

Permission for Youth to Travel into Mexico

*Persons 17 years of age and younger must complete this form
this form is to be kept with the trip leader at all times*

We hereby give permission for our child, _____,
to travel with _____
to Ensenada, Mexico leaving on _____ and returning on _____.

Parent(s) or Guardian(s) Signatures :

Father's Name Signature Date

Notary to complete this portion:

STATE OF _____

COUNTY OF _____

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence

This _____ day of _____, _____

NOTARY PUBLIC

Mother's Name Signature Date

Notary to complete this portion:

STATE OF _____

COUNTY OF _____

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence

This _____ day of _____, _____

NOTARY PUBLIC

Acknowledgment of Risk Release and Waiver Form

If the Participant is a Minor, Their Guardian agrees to the Following:

I agree to waive any and all rights and claims for damages that I or my spouse may have against Lantern Hill and its agents, employees, and representatives for any and all injury, damage, or loss sustained by the participants arising directly or indirectly out of the trip;

I further agree that, in the event that I, my spouse, the participant, or another child in my care should make any claim against Lantern Hill for damage, injury, or loss arising directly or indirectly out of the trip, I will personally indemnify, defend and hold harmless Lantern Hill and its agents, employees, and representatives against any and all such injury, damage, or loss; and

I authorize Lantern Hill or their representative to obtain any medical treatment for the participant that should appear to be necessary during the trip, and I will be responsible for the payment of expenses relating to such illness or injury.

I affirm that I have the right to authorize and agree to the foregoing. I have carefully read and understand this agreement, and have willingly placed my signature below as evidence of my acceptance of all the conditions contained herein.

Signature of parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

Note: The trip, trip sponsor, and participant referred to in this agreement are shown on the reverse side of this form.

If the Participant is an Adult, Participant agrees to the Following:

I agree to waive any and all rights and claims for damages that I or my spouse may have against the Lantern Hill and its agents, employees, and representatives for any and all injury, damage, or loss sustained by the participant arising directly or indirectly out of the mission trip;

I further agree that, in the event that I should make any claim against Lantern Hill for damage, injury, or loss arising directly or indirectly out of the trip, I will personally indemnify, defend, and hold harmless Lantern Hill and its agents, employees, and representatives against any and all such injury, damage, or loss.

I affirm that I have the right to authorize and agree to the foregoing. I have carefully read and understand this agreement, and have willingly placed my signature below as evidence of my acceptance of all the conditions contained herein.

Signature of adult participant: _____ Date: _____

Note: The trip, trip sponsor, and participant referred to in this agreement are shown on the reverse side of this form.

Lantern Hill Mission Trip Info

Participant Information

(To be completed by participant or an authorized guardian)

Participant's name: _____ Male or Female (please circle)

Address: _____ Phone #: _____

Person to contact in case of emergency: _____

Phone: _____

List all current: Allergies: _____

Illnesses: _____

Physical problems: _____

Medications: _____

Name of health insurance company covering participant: _____

Insurance company address: _____

please include a physical copy of your insurance card

please include a physical color copy of your passport

To attend the mission trip, the reverse side of this form must be read and signed.



- Alcohol** Lantern Hill's policy is to abide by the law of the land. The drinking age in Mexico is 18. However, when we are with host families or members of conservative religious groups, you are asked and expected to refrain from consuming alcoholic beverages. If anyone's behavior becomes problematic, extreme or dangerous, the offending person will be sent home on the next available flight at his or her own expense.
- Border** Crossing the border into the US is tedious and time consuming, but not dangerous. Be prepared for lines and waiting. It can take several hours. Make sure you have your passports ready.
- Cell phones** Most US cell phones will not work in Mexico. Those that do are often very expensive (US \$10/minute).
- Climate** Mexico is just like a "Southern California-climate." Weather conditions will vary. We will experience cool nights on the beach and hot days in the "campo" (countryside).
- Clothing** See "What to Bring" list. This is a conservative culture; bare midriffs, unusual body piercings, skimpy clothing suggest that the wearer is available and promiscuous. Dress for the amount of attention you desire to attract. ☺
- Contact info** We should have your emergency contact telephone numbers and you should know them as well. Keep a copy of them on you at all times.
- Culture Shock** "The experience of encountering ways of doing, organizing, perceiving or valuing things which are different from yours and which threaten your basic, unconscious belief that your enculturated customs, assumptions, values and behaviors are 'right'" (Survival Kit for Overseas Living, p. 63).
- Currency** Peso. Although the exchange rate changes often, the expected conversion is 10 pesos for each US dollar.
- Current** Electrical current is the same as the US.
- Dehydration** High altitudes, tropical sun, high temperatures and hard work all conspire to dehydrate your body. Dehydration is a genuine medical concern here. Water is not a magic charm that works by simply carrying a bottle of it around. *Drink it! LOTS of it!* (Sodas dehydrate you.)
- Drugs** *Legal/prescription:* bring what you need *in your carry on*. Also bring the chemical name and dosage written on a slip of paper.
Illegal drugs: Wanna see the inside of a Mexican prison?
- Email** You may find a internet café in town, but it is unlikely that you will have access at any other point in the trip.
- Ethnocentrism** Judging the customs of others by the standards of one's own group.
- Flight info** We will email this to you as soon as it is booked. Be prepared for an early morning flight to San Diego and a late night flying back to your destination.
- Faith matters** We will be visiting and working with people from a variety of religious traditions, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic, and experiencing something of their faith lives. Because of the nature of the trip, group discussions will include matters of faith. Grace before meals, group prayers and devotions can be held if requested.

- Gato** Spanish for “cat.”
- Homesickness** It happens, and it is nothing to be ashamed of. Strategies to cope: bring a favorite (small) item from home. Get involved in group activities. Write to a person back home as if you were talking to him or her. Phone home if you have the opportunity *during free time*. If it keeps you from sleeping, tell a group leader.
- Insurance** *Health:* You are responsible for verifying that your US health policy will cover you in Mexico. Non-emergencies will occur in San Diego. Bring your insurance card AND the telephone numbers needed to verify international coverage.
Travel: You might want to consider travel insurance. The Center for International Service Learning recommends <http://www.missionaryinsurance.info/plans/daytripper/default.asp> .
- Itinerary** The “mix” of work, education and free time will not be ideal for everyone. In the past, some have expressed a wish for “less play, more work.” Others have regretted our inability to spend more time sightseeing. There is no itinerary that would be “perfect” for everyone. We have also learned over the years that successive days of strenuous work in the heat, while possible, makes for weary, cranky, irritable group members. Trust us on this one!
- Journals** Totally optional but definitely encouraged. Read the directions carefully, and make your entries daily or twice daily. Good journals are not merely about what you ate and where you went. They record your inner journey, and it is difficult if not impossible to remember on Tuesday exactly what you were feeling on Saturday. Also, for those who want spiritual growth to be a part of their experience, daily scripture passages are printed on each journal page.
- Language** You will have interpreters with you at all times.. but there will be times when you will be forced to try to communicate even when you do not speak the same language. Remember, english is not the world’s only language.
- Money** You will only need money for souvenirs and specialty events.
ATM’s: They are available. Usually give money in pesos.
Travelers’ checks: we recommend against them.
Merchants do not accept them, so they must be exchanged at a local bank, with a passport for ID, and a fee may be imposed. Major hassle.
Credit cards: accepted in some places. Helpful to preserve your cash.
- Motion sickness** We will be traveling by bus, airplane, and vans. If you are prone to motion sickness, try to sit forward in the buses, and bring any medications, wristbands, lotions or potions that help you.
- Naps** What you will not always have time for. It may seem early, but trust me... an early visit to sleepyville will make your trip even better!
- Ogling** Stares, catcalls, wolf whistles, and other uninvited expressions of attention are common in urban areas. Female group members are encouraged to take their cue from the local women, and simply ignore the person. What passes for “just being nice or friendly to a stranger” in our culture can invite unwanted attention in theirs. Be polite and courteous, but not excessively friendly to people with whom our group is not associated

- P**assport If you don't have one yet.. get one. They are required for your trip.
- P**hone calls Our cell phones work in Mexico everywhere we go. No worries. But, you will not be able to use the phone at all times. It will only be used in times of emergency.
- R**e-entry This is culture shock in reverse. Upon your return, you can expect to be a bit disoriented once again. You will be looking at your own culture through a newly acquired lens. You may find it difficult to describe to others your experience and the impact it had on you.
- S**panish Try it; you'll like it. Even if you know no Spanish, learn and use the phrases in the back of this booklet. People will appreciate your efforts to use their language, and most will be patient with you.
- T**ime Punctuality is not assigned the high value it is given in The United States and parts of Europe. Expect delays (as in "There is a 100% possibility of delays"), leisurely service in restaurants, and a generally more relaxed attitude toward time. "Our culture is task-oriented; Latin culture is people-oriented. Our culture is time-sensitive; Latin culture is situation-sensitive"
- T**ime zone Pacific Time Zone.
- V**accinations Consult your family physician and the Center for Disease Control travelers' website <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationMexico.aspx> for other recommendations.
- V**egetarians It is a challenge, but it can be done. Lots of rice and beans, but if you are a strict vegetarian, you will have to ask about things being cooked in chicken or beef broth. You may want to bring power bars or other travel food.
- V**isas None are required.
- W**ash hands Hand washing and drinking lots of water are the number 1 and 2 things you can do to preserve your health in Mexico.
- W**hat to bring See the *What to Bring* sheet (duh).
- W**ater Tap water is not safe for drinking. We will provide bottled water during the entire trip. Drink it. *LOTS* of it.
- Z**ebra Animals you will not see on the trip.

What-to-Bring List

Luggage

- One duffel bag for your personal things (if you bring more than 1 you will leave it at the airport!)
- One carry on backpack

Clothing – General

- We will experience cool beach nights and warm days to very hot days.
- This is a conservative culture—avoid short shorts, miniskirts, halter tops, spaghetti straps or string bikinis.
- Clothing is going to get dirty, maybe even ruined (paint).
- Idea: pack clothes that you can leave behind as you travel.
- No precious jewelry, body-piercing jewelry (except earrings), or expensive watches.
- **Do not over pack!** One duffel bag per person will be adequate.
 - Durable pants
 - Shorts (long or capri)
 - Tee shirts, polo type shirts
 - Undergarments
 - Socks
 - Two pair of shoes (one pair must be closed-toe second pair sturdy sandals)
 - Clothes for worship:
 - Women: skirts or pants
 - men: khakis and a collared shirt (pullover or buttoned)
 - Shower shoes/flip flops or creek walkers
 - One sweatshirt, fleece or jacket
 - Sleepwear, slippers are great!
 - Cap or hat
 - Swimsuit (women: one-piece or conservative 2-piece)

Personal Items – General

- iPods/portable tape/CD players are NOT allowed as you understand they are the most frequently stolen items in Mexico!
- please do not bring blow dryers for hair
- Film and camera batteries are extremely expensive; bring enough for your whole trip.

Documents and medications

- Personal medication (inc. stomach meds and travel sickness meds if you're so prone)
- Ample supply and list of medications you are currently taking (in carry-on luggage)
- Valid passport or ID and photocopies of the ID (keep the copies with the trip sponsor)
- Proof of health coverage and contact number for calling from abroad
- The part of Mexico you are visiting requires no immunizations. With regard to other medical matters, we advise you to consult your personal physician, who may want to refer to the CDC (Center for Disease Control) web site regarding pre-treatments.

Water

Don't pack any. We'll provide as we go.

Money Matters

- You will need enough to buy souvenirs or other things you desire during your trip. ATM machines exist, but are not found everywhere. They dispense only pesos.
- Do not change money in the USA in preparation for the trip. Your US money is good in Mexico.
- If possible, bring one credit card you can sign for in emergencies, but do not secure one just for this trip.

Carry-on

- It is not a bad idea to pack one change of undergarments, one extra shirt and a toothbrush in your carry-on bag. Luggage can and has been delayed.

Meeting the Victims, Falling in Love
By Dean Brackley, S.J. From Wellsprings

Waves of foreign delegations have come to El Salvador during recent years. The pilgrims deplane a little anxious, vaguely dreading what awaits them. They know that the people are very poor. They have heard of massacres and bombings of the past and the hunger and sickness of the present. They fear, half-consciously, that these poor people will lunge for their wallets, or that when they, the visitors, arrive at their first poor community, they will suffer a massive Irish-Catholic or Jewish or Methodist guilt-attack and at the very least they will have to sell their VCR when they get back home.

As happens with most of our fears, it doesn't turn out that way. On the one hand, the visitors spend much of their time in El Salvador wondering why these poor people are smiling. The people are glad they came and receive them with open arms. On the other hand, if the pilgrims listen to the stories of flight from the army, torture and death squads, and, since the war, of unspeakable hardship and premature death, the victims will break their hearts. And *that* after all, is the main reason the pilgrims have come. It is an experience of extraordinary richness, if the visitors muster the courage to take it in.

The encounter stops the visitors short and focuses their attention. "My God!" they cry, "half their children die from preventable disease. The powerful steal from them at will. There is no justice. And what has *my* government been doing here in my name?" The poor bring the visitors face-to-face with evil; and the visitors respond with horror. Not that the poor are all saints. (Hardship brings out both the best and the worst in people, the D'Aubuisson's and the Romeros.) They just obviously do not deserve what they have had to suffer. The injustice clashes strikingly with their humanity.

This presses in upon the visitors, and it can shake them to their roots. As the poor draw them deeper into their own reality, the newcomers

pass from observers to participants. The more they allow the poor to crash through their defenses, the more unsettled they feel. They begin to see their own reflection in the eyes of their hosts, and they say to themselves, "Hey, these people are just like us!" They sense a gentle invitation to lay down the burden of their own superiority (of which they are mostly unaware) and identify with these humble people, despite the differences between them. They begin to feel smaller and more "ordinary". A sweet shame comes over them, not bitter remorse but more like the shame one feels when falling in love. The visitors feel themselves losing their grip; or better, they feel the world losing its grip on them. What world? The world made up of important people like them and unimportant poor people like their hosts. As the poet Yeats says, "things fall apart": the visitors' world is coming unhinged. They feel resistance, naturally, to a current that threatens to sweep them out of control. They feel a little confused – again – like the disorientation of falling in love. The earth trembles. My horizon is opening up. I'm on unfamiliar ground, entering a richer, more real world.

We all live a bit on the periphery of the deep drama of life, more so, on average, in affluent societies. The reality of the periphery is thin, one-dimensional, "lite," compared to the multi-layered richness of this new world the visitors are entering. In this interchange with a few of their representatives, the anonymous masses of the world's poor emerge from their cardboard-cutout reality and take on the three-dimensional status of full-fledged human beings.

Actually, there are more than three dimensions here. The eyes of the victim beckon. They are like a bottomless well in which something infinite draws me on. In their welcome, peace sweeps over me. I feel almost at home in their strange place. Although an accomplice to the world of important people like me and unimportant people like them, I feel

accepted, forgiven – even before I have cleaned up my act with them or billions like them.

After reflecting on these issues for some years, it only gradually dawned on me that I belong to a peculiar tribe. The middle-class cultures of the North are newcomers to world history and have only existed for about 200 years.

We're not all bad people; we're just a tiny minority under the common illusion that we are the center of gravity of the universe. The poor can free us of this strange idea.

Don't get me wrong. The middle-class cultures have made extraordinary advances in civilization. True; many came at great cost to the despoiled nations and races. Still, these are historic achievements. And I'm not even talking about ambiguous technological progress. I mean the spiritual, cultural and political breakthroughs: the unheard-of opportunities, political liberties, democracy, the critical consciousness of the Enlightenment, and all that. No need to demean these gains. The problem for us is that the new freedoms and economic security have distanced the non-poor from the kind of daily fare of the poor of all times right up to today. Maybe 90% of all the people who ever lived have struggled every day to keep the household alive against the threat of death through hunger, disease, accidents and violence. By distancing the non-poor from the daily threat of death, the benefits of modernity have induced in us a kind of chronic low-grade confusion about what is really important in life, namely life itself and love. Besides, superior technology and the communications media induce us to think of our culture and perspective on life as the norm, and basically on track. The encounter with the poor stops us short; it recollects us. When we come out on the other side, we realize that the marginalized are actually at the center of things. It is we, in Washington and Paris, who are in the fringe.

These people shake us up because they bring home to us that things are much worse in the world than we dared to imagine. But that is only one side of the story: If we allow them to share their suffering with us, they communicate some of their hope to us as well. The smile that seems to have no foundation in the facts is not phony; the spirit of *fiesta* is not an escape but a

recognition that something else is going on in the world besides injustice and destruction. The poor smile because they suspect that this something is more powerful than the injustice. When they insist on sharing their tortilla with a visiting gringo, we recognize there is something going on in the world that is more wonderful than we dared to imagine.

It seems that the victim offers us the privileged place (although not the only place) to encounter the truth which sets us free. The poor usher us into the heart of reality. They bring us up against the world and ourselves all at once. To some extent, we all hold reality at arm's length – fending off intolerable parts of the world with one hand and intolerable parts of ourselves with the other. The two go together. As a rule, our encounters with the world place us in touch with internal reality, as well. In particular, when the world's pain crashes in upon us in the person of the victim, the encounter dredges up from within us the parts of ourselves that we had banished. The outcast outside us calls forth the outcast within us. This can heal us. We will truly heal our inner divisions if we are also working to heal our social divisions.

The victims of history – the destitute, abused women, oppressed minorities, all those the Bible calls "the poor" – not only put us in touch with the world and with ourselves, but also with the mercy of God. There is something fathomless about the encounter with the poor, as we have said – like the opening of a chess game with its infinite possibilities. If we let them, the poor will place us before the abyss of the holy Mystery we call God. They are a kind of door that opens before that Mystery and through which God passes to get at us. Clearly we need them more than they need us.

Small wonder that people keep returning. Something has happened, a kind of falling in love, I think.

**Why Most Mission Trips are a Waste of Time
(And how to make sure yours isn't)
By Noel Becchetti, President, Center for Student Missions**

"We're going to Ecuador!" The words ring out in a dimly-lit sanctuary. As music pulses, more lights come on and more voices ring out: "We'll be working with our denominational missionaries!" "We're going to repair the roof of their mission house!" "We're going to put on a Bible club for the village children!"

The voices? Members of a youth group in a large church in the Pacific Northwest. They were presenting their upcoming mission trip to members of their congregation. Me? I was the guest speaker, brought in to inspire the adults to support their students' summer mission plans. No problem—except that I was in a quandary. What can I honestly say to these people, I thought, when I know that this trip is mostly a waste of everyone's time and money?

Say What?

Those words may read strangely, coming from the keyboard of someone who is dedicated to advancing short-term mission and service opportunities for young people and adults. But I'm concerned that many (if not most) of our well-intentioned mission and service efforts are misguided. And as the world of youth-ministry mission and service continues to grow (and time, energy, and financial costs continue to rise), it's imperative that we make the most of the precious resources that God has given to us to work with.

Since the key to solving any dilemma is to first identify the root causes, let's take a look at how we get ourselves off course.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM (Mirror, Please)

"We have met the enemy," the saying goes, "and it is us." Afraid so—the first place to look when trying to figure out why we're wasting our time is in the mirror (me too, so don't feel too bad). There are three common errors we North-American, Western-Culture types make that can torpedo our best efforts:

We want to control the situation. This is understandable, given the responsibility we carry in taking a group of kids into a strange and potentially dangerous location. The problem is, missions by its very nature is a cross-cultural experience. We're choosing to go into a situation where the values, norms, cultural rules, and methods are radically different from ours. If we continue to insist on control—which means imposing our cultural and methodological framework onto our ministry partners—we create two wasteful byproducts: Our ministry partners divert us to meaningless (in their framework) tasks that fit our control grid. A friend of mine has coordinated mission and service trips into northern Mexico for years. One of his sites is an orphanage, full of boys and girls dying for love and attention. And The Wall. "I've got this wall," he told me. "When a group comes that can't handle what's required to build relationships with Mexican kids, or insists on completing a task so they can 'accomplish' something, I put them to work on The Wall. They feel like they're a big help, and it keeps them out of everyone's hair so the ministry isn't compromised."

We pull our ministry partners away from more meaningful work. "People need to remember," an inner-city friend from Chicago told me recently, "that a ministry pays a price to accommodate volunteers. It takes a lot of time and energy to set up an environment that can effectively handle volunteer help." While there are a number of legitimate reasons why a ministry partner may choose to allow volunteer groups to come in on a "make-work" basis (expose kids to the mission field, build awareness of the ministry, generate financial support), it's a waste of their distinctive gifts and skills to force them to accommodate our control issues. Remember the high school group headed for Ecuador? The missionaries really didn't need their roof repaired; they figured that it was what the kids could handle. But for two weeks, it took them away from their core ministry—an outreach to the adult men of their village.

We want to define what is 'ministry'. The ministry that God calls our mission partners to pursue may be (and often is) the exact opposite of what we would do. The point isn't to decide whose definition of ministry is "right"; the point is that as we insist on defining what ministry is in a context we know little about, we head down the garden path. Ever wonder why so many other cultures don't maintain their homes and buildings up to our standards? Maybe other things are more important to them.

One of the most common cultural collisions occurs between linear cultures (like ours) and nonlinear cultures (like Latin). Our culture is task-oriented; Latin culture is people-oriented. Our culture is time-sensitive; Latin culture is situation-sensitive. When we give in to our task orientation and define "doing" as ministry (one of our most common mistakes), we create more wasteful repercussions:

We spend an inordinate amount of time, energy and money to do 'ministry' that is a low priority to those we're attempting to serve. A few years ago, a friend of mine went with a group of other adult men from his church to a jungle village in Brazil. They were there to build a new meeting room for the mission compound. "The only problem was," he told me, "the weather was horrible the whole time—driving rain 24 hours a day. It was the worst possible time to build a building; but we'd come to accomplish a task, and by George, we were going to do it!" He went on: "It got to be ludicrous. The villagers were laughing their heads off. They couldn't figure out why the gringos were so loco that they'd slop around in the rain and mud when anyone with half a brain was inside."

We tempt our ministry partners to tell us only what we want to hear. I've got another friend who also works in northern Mexico. He's built a network of relationships with Mexican pastors all over the region. There's just one problem, he says: "Some of the pastors have learned how to make a good living telling Americans what they want to hear. They'll tug their heartstrings with some cute children, then tell them how, if they could only build a new wing on their church, they could do so much more for the kids. It's not that these pastors have such bad intentions; they've been overwhelmed by the amount of money and material resources that Americans can pour into a situation." Buildings are not automatically bad. But these Mexican pastors have become sidetracked from the ministry that is most effective in their culture (relationships) because of the overwhelming influence (and its attending temptations) of well-meaning but ignorant groups.

We want to see certain kinds of results. After all, we're investing a lot of time, energy and money into this mission trip. Surely God (not to mention the church board) wants to see some results from our efforts! True enough—but in rural Ecuador or inner-city Cleveland, "results" can be tough to pin down. This pitfall can be especially treacherous when we're ministering in difficult, complicated situations. It would be great if homeless crack addicts could meet Jesus, get clean, and land a job in a week; unfortunately, it rarely happens that way. Results like "We got to know some homeless men and women and told them that God loves them", or "We helped the missionaries hand out information for an upcoming service to the village men as they came out of the cantina" can be tough to quantify. But insisting on attaining results that fit our criterion for effective use of resources creates still more wasteful ripple effects:

We run the risk of seeing 'results' that aren't really there. "What a great day!" one group leader told me after his group spent the afternoon at a Washington D.C. homeless shelter. "We handed out tracts and witnessed to dozens of guys. At least ten men accepted Christ!" Well, maybe...but homeless shelter residents are (unfortunately) familiar with evangelistic blitzkriegs and know how to go through the motions so they can get some peace and quiet.

We could do real damage to our ministry partners' long-term work. When the Iron Curtain fell, there was an explosion of evangelistic outreach from the West into the countries of the former Soviet bloc. Huge stadium rallies brought together thousands of people, virtually all whom, it seemed, raised their hands to accept Jesus. Unfortunately, the organizers of most of these events forgot to consider how they were going to follow up these respondents. Guess who absorbed the blow created by this phenomenon? The men and women who had patiently worked over the years to smuggle in Bible and Christian literature, connect with believers behind the Iron Curtain, and support clandestine youth camps and other outreaches.

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

Take heart—your mission and service trip can be a wise and effective investment of your time, energy, and resources. All you've got to do is keep three principles in mind as you prepare yourself and your students:

1-Let Go and Let God. Most of the control issues that hover around a mission and service trip concern method rather than goal. We're all after the same things; it's in considering how to get there that our differences emerge. As we allow our methods to be adjusted to fit the situation we're entering, we communicate a powerful message of trust and respect to our ministry partners that will ensure our time will be well spent.

2-A ministry by any other name would smell as sweet. In 1992, my wife Kyle and I started the Chicago branch of the Center for Student Missions. As we began to learn our way around, we made friends with a number of African-American Christians who attended a church on Chicago's South Side. One Saturday, I headed down to their church to get my car hand-washed at the facility they'd set up in a warehouse next door to their sanctuary. Kirk Bell, one of my new friends, came by. As we chatted, I looked across the street to the new sanctuary they were building out of what had been a burned-out grocery store. "Kirk, we could bring all kinds of work groups to help you with your church building," I said (in a dazzling display of Anglo task-oriented linear brilliance). "That would be great," Kirk (diplomatically) replied, "but what we'd really like to do is to train teams of Christians to go back with us into the projects where we grew up and share Jesus with the folks who live there."

Their ministry goals looked nothing like mine—and, as I was to discover, it took some real selling to convince our groups that traipsing into housing projects (where 100% of the residents were African-American) with a team of black evangelists was a good idea. But sharing Jesus with people in the Stateway Gardens housing project with Kirk and his friends has become one of the most powerful ministries our groups experience during their times in Chicago. By deep-sixing our focus on task and redefining our understanding of ministry, we were able to see God work in ways we couldn't have otherwise imagined.

3-Leave the driving to Him. Have you read Matthew 25:31-40 lately? It's one of Jesus' most significant discourses. After all, he's articulating the actions by which God decides who's going to heaven and who's headed You Know Where. What's fascinates me in this passage is what he doesn't say. Do you notice what he leaves out in his charge to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and minister to the sick? He says nothing about what results are supposed to be achieved through these actions. There's no talk about ending hunger, defeating poverty, or seeing the prisoner go straight. He says simply to Do It, because when we do, we're somehow ministering directly to Our Lord.

Jesus gives us the freedom to go into our mission and service trips with the goal of just plain ministering. We don't have to achieve certain "results" to justify our investment. Frankly, we might not recognize some of God's divine results when we see them! But as we can remove our cultural blinders, discard the limitations we place on God's definition of ministry, and "leave the driving" to Him, we can begin to understand what it means to be Jesus' hands and feet to a hurting world.

JUST CALL ME-CHICKEN

So what did I say to the congregation that was sending their students to Ecuador? To be honest, I wasn't very bold. I played it safe and affirmed what was praiseworthy about their trip—their willingness to move out of their comfort zone, their desire to serve God, their heart for the children they were looking forward to meeting. But I took comfort in the knowledge that they were under the guidance of a solid youth leader whom I know would learn from the experience (he did) and approach future mission and service trip with more flexibility and sensitivity (he has). The "result" has been healthy relationships with ministry partners all over the world, and students whose lives have been changed forever.

That's what we want our kids to experience. And that's mission and service that's worth anyone's time.

ServantLife... A way of life

Planning to Serve

Service can be faith forming, meaningful, pointless or harmful. The approach you take to designing the experience makes all the difference. The design makes all the difference. There are four types of service¹:

- Service-LEARNING: Learning goals are primary; service outcomes are secondary
- SERVICE-Learning: Service outcomes are primary; learning goals are secondary
- Service-learning: Service and Learning goals are completely separate
- SERVICE-LEARNING: Service and learning goals of equal weight and each enhances the other for all participants.

Effective Christian service can be qualified even further because the real goal is always the same: To live on the earth like Jesus did. Christians are following Jesus, so they serve like Jesus served. This is a deeper journey than “charity”, “volunteerism”, “citizenship” or “meaningful activity.” Christian service is both a way to practice faith and to teach faith in Jesus Christ. It is much more than a project—certainly much more than something done with a youth group for a week in the summer. Jesus-style service is a way of life, fully integrated into our core being.

First Step: Language makes a difference

Shifting from service learning or more importantly, from service projects starts with language.

1. Effective service with others is done with them, not to them! We are “going to help them” implies they can’t do “it” without us. Condescending language creeps into our way of talking and then into our way of thinking that winds up turning one group of people into the “care takers” while the other group ends up as “victims.” Or maybe not quite as severe, we reduce caring to something like “parenting,” which positions one group as wiser or more powerful than the other. Anyone who has really engaged in Christian service knows the truth—when we serve one another, everyone grows.

2. “Come on, serve, you’ll feel good inside” actually makes serving into something trivial. People know that “feeling good,” especially at the expense of others, is at best, temporary. Begging people to serve or bribing them with a party or fun even afterwards is not helpful. It is more effective to teach reluctant servants about Jesus’ live of service and invite them to grow in their own discipleship. Giving people information about those you will serve with also prepares them to build a real relationship during the time of service. Most people want to help others and respond to information and invitation.

3. Helping “those poor people” creates a culture that says people who “have stuff” are more important than people who don’t. With this frame of reference we reinforce the material culture around us and create a false feeling of self worth based on possessions. Move from guilt to privilege: serving is part of Christian life rooted in God’s love for us, not pressure to feel better because we may have more money, a bigger house, or better tennis shoes than the next person. Teach people to take responsibility for the injustices in our world rather than making “the poor” something to be pitied or romanticized.

1 Defined y Robert Sigmon, 1994 Service Learning Typology

Second Step: Include the generations

Christian service is for all ages. Sending high school students to “make a difference” is great, but not enough. Think about the faith maturity of your congregation (discipleship). Most congregations have few adults, or any Confirmed members, participating in Christian Education. Serving with others is one of the most effective ways of teaching the faith because we learn best by doing! If Christian serving communities were normal, everyone would be reading the Bible, practicing their faith in daily life and experiencing transformation.

Make it a point of including as many generations (or even the whole congregation) into serving on a regular basis. There are a few ways you can do this by design:

Model 1—Every Community of Service can include

- 1) A Travel Team— People that will be “hands-on” on behalf of the Serving Community
- 2) A Home Team—People that agree to pray and provide an infrastructure for those that travel, including funding, transportation, equipment, etc.
- 3) Both The Travel Team and the Home Team prepare for serving, serve in their roles and reflect on the serving as a community

Model 2—Every Community of Service can include

- 1) A Service Family— A cross-generational team of people with a passion for a particular initiative invites the congregation into a Community of Service
- 2) Congregation Response— The congregation steps up to support the Service Family by praying, funding and equipping the Service Family.
- 3) Both the Service Family and the Congregation are part of the Serving Community so that

Third Step: Make serving normal

Richard Rohr in *Everything Belongs* writes “We are all sleepwalkers. Human beings don’t naturally see, they have to be taught how to see.” The starting point to Christian ServantLife is to recognize that you are already there! What’s absent is awareness of the fact God has already chosen us! We do not think ourselves into new ways of living, we live ourselves into new ways of thinking!

Entering in to ServantLife is as basic as opening your heart to the Spirit already working around and in you. It is less about going “to do something” and more about realizing something is already happening around you— join in! We think too small when service is reduced to servant events. That makes it too easy to miss the privilege of service already given us in daily life.

- 1) Identify all the people that serve you! Start noticing the little things others do for you.
- 2) Create rituals of practice that include:
 - Widespread ownership
 - Respect for serving and being served
 - Partnerships that tend cultural gaps
 - Reflections and follow through