



A GATHERING PLACE
FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION ARTICLES,
RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Virtual Short-Term Missions and Digital Platforms. What's next in STM?

By Bruce Wilson, Director of PROpel at Pioneers

Recently, an Indian pastor of a large church in Kolkata, India invited an American friend experienced in organizational leadership to speak to his church leadership teams on the topic of team building. The American developed a two-hour, discussion-oriented seminar that explored biblical and business principles for building strong teams. The seminar was conducted virtually using Zoom. Thirty Indian lay leaders participated from their homes. The seminar was conducted in English and simultaneously translated into Bengali by the Indian pastor. The seminar included multiple breakout sessions, discussion, lecture, and individual reflection. No financial costs were incurred. No visas were obtained. No travel arrangements were made. The virtual seminar was brief and catalytic - generating further discussion and study by the Indian participants on their own after the seminar.

Is this example of virtual, short-term missions a COVID-era anomaly or an example of an increasingly viable option for short-term missions' engagement?

What if every Christian (like the organizational leader in the story above) from any country could use their unique gifts and skills to serve the global church in a way that was meaningful to the host and the volunteer?

What if technology was leveraged to efficiently connect global needs with skilled, short-term volunteers? Digital platforms and complex algorithms connect talent with jobs at Upwork.com, riders with drivers at Uber.com, guests with hosts at Airbnb.com, and volunteers with stateside opportunities at Volunteermatch.org. Could short-term missions use similar technology to connect global needs with skilled volunteers?

Many Christians simply don't know how they can meaningfully engage with the global church in a way that leverages their unique gifts and skills while respecting the strength and maturity of the church in the Majority World. Practically, most Christians don't think missions is for them. Yet, Scripture clearly teaches there is only one body of Christ and it is broad and diverse and every person in it matters. God intentionally equips each member of Christ's body with different gifts "for doing certain things well" (NLT, Romans 12:6) so that the whole global body can thrive. In fact, the health of the global church depends on every

Christian using his or her unique gifts and skills for the benefit of Christ's body. Let's prayerfully look together for ways to leverage today's technology to serve one another as we carry out the Great Commission left to the church by Jesus Christ.

Internationally experienced catalyst for change who inspires collaboration, innovation and faith. Excels in identifying steps and developing systems for implementing strategic vision. Effective mobilizer skilled at succinctly communicating guiding principles and training others for engagement.

PROpel connects global needs with skilled volunteers by facilitating short-term opportunities for Christians to use their gifts and skills to serve the global church and the common good.