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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF SHORT-TERM MISSIONS ON THE PARTICIPANTS
OF THE BERKSHIRE MISSION GROUP

•
by

Garold Ray Wagner

Advisor: Robert G. Peck

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE IMPACT OF SHORT-TERM MISSIONS ON THE PARTICIPANTS OF
THE BERKSHIRE MISSION GROUP

Name of researcher: Garold Ray Wagner

Name and degree of faculty chair: Robert G. Peck, D.Min.

Date completed: March 2008

Problem

The face of missions is changing. While regular mission service (long-term) is still very much needed and extant, it no longer dominates the missions landscape. Fewer people are being sent to third-world or developing countries from North America to serve long term for positive reasons. There has been, however, an explosion in the number of people traveling to other countries for short terms and very short terms. While focus has shown that teens and young adults are positively impacted, no study has shown the impact on people of all age groups who go for this type of service.

Method

An anonymous questionnaire was sent to persons who participated in short-term mission trips with the Berkshire Mission Group (BMG), a group organized by the Berkshire Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lanesboro, Massachusetts. This investigator has traveled with the BMG on five of its overseas projects to date. The results from this instrument along with research from published and unpublished material was used to determine if short-term mission trips have a negative, neutral, or positive impact on the participants in the areas of spiritual development, commitment to God, and possible mission service.

Results

Short-term mission trips have been shown to make a positive impact on people of all ages who go on them. This impact is both perceived by the participants in all age groups over eighteen, as well as visible in the empirical data available from the Seventh-day Adventist Church and agencies affiliated with it.

Conclusions

Short-term mission trips should continue to be taken by people in all age groups. Their impact on the church at every level should be monitored to develop strategies to improve the impact on sending churches, those who go, churches or people in receiving locations, and communities in receiving locations. The organized church should encourage and facilitate these trips, while maintaining them as primarily lay-driven activities.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE IMPACT OF SHORT-TERM MISSIONS ON THE PARTICIPANTS
OF THE BERKSHIRE MISSION GROUP

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Garold Ray Wagner

March 2008

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The face of missions is changing. The last three decades have seen reductions in the number of regular service missionaries serving the world field from the North American Division (NAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist (Adventist) Church.¹ In 1979 approximately 796² such missionaries worked abroad for regular terms of service to the church. Gradually, the numbers have declined until in 2004 there were only approximately 500.

The decline is not because the missionaries are not needed, or because they have not been requested. Matthew Bediako, the Secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists reported, “The fact is, we have so many positions for missionaries, but they are not funded.”³ This makes it impossible to send them. It has

¹Dian K. Lawrence, Assistant Secretary, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists by email, September 20, 2005. Data in appendix A.

²Doug Clayville, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Secretariat, telephone interview by author, January 24, 2006. Reports that the “Active Interdivision Employees” figures given in September 21, 2005 Statistics Report includes spouses of missionaries which are also employed, but not spouses which are not employed and simply accompany their spouse. He calculated that to compensate for this, of the 982 listed in 2004, approximately 500 (or fifty-one percent) is the number of missionary units and/or couples sent.) If the posted numbers are used, the decline was from 1,561 to 982.

³Matthew Bediako, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Secretariat, telephone interview by author, November 9, 2006.

necessitated that the number of missionaries sent be “reduced to be realistic”⁴ according to the funding available.

This decline in the number of regular or long-term missionaries has been paralleled and even surpassed by the growth of a new breed of missionaries known as short-term missionaries. A short-term missionary is one who will serve from a few days to as long as two years. During the above-mentioned period of decline in the number of interdivision missionaries (those traveling from one administrative division of the world church to another for service), the number of short-term missionaries has grown from only one in 1959⁵ to approximately 70,000 in 2005.⁶ The exact number is impossible to know because individuals, local church groups, and new start-up groups often do not report their activities to any recording organization. Across the board, the short-term missionary movement is considered to be one of the most powerful forces mobilizing new missionaries today.⁷

By their very nature, short-term missionaries are different in many ways from long-term or regular missionaries. Short-term missionaries are volunteers who in most cases pay their own way to the field to work. They rarely receive specific training for the

⁴Ibid. When asked, “Why has funding dropped?” Dr. Bediako’s response was that the “drastic” drop was due to not having been promoted adequately in the field, and that the “churches are looking at their own needs.” When asked whether short-term mission might have been responsible for the drop, he said, “We haven’t studied it.” He added that when the North Pacific Union embraced a program of sending large numbers of short-term missionaries to Russia, it “did not diminish mission giving” there.

⁵Lawrence, email.

⁶Jose Vincente Rojas, “Adventist Volunteer Ministries Network,” <http://hesaidgo.org> (January 24, 2006).

⁷Russell L. Penney, ed., *Overcoming the World Missions Crisis: Thinking Strategically to Reach the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001), 304.

task to which they are assigned. The short-term volunteer does not study the language or the culture to which they travel to the extent of the regular missionary. By the very limitations of the length of their stay, a short-term missionary cannot develop broad-based, deep relationships with the local people. This work addresses the impact on the short-term missionary and cannot resolve these issues, but recognizes the need for them to be dealt with.

Most short-termers are not necessarily “called” by the General Conference Secretariat or mission sending board. Some are also sent to their field of service by independent organizations such as Maranatha Volunteers International,⁸ conference sponsored organizations such as Share Him⁹ (formerly Global Evangelism), or local church organizations such as Berkshire Mission.¹⁰ Also of note is the work of volunteers of all ages in relief efforts, such as those for the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the US Gulf Coast in 2005.

The impact of short-term missions on participants (those who go) has been documented recently in a Ph.D. dissertation¹¹ by Troy E. Fitzgerald. His work dealt only with the impact on young adults through the student missionary program. Short-term missions, however, has not been limited to young adults. Facilitating organizations¹²

⁸1600 Sacramento Inn Way, Suite 116, Sacramento, CA 95815.

⁹Carolina Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2701 East W. T. Harris Blvd, Charlotte, NC.

¹⁰Berkshire Hills Adventist Church, P. O. Box 2959, Pittsfield, MA 01202.

¹¹Troy E. Fitzgerald, “The Student Missionary Experience and Its Impact on Young Adults” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2005).

¹²The term “facilitating organizations” is used because these are not technically “sending organizations,” as they do not pay to send missionaries to their field of labor,

have been sending people of all ages, from as young as four years to ninety years.

Fitzgerald's work, together with that of Donna Habenicht, worked only with college-aged students. No research has been published by Seventh-day Adventist entities regarding the impact of short-term mission on adults.

Purpose of the Dissertation

Berkshire Mission is a locally based voluntary organization which seeks to "relieve the suffering of our fellow man."¹³ It was organized in 1999 by Bob Young, a member of the Berkshire Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lanesboro, Massachusetts.¹⁴ Under Mr. Young's direction, the group has traveled to Central and South America six times to conduct programs to assist the people and churches of those countries. The work of the group covered construction, medical, dental, optical, evangelism, and community services.

No work was done at the Berkshire Hills Church to determine attitudes of the church before mission trips began in 1999, therefore it is difficult to determine, other than with anecdotal evidence, the actual impact on the church as a whole. It is, however, possible to evaluate the impact on those who go on the trips. This project has been developed to determine the impact of participating in short-term missions on those who are short-term missionaries.

nor are they officially connected to the administrations in the receiving countries as would be the Secretariat to the church leadership in receiving countries.

¹³Berkshire Hills Seventh day Adventist Church, "Welcome to Berkshire Mission!," <http://www.berkshireremission.org> (January 26, 2006).

¹⁴This researcher was involved in the organization of the Berkshire Mission program and has traveled on most of their trips.

With the number of church members traveling on these trips, the amount of time, money, and effort being expended on them, and the potential impact for good or for the harm on the work of God around the world, such a study is necessary.

This work will seek to qualify the impact which short-term mission service, such as that conducted by the Berkshire Mission group, has on the people who participate in that service. It will study factors of short-term missions that impact the participants of short-term missions, and make suggestions on improving the impact of future short-term mission trips.

Justification for the Dissertation

The number of regular, or long-term missionaries serving the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide in inter-division positions is on a steady decline, but the number of people participating in short-term mission trips is growing rapidly.

Anecdotal evidence points to both the positive and negative potential impact on those who participate in these trips.

Impact on college-age young adults (student missionaries) has been evaluated, but the impact on the general population of the church which participates has not.

Definition of Terms

To understand the terms used, it is not sufficient to know only how the dictionary defines them. In the field of short-term missions, there is much variation, or lack of consensus, on the exact definitions. Therefore, the dictionary definition of some terms will be supplemented by that of writers in the field, and resolved by a compilation which will be used for this work.

Mission: “Ministry commissioned by a religious organization 1a: the act or an instance of sending 2a; a ministry (as preaching or educational or medical work) commissioned by a church or some other religious organization for the purpose of propagating its faith or carrying on humanitarian work. B: assignment to or work in a field of missionary enterprise.”¹⁵

“The etymology of the English word ‘mission’ dates [to] 1606 A.D. from Latin words such as MISSIO (a letting go, sending way, or a release from captivity, setting at liberty, liberation) or MITTERE from the Latin root MITTO (to cause to go, let go, send, to send off, dispatch, or to send word, announce, tell, report anything to any one.”¹⁶

Stephen Gaukroger is very specific with his definition:

Mission involves all that God sent His people in the world to do, to quote John Stott. This includes telling people about God in a way they can understand, . . . wanting people to have access to a local worshiping community and at least some of the Bible in their own language, . . . wanting hunger to be alleviated and disease to be minimized . . . wanting freedom from torture, oppression and war, . . . wanting to make disciples of Jesus Christ, . . . wanting the whole world to receive the benefits of being part of the kingdom of God, . . . wanting God’s will to be done on earth, as it is in heaven. This is mission.”¹⁷

Missions is simply defined as “organized missionary work: a body of persons appointed to go somewhere to perform a service or carry on an activity.”¹⁸

¹⁵Philip Babcock Gove, ed., *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*, Unabridged (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1993), 1445.

¹⁶Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission* (Minneapolis, MN: STEMPress, 2003), 43.

¹⁷Stephen Gaukroger, *Your Mission, Should You Accept It-- An Introduction for World Christians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 44.

¹⁸Gove, 1445.

Missionary: "1. Of or relating to missions a. One sent to propagate the faith, doctrine, and principles of a religion or a religious group among nonbelievers b. one who undertakes a special religious or humanitarian mission among those of his own faith or country."¹⁹

The term creates different images for Christians than for non-Christians. Without the benefit of literary definitions, some will consider the missionary to be an emissary of colonial indulgence, reaching into new lands to subdue the belligerent tribes, allowing financial exploitation. To others they could represent the advance guard of military invasions. According to Gaukroger, 'missionary' could evoke "images from a colonial past: tea on a wooden veranda, with a black houseboy standing by; pith helmets, khaki shorts and natives with bundles on their heads."²⁰

Some place an additional qualifier to be a missionary—that of being sent across one or more cultural boundaries (of language, geography, or society)²¹ to witness for Christ.²² Hale looks at it from a vastly different perspective. To him, a missionary is not a person who wakes up in a foreign country or is out for a joy ride or for adventure. Rather, "you are a missionary only insofar as you are obedient to a call."²³ For this work, a missionary is a person who leaves their own personal surroundings and goes to provide

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Gaukroger, 39.

²¹Ibid., 41.

²²Thomas Hale, *On Being a Missionary* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 8.

²³Ibid.

a service to another or others, which service is directly or indirectly for the purpose of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Term: “a limited or definite extent of time: the time for which something lasts”²⁴

In the case of missions, ‘term’ is the length of time a missionary serves in mission. A ‘regular term’ may be two to six years, and may extend for a lifetime. ‘Short-term,’ is more difficult to pin down. There is great disparity in the understanding of this word.

Various segments of the mission community are each defining ‘short-term’ primarily by their own personal, non-integrated experience and observation.²⁵

While Thomas Hale calls it three months to three years,²⁶ Russell L. Penney defines short-term as ranging from one week to two years.²⁷ Complicating this picture, Hale calls those who stay less than three months “very short-termers.”²⁸ To overcome this problem, Mack and Leeann Stiles sidestep the time element and contrast the short-term missionary’s on-field time commitment against the traditional long-term career missionary’s on-field time commitment, by suggesting the use of the word, temporary.²⁹

²⁴Gove, 2358.

²⁵Peterson, 66.

²⁶Hale, 22.

²⁷Penney, 305.

²⁸Hale, 24.

²⁹J. Mack Stiles and Leeann Stiles, *Mack & Leeann’s Guide to Short-Term Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 121.

This work will define short-term as one week to two years.

A goer is “one that goes.”³⁰ In missions, this is a person who leaves home to travel to another place to serve.

Limitations of the Dissertation

This project is limited to a focus on the impact on non-age-specific participants of short-term mission service. It cannot effectively deal with the impact on the local church which sends them, the people who do not go, the local church in the country to which the group travels, nor the community where the group serves. Those issues should be studied by other researchers.

Methodology

In order to evaluate and understand the research, current literature will be reviewed, including books and articles on the philosophy of missions, the reasons for the changes in the face of missions in recent history, and the impact on those who go. Data will be presented from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists pertaining to trends in regular and short-term missions.

After traveling on a short-term mission trip, participants will be asked to voluntarily complete a survey comprised of questions that seek to qualify each person’s view of their experience before, during, and after the mission trip. A survey will be given to participants in the short-term mission trip of the Berkshire Mission group. This survey will be evaluated to determine the impact short-term mission trips have made on the participants. The Berkshire Mission group was selected because of this researcher’s

³⁰Gove, 974.

involvement to help organize and assist the group with the planning and supervision of several short-term mission trips. Home base for the group is the Berkshire Hills Adventist Church in Lanesboro, Massachusetts, where the researcher was pastor for seven years.

Overview of the Project

Chapter 2 will consider patterns of mission, including the development of short-term missions within and outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In chapter 3, the biblical foundation for short-term mission will be established. It will be seen that although acceptance of the concept of short-term missions may be new to us, the concept itself has been present since Old Testament times.

The survey which was used to evaluate the impact of short-term missions on the participants of the Berkshire Mission group is found in chapter 4.

Recommendations will be made in chapter 5 to lead to a greater positive impact on the participants as well as the local people being ministered to.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF PATTERNS OF MISSIONS

The history of missions is well established in other works and does not need to be reviewed here. The development of short-term missions, however, does require attention. Short-term missions have always been a part of the missionary scene. Famous short-term missionaries include Jonah, Peter, and Paul, among many. Their names evoke their missions to specific places to do specific tasks for short periods of time.

During the Christian era, missions became the domain of professionals supported by moneyed people or organizations. Among these sending agencies were primarily the church and missions boards.

“William Carey, the father of modern missions, published his five ‘Clear Convictions’ back in 1792 as he established the first missionary society in India.” The last of his ‘Convictions’ is that “new mission societies must be created in every denomination.”¹ Thus the reformation of the church was carried into the realm of missions. This created a dramatic increase in the number and extent of missions around the world. This change in missions during the transition of the world from the Dark Ages to Modernism may actually have been a signal to us that a similar change would ensue

¹David C. Forward, *The Essential Guide to the Short Term Mission Trip* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1998), 26.

during the transition from Modernism to Post-modernism. This will be discussed in greater detail later.

The most recent development in mission-sending organizations is what Stiles describes as a Local Society created within a given church for the expressed purpose of specializing in cross-cultural mission for that church. This particular society remains under the full control of the given church.² This describes Berkshire Mission. This trend has expanded dramatically, as was discussed in chapter 1.

A major part of the trend is that in order to send a large number of people, short-term missions is sending lay non-professionals. Stiles defends this practice as being biblical,³ which will be argued in chapter 3. Another trend is that, increasingly, missionary teams are becoming multi-cultural.⁴

Some of the best foreign missionaries are people in their retirement years. There is no age limit on God's call. Furthermore, maturity is something the foreign mission field needs desperately.⁵

Pros and Cons to Short-Term Missions

The discussion on short-term missions is exhaustive. Everyone remotely related to the concept has an opinion as to its appropriateness or lack thereof. In order to restrict the discussion to those actually involved in this endeavor, there are four groups which

²Stiles, 90, 91.

³Ibid., 198.

⁴Levi Keidel, *Conflict or Connection: Interpersonal Relationships in Cross-Cultural Settings* (Wheaton, IL: Evangelical Missions Information Service, 1996), 17.

⁵Hale, 7.

need to be considered to determine whether short-term missions are effective. They are: (1) the sending entity; (2) the goer-participants; (3) the receiving host field facilitator participants; and (4) the receiving host, or intended receptor participants.⁶ Evaluating the impact of short-term missions on all these groups is too broad in scope for this project. The impact on the goer-participants will be dealt with. Nonetheless, the effects of a short-term mission project on all these groups will factor into the impact on the goer. These issues need to be recognized if one wants to develop projects to positively impact all the groups.

Russell Penney sees significant strengths of short-term missions, but also sees potential weaknesses that raise both serious concerns and criticisms.⁷ Among the weaknesses are the following.

Cons

From the outset, some decry short-term missions as evidence of a shift “from the rational, objective, and textual approach to doctrine and practice to the mystical, subjective, and experimental.”⁸ In other words, post-modern culture is infecting missions instead of missions overcoming the culture. The concern is that the modern missions movement will lose its worldwide impact and melt away into apostasy.⁹

In addition, there will always be a concern about the money used to send and support short-term missionaries and their projects. Some will say that money for short-

⁶Stiles, 94.

⁷Penney, 314.

⁸Ibid., 19.

⁹Ibid., 15.

term missions is a drain on the financial support given to career missionaries. Others suggest that when it comes to the finances raised to fund short-term missions, it would be better stewardship to send the money to the field instead of sending the workers.¹⁰

Another obstacle at the level of the sending entity occurs primarily when that agency is a local church. David Forward writes that if a mission program is begun in your church, "you should be prepared for people whom you held in the highest esteem to challenge your deeds."¹¹ His caution has proven insightful in the case of the Berkshire Mission Group.

There are wrong reasons as to why people go on short-term mission trips. Going for the purpose of building group unity, giving little attention to actually helping the ministry in the field is one of those.¹² Penney is adept at pointing out the difficulties.

Some teams might show up on the field with proper motives but inadequate preparation. Perhaps they had no chance to meet together beforehand. Such groups might be sincere but lack the cohesiveness that develops through team preparation; they are prone to interpersonal difficulties and lack of focus. They may have little awareness of the need for cross-cultural sensitivity and thus unknowingly offend nationals and give negative impressions of Christianity.¹³

Without proper training in the particular activity being conducted, the efforts of short-terms may not be strategically important.¹⁴ Lack of preparation by the volunteers may be caused by their failure to see that their role in many settings is to encourage,

¹⁰Ibid., 317.

¹¹Forward, 21, 22.

¹²Penney, 315.

¹³Ibid., 315, 316.

¹⁴Ibid., 336.

assist, and strengthen the national church.¹⁵ Penney is not alone in pointing out the problems. Donna Habenicht points out built-in limitations which probably mean that less is expected, so productivity is consequently lower.¹⁶ Also, since volunteers often tackle projects for which they have little or no training or experience, they may get themselves hurt in the process.¹⁷

Since short-termers do not master the language, their spiritual ministry is often limited. They can tend to be disruptive to the work being done, do the work poorly, and become frustrated and disillusioned. In their struggles, they may criticize missionaries and sow the seeds of conflict.¹⁸

Many short-term mission trips are planned without anyone from the team traveling to the field of service to check out the geographical and political situations, the work to be done, or the facilities, services, transportation, equipment or supplies available for the task. Even when people do check out everything for themselves, they may fail to account for the fact that things change, and that the reality of a given situation may not be the same as the perception.

When things go wrong, the local host-leaders on the site may be blamed whether they are at fault or not. This causes friction and dissatisfaction.¹⁹ A team, or just a single

¹⁵Ibid., 317.

¹⁶Donna Habenicht, "A Descriptive Study of the Personality, Attitudes, and Overseas Experience of Seventh-day Adventist College Students Who Served As Short-term Volunteer Missionaries" (Ed.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1977), 39.

¹⁷Michael J. Anthony, ed. *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 57.

¹⁸Hale, 23.

¹⁹Penney, 316.

team member may act as if they have come to be the 'great problem solver from North America.' This attitude could poison the perception of all the project hosts as well as the community around the project, causing long-term problems between the host and their community.

The dignity of the community is also at stake here. When a group arrives and does all the work on a project, local workers may be deprived of the work by which to support their families. Some believe that better stewardship requires just sending the money for the project which would have been spent on the travel.²⁰ This brings us to the very real concern that some short-termers are simply 'experience junkies' who seek adventure.²¹ This could be a problem for modernists as well as post-modernists.

Critics are also concerned that some will use their two weeks of service to ease their evangelical conscience or appease their denominations and consider themselves free to do what they want thereafter.²²

These objections may seem to overwhelmingly preclude the viability of short-term missions. Add to this that Thomas Hale believes that if a person is not interested in serving as a missionary in a long-term capacity, he/she should not get involved in short-term mission service.²³ However, the other side of this picture needs to be seen.

²⁰Anthony, 58.

²¹Penney, 315.

²²Ibid.

²³Hale, 24.

Pros

It was determined to place the Pros after the Cons in order to emphasize them. This researcher has found both the written arguments and the experience of short-term missions to be heavily weighted in favor of their continuation.

Proper personal motive appraisal, spiritual and cultural preparation, trip and project planning, and careful pre-trip evaluations can make the short-term mission trip a positive experience for everyone involved. Short-term missions also tend to give the team members a burden for people for whom the work is done.²⁴ Those who go gain a more realistic view of the work which still needs to be done around the world and gives them a vision for missions.²⁵ To Hale, the greatest benefit of these programs is not to the field, but to short-termers and their home church.²⁶ Such a trip instills in a congregation a healthy sense of pride in their church.²⁷

Peterson puts the benefits in pragmatic terms for the work and the worker. Short-term mission “allows swift, immediate response by any believer; allows temporary engagement by Christian people not called, or not yet called, into full-time professional ministry (realistically, that’s the overwhelming majority of the church); allows lay non-professionals opportunity to perform what God commands of all disciples; provides

²⁴Tim Gibson et al., eds., *Stepping Out: A Guide to Short-Term Missions* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 1992), 25.

²⁵Penney, 314.

²⁶Hale, 24.

²⁷Forward, 38.

repetitive deployment opportunities to lay non-professionals to on-field locations; and is a Biblically-solid, theologically-correct response to God (i.e., God-commanded).”²⁸

Rather than getting in the way of regular missionaries, the short-termer has been found to enhance the work of regulars. Teams of young people have been known to develop more interests in a month than a regular missionary could find in five years, thus accelerating the impact of the missionary.²⁹ This leads to the Gospel of Jesus Christ being proclaimed more efficiently. These short-termers don’t generally suffer the burnout and emotional fatigue experienced by the regular missionaries because they are not in the field long enough for this to be a problem.

Gibson and others are convinced that this kind of work will strengthen the faith of the mission team members, encourage them into service in other areas of church life, and enhance the church’s reputation in the community as a place that is caring and does fulfilling activities.³⁰ Even ordinary non-professionals can become involved.³¹

The money issue has another side as well. Concern that the money for short-term missions may be drawn from what might have been given for regular missions is what Greg Livingstone calls the ‘limited-pie theory.’³² This theory has not been tested, much less proven. Anecdotal recollection of the missions offering at the Berkshire Hills

²⁸Peterson, 16.

²⁹Gibson, 24.

³⁰Ibid., 41.

³¹Penney, 306.

³²Greg Livingstone, “Does it Work? Why Short Terms Cause More Good Than Harm,” in *Stepping Out: A Guide to Short Term Missions*, eds. Tim Gibson, Steve Hawthorne, Richard Krekel, and Kn Moy (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 1992), 23, 24.

Church is that it did not change after the mission trips began. This observation was confirmed by the treasurer of the Berkshire Hills Adventist Church, sponsor and home church of the Berkshire Mission group.³³ Of course, this one example does not disprove the theory either.

The availability of money for missions in comparison to other aspects of ministry has long been a point of contention. Some time before 1901, Ellen White wrote, “The home missionary work will be farther advanced in every way when a more liberal, self-denying, self-sacrificing spirit is manifested for the prosperity of foreign missions; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off.”³⁴ Whether it follows that the prosperity of regular missions is actually being affected by short-term missions is not yet definite.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance, whose member churches support more than 1,100 missionaries in 60 nations, has seen the proportion of giving designated to missions drop from 14.7 percent in 1983 to 11.1 percent in 1995.³⁵ This may be due not so much to the fact of short-term missions, but to the same post-modern factors that may have been responsible for igniting the short-term missions explosion.

After observing the fund-raising activities of numerous short-term mission groups, and being acquainted with the giving habits of many Christians, this researcher

³³Jane Douglass, treasurer of the Berkshire Hills Adventist Church, telephone interview by author, March 27, 2007.

³⁴Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 6:27.

³⁵Forward, 36. The reason for this drop may be due to an aging donor base that is not being replaced by younger supporters.

strongly questions whether the same efforts would ever have been made to support the regular missions offerings of the church. This suggests that the funding for short-term missions comes from a completely separate 'pot' than that of regular missions. It uses funds that would never have been offered to regular missions. The financial resources of each short-term trip are sure because the needs and availability have been determined before the trip.

The specific type of project carries its own pros and cons for those who go and can be divided into two general categories. There are relational projects such as evangelism and training, and construction projects that build churches and schools. Relational ministries provide the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of a host culture,³⁶ perhaps see a person come to faith in Christ,³⁷ and in the process, build lasting bonds.³⁸ This type often requires additional language and culture³⁹ training needed to work effectively in a cross-cultural interpersonal ministry, but unfortunately increases the potential for interpersonal conflicts.⁴⁰

Construction projects have a different set of constraints. They may insulate the volunteer from the host culture with an eye to just getting the job finished. While it is easy for people to be trained on-the-job, it may also increase the possibility of injury. Construction projects add to the cost of a mission trip and may hinder the dignity and

³⁶Penney, 323.

³⁷Anthony, 59.

³⁸Penney, 323.

³⁹Anthony, 60.

⁴⁰Ibid., 324.

economy of the local community by doing the work which local workers might have done, had the foreign team not come to do it.⁴¹

The benefits of construction projects are that they are measurable (you know when you are done), almost anyone can participate in some aspect, and they allow for people who may feel threatened by interpersonal or evangelism-type projects to feel needed.⁴²

The ideal project might be one which combines construction with relational ministry. This is the format used by Berkshire Mission, as will be seen in chapter 4. To do so combines the pros of the two types of ministry while eliminating some of the disadvantages. It also may tend to appeal more to the host community, leading them to become more receptive to the group's spiritual message.⁴³

Seventh-day Adventist Regular Missions from 1970 to 2005

The North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church supported a total of 1,378 regular missionaries in 1970.⁴⁴ Of these, 761 were working missionaries and 617 were spouses with no special assignment. Since that time, the numbers have fluctuated, but by 2005 had dropped to 405 regular missionaries. Of these, 312 were working missionaries and 93 were spouses with no special assignment. Other than the statement by Bediako on the reduction of the number of missionaries for the sake of

⁴¹Penney, 323.

⁴²Anthony, 56.

⁴³Penney, 324.

⁴⁴Lawrence, telephone interview by author, March 28, 2007.

budget, there seems to be no inclination on the part of the Church to understand the contributing factors for the trend. This is an area that needs to be evaluated.

In the Adventist Church worldwide, from 1975 to 2005, while per capita tithe rose by eleven percent, giving to world missions plunged precipitously to only about nineteen percent of the original figure.⁴⁵ When asked whether this drop, which coincides with the sharp increase in numbers of people participating in volunteer and short-term missions, Steve Rose, the under-treasurer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists responded, “I don’t know if there is hard data to show any relation between the trends. There is some anecdotal evidence to show this. Some local churches show that after mission trips, giving has grown. There is probably some relationship, but it is more likely that we haven’t done a good job of telling of the need to show a turnaround in missions giving.”⁴⁶ Rose looked positively to the future, stating, “Long-term impact may show kids to be more committed to supporting missions.”

This statement of hope highlights the need for careful observation. Not only is giving to missions down in this time period, but so is another institutional giving bellwether—Harvest Ingathering.⁴⁷ Perhaps Ingathering seems outside the bounds of the present study, but there may be some connection, which will be mentioned and then left

⁴⁵General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives & Statistics, “Annual Statistical Report for 2005,” http://www.adventistarchives.org/doc_info.asp?DocID=25682 (March 27, 2007), 87.

⁴⁶Steve Rose, Under-Treasurer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, in a private telephone interview, October 26, 2006.

⁴⁷The drop from \$8,968,549.19 in 1982 to \$4,397,278.01 in 1996 represents a nearly 51 percent decline, according to a May 22, 1997 report by John M. Stephenson, received by fax from the North-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, September 26, 2005.

to other researchers. During the development of the postmodern era on our way to the post-Christian era, functions within the church, which seem to be 'institutional' in nature such as regular missions, giving to regular missions, evangelism, and Harvest Ingathering (there may be others), may be getting passed over by those coming of age since 1970. At the same time these same people may be more convicted on issues and functions for which their interest and responsibility is more personal, such as tithe and short-term missions. If that is the case, how should the church be presenting the Gospel and missions to gain this generation's allegiance? The answer is far too broad for this work to address.

Non-SDA Short-Term Missions in North America

Many Christian denominations as well as non-denominational organizations in North America have taken advantage of the trend to provide opportunities for those desiring short-term service. It is impossible, as well as unnecessary to report on all these organizations, but one can get an idea of the popularity of short-term service by reviewing a few facts.

One organization, Campus Crusade for Christ, began in 1951. By 2001 they reported 125,506 short-term volunteers during that year.⁴⁸ In 1996, the members of Southern Baptist churches alone sent more than 75,000 short-termers and 81,000 volunteers.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Stiles, 244.

⁴⁹Forward, 13, 14.

By 2000, Stiles' estimate of the number of short-termers sent out globally every year was at least one million.⁵⁰ It is believed that there are at least forty thousand sending organizations in North America alone, but some believe that this overall estimate is far too conservative. Other authors and organizations seem hesitant to give an overall figure.

Seventh-day Adventist Short-Term Missions in North America

Marlin Mathiesen was chosen to be a student missionary from Columbia Union College to Mexico during the summer of 1959.⁵¹ This was the beginning of the student missionary program and the present short-term missions trend among Seventh-day Adventist teens and young adults in North America.

Mack and Leeann Stiles lists Adventist student missions as one of seven mission groups active in the beginnings of modern-day short-term missions.⁵² Growth was undertaken with caution in the early years⁵³ and has resulted in thousands of students having served in this capacity.

According to José Rojas, Director of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventist Volunteer Ministries, over 70,000 missionary volunteers or short-term

⁵⁰Stiles, 255.

⁵¹Habenicht, 8.

⁵²Stiles, 245.

⁵³The figures provided to Dr. Habenicht by the General Conference Youth Department in her table 3, page 11 are challenged. Specifically, under Union College, the figures for 1970-72 are known to be inaccurate. In 1971, only 2 student missionaries were sent. The table reports 13. This researcher was one of only 4 student missionaries sent in 1972. The table reports 10. It is not known whether other figures are incorrect.

missionaries served in 2006.⁵⁴ Service was in many different programs through church and para-church organizations. This increase over the one person reported in 1959⁵⁵ while laudable is likely only a guess, as many who serve are never reported. Even those organizations which encourage short-term missions⁵⁶ have not been able or willing to give this researcher estimates of the number of people who have served through their organizations.

Reported Impact on Short-Term Missionaries

The many challenges and potential problems of short-term missions as stated above require that there be proven positive benefits to those involved. Writing about student missionaries, Habenicht reported that her subjects went to the field and returned with very favorable attitudes toward missions.⁵⁷ In addition, their service seems to have strengthened religious commitment, aided growth toward personal maturity, and encouraged the participants to make a commitment to lifetime missionary service.⁵⁸ This may be because they were forced during their service to humble themselves and depend on God⁵⁹ and other Christians⁶⁰ more than ever before as they confronted the unfamiliar.

⁵⁴Jose Rojas, "Join the Volunteer Network in North America!" March 2007, <http://www.hesaidgo.net> (March 27, 2007).

⁵⁵Lawrence, email.

⁵⁶Specifically, Maranatha Volunteers International and Share Him.

⁵⁷Habenicht, Abstract.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Penney, 312.

⁶⁰Ibid., 310.

Bediako believes that this trend of an expanding role for short-term missions is positive, stating that “short-term missionaries become long-term missionaries,”⁶¹ although there is no tracking done to prove that this is actually happening within Adventism.⁶² Bediako is not, however, the only one to suggest this benefit. Penney supports him⁶³ and Hale adds that short-termers usually become better Christians and their churches become rejuvenated⁶⁴ to focus on others outside the church.⁶⁵

Additional areas of impact reported by short-term goers are: developing a sense of unity with Christian brothers and sisters in a foreign land, developing practical ministry leadership and vocational skills, gaining a fresh sense of contentment and joy from serving others, building faith in God, gaining an appreciation and interest in people of other cultures, and decreasing ethnocentric attitudes.⁶⁶

Gonzales reports that within Adventist short-term missions “the people that often show the most lasting impact are those who go on the longer mission trips especially to the highland area of Asia (Cambodia, Vietnam, India, Thailand). They continue to send money and materials” after their return.⁶⁷

⁶¹Bediako. When asked how many or what percentage of our present regular or long-term missionaries served previously as short-term missionaries, he responded, “We don’t have any figures on that.”

⁶²Clayville, email.

⁶³Penney, 307.

⁶⁴Hale, 24.

⁶⁵Penney, 309.

⁶⁶Ibid., 310-314.

⁶⁷Caesar Gonzales, office staff of the Adventist Volunteer Ministries Network, private telephone interview, January 24, 2006.

Potential Factors in Change

What has brought about this dramatic change in the face of missions? Have people always had an interest in serving the Lord cross-culturally? Has there always been a need for more people to work than have been able to go? “Throughout biblical history God has called living, breathing people to immerse themselves in (the) plan”⁶⁸ to go into all the world. Increasingly people see themselves as ‘World Christians,’ recognizing that they are part of the global family of humankind.⁶⁹ In addition, there are external changes which have pushed this trend.

Peterson warns that “it would be dangerous to try to come to any definite conclusions on influences that ‘created’ the modern short-term mission movement.”⁷⁰ The influences might not be as lofty in nature as those already suggested. Among them might be post-World War II young people, experienced in world-wide travel and with a global perspective; improvements in the air travel industry; President John Kennedy’s 1960 launch of the Peace Corps; and the development of the internet.⁷¹ The Stiles seem to point to the changing of the culture (to postmodernism) as a reason for the growth of short-term missions. “We desire our relationship with God to go beyond an academic faith; we want to have more than head knowledge in our” walk with God. We want to experience God.⁷²

⁶⁸Peterson, 16, 17.

⁶⁹Forward, 13.

⁷⁰Peterson, 253.

⁷¹Ibid., 253-254.

⁷²Stiles, 22.

One other factor exists in explaining the development of the trend of short-term missions. It is possible that the beginnings of it were simply a fad which, once having begun, grew into its own respectable movement. As with any real movement, it was grown by satisfied participants. Missions multiply as short-termers tell their story.⁷³

As important as it is to understand the contemporary influences leading to the explosion of short-term missions, it is even more important to determine whether this movement had biblical support. The next chapter will establish the foundations of short-term missions which can be traced as far back as Old Testament times.

⁷³Ron Blue, "Tell the Story: How to Communicate with Others When You Return," in *Stepping Out: A Guide to Short Term Missions*, eds. Tim Gibson, Steve Hawthorne, Richard Krekel, and Kn Moy (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 1992), 179.

CHAPTER III

A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

The topic of missions has been studied by scholars at every level. The theological authenticity of missions has been thoroughly researched and adequately reported. It is not, then, necessary for this work to duplicate or try to improve on the vast body of materials extant. What is necessary, is to show the biblical foundations of short-term missions. There are three principles that will assist in the development of a biblical understanding of short-term missions. They are: (1) missions is the calling of the church at every level and in every place; (2) short-term mission service is featured in the Old Testament and in the New Testament; and (3) God uses all believers as missionaries.

Missions Is the Calling of the Church

First, missions is not only a part of the work of the church, but is the calling of the church at every level and in every place.¹ Missions is evangelism. It is the *raison d'être* of the church. It is found in the establishment passage of the church (Matt 28:19) commanding those who believe to *go* and make disciples. God is, by nature, missionary.² This command to make more (all, if possible) people in the world to show His character

¹J. Andrew Kirk, *What Is Mission? Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 24.

²*Ibid.*, 20.

and thus be ready to spend eternity with God was not unlike the first command to man. In Gen 1:28, God said to our first parents, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” The task was given to man—to all mankind—to fill the earth with people in the image of God to whom God could show His love. In both cases, the command and the responsibility to fulfill it was given to all through our original parents. In Genesis, it was given to our physical parents, and in Matthew to our spiritual parents.

In both cases, the command to fill the earth with people in the image of God is given to all who are the descendants of the one(s) who received the command. These were physical in the case of the command to Adam to fill the earth, and spiritual in the case of the command to the disciples to make disciples. Also in both cases, with the command came the authority and the gifts or ability to fulfill the command. The authority and gifts are received in some way by every person.

In this context, *missio dei* describes God’s plan for people to share His love with others as *missio hominum* or God’s mission for mankind.³ God’s ultimate mission through all that He does is to bring glory to Himself.⁴ Isaiah 40 to 55 tells in three steps how God expected to do this through Israel.

First, the Israelites were to live according to God’s word and nature and thus be like a beacon guiding the peoples to their God in Zion. The second step is that Israel, after falling into exile and facing imminent oblivion, would be rescued by God in such a marvelous way that the Gentiles would be overwhelmingly impressed by the magnificence, might, and tender mercy of Yahweh. Consequently, they would give him praise and be drawn to him. In step three, Israel would declare to the Gentiles

³Peterson et al., 16, 17.

⁴Penney, 59.

that Yahweh alone is God and that to him, they should yield honor, worship, allegiance, and obedience.⁵

In fact, the mandate to go to the world was given not only in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament as well. God always intended Israel to communicate His grace to the nations.⁶ This can be seen clearly in three different Old Testament passages. In Gen 12:1-3, Abram was sent out of his country to be made a great nation, and through him, all the families of the earth would be blessed. In Exod 19:5-6, Israel was to be a “kingdom of priests and an holy nation (verse 6)” to all the other nations of the earth. And in Ps 67, the mercy and blessings of God on Israel would cause the nations to be glad and sing for joy (verse 4), and through the blessings on Israel, all the ends of the earth would fear Him (verse 7).

Solomon prayed (1 Kgs 8:43-53) that God would make Himself known to all the nations through two different methods. The first is not particularly missionary-minded. In verse 43, he asks that the prayer of the “stranger,” possibly a sojourner in Israel, would be heard. This would cause the stranger to become the missionary.⁷ The other method is a ‘going out’ of sorts. Solomon asked that as Israel’s people went into battle and some were captured and carried to other places, that when the captured troops returned their hearts to God, they would become witnesses to their captors (verses 47-49). This is not

⁵Bryant Hicks, “Old Testament Foundations for Missions,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 58.

⁶Walter Kaiser Jr., “Israel’s Missionary Call,” in *Perspectives On the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 26.

⁷Hicks, 56, 57.

far-fetched. In 2 Kgs 5, the “little maid” captured by Syria witnessed to Naaman about the healing power of God in Israel.

Greek etymology, also suggests the New Testament Church was built on the concept of being sent. “The Greek *apostolos* (messenger, ambassador, envoy, or an apostle) can also contain within itself the definition of ‘mission’ when used in literary Greek. In New Testament Greek, its root *apostello* literally means ‘to send forth . . . to send on service, or with a commission.’”⁸ Another noun, feminine in form, *apostole*, refers to the act of being sent, a “sending away,” or a “mission.”⁹

In Matt 28:19, 20, what is called the ‘establishment passage,’ the word “go” is not a simple command in the imperative, but a participle in the present active indicative form; its status is much more accurately translated as, ‘as you are going,’ or ‘as you go along in life.’ In other words, it is commanding God’s people to make disciples as a normal part of daily life, and do so wherever they are.¹⁰

Short-Term Missions in the Old and New Testament

Old Testament

If short-term missions is a part of the arsenal of activities which God can use to accomplish His will and make His glory known in the world, it should be possible to find examples of this kind of service throughout the Bible record. Mack and Leeann Stiles

⁸Peterson, 43.

⁹Bob Garrett, “The Gospels and Acts: Jesus the Missionary and His Missionary Followers,” in Terry, Smith, and Anderson, 65.

¹⁰Peterson, 27.

suggest that short-term mission is an often used missiological means to God's ends of increased God-glorification and worship.¹¹

Many writers give lists of these examples of short-term mission service. To qualify for the lists, it seems that the only requirement is that the occasion had to be completely conducted over a short period of time—anywhere from a matter of hours to three years. The degree to which some qualify as short-term missions, and that God was glorified through the event could be debated in some. This is not intended to be exhaustive, but simply sufficient to determine the presence of short-term missions in the Old Testament.

Table 1. Old Testament Examples of Short-Term Missions

Reference	Person(s)	Occasion	Duration
Gen 18:1-19:29	Lord and two Angels	Spoke to Abraham and destroyed Sodom	16-20 hours
Exod 3:12	Moses	Went to the Egyptian royal court to gain the release of Israel	Less than 1 year
Numb 13-14	12 Jewish Spies	Spy out the promised land	40 days
Josh 2:1-24	Two Spies	Spy out Jericho	5 days
Jonah 3:1-3	Jonah	Preached to the people of Nineveh	40 days
1 Sam 7:15-17	Samuel	Tours to cities to judge Israel	3 months per city ¹²
1 Kgs 17	Elijah	To the widow of Zarephath	3 years
2 Kgs 4:8-37	Elisha	With Shunamite family	Repetitive
Neh 2-10	Nehemiah	Rebuild Jerusalem wall	52 days

¹¹Stiles, 118.

¹²Ibid., 199-206.

It is interesting to note that Jonah is the most missionary-oriented book in the entire Bible, and represents a stinging rebuke to the way Israel had become very isolationist.¹³ Unfortunately, even prophets found reasons not to go reach out to the people God was leading them to reach. Even after Jonah saw the repentance of the Ninevites, he was more interested in a vine than the people.

New Testament

From beginning to end, the New Testament is a book of mission. It owes its very existence to the missionary work of the early Christian churches, both Jewish and Hellenistic.¹⁴ It shows that for the first time missionary fervor was actually successful and also sustained.

Table 2. New Testament Examples of Short-Term Missions

Reference	Person(s)	Occasion	Duration
Matt 2:1-12	Wise Men	To Jerusalem and Bethlehem to find Jesus	A few days to a year
John 4:3-43	Jesus	Samaritan woman at the well	2 days
Luke 9, 10	Jesus' Disciples	Sent out to preach, teach, heal	Few days at a time
Acts 10	Peter	Preached to Cornelius' house	Certain days
Acts 11:27-30	Barnabas and Saul	Relieve famine in Judea	Unknown
Acts 13, 14	Paul and Barnabas	First missionary journey	2 years ¹⁵
New Testament	Disciples	Preach	Differing lengths

¹³Hicks, 59.

¹⁴Winter and Hawthorne, 45.

¹⁵W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul* (New York: Revell, 1910), 895, 896.

The sustainability can be attributed to the success of building relationships with people in numbers sufficient to build a core group and continue the multiplication process. Jesus' disciples in conjunction with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost built momentum by winning a dedicated core. This group of 3000 and growing, when finally dispersed into all the world, was sufficient to sustain the Christian movement until our own day to one degree or another. The difference between this and the Old Testament era is that at the time God stopped his personal, regular contact with people (evening strolls in the garden), there were only two people who had enjoyed the relationship.

All Believers Are Missionaries

The third principle helps lead us to a biblical understanding of short-term missions. Missions was not intended to be a responsibility left only to the professional, full-time, ultimately trained follower of Jesus, but is the responsibility of every believer.¹⁶ Russell Penney uses 1 Cor 1:20, 21¹⁷ to say that not only those who were highly educated and experienced were used to go with the message of Jesus. Jesus sent out the twelve and the seventy-two before they fully comprehended the purpose of His incarnation for the kingdom of God.¹⁸

¹⁶Gaukroger, 52.

¹⁷“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (KJV).

¹⁸Penney, 306.

Peterson and others take this idea one step further, quoting verse 27¹⁹ to say that even the foolish, or “fools,” are used by God in missions.²⁰ Under the concept of the ministry of all the members (or priesthood of believers), all qualify as “fools” and

Table 3. List of *Fools* Used by God²¹

Passage	Person(s)	Foolishness	Ministry
Gen 9:21	Noah	Drunkard	Saved mankind from flood
Gen 11:28-31	Abram	Pagan background	Father of God's people
Exod 23:11, 12; 4:10	Moses	Murderer and slow of speech	Led God's people out of slavery
Josh 2:1	Rahab	Prostitute	Saved Israelite spies
Hosea 1:2-3	Hosea	Married prostitute	Prophet of God
1 Sam 3:1-4 2 Kgs 11:21 2 Kgs 22:1	Samuel Jehoash Josiah	Pre-pubescent boys	Prophet, Judge King King
1 Sam 16:11-13 1 Sam 11:2-17 2 Sam 6:12-20	David	Not oldest son Murderer Paraded in underwear	King
Mark 1:16	Simon Peter Andrew	Fishermen	Apostles
Matt 16:23 Luke 22:3 John 6:70-71	Peter and Judas	At times possessed by Satan	Apostles
Act 4:13	John and Peter	Uneducated and common	Apostles
John 20:24-27	Thomas	Doubter	Apostle

¹⁹“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (KJV).

²⁰Peterson, 16.

²¹Peterson, 23, 24.

everything they do for the Lord is ministry. They claim the “fools” can be described as *real* people such as those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those hungering and thirsting for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are reviled and persecuted for His sake (Matt 5:3-11).²² They point to specific people in both testaments whom they consider to be God’s fools, used in missions.

This is not a new concept for Adventists either. Ellen White taught that among the believers to whom the Great Commission was given, were many from the “humbler walks of life,--men and women who had learned to love their Lord, and who had determined to follow his example of self-denying service. To these lowly ones of but limited talent was the commission given to go “into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”²³

The intent, of course, is that God can and does use anyone. He is not restricted to use just those who might normally have been considered to be righteous enough or trained well enough to be a long-term missionary. For the disciples, being sent out two-by-two before they were completely trained was a part of their training, and part of what led them to see what God wanted to do through them.²⁴

This may be seen as a biblical mandate to restructure missions to facilitate the involvement of the average (lay) church man, woman, and young person²⁵ to enter into

²²Ibid., 17.

²³Ellen G. White, “The Great Commission; A Call to Service,” *Review and Herald*, 24 December 1910, 1.

²⁴Luke 9:1-10.

²⁵Ibid., 28, 29.

the missionary domain which was until recently dominated by long-term, well-trained persons. Caution is certainly advised that there are certain tasks that will always be restricted to the professional. These may include medical, some administrative, and technical responsibilities.

Still, if Jesus' command to the disciples (in Matt 28:19, 20) before His departure to heaven can be construed as a model, He spoke to a group of people who were still in a sorry state of preparation.²⁶ They were told to teach, baptize, and preach. The great leveler for them and for us is the promise that Jesus will be with us through the Holy Spirit when we go and obey His command.

Summary

Missions is God's way of accomplishing His purpose in the world, and at the same time exercising those who go to strengthen them at least spiritually, as well as physically, socially, morally, and emotionally. It is incumbent on the individual Christian, the local church, and the administrative levels of the church to effectively promote and participate in missions.

Short-term missions has always been around, at least since the beginning of God's intervention with mankind in Abram's life. The Old and New Testaments are both replete with examples. There seems to have always been situations in which God did not need a full-time person in place to accomplish certain responsibilities that He knew could be handled by a person less trained and serving in a temporary capacity.

²⁶James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 40.

All are called to be active in missions. None is left out: neither the young nor the old; neither the wealthy nor the poor; neither the educated nor the illiterate. All are called to witness to the existence, love, and plan of God by word and deed.

Short-term missions cannot become an excuse to claim that one's responsibility to serve God is completed for the year. Service is a full-time privilege and responsibility for the Christian. Neither can it be said that serving the local church excludes all from serving far away any more than serving for a short time far away excludes people from serving the local church. In Acts 1:8, Jesus said that the disciples would serve in Jerusalem *and* in all Judea *and* Samaria, *and* to the ends of the earth (emphasis mine). This cannot be construed that every person will serve simultaneously in each of the three fields, but that the church will. None should be ignored.

Today

As missions exhibit the signs of dramatic change, it is necessary to consider the transition of thought development toward post-modernism. Under this shift, people want to experience missions for themselves rather than pay for a surrogate to serve in the mission field. Many are extremely capable of providing needed services which benefit the field if, for no other reason, than that they free up career missionaries for their primary task.²⁷

²⁷Terry, Smith, and Anderson, 48.

New methods must be developed to meet the needs of the changing society. Our aggressive missionary work is to be more abundant than it has been in the past. All is to be done that can be done to fulfill the commission.²⁸

The world seems to be becoming more hostile to Christian missionary activities which are criticized on political, social, and religious grounds for efforts to lead people to a saving relationship with Jesus. On the other hand, mission keeps “churches from becoming inward-looking and self-absorbed—which is a good definition of putting one’s lamp ‘under a bowl’ (Matthew 5:15).”²⁹

²⁸Ellen G. White, *Sermons and Talks* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990).

²⁹Hale, 6.

CHAPTER IV

BERKSHIRE MISSION AND THE SURVEY

History and Work of Berkshire Mission

Berkshire Mission was started in 1999 by the Berkshire Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lanesboro, Massachusetts. It was the dream of Mr. Robert Young, who at that time was the head elder of the church. Together with this researcher, Mr. Young made arrangements to work with Maranatha Volunteers International to build a church in Choluteca, Honduras. This was followed by the construction of houses for hurricane victims in Amariteca (near Tegucigalpa) Honduras, the construction of a school on the hurricane-ravaged Honduran island of Guanaja, a church in Colonia Mixta, Dominican Republic, a church in Casa Grandé, Peru, and a community service center in the Valley of Angels, Honduras.

Travel, housing arrangements, and work were designed so that church families could go together.¹ Also, other Christians (and even some non-Christians) were included in many of the projects.

In order to serve a diversity of needs in the target country, several teams were included in the group such as the construction team consisting of an overall construction

¹This meant that work schedules were adjusted for children, the elderly, and mothers of children so that they could take time off for school or naps or rest. Children also had specific tasks that they could do to assist with VBS programming for children.

foreman, a block-laying foreman, a steel foreman, an electrical and plumbing foreman, and a safety foreman and their respective crews; the medical team consisting of the overall medical director, dental director, pharmacy director, and eyeglass fitting director along with their respective crews; the kitchen director and staff; evangelism director and staff; mission director, and communication director.

Every Berkshire Mission short-term mission trip is planned to gain the greatest impact on those in the local church who do not go, those in the church in the country where the group would serve, those in the community in the country where the group would serve, and those who go.

The members of the local church who do not go on the trip need, not only to feel that they are a part of the ministry of the mission trip, but to actually be part of the trip. In the Berkshire Hills Church, every member was encouraged to participate. They were contacted to pray for the trip in advance, as well as during the trip. For the early trips, certain members volunteered to pray around the clock for what was happening far away.

Others raised funds for the ministries that would be conducted during the trip. Still others prepared supplies and equipment to send and helped with the logistics.

After returning from the trip, a week-long series of meetings was conducted to review the accomplishments of the trip and to report to the local church members and community. Opportunity was given for the participants to share testimonies of what God had done. However, this review series died off for later trips seemingly due to a lack of interest among the sending church and the team.

The needs as well as the feelings of the receiving church were of great importance. Before each trip, a small party of Berkshire Mission leaders contacted the leadership of the

receiving church to make arrangements for a pre-trip. The members of this pre-trip always consisted of the mission director, Mr. Young, the pastoral leader (this researcher), and at least one other person, generally the construction director. The pre-trip group would meet with the local church leadership with the help of an interpreter, and then, with the members of the church where the project would be conducted.

The leaders and the membership would all be told that Berkshire Mission comes to them, not as great helpers from a foreign land, but as brothers and sisters interested in joining together with them to be used by God to accomplish the task He has given all of us to do. Not only must the host not be given the impression that the short-termers consider themselves in any way better or more important than the host, but this attitude must not be in the missionaries' hearts.

The entire host church must see that they hold a more important role than the missionaries. The mission group will return home after the two week burst of activity, but the hosts will have to maintain the building, live with the converts, and live up to (or live down) the reputation built in the community by their guests. If the experience does not prepare them positively for their long-term role, the impact on the host church can be negative. This is an area beyond the scope of this work, but it would be good for another study to determine the impact of short-term missions on receiving churches.

A Berkshire Mission priority has been to always visit with the local government leaders to acquaint them with the work which would be done in their community and to ask what community needs the group may be able to meet. Projects have included painting municipal buildings, constructing playgrounds, installing cement floors in local family houses, and conducting anti-drug and anti-gang education.

Since many of the projects conducted by short-term mission groups are done in smaller towns and villages, a handful of expatriates conducting themselves in inappropriate ways can quickly engender a bad reputation within the community, which the local church may have to overcome. As with other situations, a bad reputation could produce long-term difficulties.

Similarly, a disciplined group, rightly conducting themselves can create, at least for a short time, an environment in the community that benefits the efforts of the local church and its members.

Of the individuals and families who volunteer to go and serve, each person or family raises their own financial support for travel, housing, meals, and local transportation. Each one also has a specific responsibility assigned before the trip.²

At least two months before the trip, all team members are called to attend an orientation meeting at the Berkshire Hills Church. In this meeting, relevant topics are discussed, including information about the target country, its people and customs including culture, government, climate, and any known issues of concern; details of the project; travel to and within the country and how to pack for it; health issues including the food, particular diseases to be concerned with and how to prevent and deal with them; how to act among the local people, with an emphasis on acting as a helper and friend as

²This researcher was assigned the tasks of shopping for food and other supplies including building materials and equipment, medical supplies, etc., maintaining the morale of the team and leading some worship events, conducting evangelistic meetings for the community and finding ways to help the local pastor carry on with his work after the departure of the team, and some logistical support such as exchanging currency for the team.

opposed to as a conqueror or savior, and how and when to effectively give balanced help to an individual without causing a riot among the others who may be waiting for special favors; what the accommodations will be and how to be prepared for them; and what the group will do for excursions during breaks from the intense work schedule.

Description of the Survey

The survey³ was developed to determine the impact of the short-term mission experience on the people who served with Berkshire Mission. Questions were developed to discover the impact among volunteers in five different age groups from age eighteen and up, as well as the combination of all ages. While children from age four have gone on Berkshire Mission trips, the complications involved with interviewing subjects under eighteen were deemed beyond the value for this work.

There may be a difference in responses between those with little short-term mission service and those who are veterans of many trips. This, too, was isolated.

A disappointing aspect of the survey that was developed before the 2006 mission trip was that question three was written, "The coming Mission trip will be my:" Since it was not ready before the trip, it was re-written for after the trip. This question should have been changed to say, "My latest mission trip was my:"

Six people still understood the intent. This will give some basis to evaluate first-time participants. The survey was not sent to anyone who had never been on a mission trip, so it is known that those who answered "first" had to mean that their recent trip had

³See appendix B.

been their first. This prevents the results from distinguishing those who have gone on one or two mission trips. Other results remain accurate.

Question 4 dealt with the reasons why people decided to go on the trip. Questions 5 and 6 showed their feelings or concerns before going in order to have a basis to evaluate some of the aspects of impact and change.

Question 7 gives the participant opportunity to evaluate the impact of the trip on themselves in specific areas. Some based their responses to questions 5 and 6 while others based their responses on their perceived change in attitude and action since the trip.

Question 8 may be considered a subset of the survey. It primarily gives opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the Berkshire Mission organization and may also give clues to some of the impact statements.

Questions 9 through 13 are open-ended essay questions that are helpful in allowing the participants to address issues more personally and to feel more heard in the survey process.

The survey was approved by the Human Subject Review Board of Andrews University. It was sent to 85 recipients, all of whom have traveled with one or more of the Berkshire Mission trips. Each survey packet included a cover letter inviting the person to participate with the survey.⁴ If they chose to participate, they were to read the *Implied Consent* letter⁵ with instructions for returning the questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, they placed it in a white envelope labeled, "Survey for

⁴See appendix C.

⁵See appendix C.

Gary Wagner–The Impact of Short-Term Missions on the participants of the Berkshire Mission Group.” This envelope was to be sealed and placed inside another pre-addressed and stamped brown envelope. This was pre-addressed to the office of Dr. Bruce Bauer of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. When the envelope was received in the office of Dr. Bauer, the white envelope was removed from the large brown one and placed in a common envelope with all the other returned white envelopes. These were then posted back to the researcher for evaluation. The only thing that the researcher received was the white envelopes labeled to be directed to the researcher, with the completed surveys inside.

Of the 85 questionnaires that were sent out, 53, or 62 percent were returned. One was not useable, as the person responding failed to mark their consent to have their responses used for the survey.

For assistance in analyzing the surveys, the results were all typed into a web-based survey engine called Survey Monkey.⁶ Through this tool, it was possible to isolate individual categories in order to evaluate their comparisons to each other. In reporting the figures throughout this work, percentages and numbers will be listed in this manner: 42% (21). This means that of the sample being considered, forty-two percent of the people who responded to that question, responded using this answer. The number in parenthesis tells the exact number of people who gave that answer in response. Comparisons can then be made by looking at the responses to any given question and/or answer, and comparing what the people who answered that way, said to all the other questions in the survey.

⁶www.surveymonkey.com

Another tool is the *Response Average* that gives the average of how all the respondents answered the question. This approach gives a number value to each possible answer. 'Strongly Disagree' is given a point value of one, for example. 'Disagree' is two, 'Neutral' is three, 'Agree' is four, and 'Strongly Agree' is five. The number of people who responded with each answer is multiplied by the numerical value of that answer, and then divided by the total number of people who responded. (In some cases, some people chose not to respond to some questions.) The resulting quotient is the average numerical value of all the responses given to that question. A higher number reveals a greater positive response (more people answering strongly agree or agree, for example) and a lower number reveals a greater negative response (more people answering strongly disagree or disagree, for example). A change in this response average denotes a change in the views of the total number of respondents.

Analysis of the Survey

Some overall perspectives are necessary before considering the individual categories and their relationships to one another. This survey,⁷ with 52 respondents, is not large, but will give a reasonable expectation of acceptable results. Forty-nine respondents, or 94.3 percent, were 25 years old or older, making this a true window to determine the impact on a general population as opposed to a group of students only.

Forty-seven people, or 96 percent, have taken from one to ten mission trips, with the largest majority, 25 people, or 51 percent having been on from two to five trips. This makes them typical for many who go on mission trips, which means that, if other

⁷Overall results available in appendix D.

variables remain the same, the results of this study may reasonably be considered to apply to others in the same age group mixture who go on short-term mission trips.

People had numerous reasons for going on mission trips and the reasons given are encouraging. While 41 people, or 79 percent, agree or strongly agree that adventure played a role for them to go on mission trips, 42 people, or 82 percent agree or strongly agree that they went in answer to God's call to go. The largest number, all 52 agree or strongly agree that they went with a desire to serve others, and 47 people, or 90 percent agree or strongly agree that they went to experience a different culture. Only 20 people, or 40 percent, agree or strongly agree that they went to be with a friend who was going. Pressure was obviously not a reason for people to go, as only 3 people, or 6 percent agree that pressure by someone else was a factor for them.

Before the trip, only 4 people or 8 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they felt it would be too expensive. Only 8 people, or 15 percent, agreed that they worry about the safety of the trip. If someone was really concerned about either of these factors, they probably would not have gone on the trip.

Important issues for this work will be whether going on short-term mission trips leads people to change their life-interests and/or actions. Questions 6 and 7 will lead to many of these answers. Not all of them, however, will mark change, but rather a sense of their feelings after the trip. Among the respondents to this survey, fully 37 people, or 72 percent either strongly disagree, disagree, or were neutral about an interest in being a regular missionary. Fully 14 of these people, or 28 percent, agree or strongly agree that they were interested in being a regular missionary.

Responses to question 7 will give evidence of the impact of short-term mission trips on those who go. The first category is one that was not a major concern for this work, but will give an understanding of the evaluation process, showing how change can be measured. It would have been better to do two separate surveys, before and after. This may have given a more accurate picture of the feelings in those two time periods. Asking the before and after questions after the trip gives opportunity for the memory of the 'before' feelings to be altered by time and events. Notice the responses to the questions.

I feel the expense of the trip was too high compared to the experience.

Forty-four people, or 85 percent, 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' that the trip was too expensive compared to the experience. The comparison needs to be made to the number who thought it was too expensive before the trip.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	15% (9)	46% (24)	31% (16)	6% (3)	2% (1)	2.33
After	56% (29)	29% (15)	8% (4)	2% (1)	6% (3)	1.73

The first difference to be noted is that before the trip, nine people 'strongly disagreed' that the trip was too expensive. After the trip, twenty-nine gave the same response. The numbers of people who responded 'strongly disagree,' 'disagree,' and 'neutral' actually dropped from forty-nine to forty-eight, but the *Response Average* dropped from 2.33 before the trip to 1.73 after the trip. Although the view of the before group was that the expense was not too high, this is an appreciable reduction in the perception of value for the trip being too expensive.

An essay⁸ echoed one of the complaints for short-term missions published in many of the resource materials. It said, “It’s too bad we couldn’t just send the money. They would have received a lot more help.” This person ‘strongly agreed’ before and after the trip that it was too expensive. They also ‘agreed’ that they will give more money to mission projects.

I felt I was safe.

Concern for safety can also be measured before and after.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	29% (15)	35% (18)	21% (11)	15% (8)	0% (0)	2.23
After	0% (0)	2% (1)	4% (2)	61% (31)	33% (17)	4.25

The ‘before’ question was asked in a negative tone, or “I worry about safety.” The ‘after’ question was asked in the positive, “I felt safe.” To accurately evaluate the response, the ‘after’ question and its responses need to be reversed to say, “I didn’t feel safe.” This gives the responses to be:

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	29% (15)	35% (18)	21% (11)	15% (8)	0% (0)	2.23
After	33% (17)	61% (31)	4% (2)	2% (1)	0% (0)	1.71

Here, the comparison is easier to make. There was not a great concern for safety before the trip, and after the trip, it was even less of an issue than it was before.

⁸All essay responses found in appendix D.

I feel my talents were well utilized.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	0% (0)	2% (1)	13% (7)	50% (26)	35% (18)	4.17

Forty-four people, or 85 percent, believed that their talents were well used during the trip. Only one person 'disagreed.' This is probably a testament to the organization, leadership, and preparation of Mr. Young and his supervisors.

I found I had talents I wasn't aware of.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	2% (1)	8% (4)	48% (25)	33% (17)	10% (5)	3.40

Twenty-two people, or 43 percent, agreed or strongly agreed that they found that they had talents they were not aware of before the trip. This happens when they are asked to help with a different part of the project. People sometimes requested to move to different jobs so they could learn new skills or just to see what was happening on a different work site.

I feel I was asked to do things I couldn't do.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	58% (29)	34% (17)	2% (1)	6% (3)	0% (0)	1.56

Forty-six people, or 92 percent, strongly disagreed or disagreed that they were asked to do things that they could not do.

I feel better about myself.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	2% (1)	0% (0)	24% (12)	41% (21)	33% (17)	4.04

This indicator is important to the research. It reveals that 38 people, or 74 percent felt better about themselves after the trip. One essay said, "I feel that serving others in love has great benefit for the servant. God gives blessings in numerous ways to those who obey Him."

I would like to be a regular missionary.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	20% (10)	27% (14)	25% (13)	22% (11)	6% (3)	2.67
After	14% (7)	20% (10)	28% (14)	20% (10)	18% (9)	3.08

For this item, question six can be used as the 'before' response. It says, "Before going on a short-term mission trip, I considered becoming a regular missionary." Forty-seven percent, or 24 persons responded that they 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed.' This number was reduced after the trip to 34 percent, or only 17 people who 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' that they would like to become a regular missionary.

On the other hand, 28 percent, or 14 people 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' before the trip that they had considered being a regular missionary. This number rose after the trip to 38 percent or 19 people who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed.' It seems that, at least in this situation, a short-term mission trip does increase some people's desire to become a regular missionary.

I feel closer to God

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	0% (0)	0% (0)	17% (8)	42% (22)	40% (21)	4.23

This question received a very positive response. Eighty-two percent, or 43 people of the 51 who responded ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the trip(s) led them to feel closer to God. This recognition is important to a person, in that it shows that they can feel closer to God and that in doing these types of activities, they may be able to build their relationship with Him. Still, it is not tangible, in that this closeness is not measurable, or definable without other factors to be mentioned later. An essay said, “I felt a closer connection to God. I felt love and grace. I also felt very thankful for everything.” Another said, “Mission trips always serve as a spiritual boost for me!”

I feel a new commitment to serving others.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	31% (16)	69% (36)	4.69
After	0% (0)	0% (0)	14% (7)	45% (23)	41% (21)	4.27

The ‘Before’ line here comes from question four. It asked, “What factors did you consider in choosing to go on this mission trip?” The responses were for “Desire to serve others.” All fifty-two people either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that serving others was one of their driving factors to go on the trip(s). The response average of 4.69 is the highest of the survey. Some care must be taken not to misinterpret the responses to the ‘after’ question. It is not asking the person to rate their desire to serve others as did the ‘before’ question. If that were so, it would seem to indicate that there was a diminished desire to serve others after the trip. Rather, it describes a *new* commitment to serve others. Therefore, from a starting point of 4.69, 86 percent ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they had a new commitment to serve others. This might be interpreted as an even

higher commitment. Fourteen percent, or 7 people, were ‘neutral,’ meaning that their commitment did not increase from the high level where it started.

I find that my prayer life is stronger.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave
After	0% (0)	6% (3)	38% (20)	35% (18)	21% (11)	3.71

Twenty-nine people, or 56 percent, responded that their prayer life has improved after the mission trip. Prayer life is an effective indicator of the level of relationship with God.

I have a better understanding of cultural differences.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	0% (0)	2% (1)	8% (4)	44% (23)	46% (24)	4.35
After	0% (0)	4% (2)	10% (5)	44% (23)	42% (22)	4.25

The ‘Before’ line here is from question four concerning the factors considered in choosing to go on the mission trip. Specifically, it was the factor *Desire to experience a different culture*. In the ‘After’ line, 45 people, or 86 percent either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they had a better understanding of cultural differences. However, the responses are similar. Before, 1 person, or 2 percent ‘disagreed’ that they were going at least partially because of an interest in experiencing a different culture. After the trip, two people, or four percent ‘disagreed’ that they then had a better understanding of cultural differences. The rest of the responses were all within one or two people. It would be easy to generalize from these responses and say that people found what they went looking for as far as cultural experience is concerned. This could also be used,

wrongly so, to show that perhaps people who pre-test with the wrong motives or wrong interests should not be permitted on that basis to go, since they will just find what they are looking for. Deeper study disproves this hypothesis.

Responses from one person are not sufficient to develop a theory, but these responses show an interesting twist. The person who before 'disagreed' that he/she was going with a desire to experience a different culture listed his/her first reason as a desire to serve others, and the second reason as being called by God to go. After the trip, this person 'strongly agreed' that he/she had a better understanding of cultural differences. This person was strongly impacted in an area where he/she claimed to have little interest.

Of the 4 people who were neutral' on their desire to experience a different culture, 1 remained 'neutral,' 2 'agreed' that they had gained a better understanding of cultural differences, and 1 'strongly agreed.' In fact, the 2 people who reported after the trip that they 'disagreed' that they had received a better understanding of cultural differences had both responded that they 'agreed' that they were going with a desire to experience a different culture. The total after responses of those 23 people who 'agreed' that they were going to experience a different culture were as follows:

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	0% (0)	9% (2)	17% (4)	48% (11)	26% (6)	3.91

To complete this picture, of the 24 people who strongly agreed before the trip that they were going expecting to experience a different culture, their responses were possibly more predictable and less random:

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	42% (10)	58% (14)	4.58

These people did find what they were looking for, fulfilling at least that portion of their expectations of the trip. In an essay written about what they learned about other cultures, someone wrote, "They are real people with needs much like our own. They want to be loved, to be friends and to give in return to the best of their ability. It puts a face on mission work." Another wrote about the people in the country they visited, "I had a bad image of the culture as being lazy and not time-oriented at all but many are very hard working and charitable as well as loving. I'm so glad to have had my eyes opened to this fact." Several commented on how happy the people are even though they have so much less than we have.

I plan to go on more short-term mission trips.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	0% (0)	2% (1)	14% (7)	24% (12)	61% (31)	4.43

Eighty-five percent, or 43 people 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they plan to go on more short-term mission trips. For these people, it is working. The benefits, whether spiritual or emotional, are leading them to satisfaction and growth that they want to continue in. Because Berkshire Mission is a regular program, it provides for continued improvement in the program, growth in the team members, and opportunity to lead others to Christ through service.

I plan to be more involved in mission outreach at home.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	0% (0)	6% (3)	31% (16)	48% (25)	15% (8)	3.73

Comparing the Response Average of 3.73 to that of the previous question (on planning to go on more short-term mission trips) of 4.43 shows that being involved in mission outreach at home is not as appealing to this group of people as is traveling to other cultures. Perhaps it is possible to package local evangelism to be more like a mission trip, such as is done by Share Him. This may make local evangelism more appealing. Still, an encouraging 63 percent, or 33 people ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that they will be more involved in mission outreach at home.

One person responded in the essay section to the question, *What would you like to see done differently and how?* This person said, “I would like to see more follow-up in mission at the local home church level. Why go to foreign countries if we’re not willing to do evangelism at home?”

I will give more money for mission projects.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	0% (0)	2% (1)	41% (21)	45% (23)	12% (6)	3.67

This research has no way to follow-up whether people actually began giving more money for mission projects. The intent of the goers, however, is clear. Fifty-seven percent, or 29 people ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they plan to give more money.

This could be happening. The statistical report for 2006 from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists⁹ shows stagnant or declining levels of giving to the Sabbath School Mission Offerings from 1997 to 2003. Levels of giving then began an

⁹General Conference Statistics, “Total Tithes and Offerings, 2006, page 87,” http://www.adventistarchives.org/doc_info.asp?DocID=41705 (January 9, 2008).

appreciable three year increase. What is not known is the reason for the decrease nor for this recent increase. There does not seem to be a process to evaluate cause and effect for these fluctuations.

Possibly a more telling figure is the per capita giving for missions. Since 1975, it has been in free fall from \$20.79 to \$3.85 in 2004. This figure increased to \$3.98 in 2005 and to \$4.16 in 2006. The General Conference under-treasurer does not know if there is a relationship between this mission offering giving and the increases in the number of short-term missionaries.¹⁰ It is possible that a critical mass of short-term missionaries was reached, who, giving more to missions has made a turn-around in the statistics.

This giving to the church does not include the donations to other mission groups such as Berkshire Mission and Maranatha Volunteers International. Revenue for Maranatha in 2005 totaled just over \$15 million.¹¹ This may not be a totally accurate figure, but in general, the percentage of Maranatha's annual revenue which comes from people who have been on their short-term mission trips is in the 90's.¹² Add to this the \$1,000 - \$2,000 which each of the 2,500 to 3,000 people who go each year with Maranatha spend on their own trips. Mission giving is definitely on the rise.

¹⁰Steve Rose, Under-treasurer, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, telephone interview with author, October 26, 2006.

¹¹Charity Navigator, <http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=4044> (November 28, 2007).

¹²Kenneth Weiss, General Vice President, Maranatha Volunteers International, telephone interview with author, December 5, 2007.

I am a Seventh-day Adventist and I feel more positive about my church.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	0% (0)	2% (1)	21% (9)	38% (16)	38% (16)	4.12

Seventy-six percent of those who responded to this question, being Seventh-day Adventists, or 32 people, ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that being on the trip led them to feel more positive about their church.

This question and the next should not be given strong value. It is possible that there was some confusion in the wording of the two questions leading some people to not understand that they should answer one or the other. There were 19 surveys that had some kind of marking for both questions. Of these, 6 made their markings in ways that showed their obvious intention. For the others, the researcher sought to find clues within the survey to determine which of the two responses were intended. No effort was made to identify the people. Still, the evaluation of these questions cannot be considered authoritative.

One person’s essay who was neutral on this item said they “felt that many SDA’s did not live up to church standards in diet.”

I am not a Seventh-day Adventist, but have a more positive view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
After	0% (0)	22% (2)	33% (3)	44% (4)	0% (0)	3.22

The problem discussed in the previous question about the way the question was asked applies to this one as well. This is unfortunate. It would have been good to be able to evaluate the impact on non-Seventh-day Adventists. At face value, the impact on

some seems to be favorable. Four of the 9 people who responded 'agreed' that they had a more positive view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a result of the mission trip. Overall, this is not a particularly strong showing. The non-Adventists who went on the mission trips with Berkshire Mission were generally people who members in the church already had a relationship with. Their other responses on the impact of the trip on their lives and on their views of Berkshire Mission were by far more on the positive side. One might have expected these responses to be more positive. With these responses, the jury is definitely out on whether non-Adventists should be taken on Adventist mission trips.

An essay from one who describes themselves as an Adventist writes, "Non-SDA's need to be better informed as to what to expect." Another writes, "Stop watering down SDA values to make other Christians feel more comfortable. Let them experience Adventism at its best for 2 weeks." The team leadership was not aware that values were being watered down.

Question Eight

Question number 8 asks for perspective on the effectiveness or success of the Berkshire Mission team leaders to run a positive program. In all but one category, the Response Average was over the 4.00 level, or '*Agree*.' That lowest category scored a Response Average of 3.98, which is close enough to call it an '*Agree*.' This is a very strong vote of confidence in the work of Mr. Young and his leadership team of group leaders and directors. It may be that the positive impact responses of the survey participants have been strongly affected by the work of the team leaders. This is an important consideration when choosing leadership for any short-term mission trip.

Building team unity and working together effectively.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	0% (0)	6% (3)	2% (1)	39% (20)	53% (27)	4.39

Ninety-two percent, or forty-seven people, ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the Berkshire Mission team was successful at building team unity and working together effectively. This is far more than might be considered to be team loyalty. Of the three who disagreed, two had specific comments that may show the nature of their disagreement. One of these circled this very response and wrote, “This is a qualified answer. On the building site there was tremendous team unity, but other aspects of the trip, there wasn’t.” The other person who gave essay comments said, “I was not from the (Berkshire Hills) area and felt a bit on the outside. We were not introduced into the group. Felt more like an outsider. (The Berkshire team was) clickish. Not very friendly, maybe because they knew each other or maybe from the east coast.” A more prominent sentiment in the essays was that the trip was “well organized.”

Building a cultural sensitivity in the group.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	0% (0)	6% (3)	10% (5)	43% (22)	41% (21)	4.20

Eighty-four percent, or 43 people ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the Berkshire Mission group was successful at building a cultural sensitivity in the group. The 3 people who ‘disagreed’ were the same people who ‘disagreed’ with the previous question. The fact that they are so out of step with the other subjects by no means invalidates their responses, but begins to call into question what may have been going on in their lives, or what may have happened to them during the trip. One of the 3 wrote in an essay, “When

we go to countries that are so poor, the wastefulness of using paper and plastic plates, cups and silverware doesn't seem to be a good witness. It reinforces the stereotypical view of the ugly wasteful American. It's something that's easy to change."

Serving as humble servants and learners.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	0% (0)	6% (3)	10% (5)	51% (26)	33% (17)	4.12

Eighty-four percent, or 43 people 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the Berkshire Mission group was successful serving as humble servants and learners. Two of the three who 'disagreed' were the same as 'disagreed' in the previous two questions. Two of them were Adventists. The one who was not Adventist wrote, "The attitude of the SDA—that they are so good and so right, i.e., correct. Other Christian faiths are good, i.e., have value, too, you know." This person 'disagreed' that they had a more positive view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Communicating with the nationals.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	0% (0)	0% (0)	4% (2)	59% (29)	37% (18)	4.33

Ninety-six percent, or 47 people 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the Berkshire Mission group was successful at communicating with the nationals.

Building the needed skills in the team members.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	0% (0)	2% (1)	10% (5)	51% (25)	37% (18)	4.22

Eighty-eight percent, or 43 people ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the Berkshire Mission group was successful at building the needed skills in the team members. The person who ‘disagreed’ did not give any essay response to understand the nature of their concern.

Informing the team members of logistics and following through.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	2% (1)	2% (1)	6% (3)	44% (22)	46% (23)	4.30

Ninety percent, or 45 people, ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the Berkshire Mission group was successful at informing the team members of logistics and following through. The people who ‘disagreed’ and ‘strongly disagreed’ did not give any essay response to understand the nature of their concern.

Leading the team to prepare for the spiritual implication of the experience.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	2% (1)	8% (4)	20% (10)	30% (15)	40% (20)	3.98

Seventy percent, or 35 people, ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the Berkshire Mission group was successful at leading the team to prepare for the spiritual implication of the experience. This was one of the responsibilities of this researcher. The results show the need for improvement in this area. An essay suggested, “Perhaps small group devotion time—being able to worship and share a bit more together.”

Followed up on what the pre-trip build-up said it would do.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	0% (0)	2% (1)	2% (1)	54% (27)	42% (21)	4.36

Ninety-six percent, or 48 people ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the Berkshire Mission group was successful at following up on what the pre-trip build-up said it would do.

Laying a spiritual foundation for all aspects of the trip.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	0% (0)	6% (3)	16% (8)	41% (21)	37% (19)	4.10

Seventy-eight percent, or 40 people, ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the Berkshire Mission group was successful at laying a spiritual foundation for all aspects of the trip. This question seems closely related to the above, *Leading the team to prepare for the spiritual implication of the experience*. These two were the lowest scoring Response Averages in this category. It is consistent in showing the need for improvement here. A person in the 18 to 24 year age group suggests “a little more outreach to the group members who were not SDA.”

Showed appropriate respect to the people we served.

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
Before	0% (0)	2% (1)	4% (2)	30% (15)	64% (32)	4.56

Ninety-four percent, or 47 people ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the Berkshire Mission group was successful at showing appropriate respect to the people we served. The person who disagreed wrote, “Instruct participants on how to be more sensitive to the people we’re there to help. They are not some sort of freak show—a feeling I got from all the picture taking.” Several essays echoed the same sentiment as this one. “It was just an inspiration to see people with so little yet a great love for the Lord and even though we’re

a world apart we are bonded close together as brothers and sisters and I still feel that kinship.”

Findings and Implications

Impact Based on Different Factors

Of interest is whether the impact on people is significantly different based on their reasons for going on the trip. To determine this, people will be looked at who responded at four different levels on the factors of *Adventure*, *God's call to go*, and *Wanted to go with a friend who is going*. We will then compare the Response Average for different types of impacts for each level of each reason. The impacts that will be viewed are:

- A. I found I had talents I wasn't aware of
- B. I feel better about myself
- C. I feel closer to God
- D. I feel a new commitment to serving others
- E. I find that my prayer life is stronger
- F. I have a better understanding of cultural differences
- G. I plan to go on more short-term mission trips
- H. I plan to be more involved in mission outreach at home
- I. I will give more money to mission projects
- J. I would like to be a regular missionary

The variable listed in the charts below (unless otherwise mentioned) pertains to the difference between the highest score for that factor and the lowest score for that factor. In most cases, the value of the variable was less than 1.00 which seems to show that reasons for going on the mission trip were relatively unimportant in determining

whether a person received a particular blessing or whether they were impacted in a particular way. The higher the variable, however, the more difference there would be in the degree of the impact based on the reason one went on the trip.

Impact Based on Adventure									
Adventure	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Disagree	2.50	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.00	4.00	4.50	4.00	3.50
Neutral	3.22	3.78	4.11	4.00	3.67	4.22	4.22	3.44	3.56
Agree	3.52	4.00	4.36	4.40	3.72	4.16	4.44	3.88	3.60
Str. Agree	3.44	4.31	4.19	4.33	3.81	4.44	4.53	3.63	3.87
Variable	1.02	1.31	0.86	0.83	0.81	0.44	0.31	0.56	0.37
W/O Disagree	0.30	0.53	0.25	0.33	0.14	0.28	0.31	0.44	0.31

In the factor of Adventure, no matter what the response was, the variable of the impact on a group of individuals (and by association, the impact on an individual) was no more than 1.31 different in any of the columns representing different impacts. This may not, as yet, prove anything, but the implication here is that when it comes to Adventure, a person can be positively impacted to nearly the same degree in any category as can any other person who goes with any other level of interest in Adventure.

This would mean that those seeking adventure can be positively impacted on short-term mission trip. Since no one responded 'strongly disagree,' it is unknown what the impact might be for them. The impacts with lower variables may be those that are

more likely to happen to any person going on a mission trip. Also, the sample for the 'disagree' response is very small, with only two persons.

Since adventure seeking is one of the reasons for going which is most maligned by the critics of short-term missions, it is important to determine how it affects the impact. To take out those who disagree that they are going for the adventure—those who are not going for adventure—narrows the variable in seven of the eight impact areas (all except G). In fact, those who disagree that they go for the adventure have the lowest level of reported impact in seven of the eight impact areas. They seem not to benefit as much as others in the areas that are desirable to short-term mission promoters.

This says that, at least in the general population of short-term mission goers, adventure seeking should not be dismissed as a valid reason for going. It would be interesting to see what this measure would reveal in relation to the impact on the receiving church and community.

Impact Based on God's Call to Go									
God's Call	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Disagree	4.00	4.50	3.50	4.00	2.50	4.50	4.00	2.50	4.00
Neutral	3.00	3.71	3.71	3.71	3.14	4.57	4.57	3.43	3.71
Agree	3.20	3.84	4.15	4.10	3.50	3.95	4.10	3.55	3.40
Str. Agree	3.64	4.23	4.59	4.64	4.18	4.50	4.73	4.18	3.86
Variable	1.00	0.79	1.09	0.93	1.68	0.62	0.73	1.68	0.60
W/O Disagree	0.30	0.53	0.25	0.93	1.14	0.62	0.63	0.75	0.31

Using the same method to consider the impact on those who go based on their response to God's call for them to go, shows some different results and some similar. The overall variable of impact was from 0.60 to 1.68 (in two areas). A variable of 1.68 does seem to be getting high. However, there is nothing in this survey that can help determine what a good, or acceptable level of variable might be. A sense of God's call upon an individual to go may well impinge on the impact in some areas. This could be studied in more detail at a future time.

Again, it is premature from this data to claim proof, but it seems that when it comes to responding to God's call a person can be positively impacted to the same degree, more or less in any category as can any other person who goes with any other level of recognition of God's call to go. The areas where this is less true are in having a stronger prayer life and being involved in mission outreach at home.

It is more understandable in this case, that if 'Disagree' responses are removed from the results, the variable is much lower for every impact area. Here, again, the sample of 'disagree' responses is very small, at only two persons. In three of these eight impact areas (A, B, I), those who 'disagree' that they go because they are called by God ranks them with the highest level of impact among the responders. In four of the areas (C, E, G, H), they rank with the lowest level of impact. If a person 'strongly disagreed' that they were called by God to go on the mission trip, the results may be the same or completely different. 'Disagreeing' that God has called a person to go will not keep them from being positively impacted and should not be a reason to keep someone from going.

Impact of Wanting to Go with a Friend

This exercise will give the most accurate analysis of making comparisons between the responses. It has the most balanced number of all the responses of any factor. By category, the responses are:

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.			
Before	14% (7)	14% (7)	32% (16)	24% (12)	16% (8)	3.14			
Go With Friend	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Str. Disagree	2.71	3.57	3.71	3.71	3.00	4.14	3.86	3.29	3.14
Disagree	3.43	4.00	4.43	4.86	3.29	4.14	4.43	3.29	3.57
Neutral	3.63	4.25	4.44	4.38	4.00	4.44	4.69	4.00	3.81
Agree	3.42	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.67	4.08	4.55	3.92	3.73
Str. Agree	3.50	4.00	4.38	4.38	4.13	4.25	4.50	3.75	4.00
Variable	0.92	0.68	0.73	1.15	1.13	0.30	0.83	0.63	0.86

Across the board, with only one exception (Disagree–D), the strength of the impact either remained the same or rose as the response went from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘disagree,’ and from ‘disagree’ to ‘neutral.’ This kind of progression might be expected. It ceased, however, when going from ‘neutral’ to ‘agree.’ This step saw a reduction in every area.

The only area in the survey which shows any cause for this drop between neutral and agree is that 38 percent of those who responded neutral, also responded that they strongly disagreed before the trip that they worried about safety compared to 17 percent

who agreed that they wanted to go with a friend. Likewise, 33 percent of those who agreed that they wanted to go with a friend, also agreed that they worried about safety before the trip, compared to 12 percent of those who responded neutral about going with a friend. This major transition may show that being concerned about safety has a dramatic effect on the level of positive impact. It could also show that a strong desire to take a friend may be due to a concern for the safety of some aspect of the trip. This will be viewed more later.

The transition from 'agree' to 'strongly agree' once again showed an increase in the level of positive impact based on the trend of the first three responses. If these aforementioned drops were truly due to concern over safety issues, one might expect that a stronger response to this question might show a stronger level of fear. This did not prove to be the case. In addition, the response average to the question of worry about safety of those who agreed that they wanted to go with a friend was 2.75. The same calculation for those who strongly agreed that they wanted to go with a friend was lower, at 2.00. There may have been a difference in the reasons for the two different responses. Some of those agreeing that they wanted to go with a friend seem to have been worried about safety. The others who responded 'strongly agree' may just have responded this way because a family member was going on the trip. One person crossed out the word "friend" and wrote in "son."

Impact on Those Pressured to Go

It will be helpful to see what difference there is in the impact on those who feel pressured to go compared to those who strongly disagree that they were pressured to go. It seems that this kind of pressure would be more felt in the ranks of the teens than in the

general adult population, but this is yet to be studied. In this case, the sample of those who felt pressured is small, at only three persons.

Pressured	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Str. Disagree	3.54	4.00	4.32	4.34	3.79	4.32	4.63	3.79	3.71
Agree	3.33	4.00	4.00	3.67	3.67	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00
Variable	0.21	0.00	0.32	0.67	0.12	0.32	0.63	-0.21	0.71
Overall	3.40	4.04	4.23	4.27	3.71	4.25	4.43	3.73	3.67
Var/Agr/Over	0.07	0.04	0.23	0.60	0.04	0.25	0.43	-0.27	0.67

Those who did not feel pressured to go had a more positive impact in six of the eight areas (excluding B, H). It cannot be said that the difference was great enough to suggest that people should not be pressured to go on mission trips. It does, however, seem that pressure would open more possibilities of criticism and discontent among those pressured. This could lead to discontent among the whole group, which would be counter-productive.

The variable is listed between the impact of those who responded 'strongly disagree' and those who responded 'agree.' The overall response averages are also listed to show the variable between the 'agree' scores and the overall. In six impact areas, the 'agree' scores are closer to the overall scores than they are to the 'strongly disagree.' This may not prove anything.

Impact on Different Ages

The following graph shows each category and the Response Average for each age group. Category J has been added: *I would like to become a regular missionary*. The Response Average (RA) is based on a number value given to each possible response (Strongly Disagree = 1.00, Disagree = 2.00, Neutral = 3.00, Agree = 4.00, Strongly Agree = 5.00). The higher the RA, the larger number of respondents in that category answered toward Strongly Agree. A score higher than 3.00 represents a positive impact on the people in that age group for that category.

Category	Response Average for Each Age Group					All
	18-24	25-35	36-50	51-65	65+	
A.	4.00	4.00	3.69	3.20	3.15	3.40
B.	4.50	4.00	4.38	3.70	4.17	4.04
C.	5.00	4.00	4.38	4.10	4.23	4.23
D.	5.00	4.33	4.38	4.20	4.17	4.27
E.	4.50	3.00	4.15	3.40	3.77	3.71
F.	5.00	2.67	4.62	4.35	4.00	4.25
G.	4.50	4.67	4.54	4.50	4.17	4.43
H.	4.00	2.67	3.92	3.85	3.54	3.73
I.	3.50	3.00	3.85	3.85	3.42	3.67
J.	5.00	3.00	3.42	2.63	2.50	3.08
Overall	4.50	3.53	4.13	3.78	3.71	3.88

It is clear that people in every age group are (or can be) positively impacted by going on a short-term mission trip. The exception seems to be that even going on a mission trip does not seem to lead a large percentage of people to want to become regular missionaries. Older short-termers seem less likely to want to be regular missionaries than their younger fellow travelers. Only 38 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they were interested after the trip to consider being a regular missionary. Still, if this figure were consistent across the 70,000 goers each year, there could be 26,600 new missionaries available. This will continue to be an untapped resource. There is worldwide demand for more regular missionaries, but the requests will probably continue to be unfunded. This is a major work force which should be enlisted in some type of ministry.

Young adults, ages 25-35, were less than positive when it comes to having a stronger prayer life, understanding cultural differences, wanting to be more involved in mission outreach at home, wanting to give more money to mission projects, and being a regular missionary. With an overall Response Average for all impacts of only 3.53, they were the least positively impacted by the trip.

People in the 18-24 group were the most positively impacted, followed by the 36-50's. Questions arise as to how the 25-35's could be the least positively impacted when that age group is between the two groups which were the most positively impacted. This may be worth some additional study.

Impact on Non-Adventists

People who were not Seventh-day Adventists were invited to participate with the Berkshire Mission trips. This was done to engender cooperation between their churches and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This evaluation requires consideration of the

items in questions seven and eight. In addition to the above list (A through I) the items to be reviewed are:

- K. Building team unity and working together effectively
- L. Building a cultural sensitivity in the group
- M. Serving as humble servants and learners
- N. Communicating with the nationals
- O. Building the needed skills in the team members
- P. Informing the team members of logistics and following through
- Q. Followed up on what the pre-trip build-up said it would do
- R. Laying a spiritual foundation for all aspects of the trip.
- S. Showed appropriate respect to the people we served

Note that the item, “Leading the team to prepare for the spiritual implication of the experience” was left out because it was significantly like item R.

In the following chart, there are two sections. The first is to compare the responses to question 7. The second is to compare responses to question 8. Both lines show the Response Averages of the non-Adventists who answered the question, “I am not SDA, but have a more positive view of the SDA Church.” The intent is to try to understand what may have caused the ‘Disagree’ response.

Question 7	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Disagree	3.50	4.50	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.00	4.00	2.50	3.00
Agree	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.50	4.00	4.25	4.75	3.25	3.50
Variable	0.50	-0.25	0.75	1.50	0.50	1.25	0.75	0.75	0.50
Question 8	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
Disagree	4.00	3.50	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50
Agree	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.50	4.25	4.00	4.25	4.50	4.50
Variable	0.25	0.75	1.25	0.50	0.25	0.00	0.25	0.50	1.00

In all but two of the 18 items (Items B and P, the scores of which are the same), the 'agree' score is higher than the 'disagree' score. Most of the responses for the 'Disagree' group are in the 'neutral' to 'agree' categories. This makes it difficult to evaluate what may have happened. There seems to be no smoking gun in this material that would suggest why these people's impression of the church would not be better. The only possibility lies in the essays which have already been noted. Perhaps the writers of some essays regarding the non-Adventists had some personal contact with other team members that left a bad taste in the mouth of the non-Adventists. It is also possible that some who attended the evangelistic meetings or church services may have felt hurt.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Significant Findings

In accordance with the purpose of this work, the primary finding is that short-term mission trips impact the participants of all ages. The overall Response Average of all the age groups to the impact areas considered is 3.88 out of a possible 5.00. With 3.00 being 'neutral' and 4.00 being 'agree' the overall perception of the participants was that they were positively impacted by having gone on a short-term mission trip. That is a 77.6 percent positive impact among all age groups. Fitzgerald's research¹ among college students quoted a Randall Wisbey study² which showed that 72 percent of the students indicated that their short-term experience was helpful in the development of their spiritual life. This shows a statistical similarity for all ages to at least one previous study.

Mission giving is on the rise, not even counting that which goes to groups such as Maranatha, or that which is spent by the 70,000 who pay to go on their own trips.

¹Fitzgerald, 67.

²Randal R. Wisbey, *Collegiate Missions in the Context of Short-Term Missions Experience* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC, 1990).

There is evidence that this impact is real in that 87.7 percent of the respondents have gone on more than one mission trip, and 85 percent say they plan to go on more. If the experience were not positive, it is unlikely that people would continue to go.

Other factors such as having a better prayer life, feeling better about oneself, and being closer to God are impossible for this work to prove other than by the self-evaluations of the survey participants.

It seems not to matter why a person goes on a short-term mission trip. They can be similarly positively impacted whether they go for perceived wrong reasons or for perceived good reasons. An extremely large force of potential missionaries has been identified for whom we need to find a method of deployment.

Not specifically addressed by the study, but pulled from the research and personal experience is the fact that the leadership of a short-term mission trip is one key to whether those who go will be positively impacted. This should be studied.

Evaluation of the Survey

The survey seems to have accomplished what it was designed to do. That is, it provided data to determine what the impact of short-term mission is on those who go. There were, however, some problems which were identified.

It would have been better to actually survey the goers before and after their trip to get the most dependable results. Asking people after the trip to recall what they thought or felt about a given topic before the trip is problematic. Their recollection of their thoughts or feelings may have become clouded by the experience of the trip itself. This may or may not cloud some responses which dealt with before and after issues.

However, the main body of questions dealing with after trip attitudes should still be valid.

There is a problem with Question 3. It reads, “The coming mission trip will be my: A. first; B. 2-5; C. 6-10; D. 11-20; E. 21 or more.” This question was written to be answered before the mission trip. However, by the time the survey was approved and distributed, the trip had already taken place. This question was overlooked as changes were made to send it only after the trip was taken. Because of this, the question must have been confusing to the participants. Some may have figured out the intent, in that six people responded that the coming trip would be their first. Had they answered the question correctly, those who had just completed their first trip would have to have responded that the next trip would be their second. Three people did not answer the question at all. There is no way to be certain that everyone distinguished the intent and responded accordingly. Therefore, the responses to this question are not valid and cannot be considered strongly.

What is obvious is that a very high percentage of the respondents had been on multiple trips. This is verified by the researcher’s personal observation. Most of the people to whom the surveys were sent had gone on more than one trip. This might return some confidence to the results of item 3, but not for the sake of scholarly evaluation.

Recommendations

For Berkshire Mission

It is clear that in the case of Berkshire Mission, short-term mission trips are beneficial, making positive desirable impact on the majority of those who choose to go. The fact that such a large number of those who responded look forward to going on future mission trips shows that they consider the impact on themselves to have been worth continuing to expend the money and time.

It is strongly recommended that Berkshire Mission continue to plan and conduct short-term mission trips.

North American Division

The survey instrument used in this project should be improved to overcome the faults that were found to be in it. Among the recommended changes would be to send it to people both before and after a mission trip to acquire more accurate data. The questions should be reviewed to ensure that they provide the intended information. More opportunity should be given for essay responses to help evaluate some of the more problematic issues. The survey could be offered in a hard copy form or over the internet. The internet survey would facilitate rapid evaluation with little manpower investment. The hard copy would probably be primarily for people in the higher age categories.

Short-term mission trips will probably be around for quite some time. The Adventist Church should encourage all conferences, local churches, and other organizations that send teams on short-term mission trips to survey their teams before and after each trip. The survey would determine what the impact is on those who go, those who send them, those they go to serve, and those in the communities where they go. This will help to make a distinction between those groups or leaders whose trips are actually beneficial to the church and those who lead trips with a counterproductive impact.

Training should be established to teach group leaders how to lead effective short-term mission trips. Maranatha Volunteers International is now requiring leaders of their trips to be trained in order to make the trips better. This is a positive step.

Lay people who are adept at leading beneficial mission trips should be encouraged to develop ministries that organize and lead trips for local churches. A

leadership team could conduct twenty trips a year consisting of people from many different places. By going to a particular area such as a school, hospital, or group of churches in a single country, major projects can be accomplished which will fit in with the objectives of the church. This would be different than Maranatha in that the leadership team would assist in the development of the project and go with the team to carry it out. They could still work together with Maranatha, Share Him, or ADRA.

Study should be given concerning the advisability of taking non-Seventh-day Adventists and even non-Christians on mission trips to determine the impact on them, the rest of the team, the host church, and the host church community. Is this a method of relationship building that should be encouraged? It could be that those wishing to bring non-Seventh-day Adventists on mission trips should have some advance criteria to determine whether that person should attend or not.

Dialogue should be initiated with Share Him to develop a method of packaging local evangelism in North America to be more like a short-term mission project. Their domestic meetings have begun to move in this direction. A way should be found to facilitate and expand this emphasis, but lay people should be central in this push.

It would be good to compare these findings with those of other organizations which do surveys following short-term mission trips. Maranatha Volunteers International does such surveys with very large numbers of people, but were unable to share information from them due to "privacy issues."

General Conference

The Church leadership should be cautious not to over-regulate short-term missions. Lay people are doing a great job. Leave it in their hands, but help them do it better.

Develop a ministry track for those who are interested in being regular missionaries, but for whom there is no funding to send them. This could be a 'tent maker' style program in North America or around the world or it could be an expansion of the previous Adventist Volunteer Service Corps (AVSC) that provided volunteers for long-term needs such as being a Bible worker in a city to building facilities for churches or institutions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church should carefully evaluate their statistics on regular missions and missionaries, short-term missions and missionaries, tithe, mission offerings, and Ingathering. These should be compared with world and regional trends such as post-modernism to determine what is happening, why it is happening, and how to deal with what is happening. Do long-term missionaries come from the ranks of short-termers? Do former short-termers perform better in regular service than those who did not have short-term experience first? Could short-termers become a source for funding of special projects in the world field which are currently un-funded or under-funded? This is definitely being done by some private mission groups. Would it work to institutionalize the practice? Answers to these questions may enable the church to become more effective in evangelism and provide workers where they cannot be afforded presently.

Overall

The results of this study and those conducted concerning young adults and high school students shows that in general, people of all ages benefit by their participation in short-term missions. It may be impossible to determine how many have been influenced to continue in their walk with Christ and/or with the church. However, this researcher concludes that the benefits which they recognize for themselves probably encourage many to maintain their faith walk. This in itself may be sufficient reason to continue and expand short-term missions.

Another potential area of study involving short-term missions is the impact on the local congregation which sends the short-term volunteers. In theory, those who stay behind should also grow due to their support of the goers and the influence on them by those who have returned from their experience. While this research project did not delve into this area deeply, some anecdotal observation may be in order.

The Berkshire Hills Church originally seemed somewhat divided by the concept of sponsoring a mission trip. Groups included those who planned to go and were obviously more in favor of the trip, those who would not go but were in favor of the trip, and those who would not go and were not in favor of either the concept and/or the expenditure of local church funds to support the group.

Efforts were made to encourage non-supporters to get them on board, and/or pray before and during the trip. Then after the trip, one week of meetings were conducted to report on the trip, give testimonies, and share the Gospel.

The fact that such a large number of those who responded look forward to going on future mission trips shows that they consider the impact on themselves to have been

worth continuing to expend the money and time. It also suggests that Berkshire Mission has done a good job of organizing and conducting a short-term mission program which meets the needs at least of the people who are going.

Additional study which may be helpful could include the impact on the community where short-term projects are conducted. This, too, was outside of the parameter of this work.

APPENDIX A

INTERNATIONAL DEPLOYMENT OF PERSONNEL

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

INTERNATIONAL DEPLOYMENT OF PERSONNEL – GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS							
DEPARTURES*						INTERDIVISION EMPLOYEES	
Year	Appointees	Furloughees	Adventist Volunteer Service	Adventist Youth Service	Total	Permanent Returnees	Active Interdivision Employees
2005	116	370***	1589**		2075	143	980
2004	87	481***	1873**		2441	145	982
2003	142	542***	1863**		2547	126	1024
2002	152	300	1413**		1865	132	1126
2001	187	330	1524**		2041	138	1044
2000	169	339	1526**		2034	135	1138
1999	149	266	1355**		1770	100	1108
1998	186	306	1033	176	1701	183	1071
1997	208	308	889	146	1551	178	1183
1996	159	242	1126	277	1804	204	1194
1995	376	448	961	362	2147	189	1209
1994	293	457	813	447	2010	198	1257
1993	253	461	822	563	2099	162	1247
1992	304	427	530	545	1806	243	978
1991	186	394	609	553	1742	222	1063

*Includes intradivision (where divisions have defined mission territories) and interdivision departures.

** Includes Adventist Volunteer Service extensions beginning during the current year

***Includes data on furloughs/optional annual leaves.

INTERNATIONAL DEPLOYMENT OF PERSONNEL (2)

DEPARTURES*						INTERDIVISION EMPLOYEES	
Year	Appointees	Furloughees	Adventist Volunteer Service	Adventist Youth Service	Total	Permanent Returnees	Active Interdivision Employees
1990	369	503	589	498	1959	279	1089
1989	282	374	538	573	1767	233	1238
1988	281	495	253	230	1259	231	1279
1987	225	322	690	150	1387	257	1363
1986	459	369	339	171	1338	243	1379
1985	374	390	325	151	1240	174	1432
1984	285	424	353	167	1229	134	1510
1983	285	370	328	210	1193	306	1584
1982	288	339	429	187	1243	228	1507
1981	294	293	462	216	1265	275	1519
1980	356	378	575	188	1497	326	1388
1979	283	300	365	181	1129	212	1561
1978	366	316	273	181	1136	217	
1977	350	312	229	206	1097	206	
1976	340	317	237	189	1083	263	
1975	269	340	190	191	990	315	

INTERNATIONAL DEPLOYMENT OF PERSONNEL (3)							
DEPARTURES*						INTERDIVISION EMPLOYEES	
Year	Appointees	Furloughees	Adventist Volunteer Service	Adventist Youth Service	Total	Permanent Returnees	Active Interdivision Employees
1974	342	350	214	198	1104		
1973	316	388	214	160	1078		
1972	354	331	132	157	974		
1971	445	310	64	167	986		
1970	470	488	43	82	1083		
1969	473	397	26	71	967		
1968	363	285		46	694		
1967	421	315		28	764		
1966	365	330		15	710		
1965	287	236		8	531		
1964	292	203		6	501		
1963	318	201		4	523		
1962	207	242		5	454		
1961	254	175		1	430		
1960	270	220		3	493		
1959	247	214		1	462		

APPENDIX B

THE SURVEY

Survey for Research

“The Impact of Short-Term Missions on the Participants of Berkshire Mission.”

___ I consent to my participation and to the use of this survey.

Age 18-24 25-35 36-50 51-65 66 or higher

The coming Mission trip will be my

First 2-5 6-10 11-20 21 or more

Please mark the following questions under SD for Strongly Disagree, D for Disagree, N for Neutral, A for Agree, and SA for Strongly Agree.

	SD	D	N	A	SA
What factors did you consider in choosing to go on this mission trip?					
Adventure	___	___	___	___	___
God's call to go	___	___	___	___	___
Wanted to go with a friend who is going	___	___	___	___	___
Desire to serve others	___	___	___	___	___
Desire to experience a different culture	___	___	___	___	___
Pressured by someone to go	___	___	___	___	___
In preparation for the trip, did you:					
Think it was too expensive?	___	___	___	___	___
Worry about the safety	___	___	___	___	___
Feel you were prepared/trained for the work you would do	___	___	___	___	___
Before going on a short-term mission trip, I considered becoming a regular missionary?	___	___	___	___	___
After Returning home, I:					
Feel the expense of the trip was too high compared to the experience	___	___	___	___	___
Felt I was safe	___	___	___	___	___
Feel my talents were well utilized	___	___	___	___	___
Found I had talents I wasn't aware of	___	___	___	___	___
Feel I was asked to do things I couldn't do	___	___	___	___	___
Feel better about myself	___	___	___	___	___
Would like to be a regular missionary	___	___	___	___	___
Feel closer to God	___	___	___	___	___
Feel a new commitment to serving others	___	___	___	___	___
Find that my prayer life is stronger	___	___	___	___	___
Have a better understanding of cultural differences	___	___	___	___	___
Plan to go on more short-term mission trips	___	___	___	___	___
Plan to be more involved in mission outreach at home	___	___	___	___	___
Will give more money to mission projects	___	___	___	___	___
Am a SDA and feel more positive about my Church	___	___	___	___	___
Am not SDA, but have a more positive view of the SDA Church	___	___	___	___	___

I found the Berkshire mission team was successful at:

Building team unity and working together effectively.

— — — — —

Building a cultural sensitivity in the group

— — — — —

Serving as humble servants and learners

— — — — —

Communicating with the nationals

— — — — —

Building the needed skills in the team members

— — — — —

Informing the team members of logistics and following through

— — — — —

Leading the team to prepare for the spiritual

implication of the experience.

— — — — —

Followed up on what the pre-trip build-up said it would do

— — — — —

Laying a spiritual foundation for all aspects of the trip

— — — — —

Showed appropriate respect to the people we served

— — — — —

What did you like most about the Mission trip experience? _____

What did you like least about the Mission trip experience? _____

What would you like to see done differently and how? _____

What spiritual benefit did you receive from going on the trip? _____

What did you learn about other cultures from the trip? _____

APPENDIX C
SURVEY LETTERS

Date

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear (Name),

Thank you for agreeing to assist me in my research by answering and returning the enclosed short questionnaire. I have enjoyed getting to know you on our mission trips with Berkshire Mission and appreciate your willingness to help me evaluate the impact which the trips have had on us. I understand that you are doing this voluntarily and want you to know that you have the right to decide at any time that you do not wish to continue. Should you decide not to finish this process, there will be no penalty or hardship measured against you.

Before you answer the survey, please read the "Implied Informed Consent" paper and be sure you understand it. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or any of the other people whose information is listed.

You should be able to complete the survey in an hour or less. Please find a comfortable place to sit for that length of time and give me your reactions to each item. There are no right or wrong answers. I truly want to know what the impact of the trips was on you.

After you have answered the questions on the survey, please carefully follow the instructions for returning it to me. This will ensure that your responses remain completely anonymous. Thanks again for your help with this research.

Sincerely,

Gary Wagner

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Department
Implied Informed Consent

The Impact of Short-Term Missions on the Participants of the Berkshire Mission Group

I have been told that by simply returning the completed survey without this form, my consent to my participation and to the use of the information provided by me will be implied.

I have been told that this study involves research by Gary Wagner as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The research is on the impact on myself, of my participation in the Berkshire Mission short-term mission trip(s). This research, joined with similar surveys of other participants hopes to determine if these short-term mission trips have a negative, neutral, or positive impact in the areas of spiritual development, commitment to God, and possible future missionary service.

I have been told that my expected duration of participation will be less than one hour, and that after I have mailed the survey to the office of Dr. Bruce Bauer at the SDA Seminary, I will have no further expected participation.

I have been told that my requested participation is:

1. I am to respond to the items on the survey in the quiet and privacy of my home.
2. I should not place my name or address or any information which might identify me anywhere on the survey or on any envelope used to return it.
3. Once I have filled out the responses, I am to fold the survey and place it in the provided white envelope and seal it. The only writing on the envelope should say, "Survey for Gary Wagner – The Impact of Short-Term Missions on the Participants of the Berkshire Mission Group."
4. I should then place the white envelope in the brown self addressed and stamped envelope and seal it. The address on the envelope should read: Dr. Bruce Bauer. SDA Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, MI 49104
5. This brown envelope should be dropped in the mail as soon as possible.

Once the brown envelope arrives at the office of Dr. Bauer, the white envelope will be taken out of the brown envelope. The white envelope will not be opened. It will be combined with other similar envelopes from other survey participants and mailed to Gary Wagner to be opened and analyzed for this research project. It will not be possible to connect my name to the information in the surveys. This way, confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained.

I have been told that there will be neither cost to me nor compensation to me.

I have been told that by following these steps, there will be no reasonably foreseeable risk, stress, discomfort, or invasion of privacy, and that I should suffer no physical, psychological, sociological, or other harm as a result of participating with this survey. If I have any questions concerning these instructions, I may contact Gary Wagner, 354 Trimmer Road; Spencerport, NY 14559. Tel (585) 617-4438. E-mail, prgrw@verbaloxygen.com.

I have been told that if I should sense any research related injury, I should contact Dr. Bruce Bauer. SDA Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, MI 49104, Tel. (269)471-6505. Dr. Bauer will then work with me to determine the extent of my injury and any appropriate compensation.

I have been told that if I wish to contact the researcher's advisor or an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any complaint I may have about the study I may contact Dr. Robert Peck, P. O. Box 65665; West Des Moines, IA 50265-0665. Tel (515) 223-1197, ext. 3 for information and assistance.

I have been told that potential benefits of this study are the improved understanding of the impact of short-term missions on the participants. The results and evaluation of this study will be written in a dissertation and may become material for published writings on the topic. This may or may not result in improvements in short-term missions planning and promotions.

I have been told that my participation in this survey is voluntary, and that I have the freedom to withdraw at any time without penalty or denial of benefits.

I have read the contents of this consent form and understand the written instructions given by the investigator. My questions concerning this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby give voluntary consent to participate in this study. If I have additional questions or concerns, I may contact Gary Wagner, 354 Trimmer Road; Spencerport, NY 14559. Tel (585) 617-4438. E-mail, . I have received a copy of this consent form.

I have been told that my signature is not required, and I am not required to return this form with the survey. By returning the survey, I am implying my consent to my participation and to the use of the survey.

APPENDIX D

OVERALL SURVEY RESULTS,

ESSAY RESPONSES

I consent to my participation and to the use of this survey.

Yes

Total Respondents
(skipped this question)

Age

None listed

18-24

25-35

36-50

51-65

66 or higher

98

Total Respondents
(skipped this question)

The coming Mission trip will be my:

First

21 or more

Total Respondents
(skipped this question)

Resp's

52

52

0

Resp's

1

2

3

13

20

13

52

0

Resp's

6

5-Feb 25

10-Jun 16

20-Nov 1

1

49

3

What factors did you consider in choosing to go on this mission trip?

Adventure

God's call to go

Wanted to go with a friend who is going

Desire to serve others

Desire to experience a different culture

Pressured by someone to go

Total Respondents

(skipped this question)

In preparation for the trip did you:

Think it was too expensive

Worry about the safety

Feel you were prepared/trained for the work you would do

Total Respondents

(skipped this question)

Before going on a short-term mission trip

I considered becoming a regular missionary.

Total Respondents

(skipped this question)

SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
0	2	9	25	16	4.06
0	2	7	20	22	4.22
7	7	16	12	8	3.14
0	0	0	16	36	4.69
0	1	4	23	24	4.35
38	6	4	3	0	1.45

52
0

SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
8	24	16	3	1	2.33
15	18	11	8	0	2.23
1	2	10	22	17	4

52
0

SDe	D	N	A	SA	Resp. Ave.
10	14	13	11	3	2.67

51
1

After returning home I:

	SD	D	NI	A	SA	Resp.	Ave.
Feel the expense of the trip was too high compared to the experience	29	15	4	1	3	1.73	
Felt I was safe	0	1	2	31	17	4.25	
Feel my talents were well utilized	0	1	7	26	18	4.17	
Found I had talents I wasn't aware of	1	4	25	17	5	3.4	
Feel I was asked to do things I couldn't do	29	17	1	3	0	1.56	
Feel better about myself	1	0	12	21	17	4.04	
Would like to be a regular missionary	7	10	14	10	9	3.08	
Feel closer to God	0	0	9	22	21	4.23	
Feel a new commitment to serving others	0	0	7	23	21	4.27	
Find that my prayer life is stronger	0	3	20	18	11	3.71	
Have a better understanding of cultural differences	0	2	5	23	22	4.25	
Plan to go on more short-term mission trips	0	1	7	12	31	4.43	
Plan to be more involved in mission outreach at home	0	3	16	25	8	3.73	
Will give more money to mission projects	0	1	21	23	6	3.67	
Am a SDA and feel more positive about my Church	0	1	9	16	16	4.12	
Am not SDA but have a more positive view of the SDA Church	0	2	3	4	0	3.22	
Total Respondents	52						
(skipped this question)	0						

100

I found the Berkshire Mission team was successful at:

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp.	Ave.
Building team unity and working together effectively	0	3	1	20	27	4.39	
Building a cultural sensitivity in the group	0	3	5	22	21	4.2	
Serving as humble servants and learners	0	3	5	26	17	4.12	
Communicating with the nationals	0	0	2	29	18	4.33	
Building the needed skills in the team members	0	1	5	25	18	4.22	
Informing the team members of logistics and following through	1	1	3	22	23	4.3	
Leading the team to prepare for the spiritual implication of the experience	1	4	10	15	20	3.98	

Followed up on what the pre-trip build-up said it would do
Laying a spiritual foundation for all aspects of the trip
Showed appropriate respect to the people we served

Total Respondents
(skipped this question)

What did you like most about the Mission trip experience?

Total Respondents
(skipped this question)

What did you like least about the Mission trip experience?

Total Respondents
(skipped this question)

101

What would you like to see done differently and how?

Total Respondents
(skipped this question)

What spiritual benefit did you receive from going on the trip?

Total Respondents
(skipped this question)

What did you learn about other cultures from the trip?

Total Respondents
(skipped this question)

0	1	1	27	21	4.36
0	3	8	21	19	4.1
0	1	2	15	32	4.56

51

1

49

3

46

6

43

9

46

6

46

6

What did you like most about the Mission trip experience?

Open-Ended Response

The camaraderie. The satisfaction of serving God in this way - being useful

Serving others who were wonderful people, travel and seeing past cultures. Just being in the tropics again!

Worship by team members, clear leadership by Bob

It is thrilling to feel a part of the world mission field we have heard about and given offerings to for many years

Working with other people, learning customs and ways people live in other countries, the love and respect most of these people have for us

Working with and for others

Seeing the enthusiasm and unity in working toward a common goal. The joy it brought to the local people

meeting people from other countries

The whole trip and being able to help people see to read again and helping the dentists by keeping the instruments sterilized and last but not least, the side trips like Macchu Picchu helping and getting to know people there, travel

seeing how people live in foreign countries. The work and traveling

I liked helping the poor and being able to give back

being appreciated and filling their need

I liked the look of the people's face that we were able to help in some little way, I wish we could do more

speaking Spanish and treating the sick

helping others and building relationships with locals and with fellow team mates. Life long memories

seeing how other people lived and how friendly they were
travel

Meeting new people both from the US and the cultures we served. Loved being immersed in a new culture

Serving the people. I felt blessed to be able to help

I enjoy and receive such a blessing from seeing the thankfulness and gratitude on so many faces

Helping the people! Being able to connect with them - learning of their culture

Getting to know the people I was working with and especially the chance to meet and interact with the local people and our church members. The love for our Lord that the people we were serving showed in their worship and friendship.

It was short-term, got hands-on experience. Enjoyed serving the people. Good witnessing tool to the community. Many positive responses to the idea

Getting to know the people is what I like most. I enjoyed being able to develop work skills different from my occupation, and the fact that it was short term, a 2 week trip experiencing a different culture and seeing how people live. Knowing we were making a difference in the lives of the people we were serving and meeting

well-organized
sense of accomplishment, meeting new people, helping others
The experience of serving in another country
meeting the people
extremely well organized, safe, flexible, fun and healthy
To visit a different culture and help people who I realized were so poor, but still seemed positive
To help other people and for them to find God, and way of life. To live, and learn other people's life style and culture. Enjoy their countries, and language. most of all be thankful for what we have!
serving others
The exposure to the sights, sounds, smells, etc. of another country and another way of life.
And the weather - Warm
helping others and working together
The wide variety in ages within the team worked together so nicely
Being able to share God's love with people in need
very well organized and thought out projects
being able to serve people in need with projects that truly make a difference in their lives
The people we went to help are so gracious and happy we are there.
meeting and serving the locals, and working with new people within the group
working with people, meeting locals
Meeting and working with new people. meeting the country locals and helping them seeing their appreciation towards us.
Sharing the love and promise of Jesus with others and watching the smiles of kids who came to VBS and their eagerness to learn.
There was always a way to show God's love in every aspect of the trip

What did you like least about the Mission trip experience?

Open-Ended Response

the demanding schedule

The airport in Honduras. To be honest, I loved the whole trip, for sure, the side trip at the end
long hours in the kitchen

I would have liked to communicate better with the native people in their home and work situations
I don't think there was anything that I did not like with the mission trips I have been on

air travel

having to leave

nothing

the forever blowing dust

when the construction foreman was not on the ball and things did not go right
nothing really

I don't like to be away from home so long

I did not like how some of the group treated the people. I think that we should treat others as we would treat our own family.
accommodations. sleeping 2 couples in 4 hospital beds in a row
going home again
the expense. It's too bad we couldn't just sent the money they would have received a lot more help
poverty
All night flying and being up all night traveling to airport and flying. Missing one whole night of sleep going and another returning

I was not from the area (where most of the team was from) and felt a bit on the outside. We were not introduced into the group.
Felt more like and outsider. Communication was poor with medical team
It's cultural, but the fact that every detail is planned and arrangements made during the pre-trip and then to have plans fall through,
The Lord still is in charge , though and something better usually comes of it.
I can't think of any negative experience that occurred. This my LOVE and I make the most of all things.
The bus trips to get to the worksite make for a long day
Felt that many SDA's did not live up to church standards in diet. Non-SDA's need to be better informed as to what to expect.
It was a positive experience
the long hours of work
spiritual aspect for children and somewhat for adults
Our spiritual condition thinking we're pretty good stuff
nothing
flying
nothing was so awful that it was at the bottom of the list. maybe knowing there would be hot water at the end of a day
I did not have any negative experiences
No complaints
nothing
The attitude of the SDA - that they are so good and so right ie: correct. Other Christian faiths are good, ie: have value, too, you know.
the 'friendly' teasing among the leaders
Nothing. I enjoyed the whole experience and feel it was done very effectively.
I feel that more effort could be made in training people to be involved in missionary service and to leave some of the trappings of
our culture behind so they don't detract from the experience ie, video games and other such distractions.
kitchen staff doesn't have much time to spend on the job site. I always feel bad for them.

The bugs! LOL I can't think of anything
long hours (Peru)
I liked it all
I came back with no complaints

Not enough time with the people, maybe about a month would be awesome! In other words change short term to long term

What would you like to see done differently and how?

Open-Ended Response

too many different circumstances to answer this question

Stop watering down SDA values to make other Christians feel more comfortable. Let them experience Adventism at its best for

2 weeks

the kitchen duties divided more equitably. I would like to see use more local foods and bring less from the States.

I would have liked to rotate to different jobs more and have more time to mingle with the natives
Going on a few mission trips here in this country at times in between the foreign countries,
whatever God chooses us to do

2 shifts in the kitchen

nothing

the organization was good for the most part. Just to keep things organized so everyone knows what to do

get more people involved and get some more publicity

I think the leaders do an excellent job and don't know what needs improving. each trip may have different isolated problems but all seems to work out

I would like us to give more to some of the people who really needed it, eg. medication etc, instead of having all the left-overs.

better travel organization in the day to day transport between lodging and sites

no complaints. The project/logistics and lodging were very well planned and executed.

It's too bad we couldn't just sent the money they would have received a lot more help more preparation

I'd like to add travel time so we wouldn't have to arrive so dead tired and sick feeling

In Maranatha projects people are from everywhere and not so clickish as I belt Berkshire. Not very friendly maybe because they knew each other or maybe from the east coast.

I think the pre-planning is very thorough and well done, I do prefer Maranatha projects much better than the ADRA; but there again, the Lord blesses every sincere heart and effort.

perhaps small group devotion time - being able to worship and share a bit more together

Spend the first evening together as a group and get to know each other. More opportunities to shop locally and get to visit the area.

Not so much business. staying put for medical team more time for private devotions.

The directors do an excellent job. If they would just use a little more positive praise towards and with the team members,
especially when things get rough.
shorter hours or some kind of rotation for those who worked in the kitchen
better quality music (more sacred) - not puppetry (SOP does not condone anything of a theatrical nature)
I love these trips, however we desperately need a revival of primitive godliness as predicted will come. Great Controversy
chapter on modern revival
nothing

The organizing team did a great job - it worked!!
Nothing. It was a very positive experience for me.
No complaints
just right
Instruct participants on how to be more sensitive to the people we re there to help. They are not some sort of freak show - a feeling I got from the picture taking.
limit participants to Christians only

See above. Train team members in the purpose that we are going for including the young people so they are more involved in active service and not just along for the ride.
Having worked both construction and medical, I feel the medical staff need to incorporate more laughter into the work. Too much stress in medical section. need longer break time.
I would like to see more follow-up in mission at the local home church level. Why go to foreign countries if we're not willing to do evangelism at home? Also when we go to countries that are so poor that wastefulness of using paper and plastic plates, cups and silverware, doesn't seem to be a good witness. it reinforces the stereotypical view of the ugly wasteful American. it's something that's easy to change.

ability to work in different areas of the experience ie. medical/construction
More people participate in different areas
Can't think of a thing
It would be neat to start up scholarship funds for kids who can't afford to go to school.
A little more outreach to the group members who were not SDA

What spiritual benefit did you receive from going on the trip?

Open-Ended Response

seeing 1st hand God's provision & how He prepares the people
Getting both feet planted in what truly is important and the missionary spirit outside the US
getting to see God's working many lives

It built my confidence in the hope of our church fulfilling the Gospel commission to warn the world
Seeing so very many people coming to our services and knowing they are just starving for

God's love and seeing so many being baptized

how overly blessed we are in the USA, desire to give more to missions. looking forward to another trip
closer to God
helping other people to the best of my ability
benefit of worshipping with people of like interests
that going on a mission trip is one way I can serve my God
this trip brought me closer to God and made me more appreciative of life
appreciate everything God has given me and see how I need to be like Him more in accepting others and being patient
It has made me more thankful for all the things we take for granted, and being able to worship freely
helped my humility and appreciate my good life in USA
I could see answered prayer in real time
how god is so good to us

I feel that serving others in love has great benefit for the servant. God gives blessings in numerous ways to those who obey him

I was blessed and in turn hoped to have blessed others. Blessed to be able to give more money to the poor who needed it desperately.
I truly feel privileged to serve my Maker. I feel closer to him now.
God always fills the Spirit. When reaching out to others I was enriched/filled with God's love then those around me. God is Good!
how humbling it is to realize that you don't need earthly possessions to be happy and love others
Did not increase spirituality but made me rely on what I knew . If one was not spiritual before it would make things harder.
From the very first trip, I have always felt a spiritual lift and blessing from the happiness those brothers and sisters share and sing with us in Jesus. and I look forward to seeing them again in heaven.
helped me to see the need for leaving my comfort zone to bless others. God was especially near to protect and keep us and to answer our (my) prayers.
sharing with natives spiritual beliefs and learning where they are at spiritually
Time for prayer and reading - encouragement from others in the group or from the nationals
Our God is awesome. he cares for us worldwide
seeing God work in a tangible way - many miracles
more tolerance of others
definitely a closer relationship with God
A good feeling of helping other people, and not thinking of yourself!
still receiving many benefits and renewal. More love and compassion for multi-cultural populations
That God hears and answers prayers of all those who call on Him regardless of denomination, culture, language, style, etc.
God cares deeper than we understand for people

It helped me to feel a closer connection with God and His grace to all.
I grew by seeing how God provided for the needs of His people in His service.
my spiritual benefit is spending time with the local children. since they are the most Christ-like.
I enjoy helping with VBS
Mission trips always serve as a spiritual boost for me.
I felt a closer connection to God. I felt love and grace. i also felt very thankful for everything
learning faith and trust

I was asked to share my love for God in a worship service. It forced me to get up in front of others and share
I found a deeper dependence on god was important while working there
These trips are always a challenge and I believe that it helps you to grow closer to God when we are working for Him.

What did you learn about other cultures from the trip?

Open-Ended Response

See how other people live noticed what is most important to us is to them also (family, needs met, etc.)

All good qualities do not come just from the US. Other cultures understand family needs and caring for others a little better than US. Mission experience is 2 way.
each country is different, but we all have much in common

We can find friends and love each other despite political stress between nations.
Those people have so little to work with, but they make do with what they have and most of them don't mind too much. Most of them are very hard workers and really appreciate the help they get from our mission teams.
How better we are off.
welcoming, grateful, warm, open-minded people
they are easier to reach with the gospel. They are searching for a better life.
they serve the same God, when we were leaving, one of the fellows pointed to me, then to himself, then to heaven. This happened on two trips. Even though we spoke different languages I knew what he meant. That we would meet in heaven.
they're neat people like we are.

That we have it good at home and when we go to a foreign country, just do your best and be satisfied.

we have a lot of similarity

how blessed I am and really everyone that is fortunate enough to live in USA. They have very little material things but they are so happy and share. Even though they don't have much, they share.

It does not matter about your culture, or how poor you are. you should be treated with respect and dignity you deserve.

Central America and South America cultures are very friendly to us even though we don't speak fluently their language.

America is very young compared to other cultures. Other cultures have very deep roots in tradition and religious beliefs. prior to computer age, many talented artists and 'engineers' existed who do d/achieved great results without modern equipment and computers.
they have nothing, but are so very very happy
our role in the world
that they are real people with needs much like our own. They want to be loved, to be friends and to give in return to the best of their ability. it puts a face on mission work.

people everywhere were friendly. Good 'Christian people working hard to have churches and buildings very unselfish with what they had. I worked as a nurse on the medical team and I felt it didn't matter to them if I was there or not. In fact I doubt if I would go with them again. I had a bad image of the culture as being lazy and not time-oriented at all but many are very hard working and charitable as well as loving. I'm so glad to have had my eyes opened to this fact. 'Things' don't matter. The people of Honduras are humble, quiet, grateful, patient, calm folk with few worldly goods, but happy. A wonderful people. They were very receptive to us; I'd be happy to be able to serve them again.
people with hope in the Lord no matter their situation are more able to be happy with what is done for them. We need to take a lesson and realize that our Lord loves us all.
Being in a hurry is not the way to go
We learn about their culture/history on our excursions. The nationals are happy with few possessions, and whatever we can provide helps to make their lives on this earth better. They have helped me learn some Spanish, which helps me in the US as well.
people may live a little differently and eat different food but they are the same in their hearts. We are all a lot alike. All humanity needs a Savior.
how they live , eat and are impacted by what we do for them (and pay to come and do it.)
Though we have cultural difference we are basically very much alike and can be very bonded because of Christ
They are more open to God than the US.

Just 'living' is a full time job when you lack resources, money and power. In America (US) we HAVE, WANT AND NEED EXCESS too much.

People in other parts of the world have so much less than many of us but seemed to be more family oriented and very simple
things seem to make them very happy. Children in this country are VERY special.
how happy they are in their own world with less than what we have!
Love for God in the midst of extreme circumstances
That they have the same cares and concerns as we, ie; having enough raising teens, health issues.
we are all the same, we just do things differently

I learned that the Honduran culture has much to offer and that we can learn from them, especially in their attitude about being content with what they have.

They will do anything to obtain help for their children including lying or stealing. I would do the same if I was in their shoes.

How they are so gracious and how they interact with each other.

Mostly to appreciate what we have and to see what other cultures don't have and are happy without
difference is good
How happy they are with so little.
I learned that time is not a factor
We can all work together just at different speeds

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VITAE

GAROLD RAY WAGNER

Missions—the organizing, going, supporting, sending, receiving, etc. has been a part of my life for the past thirty-six years. It began less than a year after I committed my life to Jesus and to serve Him according to His will. I was selected at Union College to be a student missionary to teach conversational English in Korea. After ten months, I was asked to go to Phnom Penh, Cambodia to direct the language school. This war-time effort included leading other student missionaries, evangelism, and refugee assistance work for SAWS.

Since that time, I served with my wife and children in: Thailand as Director of SAWS Thailand, which included supervision of around 200 medical and logistical volunteers; Micronesia as District Leader, pastor and school principal, supervising student missionary teachers; the Congo as Mission President and ADRA Country Director, training church members to move into unentered areas and start new churches, while supporting themselves; and Central and South America on short-term mission trips, each consisting of from 50 to 80 volunteers.

Stateside, I served as leader of the student missionary program at Union College, chairing the screening and selection committee. As a pastor for over thirty years, I have worked to renew the ministry mentality in members to recognize the role God has given them to serve Him. I have seen nearly every side of short-term missions. This experience has taught me the tremendous value of this resource, as well as the great need for caution in the selection, training, and sending of volunteers.

As the Lord leads, I choose to continue to be involved with missions. If nothing else, to encourage and train people of all ages to place themselves in God's hands to go where He wants them to go and to do what He wants them to do.