Mennonite Mission Network

Service Adventure
Unit Leader Handbook



Mission and Vision of Mennonite Mission Network

Mennonite Mission Network exists to lead, mobilize and equip the church to participate in holistic witness to Jesus Christ in a broken world.
We envision every congregation and all parts of the church being fully engaged in mission — across the street, all through the marketplaces and around the world.

Service Adventure Program Commitment

Service Adventure members are involved in issues and activities of a local community and a local Mennonite congregation, share in a household where a sustainable lifestyle is affirmed and caring relationships are nurtured, and demonstrate compassionate service which honors and imitates Jesus Christ's love for all people and His special concern for those who suffer from injustice.

June 2026

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Service Adventure Program

Welcome!

Welcome to Service Adventure! We are grateful for your work with our youth. We pray that this is a time of growth for you and the participants, as you serve God in your community.

Program overview

Service Adventure, established in 1989, is a program for post-high school young adults, ages 17-20. Service Adventure is a program of Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) of the Mennonite Church USA. Administrative responsibility is housed in the Global Partnerships division of MMN.

Participants live together with up to five other young adults, under the guidance of a unit leader. Participants serve in local community agencies for 35-40 hours of service per week and become involved in the ministry of their hosting congregation.

The unit leaders are selected and prepared by MMN to provide structure and guidance to unit life. Service Adventure is a commitment to live in a household with young adults. Life with your group provides opportunities for rich fellowship, friendship, and fun. Tolerance, flexibility, and a willingness to work hard at maintaining healthy relationships are required.

All unit members share household work and activities. You meet regularly for worship and business meetings, worship and participate as a household with a local Mennonite congregation. As a unit leader, you are involved with the participants in many areas, including one-on-one meetings, weekly learning experiences and unit activities.

Objectives

- To join congregations in engaging within the local community.
- To provide opportunity to see where God is at work and invitations to join that work.
- To offer each other gifts of service and to receive gifts of insight and perspective.
- To develop lives of Christian leadership and compassion.
- To provide tools and training opportunities to build intercultural competence and grow in ability to see and offer faithful resistance to discrimination/oppression as they learn about God's work in the world.
- To provide participants to explore Christian faith and a relationship with Jesus while living in community with others and as part of the local faith community.

"A method and philosophy of experiential learning through which participants expand their knowledge of society; develop abilities for critical thinking; develop commitments, values and skills needed for effective citizenship; and contribute in meaningful ways to addressing social problems." Eby, John. *Linking Service and Learning: Observations from the Service-Learning Movement*. Consultation for Short Term Service, 1997.

People to know

Mennonite Mission Network Staff

Michael Oyer
Service Adventure Program Director
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Unit Leaders

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Calendar

Unit calendar	
July	Leaders' training/orientation Pre-term leadership development tool due
August	Participants arrive Unit orientation Host family social Unit reflection activity
September	Leader check-in with each service assignment/supervisor Program director Fall unit visits Unit reflection activity
October	Unit retreat Program director Fall unit visits Unit reflection activity
November	Begin planning for Advent Entire unit re-evaluate covenant and review policies Program director Fall unit visits Unit reflection activity
December	Celebrate Advent Send care packages to friends with Service Adventure information Program director Fall unit visits Unit reflection activity
January	Leader check-in with each service assignment/supervisor Mid-year participant evaluations due Mid-year leadership development tools Mid-year leaders' retreat Unit reflection activity

February	Begin planning for Lent Unit reflection activity
March	Celebrate Lenten season Program director Spring unit visits-possible Unit reflection activity
April	Plan for unit to provide/plan worship service at host congregation Program director Spring unit visits-possible Unit reflection activity
May	Unit reflection activity
June	Unit reflection activity Closure/re-entry activities End-of-year participant evaluations due Leader exit evaluations due (if applicable) Leader check-in with each service assignment/supervisor

Service Adventure Components

Service Adventure has been intentionally developed as a service-learning opportunity. It is expected that participants contribute to their hosting communities in significant ways, and that participants come away from their experience with new knowledge and insight. To facilitate participants' service-learning, a number of components have been put in place. These components are listed in alphabetical order. Related handbooks may have components listed in differing order, depending on the audience.

- **Advocate -** A person in the participant's home congregation/community to help the participant stay connected and ensure there is a support network for the participant while they embark on this journey. An advocate's tasks could include keeping the local congregation aware of how the participant is doing, keeping the participant in the congregation's prayers, and helping ensure contributions from the participant's church are sent to MMN.
- **Check-in** - A twice-monthly meeting between each participant and unit leader(s) for discussion and exploration of participant's Service Adventure experience, including relationships, challenges, growth experiences, etc.
- **Host congregation** - One or more Mennonite churches that have a vision for Service Adventure as a ministry in their community. Congregations provide financial and other support to Service Adventure units. Units are accountable to their host congregations. The units attend weekly worship services with these congregations and are encouraged to get involved in the congregation's other ministries.
- **Host families** - Families at the unit location which serve as surrogate families for the participants. They are part of host congregations and involve participants or leaders in their lives via varied activities, at least monthly. The local support committees are responsible for identifying and linking host families with participants and leaders at the beginning of each term and for planning a beginning-of-term social/gathering. To orient host families with the objectives of the program, each host family is given a *policies in*

summary document, which is provided by the program office. Host families make contact with their respective participant/leader within the first month of the term. There may be occasions when the participant has an issue that they bring to the host family. The host family is encouraged to assist the participant in working towards a resolution, and to follow the chain of communication described below.

- **Household/unit** - Group of three to six young adults (participants) plus one or two leaders, who reside in a common residence and who live in community, sharing the various household responsibilities. Participants share a bedroom with one or two other participants, as well as a shared bathroom.
- **Learning component** - A weekly unit activity designed to create opportunities for participants and leaders to learn from each other and those in their community. These sessions are structured times of teaching or introducing the household to new activities or ideas. Planning responsibility is shared between leaders and participants.
- **Life skills** – Daily or weekly activities that support the healthy functioning of the unit household. This may take the form of instruction in housekeeping, food preparation and nutrition, finances, and bookkeeping, etc.
- **Local support committee** - The local support committee are members of the host congregations and help with household business.
- **Program director** - The program director is employed by MMN and provides supervision and support to unit leaders and holds administrative responsibility for the overall program. The program director travels to each Service Adventure location, at least once per year.
- **Reflection activities** - Meaningful activities for participants to reflect on relationships, challenges, growth experiences, and more. These reflections can be valuable to share during bimonthly check-ins with leader(s), offering insight into personal journeys and experiences in the program.
- **Service assignment** – Part- or full-time placements in the hosting community. The non-profit may give a small payment, and this payment is part of the unit budget, and is not paid to the participant. Each participant works between 35-40 hours a week at various sites in the community. In some cases, participants are asked to work in multiple assignments to serve their needed hours.
- **Stipend** – This is the monthly amount participants receive for their own personal use. This amount comes from the unit budget.
- **Unit leader(s) -** Each unit has a single person or a couple who serves as the unit's leaders. Service Adventure leaders have been prepared by MMN to provide structure and guidance to unit life. The unit leader lives in the unit house with the group.
- **Worship night** - A weekly unit activity intended for spiritual discussion, reflection, exploration and expression. Planning responsibility is shared between leaders and participants.

General information

Length of term
A Unit Leader term is 2 years. A Service Adventure participant term is 10 1/2 months. Locations may have differing start and end dates. In general, most units begin in August and end in June or July.

Basic needs
The Service Adventure program provides basic needs including housing, food, towels, bedding, and transportation. Participants receive $40 per month.

College credit for participants
Participants wishing to earn college credit for their Service Adventure experience may do so by making arrangements with certain Mennonite colleges. For additional information, participants can contact the respective admissions offices.

Extended weekends/retreats
Units usually take several weekend trips together per term. They also often use weekends as a time to learn to know the local area.

Medical coverage for participants
Participants in Service Adventure are responsible for providing their own health insurance coverage.

Orientation/end of service
Participants in each unit spend the first week of their term together on location in orientation guided by the unit leader. The last week of the term is spent together as a unit addressing closure and reentry issues in preparation for moving on after Service Adventure.

Presentations
During the term, units are asked to share about Service Adventure during chapels at Mennonite high schools, at mission conferences, in congregations, youth groups, etc.

Program costs
Service Adventure encourages the participant's congregation to partner with us by contributing toward the total cost (this is not mandatory). A financial sheet will be sent to the congregation, suggesting a commitment of $4,000.

Reports
Participants complete different reports throughout the course of their term, which will be submitted to MMN. These reports are used to assess the quality of the experience we offer participants and give participants an opportunity to share about various aspects of their Service Adventure experience.

Travel
Participants are responsible for their transportation costs to and from their Service Adventure location.

Vacation
Participants are entitled to eight days of vacation away from the unit during the service term. Participants are reasonable for all vacation costs. Vacation at Christmas varies according to the service placement. All time away from the unit and unit responsibilities must be discussed with the household members and the unit leader. Vacations may not be taken in the last week of Service Adventure.

Visitors
Family and friends are encouraged to visit participants to learn about their Service Adventure experience. Lodging and meal arrangements are to be made with the unit. If guests lodge at the unit house, visits are to be limited to no more than three nights.

Reflection Activities

Calendar of events

Note: Please share raw footage, no editing necessary for video related activities.
August - House tour video
September - Write a letter to your supporting congregation/group
October - Day in the life video by participants
November - Create Christmas thank you cards for supporters
December - 12 days of Christmas video
January - Shoulder tapper cards
February - Individual prompt writing/create a reel
March - What does it mean to fail?
April - What have I learned from living in community?
May - What have I learned from serving at my service placement?
June - Unit leader/participant video interview (or participant to participant)

August: Home & belonging

Session 1: Reflection
What makes a place feel like home?

- Draw a map of your childhood home.
- Share a memory connected to a room or place.
- Name a tree that has meaning to you.
- What family traditions shaped you?
- What do you miss?
- What do you hope this house becomes by June?

Session 2: What will this house become?
House Tour Video
Create a house tour video with your unit!
A house tour video gives future participants an idea of what the unit house is like and can help build familiarity with where they will be living for the next ten months.

- Take the video vertically, and use your phone's wide-angle lens if possible.
- One person visible in video, narrating the house tour.
- Start outside front door, then go room by room explaining what happens in each space (don't forget the yard!).
- Here are two examples to help inspire your video.
- Once the video is complete, see the upload guidelines on the leader webpage to upload the video to your unit's google photo album.

September

Session 1: What faith story brought me here?

- Describe your home church.
- What parts of faith were life-giving?
- What parts are being challenged?
- What assumptions did you bring into Service Adventure?

Optional: Create a simple "faith timeline" for your experiences.

Session 2:

Each participant has a number of people who helped them join Service Adventure. Family, friends, and church/community members may have helped pack, move or fundraise to help make this experience possible. Send them an update to give them an idea of what you're up to! What is unit life like? What do you do at your placement? What have you done around town? What has surprised you?

October: Daily life

Session 1: Who am I becoming?

Prompt: "It's June 10th and you're 10 years old. School is out. Describe the perfect day."
Then:

- What is your perfect day now?
- What has changed?
- What does your current routine reveal about your values?

Session 2: Create a "Day in the life" video.

By now, you've probably settled into a schedule for each day. Service placements, commutes, meals and free time are becoming clear and more routine. It may start to feel like just another day for you, but your routines are extraordinary compared to folks who are not doing a year of service!

Make a video that showcases a bit about your day from start to end – a few seconds of your wake-up routine, commute, service placement, meals and evening activities. Here's an example video.

November: Gratitude & relationships

Session 1: Reflection

Who helped me get here?

- Who invested in you?
- Who encouraged you?
- Who took a chance on you?
- Who has supported you this year?

Session 2: Create a Christmas thank you card for your supporters.
A Christmas-themed thank you card is a great way to update the people who are supporting you during this year of service (emotionally, financially, etc.) to what you're up to, as well as show gratitude for their role in your life. Don't forget to include people you've met this year!

- Take a group photo for your Christmas card (the cheesier, the better!).
- Write a thank you note to go with the picture.
- Send the card to your supporters in early December.

December

Session 1: How do people celebrate differently?

- What Christmas traditions did your family have? Which ones do you hope to keep?
- Name some traditions you've encountered this year.
- What feels meaningful?
- What feels uncomfortable?
- What is Christmas becoming for you? Is there something new you hope becomes a tradition for you?

Session 2: 12 days of Christmas video reels

- Show off what the "Twelve Days of Service" looks like for your unit! You all are the resident experts in what life looks like living together as service units, and Mission Network would like to give our audiences a glimpse into your experiences!
- Submit 12 short videos, each detailing a number of something that completes the statement, "On the (first-twelfth) day of Christmas, service units see…" Focus on numbers of something that pertain to your service experience, from 1-12. You know, like the "Twelve Days of Christmas" song.
- Once you've got your unit's videos, upload them to your unit's photo album: Colorado Springs Google Photos Album, Anchorage Google Photos Album. Don't forget to include captions in the uploaded image comment!
- These videos will be curated and published on Mission Network's website and social media accounts, for all the world (and your grandparents!) to see. Be kind and make sure to get permission from everyone included in them.
- Need some inspiration? Check out what units have done in Christmases past!

January

Session 1: Shoulder tapper cards

- Write to a friend still in high school, affirm their gifts, and encourage them to think about Service Adventure. Send a care package?
- Why did you join Service Adventure? Who was the biggest influence?

- What do you wish you would have known when you started this year?
- Have you ever been “shoulder-tapped” to do something you otherwise wouldn’t have? Who asked you? How did that feel? Why do you think you were asked to do that thing?

Session 2: Midyear evaluation
A link to the midyear evaluation will be sent to participants.

February

Session 1: How am I making a difference, and how am I being changed by this experience?
- Name a time when someone affirmed you.
- What exactly did they affirm?
- How did it make you feel, beyond just "good"?
- Did it change how you saw yourself?

Transition to: If someone were to affirm you today, what might they say?
- What strengths have emerged this year?
- What gifts are you using at your placement?
- What contributions are you making in your house?
- What might your housemates say you've brought to the community?

If I wasn't here, what would be missing?
- What would be missing at my placement?
- What would be missing at our house?
- What difference am I making in the lives of others?
- What difference is being made in my life because I am here?

Session 2:
Option A: Written reflection
Written reflection prompt: What difference am I making, and what difference is being made in me? Participants write 300–500 words reflecting on:
- One way they are contributing.
- One way they have been changed.
- One affirmation they have received or would like to receive.
- One affirmation they want to offer others.

Option B: Video reel (90-120 seconds)
Video reel prompt: If I wasn't here, what would be missing?
Possible video clips:
- A task at placement.
- A favorite interaction.
- A household responsibility.
- A moment of connection with another participant.
- A voiceover reflecting on how they are contributing and being changed.

March

Session 1: Failure is an option.
Read *Ish* by Peter Reynolds. If your local library doesn't have the book, do a YouTube search for Ish by Peter Reynolds and watch one of the read along versions, then discuss:

- What keeps you from trying new things?
- How do you typically respond when you make a mistake or aren't good at something?
- Have you experienced a failure this year that taught you something important?
- Where might perfectionism be getting in the way of growth, relationships, or service?

Challenge: Identify one thing you've been hesitant to try because you might fail. Commit to giving it a try before the next session.

Session 2: What happened when I tried?
Share your experience of trying something you were fearful of failing:

- What did you attempt?
- How did it go?
- What surprised you?
- What did you learn about yourself?

April

Session 1: What has community revealed about me?
Living in community:

- Did you share a bedroom in your family home?
- What is easier or harder than you expected in Service Adventure regarding community living?
- Describe the household chores you did at home, and the ones you do in Service Adventure.
- What have you learned to cook?
- Do you think community living is an important part of the Service Adventure program?
- What are you learning about living in community?

Session 2: Community living quotes
Prompt: What has living with others taught you that you couldn't have learned alone?
Each participant crafts a 200-word minimum reflection/takeaway regarding their experience living in community.

May

Session 1: What have I learned about serving?
Questions:

- Am I always the helper?
- What have I received?
- How has power shown up?
- What is my placement contributing to the world?

This is a great month for deeper conversations about service, justice, humility, and vocation.

Session 2: Placement reflection quotes
Each participant crafts a 200-word minimum reflection/takeaway from their placement experience centered on what they have learned through serving.

June

Session 1: Looking back
The end of your Service Adventure term is quickly approaching. No doubt you're thinking a lot about what is ahead for you in the coming months. The end of your term is also a great time to reflect on a very unique ten months of your life. For this session, practice reflection by writing a letter to yourself:

- What do you want to remember?
- What would you tell your August self?
- What changed?
- What remains unfinished?

Session 2: Final interview video
Have the whole unit speak into the questions below with the unit leader video recording the conversation. For example, you could all sit around your dining room table, (all in frame) and discuss the questions. Have the participants ask each other these questions:

- How have you grown this year?
- What have you learned about yourself?
- What was a success you would like to claim from this year?
- Has your view of yourself changed at all?
- Has your view of God changed at all?
- Has your view of the world changed at all?

Once the video is complete, see the upload guidelines on the leader webpage to upload the video to your unit's Google photo album: Colorado Springs Google Photos Album, Anchorage Google Photos Album.

Chain of Communication

Participants

Participants who have concerns regarding any part of their Service Adventure experience and are in search of counsel should the following chain of communication:

- Unit leader
- Support committee
- Service Adventure director

Unit leaders

In the event that a unit leader learns of behaviors or events that compromise: the integrity of Service Adventure, the integrity of the host congregation(s), significant relationships within the

hosting community, or the physical or emotional well-being of participants and/or leader(s), the following procedure is to be adhered to:

1. Unit leader immediately contacts the support committee chair to develop a plan of action to resolve the situation.

2. If the unit leader and support committee chair determines the behavior or event a crisis, the unit leader contacts the program director within one day

3. Program director and leader review the established plan of action (see 1), or work with leader on developing a plan of action, as necessary.

4. Program director advises the MMN department director to develop an intra-organizational communication plan, if necessary.

5. Program director informs a Service Adventure crisis team of behaviors or events and of the established plan of action, and seek counsel, if necessary.

Crisis preparation

Throughout the Service Adventure experience there may be situations that arise that are out of the ordinary and require special attention. This may be things such as a bike accident, a natural disaster, or a participant talking about suicide. Each crisis situation needs to be evaluated to determine who is impacted and who needs to be informed about the situation. **If a situation occurs, the unit leader should immediately inform the local support committee and the Service Adventure director**, who will, in consultation with the unit leader and Mission Network staff, determine the next steps. MMN has a crisis management team in place who will help assess what steps will be taken. Information sharing during a crisis is critical. In our instant news culture, major crises can be communicated across the country almost instantly. Social media makes it easy to communicate with many people at once, however it often is not the best way to sensitively inform family and friends. The Service Adventure director will work with unit leaders and the Mission Network crisis management team to communicate in helpful ways.

Things to do ahead of time

When a crisis happens, it is crucial that you have the information and resources you need to respond in a calm and helpful way. There is usually no time to get these things together when a crisis happens, so doing these things ahead of time will be most helpful.

- Review the information provided here and make sure it is easily accessible to review in a crisis.
- Identify persons in your host church or community that are trained in crisis response who could help your group if needed.
- Identify persons in your host church or community that are licensed to provide counseling if needed.
- Copy the charts found at the end and keep them in your unit house in a place that you and the participants can access them easily.

- Keep a copy of the participant emergency information forms in a secure file, but where they can be readily accessed by the unit leader. Separate copies are sent to support committee leaders.
- Make sure a current version of the emergency contact form is posted by the phone at the unit.
- Use orientation time to talk openly with participants about how to handle various types of situations if they should occur.
- In the event of an emergency, contact the Service Adventure director, or if you are unable to contact the Service Adventure director, contact the Mission Network Care Specialist, or Service Adventure assistant.

Emergency Contact Form

To be posted in the unit house

Closest hospital/emergency center _____

In case of an emergency, please contact one of the local contacts first, and then notify the Service Adventure director. In the event of an emergency, the Service Adventure director, in consultation with the unit leader and Mission Network staff, will determine the next steps.
**Emergencies could include the following: accidents, serious illness, sudden psychological problems, pandemic, political unrest, military conflict, natural disasters, criminal acts, sexual violence/rape, death.*

Unit leader name _____

Home phone _____ Cell phone _____

Support committee members

Name _____ Contact # _____

Name _____ Contact # _____

Service Adventure Director: Michael Oyer
Office phone: 1-574-523-3041, etc. 23041 Cell 620-951-4388

MMN Care Specialist: Heidi Dyck Hilty
Office phone: 1-866-866-2872, ext. 23066 Cell 574-214-6891

Service Adventure Assistant: Lori Hershberger Blair
Office phone: 1-866-866-2872, ext. 24404 Cell 574-214-5400

Christliche Dienste emergency contact information:

- The CD emergency mobile phone number is +49 159 049 770 90
- In addition to phone calls and text messages, communication to this number is possible via Facetime, messenger app Signal, Zoom.

Role of a participant

1. Full participation and engagement in all aspects of the program
    a. unit group activities and unit relationships
    b. church life and host family relationships
    c. Service placements
2. Building healthy connections within the unit
    a. Participant-participant
    b. Participant-leader
3. Active participation in unit life – not merely along for the ride.
    a. House cleaning chores
    b. Meal planning and preparing
    c. Learning Components
    d. Worship Nights
4. Be open to change and growth

Responsible behavior

- Live in accordance with and reflect Christ-like standards in personal and professional conduct,
- Nurture trust and maintain and restore right relationships in the communities within which they live and serve,
- Demonstrate mutual respect and integrity in sharing and fulfilling their responsibilities,
- Respect and celebrate diversity of backgrounds and nurture acceptance in our Christian community,
- Live in accordance with sound ecology, good health, and wise stewardship,
- Conduct themselves in ways and in settings which will not harm their witness, service, or personal health,
- Reserve sexual intimacy for the marriage covenant,
- Strive to be free from lies, manipulation and deceit, be faithful in keeping promises, and trustworthy in managing resources,
- Serve and learn, ready to have life broadened being open to explore new insights for Christian growth and service,
- Be open to counsel,
- Be honest and accept responsibility for actions.

Disregard for any of the above stated expectations shall be brought to the attention of the local support committee and program director and may result in early dismissal.

Role of the support committee

Local support committee

The local support committee is a body comprised of individuals from the host congregation. Unit leaders are accountable to this body as well as the host congregation and MMN. The local support committee provides guidance and support on all unit issues, helping to foster communication and relationships between the host congregation and the unit. The chair of this

committee serves as the primary source of contact between the committee and the program office.

The following is a list of responsibilities for the local support committee.
Relational support:

- Provide orientation for new leaders.
- Assist with on-site orientation for participants.
- Meet at least monthly as a committee with the unit leader.
- Regular communication with unit leader; be aware of any issues of concern and be available to talk and think through unit issues.

Operational support:

- Be knowledgeable of all current program policies.
- Receive monthly financial reports from the unit leader.
- Quarterly communication between support committee leader and program director. This can be in the form of emails or phone calls.
- Participate in the evaluation of the program.
- Assist with needed maintenance work on unit house, appliances and vehicle(s).
- Ensure that the unit has access to necessary resources, such as housing, transportation, etc.
- Present periodic reports regarding the state of Service Adventure, in that location, to the host congregation via council, church life, or members' meetings.
- Assume responsibility for, or ensure that necessary arrangements are made, to preserve unit life in the absence of unit leaders or in the event that leaders are unable to complete their term or service.

Responsibilities along with the local leader:

- Review applicant files of, and accept or reject, potential participants and leaders for that location.
- Review service assignments and seek out additional assignments in the community.
- Procure host families for all participants and leaders.
- Serve as the business manager for the unit, which includes;
    - Establish and review annual budget.

Role of a unit leader

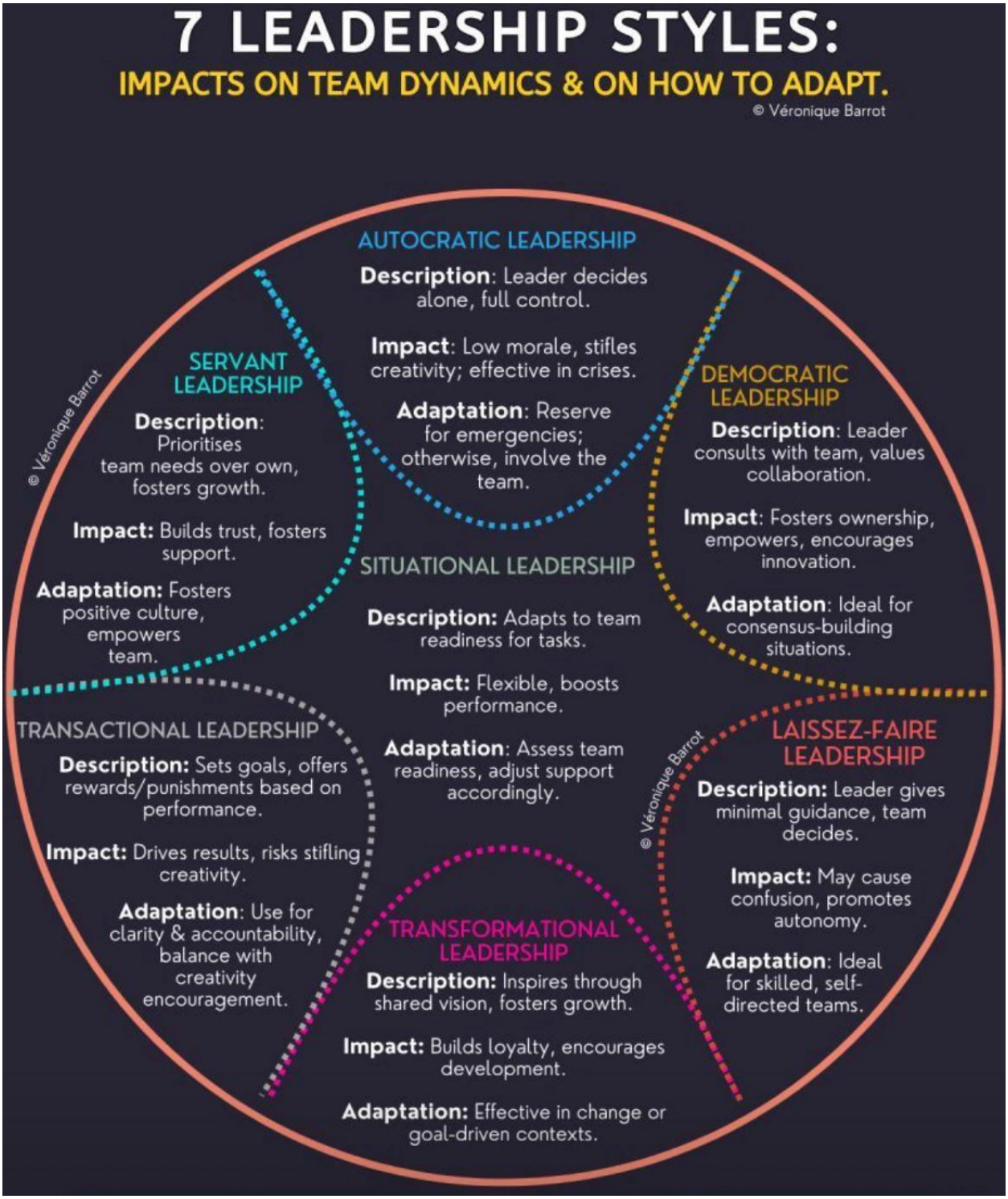
Service Adventure leaders provide structure and guidance to unit life. Unit leaders provide spiritual guidance for the 17-to-20-year-old participants in Service Adventure. Leadership responsibilities take the equivalent of a half-time job, allowing for part-time service or work in the community. Responsibilities include providing structure and direction to all aspects of unit life, and guiding and supporting participants on their spiritual and personal journeys. Leaders live in a household with three to five Service Adventure participants. Terms are two years in length and may be extended. Terms begin on the first day of leaders' orientation. The term ends one week after participants have left to allow time to complete any business related to finances, service assignments, exit interview/discussion with program director, etc.

Expectations of leaders

- Responsible for all program components and community life
    - Lead when needed, delegate and supervise as possible
    - Communicate effectively with support committee and program director
    - Communicate regularly with service placements
- Preparation/orientation
    - Provide welcoming home for participants
    - Set clear expectations
- Nurture healthy connections within the unit
    - Participant-participant
    - Participant-leader
- Be a balanced authority figure to nurture growth
    - mentor vs coach vs parent vs boss
- **Be familiar with the Policy Manual and Participant Handbook**
- Safety and Crisis management

Responsible behavior

- Live in accordance with and reflect Christ-like standards in personal and professional conduct.
- Nurture trust and maintain and restore right relationships in the communities within which you live and serve.
- Demonstrate mutual respect and integrity in sharing and fulfilling your responsibilities.
- Respect and celebrate diversity of backgrounds and nurture acceptance in our Christian community.
- Live in accordance with sound ecology, good health, and wise stewardship.
- Conduct yourself in ways and in settings which do not harm your witness, service, or personal health.
- Strive to be free from lies, manipulation and deceit, be faithful in keeping promises, and trustworthy in managing resources.


7 LEADERSHIP STYLES:
IMPACTS ON TEAM DYNAMICS & ON HOW TO ADAPT.
© Véronique Barrot
AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP
Description: Leader decides alone, full control.
Impact: Low morale, stifles creativity; effective in crises.
Adaptation: Reserve for emergencies; otherwise, involve the team.
SERVANT LEADERSHIP
Description: Prioritises team needs over own, fosters growth.
Impact: Builds trust, fosters support.
Adaptation: Fosters positive culture, empowers team.
DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP
Description: Leader consults with team, values collaboration.
Impact: Fosters ownership, empowers, encourages innovation.
Adaptation: Ideal for consensus-building situations.
SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP
Description: Adapts to team readiness for tasks.
Impact: Flexible, boosts performance.
Adaptation: Assess team readiness, adjust support accordingly.
TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP
Description: Sets goals, offers rewards/punishments based on performance.
Impact: Drives results, risks stifling creativity.
Adaptation: Use for clarity & accountability, balance with creativity encouragement.
LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP
Description: Leader gives minimal guidance, team decides.
Impact: May cause confusion, promotes autonomy.
Adaptation: Ideal for skilled, self-directed teams.
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP
Description: Inspires through shared vision, fosters growth.
Impact: Builds loyalty, encourages development.
Adaptation: Effective in change or goal-driven contexts.

Setting Expectations

Healthy communities have clear expectations and accountability. This is not a punitive system, but it does mean that expectation violations require response, and expectations need to be clearly and continuously communicated. As the unit leader, you help participants understand their role and responsibilities within the community, as well as the impact their choices have on others. You help ensure the community is a safe and comfortable environment for participants to live, learn and grow by holding everyone accountable to these expectations.
When working with your unit to develop community expectations, please consider:

- Be clear about your expectations of members in your community. It is highly recommended that expectations are written down, posted publicly, and revised as new conversations happen.
- Get unit input on their expectations of community. You can then use this information to help guide them toward meeting these expectations.
- Regularly revisiting and updating the Covenant agreement can accommodate changes and prevent future misunderstandings.
- Work to create an environment where your participants feel empowered to address issues and concerns they notice.

Covenant making

In the Bible, the people of God are repeatedly invited to live in relationship with God, others and the world out of a covenant. A covenant is an agreement by an individual to another or group that they will engage in or refrain from specific action. When we think of a covenant for this community and your household, think not so much of a list of do's and don'ts but a desire for a way of life. Covenants are to be life-giving.

Each member of the unit is accountable to keep the covenant. We are accountable to the group. Therefore, in Service Adventure we ask that everyone agree to a covenant and work to hold themselves accountable. This takes vulnerability, honesty and integrity.

As we see from the Bible, living within a covenant is a blessing to our lives and helps us to live as a blessing to others. When we think of creating a covenant as a household, we understand that there will be a need to at times place ourselves second to the needs of the group--a realization that how we live affects those around us and affects the value and strength of our relationships.

What follows is a list of topics for you as a group to discuss. There will be more that you may want to add to this list. It is important that everyone can agree to the covenant and that we willingly commit to living out what we have said with honesty, vulnerability, and integrity.

Start with principles and values, but don't be afraid to dig into the details. Make room for details to be added as you engage in unit life. For instance, invite conversations about how dishes are done, where clutter lands, how we use electronics, etc.

Topics for conversation:

- How to build healthy relationships with each other
- Communication

- Listening
- Confidentiality
- Exclusive relationships
- Cooking and Cleaning
- Space
- Living simply
- Money
- Technology use
- Hospitality

Program Components

Preparing for start of term

- Determine and confirm final service placement assignments
    - This will typically have been done by the previous leader or the Support Committee
    - If a new leader needs to do this, please refer to the Personnel Process in the Program Policy Manual and ask for help!
    - Is there paperwork to begin (background checks, childcare clearances, physical, etc.)?
- Find host families
- Plan activities or trips for the first few weeks to help build relationships.
- How do you want to set the tone for the year?
    - How will you make sure participants are prepared?
        - Know what to bring
        - Know more about you
        - Know more about each other
    - How will you make sure you have the information you need to prepare well?
        - What would you like to ask participants?
        - What would you like to ask the Support Committee?
- How will you set expectations for parents/families of participants?
    - You will have some relationship with parents/families. How do you want this to look?
    - Giving parents/families specific things to do (send care packages, visit specific number of times) can help give direction to their role during this year. This is new for them too, and providing a bit of guidance and direction to help them know their role can be a good way to draw boundaries kindly.

Participant orientation

Orientation learning goals for participants:

1. What they can expect through the year (basics of the program)

2. What is expected of them throughout the year (Unit Life, Service Placement)
3. Introduction to the new city and community
4. Start using intrapersonal and interpersonal reflection to build healthy relationships

Paperwork/info checklist for participants

- Participant crisis forms
- Signed copies of statement of accountability from each participant (after review of participant handbook)
- Several group photos and individual photos
- Prayer card info: Bible verse for unit, group photo
- T-shirt sizes
- MOU from each service placement agency

Things to cover in orientation week, or in first few weeks

Home life and Service Adventure policies

- Expectations, van use, one-to-ones schedule set up, chores, rooms/roommates (expectations for each other), common areas, cleaning, technology use, calendar, policies, travels, food, learning components, stipends, financial stuff/budget, vehicle upkeep, shared bathroom schedule, laundry schedule.

Electronics

- Service Adventure encourages living in community, and modern methods of communication can take away from the community. During orientation week, the unit should discuss appropriate Internet usage and guidelines for cell phones, laptop computers, and other electronics.

Relationship building experiences

- Lead meaningful group activities regularly through the first few weeks/months that ask intentional questions, provide opportunities to bond as a group.
- Host Family Welcome Event

Spiritual/personal growth

- Church family: Corporate: introductions to church, pastors, support committee, host families
- Taking care of needs
    - Physical: eating, exercise, sleep
    - Mind/spirit: personal changes during terms, culture shock
- Personal: Worship nights and learning components, ways to promote individual growth/reflection

Service

- Visit work placements and meet the supervisor. Learn job description/expectations.
- Transportation planning and practicing

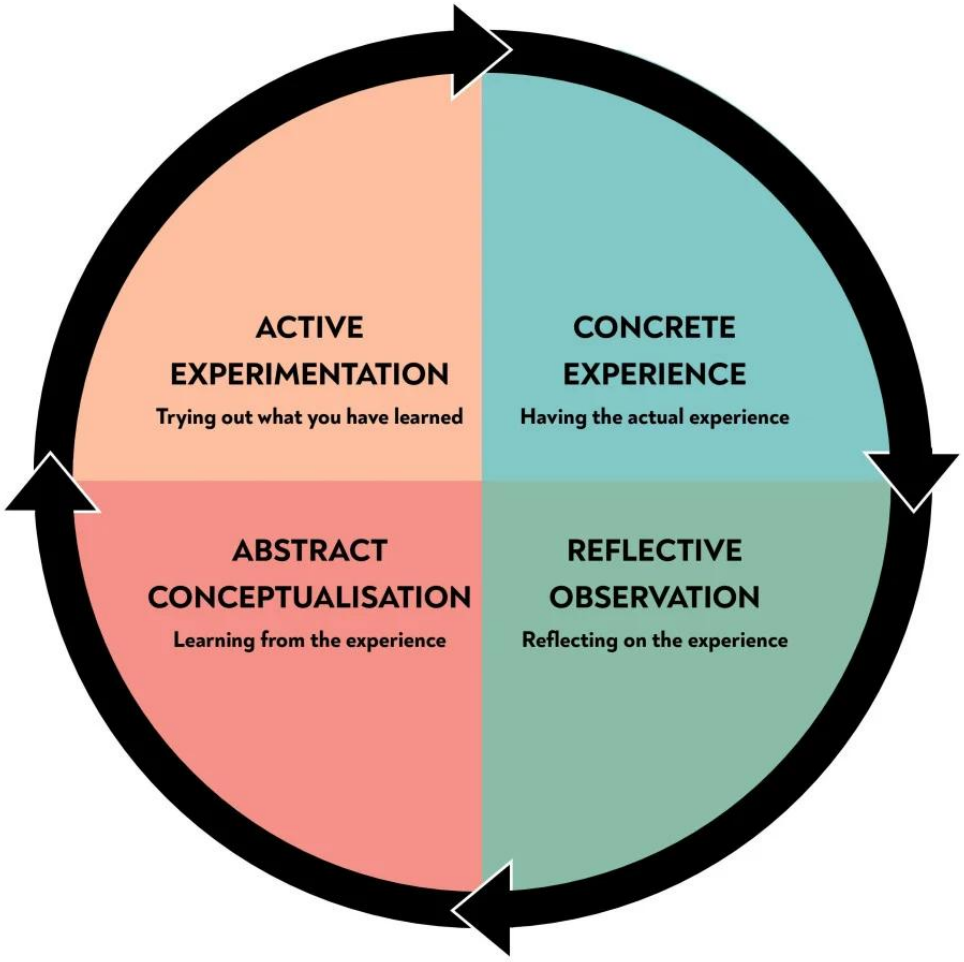
Our new city

- City tour, history (economic, people, shaping events, etc.), needs of people in our town, map (to understand church location, host families homes, etc.).
- Walk to local areas, meet neighbors, and explore local parks.
- Grocery store/supplies

All-unit orientation Zoom calls with MMN Staff

- Child safety
- Anti-racism
- Program policies/expectations

Community life



Values & principles of community living (why we live as a unit)

- Value: We want to reflect the early church
    - Shared resources
    - Shared meals
- To live in community – learning how to think beyond ourselves
- To share life's joys and sorrows together in healthy relationships

Unit life is an integral part of the Service Adventure experience. A unit is a community of support, celebration, reflection, and discernment as the members of the community offer themselves in Christian service.

Unit leaders are expected to guide and offer structure to the group living component of Service Adventure. Following are a list of community life details to think through on your own, and then plan with your unit. Think of all of this as training; you want the participants to know why they are doing this, so their goals will be shared. They won't be good at first and maybe can't even take all of this on at first. Find what is necessary to have a successful entry, then after establishing some connections, build together a plan for the coming months. Re-evaluation helps growth.

Meal planning, preparing and eating together

Why do we do this together?

- Communities build relationships over food. Preparing meals with love is a Christ-like way of showing hospitality, even to those closest to you.
- Sharing resources means you share responsibility for each other. You can't only make choices for yourself, you have to consider how your choices affect others.
- Shared Resources can also allow you to do more together than you could alone. If you split your budget between yourselves, you couldn't make the same kind of meals.

How will we do this together?

- Basics
    - Who cooks when and how often? In a team or alone?
    - How does that affect grocery shopping and meal planning?
    - Who will go grocery shopping and when? How will they know what others want to put on the list? How will they make budget decisions?
    - Who will do the dishes and when?
- Taking care of each other
    - What does a meal include? Protein? Vegetables?
    - Special dietary needs?
    - What foods are important to each of us?
- Building relationship
    - Who prays?
    - What kind of conversation do you want to have at mealtimes?
- Shared resources
    - Learn about the weekly and monthly budget. Talk about how to determine needs and wants as related to the budget.
    - Explore alternative food sources – community gardens, food co-ops, etc.

Scheduling and activities

Why do we do this together?

- We want to share experiences together as a unit. We want to learn from each other and develop our own skills and gifts.
- We want to find the balance between taking care of ourselves and being part of a group. Different people will want different activities, and working together to find equity in the schedule is a way to build healthy relationships.

How will we do this together?

- Planning in advance gives you time to discuss the balance of activities with service assignments and individual commitments.
    - How far in advance should participants give notice about personal commitments?
    - Who and how will you communicate with service placements?
    - What flexibility will you allow with learning components and worship nights?
    - How will you make sure leadership for each is shared equitably?
    - Best practice: Schedule 2 months in advance, but remain flexible up to 2 weeks ahead
- How will you communicate schedules with each other?
    - Best practice: Group calendar (if it's not on the calendar, it doesn't exist)
    - Best practice: Use weekly unit meetings to review schedule two weeks forward
- What fun things will you do together?
    - What ideas do you have for monthly recreational activities?
    - Who will plan and arrange these activities?
    - Will you invite others (non-unit people) to go with you on these activities?

Unit meetings

Why do we do this together?

- Healthy relationships require communication. This is a way to create opportunities for communication and conflict resolution.
- We want to share responsibilities equitably thereby taking care of each other.
- This gives participants opportunities to grow in their relationship skills with the guidance of leaders.

How do we do this together?

- When and how often will you meet?
- What kind of topics will you discuss, and how will you decide each agenda?
- How will we set boundaries in healthy ways while responding to others' needs?
- Best Practice: The Leaders gather agenda and moderate - including keeping discussions on track and stimulating equal participation of unit members in discussions.
- Best Practice: Leaders ensure participants are designated to implement decisions made at unit meetings.
- Best Practice: Use this meeting to discuss what expenses you will include in house budget vs items they should pay for from their stipend. Talk about why and how those decisions are made. Think carefully about *equity,* not *fairness* in making these choices.

Taking care of the house together
Why do we do this together?

- Common Purse – we all share responsibility for this house. We want to be good stewards of this gift given by the Church and prepare it for the next unit.
- Caring for Each Other – a clean living space is important for mental health. We want to think about others' needs for cleanliness as well as our own preferences.

How do we do this together?

- What needs to be cleaned daily? Weekly? Monthly?
- How do we decide who will clean what, when? What are our shared expectations?
- How will we bring up concerns about cleanliness? How will that be different between leaders and other participants?
- How will we learn cleaning skills? How do we ask for help respectfully?
- How will we host guests? What are the extra expectations when someone comes over for dinner or for overnight?
    - Best practice: Distinguish between unit guests and personal guests. Individual participants are responsible for preparing for and cleaning up after personal guests, i.e. changing and washing linens and towels, etc.
- Best Practice: You set clear expectations and enforce deadlines. You ensure the house is cared for well.

Unit activities
Official unit activities are planned in advance and involve the whole unit. Informal activities invite everyone, but not every activity involves the whole unit, and does not require the whole unit. This is a balancing effort, but should be one you pay attention to, and check regularly with individuals and the group.

Sharing joy together (best practices)

- Joy is close to everyone's heart. Learn what brings joy to everyone.
    - Ask participants about special traditions/rituals from their home or home community. Incorporate some into unit life.
    - Create special unit traditions/rituals.
    - Decide how to celebrate birthdays.
- Encourage celebrations! Take initiative if necessary.
- Sharing care packages & gifts

One-on-ones

Relationships
As a unit leader, you establish this relationship as a **"**safe place" for the participant. Non-judgmental, not critical, honest, unconditional, positive regard. There needs to be a safe place to discuss issues. Find out about their family, where they fit in, what they want out of the year, find out about their friends (who are they, what role do friends play in the participant's life).

Strengthening bonds
Find something that you have in common. Sometimes it can be hard to find commonalities, but it is very important.

Breaking down barriers
Find the balance between being a leader and a friend. There is a fine line between not being paternal and yet being parental or possibly stripping down negative ideas about what leaders do.

Share in struggles
It is very important not to be judgmental as this will facilitate a more open relationship. Perhaps it is just about simple struggles in the house i.e. learning to cook…your job is not necessarily to solve problems, but to empower them to figure out what to do.

Accountability
Once the relationship has been built, then growth can occur. Your relationship with the participant eases the times when there is an issue, and participants need to be held accountable. This can be anything from getting to work on time to performing unit responsibilities

Encouragement
A chance to give positive feedback to each participant. Once you know the person and what issues they have been working on, you can give specific descriptions regarding their growth and choices.

Motivation
Having a relationship with the participants helps in motivation. For example, if the participant has anxiety about cooking meals, they wont have any motivation to help in the kitchen. You could give "homework" related to the specific problem i.e. have the participant find three recipes and practice them; use only those recipes when cooking until they feel comfortable cooking those dishes.

Another example could be if a participant struggling with attitude or personality issue. Assign "homework" related to the specific problem i.e. who are you? How would you describe yourself? What change(s) would you like to see in yourself? What are specific, measurable, things that you can do toward this goal? Note that this is not limited to a writing assignment. This is an excellent discussion topic for your one on ones.

Formats for one on ones:
Formal (scheduled): Coffee shop, breakfast, lunch
Informal (unscheduled): Dishes, preparing dinner, driving in car, late night talks

Wellness scale
The wellness scale is a simple tool used to help leaders acquire a baseline for each participant, get an idea of what they're dealing with, and see what direction things are going. This is a simple but tangible assessment that gauges how the participant is moving on their own pre-defined scale. For instance, if someone is complaining of "hating it here" or "being depressed," the leader needs to know if this is simply normal behavior for this individual, or if this is something that to be concerned about.

Step 1: Baseline (within first month of term)
On a scale of 1-10 (1 = "felt suicidal", 10 = "felt absolutely fantastic")

1. What would your average number be over the past year?
2. What is the highest number you've ever been at?
3. What is the lowest number you've ever been at?

Ask for a description of those numbers.
"What does a _ (average number) feel like?"
"What was it like to be at a _ (highest number)?"
"What did a _ (lowest number) look like for you?"

Step 2: Current reality
Using their scale, ask what number they've been at over the past two weeks and ask them to describe it.

If they are lower than their average, help them think about how they might be able to move forward or back to average. "If you're at a 5 now, what do you think it might take for you to get to a 6? Or even a 5.5?"

If they can identify an area of stress, are there ways you can help them remove or deal with that stress in a more helpful way?

Step 3: Check in
Check in on their numbers again a few weeks later and then throughout the year – both in perceived great times and when you think they might be struggling.

If they've been able to move forward or up:
"Wow, that's great. How were you able to do that?"

If they've moved down:
"What do you think is going on that brought you to that number?"
"What would help you move back up to a _?"

Working through conflict

Addressing unmet expectations

- Set expectations early, clearly, and repeatedly – write them down
- Notice/follow-up on unmet expectations
- Work on the why, go beyond punitive to restorative
- Reset Expectations, in agreement with participant – write them down
- Debrief/Follow-up at a later time

Addressing conflict between participants

1. Listen to both sides before passing any kind of judgment on a situation or taking action. Don't be a victim of believing the first person who comes to talk to you about a conflict. It's

important to take what this person is saying seriously, but it's just as important to give the other participant just as much time to share their own perspective and experience.
2. Never take one person's side over the other.
3. Come with curiosity and listen carefully to the details of what each person is saying. Sometimes very important information gets overlooked unintentionally. Pay attention to what is not being said as much as to what is being said. Silence can say just as much, if not more, than someone yelling or screaming their version of a story. Remember to ask questions to dive deeper.
4. Make sure to talk to each person involved individually before bringing them together to mediate. This allows for each person to feel as though their voice has been heard without someone else interrupting. This also gives you the chance to ask follow up questions and get the details you need before going into mediation.
5. Encourage independence for your participants, for both their sake and yours. Many times participants will come and complain about something their roommate does (eg. typing on the computer too loudly). When we ask, "Have you talked to your roommate about that?" the answer is usually no. At this point, it is fair to ask them to communicate their frustration to their roommate, yet also important to teach them how to do it respectfully, as this is a challenge for many. Role-playing the scenario with the frustrated participant may help them feel more confident going into the conversation.
6. You are human, and are going to make mistakes. If you make a mistake, take a step back and apologize, and move on. (Learn from it though!) The best kinds of leaders are those that admit when they are wrong.
7. Above all else, be yourself and trust your instincts. Every leader is going to handle conflict a little bit differently. It is expected that you find your own style so that you can mediate in a way that is natural for you—not from a script.

Principles for mediating conflict

- Maintain mutual respect: Ask yourself/get parties to ask: "How can I discuss our differences in ways that allow the other person to retain his/her dignity? How can I avoid having the other person feel denigrated or put down?
- Seek the common ground: Explore overarching goals, values and shared purpose. Try to see things through the other person's eyes (e.g., his/her culture, race, gender, age, or other life experiences).
- Focus on the problem, not the attack: focus on what people are saying about the problem.
- Objectify the situation: help people focus on what happened, the behavior causing the problem, the impact, and possible solutions.
- Emphasize and acknowledge both people's situation: try putting yourself in both people's shoes and try to understand the emotional impact which the situation is creating for them.
- Acknowledge the needs of both people: empathize verbally with them and allow them to vent their emotions so that you can establish yourself as being understanding of both sides.
- Validate feelings: help make emotions explicit and acknowledge emotions as legitimate.
- Listen actively: verify and provide feedback to both parties: let both parties know that you are genuinely trying to understand both parties' position and interests, and that you are trying to help. Summarize what you are hearing as the more neutral source. Seek clarification on your feedback to make sure that what you heard is correct.
- Separate fact from opinion.

- Keep perspectives open: help both parties see the situation from their own perspective, from the other person's perspective (getting into the other person's shoes), and from the perspective of a neutral third party (or fly on the wall).
- Be non-threatening: avoid any statements that criticize, are sarcastic, and put people on the defensive.
- Encourage use of "I" statements: "I" statements have four components:
    - what the person experienced or what he/she perceived,
    - what the person felt about that experience, what they liked or did not like and why,
    - what the person would like to see happen differently in the future (what the person needs from the other person), and
    - the consequences the person sees if things don't change.

Learning components

Goals

- To help participants develop a framework and skills for discerning God's purpose in their lives.
- To help participants find a place in the life of the congregation and to evaluate the role of the local, home, and broader church in meeting the needs of the world.
- To help participants develop a worldview that identifies need and develop a sense of justice that transforms the way of life.
- To help participants to get to know each other as well as people from the congregation/community.
- To help participants learn about the community/area they are living in.
- To help participants learn how to share their gifts and interests with others

Structure: One evening (day) per week to be spent as a whole unit.

Ideas & tips

- During the first month, participants and leaders can share their life stories in detail. The leaders could begin and model the sharing. Allow each person up to one hour with a maximum of two people per night. People can use photos, their collage and spiritual journey exercises developed during orientation week, etc.
- As you plan throughout the year, make sure you balance between participants teaching and participants learning. Having the chance to teach a skill or even activity they enjoy is important for their growth experience.
- Make use of your local community and your congregation! Go to local events, invite congregation members to teach about their experiences or skills.
- While the goal/focus of learning components is to learn something, enjoy the opportunity for the unit to spend time together. It is often a fun way for participants to learn about skills/crafts that others have.

Learning component planning sheet

Planning

1. What is the topic?
2. What are we learning/doing?
3. Who do I want to lead this?
4. Who else needs to be involved?
5. How much time will this take?
6. What expenses are involved?

Evaluating

1. How prepared was I?
2. What went well?
3. What didn't go well?
4. What could I do differently?
5. Other learning component ideas:
6. Remember for next time?

Learning component money

Learning component money is for whole group activities, giving opportunities for participants to learn. This money is budgeted in each Service Adventure unit to cover the cost of activities. However, this is not meant to create frustration in determining how to spend the total budgeted amount each month. Rather, as a group, ask the question, "What experiences or new opportunities do we want to be involved in this year?" Keep in mind that most Service Adventure budgets are small and that education and recreational benefits can be gained from many free or inexpensive activities as well.

Worship nights

Informal worship leading/planning

In this context, informal worship is a gathering for worship that does not necessarily involve a pastor; is usually held in a setting other than a sanctuary; and involves a portion of a larger body of believers. It does not refer to the specific elements incorporated into the gathered worship experience.

Who should do the planning of worship and who should lead the service?
Each member of the unit should have the opportunity to plan worship nights. Use local church members as a resource to lead a worship time.

Planning worship is about including those pieces that are meaningful to participants, while also stretching and expanding their context for what worship is. Leading worship is about guiding the variety of pieces and having them flow together. People who are leading worship should **always** be a part of planning the worship, but those planning may not always have a part of leading worship.

Unit leaders and participants participate in both the planning and leading of worship. Unit leaders do most of the primary planning/leading of worship for the first few weeks.

Check in with participants who lead worship, to discuss their experience, particularly if planning and leading worship is a new thing to them.

Worship themes
Worship themes help to give overall direction and some continuity to a worship service, but not every experience of worship needs to have a theme. There may be occasion when the worship planner decides to focus on one aspect or item of worship. That one item then becomes the theme.

Early in the year, and periodically thereafter, survey the unit about what kind of topics they would like to cover during worship. You could have a brainstorming session to come up with different ideas.

Work towards making your worship themes connect with the participants and what they are experiencing. Make sure you balance teaching with empowerment.

Worship can and will take on a form which will work best for each unit. Above all else, keep the focus on God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. Making worship meaningful takes planning, planning, and planning. Your experiences together are worth the effort.

Service placements

Goals of participant service placements within program
1. See God at work in new places and faces
2. Gain independence and empowerment as they discover and grow their skills and gifts
3. Discern God's call for them
4. Build intercultural competence
    a. Grow in ability to see and understand oppression
    b. Learn ways to faithfully resist discrimination/oppression

Participant expectations
1. 35-40 hours per week in one full-time or up to three part-time placements,
2. Clear communication with placement supervisor about day-to-day work,
3. Clear communication with placement supervisor and unit leader about concerns,
4. Put forth a reasonable effort in maintaining a good working relationship with placement and staying in their assignments for duration of term.

Unit leader role and expectations for service placements
1. Unit leaders are the holders of relationships with placement agencies for the duration of their term. This includes actively evaluating placements of current participants, as well as planning for future placements, possibly at new agencies.
    a. Sign annual MOU with placement agencies and discuss stipend amounts.
    b. Community organizations in which Service Adventure participants serve are to be faith-based or ministry-focused, involved in matters of social justice, in service to marginalized populations, or are otherwise in line with the objectives of Service Adventure.
2. Unit leaders place each volunteer with a specific agency.
    a. To be a good fit, the participant should be comfortable enough to feel safe and stretched enough to grow.

3. Unit leaders mediate between the participant and service assignment if there are disagreements and/or issues that arise. This helps the participant grow in professionalism and maturity; while also advocating for healthy boundaries for the participant.
4. Unit leaders are responsible for meeting with service placement supervisors regularly:
    a. By October 15 each year, in order to become acquainted with participants' supervisors and to assess fit.
    b. Every three months within term.
    c. The last check-in of the term discuss participants' overall performance and discuss future relationships between Service Adventure and service assignment organization.
    d. Additional check-ins are expected when issues arise, with the supervisor and participant separately and together as assessed is necessary.
    e. Maintain written summaries or records pertaining to the check-ins.

May the words of Micah 6:8 be a centering reminder of our role and how we will walk with and be present to all those that we come in contact within this coming year!

He has shown you what is good
and what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6:8

Related documents

Leader program policy manual
SA Leader Policy

Participant Handbook
SAHandbook_Participants.docx