

DETERMINING *a* MISSION *or* PILGRIMAGE LOCATION

You are called to a Mission Experience or Pilgrimage.... but where?

Knowing where to serve can be one of the most daunting aspects of planning. Either the scope of the mission field can feel overwhelming or the finding the right place can feel impossible to find.

One way to discern a location is to gather your adult and youth leaders to discuss possibilities. In preparation, ask them to read the article, “Social Action Projects: A More Excellent Way,” included in this Manual. Carefully consider each of the suggested criteria as you narrow down possible mission or pilgrimage sites.

Pray together that the Holy Spirit guides your conversation and then begin identifying possibilities, considering:

- Regions that have been topics of conversation in the past,
- Issues that are on the hearts of members of your faith community,
- Relationships with congregations or communities that already exist either for your community or diocese or for other Episcopal churches, or

- Areas recently impacted by weather—related or other types of disasters.

Your group’s maturity level and capacity for travel as well as budgetary and fundraising criteria should be a part of this conversation, as well. This is the time to be realistic about possibilities and not get hung up on a romantic idea. You don’t have to travel far; powerful mission experiences and pilgrimages are available in your home state.

Alternatively, there are any number of organizations designed to assist you in planning a mission experience or pilgrimage. Google searches may be a starting point in identifying possible mission sites, but be aware that Google sites are not screened for reliability. Please note also that these mission trip planners are mostly based in denominations outside the Episcopal tradition, requiring a good deal of translation in language and worship. Finally, while it may be easier in terms of planning, remember that choosing a one—time mission experience doesn’t necessarily meet the important component of building a project in partnership with another group or community.

Because of its worldwide nature, the mission field of The Episcopal Church is broad and both the wider church and local dioceses maintain connections and locations that welcome youth and adult missionaries every year – in fact they plan on the assistance and support these groups provide. The relationship and partnership with these locations is natural and already in progress.

Inspiring Mission, www.InspiringMission.org, is an organization recently formed to maintain a church–wide list of possible mission sites with existing connections within The Episcopal Church. On its site you will find a map containing listings of possible locations with the amenities of each, along with descriptions of past work. You can connect directly with each mission location through this website.

However you decide to proceed, don't feel like you need to rush this process or simply jump at the first opportunity. As with all aspects of mission planning, take your time, be deliberate and trust that God will lead you to the right and best location.