

Short-Term Mission: A New Construct for More Effective Integration into the Traditional AGWM Mission Paradigm

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Introduction

No one can deny that short-term mission (STM) has become a fixture of the modern-day mission enterprise. In fact, the number of short-termers has grown exponentially within the last decade. Roger Peterson, the CEO of STEM International (Short Term Evangelical Missions), the chairman of ESTML (Fellowship of Short-Term Mission Leaders), maintains that there are over forty thousand sending entities in the United States alone, comprising churches, agencies and schools.¹ What's more, he cites the findings of Robert Priest, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, who in 2004 suggested that the number of short-term participants could have reached four million.²

Why has STM become such a phenomenon? Peterson offers a number of plausible explanations. He points out that World War II produced a pool of people with worldwide experience. This was followed by the age of airplane travel in the 1950's that allowed the average citizen access to flight. In addition to these factors, the rise of postmodernity produced a generation of people who no longer accepted things at face value, but instead demanded action and experience. Finally, the invention of the internet and World Wide Web allowed people to have direct access to faraway places, making the world appear smaller and more accessible.³

Undoubtedly, these factors have greatly influenced the growth of STM to the point that those involved in the mission enterprise can no longer be overlooked by it. In fact, Peterson contends that STM can be potentially strategic as a missiological strategy, especially in instances

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where long-term strategies are not feasible, because it is swift, volunteer-based and easier to employ financially.⁴ However, what does this say for the traditional long-term missionary model? Obviously, the three points that Peterson cites as strengths of STM as strategy are the very factors that embody the career missionary.

This writer has served as a long-term missionary with Assemblies of God World Mission (AGWM) for over nineteen years. In the process of data retrieval I have come to the understanding that the proponents of STM and the traditional missionary model operate in relatively dual realities almost as if looking at two sides of a coin. While both sides are pondering the same coin, or in this instance the endeavor of world evangelization, they are obviously seeing two totally different pictures and drawing, in many instances, two completely different conclusions.

However, regardless of these differing viewpoints, the Assemblies of God as a traditional mission agency must grapple with the issues of STM because it has become an ingrained practice, not only on the broad scale, but also throughout our own congregational constituency. “Short-term sending entities are already beginning to band together, completely bypassing the traditional mission networks....Older conferences and associations must make radical changes in order to incorporate the newer short-term practitioners into their much-needed spheres of influence.”⁵ Thus, it is incumbent on us as a respected agency for missionary deployment to make STM an effective, strategic and calculated component of our overall strategy to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the STM model. First, the writer will explain how the concept of Short-Term Mission has affected the overall view of mission and the office of missionary. Then, this paper will outline some various reasons why STM is purported as a mission model and the findings of recent research on the perceived benefits and hindrances of STM, as well as, some discrepancies that this writer sees between the goals of STM and the long-term missionary model. Finally, this paper will conclude with a new conceptual construct for STM as an integral part of our mission paradigm.

View of Mission and the Office of Missionary

Alan Johnson cites a poignant and thought provoking statement made by Stephen Neill in his 1959 book *Creative Tension*, "When everything is mission, nothing is mission."⁶ Ralph Winter contends that there is a common misunderstanding throughout all Christian circles to the point that the concept of mission now refers more to the redemptive activities of the local church, whether or not that activity is directed to reaching the lost in areas where the church does not exist.⁷ As such, Christian circles now implement the term "mission" so often that it has taken on a broader connotation than it had in previous generations.⁸ Undoubtedly, these broader contexts can cause the average local church and its constituents to consider mission in ways that the traditional sending agency does not.

Consequently, one now sees the term 'missionary' more loosely applied, often to anyone who is involved in outreach. In fact, it is quite common for churches to erect signs in their parking lots to inform people that they are now entering the "mission field." Johnson points out that, "...the word missionary has outgrown its original connection to the idea of cross cultural and geographic boundaries to plant the church and become a motivating symbol for witnessing, mobilizing for ministry and fundraising."⁹

Undoubtedly, this motivational aspect of mission helps account for the rise in STM trips out of the local church. The majority of evangelical churches are concerned primarily with their local bodies and the life of individual church members.¹⁰ What's more, most new church members were not raised in a particular church tradition and consequently have little understanding of the traditional missionary model.¹¹ Therefore, STM trips often appeal to the church's desire to see members of its own congregation mature and grow in their faith and service as a result of their STM trip. In light of these factors, the traditional mission agencies and long-term missionaries can be viewed as irrelevant.¹²

The formerly held conceptualization of mission and missionary no longer exists. Instead, viewpoints on these terms are now influenced by a number of issues, such as: the considerable growth of the church outside of the U.S., the ease of international travel and communication, the increased suspicion of traditional structures, the increased need for personal experience and the consistent rise in the number of mission agencies and philosophies of mission.¹³ Whereas, in

past generations, people would participate by praying for and supporting missionaries, they now desire to travel and work alongside traditional missionaries, though for brief periods of time.¹⁴

STM as a Mission Model: Reasons and Research

STM has become a grassroots movement in which churches organize mission trips for members of their congregations, both young and old, on a routine basis. “Like pilgrimages, these trips are rituals of intensification, where one temporarily leaves the ordinary, compulsory, workaday life.... experiences an extraordinary, voluntary, sacred experience (that) ideally produces new selves to be reintegrated back into everyday life.”¹⁵

The traditional view of mission is the idea of giving one’s life up for the cause of Christ and the Gospel; however, many ministry leaders see other purposes for mission and hope that the participants’ involvement in STM trips will cause them to grow spiritually and will give them a greater desire to be involved in God’s mission.”¹⁶ As such, facilitators can be more concerned with the effect that the trip will have on the participants than they are on the impact that the participants will have on the receiving people. What’s more, reporting on the effects of STM is often skewed. Corrie Baar contends that out of 40 research studies published in the last two decades,

[O]nly one surveyed Third World communities ... only 9 had sample sizes of over 100, nearly all surveyed the returning North Americans immediately after returning from their trips--while they were still on the “high” from their experience—and very few triangulated respondents’ answer with secondary sources like organizational donation records.¹⁷

Consequently, the missiological research community has just begun to take a more serious look at this impactful phenomenon and more varied research is coming to light. For instance, Terence Linhart researched what he terms the grounded theory process. In so doing, he found that students typically explore and construct their identities during the course of a STM trip and that this process causes them to construct new ways of being in response to the images that they encounter in their experiences. However, in the absence of significant understanding and reflection, the STM trip becomes more of a spectacle from which they will hopefully grow and mature.¹⁸ In the study, ten high school students were given a tape recorder to use several months before the summer STM trip and during the trip. They were asked to record any

thoughts or experiences that they deemed significant. Linhart found that the respondents seldom reflected on the effectiveness of their cross-cultural ministry, but instead would focus on what various ministry opportunities said about them and what God may have in store for them in further ministry.¹⁹

In another study, Randy Friesen collected data from 112 STM participants over the course of two years to determine how they were impacted by their cross-cultural experience. He found that one year following the STM trip a majority of the participants experienced a considerable decline in Bible study and prayer. What's more, most experienced a decline in their relationship with the local church and many reported regressing in any positive changes they had garnered from their trip.²⁰ These findings could suggest that the curricular hope that STM participants will grow spiritually from their experiences may be misplaced. As the saying goes, "Wishing it does not make it so."

While the STM movement is often fueled by the heartfelt, well-intentioned desire of American Christians to go, grow and serve, it nonetheless can raise a number of negative implications for the mission endeavor. Steve Hawthorne maintains that STM programs are, "inadvertently structured to give participants poor exposure to the world, to the work and to missionaries themselves (and they) fail to expose people to the best of what missions can be and is."²¹ STM participants often show a lack of cultural sensitivity. As a result, participants often find themselves "waving or smiling across the chasm of language barrier" never really knowing or understanding the people that they encounter.²² Because STM participants spend only a short time within the host culture they are often forced to generalize the people's actions during that time period as a characterization of the people's whole lives. For instance, one student returned to live with a couple who had hosted a number of her STM trips; however, she did not feel that the people were as happy as she had remembered them. Although they were committed Christians who loved Jesus, she had essentialized their behavior as team hosts to their entire lives.²³

Yet another serious implication of the STM enterprise is the amateurism of mission.²⁴ Whereas, Americans would never consider sending untrained, inexperienced persons to perform jobs such as teacher, public relations consultant or pastor, they are often excited to send untrained persons to perform the task of missionary. According to Johnson, this mentality stems from promotional driven mobilization, which seriously downplays the complexity of the

missionary role. In fact, he suggests “there is a real danger of producing a great deal of action with little overall impact.”²⁵ Kevin Birth in his article, “What Is Your Mission Here?” asks a very poignant question in regard to the amateur as missionary; “...if Americans, in general, are less equipped to minister to their hosts than their hosts are equipped to minister to themselves, then what is the justification for a short-term mission trip?”²⁶

Still another consideration is the fact that STM teams monopolize the time of long-term missionaries. Because of their inability to speak the local language and their lack of cultural understanding, STM participants rely heavily on the long-term missionary. Various problems can arise from this scenario. For example, the veteran missionary may not be well equipped to handle the needs of a team or he/she may have different expectations as to the team’s purpose than the team members do. Often, because of their lack of language, STM participants are often assigned to do tasks, such as literature evangelism, that the veteran missionary seldom engages in.²⁷ In essence, the STM participant is unlikely to participate in the relational aspects of the veteran missionary’s daily life, which are the cornerstone of his or her effectiveness as a missionary.

Finally, we come to a key consideration and that is the issue of missionary funding. The funds for STM trips come from the same source as the funds for the long-term missionary. Proponents of STM consistently claim that STM increases the pool of people willing to serve as career missionaries and increases the financial support of career missionaries. While research does seem to indicate that STM can lead to an increased openness to long-term missionary service, findings do not conclusively prove that STM participation leads to an increase in missions giving.²⁸ In fact, STM that contributes only to the number of persons willing to serve as career missionaries, but does nothing to increase the financial support for career missionaries makes it unlikely that the number of career missionaries will increase at all.²⁹

To the contrary, STM may actually lead to a decrease in funding for the career missionary. Priest, Dischinger, Rasmusen and Brown use the analogy of grazing cows to illustrate this point. In the analogy the cows represent the career missionary who must engage in grazing (fund-raising) in order to get the grass (money) necessary to sustain him or her on the field. Introduce the STM participant (sheep) into the scenario. Now, the cows and the sheep must both graze on the same grass. The authors explain that the sheep has a number of advantages over the cow. First, the sheep grazes closer to the ground meaning that the STM

participant is inherently closer to the funding base compared to the cow that spends years away from the home church. Secondly, donors often have a reciprocal relationship with persons from their church who desire to go on STM trips and thus are more willing to support them. Consequently, returning career missionaries may find it harder to raise their support when they must go back to pastures that are filled with flocks of sheep.³⁰ C.M. Brown explains that there has been a shift in donor attitudes. Now, donors often want to give to acquaintances and require little strategy or justification beyond their established relationship to the person desiring funding.³¹

Discrepancies between STM and the Goal of Traditional Mission

Winter explains mission in interesting terms by saying that unlike other evangelistic organizations, missionaries are in the lock picking business whereby they possess the unique skills to penetrate a strange and baffling culture.³² The cross-cultural mission enterprise is inherently difficult. Disciples of Christ cannot be created in one to two week blocks of time. The Apostle Paul encountered extreme challenges throughout his three missionary journeys. He writes to the Corinthians:

Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.³³

However, in spite of these tremendous obstacles and hardships, Paul was working in a known language and within a shared Hellenistic culture. What's more, he utilized the synagogue network, which means that most of his listeners would approach his Messianic message with a background of understanding. To the contrary, most modern-day missionaries must first immerse themselves into the language and culture of the people to whom they want to minister. Then, many must labor in areas where they must first build a conceptual bridge to reach people who have absolutely no "God" concept or knowledge base for Christianity. Miriam Adeney

explains that life in a cross-cultural context should not be viewed as a host of problems or as exotic. Rather, “foreign life is merely another set of arrangements viewed best through local lenses. It takes time to adapt to this. And it takes time to absorb how to make local patterns work...Jesus spent 33 years in 1 place. It takes time to be a friend.”³⁴

Still another missiological discrepancy between the STM model and traditional mission model is the fact that STM has virtually nothing to offer the unreached world where the church does not exist. Johnson contends that STM can significantly skew missionary placement. Because STM participants lack the cultural or language skills to branch out into new, unreached areas they must go to areas where someone already possesses the necessary skills to facilitate them. Consequently, most STM teams go only to places that have an existing church.³⁵ This phenomenon creates what Johnson terms positive and negative feedback loops that ultimately influence where future long-term missionaries want to serve. Positive feedback generates excitement and leads people to visit a place and catch a burden for it. To the contrary, the negative loop represents the complete lack of information on a given country because of no positive report. As a result, people are not inspired to visit, which results in the lowered likelihood that persons will develop a calling to an unrepresented country.³⁶

Couple these negative feedback cycles with the pressing desire of churches to be directly involved in the areas where they support missionaries and the issue of unreached people groups becomes increasingly more complicated. Having worked in a restricted access country for nine years, this writer understands how difficult it can be to provide opportunities for churches to be directly involved. Paul Borthwick recounts a conversation that he had with a church leader. This leader was instrumental in developing new policies for his church’s mission’s budget, which stipulated that the church would only give to projects where church members could have direct involvement. When Borthwick explained to him that this would be impossible to do in certain restricted access regions, the leader replied, “Well, I guess we cannot be involved there.”³⁷

Finally, STM by its very definition is short-term. Gary Corwin explains that, “many students, along with many of their elders, have unwittingly accepted the idea that embracing a call to the nations is primarily an instantaneous commitment having short-term consequences, resulting in a memorable experience.”³⁸ However, only long-term personnel can incarnate the Gospel through relationship, language and cultural sensitivity. It is one’s on-going presence that,

many times, makes the difference in people's lives as they watch the missionary live his or her life day in and day out even through difficult circumstances. As Johnson explains, a developed relationship gives the career missionary the platform to explain the "why" of the deed and allows that deed to illuminate the truth of the proclaimed word.³⁹

Robert T. Coote contends that STM workers can never "balance a real decline in long-term commitments by men and women who are prepared to take a profoundly incarnational approach to communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of other cultures."⁴⁰ For many areas of the world relationship holds precedence over programs, which means that the message of Christ will only find acceptance and understanding as it is represented in a caring, reciprocal relationship. For instance, Lois Bush explains how Pakistani missionaries must learn to do things in a non-Western way and that long-term relationships are valued far beyond education or skills.⁴¹ In contrast to the incarnational model which strives to meet people within their own context and on their own terms, STM approaches and programs are often formulated and conceptualized in the goer's context and therefore are not contextualized.

A New Construct for Viewing STM

Regardless of the obvious shortcomings of STM, the fact remains that modern-day American Christians, especially those from the younger generations, want to experience mission for themselves. AGWM must recognize this need for global experience and proactively shape this trend to inspire a new generation of cross-cultural laborers. Priest, Dischinger, Rasmussen and Brown explain that STM "is a grassroots and populist phenomenon almost completely divorced from scholarship, from missiology, and from seminary education."⁴² Therefore, it is incumbent on AGWM to take the lead in steering our denominational constituency in the effective utilization of STM.

This writer feels that our mission agency can steer our movement toward better STM practices in a number of ways. First, AGWM must better inform youth pastors, mission pastors and STM facilitators on how to successfully employ STM teams. For example, youth pastors are often called upon to lead STM teams when they have received no formal instruction on how to do so from their Bible school educations. What's more, most seminary courses and missiological publications are focused on preparation for long-term missionary personnel.⁴³

Secondly, training materials for STM participants and facilitators that complement and enhance AGWM vision and strategy must be developed. Thirdly, AGWM must promote a team concept that conveys how STM can be a valuable facet of the overall strategy of our movement to win the world. “Local church supporters need to know that organizations exist for strategic purposes--not just for self-perpetuation. [Churches] want to hear about dreams and visions” and they want to see the big picture and how they can fit into it.⁴⁴

Johnson maintains that local churches, pastors and even individual Christians have a missiology even if they do not formally express it. As such, their values will guide their decision-making when deciding the where, when and how of their mission involvement.⁴⁵ AGWM cannot afford to be swept along with the STM phenomenon or it risks being swept to the wayside. Increasing numbers of unaffiliated mission-sending organizations are dedicated to the STM model. Peterson reports that STM entities are starting to organize together, in effect bypassing traditional mission networks.⁴⁶ The AGWM website explains that our movement was established for the purpose of sending funds with “greater efficiency.”⁴⁷ However, those of us involved in the movement know that this efficiency has been encumbered to some degree by the local churches’ increased focus on STM. Undoubtedly, AGWM should now consider greater efficiency both in the sending of funds and church members.

This paper arises in response to a course taught by Alan Johnson at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary. During the course of study, a collaborative discussion took place among a small group of veteran missionaries on the issue of STM. Hence, varying aspects of the following construct stem from these discussions. During the course, Johnson shared a valuable insight by suggesting that bad systemic problems cannot be fixed by fixing bad practices, but some bad practices can be fixed to become more effective. While some of the problems with the STM model are unfixable because of the model’s very nature, there are definitely some aspects that AGWM can fine-tune and make more effective.

To address the issue of STM within the Assemblies of God movement we must first understand and effectively communicate what we categorize as short-term. All STM are not created equal, thus a continuum of STM can aide in our evaluation.

CONTINUUM OF STM

| EXPLORATION | EXPERIENCE | EXCHANGE |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1-3 weeks | 1-3 months | 1-2 years |
| Goal: Observation | Goal: Learning | Goal: informed interaction |

The analogy of a dramatic play can better illustrate how these various stages of STM interact within a cross-cultural context. The drama represents the actors (persons) of another culture as they live and interact within their context. Participants of a one to three week STM trip represent the audience. They are permitted entry into the theatre simply because they have purchased a ticket. Thus, they do not need to possess any particular skills, nor are they expected to interact with the actors up on stage. Instead, they watch the drama from the outside and are left to themselves to determine how to react or respond to what they have seen.

The one to three month STM participant enters the theatre the same way that the other audience members enter; however, this person is eventually invited up on stage during the course of the show. Consequently, he or she gets a closer look at the actors and may even be asked to perform some small part in the show. As a result of this closer more sustained contact, the participant has more concrete experiences to base his or her perceptions on and he or she has actually had the opportunity to interact with the actors.

The one to two year STM participant actually receives a back stage pass, which allows him and her to see the actors as they really are in everyday life. The participant has meaningful exchanges with the people and begins to understand more about the culture and what is behind the surface. Most likely this participant will learn the language and become more culturally informed.

This construct frames the one to three week STM trip as an opportunity to explore new cultures. Typically, these trips are promoted as "mission" trips in which participants are expected to actively minister. However, these expectations have serious drawbacks, both for the STM participant and the host culture. An East African church sent a letter in response to a request to host a group of college students for a multi-month internship. In the letter they explained that STM participants often expect "that they can engage the people instantly,

accomplish their ‘mission’ and pull out” even when they possess very little expertise in a given cross-cultural setting.”⁴⁸ What’s more, the church complained that STM participants held high expectations for results and action and that these attitudes most likely arose from the notion that people who have traveled far to “do mission(s)” must do something substantial for those whom they came to serve.⁴⁹

Consequently, this church suggested that STM be seen as experience, rather than as mission whereby the participants themselves are stretched to experience God more, experience the body of Christ worldwide and experience how ministry is conducted in different contexts.⁵⁰ During our class discussion at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines), one Japanese missionary, Hiro Yoshihara, informed us that the Japanese Assemblies of God does not call one to three week trips “mission” trips, instead they refer to them as experience trips. He explained that experience trip participants are never expected to minister, rather they are asked to observe and reflect on what they see. Obviously, this shift in expectations would require a greater flexibility on the part of sending agents and would call for them to adjust their notions on status, relationship and task.⁵¹ However, a shift in emphasis from a results-oriented role of short term missionary to the more realistic goal of exploration would allow STM participants to learn and grow from their experiences without the pressure of doing ministry. What’s more it would preserve the term “missionary” in the eyes of the average church member.

The one to three month STM participant experiences the culture at a deeper level. Kurt Alan Ver Beek effectively illustrates the difference between this level and the one to three week STM trip.

Rather than seeing communities and North Americans as easily changed entities, I wonder if they more closely resemble saplings, which can be bent and even held in one place for a week or more, but once let loose quickly go back to growing vertically. Those saplings need to be held in place for a much longer period of time for the change in direction to become permanent.⁵²

The experience level trip gives participants prolonged exposure to a new culture. This model is already utilized successfully at a number of our Assemblies of God universities.

Nevertheless, this writer would suggest that exposure trip facilitators take steps to expose participants not only to elements of the host culture, but also to how that culture compares and contrasts to other unreached regions. Typically, one to three month STM experiences are organized in areas with a developed Christian framework. It is this framework that makes it

possible for them to come in and minister within an established context. Hawthorne contends that persons who are called to career missionary service usually go to the places where they went first, but that it is precisely these places that need missionaries the least.⁵³ Hence, trip facilitators must help to insert new information into the feedback loop. This could mean that they plan layovers on return trips to allow exposure to unreached areas whereby students can compare that area as unreached to the reached area that they have already experienced. What's more, participants should also learn that persons can receive a call for missionary service without having a specific country or prior experience in mind. Study on the lives of pioneer missionaries who left their home countries permanently to encounter new cultures that they had never previously experienced can help to illustrate this point. The one to two year STM will not be discussed at length in this paper because this level is more akin to the traditional missionary model.

How does this framework address the STM participant who goes on a trip to offer a specific skill, such as medical or construction work? In this case the participant can offer his or her expertise with the understanding that it is still grounded within his or her own cultural context. As such, they should offer their skills to enhance the ministry skills of local Christians and career missionaries. Dave Sanford, chairman of the Cross-Cultural Studies department of Arizona College of the Bible points out that "North American Christians too often fail to consider whether their short-term projects are true service to the national churches or merely means by which they are 'seeking to fulfill (their) own needs and dreams.'"⁵⁴ Consequently, STM participants need to make sure that they are responding to a specific need as expressed by career personnel on the ground. As an agency promoter said in response to a study on the efficacy of sending a U.S. team to build houses in Honduras, "the truth is that they don't have to come here to build homes....If they come, they should come for the friendships, for the cultural exchange....The most important is the relationship with the people."⁵⁵

Although it is difficult, AGWM must encourage its churches to fight against the American mentality that you have to "do something" to be successful. When asked for reasons why America should send STM teams, respondents most commonly answered: building relationships. However, these same respondents also reported that North American work teams missed valuable opportunities to build stronger relationships by participating in shared activities with the locals, such as eating and attending church services.⁵⁶ In response to this study it may

be viewed more positively if the STM participant gives his or her time to the locals and reserves his or her money to give to the career missionary who can then build on those relationships once the STM participant has returned home.

Johnson stresses that mission agencies must view themselves as service agents.⁵⁷ Whereas, AGWM has no direct control over local churches within the movement, they can influence them in terms of training and education. This paper has already addressed the fact that most STM facilitators within our churches lack training and possess very little expertise in terms of mission strategy. Thus, it is incumbent on AGWM to provide leadership and direction in this regard. Pierson warns larger churchly structures to resist their bureaucratic tendencies. They can do so by encouraging new initiatives and by communicating an excitement and openness to the creativity of their constituency.⁵⁸ What's more, they can help channel the energies of local churches by providing focused, organized training for their mission leaders and facilitators.

Our churches must view STM as more than just the event. Instead, STM is a process that involves preparation before, guidance during and debriefing long after the actual trip has ended. AGWM can take the lead by providing curriculum for STM facilitators and participants from our local churches. David Johnstone explains that cross-cultural experiences are emotional experiences; therefore, participants must be afforded the opportunity to reflect on what they have encountered in a purposeful, facilitated way.⁵⁹ He calls this process of purposeful reflection, closing the loop. Johnstone implements an educational paradigm first delineated by Jim Mannoia who suggested a four level process for deep, committed growth: dissonance, habituation, modeling and community.⁶⁰ What this model suggests is that participants must first experience dissonance, which allows them to integrate the implications of their reflections into their daily lives in a way that exhibits greater integrity. Then, this new way of living must translate into new habits, which are reinforced by positive modeling within a community context that encourages further exploration.⁶¹ Obviously, this process takes time and commitment, but it is this commitment that will lead to the emotional and spiritual growth that STM facilitators desire to see in their participants. The ministry leader must help the participants deconstruct the images they have witnessed in light of the trip's larger learning goals.⁶²

Conclusion

STM participation can assist the local church and our movement on a number of levels. It can encourage spiritual growth for the church member even if he or she feels no call to missionary service, if the person is given the appropriate opportunities to process his or her experience. STM can also inspire the call to missionary service. Nevertheless, STM experiences, as currently practiced, are often action-motivated experiences that expose participants to needs. As a result, there can be "an uncoupling of the mission enterprise from the call, and, ultimately, a weakened mission movement... We won't have people going out because that's what God wants them to do. They'll go because it makes them feel good to 'meet a need.'"⁶³

In our movement, we cannot afford for STM to become just another rite of passage where participants see mission as a "been there, done that" life experience. Hawthorne warns of the major danger in this way of thinking. If mission becomes something that everyone does or a stage that everyone in the church must go through, then mission "instead of being central to Christian life, becomes a side show, something to do when convenient."⁶⁴

Obviously, STM is here to stay. Knowing that STM holds the potential to aide or harm the cause of Christ cross-culturally, AGWM must take the lead to steer this movement to greater efficacy. If the local church genuinely desires to build up missionaries from its midst, then AGWM must encourage them to invest in committed persons from their congregations. Churches must be released from the mindset that they must "go and do" to impact the world for Jesus Christ, rather they can explore and learn from new cultures and build relationships that will illuminate God's message and assist career missionaries who remain after they are gone. Moreover, the church must be convinced of its role in the lives of STM participants beyond financial and prayer support. They must actively discern suitable candidates and actively support them as coaches and mentors.⁶⁵

We cannot assume that our churches will figure it all out by themselves. Unless the Assemblies of God constituency is educated on their role in global mission, they will forge their own path. However, if they see AGWM as an agency that is taking them seriously and is addressing their felt needs through training and education, they will be more likely to work within the mission's broader strategic plan, rather than against it.

¹ Peterson, "What's Happening in Short-term Mission?" Lausanne World Pulse (March 2006); available from http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/page_print.php; Internet; accessed 31 March 2009.

² Robert Priest, as cited in Peterson, 2.

³ Ibid., 3.

⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁶ Stephen Neill, *Creative Tension*, (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1959), 81, quoted by Alan Johnson, *Apostolic Function in 21st Century Missions*, (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2007), 27.

⁷ Ralph Winter, "The Meaning of Mission: Understanding This Term Is Crucial to the Completion of the Missionary Task," *Mission Frontiers* (1998); available from www.missionfrontiers.org/1998/0304/ma9813.htm; Internet; accessed 4 May 2009

⁸ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 511.

⁹ Johnson, 212.

¹⁰ Paul Pierson, "Local Churches in Mission: What's Behind the Impatience with Traditional Mission Agencies?" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22 #4 (1998): 148.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 150.

¹⁴ Johnson, 41.

¹⁵ Robert J. Priest, Terry Dischinger, Steve Rasmussen, C.M. Brown, "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," *Missiology An International Review* 34 (2006): 433-434.

¹⁶ Terence D. Linhart, "They were so alive!: The Spectable Self and Youth Group Short-Term Mission Trips," *Missiology: An International Review* 34 (2006): 452.

¹⁷ Corrie Baar, "Short-Term Student Missions and the Needs of Nationals," quoted by Kurt Alan Ver Beek in "The Impact of Short-Term Missions: A Case Study of House Construction in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch," *Missiology: An International Review* 34 (2006): 479.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Randy Friesen, "The Long-term Impact of Short-term Missions," Evangelism and Missions Information Service, (October 2005) ;available from https://bgc.gospelcom.net/emgonline/emg_article_read_pv.php?ArticleID=3527; Internet; accessed 29 October 2007.

²¹ John Holzmann, "Factors Not Often Considered," *Mission Frontiers* (1988) ; available from <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/pdf/1988/03/m882.htm>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2009; Hawthorne is the executive director of Caleb Resources and the editor of *Stepping Out*, a guide to STM.

²² Linhart, 455.

²³ Ibid., 456.

²⁴ Johnson, 164.

²⁵ Ibid.

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⁴¹ Bush.

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⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Borthwick, 151.

⁴⁵ Johnson, 45.

⁴⁶ Peterson, 5.

⁴⁷ Assemblies of God World Mission website, found in the About Us section.

⁴⁸ Edwin Zehner, "Short-Term Missions: Toward a More Field-Oriented Model," *Missiology: An International Review* 34 (2006): 512.

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⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 517.

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⁵³ Holzmann.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ver Beek, 483.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 489.

⁵⁷ Johnson, 199.

⁵⁸ Pierson, 150.

⁵⁹ David Johnstone, "Closing the Loop: Debriefing and the Short-Term College Missions Team," *Missiology: An International Review* 34 (2006): 524.

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⁶¹ Ibid.

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⁶³ Holzmann.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Friesen.