

Overseas Exposure Visits – Planning, Orientation, and
Funding for Travellers
Mission Outreach and Advocacy Committee - February 2007
Bay of Quinte Conference

Introduction

Travelling overseas can be a life-changing experience, stretching our worldview and transforming our understanding of ourselves, our world, and our faith. Many United Church congregations and members are taking advantage of opportunities to spend time in another country and culture. Some of these trips are largely educational and relational in nature, and other trips have service-oriented objectives.

Some of these trips come at the invitation of United Church of Canada global partners, and provide opportunities to learn about the work and ministries of those partners as well as deepening the partner relationship. Other trips may be initiated by the church group or individual from here who wishes to travel, but still involve significant time spent with a global partner organization. Still other trips may be opportunities for learning or volunteering that have nothing to do with United Church partners but are deemed to be important opportunities nonetheless.

Planning and Orientation for an Overseas Exposure Visit

1) Planning the Visit:

From the beginning, we recommend that the key persons planning a visit work with the new resource, “Sojourning”, available free from through the Program Coordinator for People in Mission (currently Rev. Rivkah Unland) of JGER, The Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit of the General Council Office. (runland@united-church.ca) 1-800-268-3781 or 416-231-7680, ext. 4016. This resource will guide your group through the essential stages of discernment, clarifying rationale, determining the kind of visit or trip your groups wants to make, raising funds, recruitment of participants, cross-cultural considerations, planning and orientation, the mission exposure trip itself, and post-trip considerations.

A second resource that the Conference strongly recommends is the short pamphlet, “Criteria and Questions for Engaging in Mission”, which provides questions that can help discern among the range of groups and opportunities that can come our way. This brochure can also assist your group members in understanding the UCC’s theology and practice of mission partnership.

2) Trips to Visit United Church of Canada Global Partners:

Overseas exposure trips to visit UCC global partners can bring alive the global work of our church throughout the world. It can also make more visible the impact of the Mission and Service Fund, which funds those global partnerships. Therefore, the Conference recommends that church groups wishing to travel overseas first consider visiting UCC partner organizations. Such visits should be arranged well in advance through the Program Coordinator for People in Mission (currently Rev. Rivkah Unland) at JGER. JGER staff are also more than willing to provide information about United Church of Canada partners overseas.

3) Orientation for the Travellers:

Orientation is a critical component of a successful overseas exposure trip, both prior to the trip and upon return home. The Canadian Churches' Forum for Global Ministries and the United Church of Canada are now offering orientation and re-orientation workshops for church groups planning a trip overseas. These orientations should be arranged well in advance. Again, contact the Program Coordinator for People in Mission (currently Rev. Rivkah Unland) at JGER.

4) The Conference's Role:

The Bay of Quinte Conference can assist you in several ways as you consider an overseas exposure visit and begin the planning for it. The Conference can also advise you of other congregations and groups that may be developing similar plans. Please contact the Conference Minister for Stewardship and Mission, (currently Rev. Dr. Nan Hudson), early in your planning process. She can be reached at 613-353-7151, or through the Conference office, or at: nan.hudson@sympatico.ca

5) Environmental Considerations:

Groups who wish to travel are increasingly asked to consider the "carbon footprint" their trip leaves behind on the environment, and to make provisions for offsetting that impact. Numerous websites offer assistance... here are a couple; you can "Google" for more.

<http://www.carbonfund.org/site/>

<http://www.tenpercentchallenge.org/>

Funding Support for an Overseas Exposure Visit

The Bay of Quinte Conference administers a small fund called the "Leadership Development Fund" that Conference members can apply to for a modest amount of exposure visit support. For application forms, please contact the Conference Office at 1-888-759-2444 or 613-398-1051.

The Bay of Quinte Conference Executive adopted in principle the following guidelines in February 2007 to govern the allocation of funding from the Leadership Development Fund for Overseas Exposure Visits.

- 1) Overseas exposure trips to visit UCC partners can bring alive the global work of our church throughout the world. It can also make more visible the impact of the Mission and Service Fund, which funds both global partnerships and the Leadership Development Fund. Therefore, trips planned to visit UCC partner organizations as its primary purpose will have the highest priority for funding from the Leadership Development Fund.
- 2) Overseas trips to visit people or organizations not affiliated with the UCC or its partners will not be prioritized for funding from the Leadership Development Fund.
- 3) When a member or congregational group wish to plan a visit overseas to a UCC partner, they should arrange that visit with the help of the appropriate Regional Relations Coordinator of the Justice, Global, and Ecumenical Relations Unit (JGER) of the GCO, and inform the Conference Minister for Stewardship and Mission at the same time.
- 4) That applicants be asked to demonstrate in their application how their trip proposal is consistent with the criteria and answers the questions contained in the Conference's "Criteria and Questions for Engaging in Mission" document.
- 5) That an pre-trip orientation for a church group be arranged well in advance through the Program Coordinator for People in Mission (currently Rev. Rivkah Unland) of JGER, either with JGER staff or staff of the Canadian Churches Forum.
- 6) That the leader or coordinator of a group that wishes to travel overseas work from the beginning with the resource "Sojourning ", available through JGER.
- 7) That funding be limited to a maximum of 10 people per church, which is also recommended by JGER as an ideal number of participants for overseas exposure visits.
- 8) That the allowance for overseas exposure visits be increased from the current \$150 p. p. to \$300 per person.
- 9) That funding of individuals on overseas trips to UCC partners be offered at the maximum (i.e. \$300) and be capped at \$3,000 per group.
- 10) That funding of individuals on overseas trips to non-United Church partners be limited to 40% of what they might receive (i.e. \$100 p.p) and capped at \$700 per group, with the proviso that the application addresses and satisfies the criteria and questions contained in the document "Criteria and Questions for Engaging in Mission". The Leadership & Faith Formation Committee in consultation with the Mission, Outreach & Advocacy Committee will be the final determinant of whether the application does in fact meet the criteria.