



July 20-27, 2024

VOLUNTEERS-IN-MISSION BRIEFING DOCUMENT and ACTIVITY PLAN

OUR TEAM ASSIGNMENT

During the week in Maine, our team will again be assisting the congregations of Mission-at-the- Eastward (MATE) near North New Portland. This will be the 44nd consecutive year that a team sponsored by our church is serving there and our 50th consecutive VIM Team.

MATE's Housing Ministry helps community members in Central Western Maine stay in their homes by conducting home repairs they otherwise could not afford. Volunteers spend a week in Maine in each summer performing this indispensable service. The repairs that we carry-out each summer are critical, enabling MATE's clients to stay in warm, healthy and safe environments, and avoid falling into the devastating cycle of homelessness.

DEPARTURE - TRAVEL PLANS - RETURN

Team members should arrive at the FPC parking lot no later than 5:00 AM on the morning of departure for final equipment storage, seating assignments, etc. Promptness is essential since the journey takes over 12 hours and camp set-up is much easier in daylight.

Each team member should bring a bag lunch. Lunches will be packed in designated coolers. Breakfast will be provided at a stop about 2 ½ hours after we leave Flemington. Beverages for all meals will be provided. Dinner will be prepared after our arrival in Maine. **Group text blasts** will be utilized to notify parents and spouses that we arrived safely.

The VIM coordinators will provide details on the route we take to and from Maine. All drivers of vehicles will be given route details, plus gas & toll money prior to our departure. We normally take 11 – 12 vehicles, and some will pull campers or utility trailers. All VIM vehicles are linked by supplied CB radios using a remote channel. Walkie-talkies are used as well.

On Saturday, the last day in Maine, we will break camp early, pack the bus, clean up and depart by about 8:30 AM. (Arrival back in Flemington is greatly affected by the speed of our departure from camp in North New Portland.) In prior years, our arrival times in Flemington have ranged from 8:00 PM to 1:45 AM, although we normally expect to be home well before midnight. We will utilize **group texts** during the return trip to update those who need to know the expected arrival time. We initiate the texts shortly after our dinner stop, giving an estimated arrival time. You can indicate on the application form who in your family should be notified.

CAMERAS AND ENTERTAINMENT ITEMS

Please take lot of pictures! Please remember that we must get digital copies of ALL pictures and videos taken on the trip. **We need them for the multi-media show in January! Please leave large speakers home,** but personal units with earbuds are OK. Games, music, and other media rated for mature audiences should be left home.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS:

We will be staying at the North New Portland Community Church. Team members who are in high school will sleep in the sanctuary. Older young adults who have completed a year of college, sleep in the schoolhouse building. Adults sleep in tents or in campers. Family members may chose to camp together.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS, PHONE CALLS & CELL PHONES

A list of emergency contact numbers will be provided for parents and spouses specified as the at home contact.

Cell phones shall be silenced after 11 pm. Cell phone use shall be limited at a work site so as not to distract from the job at hand. When making a video call, please be mindful of who is around you and be considerate of your fellow VIM teammates. Inappropriate use of a cell phone may result in confiscation of the phone and will be done at the discretion of the VIM leadership team.

PERSONAL GEAR - LUGGAGE

There is limited space on the bus and other vehicles, so team members should limit their luggage to one suitcase or duffel bag and one carry-on airline or gym-type bag. This is in addition to an optional air mattress (**single width only**), sleeping bag, a pillow, and a tent (for adults). Personal clothing should include casual clothes suitable for church, work clothes for six days, and something comfortable for evenings and the return trip. Other items needed are:

Toiletry kit with toothbrush & toothpaste, soap and soap container, shampoo, nail file, etc.

Leather work shoes, and leisure shoes. (Work shoes should have a reinforced toe. Dropped hammers, boards, and logs can easily break a toe, and it has happened. *(Note: Sneakers are NOT good work shoes on ANY job site)*

Work shirt(s) (Should be long sleeves)

Hair ties (for those with long hair)

Jacket, sweater, sweatshirt, sweatpants, for cool evenings *(Note: The VIM week is usually fairly warm in the daytime, but in evening temperatures often dip to the 50's.)*

Rain gear suitable for working (such as a poncho)

Air mattress (if desired) SINGLE-WIDTH only!

Sleeping bag

Swim suit and beach towel

Hat, sun block lotion, and sun glasses

Reusable water bottle

Insect repellant

Small flashlight

Stream sandals or “river shoes”

Work gloves, nail apron, carpenters pencil(s)

Tool belt with hammer holster, hammer, tape measure, Utility knife

Put your name on everything!

PACKING THE BUS AND OTHER VEHICLES

Tools, equipment, tents, sleeping bags, suitcases and other personal gear should be in the Harry Thomas Chapel at FPC no later than the Thursday prior to our departure. This will permit us to gauge how much space is needed to transport all of the gear and extra items we will ferry to Maine. The Harry Thomas Chapel is accessible during summer church office hours (9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon and 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM) Tuesday through Thursday. We begin packing the bus, other vehicles, and trailers on Thursday night and then continue again on Friday night.

MEALS

While in Maine, we will be preparing most of our own meals centered around the casseroles and other delicious foods sent along with us by parents and the Congregation. Fresh vegetables, fruits, milk and bread are purchased every day. A schedule will rotate camp chores so everyone gets a chance to help with meal preparation, clean-up, and general camp duties. Chores are posted on charts and everyone is responsible for keeping track of their own camp assignments as well as those of their work team. We all work on camp chores together as one large family during the week and all are expected to do their work cheerfully. Our stewards shop every day and can pick up things you may have forgotten. A small nearby convenience store also helps with small necessities.

***** IMPORTANT NOTE: Anyone with special dietary needs should make this known on the application form or by a separate confidential note. We can and have prepared vegetarian meals, nut-free meals, etc. but we MUST know this WELL in advance! *****

INSURANCE - MEDICAL RELEASE STATEMENT - MEDICATIONS

Accident indemnity insurance is included on our FPC insurance policies for volunteers, but you should not presume to have health insurance coverage within our church or MATE insurance programs. **Primary medical coverage is from health insurance of each team member.**

The medical release statement is an important part of the VIM application for all members of the team under 18 years of age in order to obtain any emergency medical treatment. **Teens under 18 not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian must have the medical information section of the application form signed by a parent or legal guardian.**

It is very important that our team leader be informed about ANY prescription medications that are being taken or carried by team members, as well as allergies, special dietary needs, etc. The application contains space for this information, which will be held in confidence. A private note may also be submitted with the application. **We strongly discourage unsupervised use of over-the-counter medications.** (In the past, some teens have shared OTC medications with friends. If the friend is also taking prescription medications,

the combination can be dangerous.)

A list of OTC medications maintained on hand by VIM coordinators is made part of the youth application. Parents must check the OTC medications that their child can tolerate and then initial this form. (During the 2009 trip, the OTC medication “Benadryl” was used after some team members reacted to nasty insect bites. **The Benadryl itself caused a more severe reaction than the insect bites.)** We want to know ahead of time if the team member has previously experienced problems with certain OTC medications.

FINANCES

Our VIM committee sends a substantial donation to Mission at the Eastward to help defray the cost of construction materials we will be using at job sites. During June and July, parents, friends, and members of our Congregation purchase "stock shares." We also run fundraising breakfasts in the spring where applicants and/or their parents are encouraged to help. Those funds plus our team member fees usually enable us to cover all of the travel and meal costs throughout the trip. The fee for each individual team can be found on the application.

Individual spending money is a personal decision and \$40 is normally sufficient. A collection is taken during the Sunday church service. All travel and meal costs are included in the team fee **with the exception of dinner on the trip home** when we stop in an area with fast food choices.

PURPOSE

Our most important preparation is personal. We go to Maine with open minds and sensitivity toward other people and their needs. We go with a readiness to serve Christ through serving others. We go remembering that our purpose is to help Mission-at-the-Eastward serve its people. We go remembering it is their priorities and not our own for which we will strive.

COVENANT BETWEEN OUR GROUP AND MATE

What MATE will provide:

1. Liability insurance to cover the homes and projects on which we will work.
2. An orientation covering: Safety and working procedures, descriptions of the projects and the people for whom we will work, an introduction to the host church (The North New Portland Community Church), and community expectations.
3. Local supervisors where needed at work sites
4. Materials available at work sites when the work begins and a procedure for obtaining supplies as needed.
5. Social contacts and recreational opportunities within the community.

What our VIM team will provide:

1. Five days of work, eight hours per day, (weather and conditions permitting)
2. Hand tools and power tools as needed
3. Parental release forms establishing parent/guardian substitutes
4. Individual medical insurance (*provided by each team member*)

5. Food and other sustaining necessities
6. Funds for materials and supervision (the VIM program will be sending this money directly to MATE)
7. Work site administration to include 2 adults at each job site with at least 1 adult with the necessary skills to complete the work requirements for each job site.

EXPECTATIONS AND GROUND RULES FOR CAMP ACTIVITY

Expectations:

Our personal objectives for joining the mission vary, but usually can be found within the following:

This remarkable summer mission program has helped to build a greater sense of community within our church and between our church and the people of western Maine. While we work together to help others we also achieve self-fulfillment, make new friends, strengthen relationships, and discover the power of the spirit of the Lord at work around and within us.

Ground rules for camp activity:

While in Maine, we are the visitors and guests. That means we must be sensitive to the people who live there, and not be intrusive to their quiet way of life. Although we do not want to isolate ourselves from the local environment, we also do not want to wear out our welcome.

Part of the total experience of the week in Maine is the enrichment of the relationships of the people on the trip. It comes from reaching out, sharing stories, learning about faith, challenging ideas and thoughts, learning about those working beside us, and achieving worthwhile things by working together. It's all informal, but it *always* happens!

It is with these principals in mind that the following operating guidelines have been developed:

- Everyone is expected to participate in all VIM planned events and to be at dinner promptly. Our final Service on Friday evening is an especially enriching experience.
- Everyone must be on the camp grounds by 9:00 PM. This includes trips to any local store.
- While in Maine, we work at jobs sites, *but we also run a camp for more than 20 people*. Everyone is assigned to rotating teams to handle in-camp chores like doing the dishes, sweeping floors, setting up breakfast and lunch, taking out garbage, cleaning bathrooms, etc. (If you don't do these things at home, *just think of all the new skills you'll learn!*) Since camp chores are rotated daily, the expectation is that you will work with your camp team cheerfully and keep your own area neat.
- The VIM team itself has voted this to be a completely **alcohol and dangerous substance free week** from Saturday morning at 5:00 AM until we return on the next Saturday. No alcohol or dangerous substance *use or possession* is permitted at camp, on job sites, or during recreation activities, private visits, or personal excursions.
- Smoking is prohibited inside any of the buildings, and is limited to those legally permitted to

smoke. A tobacco-free week is definitely desirable.

- Brotherly love, and all that stuff, is encouraged. In our 44 previous years, we have not had too many problems. The rules are simple:
 - i. Treat others as you would like them to treat you.
 - ii. All occupants of a tent or camper must be members of the same family or the same gender.
- When taking walks around North New Portland, **never** wander onto back trails or go through peoples' private property. The first issue has to do with safety and ease of getting the group together whenever we need to; the second is a matter of respecting the rights of people who live there. **Always go in groups of three** and remember to take one of our VIM walkie-talkies for extra safety.
- All vehicles that go to Maine must be approved by the VIM leadership. NO teenager or young adult is permitted to take his/her own car, or drive a car without permission of **both** the car owner **and** the VIM team leaders while in Maine.
- It is normal to meet and become friendly with the people at our job sites and others. However, social plans involving people outside of the VIM team must be coordinated with the VIM leaders. We have general plans for our entire group every day. While we have welcomed many guests, we need to know about them ahead of time.
- Bring an "I-Pod" or other private listening device if you wish, ***but please do not bring high volume speakers.*** We use this week to really talk and listen to each other. Loud music in camp or at job sites is disruptive to our hosts, neighbors, and creates safety problems.
- The basic daily schedule is: Rise at 6:00 – 6:30 AM; Leave for job sites before 8:00 AM; Back at camp @ 5:00 PM; Swim at a lake or river before dinner; Dinner at 7:00 PM; All on camp grounds by 9:00 PM; Quiet time at 10:30 PM (lights OK in dining hall, but no noise); 11:00 All lights out! **Teens and young adults *must* be inside by 10:30 PM.** Please govern your own behavior to accommodate this schedule, and be an active participant in camp life.
- Approval is required from the site leader before leaving any work site for any reason.
- Always notify one of the designated team leaders before leaving the camp grounds for any reason.
- Above all, we honor the VIM Creed:

**In the name of Jesus Christ,
And in the company of the Faithful,
We commit ourselves in service to others,
To share the common wealth of God's goodness, And the power
of the spirit of love.**