

Preparing to return home

The last and most often neglected part of a service assignment is the re-entry phase. For many, the worst kind of culture shock does not occur when entering into a new community, but in returning to the home community. When people go to another country or another part of their own country, they expect to be disoriented or to lack understanding. But upon returning to their home community, they think they will take up their lives exactly where they left off. Soon they discover, however, that their eyes have been opened and their judgments challenged by experiencing another community. They may find themselves not only struggling to adjust back at home, but very critical of people or situations they previously tolerated.

Setting aside some time at the end of your service experience or as you return home to debrief the experience can be very helpful. Here are a few questions from Kim Hurst in *The Art of Debriefing*. Use these questions as a place to start thinking about your experience and how it will impact your life.

Three focuses of debriefing

- What happened between God and me?
- What happened between others and me?
- What happened within me?

Questions: God

- How did God use me in unexpected ways?

- When did I rely most on God?



Photo by Travis Duerksen

Paula Klatte, Risa Fukaya, Estella Sandweg and Roger Neufeld Smith lead worship at Open Door Mennonite Church in Jackson, Mississippi.

- In what ways did I diminish/empower others, and they me?

- Where are the similarities between me and those in this community? The differences? Which weighed more for me on this trip? Why?

- How will I respond differently the next time I'm in a situation like this?



Photo by Robert Wolf

Questions: Self

- What did I learn about my values in these areas: time, body, work, communications, other?

- What did I find negative in myself? What does this say about me?

- What did I find positive? What does this say about me?

- What will I change?

- What's the one memory I'll cherish the most?