



Missionary Guidelines & Expectations

First of all, thank you. Your involvement in the Urban Hearts missionary program is the fruit of a deep prompting by the Holy Spirit to seek out Christ in the poor through intentional relationships with our homeless friends on the street. Your generosity in response to this call is deeply appreciated, for as our Lord says, “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)

This is a volunteer position. As such, it is wholly up to your discernment as to whether or not you feel called to participate. However, if you do decide to serve the poor as an Urban Hearts Missionary, it must be understood that you are agreeing to all that is expected of you as laid out in these guidelines. It is absolutely a volunteer program, but if you volunteer, you volunteer for all of it and must do so with the intent to remain fully dedicated to our mission. Our homeless brothers and sisters deserve a dedicated team, and unless each missionary is fully prepared to devote themselves to the service of the poor, we do them an injury in failing to live up to our promise of friendship.

For as long as you serve on the Urban Hearts team you are committed to a mission lifestyle, living as an intentional disciple of Christ in every aspect of your life. For the Scriptures tell us, “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also.” (John 12:26) Our program incorporates elements of human, intellectual, spiritual, and apostolic formation and is centered on the revealed truth of the Gospel and the teachings of Jesus Christ. This document will serve to lay out the responsibilities and commitments involved according to each pillar of formation, as well as the guidelines of practice that missionaries agree to when volunteering for the Urban Hearts program.

I. HUMAN FORMATION

Human formation is about becoming more fully alive and disciplined in those aspects of life that are common to all of humanity. This encompasses many things, but it is most fully summed up in the idea of community. Our missionaries engage in weekly community nights in which they learn to share, grow, and authentically enjoy their fellowship with one another. Formation in the area of human experience is necessary so that we can bring a holistic sense of relational community to our friends on the street.

Missionary responsibilities in the area of human formation include:

- Attendance at weekly team dinner/social.
- Appropriate language and humor when engaging in missionary work.
- Pursuing virtuous living, particularly in the realm of sobriety and chastity.
- Meeting regularly with mission leadership

Weekly Dinner & Social

Each week, missionaries are expected to engage in the team dinner/social event that immediately follows our street-walk on Saturday afternoon. In the context of this weekly time of community, missionaries will share experiences from the mission, grow in love and charity for one another, but mainly just have fun and relax in the joy of friends and fellowship. Missionaries are also encouraged to spend time with one another outside of the mission field!

Appropriate Language/Humor

Missionaries should always be mindful of speech whether in the context of ministry or personal affairs. We are told in Sacred Scripture, “So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!” (James 3:5) Sometimes a situation may call for gentle words while other occasions are cause for strong or forceful language, but missionaries are expected to always practice prudence in speech while serving with Urban Hearts.

Pursuit of Virtue

The moral life of the Christian is intrinsically tied to their walk with God. Therefore, it is written, “For this very reason make every effort supplement your faith with virtue.” (2 Peter 1:5) Volunteers are expected to adopt a missionary mindset, in which they strive to live virtuously according to the teachings of Christ. In a particular way, missionaries agree to pursue a lifestyle that is within accordance with the Catholic understanding of chastity and sobriety in order that they might act as powerful witnesses to the world.

Missionary Check-In

Missionaries will meet with the Mission Director or another formation officer at least once every 8 weeks to check in, voice concerns, express ideas, and give an honest assessment of their spiritual life. This helps leadership keep a pulse on the spiritual state of the mission.

II. INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

The Catholic Church has a rich history of intellectual and philosophical discourse, and we want to encourage that tradition of cultivating the mind in conjunction with the heart. In order to form their intellectual faculties toward charitable mission work, missionaries participate in weekly studies designed to expand their knowledge in various areas of study related to the

apostolic mission. The curriculum includes classes in catechetics, as well as addiction recovery, poverty statistics, and social justice.

Missionary responsibilities in the area of intellectual formation include:

- Completing weekly reading and study assignments
- Attending monthly study/catechesis events
- Attending occasional supplementary courses

Weekly Reading & Study Assignments

Every week, there will be some short reading assignments and possible additional video/audio assignments to study. All materials will be provided to the missionary volunteer. Topics will often include the basic Gospel message, maintaining a healthy interior life, Catholic social justice, homelessness and poverty reports, etc.

Monthly Catechesis Training

Missionaries will be in attendance at monthly catechesis training nights. At this meeting, the study assignments for the previous weeks will be discussed and explained. Training nights may incorporate elements of lecture, small group, and prayer.

Supplementary Courses

If possible, supplemental courses will be offered during the course of the mission assignment. These courses could include things such as CPR, emergency health care, self-defense, substance addiction recovery, and other topics related to the apostolate mission. If these are offered at any time other than the regular monthly training night, missionaries are not obligated *but are highly encouraged* to attend.

III. SPIRITUAL FORMATION

A firm footing in faith rooted in a loving relationship with the Father is required of every missionary on our team. In the course of our ministry, we encounter many disturbing and heartbreaking stories, and without a deep spiritual foundation, the struggles and hurt we encounter absolutely will overcome us. We cannot do this on our own steam. Missionaries commit to daily prayer, a regular sacramental life, and a weekly holy hour in order to make sure that their spiritual life is healthy and centered on Christ.

Missionary responsibilities in the area of spiritual formation include:

- Practicing daily prayer
- Commitment to one weekly holy hour
- Attendance at Sunday Mass/Holy Days

- Regular visitation of the Sacraments (Eucharist/Reconciliation)
- Urban Hearts Retreat

Daily Prayer Life

A regular prayer life is vitally important to the health of the missionary. It is expected that Urban Hearts team members will have a daily prayer life. If you are struggling with how to work prayer into your day, here are some suggestions to consider:

- Begin your day with a morning offering. As soon as you wake up, get on your knees and prayerfully surrender your day to God—all the joys, sorrows, irritations, and successes.
- Pray a rosary. It takes about 20 minutes and can be done in the car, on the bus, on lunch break, etc.
- Pray a Chaplet of Divine Mercy. The Chaplet takes about 5-10 minutes and is a very powerful prayer.
- Read the Sacred Scriptures for 10 minutes and then meditate on the message being spoken. This is especially helpful if you work your way through a specific book.
- Spend some time speaking to God from the heart. What do you want to thank Him for? What are you struggling with? Open your heart to Him and trust in His merciful love, for our Lord says, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)
- End your day with an Examination of Conscience. Where did the Lord bless you? Where did you love well? Where did you fall into sin? How will you refrain from those same sins tomorrow?

Weekly Holy Hour

We will almost certainly be spiritually attacked when engaging in mission work. As such, it is important that missionaries have a regular relationship with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Speak to your parish about signing up for a Holy Hour, or ask if perpetual adoration is available.

Obligation to Attend Holy Mass

Missionaries swear an Oath of Fidelity to the Catholic Church and her teachings. As such, attending Sunday Mass and all Holy Days of Obligation is an absolute requirement for those living a missionary lifestyle.

Receiving the Sacraments

The Sacraments are how we receive God’s own Divine Life into our own and how the graces He offers us are infused into our souls. It is a good practice therefore to be receiving them regularly. Missionaries should be receiving the Eucharist at least once a week if in a state of grace, and if not, should seek the healing power of Reconciliation as soon as possible. Even if in a state of grace, missionaries should seek the graces offered through confession once a month.

Attendance on Retreat

There will be one overnight retreat missionaries are asked to attend. This will be a time of prayer, community, fellowship, and study in common with one another.

IV. APOSTOLIC FORMATION

This pillar is last not because it is the least important, but because it is informed by and grown through the other three areas of formation. Apostolic formation refers to the growth of our missionaries in their apostolate, especially in their service to the poor. Through their human, intellectual, and spiritual formation, Urban Hearts missionaries are well equipped to engage with the homeless community and serve their needs in a direct and personal way that offers the most effective route toward social reintegration.

Missionary responsibilities in the area of apostolic formation include:

- Participation in weekly street walks
- Commitment to the full 6-month mission period
- Adhering to street walk guidelines
- Submitting weekly reports on street walks

Weekly Street Walks

The main outlet of ministry will be in the form of our weekly mission street walks. On these street walks, missionaries will intentionally seek out our homeless friends on the street and engage in conversation and friendship with them. Missionaries will also be supplied with food, water, and hygienic products to distribute to the homeless they encounter. It is important that missionaries are present every week for street walks, barring extenuating circumstances.

6-Month Mission

The Urban Hearts street ministry program is a 6-month commitment. This represents an adequate amount of time to build up relationships with some of our homeless friends and offer help and resources to them. However, missionaries are free (and encouraged!) to continue serving after their 6-month commitment period ends.

Street Walk Guidelines

Missionaries will be trained how to safely and effectively engage in street ministry by adhering to the guidelines set forth by Urban Hearts. Guidelines will include practical advice for engaging in relationship-building interaction with our friends on the street, as well as cautioning against certain activities that could compromise the friendship we are trying to establish with the homeless.

Weekly Reports

During street walks, missionaries will keep a notebook where they record brief details about the interactions they have with our friends on the street. At the end of each street walk, each team will submit a brief report to the Mission Director that includes all of this information. This way, we can create a comprehensive database in which we pay special and close attention to each individual we interact with and implement a systematic way in which to love them better.

V. CONSENT TO LIVING A MISSION LIFESTYLE

This document outlines the main duties and responsibilities of each Urban Hearts missionary. In volunteering for this position, you are agreeing to adhere to the policies and expectations outlined in this document. If for some reason you are unable to perform a certain duty or cannot meet an expectation, feel free to talk to the Mission Director or team leadership. We recognize that as a volunteer, sometimes you will have other responsibilities to perform that are in conflict with the missionary operating guidelines, and we will work with you as best we can to come to a solution and keep you involved in the ministry. However, this is a commitment. Missionaries should not think themselves free to simply come and go as they please. These duties are what are expected of the mission team, and if you do not believe you will be able to perform them, please take that into consideration.

Missionary Consent

I understand that in signing this document, I am consenting to operate according to the missionary guidelines and expectations as set forth in these articles. I will commit myself to serving the homeless of Anchorage as an Urban Hearts missionary for the duration of a 6-month mission. I will live according to the missionary lifestyle as described in this document, and I will commit to all duties and expectations that are required of that position. If at any time I realize that I can no longer commit to said duties and expectations, I will inform the Mission Director and resign from my position.

Printed Name

Date

Signature