

Local Church Visitation Policy

This policy primarily targets students who wish to visit churches whose congregation has significantly different traditional cultural norms. The basis of this experience is to ensure students participate in an experience that immerses them into a culture significantly different from their own on an ethnic, cultural and where possible language level.

1. Duration – The student will spend a minimum of 45 hours of one-on-one interpersonal interaction during a 15-week semester or summer term. This model is based upon a typical one-credit-hour internship experience requirement. Participants may attend Sunday school, worship services, Bible studies, festivals, holiday celebrations, youth rallies, revivals, and/or special church functions or programs. Additionally, visits to homes of church members and activities outside of the church setting are strongly encouraged.

2. Contact – The Global Perspectives Office does not supply a list of churches to choose from. It is up to the student to research the area and determine a suitable choice. The student will make contact with a member of the pastoral team to arrange the experience. Information such as length of study, intentions, and goals should be conveyed. Inquiries might include hours of Sunday School, worship services, prayer meetings, and praise and worship practice. Additional considerations include College & Career activities, potential host family arrangements for meal sharing, Teaching English as a Second Language for English or Education majors, and assistance with event planning or public relations. Students are encouraged to seek opportunities to enhance their major field of study and interests.

3. Interaction –The student must engage in conversation with members of the congregation, observe body language, conduct interviews, participate in various church activities, and reflect on his/her experiences. The congregation should not be watched from a distance and treated as mere specimens. Students should inquire as to the mission, goals, and vision of the church and record this within their Journal. Volunteering time and conducting service learning at the church is encouraged to increase interaction.

4. Sensitivity – The student should review information from the LEEU 102A Global Perspectives Seminar to ensure they do not offend church members through insensitivity or criticism of worship styles that may differ from their own. Students should conduct research on the faith tradition in question and its attendant taboos prior to conducting the experience. Strict attention to items of dress, speech, posture, demeanor, interaction with older adults, roles of women and children, etc. requires the careful consideration of the student.

5. Awareness – The student should discuss with a member of the pastoral team the role of the church in the area of cultural awareness, its diversity, and the roles of men, women, and children within the culture. This discussion may cause you to examine how this culture is similar to or differs from your own in these areas and should serve to enrich both your experience, as well as those with whom you have chosen to interact.