

**1. Title:** Planning and Approval of Mission Trips

**2. Purpose:**

The First Presbyterian Church of Conroe (“church”) occasionally sponsors short-term mission trips. While these trips may provide essential ministry services, the trips are primarily intended to introduce trip participants to missions. The church desires that God will be honored in every aspect of these trips. Therefore, this policy has been developed and adopted by the church to provide general guidance for these trips. A mission trip may be organized to consist mainly of either adults or minors. The purpose of this OPS is to provide policy in general for all mission trips.

**3. Policy:**

3.1 The Discipleship Ministry, with input from the Mission Ministry, is responsible for periodically reviewing this OPS for changes and coordinating any revisions with other ministries before submitting to the session for its approval.

3.2 Ministries are responsible for submitting during the annual budget call their budget requests for any church funding of its anticipated mission trips. The funding of mission trips and other related financial matters are covered in OPS 23.05 *Funding of Mission Trips*.

3.3 Mission trip planning and budgeting shall be initiated with the use of the church form, *Mission Trip Planning Form*, F- 230101.

3.4 The Discipleship Ministry is responsible for budgeting, planning and completing F-230101’s for all mission trips associated with children and youth. The Ministry’s approval of a trip as planned in an F-230101 is to be recorded in the Ministry’s minutes. The Discipleship Ministry Chair is responsible for approving (signing F-230101’s) for children and youth mission trips.

3.5 The Mission Ministry is responsible for budgeting, planning, completing F-230101’s for all adult mission trips. The Ministry’s approval of a trip as planned in an F-230101 is to be recorded in the Ministry’s minutes. The Mission Ministry Chair is responsible for approving (signing F-230101’s) for adult mission trips.

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3.6 All mission trip participants less than eighteen years of age must have parent/guardian permission approval and a liability release. This age may be extended to a higher age for those who legally require a guardian's signature. The church form *Parent/Guardian Trip Consent Form* (F-230201) must be completed and signed.

3.7 All mission trip participants less than eighteen years of age must have a parent/guardian-provided medical information and release. This age may be extended to a higher age for those who legally require a guardian's signature. The church form *Medical Information & Release Form for Youth Mission Trip* (F-230401) shall be used for this purpose.

3.8 Participants who are legally adults (18 years of age and older) must provide medical information including medical insurance information and signed release forms. The church form, F-230401, shall be used for this requirement.

3.9 The planning of mission trips requires a considerable amount of detailed planning, coordination and communications. Any ministry sponsoring a mission trip is responsible for performing the appropriate pre-planning, coordination and communications. Appendix A, *Planning Your Mission Trip Guidelines*, provides mission trip planning guidelines which should be referenced for mission trip planning.

3.10 All mission trips shall have a "Trip Leader" who is approved by the sponsoring ministry and recorded in that ministry's minutes. This individual must be at least thirty (30) years of age, in good health and spiritually, mentally, and emotionally fit.

3.11 Trip Leaders shall be familiar with the church's mission trip policies and agree to accept the *Trip Leader's Responsibilities* as defined in Appendix B.

3.12 All mission trips shall have a summary report of the trip approved by the sponsoring ministry and filed in the Church Records (23.07). The said report should be distributed to the Pastors and any other Staff, session members, and any others in the church organization who may have need of the information or associated interest. Such report should have a critique of the trip by reporting the positives and areas requiring improvement in the trip's planning. The purpose is for improving the planning process and passing along lessons-learned to others who may be doing it later.

3.13 The participants or representatives of the participants shall provide an oral report to the congregation regarding the trip – what were its highlights, what spiritual growth experience will be remembered, etc., (23.06).

3.14 The church has specific qualifications for adult mission trip participants. An adult mission trip participant must meet the following criteria:

- Must evidence a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and a love for Scripture.
- Must be a FPCC Church member or a member of an approved local church, or working toward membership with FPCC or an approved local church.
- He or she must be regular in church attendance and either be actively serving or show evidence of plans to be in active service.
- Must be spiritually, mentally, and emotionally fit. The demands of the mission field are not just financial or practical. The demonic influence in many countries is much more unbridled and open in its practice. Differences in food, possible sleep deprivation, and often a time change will be factors in cross-cultural experience.
- Must have a strong marriage and family commitment. If single, there must exist a sense of peace, accompanied by contentment and self-control.
- Must have strong recommendations from church leaders in his/her area of service and approval of elders.

3.15 Children and youth participants shall have explained to them before departure the church's requirements for their conduct and behavior. Such requirements shall be expressed in the church's "Mission Trip Covenant" which each youth and adult participant is required to agree with and to sign prior to going on a church sponsored mission trip. Appendix C is the said covenant. The covenant document is to be signed by the child/youth, parent, and Discipleship Ministry representative, which may be either the Discipleship Chair, or the Associate Pastor.

#### **4. Definitions:**

Trip Leader – the individual whose name is specified in a ministry-approved F-230101 as a specific trip's Trip Leader. This individual has specific responsibilities for supervision and health/safety matters of mission trip participants during the trip. It will be the responsibility of the Trip Leader to communicate regularly with the sponsoring ministry chair (or her/his designee) in order to assure that all preparations are made. He/she is really *the key* to a successful mission's experience. He or she will be responsible for the planning and carrying out of the mission trip; including making travel arrangements, establishing good communication with the contact person where you are going, and preparing the team. The team leader will collect forms from parents and participants and provide same to the Church Administrator.

Participant - servant participation is what makes mission trips work! Each individual should feel called to the mission effort. Prayer is the most effective tool a Christ servant takes to the field. Flexibility and a can-do attitude are a must. God will use the talents, time, and money of Christ servants to bless the lives of others, and further His kingdom!

**5. References:**

OPS 23.02, 23.03, 23.04, 23.05, 23.06  
OPS 17.01, 17.02, 17.05

**6. Applicability:**

The policies and procedures in this OPS apply to all and any church mission trip(s). Mission trips which are out of the country require special consideration and planning which are not covered in this OPS.

**7. Procedures:**

7.1 The Ministry Chair shall include in the ministry's annual budget submission the funding for the church-share of the funds needed for planned mission trips. [A completed F-230101 or partially completed F-230101 is recommended.]

7.2 The Ministry's Chair shall use the Ministry's session-approved budget to determine if the ministry will need to do further fund raising for the anticipated mission trip(s) and if yes, refer to OPS 23.05 *Funding of Mission Trips*.

7.3 The Ministry identifies and approves a Trip Leader.

7.4 The Trip Leader identifies the Approved Drivers for the trip.

7.5 The Trip Leader or Ministry Chair submits F-170101 to the Church Administrator.

7.6 The Trip Leader shall initiate trip planning by using the Appendix A, *Planning Your Mission Trip Guidelines*.

7.7 The Trip Leader coordinates with all parties for obtaining completed and signed parent/guardian and participant forms and providing such forms to the Church Administrator. This includes each participant's "Mission Trip Covenant".

7.8 The Trip Leader provides a written report regarding the trip to the sponsoring ministry for its approval and distribution.

7.9 The Ministry Chair (or his designee) coordinates with the participants and the Pastor for participants to orally report to the congregation.

7.10 The participants provide the oral report to the congregation.

7.11 The sponsoring Ministry Chair shall place on the ministry's monthly meeting's agenda a discussion for all aspects of the trip for evaluating achievement of the trip's objectives, and to note any needed changes in policies and procedures.

**8. Review Schedule:**

This OPS shall be reviewed for revision by the Discipleship Ministry, with input by the Mission Ministry, one year following its approval/effective date.

**9. Approval:**

The Session approved this OPS on the above "effective date".

**Appendix A**

**PLANNING YOUR MISSION TRIP GUIDELINES**

1. Pray - Involve the whole church in the process through prayer from the dream stage to the celebration.
2. Discover - What are your skills? Where do you feel God is leading you to go? What is your interest? What is the size of your mission team group? Decide what you feel God is calling you to do.
3. Read - Take time to read this *Planning Your Mission Trip Guidelines*.
4. Contact - Once you have selected one or more projects, research each candidate project. List the questions that are essential for your mission team group. Talk about the dates you have chosen to make sure that it is acceptable for all parties concerned. Place the mission event on the church calendar.
5. Visit - Successful mission trips include a pre-mission scouting visit to review the site, to secure the housing arrangements, to discuss with the contact person the project, and to pray.
6. Goals - What would you like to see accomplished through and on this mission trip? Write it down and share it with your prayer partners. Ask yourself this question: "What do we feel God wants to accomplish through us on this mission trip?"
7. Planning - Using this planning guide, will help make your mission trip a positive experience. Be sure to involve the church. Consult with a church in the mission area and involve that church in your planning. Ask what Bible Translation is acceptable for you to use in the area you are planning to take your mission trip.
8. Missions - Enjoy your mission trip. Let this be the mission trip where God uses you in a marvelous way to see many come to faith in Jesus Christ.
9. Report – Share the excitement, results, disappointments and concerns with all of your partners: your church, and presbytery. Reports should include information on who went, where you went, digital photos, what you did, what happened as a result, and what ongoing concerns you have. Seek opportunities for participants to share about their experiences and give testimonies of how God was at work during the project.
10. Celebrate - Work with your pastor and plan a time to share with your church about your mission trip.

11. Learn- Evaluate the process; debrief in the midst of the event while it is all still fresh. Use this as a momentum builder.

12. START THE PROCESS ALL OVER AGAIN!

**Appendix B**

**TRIP LEADER'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

A mission trip's Trip Leader has the following responsibilities:

- Assuring that the church's policies regarding safety and other matters are followed and strictly enforced.
- Assuring that there is appropriate communications among all parties both before and during a mission trip.
- Providing each parent/guardian a copy of the completed church form, F-230101 which provides specific information about the mission trip such as dates, destination, address of lodging, brief description of activity/work to be done, etc. This completed form may be given to the parent/guardians at a meeting for the purpose of providing more detailed information with the opportunity for questions and answers.
- The Trip Leader shall provide to each child's parent/guardian copies of a blank F-230401, and obtain from each parent/guardian the completed F-230401's and provide each to the Church Administrator for filing.
- The Trip Leader shall provide to each child's parent/guardian copies of OPS 23.02 and a blank F-230201. The Trip Leader is responsible for obtaining completed F-230201's from each parent/guardian and giving each to the Church Administrator.
- Arranging for transportation by submitting the church form, *Van Use Request Form*, F-170101, to the Church Administrator.



**Appendix C**

See the next page for the Mission Trip Covenant

## Mission Trip Covenant First Presbyterian Church Conroe

Each youth and adult participant of any church mission trip will be asked to agree with and to sign the following covenant prior to going on a church sponsored mission trip. As a FPC Conroe Missions participant, you are expected to conduct yourself according to the highest standards of integrity and morality. This is to ensure that you represent the church and our Lord Jesus Christ in way that would bring Him honor. Failure to follow this covenant will result in disciplinary action that may include sending a participant home at their own expense and or suspension from future trips.

1. I will do my best to be open to God's Holy Spirit in my life during the trip with the expectations that this Mission Trip is about experiencing God.
2. I go as a disciple of Jesus Christ and will adopt the attitude of Christ when dealing with my fellow team members and the people I meet during the trip.
3. I will accept and submit to the leadership role and authority of the team leader(s) and promise to abide by his or her decisions as they concern the mission trip.
4. I will be respectful and encouraging of other participants and refrain from making negative comments or putting others down.
5. I understand that mission trips can be difficult, and promise to be flexible instead of having a complaining attitude.
6. I will adhere to the dress code established for the trip.
7. I will not destroy, steal or disturb the property of others.
8. I will be respectful of all church property and mission trip properties encountered. I understand that this includes the vans, all lodging areas, and all meeting rooms as well as public areas.
9. I realize that cursing, swearing, and vulgar language are not permitted and I will abide by these standards.
10. I will not go off by myself or wander around. I promise to stay with the group and make sure the trip leaders know where I am at all times.

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11. I understand that it is a privilege to take a cell phone on the trip and not a right. I will surrender the cell phone to the trip leaders when asked to do so at the designated times.
12. I promise not to bring any TVs, firearms, knives or weapons of any kind, matches, lighters, or other incendiary devices (such as fireworks of any kind), alcohol or tobacco products, illegal drugs/contraband or controlled substances.
13. I will refrain from using tobacco, alcoholic beverages, or illegal drugs at any time during the mission trip. This prohibition includes adults.
14. Prescription drugs will be managed confidentially by an Adult sponsor/leader.
15. At no time will girls be welcome in boys living quarters, and at no time will boys be welcome in girls living quarters. There will be no public displays of affection and participants are not allowed to be alone with a member of the opposite sex.
16. On cross cultural trips I will refrain from giving gifts, such as money, clothes, jewelry, CD players, etc. to those we are helping. Although the intent of the giver is good, the results after we leave can cause problems for our host, and jealousy amongst those who did not receive such gifts. We will do any and all gift giving as a team and not individually.
17. I will respect any other special social behavior or activity advised by the local contact who knows the culture. I will remember that I am a guest in their culture and will do what is necessary to follow cultural traditions and norms.
18. I will comply with any reasonable request from the team leader(s) to give assistance. I will not do this with a grumbling attitude, but cheerfully.

I hereby agree to comply with and sign this covenant of behavior for the mission trip on the following dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Adult signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Discipleship Ministry signature: \_\_\_\_\_