

Short mission trips when money is tight



SUMMARY: Your congregation has felt the effects of the economic downturn and your mission trips likely have as well. Don't give up mission projects. Discover new ways to be in mission without spending as much.

Mission work is an important ministry in The United Methodist Church. Many congregations unite around mission endeavors. Scaling back the budget doesn't mean you must reduce mission. Consider these alternatives for continued mission service.

Stay close to home.

You need not travel to serve God's people. Look for people and projects in your community that can use help. Make repairs and paint homes for low-income families or older adults. Visit shut-ins. Offer job-skills training and placement assistance.

If mission volunteers want to travel, consider a domestic destination within driving distance. Consider an area affected by a natural disaster. Contact the General Board of Global Ministries to coordinate your mission: go to <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/about/us/mv/>.

Consider couch surfing.

Instead of staying in a hotel, consider camping, sleeping at a host church or staying with host-church families. Bring sleeping bags and bunk in a fellowship hall. Participate in one of The United Methodist Church's mission [programs](#), which often provide lodging.

People are searching the world for spiritual fulfillment. CouchSurfing.org could be a valuable tool as you begin to rethink your church and reach out to the global community. Read "[Rethink your couch: a new spin on mission](#)" for more ideas on how to incorporate couch surfing in your ministry.

Plan a mission-themed retreat.

Take a day or two from the daily grind and use the downtime purposefully. Focus on how everyone can be a servant of God in daily life. Set up prayer stations to pray for those who are struggling in all parts of the world. Plan service projects such as making greeting cards or knitting prayer shawls. Learn how UMCOR relief supplies sustain everyday life by going to this website: <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/getconnected/supplies/>

Create a pen-pal program.

Keep the spirit of missions alive with letters and emails. Minister to one another through art and letter exchanges. Correspond with those you have met on previous mission trips or start a prison pen-pal program.

Bring a missionary to you.

Enter into a [covenant relationship](#) with a United Methodist missionary. The cost can be as low as \$5 per church member per year. This program gives your congregation an opportunity to meet the missionary face-to-face and host him or her at the church. Continue the relationship after the visit by praying for the missionary regularly and sending care packages, letters of encouragement and greeting cards.

Establish a mission month.

Choose a month to focus specifically on missions. Include events such as mission-specific prayer stations. Have an international dinner featuring food from parts of the world where missionaries you know serve. Through Skype online videoconferencing, schedule a call during your dinner with one or more of your church's groups. Ask the missionaries to send emails or letters to read to the congregation. Invite local missionaries—those who direct food banks or serve with the homeless or lead similar ministries—to share their work. Provide information about connectional giving to raise awareness of The Advance, UMCOR and other United Methodist outreach.