



Lewis Center
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Leading Ideas

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Helping a Congregation Connect to Mission By Tom Berlin

My congregation has been in an ongoing mission partnership with the Child Rescue Center and Mercy Hospital in Sierra Leone, Africa, since 2000. However, there is always a need to find fresh, new ways to help the congregation feel connected with this project. During a recent mission trip, we did two things that made this mission connection come alive for our whole congregation. And they have had an amazing impact on our church.

First, we used Skype to transmit a live video cast of a group of children from the Rescue Center into our two Sunday morning worship services. (Fortunately, the hospital lab is the site of a research project that requires a satellite.) We did this as a surprise since there was a significant likelihood of technological failure. But the surprise element made it more dramatic for the congregation. I was on camera for a brief introduction about celebrating Pentecost all over the world, and the kids took it from there. The response was very strong if judged by tears and applause!

Second, I produced a daily travel log that was posted to our church website and disseminated through the pastor's E-Note. Many people in our church said that they read these and felt connected to our efforts in Sierra Leone in a new and fresh way. Using Skype might be hard for most VIM teams and pastors in remote locations, but the travel log only requires an internet café and about an hour a day to create it.

About ninety percent of the church members I have spoken with have commented on how much they appreciated the travel log and video cast. Rarely do I get such a warm welcome home! As a result of these immediate and personal ways of telling the mission story, parishioners who will never make the journey to another country now feel connected. Even more amazingly, a co-worker of a church member saw one of the travel logs on the church member's computer screen and read about a man who needs a skin graft. He sent a check for \$750 to pay for it. Who would believe such accidental development was possible? Of all the things I have done over the years to promote the Child Rescue Center and Mercy Hospital, these were by far the most effective.

Read Tom's travel log at <http://www.florisumc.org/407808.ihtml>.

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