



Comprehensive Workbook on How to Start a Home Mission

Ecumenical Protestant Church of America

Administrative, Safe Church, Liturgical, Evangelistic, and Discipleship Manual

Purpose of this manual

This workbook is a practical field guide for launching, governing, protecting, and growing a home mission of the Ecumenical Protestant Church of America. It draws from Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and ecumenical mission resources while providing original EPCA procedures and adaptable liturgies.

Use this as a formation document, not as a substitute for civil legal counsel, denominational authorization, insurance advice, or mandated reporter training.

Prepared for local mission leaders, lay hosts, clergy supervisors, and home mission teams

How to Use This Workbook

Read, adapt, approve, implement, review.

A home mission is a small, accountable Christian community that gathers for prayer, Scripture, fellowship, service, and evangelistic witness under the spiritual and administrative oversight of the Ecumenical Protestant Church of America. Because it may meet in a private home, the home mission needs stronger safeguards, clearer written procedures, and more consistent recordkeeping than an informal Bible study.

This workbook supplies templates and model language. Leaders should adapt these pages to local law, denominational canons, insurance requirements, and the direction of the EPCA bishop, board, or mission officer. The administrative counsel follows the general logic of IRS church guidance; the worship patterns draw on common prayer traditions; the safeguarding sections draw on Safe Church and Safe Sanctuaries approaches (Internal Revenue Service, 2015, 2026a; The Episcopal Church, n.d.; Wisconsin Conference of The United Methodist Church, n.d.).

Each page is meant for direct use: read the principle, complete the checklist, place the resulting document in the mission binder, and review it quarterly.

- Do not launch public meetings until the mission has an identified supervising clergy or denominational officer.
- Do not provide unsupervised ministry to children, youth, or vulnerable adults without an approved Safe Church plan.
- Do not handle offerings without two-person counting, written receipts, and clear bank procedures.
- Do not advertise sacraments unless the EPCA has authorized the leader to administer them.

First meeting assignment

Before the first public gathering, write the names of the host, mission leader, treasurer/bookkeeper, safe church coordinator, and clergy supervisor.

- [] Host named
- [] Mission leader named
- [] Treasurer or finance custodian named
- [] Safe Church coordinator named
- [] Clergy supervisor named

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Workbook symbols

Checklist boxes mark actions to complete. Rubrics are directions for worship leaders. Policy paragraphs are model language that may be adopted by the home mission after EPCA review.

- [] Copy approved policies into the mission binder
- [] Train all adult volunteers before assigning duties
- [] Review the whole workbook every six months

Citation method: In-text references use APA author-date style. The references page gives full bibliographic information. Liturgical texts in this manual are original EPCA-adapted forms inspired by ecumenical patterns rather than copied rites.

1. Theological Foundation of a Home Mission

A small churchly community, not a private religious hobby.

The EPCA home mission exists to gather people around the apostolic faith, the reading of Scripture, common prayer, holy fellowship, works of mercy, and accountable evangelistic witness. The pattern is ecumenical: Scripture is central; the creeds summarize the faith; prayer is ordered and reverent; discipleship is practical; and service is local. Historic prayer books show that Christian worship can be simple, lay-led, and ordered without becoming casual or careless (The Episcopal Church, 1979; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2018).

A home mission is not a substitute for the wider church. It is a seedbed. It should remain connected to clergy oversight, denominational standards, safe church norms, and the wider body of Christ. The goal is not to build a personality-centered gathering but a reproducible mission community capable of becoming a recognized chapel, mission congregation, or parish when mature.

The home mission must be accessible to ordinary people. Avoid insider jargon. Explain worship actions. Teach the faith patiently. Build habits before building institutions.

- The Word of God is read publicly and studied carefully.
- The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds shape doctrinal teaching.
- Prayer is offered for the church, the neighborhood, civil authorities, the suffering, the departed, and those seeking faith.
- Hospitality, safety, accountability, and financial integrity are treated as spiritual duties.

Mission thesis

Write one sentence beginning: "This home mission exists to..." Use it in announcements and visitor materials.

- [] Statement written
- [] Reviewed by supervising clergy or EPCA officer
- [] Printed for mission binder

2. Thirty-Day Launch Map

From private discernment to a public, accountable gathering.

The safest way to begin is slowly. A leader may feel called immediately, but the church must first confirm character, capacity, accountability, and practical readiness. The thirty-day launch map below assumes a home mission is beginning under EPCA sponsorship and not as an independent corporation.

The first month focuses on approval, team formation, safe church preparation, scheduling, and initial invitation. The mission should not attempt every ministry at once. Begin with one weekly gathering, one service project, one Bible study plan, and one safe recordkeeping system.

- Week 1: Pray, clarify the mission field, identify a host home, and request EPCA authorization.
- Week 2: Name the core team, complete background checks and safe church training as required, and draft local procedures.
- Week 3: Prepare worship and Bible study materials, review home safety, establish finance procedures, and build a simple contact list.
- Week 4: Hold an orientation gathering with invited adults; then schedule the first public prayer-and-study service.

Launch covenant

Every founding team member should sign a covenant of doctrine, conduct, confidentiality, safety, non-harassment, financial integrity, and obedience to EPCA oversight.

- [] Covenant drafted
- [] Team members trained
- [] Signed copies stored

3. Authorization and Spiritual Oversight

The home mission begins by permission, not assumption.

A home mission leader should receive written authorization from the EPCA before advertising a public ministry in the name of the Church. Authorization protects the public, the host family, the denomination, and the leader. It also clarifies what the mission may and may not do.

Written authorization should specify the mission name, host address or general location, supervising clergy or officer, meeting frequency, permitted worship forms, limits on sacramental ministry, reporting schedule, finance procedures, safe church requirements, and the review date. Without this clarity, a home group can unintentionally become a legal, pastoral, or reputational risk.

The EPCA should reserve the right to suspend or close a home mission if safety, doctrine, finances, misconduct, or insubordination require intervention.

- Authorization letter received and placed in binder.
- Leader understands whether the mission may use EPCA logo, seal, website, and public titles.
- Sacramental boundaries are written in plain language.
- Quarterly report dates are scheduled.
- Emergency contact for EPCA oversight is known to all adult leaders.

Model authorization clause

“This home mission operates under the provisional authority of the Ecumenical Protestant Church of America and remains subject to its doctrine, discipline, safe church policy, financial controls, and pastoral oversight.”

- [] Clause adopted
- [] Authorization reviewed every 90 days

4. Administrative Binder

The mission binder is the practical memory of the church.

Every home mission should maintain a secure physical or encrypted digital binder. The binder helps leaders act consistently, gives continuity when leaders change, and demonstrates good-faith diligence if questions arise. IRS guidance for churches emphasizes benefits and responsibilities under federal tax law; therefore, even small missions should keep organized documents (Internal Revenue Service, 2015, 2026b).

The binder must be accessible to authorized leaders but protected from casual viewing. Pastoral notes, incident reports, background check information, donor data, and member contact records should be confidential.

Tab	Contents	Review
1. Authorization	EPCA authorization letter, leader covenant, mission description.	Quarterly
2. Governance	Team roster, roles, meeting minutes, conflict policy.	Monthly
3. Finance	Budget, offering count sheets, receipts, reimbursements, bank records.	Monthly
4. Safe Church	Policies, training logs, screening records, incident reports.	Monthly
5. Worship	Approved liturgies, music permissions, preaching schedule.	Monthly
6. Discipleship	Bible study plans, catechesis records, membership pathway.	Quarterly
7. Outreach	Evangelism plan, service projects, communication calendar.	Quarterly

Binder exercise

Create tabs today. Place a blank “documents needed” sheet in any tab that is not yet complete.

- [] Binder created
- [] Responsible custodian named
- [] Confidential records separated

5. Governance and Accountability

Small does not mean ungoverned.

A home mission should have a lean structure: one mission leader, one host, one finance custodian, one safe church coordinator, and one clergy or denominational supervisor. The same person should not control all decisions, all money, and all records. Healthy governance prevents confusion and protects the leader from isolation.

The team should meet monthly, keep brief minutes, and report to EPCA oversight. Minutes should record decisions, not private pastoral details. Contested matters should be escalated rather than handled through gossip or informal pressure.

The mission should distinguish spiritual authority, administrative responsibility, and home ownership. The host owns or rents the meeting place; the mission leader coordinates gatherings; the EPCA supplies ecclesial accountability.

- Mission leader: organizes prayer, teaching, reporting, pastoral follow-up, and team coordination.
- Host: prepares safe space, manages household limits, and communicates property concerns.
- Finance custodian: receives forms, deposits funds, keeps receipts, and reports monthly.
- Safe Church coordinator: manages training logs, incident response, and safeguarding reviews.
- Supervisor: reviews doctrine, worship, ethics, safety, and mission development.

Monthly agenda

Prayer; attendance; pastoral concerns without gossip; finances; safety; worship plan; outreach plan; follow-up assignments; decisions requiring EPCA approval.

- [] Minutes template adopted
- [] Monthly meeting scheduled

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

6. Financial Stewardship Policy

Offerings are sacred trust, not informal cash.

Even if offerings are small, finance procedures should be written before money is collected. The finance policy should honor donor intent, prohibit private benefit, require receipts, and separate counting from spending. IRS church guidance addresses federal responsibilities, annual filing issues, unrelated business income, political campaign restrictions, and exempt status questions; a mission should therefore keep clean records from the beginning (Internal Revenue Service, 2015, 2026b).

If the home mission is not separately incorporated, the EPCA should decide whether money is deposited into a denominational account, local mission account, or fiscal sponsor account. The mission must not use a personal bank account as if it were a church account.

- Two unrelated adults count offerings together whenever possible.
- Use numbered offering envelopes or digital receipts for traceable gifts.
- Deposit funds promptly; do not keep cash in the host home.
- Require written reimbursement requests with receipts.
- Set spending limits requiring supervisor or board approval.
- Publish simple quarterly summaries to the mission team without exposing donor details.

Model finance rule

“No person may approve, spend, count, deposit, and reconcile the same funds alone. All funds belong to the ministry purpose approved by the EPCA.”

- [] Two-person count procedure adopted
- [] Banking method approved
- [] Monthly reconciliation assigned

- _____
- _____
- _____

7. Budget, Offerings, and Benevolence

Plan before need becomes pressure.

A first-year home mission budget should be simple: worship materials, hospitality, safe church screening costs, website or printing, outreach, benevolence, insurance or facility-related costs, and denominational assessments if applicable. Avoid debt. Avoid leader reimbursement without documentation. Avoid promising aid that the mission cannot sustain.

Benevolence funds require extra care. A benevolence gift should be documented by need, decision, amount, and payee. Whenever possible, pay vendors directly rather than giving cash. Protect dignity while preserving accountability.

Fundraising should be truthful, modest, and mission-specific. The mission should not imply tax deductibility beyond what EPCA and federal law support. Donor-restricted gifts should be accepted only when the mission can honor the restriction.

Category	Monthly estimate	Approval notes
Worship and study materials	\$____	Books, printing, Bibles, music permissions.
Hospitality	\$____	Coffee, meal supplies, newcomer welcome items.
Safe Church and admin	\$____	Background checks, training, records, postage.
Outreach and service	\$____	Neighborhood flyers, service project supplies.
Benevolence	\$____	Controlled by written procedure.
Reserve	\$____	Emergency fund; no personal borrowing.

Budget exercise

Prepare a three-month budget before accepting recurring offerings.

- [] Budget drafted
- [] Supervisor reviewed
- [] Finance report date selected

8. Legal and Tax Compliance Basics

Good administration supports credible mission.

This page is not legal advice. It gives a prudential checklist. Churches that meet Section 501(c)(3) requirements are generally considered tax exempt without applying for IRS recognition, but many seek recognition for reliance by leaders, members, and contributors (Internal Revenue Service, 2026a). IRS church resources also list filing requirements, political campaign restrictions, unrelated business income concerns, and special church audit rules (Internal Revenue Service, 2026b).

A home mission should ask: Is this ministry a program of the EPCA, a local unincorporated association, or a separate nonprofit? Who owns funds? Who signs contracts? Who carries insurance? Who reports suspected abuse? Who may speak publicly for the mission?

The safest answer is written authority and review by competent counsel, especially if the mission leases space, hires workers, transports minors, stores sensitive records, or raises significant funds.

- Use an EIN only as authorized by the EPCA or local legal entity.
- Do not endorse or oppose political candidates in the name of the mission.
- Obtain insurance guidance before regular public meetings.
- Know state mandatory reporting law and emergency contacts.
- Keep employment, volunteer, and contractor distinctions clear.
- Use written photo releases for public images of participants.

Compliance exercise

List the civil jurisdictions that affect the mission: city/borough, state, federal, landlord/HOA, insurance carrier, and denominational authority.

- [] Jurisdictions listed

- [] Legal counsel or advisor identified

9. Home Meeting Safety and Facility Review

A private home becomes a public ministry space during mission gatherings.

Home hospitality is powerful, but it creates practical risks. Before public meetings begin, walk through the space as if you are welcoming a first-time guest, a child, an older adult, and a person with limited mobility. The mission may not be able to remove every barrier, but it should disclose limitations and reduce obvious hazards.

The host should decide which rooms are public, which are closed, where coats and bags go, where restrooms are located, how pets are handled, where children may be present, and how emergency exits are marked. The home mission should avoid one-on-one pastoral meetings in bedrooms, isolated rooms, or parked vehicles.

Church of England safeguarding guidance and Methodist Safe Sanctuaries resources emphasize creating safer environments and maintaining boundaries; those principles apply strongly in a home setting (Church of England, n.d.; Wisconsin Conference of The United Methodist Church, n.d.).

- Clear stairs, cords, rugs, candles, weapons, medications, alcohol, and private documents.
- Provide visible entry, adequate lighting, restroom directions, and emergency exit awareness.
- Post emergency address, local emergency number, first aid kit location, and safe church contact.
- Use sign-in sheets for attendance and emergency contact when appropriate.
- Do not allow unsupervised wandering through private rooms.

Risk review

Conduct the review quarterly and after any major household change.

- [] Host completed safety walk-through
- [] Emergency information posted
- [] Private spaces identified

10. Safe Church Policy: Core Commitments

The mission protects persons before programs.

The EPCA home mission shall maintain a safe church culture that protects children, youth, vulnerable adults, guests, volunteers, and leaders. This policy is grounded in Christian teaching on human dignity and informed by ecumenical safeguarding practice. Episcopal Safe Church resources, Methodist Safe Sanctuaries material, and Church of England safeguarding guidance all stress prevention, training, safer recruitment, reporting, and clear response to concerns (The Episcopal Church, n.d.; Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, n.d.; Church of England, n.d.).

Safe Church practice is not merely liability management. It is pastoral care. It says that the gospel is not credible where people are ignored, exploited, manipulated, or endangered.

The mission should never handle serious concerns alone. When abuse, neglect, harassment, stalking, credible threat, exploitation, or criminal conduct is suspected, leaders must follow civil law and denominational reporting procedures.

- Zero tolerance for abuse, grooming, harassment, exploitation, retaliation, or intimidation.
- Screen and train volunteers before they serve in sensitive roles.
- Use two-adult visibility rules in ministry with minors and vulnerable adults.
- Report suspected abuse to civil authorities as required by law.
- Document concerns factually and confidentially.
- Remove accused persons from ministry contact while concerns are assessed.

Policy adoption

The mission team should vote to adopt interim EPCA Safe Church rules before launch and review them with every volunteer.

- [] Policy adopted
- [] Volunteers trained
- [] Reporting contacts posted

11. Screening, Training, and Volunteer Approval

Trust is strengthened by verification.

Small communities often rely on friendship, but friendship is not screening. Every adult volunteer should complete an application, references, interview, background check as required, safe church training, and a signed conduct covenant before serving in leadership, children’s ministry, transportation, pastoral visitation, or finance.

A waiting period is wise. New attendees should not immediately receive access to children, money, keys, confidential records, or pastoral authority. The mission may be warm and welcoming while still maintaining boundaries.

The mission should store screening records securely and limit access. Leaders should not casually discuss background information. A disqualifying concern should be handled by the supervisor, safe church coordinator, and appropriate civil or denominational authorities.

- Application completed.
- Identity verified.
- References checked.
- Background check completed as required.
- Safe Church training completed.
- Conduct covenant signed.
- Role description reviewed.
- Approval recorded in minutes or secure personnel file.

Volunteer rule

“No volunteer may begin a sensitive role until written approval is complete.” Sensitive roles include children, youth, vulnerable adults, transportation, pastoral care, finance, keys, and confidential records.

- [] Approval process written
- [] Training log created

12. Adult Boundaries and Pastoral Care

Care must be compassionate, visible, and accountable.

Home missions frequently attract people in transition: lonely neighbors, seekers, former church members, grieving persons, and those in crisis. Leaders must show mercy without becoming therapists, social workers, lawyers, or financial patrons. The mission should refer serious needs to appropriate professionals and emergency services.

Pastoral conversations should occur in visible or interruptible spaces. Private meetings should be scheduled with awareness of power dynamics, gender concerns, trauma history, and safety. Written records should be factual: date, issue, referral, next step. Do not record unnecessary personal details.

Confidentiality is not secrecy. Leaders must explain that threats of harm, suspected abuse, exploitation of vulnerable persons, or legal reporting obligations cannot be kept confidential.

- Avoid romantic, sexual, financial, or dependency relationships with persons under pastoral care.
- Never ask for secrecy around conduct, money, counseling, or private meetings.
- Use referral lists for counseling, domestic violence, addiction, emergency housing, and medical care.
- Do not provide deliverance, exorcism, or intense prayer practices without trained oversight and safety assessment.
- Maintain calm, non-coercive prayer ministry.

Boundary statement

At the beginning of pastoral care, say: "I will honor your privacy, but I cannot keep information secret if someone may be harmed or if the law requires a report."

- [] Referral list created
- [] Care record template adopted

13. Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

The home mission does not improvise protected-person ministry.

If minors or vulnerable adults attend, the home mission needs written procedures before the gathering begins. A home setting can be confusing because family space and church space overlap. The mission should use check-in/out, parent permission, two-adult visibility, bathroom procedures, transportation rules, and clear room boundaries.

The two-adult rule should not be treated as optional. When two approved adults are not available, the activity should be modified, postponed, or held in an open group setting. Online youth contact should include parents or approved ministry channels.

Any allegation or suspicion of abuse must be reported according to civil law and EPCA policy. Internal investigation must never delay required reporting.

- Parents or guardians remain responsible unless a written childcare plan has been approved.
- No closed-door one-on-one contact with minors.
- No corporal punishment, shaming, threats, sexualized joking, or secret gift-giving.
- No transportation of a minor alone except in a documented emergency.
- Bathroom assistance follows parent-approved and two-adult visibility rules.
- All youth photos require written permission before public use.

Protected-person exercise

Decide whether the first 90 days will include childcare. If not, write: "Children remain with parents/guardians during gatherings."

- [] Child policy chosen
- [] Parents informed
- [] Volunteers approved

14. Digital Ministry and Communication Safety

Online contact is ministry space.

Many home missions grow through texts, social media, livestreams, and neighborhood apps. Digital communication should be transparent, respectful, and archived when possible. Never use disappearing messages for ministry business, pastoral care, youth contact, finance, or complaints.

A public page should identify the mission as provisional or recognized according to EPCA authorization. It should not claim sacraments, titles, offices, affiliations, tax status, or credentials that have not been approved. Images of gatherings should be modest, permission-based, and never exploit someone's grief, poverty, disability, or conversion story.

Digital evangelism should invite, not pressure. Alpha's model of hospitable questions and Presbyterian evangelism resources both encourage spaces where people can explore faith honestly and without coercion (Alpha USA, n.d.; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2024).

- Use group channels for announcements.
- Copy parents or guardians on youth communication.
- Do not counsel crises by text alone; move to supervised care and referral.
- Preserve screenshots of threats, harassment, or complaints.
- Use written consent before publishing names, photos, or testimonies.
- Designate one approved spokesperson for public controversies.

Digital policy

Create a mission email address. Avoid using a leader's personal inbox as the only record of ministry business.

- [] Mission email created
- [] Social media admin named
- [] Photo release form adopted

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

15. Incident Response and Reporting

Move from concern to action without panic.

An incident is any event that may require pastoral, safety, legal, insurance, or denominational response: injury, threat, abuse allegation, harassment, misconduct, missing child, unsafe visitor, financial irregularity, property damage, or serious conflict. The first duty is safety. The second is reporting. The third is documentation.

The mission should not promise outcomes, investigate beyond competence, or confront alleged abusers in a way that increases danger. Write facts, not theories. Preserve messages, attendance records, photos, and names of witnesses. Notify EPCA oversight promptly.

Safe Church systems often use audits and written procedures to confirm compliance; a home mission should adopt the same discipline in proportion to its size (The Episcopal Church, n.d.; Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, n.d.).

- Immediate danger: call emergency services.
- Suspected abuse or neglect: make mandated report as required by law.
- Medical incident: provide first aid within competence and call emergency help when needed.
- Misconduct allegation: remove person from role pending review.
- Financial concern: secure records and notify supervisor.
- Complete incident report within 24 hours.

After-action review

Within seven days, the team should ask: What happened? What rule applied? Who was notified? What will change?

- [] Incident form printed
- [] Emergency contacts posted

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

16. Hospitality and Welcoming Guests

The first ministry is often the doorway.

Home mission hospitality should be warm without being intrusive. A newcomer should know where to park, which door to use, what time the gathering ends, where the restroom is, whether children stay with parents, whether food is served, and what level of participation is expected.

Hospitality is evangelistic when it lowers unnecessary barriers. It is unsafe when it ignores boundaries. Do not overwhelm visitors with intense personal questions, pressure to disclose trauma, immediate requests for money, or demands for public testimony.

Presbyterian and Alpha evangelism resources both emphasize welcome, conversation, and patient journeying with people rather than treating evangelism as a sales technique (Alpha USA, n.d.; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2024).

- Prepare signs or a greeter if parking and entry are unclear.
- Start and end on time.
- Explain the order of service before it begins.
- Provide non-alcoholic drinks and allergy-aware food labels.
- Offer a visitor card but do not pressure for personal data.
- Follow up within 48 hours with a thank-you message and next invitation.

Welcome script

“We are glad you are here. You may participate as much or as little as you are comfortable. We will pray, read Scripture, discuss, and share fellowship. The gathering ends at ____.”

- [] Greeter assigned
- [] Visitor card printed

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

17. Weekly Rhythm and Ministry Calendar

A reliable rhythm forms disciples.

A home mission should establish a rhythm simple enough to sustain for six months. Over-programming exhausts volunteers and confuses guests. The recommended pattern is weekly prayer and Scripture, monthly service, monthly leadership review, quarterly safe church review, and seasonal evangelistic invitation.

Daily prayer traditions in Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Methodist sources show that repeated simple forms can shape Christian identity over time (The Episcopal Church, 1979; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2018; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2020; United Methodist Church, 1992).

The calendar should reflect the Christian year without becoming complicated. Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time provide an accessible teaching arc for seekers.

Frequency	Practice	Owner
Weekly	Home Service of Word and Prayer or Bible study.	Mission leader
Weekly	Follow-up with visitors and absentees.	Hospitality lead
Monthly	Service project or neighborhood care action.	Outreach lead
Monthly	Finance report and leadership meeting.	Finance custodian
Quarterly	Safe Church review and home safety walk-through.	Safe Church coordinator
Seasonal	Evangelistic service or open house.	Team

Calendar exercise

Fill in the next twelve meeting dates and one service project date before advertising.

- [] Dates selected
- [] Host confirmed
- [] Supervisor notified

18. Core Home Service Model

Word, prayer, fellowship, and sending.

The core service is designed for homes and small rooms. It can be led by an approved lay leader. It does not require vestments, altar equipment, candles, incense, or music, though reverent symbols may be used. It should be clear to guests that the gathering is Christian worship and not merely a discussion club.

The structure follows broad ecumenical practice: gathering, confession or preparation, praise, Scripture, teaching, response, prayers, Lord's Prayer, blessing or dismissal, fellowship, and sending. This mirrors the ordered simplicity found across common prayer resources without copying any one rite (The Episcopal Church, 1979; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2018; United Methodist Church, 1992).

Keep the whole service between 45 and 70 minutes unless a meal follows. Allow silence. Do not let announcements consume worship.

- Gathering: welcome, opening sentence, short prayer.
- Word: one Psalm or canticle, one Scripture reading, short teaching.
- Response: Creed, testimony, discussion, or hymn.
- Prayers: church, world, neighborhood, sick, seekers, departed.
- Sending: Lord's Prayer, blessing, mission charge, fellowship.

Room setup

Bible visible; chairs in circle or semi-circle; simple cross if desired; safe exits; no inaccessible private rooms; sign-in sheet near entry.

- [] Order printed
- [] Readings chosen
- [] Prayer leader assigned

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

19. Morning Prayer for a Home Mission

An original EPCA form inspired by ecumenical daily prayer.

This service may be used by an approved lay leader. The leader should speak naturally and reverently. Readings may follow the Revised Common Lectionary, a denominational daily lectionary, or the mission's Bible study plan. The pattern is indebted to historic daily office forms (The Episcopal Church, 1979; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2018).

Leader: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Leader: Let us come before the Lord with honest hearts.

Silence is kept.

All: Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed. Turn us again to Christ, forgive what is past, strengthen what is weak, and lead us in the way of life. Amen.

Leader: May the God of mercy forgive us, renew us, and bring us to everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Psalm or opening song may be said or sung.

Reader: A reading from Holy Scripture. [Reading follows.] The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: A brief reflection or silence may follow.

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty... [Apostles' Creed may be said.]

Leader: Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

All: Our Father, who art in heaven...

Leader: Send us into this day to love you and serve our neighbors; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Rubric

If guests are unfamiliar with the Creed or Lord's Prayer, print them. Do not embarrass anyone who remains silent.

- [] Reading selected

- [] Intercessions prepared

- [] Printed order ready

20. Morning Prayer Leader Notes

How to lead the service without rushing or performing.

Morning Prayer should feel ordered, humane, and participatory. The leader does not need to preach long. In a home mission, the strongest teaching may be a five-minute reflection followed by guided discussion. The service should teach people how Christians pray Scripture, confess sin, ask mercy, and begin the day in mission.

Choose one main Scripture text. Give a brief introduction: book, context, and one question for listening. After the reading, allow silence. Then offer a short reflection grounded in the text, not personal speculation. End with a concrete practice for the day.

Use the prayers to widen the group's concern: the whole church, civil leaders, the town, first responders, schools, workers, the poor, the sick, the lonely, and those seeking God. Local prayer forms a local mission.

- Before: prepare readings, print order, assign reader, review names for prayer.
- During: speak slowly, explain actions, allow silence, keep discussion focused.
- After: welcome guests, note pastoral follow-up, record attendance, secure the home.
- Monthly: rotate trained readers and prayer leaders to develop shared ministry.

Reflection template

1. What does the text say? 2. What does it reveal about God? 3. What does it call us to repent, trust, or do? 4. What one practice will we carry today?

- [] Template printed

- [] Reader trained

- [] Follow-up list reviewed

21. Evening Prayer for a Home Mission

A peaceful form for households, small groups, and mission teams.

Evening Prayer is especially effective for seekers and tired workers because it receives the day before God. The service may include a candle if safe, but never use open flame where children, pets, oxygen equipment, or fire hazards make it unwise. This form draws from the common evening prayer pattern of light, thanksgiving, Scripture, intercession, and rest (The Episcopal Church, 1979; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2020).

Leader: The Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a peaceful end.

All: Amen.

Leader: Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

All: A light no darkness can overcome.

A lamp or candle may be lit if safe.

Leader: Let us give thanks for the mercies of this day.

Short thanksgivings may be spoken.

All: O God, receive our thanks, forgive our sins, and guard us through the night.

Psalm, hymn, or silence.

Reader: A reading from Holy Scripture. [Reading follows.]

Leader: Into your hands, O Lord, we commend ourselves, our homes, our neighbors, and all for whom we pray.

Prayers are offered for the church, the town, the troubled, the sick, and the dying.

All: Our Father, who art in heaven...

Leader: May the peace of Christ keep our hearts and minds tonight and always.

All: Amen.

Evening rubric

Keep the tone gentle. Evening Prayer is not the best setting for confrontational teaching or intense debate.

- [] Lighting safe

- [] Prayers prepared

- [] End time honored

22. Evening Prayer Leader Notes

Receiving the day and releasing anxiety.

Evening Prayer helps a home mission become a place of peace. In small towns and neighborhoods, many people carry economic stress, family conflict, loneliness, and religious wounds. The service should be reverent without being theatrical.

Use fewer words. Allow silence. Invite thanksgivings, but do not force sharing. When people offer prayer requests, avoid turning them into public counseling sessions. The leader may say, "Thank you; we will pray for that," and follow up privately with appropriate boundaries.

Where music is used, choose hymns or songs that the group can sing without pressure. If copyrighted music is printed, projected, streamed, or recorded, obtain proper permission. Public worship in a home does not remove copyright obligations.

- Use a predictable closing time for families and workers.
- Avoid candle use where it introduces risk.
- Separate prayer requests from gossip by asking for first names and general needs.
- Keep pastoral follow-up visible and accountable.
- Offer a printed card with the Lord's Prayer and a simple night prayer for guests.

Night prayer card

"Lord Jesus Christ, be our light in darkness, our forgiveness in failure, our courage in fear, and our peace in the night. Amen."

- [] Card printed

- [] Copyright permissions reviewed

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

23. Home Service of the Word

A fuller weekly gathering without Holy Communion.

This service is appropriate when no authorized clergy are present. It centers the community on Scripture and prayer while honoring sacramental boundaries. The structure resembles Protestant services of the Word found across Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Methodist worship traditions (The Episcopal Church, 1979; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2018; United Methodist Church, 1992).

Gathering Song or Psalm

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

All: And also with you.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, open our hearts to your Word and our hands to your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Confession and Assurance may be used.

First Reading: [Old Testament, Epistle, or Acts]

Psalm or spiritual song

Gospel Reading: [All may stand if customary.]

Teaching or Sermon: 8-15 minutes.

Discussion or Response: What is God calling us to believe, repent, or practice?

Apostles' Creed or Nicene Creed

Prayers of the People

Offering may be received according to finance policy.

Lord's Prayer

Mission Charge: Go in peace to love God and serve your neighbors.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader caution

Do not simulate Eucharistic Prayer, consecration, absolution, or ordination language unless the leader is authorized by EPCA discipline.

- [] Sacramental boundary explained

- [] Offering counters assigned

24. Evangelistic Service

A seeker-sensitive service with theological seriousness.

An evangelistic service should be hospitable, clear, and non-coercive. Its aim is to introduce people to Jesus Christ, Christian community, prayer, and the possibility of discipleship. It should avoid manipulation, fear tactics, public shaming, and forced emotional display. Alpha describes evangelistic spaces as places for honest questions and open discussion, often around food and conversation (Alpha USA, n.d.).

A home mission may host an open house, meal, testimony night, or question-and-answer evening. The leader should explain that guests are free to observe. A call to faith may be offered, but pressure should not.

Welcome and hospitality: explain the evening and introduce leaders.

Opening prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, meet us in truth, mercy, and peace. Amen.

Short song, Psalm, or spoken thanksgiving.

Gospel Reading: choose a short passage such as Mark 1:14-20, Luke 15:1-10, John 3:16-21, or John 20:19-31.

Message: 10 minutes: Who is Jesus? What is grace? What does following him look like?

Testimony: one trained speaker, 3-5 minutes, no sensationalism.

Discussion at tables: What stood out? What questions do you have? What would you like to explore next?

Invitation: Those who desire prayer may speak with approved prayer ministers in visible spaces.

Closing prayer and next-step invitation: Bible study, Morning Prayer, catechesis, or pastoral meeting.

Ethical invitation

Invite people toward Christ and community; never exploit grief, poverty, illness, immigration status, addiction, or family crisis.

- [] Question cards ready

- [] Prayer ministers approved

25. Service of Healing and Intercession

Prayer for the sick without unsafe claims.

A home mission may pray for healing as part of Christian care. The service must be humble, non-coercive, and clear that the church does not replace medical, mental health, or emergency care. Leaders should avoid diagnosing illness, promising cures, blaming sufferers for lack of faith, or conducting intense spiritual warfare practices without trained oversight.

The service may include Scripture, silence, intercessions, and simple prayers. Anointing with oil should occur only if permitted by EPCA policy and civil safety norms, and only with consent. For many home missions, laying on hands should be replaced by a hand extended in prayer to maintain boundaries.

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: The maker of heaven and earth.

Scripture: James 5:13-16, Mark 10:46-52, Psalm 23, or Psalm 121 may be read.

Leader: Let us pray for all who suffer in body, mind, spirit, relationship, or circumstance.

Names may be spoken with consent.

Prayer: God of compassion, look with mercy upon your servants. Bring healing according to your will, strength for today, wise helpers, and the peace of Christ. Amen.

Silent prayer.

Leader: Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

Lord's Prayer.

Dismissal: The God of peace be with us and with all for whom we pray. Amen.

Pastoral safeguard

If someone discloses danger to self or others, abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or medical emergency, pause the prayer service and follow emergency/reporting procedures.

- [] Consent language ready

- [] Referral list available

26. Sacraments, Clergy Coordination, and Limits

A home mission should honor the sacraments by honoring order.

The EPCA should state clearly whether home missions may host Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, Anointing, Reconciliation, Ordination, funerals, or other rites. In historic Protestant churches, sacraments are administered within church order, not private preference. Home missions should therefore coordinate with authorized clergy for sacramental ministry.

When Holy Communion is celebrated in a home by authorized clergy, the setting should remain reverent and safe: clean table, bread and cup prepared hygienically, allergies considered, children supervised, and elements treated respectfully. When no clergy are present, the mission may hold a Service of the Word and pray for the day when the sacrament may be celebrated.

Do not advertise sacramental validity, ordination, apostolic claims, or denominational recognition beyond official EPCA statements. Clarity prevents scandal and builds trust.

- Baptism: coordinate with clergy; record candidate, sponsors, date, and place.
- Holy Communion: celebrated only according to EPCA authorization.
- Marriage: requires civil law compliance and clergy authorization.
- Funeral or memorial: may use prayers and Scripture; coordinate with family, clergy, and civil requirements.
- Anointing or reconciliation: use only if authorized and trained.

Sacramental planning form

Date requested; rite requested; names; pastoral circumstances; civil requirements; clergy assigned; records needed; follow-up catechesis.

- [] Policy clarified
- [] Record forms printed

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

27. How to Conduct Bible Studies

Observation, interpretation, application, and prayer.

A good Bible study is not a lecture disguised as discussion. It is a guided encounter with Scripture in the communion of the church. Many evangelical and ecumenical teaching resources use a basic movement: observe what the text says, interpret what it means in context, and apply it faithfully (LifeWay, 2026).

The leader should prepare carefully but ask open questions. Keep the group in the text. Avoid letting one person dominate. Welcome honest questions. Distinguish what the text clearly teaches from historical background, theological inference, and personal opinion.

A home mission should use a Bible translation approved by EPCA leadership. If participants use different translations, treat that as an opportunity to compare wording rather than argue.

- Opening: brief prayer for illumination.
- Context: who, what, where, genre, and covenant setting.
- Observation: repeated words, commands, promises, contrasts, questions.
- Interpretation: meaning in original context and in the whole canon.
- Application: concrete obedience, repentance, hope, worship, justice, mercy.
- Closing: prayer for grace to live the Word.

Study leader rule

The leader asks better questions rather than giving every answer.

- [] Text chosen
- [] Questions prepared
- [] Application named

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

28. Twelve-Week Starter Bible Study Plan

A simple path for seekers and new disciples.

The first twelve weeks should give participants a coherent introduction to Jesus, Scripture, prayer, church, mission, and Christian ethics. The plan below may be used alongside the Christian year. Keep sessions to 60-75 minutes including prayer and fellowship.

Each week should include one primary text, one doctrinal theme, one practical habit, and one outreach action. Newcomers should know that questions are welcome and that no one will be forced to read aloud.

Week	Text	Theme	Practice
1	Mark 1:1-20	The good news begins with Jesus.	Daily five-minute prayer.
2	Luke 15	Grace seeks the lost.	Pray for three neighbors.
3	John 1:1-18	Christ the Word made flesh.	Read one Gospel chapter.
4	Matthew 5:1-16	Kingdom character.	Practice one act of mercy.
5	Romans 3:21-26	Grace and faith.	Write confession and assurance.
6	1 Corinthians 12	The church as body.	Name your gifts.
7	Acts 2:37-47	Baptism, teaching, fellowship, prayer.	Attend weekly worship.
8	James 2:14-26	Faith active in love.	Serve locally.
9	Psalms 23	Prayer and trust.	Pray morning/evening.
10	Ephesians 4:1-16	Unity and maturity.	Reconcile where possible.
11	Matthew 28:16-20	Mission and discipleship.	Invite someone kindly.
12	Revelation 21:1-6	Hope and new creation.	Share testimony.

Plan review

After week 12, ask who wants catechesis, baptism/confirmation preparation, volunteer training, or a next study.

- [] Follow-up appointments set

- _____
- _____

29. Facilitating Discussion

A Christian discussion is hospitable, truthful, and bounded.

Discussion is where seekers test whether the community is safe enough for honest questions. The leader should protect the room from domination, mockery, conspiracy theories, partisan fights, trauma dumping, and doctrinal confusion. Protecting the room is not censorship; it is pastoral stewardship.

Use a covenant: speak for yourself, listen before responding, keep confidences except safety concerns, return to Scripture, disagree respectfully, and allow the leader to redirect. Remind the group that the mission is Christian; every question is welcome, but the group's center is Jesus Christ.

When a question is beyond the leader's knowledge, say so. Then research it and return with a responsible answer. This models humility and scholarship.

- Ask: What word or phrase stood out?
- Ask: What does this passage reveal about God, humanity, sin, grace, or mission?
- Ask: What is difficult, beautiful, or surprising?
- Ask: What faithful action does this text invite this week?
- Redirect: "That matters, but let us return to the text."
- Close: summarize one shared insight and one shared prayer.

Group covenant

Read the covenant aloud for the first four sessions and whenever new people join.

- [] Covenant printed
- [] Leader practiced redirection

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

30. Theology and Ethics of Evangelism

Witness is invitation, not domination.

Christian evangelism is the truthful, loving witness to Jesus Christ in word, deed, community, and prayer. It should be rooted in humility because conversion is the work of God, not the product of pressure. Presbyterian resources on evangelism frame witness through habits such as prayer, generosity, sacraments, worship, teaching, justice, fellowship, and radical welcome (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2024).

The EPCA home mission should reject manipulative evangelism: fear-based pressure, deceptive invitations, financial inducement, exploiting vulnerable persons, public shaming, or implying that joining the mission solves every life problem. Instead, witness through truthful relationships, service, prayer, and clear invitations.

Evangelism and safeguarding belong together. A person should be freer, safer, and more dignified after encountering the mission.

- Pray for people by name without treating them as projects.
- Listen before speaking.
- Share personal testimony briefly and truthfully.
- Invite to a meal, service, Bible study, or prayer night.
- Respect a clear “no.”
- Serve the neighborhood whether or not people attend.

Testimony exercise

Write a three-minute testimony: life before, encounter with Christ, life now, and invitation. Avoid exaggeration and private details about others.

- [] Testimony drafted
- [] Reviewed by leader

31. Neighborhood Evangelism Plan

Love the place before trying to gather the place.

A home mission should learn its neighborhood: streets, schools, elders, workers, civic concerns, local businesses, transit, homelessness, addiction, isolation, and cultural life. Fresh Expressions emphasizes mission in the places where people already live and gather, with inherited church wisdom carried into new contexts (Fresh Expressions North America, n.d.).

Begin with prayer walks that are quiet, respectful, and non-performative. Do not trespass. Do not photograph people without consent. Notice signs of need and signs of grace. Ask local leaders what would genuinely help.

Create a map of relationships rather than a map of targets. Evangelism grows from presence, service, credibility, and patient invitation.

- Walk the neighborhood in pairs at appropriate times.
- List public gathering places: library, coffee shops, parks, schools, shelters, senior centers.
- Identify one practical service need.
- Introduce yourself to neighbors without pressuring them.
- Carry simple invitation cards with meeting time and contact information.
- Pray weekly for households, workers, and civic leaders.

Neighborhood map

Draw the mission radius. Mark homes represented in the group, service needs, public spaces, and possible meeting partners.

- [] Map started
- [] Prayer route selected

32. Local Town Outreach and Service Projects

Public credibility grows through steady service.

A home mission should become known for humble service before it becomes known for institutional ambition. Choose service projects that are lawful, safe, modest, and repeatable. Avoid projects that require professional licensing unless professionals are involved.

Good first projects include neighborhood cleanups, food pantry support, cards for elders, school supply drives, winter clothing collection, help for a shelter, public prayer booth with consent, or a community meal in partnership with an existing organization.

The mission should not use service as bait. Say plainly: "We are Christians serving our neighbors. You are welcome at our gatherings, but this help does not require attendance."

- Ask community organizations what is needed rather than assuming.
- Use sign-up sheets and liability awareness for volunteers.
- Train volunteers on respectful conduct and photography limits.
- Document expenses and donated goods.
- Evaluate the project: who was served, what was learned, what follow-up is appropriate?
- Thank partners publicly when permitted.

Service project planner

Need; partner; date; supplies; budget; safety risks; volunteers; communication; follow-up; theological reflection.

- [] Partner contacted
- [] Budget approved
- [] Safety risks reviewed

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

33. Online Evangelism and Public Communication

Clear, truthful, and beautiful communication helps people take a first step.

The home mission needs a simple public presence: name, affiliation, meeting type, general location, contact method, safe church commitment, and what newcomers can expect. A webpage or social page should not overpromise. Avoid claiming large membership, official parish status, or sacramental offerings that do not yet exist.

Use plain English. “We gather for prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and service in the Christian tradition” is clearer than a long list of ecclesial terms. Explain “ecumenical” as drawing respectfully from historic Protestant sources while remaining centered on Scripture and the creeds.

Digital invitation should be consistent: one weekly post, one event reminder, one testimony or reflection, and one service opportunity. Quality matters more than volume.

- Post meeting time and what to expect.
- Use permission-based photos.
- Avoid arguments in comment sections.
- Create a response script for inquiries.
- Keep a private follow-up list with consent.
- Use accessibility: readable fonts, alt text, captions, and clear contrast.

Sample online description

“The EPCA Home Mission is a small Christian gathering for prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and neighborhood service. Visitors are welcome. You may observe, ask questions, and participate at your own pace.”

- [] Description posted
- [] Admin roles assigned

34. Pastoral Follow-Up and Membership Pathway

People need next steps, not vague welcome.

Follow-up should be prompt, gentle, and consent-based. A visitor card should ask what contact method the person prefers and what they want next: prayer, Bible study, pastoral conversation, baptism/confirmation inquiry, service opportunity, or no contact. Respect the choice.

A membership pathway may include inquiry, regular attendance, introductory catechesis, profession of faith or reaffirmation, baptism or confirmation preparation as needed, safe church orientation, and integration into service. The pathway must be clear about EPCA doctrine, leadership, financial expectations, and sacramental practice.

Do not rush vulnerable people into public commitments. Allow time for questions, family implications, prior church wounds, and pastoral discernment.

- Within 48 hours: send a thank-you message.
- Within 7 days: offer next gathering and one appropriate next step.
- Within 30 days: invite regular attenders to catechesis or service.
- After 90 days: review whether the person desires membership, baptism, confirmation, or continued inquiry.
- Maintain confidentiality and do not share visitor information casually.

Follow-up script

“Thank you for visiting. We were glad to welcome you. You are invited again next _____. Is there any way we may pray for you or help you explore the Christian faith?”

- [] Visitor workflow created
- [] Membership pathway printed

35. Catechesis and Discipleship

Teaching forms stable Christians and future leaders.

Catechesis should be plain, biblical, and ecumenically Protestant. It should cover Scripture, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, baptism, Holy Communion, prayer, church membership, stewardship, vocation, service, and Christian ethics. Luther's Small Catechism and Anglican/Methodist/Presbyterian catechetical traditions show that concise questions and answers remain useful for formation (Luther, 1529/2017; The Episcopal Church, 1979).

Discipleship must move from information to practice. A participant should learn how to pray, read Scripture, forgive, serve, give, worship, witness, and seek help. Keep lessons short enough to remember and concrete enough to obey.

Catechesis should prepare people for baptism or reaffirmation only in coordination with authorized EPCA leadership.

- Lesson 1: The gospel and the person of Jesus.
- Lesson 2: Scripture and how Christians read it.
- Lesson 3: The Creed and the Trinity.
- Lesson 4: Prayer, Lord's Prayer, and daily devotion.
- Lesson 5: Baptism, Communion, and church membership.
- Lesson 6: Christian ethics, vocation, and mission.
- Lesson 7: Stewardship, service, and spiritual gifts.
- Lesson 8: EPCA identity, safe church, and next steps.

Formation record

Keep simple records: participant name, lessons completed, pastoral notes, sacramental preparation needs, and next step.

- [] Catechesis schedule set

- _____
- _____
- _____

36. Multiplying Small Groups and New Missions

Healthy growth is reproducible and accountable.

A home mission should not multiply because the room is crowded only. It should multiply when leaders are formed, safe church systems are functioning, finances are clean, doctrine is stable, and the mission can send rather than split. Fresh Expressions describes new church forms as missional, contextual, formational, and ecclesial; these principles help home missions grow without abandoning inherited church wisdom (Fresh Expressions North America, n.d.).

The sending question is: who is called, trained, trusted, and supervised to host the next gathering? A new group should begin with the same authorization, safeguarding, finance, and reporting requirements as the first.

Multiplication should be celebrated liturgically: prayer, blessing, and clear accountability.

- Identify apprentice leaders early.
- Let apprentices lead prayer, discussion, hospitality, and administration under supervision.
- Review character before charisma.
- Never split a group to avoid conflict; resolve conflict first.
- Send a team, not a lone leader.
- Secure written EPCA approval for every new location.

Multiplication readiness

A group is ready when it has trained leaders, stable attendance, safe systems, financial integrity, and a defined mission field.

- [] Apprentice named
- [] Training plan created

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

37. Training Lay Leaders

Every leader should be formed in doctrine, skill, and character.

Lay leaders are not placeholders until clergy arrive. They are ministers of hospitality, prayer, Scripture, service, and witness. Yet they must know their limits. Training should include Christian doctrine, Bible study facilitation, worship leadership, safe church, pastoral boundaries, finance basics, conflict response, and evangelism.

Training should be observed. Do not approve a leader merely because the person is enthusiastic. Watch how the person listens, handles correction, speaks about other churches, respects boundaries, and treats vulnerable people.

The leader formation process should include prayer, reading, supervised practice, feedback, and written approval.

Competency	Evidence	Approved by
Doctrine	Can explain gospel, Creed, sacraments, EPCA identity.	Supervisor
Scripture	Can lead observation, interpretation, application.	Mission leader
Worship	Can lead Morning/Evening Prayer reverently.	Supervisor
Safety	Completed training; knows reporting procedure.	Safe Church coordinator
Care	Uses boundaries and referrals.	Mission leader
Administration	Understands records, finance, communication.	Team

Leader development exercise

Create a six-week apprenticeship for one person: observe twice, assist twice, lead twice with feedback.

- [] Apprentice selected

- [] Feedback form printed

- _____
- _____
- _____

38. Care, Visitation, and Crisis Boundaries

Mercy requires wisdom.

Home mission leaders may visit the sick, lonely, imprisoned, grieving, and absent. Visitation should be approved, documented, and bounded. Two-person visitation is preferable when the person is vulnerable, the setting is private, the relationship is new, or there are safety concerns.

Leaders must not promise professional counseling, legal representation, medical advice, immigration advice, addiction treatment, domestic violence intervention, or financial rescue. Instead, offer prayer, presence, practical referral, and connection to appropriate resources.

For crisis situations, use emergency services and mandated reporting. A leader's compassion is not measured by handling everything alone.

- Schedule visits; avoid surprise visits unless requested or urgent.
- Tell another leader where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Meet in visible spaces when possible.
- Keep visits time-limited.
- Document date, purpose, general outcome, and referrals.
- Use same-gender or two-person teams when pastoral sensitivity requires.

Referral directory

Build a local list: emergency services, counseling, domestic violence shelter, food assistance, housing, addiction recovery, hospital, police non-emergency, elder services, child protection.

- [] Directory started
- [] Emergency protocol reviewed

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

39. Conflict Resolution and Church Discipline

Address conflict early, humbly, and fairly.

Conflict in a home mission feels personal because the gathering occurs in a home. Leaders should normalize direct, charitable conversation before resentment grows. Not every disagreement is misconduct; not every complaint is persecution. A mature mission distinguishes preference, misunderstanding, sin, abuse, and danger.

Use a simple pathway: private conversation when safe; mediated conversation with a leader; written complaint; supervisor review; temporary safety measures; final decision by EPCA authority when needed. Do not use Matthew 18 language to silence abuse reports, legal obligations, or power-imbalanced complaints.

Discipline should aim at truth, protection, repentance, restitution, and restoration when possible. Some cases require removal from ministry or attendance restrictions.

- No gossip meetings.
- No retaliation against complainants.
- No private confrontation of alleged abusers when it increases risk.
- Written records for serious complaints.
- Supervisor notified when leaders are accused.
- Safety plan before restoration plan.

Peacemaking prompt

What happened? What policy applies? What harm occurred? What repair is possible? Who needs protection? Who has authority to decide?

- [] Complaint form prepared
- [] Supervisor contact posted

40. Recordkeeping and Reporting

Records serve memory, protection, and mission evaluation.

A home mission should keep records without becoming bureaucratic. The basic records are attendance, visitor contact permissions, team minutes, finance reports, safe church training, incident reports, sacramental requests, catechesis progress, and outreach activities. Protect confidentiality carefully.

Monthly reports to EPCA oversight should include attendance average, new visitors, pastoral concerns needing clergy attention, finances, safe church issues, service projects, teaching topics, and requests for support. Reports should be factual, brief, and regular.

Do not store sensitive records on unsecured personal devices. Use locked storage or approved encrypted systems. Limit access to those with a legitimate ministry need.

Record	Retain where	Access
Attendance and visitor cards	Mission binder or approved system	Leader, hospitality lead
Finance reports	Finance file and EPCA office if required	Finance custodian, supervisor
Safe Church records	Secure confidential file	Safe Church coordinator, supervisor
Incidents	Secure confidential file	Supervisor and authorized responders
Minutes	Governance tab	Team and supervisor
Catechesis records	Formation file	Leader and clergy

Monthly report

Submit by the fifth day of the next month unless EPCA policy says otherwise.

- [] Report template adopted

- _____
- _____
- _____

41. Forms: Visitor Card and Attendance Log

Keep records simple and consent-based.

Visitor information should be requested, not demanded. Explain why the mission asks for contact details. Do not add people to public lists without consent. Keep children’s data especially protected.

Visitor Card Field	Purpose
Name	Identify the guest respectfully.
Preferred contact	Email, phone, text, or no follow-up.
Prayer request	Optional; avoid sensitive details on public cards.
Interest	Bible study, prayer, catechesis, service, pastoral conversation.
Consent	Permission to contact and store information.

Attendance log fields

Date; service type; leader; number of adults; number of children/youth; visitors; offering received yes/no; safe church notes; follow-up names.

- [] Visitor cards printed
- [] Attendance log started

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

42. Forms: Offering Count and Reimbursement

Financial forms prevent confusion.

Offerings should be counted immediately after the gathering by two approved adults. The count form should be signed by both counters and reconciled with deposits. Digital gifts should be reviewed through official statements rather than screenshots alone.

Reimbursement requests should identify the ministry purpose, budget category, amount, receipt, requester, approver, and payment date. The requester should not be the sole approver of the reimbursement.

Offering Count Form	Details
Date and gathering	Identify the service or event.
Cash total	Record bills and coins.
Checks	List check number and amount; protect donor privacy.
Digital gifts	Note platform report, not private phone screenshots.
Counters	Two signatures and time counted.
Deposit	Date, method, and receipt attached.

Reimbursement controls

Receipt required; budget category required; ministry purpose stated; approval separate from requester; payment recorded; monthly reconciliation.

- [] Count sheets printed
- [] Reimbursement form printed

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

43. Forms: Incident Report and Risk Assessment

Write facts promptly and protect confidentiality.

The incident report is not a theological essay or accusation. It records observable facts, dates, times, persons involved, immediate action, notifications, and next steps. If civil reporting is required, note when and to whom the report was made. Preserve original notes and messages.

Risk assessment should be completed before recurring activities, youth involvement, transportation, overnight events, public service projects, or meetings in unfamiliar locations.

Incident Report Field	Write
Date/time/location	Exact information.
Reporter	Name and contact.
Persons involved	Names, ages if relevant, roles.
What happened	Facts only; direct quotes if important.
Immediate action	First aid, separation, emergency call, report.
Notifications	Civil authority, EPCA supervisor, parent/guardian, insurer.
Next steps	Follow-up assigned and due date.

Risk assessment fields

Activity; location; date; leader; participants; hazards; who may be harmed; prevention steps; emergency plan; approval.

- [] Incident form stored securely

- [] Risk form used before new activity

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

44. Ninety-Day Launch Workbook

A realistic timeline for first-quarter stability.

The first ninety days determine whether the mission becomes stable or chaotic. Keep the goals simple: gather faithfully, protect people, teach Scripture, serve locally, keep records, and report to oversight. Do not measure success only by attendance. Measure trustworthiness, consistency, pastoral fruit, and readiness for wider mission.

At day 90, the supervisor and mission team should decide whether to continue, pause, revise, multiply, relocate, or pursue recognition as a more formal mission congregation.

Day range	Primary goals	Evidence
1-15	Authorization, core team, safe church policy, home review.	Letter, roster, policy, checklist.
16-30	First gatherings, Bible study plan, finance setup.	Attendance, plan, forms.
31-45	Visitor follow-up, service project, leader feedback.	Cards, project notes.
46-60	Catechesis begins, outreach rhythm, finance report.	Lesson list, report.
61-75	Apprentice leader practice, safe church review.	Feedback, review form.
76-90	Evaluation and supervisor meeting.	90-day report.

90-day evaluation questions

What has God blessed? What is unsafe or unclear? Who is being formed? Are finances clean? Are guests returning? Does the mission need clergy support, training, or closure?

- [] Evaluation scheduled

- _____
- _____
- _____

45. Appendices: Prayers, Templates, and Commissioning

Short texts for repeated use.

The following original prayers may be used freely by EPCA home missions. They are intentionally brief so that lay leaders can learn them and guests can follow them. They may be adapted with approval.

Commissioning of a home mission team may occur at a Sunday service, online gathering, or first meeting with the supervising clergy or EPCA officer present when possible.

Prayer before Bible Study: Blessed Lord, open the Scriptures to us, open our hearts to your truth, and open our lives to your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for the Neighborhood: God of mercy, bless the homes, schools, workers, elders, children, strangers, and sufferers of this place. Make us good neighbors and faithful witnesses. Amen.

Prayer before Outreach: Lord Jesus, send us with humility, courage, truth, and love. Guard us from pride and pressure. Give us words of peace and works of mercy. Amen.

Commissioning: Will you gather faithfully, teach truthfully, protect the vulnerable, steward resources honestly, welcome strangers, and serve this neighborhood in the name of Christ?

Team: With God's help, we will.

Leader: May the Holy Spirit strengthen you for this home mission, and may Christ be known in your prayer, witness, fellowship, and service. Amen.

Closing Charge: Go in peace. Pray daily. Serve humbly. Speak truthfully. Welcome generously. Follow Christ.

Final binder checklist

Authorization; roster; safe church policy; finance policy; worship orders; Bible study plan; evangelism plan; forms; 90-day review date; references.

- [] Binder complete

- [] PDF saved

- [] Team trained

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Document note

This manual is an original EPCA workbook using APA-style references to source traditions and administrative resources. It should be reviewed by denominational officers and qualified civil counsel before adoption as binding policy.