



CONCILIUM

Feet on the Ground, Eyes on the King

A practical resource preparing
hearts, hands, and feet for short
term mission service.

Written and Developed by Scott Brawner

*Picture:
Trekking Thar Desert wonders. Rajasthan, India.*

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WELCOME!

Welcome to your short-term missions journey—a calling that involves both heart and hands, both preparation and purpose.

Whether this is your first short term mission trip or you are a seasoned mission team leader, this manual is designed to guide you through eight essential aspects of readiness and reflection:

Team Development, where we build spiritually grounded, unified teams;
Team Promotion, inviting others to support and engage with the mission;
Team Preparation, where practical and spiritual equipping begins.

We also cover **Team Health** to ensure physical and emotional readiness, and **Team Safety and Security** for wise navigation in unfamiliar environments.

The **Team Deployment** aspect equips you to serve humbly and effectively on the field.

After the trip, intentional **Return and Debriefing** help you process all God has done, and **Post-Trip Evaluation** ensures continued growth and future mission impact.

Through every stage of the mission journey I pray that, in your walk with Jesus, you cultivate a posture of humility, flexibility, and Gospel-centered purpose. You've been called—now let's prepare to go well.

But if Not!

Scott Brawner
Concilium President

P.S.:

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to Concilium's awesome team!

You can reach us via our website at www.concilium.us or by email: info@concilium.us.

Talk to Concilium about our key support tools and resources!

- Security/Crisis Management
 - Global Analysis
 - Personnel Tracking
 - 24/7 Emergency Assist
- Info@concilium.us

Picture:
Hassan II Mosque, Casablanca, Morocco.



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Aspect 1

Team Development

Clarify the Mission

Determine Location

Set Trip Cost

Identify the Team

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Picture:

The Great Wall Near Beijing, China.

Clarify the Mission

Define the spiritual and practical goals of the trip. Determine whether your team will focus on evangelism, service, training, or support for local ministries. A clear mission ensures alignment with hosts, focuses your team's efforts, and provides a meaningful framework for preparation, fundraising, and post-trip reflection.

Determine Location

Choose a location based on existing partnerships, ministry needs, and safety considerations. Confirm that the destination has reliable local contacts, cultural openness to your mission goals, and infrastructure to support your stay. Consider language barriers, visa requirements, and health risks as part of the overall destination selection process.

Set Trip Cost

Develop a detailed budget that includes airfare, lodging, meals, local transportation, visas, international travel insurance, and supplies. Factor in a contingency fund and possible donations to your host ministry. Clear communication of the total cost helps with fundraising, donor support, and ensuring team members are financially prepared before committing.

Identify the Team

Select spiritually mature, emotionally stable, and teachable individuals who bring relevant skills and a servant-hearted attitude. Build a diverse and balanced team by considering age, cultural background, personality, and spiritual gifting. Assign key roles early—such as team leader, worship coordinator, and logistics manager. A well-formed, unified team fosters trust, adaptability, and deeper ministry effectiveness in the field.

Aspect 2

Team Promotion

Picture:
Sunehri Masjid, Delhi, India.

Cast Vision

Gain Stakeholder Buy In

Develop Prayer Support

Raise Funds

***“Declare His glory
among the nations,
His marvelous works
among all the
peoples!”***

Psalm 96:3

Cast Vision

Clearly communicate the spiritual purpose and expected impact of the mission. Inspire potential team members, supporters, and church leadership with the “why” behind the trip. Use stories, Scripture, and specific goals to rally hearts toward God’s work in another culture and create unity around the mission’s greater calling.

Gain Stakeholder Buy-In

Secure support from pastors, church leaders, mission boards, and sending organizations. Present the plan with clarity, showing how the mission aligns with broader church goals. Encourage leaders to champion the effort, bless the team publicly, and provide spiritual covering, accountability, and logistical support throughout the preparation and deployment phases.

Develop Prayer Support

Recruit individuals or groups to pray regularly for the team before, during, and after the trip. Share prayer requests through emails, printouts, or church announcements. Assign each team member a dedicated prayer partner. Spiritual covering through prayer is essential for discernment, protection, boldness, and fruitfulness in cross-cultural service.

Raise Funds

Create a fundraising plan that includes personal support letters, group events, and online giving platforms. Communicate specific financial needs and ministry goals. Emphasize that giving enables participation in God’s mission. Encourage team members to approach fundraising as a faith-building partnership, not just a task to check off.

Aspect 3

Team Preparation

Picture:
Cathedral of Saint Domnius, Split, Croatia.

Team Covenant

Team Building

Language Acquisition

Spiritual Preparation

Cultural Understanding

Team Covenant

A team covenant outlines shared values, behavior expectations, and conflict resolution principles. It fosters unity, mutual accountability, and spiritual focus, helping team members serve with integrity, humility, and respect for one another and their host community.

Team Building

Team building activities create trust, deepen relationships, and enhance communication. Through prayer, service projects, and group challenges, team members learn to collaborate effectively, support each other under stress, and function as one unified body with a shared mission.

Language Acquisition

Learning basic local language phrases builds bridges of respect and connection. Simple greetings, thank-yous, and ministry terms demonstrate cultural humility, open relational doors, and enhance the team's ability to communicate love and the Gospel across language barriers.

Spiritual Preparation

Spiritual preparation involves prayer, Bible study, fasting, and personal reflection. It equips team members to serve with sensitivity, resist spiritual attack, and stay rooted in Christ. A spiritually prepared team serves more faithfully, fruitfully, and joyfully under pressure.

Cultural Understanding

Understanding the host culture's values, customs, and social norms helps prevent offense and builds trust. Cultural awareness equips the team to listen well, adapt behavior, and show Christ-like respect in ways the local community will receive and understand.

"The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord."

Proverbs 21:31

Aspect 4

Team Health

Before You Go

Current Medications

Protect Yourself

Upon Return

Picture:
Fisherman on Lake George, Uganda.

Before you go:

Schedule an appointment with their healthcare provider for a general physical or checkup 4-6 weeks prior to departure. Get needed/required vaccines to safely serve at the destination. Children, teenagers, and young adults should be up-to-date for all routine vaccines. Some vaccines may need to be given earlier than usual to protect young travelers. If prescribed anti-malarial medications, ensure that you start and complete your medication according to the directions. Notify your team leaders of any personal medical issues or concerns.

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL, make sure to secure international medical insurance that includes evacuation coverage.

Current Medications:

Take all of the medicines you usually take when you are at home. If refills are not available at your destination, ensure team members bring enough for the trip. If medications require refrigeration, ensure that resources and logistics will accommodate PRIOR to departure.

Protect Yourself While On Mission:

Avoid bites from mosquitoes, ticks, spiders, and other insects and arachnids. Bug bites can transfer to humans serious diseases such as malaria, chikungunya, dengue, Zika, and encephalitis. Use an insect repellent and wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, closed shoes, and hats as much as possible.

Avoid diarrhea by drinking beverages that have been bottled and sealed and eating food that is fully cooked and served hot. Wash your hands and face often.

Upon Return:

Seek medical care immediately if you develop a fever or other health issues during your trip or upon return.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, Who forgives all your iniquity, Who heals all your diseases.”

Psalm 103:2-3

Aspect 5

Team Safety and Security

Picture:

A Tuk-Tuk driver in Chinatown, Bangkok, Thailand.

US Embassy Info

STEP

Personal Safety

Personal Data

Operational Security

***“The Lord will keep
you from all evil;
He will keep your life.
The Lord will keep
your going out and
your coming in
from this time forth
and forevermore.”***

“Psalm 121:7–8

US Embassy Info

Know your nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate’s location and contact details. In emergencies the embassy may provide critical support, guidance, and coordination with local authorities or evacuation resources if necessary.

STEP Program

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free U.S. government service that registers your trip with the local embassy. It enables important safety updates, facilitates and helps the embassy assist you quickly if crises arise.

Personal Safety

Prioritize situational awareness at all times. Travel in groups when possible, avoid isolated or high-risk areas, and secure your valuables. Respect local customs, obey laws, and adhere to your host’s guidance. A humble, low-profile presence reduces risk. Good personal safety practices begin with wisdom, alertness, and the intentional choice to avoid unnecessary exposure or confrontation.

Personal Data

Protect personal information—passports, IDs, itineraries, and digital files. Avoid broadcasting your plans online or in public. Store physical documents securely and back up important data digitally. Password-protect devices and enable tracking features where possible. Treat personal data as a critical vulnerability that could endanger your team if compromised.

Operational Security (OPSEC)

Protect sensitive details related to your mission, team members, finances, or affiliations. Avoid discussing ministry plans in public or online spaces, and use general language when referring to your work. Social media posts should be minimal, delayed, or avoided in sensitive environments. Practicing sound OPSEC reduces the risk of surveillance, targeting, or compromising your local partners.

Aspect 6

Team Deployment

Ministry Effectiveness

Personal Flexibility

Humility

Situational Awareness

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

“Matthew 28:19–20

Picture:

The desert at sunset. Wadi Rum, Jordan.

Ministry Effectiveness

Effective ministry isn't about numbers or performance—it's about obedience, presence, and love. Focus on encouraging local partners, building relationships, and letting Christ shine through your actions. Fruit may not be immediate, but faithfulness, compassion, and humility leave a long-lasting impact rooted in God's timing, not our agenda.

Personal Flexibility

Flexibility is vital on the mission field. Travel delays, cultural misunderstandings, and last-minute changes are common. Adapt with grace, trust God's sovereignty, and embrace interruptions as divine appointments. A flexible spirit reveals maturity and keeps the team unified, even when plans fall apart or expectations shift dramatically.

Humility

Humility means recognizing we are guests and learners, not saviors or experts. It opens hearts, builds trust, and honors local leadership. Serving quietly, deferring to others, and celebrating different ways of doing things demonstrates Christ's character more powerfully than any program or presentation ever could.

Situational Awareness (Personal and Spiritual)

Stay alert physically and spiritually. Watch your surroundings, assess risks, and avoid unnecessary dangers. Spiritually, be sensitive to God's leading, enemy resistance, and moments requiring discernment.

Awareness empowers wise choices, protects your witness, and helps you navigate both visible and unseen challenges while serving cross-culturally.

Aspect 7

Return and Debriefing

Spiritual/Emotional Processing

Reverse Culture Shock

Sharing the Story

Ongoing Engagement

“The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!’”

Luke 10:17

Picture:

Church of the Mother of God on the Lake. Bled, Slovenia.

Spiritual and Emotional Processing

Give space for team members to reflect on what God taught them. Address spiritual growth, personal challenges, emotional highs and lows, and unexpected moments of transformation. Create opportunities for prayer, worship, and honest conversation in both group and one-on-one settings.

Reintegration and Reverse Culture Shock

Returning home can be disorienting. Help your team navigate the transition from the mission field back to daily life. Discuss feelings of discomfort with wealth, disconnection from peers, or a desire for deeper purpose. Offer practical tips for adjusting and re-engaging their home context with fresh eyes.

Sharing the Story

Equip your team to communicate their experience clearly and respectfully. Encourage testimonies, photos, and creative expressions (videos, art, blogs). Help them avoid stereotypes or savior narratives, focusing instead on partnership, lessons learned, and the dignity of those served.

Next Steps and Ongoing Engagement

Establish a time for team members to sit down together and process their experience together. Create a series of reflective questions to help guide team members as they decompress and process what the Lord did with—and is currently doing—with team members now they are home and how this experience will shape their future. Encourage involvement in missions locally or globally, support for long-term workers, or deeper church service. Provide mentoring or follow-up opportunities for those sensing a call to ministry.

Aspect 8

Post-Trip Evaluation

Spiritual, Emotional, and
Relational Growth

Conflict Management

Mission Fulfillment

Leadership Lessons

“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?”

Luke 14:27-28

Picture:

Clock Tower off the square in Antigua, Guatemala.

Spiritual, Emotional, and Relational Growth

Reflect on how the team grew spiritually, emotionally, and relationally throughout the trip. Consider how your leadership contributed to or hindered that growth, and identify specific moments where you supported, guided, or missed opportunities to help the team thrive in their faith, relationships, and overall mission experience.

Conflict Management

Consider any moments of tension, fatigue, or miscommunication that arose during the trip. Reflect on how you responded as a leader and whether different actions or approaches could have better supported the team. This evaluation helps build self-awareness and strengthens your ability to lead with wisdom, clarity, and compassion in future challenges.

Mission Fulfillment

Reflect on how well your team's pre-trip preparation and in-country plans aligned with the real needs, culture, and expectations of the missionary host. Consider whether your strategy demonstrated cultural sensitivity and adaptability. Identify any gaps between intention and impact, and how future efforts could be better informed by local context and collaborative planning.

Leadership Lessons

Reflect on the leadership lessons God revealed through challenges, surprises, or the faithfulness of others. Consider how He shaped your character, decision-making, and dependence on Him. Identify key insights that should guide your future ministry and leadership. Let this reflection deepen your spiritual maturity and strengthen your role as a servant leader.

For You Helpful Resources

A list of every US Embassy around the world can be found at: <https://www.usembassy.gov/>.

Learn more about the STEP program at step.state.gov.

Check out Concilium's Website for awesome FREE resources to help you with your planning!

www.concilium.us/Resources

Stay go Decision Making. Sometimes the most stressful situations arise when making the decision to stay or go.

<https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Thresholds-for-Departure-Benchmarks-for-Return-12-2021.pdf>

When we have to consider safe communication. <https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Safe-Communication.pdf>

Great video on how to be safe overseas!

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/837605081>

A great resource on information security (INFOSEC):

<https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/INFOSEC-Updated.pdf>

For those serving in restricted access areas:

<https://concilium.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Developing-Your-Image-2024.pdf>

Picture:
St. Basil's Cathedral in Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

About the Author

Scott Brawner is the President/CEO of Concilium, a global ministry providing security-risk and crisis management services to missionaries and persecuted Christians around the world. Scott also serves as the Executive Director of the Risk Management Network, a network of security professionals serving in Great Commission organizations.

Scott is a theologically trained security professional who combines sound theological perspective with security best practices for Christian churches, mission agencies and humanitarian organizations.

Since 1999, Scott has led short term mission teams for adults and students to more than 75 countries around the world.

Scott lives in the Midwest with his wife and three children.





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“The objective of security-risk management is not to remove risk from the equation of Great Commission obedience. Instead, the objective of security-risk management is to remove uncertainty from the decision making process toward Kingdom advance.”

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