.org.uk/opportunity/vacancies/agents.htm
- A complete list of UK mission organisations can be found at: www.oscar.org.uk/opportunity/organisations

What Next? Need further help?

Here are a couple of other resources that may also help you research your short term mission trip...

Mission conferences: There are a number of day events and conferences that focus on mission. These give you the chance to explore the issues and opportunities of mission work.

For a list of mission events, courses, advice and resources for enquirers, visit www.oscar.org.uk/service/training/enquirer.htm

Do some study: There are various workbooks and courses available for those considering mission work. You might also consider doing a course at a college where short term mission service is part of the course.

For a list of colleges with mission courses, visit www.oscar.org.uk/service/training/preparation.htm

If you meet someone who has been on a short term mission trip, you'll most likely discover that it was a life changing experience for them. With the expanding opportunities available today, whoever you are ... there's going to be something that God has got prepared for you ... it's just up to you to discover it!

'Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God' 1 Cor 10:31

Mike Frith
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This is based on an article which appeared in the Christian Herald on 21/4/05 entitled 'How to Plan a Short Term Mission'

For an online version of this article, see www.oscar.org.uk/opportunity/shorttermmission.htm