

# TEAM COMMUNICATION

Maybe one of the most important precedents you can set is timely, relevant, and reliable communication. It's been said *that it takes five impressions for an actual message to cut through*. That means everything you are trying to communicate must be published, spoken, printed, and promoted at least five times.

Right from the outset, set the expectations and norms for communication. As soon as Team members and participants sign up, send a printed letter both welcoming the individual to the mission experience as well as outlining expectations and trip necessities. You will find several samples of these letters in this Manual.

For ongoing communication, create a monthly or twice-monthly e-newsletter. Make sure the newsletter is short, timely, easy to read and to the point. You teach people not to read your publications if you make it too chatty or if the information is not important now.

Reinforce these messages through your community and/or diocesan newsletters and make announcements on Sunday mornings.

You can also use social media (especially Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr) to reinforce everything you communicate. However, you don't want to rely solely on social media. It's too easy for families to miss important information if it's reliant upon showing up in someone's news feed.

You would be well-served to make sure everything you communicate is online in a centralized location. The best place to store everything is on your community or diocesan website. Some sites are easier to use than others so if that's not a reasonable solution, consider starting a blog or a simple site on your own. Platforms you might find easy to use include WordPress.com and SquareSpace.com.

*Sample Welcome Letter for International Travel*

**Province IV Youth Event**  
**Red Lake Nation**  
June 26 – 30, 2011  
Diocese of Minnesota

Hi Y'all,

In a short time, we will be gathering at The Episcopal Youth Event in the Diocese of Minnesota. We will be exploring all aspects of “mission” while we are at EYE and we will be preparing for our Three Days of Mission... THE

PROVINCE IV YOUTH EVENT 2011. The PYE Design Team is excited about our opportunity to be with the Ojibwe people of the Red Lake Nation. We are looking forward to learning from them about their life, their traditions and their history. As we stain the outside of St. Antipas Episcopal Church, paint St. John's Episcopal Church and play basketball with young people of the Red Lake Nation, the Body of Christ will be reflected through us all! I am looking forward to being with each of you and to discovering what God desires of us at the Province IV Youth Event 2011.

Here are some things that will help you as you prepare to come...

- If you are flying, you may arrange your departure on Thursday, June 30 at any time.
- Participants for PYE 2011 will gather at 10:30 am on Sunday, June 26 at the conclusion of EYE. We will travel by Motorcoach to Bemidji State University, Bemidji, MN, where we will be staying Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights. You may go to the Bemidji State University Webpage to see pictures of the campus. Sheets, pillows, pillowcase, blanket and a towel will be provided.

- On Wednesday, June 29, we will go to Itasca State Park, headwaters of the Mississippi River and then we will proceed back to Bethel University for the night. We will conclude with our final PYE evening program and a closing Eucharist for PYE 2011.
- On Thursday, June 30, the EYE Hospitality Team will transport you and your group back to the Minneapolis Airport for your flight back home.
- All meals will be provided EXCEPT for a fast food lunch on our way to Bemidji, MN on
  - Sunday, June 26. You will pay for your own lunch on Sunday afternoon.
  - If you have any questions about PYE, please call Beth Crow, The PYE 2011 Coordinator and the Diocese of North Carolina Youth Coordinator. Her cell number is 919–834–7474.
  - If you need Cookie Cantwell, Province IV Youth Coordinator, my cell phone is 910–264–5910.

WHAT TO BRING:

- Appropriate Work Clothes – Shirts with appropriate logos, no halter–tops, no sports bras worn as outerwear, no short shorts. Bring at least one pair of jeans or long work pants.
- Closed Toed Lace on Work Shoes or Boots. Tennis Shoes are appropriate. (No Flip Flops should be worn on the Work Site, please)
- Socks
- Nalgene Water Bottle or some other Water Bottle
- Backpack for transporting your “stuff” from where we are staying to the worksite
- Sunscreen
- Hat, Visor or Bandana
- Jacket or Sweatshirt: It may be cool at night
- Rain Gear or Poncho (it does rain in Minnesota!)
- Insect & Tick Repellent

- Washcloth
- Spending \$\$\$\$\$\$\$
- Plastic Bag for wet, dirty clothes
- AT LEAST ONE LARGE PAINTBRUSH PER PERSON

*Optional:*

- Camera and extra batteries
- “Crazy Creek” Chair (optional)
- DEFLATED BASKETBALLS (The Red Lake Youth LOVE to play Basketball and some of YOU will be playing Basketball with them. Let’s give them a LOT of Basketballs to use when we depart. OK?)
- Book to Read (optional)
- Bible and Journal

This Province IV Youth Event will be different from our other Province IV Youth Events. We will depart together from The Episcopal Youth Event 2011 and we will go out into the world to serve God and learn more about God’s people. We will be participating in a “Cultural Mission Exchange,” sharing one another’s culture and customs in a shared community of work, fellowship and worship. As we come together and share our gifts and talents with the Ojibwe people from the Red Lake Nation and they share with us, we will all be enriched and filled with the presence of God through one another. It will be an exciting and meaningful experience, and we hope to get a lot of work accomplished, too.

We are looking forward to being with you in a few weeks. Please contact us if you have any questions or special needs. You, your diocese and Province IV will continue to be in our thoughts and in our prayers! Please pray for EYE 2011, PYE 2011 and The Red Lake Nation!

Love in Christ,

*Beth Crow*

**Beth Crow**

Province IV Youth Event 2011 Coordinator, Diocese of North Carolina  
200 W. Morgan Street, Suite 300 Raleigh, North Carolina 27601  
Beth.crow@episdionc.org 919.208.0438 or 800.448.8775

**Lisa Aycock**

Province IV Youth Event 2011 Registrar, Diocese of North Carolina  
200 W. Morgan Street, Suite 300, Raleigh, North Carolina 27601  
Lisa.aycock@episdionc.org, 919.631.2571 or 800.448.8775

**Cookie Cantwell**

Province IV Youth Ministries Coordinator, St James Parish  
25 South Third Street, Wilmington, North Carolina 28401  
cookie@stjamesp.org, 910.763.1628

## PLANNING MEETINGS

Preparing your Mission Team for your experience is as equally important as the time spent at the site! All of the preparation will ensure that everyone involved is emotionally ready, has their expectations set accordingly and is familiar with the work style of the Team. These meetings help set the tone for your mission experience or pilgrimage, so be sure to spend time planning and working through exactly how you want to present information and establish your personality as a leader.

Here is a sample “tried-and-true plan” for preparing young people and adult volunteers on both the congregational and diocesan levels. Of course, you may want to have more or fewer meetings, or they can be incorporated into ongoing youth group programming.

Regardless of the schedule, be sure to meet the purposes of each meeting in the timing suggested.

	Timing	Who Should Participate	Purpose for Meeting
<b>Meeting 1</b>	10–12 months ahead	Full mission team and all parents/guardians	General Information, expectations, signup, participants, hand out applications, distribute international travel letter requirements
<b>Meeting 2</b>	5–6 months ahead	Full mission team	Set goals and purpose, create and sign covenant, establish family groups, share information gathered during site visit with host community
<b>Meeting 3</b>	2–3 months ahead	Full mission team	Continued learning about host community, planning for site-specific needs
<b>Meeting 4</b>	1 month ahead	Adult leaders only	Set expectations for communications, discipline, leadership styles
<b>Meeting 5</b>	2 weeks ahead	Full mission team and all parents/guardians	Revisit medical forms, re-enforce covenant, distribute trip booklets,

## TEAM COMMUNICATION

Diocesan—level training may vary depending on your schedule and the distance between participating faith communities. If geography is an obstacle, maintain communication via email or a Facebook page and hold a single retreat to promote team building.

The specific suggestions for individual meetings follow in this Manual.

# MEETING ONE

*Timing:* 10–12 months before mission experience or pilgrimage

*Participants:* Full mission team and all parents/guardians

*Goals:*

- Distribute initial information,
- Build community ownership and support,
- Distribute forms and applications,
- Establish initial expectations, and
- Distribute sample International Travel Letter (if applicable)

To begin the journey toward the mission experience, plan to have an initial meeting with all interested youth, adult chaperones, and their parents/guardians.

Begin with a meditation, prayer, or Scripture — something inspirational to clearly establish that this is not just a trip but also a meaningful spiritual journey.

You will want to discuss the specifics of the trip as much as possible, including:

- Background information on the host community and site
- Logistics
- The trip's cost,
- Fundraising plan,
- Participant expectations, and
- Timeline

An important part of this meeting is to clearly explain the requirements for participation in the mission experience. This can be done by distributing your application and discussing it in full.

This is also an opportunity to connect with the families supporting the missionaries. Families are a great resource for fundraising assistance, community support, and prayer. Getting their ownership for the mission experience or pilgrimage will be essential to the preparation process.

## MEETING ONE

Through your leadership of this meeting you are not only communicating the specifics of the experience but you are also establishing both the communication patterns as well as confidence in your ability to lead the experience.

Always leave time for questions at the end. And, as much as possible, keep this and all meetings to 1 hour. Shorter meetings are more productive.

# MEETING TWO

*Timing:* 5–6 months before mission experience or pilgrimage

*Participants:* Full mission team

*Goals:*

- Continue to learn about host community
- Create and sign Covenant
- Develop Team’s purpose, theme, and objectives and
- Form Family Groups

*Create and sign Covenant*

The Mission Team will create and sign a covenant, committing them to the mission experience. See the section on Covenants for more discussion.

*Develop the Team’s Purpose, Theme, and Objectives*

To help the group understand the purpose of the mission experience, develop a mission statement, objectives, and goals for the experience. This is a crucial part of preparing for the experience, as it involves the group developing, knowing, and understanding their expectations. Also during this time, have the team brainstorm a theme for the experience.

Be sure that you include all that you learned on your site visit about the host community’s needs, desires, and expectations. If possible, consider video conferencing members of the host community into this conversation.

In developing the mission statement, objectives, and goals, you will need to have an understanding how each is defined:

- **Mission Statement:** what are you trying to accomplish, purpose, etc.
- **Objectives:** general statement of purpose for a specific area
- **Goals:** specific statements relating to the objectives and general goals for your group

As the group works through the different statements and ideas, you may want to use a dry—erase board, chalkboard, or butcher paper to write out the statements. This will allow the group to see the statements and will also help in editing.

Once you have finalized these, plan to share them as much as possible with families and the faith community. They will help everyone see the intentionality behind the experience.

### *Form Travel Groups*

To promote interaction and accountability among the adults and youth, assign Travel Groups composed of a small group of 4–7 youth and 1–2 adult leaders. Encourage groups to choose a name or identifier. The Family Group provides structure, which can be integrated into every aspect of the project. It also helps with group management as you travel, as each adult leader is then responsible for the youth in their Family Group. It can also help take a bigger group and divide it into a manageable size for the less extroverted.

The Family Groups can share together, be responsible for different projects together and provide a framework for accountability. For example, you can assign tasks like clean—up, leading worship, etc. to family groups on a rotating basis throughout preparation and travel.

# CREATING *a* COMMUNITY COVENANT

It is important that you establish Team behavioral expectations early. These should apply not just during the Mission Experience or Pilgrimage, but also throughout your preparation and even into your youth group.

The Covenant not only creates boundaries within which each individual agrees to operate and the potential consequences, but it also helps you as a leader readily identify behavior that needs to be corrected and how to go about it.

A Covenant also establishes a sense of “safety” and “predictability” for all group members.

Remember that it is your job as the Leader to enforce this Covenant. Your Team is depending on YOU to ensure this happens.

To help with buy-in, create the Covenant at a Mission Team meeting that doesn’t involve parents/guardians. Use a white board or newsprint and markers and ask for suggestions from the Team about what should go into the Covenant. Be sure it addresses:

- Drug use
- Alcohol use
- Sleeping arrangements, curfew, and quiet time

- Participation
- Interpersonal treatment
- Behavior
- Appropriate displays of affection
- Appropriate attire
- Language
- Restrictions around leaving
- Use of technology  
(see the next section for suggestions on how to handle this)

Be sure to distribute the Covenant to all participants and parents/guardians at the next meeting.

If you have a behavioral issue, rely on the Covenant and, if necessary, gather the group to discuss the incident and how to handle it.

You will find the 30 minutes or so you spend developing the Covenant some of the most important in terms of setting the tone of the whole experience.

*The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina*  
*Youth Ministries Department*  
*Community Covenant*

**EXPECTATIONS:**

1. Participants and team will treat others as you would like to be treated, with respect for the event by displaying concern for others. Your behavior reflects on you and on the group. We are accountable to each other. Behavior that is disruptive or harmful to the community or property will not be tolerated.
2. Participants and team will respect the property of the facility and that of all those attending the event.
3. Participants and team will be present and on time at all planned activities (meals included). All participants are expected to be present from the opening activities on the first day through the closing activities on the last day.
4. Participants and team will abide by the curfews, quiet times and physical boundaries (inside & outside the buildings, on the grounds and including any use of equipment).
5. Participants and team will not possess and/or use any controlled substances or weapons, including, but not limited to, any drugs, alcohol, knives, or firearms.
6. Participants and team will dress appropriately throughout the entire event, following the guidelines of the Best Practices (change clothes in a private space; undergarments should not be visible; leggings can only be worn with shorts or a skirt).
7. Because of insurance liability, youth are not permitted to leave the event without authorized adult supervision. Any advisor or group wishing to leave should do so only with the consent of the Diocesan Youth Missioner.
8. Anyone not registered in the conference is not allowed to attend any part of the event other than the closing worship service.
9. Use of cell phone is only permitted after the closing activity each evening. Use of phones during other times will result in one's phone being confiscated until the end of the conference.

**This is the Community Covenant for all youth events held by the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina. Any violation of this covenant will be reviewed and addressed by Covenant Committee. Possible consequences may include notification of the violator's parents and rector; the violator may be asked to leave the event and not return for the current event and the next scheduled youth event. The parents of the violator will be responsible for all expenses resulting in early returns home because of disciplinary actions.**

# A WORD *about* TECHNOLOGY

Needless to say, smartphones, iPods, iPads and other electronic devices are ubiquitous. Rarely will you see an individual that doesn't have their phone nearby. It allows them to stay in touch with friends and family at every moment and the endless number of apps and ever—available music ensure that every moment is occupied electronically.

However, mission experiences are intended to give participants the opportunity to set aside their usual comforts and distractions and to be fully present in the moment.

Although the final decision is up to each trip leader, it is entirely appropriate to incorporate into the Covenant an agreement that there will not be any electronic devices on the trip. If you want to allow iPods for music, set parameters around the times they can be used. Typically this includes sleep times.

If a smartphone is also a young person's camera, suggest they purchase a small portable camera or share photos with someone on the trip who has a camera. There are also inexpensive disposable digital cameras available for purchase.

If you do allow electronics, incorporate appropriate use agreements into your Covenant. Address issues around when and where the electronic device can be used and for what purposes. This can also be a good opportunity to discuss the ramifications of

posting photos or status updates without the subject's permission.

Parents/guardians also rely on technology to stay in touch with their young people, so it may create anxiety for them not to be able to check—in. In fact, it may be the first time in years that they are out of immediate contact with their child. Be understanding and help them see the benefits of decreased reliance on technology for the missionaries. Assure them that you will be in touch if there are any issues.

For safety purposes, adult leaders should always have a phone, but they should only be used for necessary communication with sites, parents back home, between Family Groups, and for emergencies.

## *Posting to Blogs, Social Networks, and Video and Photo Sites*

One way to keep family and friends back home in the loop is to post to a blog/social network or photo site daily. This can be accomplished from an adult leader's smartphone, iPad, or laptop, or from a public Internet access point. If you use Family Groups, assign a different group each day to the task of posting.

If you are posting photos or videos, be sure you have photo releases for each of your participants and do not tag individuals on social media.

# MEETING THREE

*Timing:* 2–3 months before mission experience or pilgrimage

*Participants:* Full mission team

*Goals:*

- Planning for site—specific needs
- Planning for Commissioning Service
- Exploring the physical and cultural environment of the community you are visiting

This meeting is where the nuts and bolts planning begins.

For example, if you are doing relief work, plan for a tool drive or other packing needs. If you are on pilgrimage, plan what items you need to bring to support your journey. If you are working with children, use this time to make a list of the supplies you will need, how you will get them, and practice the stories you will lead or the games you will play.

You may need to plan a follow—up meeting for additional planning. Information for this meeting can come from the mission or pilgrimage site.

Also at this meeting you will want to incorporate the team in Commissioning Service planning. Who will be giving the sermon? Who is doing the Commissioning? Are you writing your service or using one of the samples in this book?

See the section on Commissioning Services for a fuller discussion on planning the service.

Finally, this is the point at which you should be exploring the culture and environment of the community you will be visiting. If you took a site visit, consider sharing what you experienced and learned. If possible, bring in a guest speaker to talk with the group about expectations and cultural norms from their perspectives. This will be an ongoing and important part of preparing for your mission experience or pilgrimage.

Also, take care of yourself in the important day—to—day ways: exercise, eat balanced meals, and make sure you are getting enough sleep. This should be true not just for you but for everyone participating.

# MEETING FOUR

*Timing:* 1 month before mission experience or pilgrimage

*Participating:* Adult mission team members

*Goals:*

- Continue to set expectations for communications, decision-making
- Establish protocols around discipline, and
- Discuss self-care and how to ensure each adult has space for personal centering

Although there are always several adults on every mission experience and pilgrimage, there is really only one leader. This is the meeting where the trip leader establishes a primary leadership role among the adult chaperones. This does not mean the trip becomes a dictatorship; it means ultimately that one individual is the contact person, responsible for handling difficult situations, discipline, etc.

Because this can be a challenging conversation for adults who have never traveled in this way, consider holding this meeting in an informal setting over a meal – at a restaurant or your house, if you are comfortable with that. Creating an informal environment will help you develop rapport with your leaders and create the model of servant leadership.

Your role, as the trip leader, is to support the youth and adult leaders throughout this journey and this meeting helps to set that tone.

During the course of this gathering you will want to talk through how you, as adults on the trip, will work together. Covenant to meet daily – either before morning meeting or after evening meeting – to check-in on each other individually as well as to compare notes on how other members of the team are managing the experience. Create an open and safe space to share any concerns and reflections and commit to working through the process in a non-reactive way.



Allow each adult leader to share any concerns they have about self—care and brainstorm as a team how to ensure each adult is able to take care of themselves. Of course, this is all within the constraints of the site, the work or pilgrimage expectations, and the realities of this type of journey.

Pray together and commit to supporting each other on this journey. This is a trip focused on relationships and none is more critical than healthy, whole friendships among the adult leaders.

# SELF-CARE, SPIRITUAL PRACTICE *and* *the* ROLE of LEADER

Every mission experience or pilgrimage has one leader who carries the bulk of the logistical and leadership responsibilities. Often, but not always, this is the paid staff from the faith community or diocese.

The trip leader should be mature in their faith and comfortable with taking care of themselves personally and emotionally.

Leaders should determine their centering spiritual practices before they leave home and make sure to carve out the time to continue this practice throughout the experience. No excuses! You are serving as a model for Christian leadership and spiritual connectedness and it's important to take this as seriously as any other aspect of the experience.

All adults on the mission experience or pilgrimage should have a sense of how they will practice their faith while traveling. Talk through this with your adult team.

Your rapport with the adult team should be close enough that you can ask for the space you need to stay centered and balanced – and they should be free to do the same. Asking for 15 minutes apart from the group

is not a weakness or a failure; it is a show of strength and models healthy self-care. Here are some ideas:

- Meditation is one way of finding a calm center. If you practice meditation before you leave, you will be able to utilize this skill even in the midst of a group setting.
- Memorize a collect from the Book of Common Prayer to use as a centering practice.
- Take a 15-minute nap. Sometimes all you need is to catch up on sleep.
- Go for a walk alone.
- Listen to calm music.

If you can, work with a spiritual director, priest, deacon, or a trusted spiritual companion to talk through how you are going to take care of yourself during the mission experience or pilgrimage.

# MEETING FIVE

*Timing:* about 2 weeks before mission experience or pilgrimage

*Participants:* Full mission team (youth and adults) and parents/guardians

*Goals:*

- Reinforce expectations for communication, discipline, leadership styles
- Collect International letters and re—visit forms and travel documents

This is an extremely important meeting that should take place no more than two weeks before the trip. The purpose of this meeting is to update the information for the parents and re—establish a sense of confidence in your leadership and the capacity of your team.

These topics should be discussed:

- Itinerary, review of logistics, and contact information
- Distribute trip booklet for parents/guardians
- Review Covenant and your team agreement about use of technology
- Financial issues – how much money to bring on the trip, how to manage the money
- Release forms – have parents/guardians read forms and note any changes
- Other important details
- Q&A

The only new item introduced at this meeting is the trip booklet. It will be discussed later in this Manual.

The most important element of this meeting is to be intentional about establishing spiritual and logistical confidence. Begin and end with prayer or meditation. Review the Commissioning service and how you will incorporate spiritual practices into the journey. Ask parents/guardians to commit to spiritual practices that mirror yours, as they are included in the trip booklet.

Patently answer any questions that families have. And be sure to thank them for entrusting their loved one in your care.