



Be With Spiritual Growth Do No Harm Cross Significant Boundaries Empower vs. Enable Develop Mutual and Respectful Relationships Ensuring an Ongoing Experience Be With Spiritual Growth Do No Harm Cross Significant Boundaries Empower vs. Enable Develop Mutual and Respectful Relationships Ensuring an Ongoing Experience Be With Spiritual Growth Do No Harm Cross Significant Boundaries Empower vs. Enable Develop Mutual and Respectful Relationships Ensuring an Ongoing Experience Be With Spiritual Growth Do No Harm Cross Significant Boundaries Empower vs. Enable Develop Mutual and Respectful Relationships Ensuring an Ongoing Experience Be With

How is God calling St. James's to engage in missions in 2023 and beyond?

January-February 2023 Discernment Process

The Missions Committee initiated a discernment process open to the entire congregation. The results of a parish-wide survey overwhelmingly indicated the importance of missions to our congregation and the desire to be involved in this work.

01

March-May 2023 Committee Formation

A new Missions Committee was formed and met regularly for a time of prayer, reading, reflection, and discussion. This faithful, invigorating, and productive process culminated in a new Missions Statement and Guiding Principles.

02

Summer 2023 Alignment Analysis

We have engagements planned with our current mission partners and, at the conclusion of each experience, we will assess whether the current relationships are consistent with our new Mission Statement and Guiding Principles.

03

Current mission partners include Project Homes here in Richmond, OLR in Honduras, Hurley Community Center in Appalachia and Harvest of Hope on the Eastern Shore.

Fall 2023 Looking Ahead

If the current relationships are not consistent with our new Mission Statement and Guiding Principles, we will either make plans to adjust the partnerships to more closely align with our direction or consider a new mission partner. We will also begin research aimed at identifying and evaluating possible future mission partners.

04

The team read and discussed two books, *Toxic Charity* and *Going Global with God*, and were guided by a brief Mission Video by Sam Wells.

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Mission Statement

Following the example of Jesus Christ, the Missions Ministry of St. James's seeks to cultivate and sustain relationships with God, our mission partners, and each other.

Guiding Principles

Be With

"Be With" refers to how we approach our relationships with our mission partners. While our relationships will at times include aspects of "doing for," "doing with," and "being for," we will prioritize "being with". One of our goals is to develop **long-term relationships**, and achieving it will require slowing down, listening deeply, seeking to understand, accompanying, discerning, and, most importantly, **being present**.

We believe that the first step in mission is **pilgrimage**, during which we will spend time learning about and **relating to** our mission partners as opposed to initially and primarily "doing for" them. We will experience each other's lives, tell each other our stories, and pray together. Our expectation is that we and our partners will discern together what work we can accomplish and what work we will jointly undertake.

Given our focus on relationships, we have opted to build a **deep vs. wide** mission ministry. That is, we will develop deeper and ongoing relationships with fewer rather than many mission partners. We also believe that deeper, long-term relationships are likely to result in service opportunities for parishioners who are not able to participate in actual trips.

Spiritual Growth

Seeing God in Christ in others is often a by-product of mission trips. There are certainly accounts from those whose lives have been transformed by their mission experiences. We believe that such transformation comes more from relationship building vs. the building of structures, and that **spiritual growth should be a priority and not the result of happenstance**. To help facilitate this, we will engage in in-depth preparation for our trips which will include **before, during and after phases**. We will also encourage mission leaders to prioritize spiritual growth when they plan their trips, and will encourage participants, when possible, to make longer term commitments to spiritual growth, the ministry and its relationships with our partners.

Do No Harm

In spite of unquestionably good intentions, mission trips may create unintended and even harmful consequences. When done without forethought, efforts to "do for" may weaken those being served, erode work ethic and create dependency over the long term. In addition, our good intentions to help may inadvertently harm the relationship dynamics with our mission partner. Our overriding guidance is to do no harm and we will carefully evaluate our actions relative to this principle.

Cross Significant Boundaries

We believe that mission is when people are sent by God and communities to minister in a different setting among people who are different in some major way so that we may experience Christ in the other in new and surprising ways. The boundaries we cross can be socio-economic, cultural, geographical, ideological, religious, etc. This principle is grounded in our belief that the overall direction of **God's mission in the world is reconciliation**, that is, to mend and heal our broken relationships with God, ourselves and each other. Our mission ministry will be a sacrament of reconciliation, which may require us to leave our comfort zone to understand and experience God in others who are different from us in significant ways. **What is God saying to us in this world of difference?**

Empower vs. Enable

When endeavoring to help others, it is often easier to "do for" rather than to think of creative ways to problem solve with them – handouts are quick and easy and often don't get at root causes. We will spend time and resources to work together with mission partners to **develop capacity**. Simply put, we subscribe to the proverb "if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, but if you teach him to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." We will strive to limit one-way giving to emergency situations as opposed to including it as part of our long-term plan.

Develop Mutual and Respectful Relationships

Strong and sustained relationships with our mission partners will require respect and mutuality, acknowledging that we have as much or more to learn from our partners as they do from us. Relationships are weakened if one partner is dominant and contributions are one-way, which is often the case in relationships between church mission ministries and their mission partners. This **imbalance perpetuates patterns of privilege, power and beneficence**, which damages the relationship dynamic and works against our intent.

The relationship with our partners should be founded in mutuality. In addition to us visiting our partners, we will invite our partners to our home, so that we are both extending and receiving hospitality.

Ensuring an Ongoing Experience *A Before, During, and After*

We believe that missions should not be one and done experiences that last a week. These have limited value to those we serve and offer little opportunity for spiritual growth for both parties. Instead, mission trips will be part of a long-term plan of relationship-building and mutual engagement. Our trips will include before, during and after phases, which will entail research, communication, Bible study, and prayer. **Reflection and discernment will be ongoing throughout the process**. Planning may begin as early as nine months prior to a trip. When possible, we will also engage other SJEC groups and ministries, e.g. youth, children's, music, bible study, etc. to work throughout the year with our ministry and our partners.