

Team Leader Handbook

United Methodist Volunteers In Mission,
Southeastern Jurisdiction

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www.umvim.org

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Introduction

What is UMVIM?

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) is the short-term mission arm of the United Methodist Church. Our volunteers are lay and clergy, young and old, with differing abilities, vocations, and stations in life. We come together through the United Methodist Church in order that all may offer their skills and talents for Christian service at home and abroad.

Our emphasis is upon matching persons with opportunities so that everyone may participate in mission. After all, mission is not only for those who live in the field full-time. God calls all Christians "to bring good news to the oppressed [and] to bind up the broken-hearted" (Isaiah 61:1). We believe that no matter who you are, no matter the level of your resources, no matter how big or small your church, God is calling you to mission.

UMVIM exists to connect you with mission projects, both in your backyard and across the globe. Within the United Methodist Church, UMVIM relates closely with Annual Conference UMVIM committees and the General Board of Global Ministries, all of which seek to serve as a source of information for potential volunteers.

What is SEJ?

UMVIM, SEJ is the jurisdictional organization for the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) of the United Methodist Church. This arrangement means that UMVIM, SEJ is responsible for facilitating short-term mission in the following annual conferences: Kentucky, Red Bird, Memphis, Tennessee, Holston, Virginia, Western North Carolina, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, North Alabama, Alabama-West Florida, North Georgia, South Georgia, and Florida.

How we work with local churches

UMVIM, SEJ exists to help local churches fulfill the great commission by personifying Christian love in action. Our primary function is to connect churches with appropriate mission projects, both within the US and abroad. We also provide training materials for churches and mission teams, and we exist as a resource for team leaders. Our website, www.umvim.org, offers information on the process of sending a team, potential project sites, and insurance information. In addition, the staff of UMVIM, SEJ is knowledgeable on all aspects of short-term mission. Contact our office with any questions relating to your local church's mission experience. If we cannot immediately answer your question, we will connect you with someone who can.

Best practices

UMVIM, SEJ considers the following four items best practices for UMVIM teams:

1. *Have a trained team leader through your annual conference or Southeastern Jurisdiction UMVIM program.* Contact your annual conference UMVIM coordinator for more information on upcoming trainings. You can find your coordinator, as well as a listing of upcoming training events, on the UMVIM website, www.umvim.org. This handbook is commonly used as the basis for the training, though please note that simply reading this handbook does not take the place of attending a team leader training.
2. *Comply with the Safe Sanctuaries policy of your annual conference.* Each annual conference has a policy designed to make church programming safe and welcoming for children and vulnerable adults; this policy is commonly called "Safe Sanctuaries." It is your responsibility as the team leader to ensure that your annual conference's policy is observed during all parts of your mission experience: before, during, and after the trip. More information on Safe Sanctuaries is offered later in this handbook.
3. *Register your team and take insurance through UMVIM, SEJ.* There is a nominal fee for these services. Registering your team allows us to assist your team in placement, maintain mission relationships with our projects, and intervene in the case of a dispute between your team and the project. A copy of the insurance policy is available from the UMVIM, SEJ office. Our insurance policy covers both accidents and illnesses that occur while you are on your mission trip, and we believe it is vital that all mission teams take out insurance before traveling. Mission trips can carry with them some inherent risk, and it is very important to plan for contingencies. We pray that your mission experience is free of any need for insurance, but we know that sometimes, insurance can mean the difference between a negligible medical bill and an overwhelmingly large one.

While we ask that all teams register with our office, we do require that all teams who take insurance through UMVIM, SEJ also pay the associated registration fee.

4. *Serve with an UMVIM project.* Though some mission teams who register and get insurance through UMVIM, SEJ do serve with projects not directly related to UMVIM, SEJ, serving with an UMVIM project (that is, a project listed on our website) gives us a layer of accountability often not possible otherwise. UMVIM projects have all been approved by area bishops and church officials, and should the need arise, we are able to step in and address certain situations. These projects have also gone through an extensive application process.

What is a team leader?

A team leader is someone who has undergone UMVIM team leader training and serves as the “head missionary.” There are as many leadership styles as there are mission volunteers, and there is no one set model for being a successful team leader. However you choose to delegate your responsibilities, and however you choose to lead your team, your team must understand that above all, you are the leader. When conflicts arise on your team—and they will inevitably arise—it is vital that your decisions are respected. Safety requires that in difficult situations—particularly internationally, or in situations unfamiliar to the team—the team leader has the ultimate say. This does not mean that the team leader should function as a dictator. Rather, it means that the team respects the leader as the one ultimately in charge, and functions accordingly.

A Note About This Handbook

We have structured this handbook around the process of forming and sending a team. If you are a seasoned team leader, you might already be familiar with some of the material discussed early in the handbook. However, we have included information and tips we have received from team leaders and long-term individual volunteers. You will benefit from reading this handbook from start to finish. As always, if you have any questions about the process of forming or sending your team, please contact us.

Please note: while this handbook supplements training, it does not replace Team Leader Training coordinated through your annual conference or through the UMVIM, SEJ office. As a team leader, you are still expected to attend one of these training sessions.