

One of the primary reasons we are excited about short-term missions is because of the breadth of benefits that result from participating. There are few, if any, other types of ministry that can accomplish so much in so many areas of the work of the church.

### **BIBLICAL**

It provides an opportunity for obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ and Scripture. The only instruction Christ gave to His disciples after His resurrection on earth was missions. (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:45-49, Acts 1:8). The Bible also commands us to minister to the poor. (Isaiah 58:6-9, James 2:14-17, Prov. 14:21b, 14:31, 19:17, 22:9, 21:13) As we put into practice what we've learned, we enlarge our capacity to learn more.

### **SPIRITUAL**

If all we know of Christ is based on our experience within the limited confines of one church, then we end up with a knowledge that may be insufficient when we leave that familiar setting. Participation on a short-term project gives a larger perspective of God's work that transcends our circumstances. One of the greatest needs in the church today is to learn to listen and be attentive to the voice of the Lord - not some mystical experience, but rather having a heart that is open and sensitive to the leading and prompting of the Lord. Short-term projects break the routine and the "rat race" approach to life, and provide each participant with quality time to reflect on the character of God and who they are in light of that character.

### **CULTURAL**

You grow in sensitivity to other cultures and develop a world vision that challenges you to reach the whole world for Christ. Some of the greatest lessons the disciples learned from Christ were in cross-cultural contexts. (See John 4 - The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?")

### **RELATIONAL**

Short-term projects build unity in a group because they have a common focus that is often larger than anything they have done before. Together they must deal with cultural and language barriers, heat, sickness, and fear of the unknown. They also experience the satisfaction of ministering to a hurting world. In all of this a group learns how to depend on each other, encourage and care for each other, and hold each other accountable. These projects create a microcosm of the body of Christ which should affect the way they relate to the true body of Christ.

### **CHARACTER**

The refiner's fire is designed to consume the dross and refine the gold. Short-term projects are the crucible that can produce godly character in a person's life. Time after time individuals tell us of life changing decisions they have made as a result of these projects. There was one girl on a project recently who was a 'debutante' on the outside but on the inside she was troubled. This teenage girl was disliked by everyone because she was very critical, confrontive, often vulgar and offensive to those around her. During the project she came face to face with her character and its impact on the lives of others. She stood up in front of the whole group at the end of the project and apologized: "I know I've been hard to live with," she said (at which the group applauded their agreement), "but you've loved me through it all and have still accepted me and I've been overcome by it." Two weeks after she returned home her youth leader called to update us. This young girl heard her mom crying one night and went into her mom's bedroom to see what was wrong. Her mom said, "You've changed. You aren't the same girl who left four weeks ago and I love what you've become. I'm crying because my heart is so thankful."

## **VALUES**

When one comes face to face with the needs of the world it is hard to sit by and do nothing, especially when one sees how far a little, (by our standards), will go in ministering to a hurting world. Lifestyle choices are often confronted. Some participants realize just how much affluence stands as an obstacle to the exercise of their faith. Some are challenged to reorganize their personal finances in order to give more to missions.

People who participate in short-term projects are often exposed to greater poverty and hopelessness than they have seen at home. If the project is done right, they will be given the tools, support and encouragement to do something about the need. They then return convinced, "I can make a difference in a hurting world." This is a powerful force for the church when these individuals decide to make a difference in their own community.

## **VOCATIONAL**

Short-term projects reveal much about a person's character, giftedness, strengths and weaknesses. It is often a key to understanding your passion for ministry, and can help clarify God's call. Full-time Christian ministry becomes a feasible option for people who otherwise would have never considered the possibility.

## **MINISTRY**

It has often been pointed out that Christians will not cross the street to help a neighbor, but if you can get them to cross the sea to help the needy they will cross the street when they return. We have seen groups return and establish new ministries both within their own congregation and outside the church in the community. A key purpose of these trips is to strengthen the outreach of the local church. We do not want just to meet the needs overseas and ignore the needs in our own cities. We believe these projects provide that catalyst that sparks both the sensitivity to the needs around us at home and the passion needed to do something about them.

Some people do evangelism for the first time on these projects. For some reason an overseas project provides a safe place to take the risk of sharing one's faith, and asking another to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This can create the confidence needed to do the same thing when they return home.

## **MISSIONS**

A high percentage of PCA missionaries on the field today attribute participating on a short-term project as a major factor in answering the call to be a missionary. Short-term projects will expose thousands over the next several years to the mission field, thus enlarging the potential field of new missionaries available for the next century's task. How exciting it would be to see the PCA ready to approach the next century with a vast army of missionaries sent out to all the world for Christ. Short-term projects can provide great encouragement to the missionary on the field. Rather than the missionary always having to come to the church back in the States, the church comes to them. When the group leaves, the missionary can be confident that the churches who participated will be more informed and faithful supporters. Once again the distance between the pew and the field is bridged and the work of the church is unified further.

## **THE PEOPLE YOU SERVE ARE BENEFITTED**

During these projects we will build churches, clinics, schools, houses and other structures. We will bring medical teams to minister to their physical needs and we will share the Gospel with them by our testimony. We have the opportunity to eliminate a lot of suffering in the world, and to bring moments of joy and peace into people's lives, and hopefully to bring them to Him who is the eternal source of peace. This is the work we are called to do for the benefit of the hurting world.