

# Service Adventure Leader Notebook

*Term 2024-2026*

## Table of Contents

<b>Essential Info</b> .....	2
Program Overview .....	2
Policies in Summary .....	3
People to Know .....	5
Crisis & Emergency .....	6
<b>Role of a Participant</b> .....	9
Emerging Adulthood .....	10
Experiential Learning Model .....	13
<b>Role of a Unit Leader</b> .....	14
Leadership Styles .....	15
Setting Expectations .....	16
Working through Conflict .....	17
<b>Essential Program Components</b> .....	20
Community Life .....	20
One-on-Ones .....	23
Learning Component .....	25
Worship Nights .....	26
Service Placements .....	27
Participant Orientation .....	29
<b>Role of the Support Committee</b> .....	31

# Essential Info

## 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 of the Mennonite Church USA. Administrative responsibility is housed in the Global Partnerships department of Mennonite Mission Network.

Participants live together in community with up to five other young adults, placed in local community agencies for 35-40 hours per week, and become involved in the ministry of their hosting congregation, all under the guidance of a unit leader. The unit leader serves as a non-traditional pastor who mentors young adults in the unit.

### Program Goals

- Service Adventure participants and leaders will join the congregation in engaging with their community.
- Service Adventure provides participants opportunities to explore Christian faith and what a relationship with Jesus means to them as they live in community with others and as they become part of the local faith community.
- Service Adventure provides participants and unit leaders the opportunity to see where God is at work and invites them to be a part of that work.
- Service Adventure participants, unit leaders, hosting congregations and communities are expected to offer each other gifts of service and to receive gifts of insight and perspective.
- Service Adventure participants continue to develop lives of Christian leadership and compassion.
- Service Adventure provides tools and training opportunities for participants and leaders to build intercultural competence and grow in their ability to see and offer faithful resistance to discrimination/oppression as they learn about God's work in the world.

### Program Commitment

Service Adventure has been developed with the expectation that participants will become 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. Four essential components of the Service Adventure experience are unit life, service, church and community.



# Policies in Summary

Participants live with other young adults and are supervised by unit leaders. The unit leaders are individuals selected and prepared by Mennonite Mission Network to provide structure and guidance to unit life. Together unit leaders and participants work cooperatively at household tasks.

Choosing Service Adventure is a commitment to live in a household with other young adults and unit leaders. Life with this group provides opportunities for rich fellowship, friendship and fun. Tolerance, flexibility and a willingness to work hard at maintaining healthy relationships are required.

Unit members are expected to share in household work and activities, meet regularly with household members for worship and business meetings, worship and participate as a household with a local Mennonite congregation, work in a service assignment in the community, meet for one-on-ones with the unit leader, journal regularly, and participate in weekly learning experiences with household and leader(s).

## **Responsible behavior.**

Service Adventure participants are expected to maintain a healthy lifestyle that protects and respects the health and well-being of self, others and the environment. Participants agree before beginning an assignment not to use alcohol, harmful drugs or tobacco during their term. Participants agree to be celibate during their service terms. Participants are expected to be open to counsel on what is perceived as addictive or emotionally unhealthy behavior.

## **Service assignments.**

Each participant is expected to work between 35-40 hours a week at various sites in the community. There are a variety of work sites in each location and in general the household receives a monthly stipend for the work that the participant provides to their service organization. In some cases, participants are asked to work in multiple assignments in order to serve their needed hours. The money received from these organizations helps to provide for household expenses.

## **Length of term.**

A Service Adventure term is 10 1/2 months. Locations may have differing start and end dates. In general, most units begin during the month of August and end during the month of June.

## **Basic needs.**

The Service Adventure program provides for basic needs - housing, food, towels, bedding and transportation - as well as \$40 per month allowance. Participants are encouraged to keep at a minimum the number of personal items taken to their assignments.

**Electronics.**

Service Adventure encourages living in community, and modern methods of communication can take away from the community that you are in. Each unit during orientation week will discuss appropriate Internet usage and guidelines for cell phones, laptop computers, and other electronics.

**Orientation/closure.**

Participants in each unit spend the first week of their term together on location in orientation guided by the unit leader(s). 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.

**Extended weekends/retreats.**

Service Adventure is about being community and learning together. Units usually take several weekend trips together per term. They also often use weekends as a time to learn to know the local area.

**Vacation.**

Participants are entitled to eight days of vacation away from the unit during the service term. Participants are responsible for all vacation costs.

**Reports.**

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

**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.

**Medical coverage.**

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

**College credit.**

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

**Travel.**

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

**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 days.

**Host families.**

Each Service Adventure participant is paired up with a family from the local host congregation. These families involve participants in their lives via varied activities, at least monthly, and serve as a surrogate family away from home. This provides another way that the participant is connected with the host congregation.

**Program costs.**

Service Adventure will continue to encourage the participant's congregation to partner with us by committing whatever they are able to contribute toward the total cost (this is not mandatory). A financial sheet will be sent to the congregation suggesting a commitment of \$4,000.

**Advocacy team.**

As a way to help the participant stay connected with their home congregation, participants are asked to form an Advocacy Team with members from their home congregation. This team will offer support for the participant through prayers, communication and finances.

*When you apply for Service Adventure, you will receive a Service Adventure Policy Handbook that will state policies in detail.*

## People to Know

**Mennonite Mission Network Staff****Naomi Leary**

North America Regional Director  
MVS/Service Adventure  
[NaomiL@mennonitemission.net](mailto:NaomiL@mennonitemission.net)

**Lori Hershberger Blair**

Service Adventure Assistant  
[LoriB@MMNWorld.net](mailto:LoriB@MMNWorld.net)

**Michael Oyer**

HR Placement Coordinator  
[MichaelO@mennonitemission.net](mailto:MichaelO@mennonitemission.net)

**Unit Leaders****Samir Knego**

Anchorage, Alaska  
[samir.knego@gmail.com](mailto:samir.knego@gmail.com)

**Christian & Leigha Stoltzfus****Naomi Stoltzfus**

C email: [ccstoltzfus@gmail.com](mailto:ccstoltzfus@gmail.com)  
L email: [dalterego.15@gmail.com](mailto:dalterego.15@gmail.com)

**Tonia Martin**  
MMN Care Specialist  
[ToniaM@mennonitemission.net](mailto:ToniaM@mennonitemission.net)

Travis Duerksen  
Writer/Media  
[TravisD@mennonitemission.net](mailto:TravisD@mennonitemission.net)

Eric Frey Martin  
Constituent Engagement Director  
[EricFM@mennonitemission.net](mailto:EricFM@mennonitemission.net)

Rose Mtoka  
Placement Assistant  
[RoseM@mennonitemission.net](mailto:RoseM@mennonitemission.net)

## **Crisis & Emergency**

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 next steps. Mennonite Mission Network has a crisis management team in place who will help in assessing 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 that a current version of the emergency contact form is posted by the phone at the unit.
- In the event of a serious 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. Please keep the following information on file where it is accessible for all members of the support committee who are designated contacts for the unit.

## Emergency Contact Form

To be posted in the unit house

**Closest hospital/emergency center** \_\_\_\_\_

In case of a serious emergency\*, please contact one of the local contacts first, and then notify the Service Adventure director. In the event of a serious emergency, the Service Adventure director, in consultation with the unit leader and Mission Network staff, will determine 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:** Naomi Leary

Office phone: 1-866-866-2872, etc. 23056 Cell 574-206-6314

**MMN Care Specialist:** Tonia Martin

Office phone: 1-866-866-2872, ext. 23031 Cell 580-330-1490

**Service Adventure Assistant:** Lori Hershberger Blair

Office phone: 1-866-866-2872, ext. 24404 Cell 574-214-5400

### Christliche Dienste emergency contact information:

- Emergency contact number for insurance 24/7: +49 224 792 250 13
- In case of an emergency, please also contact the CD office at the following number: +49-6223 477 60 If no one is in the office in an emergency situation, please call: +49 159 049 770 90. A staff member is available 24/7.



# 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. Take responsibility for house life – act as a leader, 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 their lives broadened as they open themselves to explore new insights for Christian growth and service.
- When they fail to live in accordance with these commitments, they will be honest about their actions and motives and will accept responsibility for them.

Disregard for any of the above stated expectations shall be brought to the attention of the local support committee and program director, and if found to be of a severe enough nature may result in early dismissal.

# Emerging Adulthood

“Baby Adults”. They are adults – this is a time to take on the responsibility and role of an adult. Expectations are higher, as they should be. They are babies at it – There is a big learning curve, and they are just taking steps away from childhood.

In industrialized countries, young people just out of high school and into their 20’s are spending more time experimenting with potential directions for their lives. This new way of transitioning into adulthood is different enough from generations past that it is considered a new developmental phase – emerging adulthood.

## Emerging Adulthood Defined

**Emerging adulthood is the period between the late teens and early twenties; ages 18-25, although some researchers have included up to age 29 in the definition (Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood, 2016). Jeffrey Arnett (2000) argues that emerging adulthood is neither adolescence nor is it young adulthood.** Individuals in this age period have left behind the relative dependency of childhood and adolescence, but have not yet taken on the responsibilities of adulthood. “Emerging adulthood is a time of life when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future is decided for certain when the scope of independent exploration of life’s possibilities are greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course” (Arnett, 2000, p. 469). Arnett has identified five characteristics of emerging adulthood that distinguishes it from adolescence and young adulthood (Arnett, 2006).

**It is the age of identity exploration.** In 1950, Erik Erikson proposed that it was during adolescence that humans wrestled with the question of identity. Yet, even Erikson (1968) commented on a trend during the 20th century of a “prolonged adolescence” in industrialized societies. Today, most identity development occurs during the late teens and early twenties rather than adolescence. It is during emerging adulthood that people are exploring their career choices and ideas about intimate relationships, setting the foundation for adulthood. Emerging adulthood is an extended period of time for exploring who the young adult is and what he/she wants out of work, love, and life. Part of that exploration is attending postsecondary (tertiary) education to expand more pathways for work. Tertiary education includes community colleges, universities, and trade schools.

**Arnett also described this time period as the age of instability** (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2006). Exploration generates uncertainty and instability. Emerging adults change jobs, relationships, and residences more frequently than other age groups. Rates of residential change in American society are much higher at ages 18 to 29 than at any other period of life (Arnett, 2004). This reflects the explorations going on in emerging adults’ lives. Some move out of their parents’ household for the first time in their late teens to attend a residential college, whereas others move out simply to be independent (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). They may move again when they drop out of college or when they

graduate. They may move to cohabit with a romantic partner and then move out when the relationship ends. Some move to another part of the country or the world to study or work. For nearly half of American emerging adults, residential change includes moving back in with their parents at least once (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). In some countries, such as in southern Europe, emerging adults remain in their parents' home rather than move out; nevertheless, they may still experience instability in education, work, and love relationships (Douglass, 2005, 2007).

**This is also the age of self-focus.** Being self-focused is not the same as being “self-centered.” Adolescents are more self-centered than emerging adults. Arnett reports that in his research, he found emerging adults to be very considerate of the feelings of others, especially their parents. They now begin to see their parents as people not just parents, something most adolescents fail to do (Arnett, 2006). Nonetheless, emerging adults focus more on themselves, as they realize that they have few obligations to others and that this is the time where they can do what they want with their life. Most American emerging adults move out of their parents' home at age 18 or 19 and do not marry or have their first child until at least their late twenties (Arnett, 2004). Even in countries where emerging adults remain in their parents' home through their early twenties, as in southern Europe and in Asian countries such as Japan, they establish a more independent lifestyle than they had as adolescents (Rosenberger, 2007). Emerging adulthood is a time between adolescents' reliance on parents and adults' long-term commitments in love and work, and during these years, emerging adults focus on themselves as they develop the knowledge, skills, and self-understanding they will need for adult life. In the course of emerging adulthood, they learn to make independent decisions about everything from what to have for dinner to whether or not to get married.

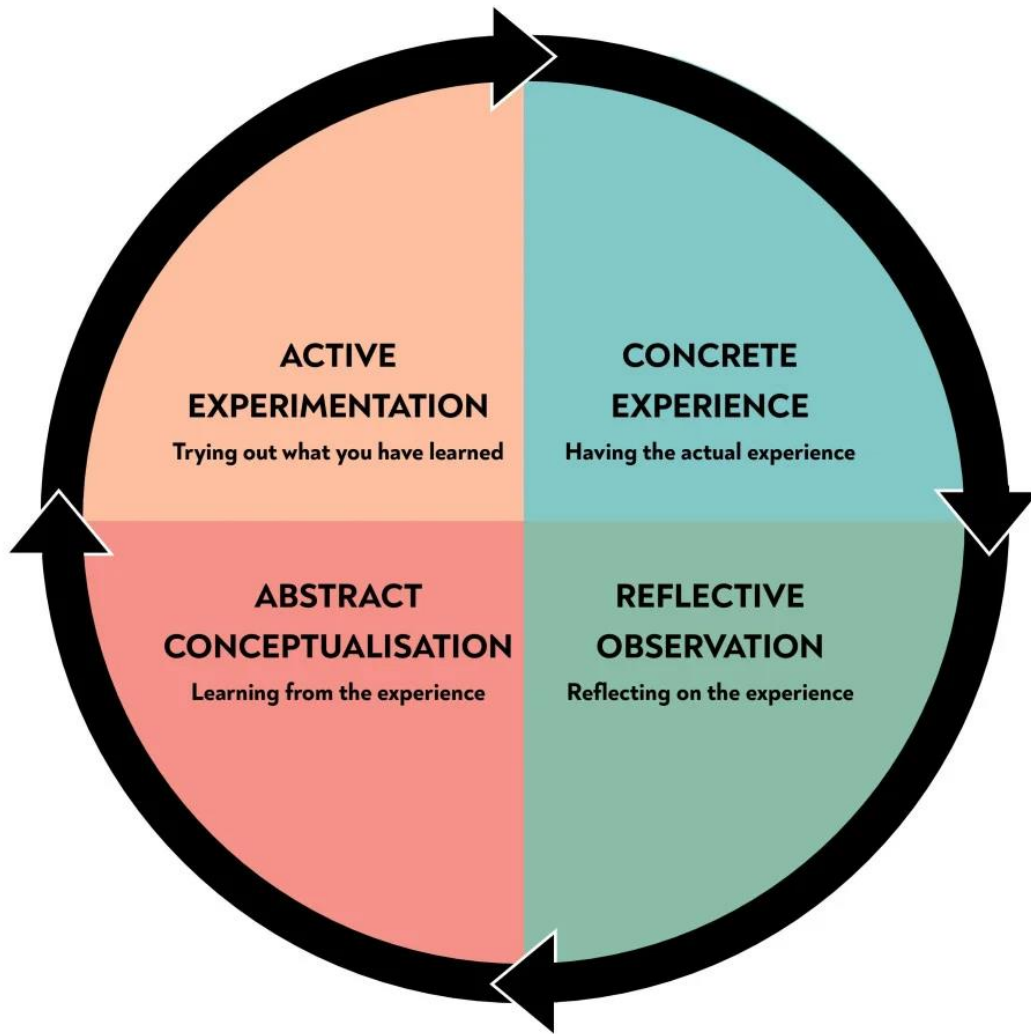
**This is also the age of feeling in-between.** When asked if they feel like adults, more 18 to 25-year-olds answer “yes and no” than do teens or adults over the age of 25 (Arnett, 2001). Most emerging adults have gone through the changes of puberty, are typically no longer in high school, and many have also moved out of their parents' home. Thus, they no longer feel as dependent as they did as teenagers. Yet, they may still be financially dependent on their parents to some degree, and they have not completely attained some of the indicators of adulthood, such as finishing their education, obtaining a good full-time job, being in a committed relationship, or being responsible for others. It is not surprising that Arnett found that 60% of 18 to 25-year-olds felt that in some ways they were adults, but in some ways, they were not (Arnett, 2001,). It is only when people reach their late twenties and early thirties that a clear majority feels adult. Most emerging adults have the subjective feeling of being in a transitional period of life, on the way to adulthood but not there yet. This “in-between” feeling in emerging adulthood has been found in a wide range of countries, including Argentina (Facio & Micocci, 2003), Austria (Sirsch, Dreher, Mayr, & Willinger, 2009), Israel (Mayseless & Scharf, 2003), the Czech Republic (Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007), and China (Nelson & Chen, 2007).

**Emerging adulthood is the age of possibilities.** It tends to be an age of high hopes and great expectations, in part because few of their dreams have been tested in the fires of real life. In one national survey of 18- to 24-year-olds in the United States, nearly all—89%—agreed with the statement, “I am confident that one day I will get to where I want to be in life” (Arnett & Schwab, 2012). This optimism in emerging adulthood has been found in other countries as well (Nelson & Chen, 2007). Arnett (2000, 2006) suggests that this optimism is because these dreams have yet to be tested. For example, it is easier to believe that you will eventually find your soulmate when you have yet to have had a serious relationship. It may also be a chance to change directions, for those whose lives up to this point have been difficult. The experiences of children and teens are influenced by the choices and decisions of their parents. If the parents are dysfunctional, there is little a child can do about it. In emerging adulthood, people can move out and move on. They have the chance to transform their lives and move away from unhealthy environments. Even those whose lives were happier and more fulfilling as children, now have the opportunity in emerging adulthood to become independent and make decisions about the direction they would like their life to take.

The years of emerging adulthood are often times of identity exploration through work, fashion, music, education, and other venues.

The five features proposed in the theory of emerging adulthood originally were based on research involving about 300 Americans between ages 18 and 29 from various ethnic groups, social classes, and geographical regions (Arnett, 2004).

# Experiential Learning Model



# Role of a Unit Leader

Service Adventure unit leaders, ages 24 and up, 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 or near a household of three to five Service Adventure participants. Terms are two years in length and may be extended.

## Basic 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
- Safety and Crisis management
- Be a balanced authority figure to nurture growth
  - mentor vs coach vs parent vs boss

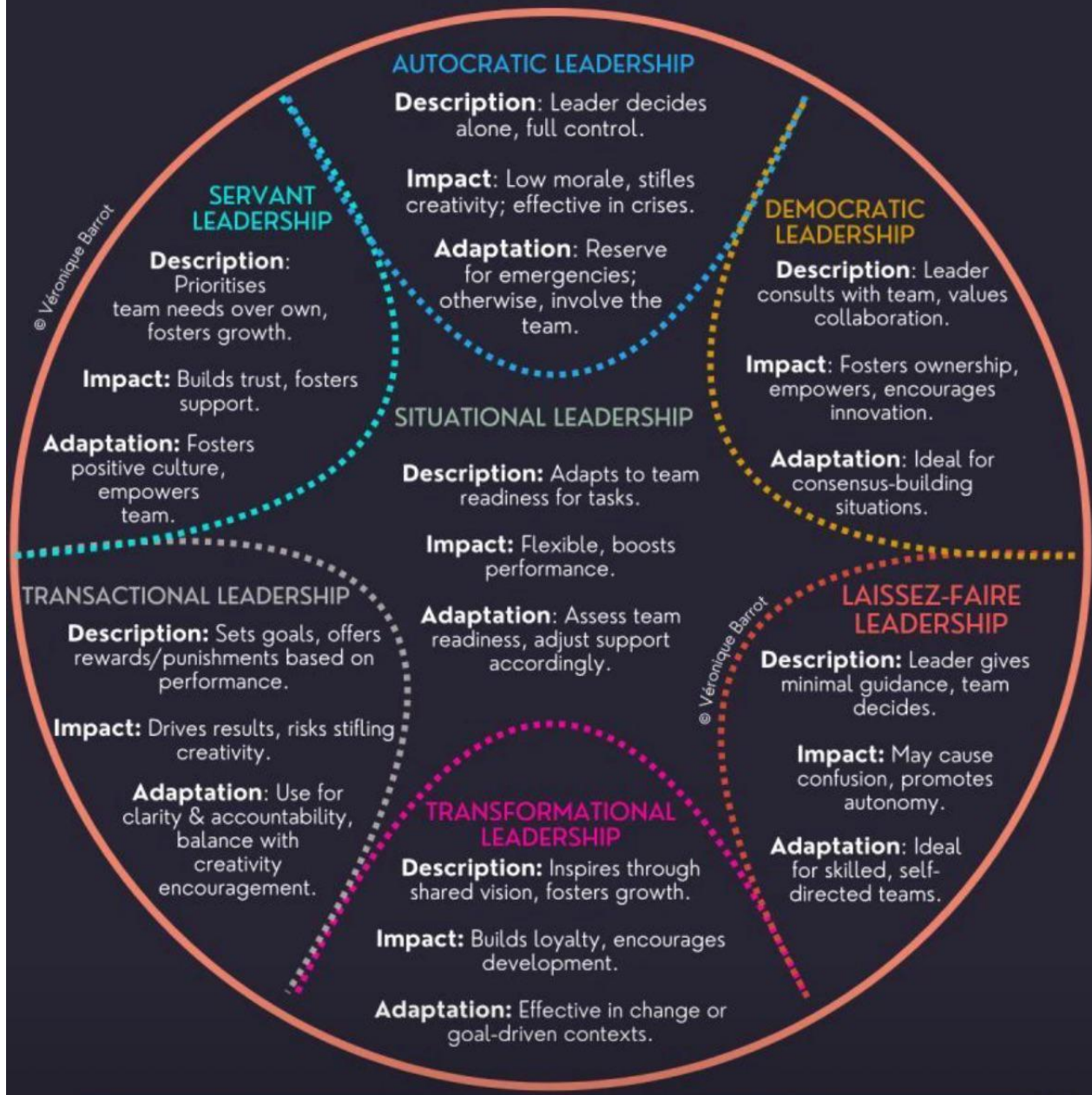
## Responsible behavior

- 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.
- 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



# Setting Expectations

Healthy communities need clear expectations that people are held accountable for. This doesn't need to mean 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 individuals 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 what they want to see out of their 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 biblical text, the people of God are repeatedly invited to live in relationship with God, others and the world out of a covenant. A covenant by definition is an agreement by an individual to another or group that they will engage in or refrain from specific action. When we think then of a covenant for this community and your household, we desire to see not so much a list of do's and don'ts but a desire for a way of life. Covenants were and are to be life giving.

The intention of covenants is that they are an agreement made by an individual that can be broken by that individual. Each one is accountable to keep the covenant. We are not dependent on others for accountability but offer ourselves to be accountable to the group. Therefore, in Service Adventure we ask that each individual agree to a covenant and work to hold themselves accountable, returning time and again to the group asking how well they are doing. This takes vulnerability, honesty and integrity.

From the biblical tradition, we take the sense that 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 all are able to 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.** Or 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
- Cleaning
- Cooking
- Space
- Sleep
- living simply
- Money
- Technology use
- Hospitality

## 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. Don't be a victim of believing the first person who comes to talk to you about a conflict. It's really important to take what this person is saying seriously, but it's just as important to give the other roommate just as much time to share their own perspective and experience. Listen to both sides before passing any kind of judgment on a situation or taking action.
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. Also, 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 all of 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 loud). 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 RA 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, what the impact is and what ideas they have for 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.

# Essential Program Components

## Community Life

### Values & Principles of Community Living (Why We Live as a Unit)

- Value: We want to reflect the early church
  - Common Purse
  - 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. At its best, a unit is a community of support, celebration, reflection, and discernment as the members of the community offer themselves in Christian service. Living together is where rubber hits the road – how will you make decisions together, how will you balance your own needs with others', how will you keep everything organized and running smoothly.

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 a 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

Why we do this together?

- Communities build relationship over food. Preparing meals with love is a Christ-like way of showing hospitality, even to those closest to you.
- Sharing a Common Purse 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 Common Purse 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 effect 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 mealtime?
- Common Purse
  - Learn about the weekly and monthly budget. Talk about how to determine needs and wants depending on costs.
  - Explore alternative food sources – thrift stores, food co-ops, etc.

## **Scheduling**

Why 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 about schedule 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 2 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 to go with you on these activities?

## **Unit Meetings**

Why 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 – taking care of each other.
- Participants should work 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 will ensure persons 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 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 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 we don't have experience in? 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: The Leader leans more authoritarian in this area. Set clear expectations and enforce deadlines. You ensure the house is cared for well.

**Unit activities** – there are official unit activities and there are some activities you want to make sure your whole unit feels included in. Official unit activities will be planned in advance and involve the whole unit. Informal activities that everyone is invited to should also have a principle of inclusion, and make sure that the majority isn't excluding others. However, it is ok for not every activity to involve the whole unit, and certainly not require the whole unit. This is a balancing effort, but should be one you pay attention to, each participant takes responsibility for, and is regularly checked in on 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**

This is the basis for the rest of the goals. Find out about their family...where do they fit in... what do they want out of the year...find out about their friends (who are they, what role do friends play in participant's life). Leaders need to help 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 be able to discuss issues.

## **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**

Finding the balance between being a leader and a friend...finding the fine line between not being paternal and yet being parental....in a positive way... or possibly stripping down negative ideas about what leaders do....

## **Share in struggles**

It is very important not to be judgmental...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 the pushing towards growth can occur. Or if there has been an issue in the house that they need to be held accountable for.... anything from getting to work on time to performing unit responsibilities

## Encouragement

A chance to give positive feedback about each one as a person...now that you know the person and what issues they have been working on, you can give specific descriptions regarding their growth and choices

## Motivation

This step cannot happen right away. There needs to be a level of comfort in the household environment first. Using relationship to get the person where they want to go.

For example: Participant having anxiety about cooking meals.... They will not have any motivation to work on this. Leader could give “homework” related to the specific problem i.e. find three recipes and learn them; use only those recipes when cooking until you become proficient at those.

For example: 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?

### Formats:

Formal (scheduled): Coffee shop, breakfast, lunch

Informal (unscheduled): Dishes, preparing dinner, driving in car, late night talks

Suggestion: Scheduled vs. unscheduled toward the end of the year

## 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. Leaders will then have 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 would need to know if this is simply normal behavior for this individual, or if this is something that they should be really 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 \_?"

## **Learning Component**

### **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 enables the individual to identify 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 getting to know persons from the congregation/community.
- \* To help participants learn more about the community/area they are living in.

**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 act as models for the sharing. Allow each person up to one hour with maximum of two persons 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 having participants teach with having participants learn. 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. Enjoy taking advantage of local events.

### 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?

### Use of learning component money

Learning component money is for activities, done as a whole group that will offer environments and opportunities for participants to learn. These dollars are budgeted in each Service Adventure unit to cover the cost of activities that might otherwise be limited due to tight budgets.

However, these dollars are 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 fairly tight 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 simply implies 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?*

Some people treat these components as the same thing but they don't need to be. **Each member of the unit should have the opportunity to plan worship nights regularly.** Use local church members as a resource to lead a worship time.

Planning worship is about including those pieces that will be 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 should participate in both the planning and leading of worship. Unit leaders should also be willing to do most of the primary planning/leading of worship for the first few weeks.

Plan to check in with participants who lead worship, to see how they felt about the experience, particularly if planning and leading worship is a new thing to them.

*Should we have a worship theme, and how do we decide what it will be?*

Theme's 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. No idea is bad one! Some may just be more difficult or unfeasible! 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.

*Closing thoughts on informal worship leading & planning*

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. In order to be the most creative with what you are doing, it will take planning, planning, planning.... Just plan on it! Your experiences together are worth 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 the calling God has for them
4. Build intercultural competence
  - a. Grow in ability to see and understand oppression
  - b. Learn ways to faithfully resist discrimination/oppression

### **Basic Participant Expectations**

1. 35-40 hours per week

2. One full-time or up to three part-time placements
3. Communicate clearly with Placement Supervisor about day-to-day work
4. Communicate clearly with Placement Supervisor and Unit Leader about concerns
5. 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 & Expectations**

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, intimately 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, but stretched enough to have a push to grow.
3. Support volunteer and placement if there are disagreements and/or issues that arise. Help volunteer to grow in professionalism and maturity; but also advocate for healthy boundaries for volunteer.
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 record pertaining to the check-ins.

## **Preparing Well for Participants**

### **Preparing for Start of Term**

- Determine 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 at \_ and ask for help!
  - Is there paperwork to begin (child care 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 - what do you want that to look like?
  - 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. Basics of 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 policy manual)
- Several group photos and individual photos
- Prayer Card Info: 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, demo cleaning, technology use, calendar, policies, travels, food, learning components, stipends, financial stuff/budget, vehicle upkeep, bathroom schedule, laundry schedule.

Relationship Building Experiences

- Do 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(es), pastor(s), support committee; host families
- How do you take care of yourself so you have energy to grow?
  - Temple care: eating, exercise, sleep
  - Mind/spirit: personal changes during terms, culture shock
- Personal: Worship Nights and Learning Components, ways to do individual growth/reflection

#### Work

- Visit work placements, meet the boss. If needed 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.).
- Groups use map, walk to local areas, meet neighbors, and explore local parks.
- Grocery store/supplies

#### **All-unit Orientation Zooms with MNN Staff**

- Child Safety
- Anti-Racism
- Program Policies/Expectations

# Role of the Support Committee

The local support committee is a body comprised of a number of individuals from the host congregation(s). Unit leaders are partially accountable to this body as well as the host congregation and Mennonite Mission Network. This body provides guidance and support to unit leaders regarding any and all unit issues, helps to foster communication between the host congregation and unit regarding pertinent issues, and works at fostering relationships between the host congregation and unit. This committee is led by a chairperson, who serves as the primary source of contact between the committee and the program office.

One of the primary responsibilities of the local support committee is to provide emotional support for the unit leader. This entails regular check-ins with the unit leader to see how things are going on a personal level for the leader.

## **Relational support**

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

The local support committee also serves as the “business manager” for the local unit. It is their responsibility to meet with the unit leader on a regular basis and review the budget as well as other household items.

## **Operational support**

- Be knowledgeable of all current program policy.
- Receive monthly financial reports from the unit leader.
- Copy support committee meeting minutes/notes to the program director.
- 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 of service.
- Attend semi-annual support committee chair meetings as appropriate and available.

**Responsibilities along with the local leader**

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