



El Salvador Mission Handbook 2023

We are very excited about the opportunity to partner with your mission team here in El Salvador. The last couple of years have been a challenge for everyone but through prayer, discernment, and patience we are very hopeful to begin hosting mission teams once again. For new teams, this Handbook serves as a starting point for answering questions/concerns you or team members might have. For teams that have worked with us in the past, you will certainly see some changes. Please take the time to read through everything to make yourself familiar with the basics. If after reading you still have questions, please don't hesitate to ask away. Thank you for your support, both new and continued, and we look forward to seeing you soon. Blessings!

Brian Dubberly

Missionary Salvadoran Mission Projects

VIM Coordinator

Rev. Juan de Dios Peña

Bishop Evangelical Methodist Church in El Salvador



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Brian and Ellyn Dubberly

Brian started Salvadoran Mission Projects in the spring of 2010 to help with the El Salvadoran Church's mission and to grow the community of faith through partnerships with churches in the United States. He is a United Methodist Volunteers in Mission long-term individual volunteer and a North Carolina conference missionary. Brian has served as the Volunteers in Mission Coordinator for the Methodist Church in El Salvador for 12 years. Ellyn is a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries serving the Methodist Church in El Salvador in the area of Christian Education. She is currently developing and writing a Sunday School Curriculum that will be used by all of the Methodist Churches in El Salvador. She is also the English teacher at the Methodist School in Ahuachapán.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28



Bishop Juan de Dios Peña

Juan de Dios has served with the Methodist Church in El Salvador since 2004. He began as the Volunteers in Mission Coordinator. In 2007 Juan de Dios was elected as the president of the Methodist Church in El Salvador while continuing to host national and international mission teams. In 2012 he became one of two ordained pastors in El Salvador. In 2019 Juan de Dios was consecrated as the first Bishop of the Methodist Church in El Salvador. In the fall of 2022, he was elected as the President of CIEMAL, The Council of Methodist Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. Bishop Juan de Dios is a very hands-on Bishop, and you will no doubt see him on the job site and even helping teams while they are in El Salvador.



Mission Work in El Salvador

You can find an abundance of scriptures about missions and serving those in need. At the center of this is, of course, the great commission found in the final chapter of the gospel of Matthew. As a member of a short-term mission group, we feel that it is important that before you come you spend time praying and studying your meaning of Christian service. We think this will make a significant difference in your mission experience here in El Salvador as well as your faith walk in general.

Poverty is widespread in El Salvador. In some parts of the country poverty levels are close to 40%. El Salvador's poverty is a problem that prevents many from getting a proper education, adequate healthcare, drinkable water, and sanitation services. The Methodist Church in El Salvador, through its ministries, works to help end this circle of poverty that seems to grip such a large number of the Salvadoran people.

With the help of your mission team, we hope to create a model of mutuality in mission. By living out our faith we can create a situation of open arms and not open hands. This is why your mission team is so important to create healthy, long-lasting relationships with the people that you will be serving and in return you too will be served. When we work together we can expand God's kingdom here on earth.

IEMEES

The Evangelical Methodist Church in El Salvador is an autonomous Methodist Church founded in 1994 by Salvadorans. While not a United Methodist Church they are in connection with the Methodist Church as a whole. Currently, all of the Methodist churches in El Salvador are in the Central and Western portions of the country. There are five churches in Ahuachapán, and one each in; Coatepeque, Zacamil, Los Horcones, San Lorenzo, Ataco, Apeneca, and Soyapango.

*Each of you should
use whatever gift
you have received to
serve others, as
faithful stewards of
God's grace in its
various forms.*

1 Peter 4:10



Is El Salvador Safe?

Since the 1980s, El Salvador has had plenty of violence, it is understandable why the country has the reputation of being a violent nation. Historically El Salvador has been on most of the lists of the most violent countries in Latin America. However, El Salvador's violence has almost never been directed at visitors.

The current presidential administration has taken a very hard approach to gang violence and delinquency. New laws have been passed and it is now illegal to be part of or to have any connection with gangs punishable by 20-30 years in prison. As a result, violent crime has been reduced greatly. So much so that El Salvador is no longer on the list of dangerous places to visit. The US State Department still maintains travel warnings to reconsider travel.

Your safety is our top priority and while we cannot make any promises or guarantees, we will do our very best to make sure that while you are in El Salvador that your mission team is as safe and comfortable as possible.



How Do We Get To El Salvador?

El Salvador's principle airport is Monseñor Óscar Arnulfo Romero International Airport (SAL) which is about 40 kilometers outside of San Salvador.

At immigration, you must purchase a \$12 single-entry tourist card and provide a foreseen address. We will let you know the address and name of where your team will be staying once we have you on the calendar. When you exit the airport in El Salvador we will take care of your transportation. If you are working in Ahuachapán, the trip is about two hours by bus. Unless you specifically ask to stop for a meal (**meals in transit are not included in team expenses**), we will plan to stop at a convenience store just outside of the airport where you can purchase drinks and snacks to hold you over until you arrive at your destination.

What About Lodging?

The church in El Salvador owns a home in which we use to host teams called the Mission Residence and we can accommodate most sized teams there. The cost of staying here is \$54 per day per person (**including the day you arrive and leave**) which covers food, lodging and transportation. Additionally, your team has the option to stay at a local hotel that we have a relationship with. El Altillo located in Ahuachapán is \$62 per day per person. Once we have you on the calendar, we can discuss your team's lodging.



Zika, Chikungunya and Dengue!

Like all countries in Central America, El Salvador has been affected by mosquito-born viruses. The mosquito that carries these viruses are one that is active during the day. Being vigilant about applying insect repellent is your best protection from these viruses.

Shots, Medicines & Your Health

We recommend that you see your family doctor before coming on your mission trip. You and your physician can decide what is best for your physical health and what vaccinations and medicines you will need for your mission experience.

The CDC classifies several parts of El Salvador as a malaria risk. If you and your doctor feel it necessary to take medical precautions, then by all means do so. However, we have never had a problem with malaria.

If you take daily medications, please make sure that you bring enough for the duration of the trip in your carry-on luggage!

The water in El Salvador is **not** safe for consumption by your mission team, so anything liquid that goes into your mouth needs to come from a bottle. We will make sure you have safe drinking water. Staying hydrated will make a huge difference in how you feel each day.

To cut down on plastic bottles and costs please ask each team member to bring a refillable water bottle.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are a good idea but remember they do not kill everything and certainly do not replace soap and water. Make sure you purchase a quality sanitizer that has a minimum of 60% alcohol.

If for some reason you do get ill while in El Salvador the Methodist Church maintains a clinic with a full-time doctor. Private professional medical care and medicines are readily available to us. We understand that some medical problems can be embarrassing, this is part of our lives here and the sooner we know you are having trouble the sooner we can help you get back on your feet and healthy.



How Much Does It Cost To Bring A Team

The cost to bring a team to El Salvador will vary depending on the project(s) that your team will be participating in while here and where you choose to stay. Likewise, the location of the project will also have some varying impact on the costs. If your team works in Ahuachapán the cost of food, lodging, and transportation will be between \$54 and \$62 per person, per day. In addition, we request that each team also bring \$400 for coordination consideration to cover our expenses associated with hosting your team. The costs for each project are as follows:

Home Building Project \$7,000

Church Construction \$5,500

(includes materials and local professional labor)

Food Distribution \$1,200

Teams doing Bible School have no in-country costs but teams are responsible for bringing their materials.

If translators are needed the cost is \$20 per day per translator.

If your team is working in San Salvador we can provide a couple of options to try to work within your budget.

Each mission team's cost will vary depending on projects, location, plane tickets, and the number of team members. Once we know you are coming, what you will be doing and staying we can give you a better idea of the total cost.



How Do We Get Our Funds To You?

Due to changes in El Salvador's banking and money laundering laws, we are no longer able to deposit team funds in the Church's bank account in the US, so all team expenses must be brought in cash (large bills are fine). We understand some team's reservations about carrying cash but we have investigated other means and bringing cash is the only feasible option at this time. Remember that if one person is in possession of more than \$10,000 it must be declared in customs. You can avoid this by splitting the funds between several team members. We will, of course, provide you with a receipt and if you need us to send an invoice to your financial administrator prior to the funds being released please let us know.

Additionally, meals in transit, teams that wish to stop for a meal when arrive and/or depart, will be at the expense of the team and is not figured in the food, lodging, and transportation expenses.

Some Things To Keep In Mind

While we encourage building relationships, we must insist that you do not give monetary gifts to anyone, including staff persons. We do not want to build the expectation or dependency that mission teams are cash cows. Likewise, this goes for giving money to individual churches or pastors. You are, of course, welcome to give during the offering. If you or your group wants to do anything extra for a particular church or person, we ask that you go through the conference. Because of safety concerns or logistics, we are not able to take teams to all of our churches. Giving money directly to one church or one pastor gives the appearance of favoritism and is divisive for the church as a whole.

Alcohol is a serious social problem throughout Latin America. **Most protestant Christians abstain from consuming alcohol as a result we ask that you respect the church and the culture in El Salvador and abstain from drinking for the duration of your mission trip.** Seeing or hearing about team members drinking can be confusing, so again please be prepared to not consume alcohol while in El Salvador

Do We Get A Day Off?

Teams working in Ahuachapán generally spend one day on the Rutas de las Floras (the Blue Ridge Parkway of El Salvador). We make two stops, the town of Concepcion de Ataco to do some shopping and a coffee plantation for lunch. In addition, the Mayan ruin of Tazamal is a short drive away and the thermal hot springs of Santa Taresa are just outside of Ahuachapan (additional costs apply). Just a short drive away is the Volcano National Park and Lake Coatepeque. El Salvador is a wonderful country full of culture and we will work with your team leader to plan your group's day off.



You may want to familiarize yourself with some Spanish vocabulary and phrases prior to coming to El Salvador.

We recommend Spanishdict.com and the app Duolingo. Both are free and fun.

Because we are always on the move the best way to contact us is via email, but please allow us a couple of days to get back to you.

*Then I heard the
voice of the Lord
saying, “Whom shall
I send? And who will
go for us?”
And I said, “Here am
I. Send me!”
Isaiah 6:8*



Projects of the Methodist Church

Home Building We construct simple homes of concrete blocks for families that own their own property but live in substandard housing. The houses we build are 36 square meters and are from a government-approved plan. Houses are built for both church members and nonmembers. There is a review process to ensure that the family receiving the house cannot obtain a home through any other means. The cost to build a home with us is **\$7,000** which covers the costs of materials and local professional labor.

Church Construction Projects We are almost always building. Whether it is a church expansion or construction of new church facilities or a building at the Methodist School. All our building projects are built with concrete blocks. We ask each team to budget **\$5,500** to work on church construction projects.

Bible School There is no shortage of children in El Salvador, and they are an important part of our ministry. All teams are welcome to do Bible School while working in El Salvador. Children go to school half days (either in the morning or the afternoon) so any time of the year is an ideal time for Bible School. Teams will need to provide their own materials and supplies

Medical Teams We arrange for medical teams to set up clinics in marginalized communities where people have little to no access to medical care. Mission teams provide free services as well as dispensing medication. Medical mission teams are responsible for providing their own supplies and medicines. There are customs and tax forms and fees that must be filed and approved prior to you entering El Salvador with medicines. Please contact us at least six months prior to traveling to El Salvador so that we can ensure that the medicine you bring will be allowed into the country. Additionally, if your team will need translators the cost is \$20 per day per translator.

Food Distribution We will purchase bulk staple foods, and your team will repack the food into individual bags for distribution. We take small groups into either the community that you are working in or another community that we are familiar with. We take time to talk with the family so that your group members will have the opportunity to understand daily life and struggles of the particular family. We take time to pray with the family and if they are not attending a church, tell them about the Methodist Church. The cost to participate in this program is \$1,200.

Suggestions Of What To Pack

- Work Clothes
- Toiletries and Medicines
- Church Clothes
- Sunscreen and a Hat
- Shoes: work (closed toe), nonwork, and shower
- Work Gloves
- Bible
- Book or Music for free time
- Pen and notebook to journal
- Neosporin and Band-Aids
- Pain Reliever
- Hand Sanitizer and/or wipes
- Travel Pack Tissue (not all bathrooms will have paper)
- Water bottle
- Sunglasses
- Eye drops (especially contact wearers)
- Ziploc bags (pack any liquids in plastic bags or your clothes may be covered in shampoo when you arrive)
- Bug Spray
- Masks
- Patience

Travel Tips

- It is a good idea to take a change of clothes, and medicines and carry some personal items with you in your carry-on bag just in case your luggage does not arrive when you do.
- Remember to save space in your suitcase for souvenirs and coffee.
- If you have something special or sentimental that you can not live without it is probably best to leave it at home.

Some Final Thoughts

- Prepare to expect the unexpected
- Things don't always go the way that we want them to go, but they always go the way God wants them to go.
- Don't forget to pack your flexibility with you. The first commandment of VIM work is to be flexible to not get bent out of shape.
- Mission teams are only as strong as the people on them. The effectiveness of the trip depends on PRAYER and YOU! Have faith that God can make the impossible happen.
- Be patient with the people on your team. Everyone has personality habits that are annoying INCLUDING YOU!
- Being is more important than doing on a mission trip. Be open to hearing what God is saying to you on this trip. During this time, you will be free from the everyday distractions that fill your life. God speaks loudest when we are free from these distractions.

The Methodist Clinic

We would like to ask each team to prayerfully consider adding \$10 per person to your mission experience which will be a voluntary financial gift to the Methodist Clinic. If your team would like to help support the clinic just add your donation to your team costs and let us know about the donation. This will be a tremendous help to this very worthwhile ministry.



UMVIM Registration and Insurance

Safe Sanctuary

We strongly encourage and recommend that each mission team both register and get insurance through UVMIM, managed by the Southeast Jurisdiction. Insurance and registration are done online through the Southeast Jurisdiction. In addition, we recommend that the mission group leader attend UVMIM Team Leader Training. We find that it makes a significant difference in the experience of your mission trip. It is also a good idea to register your team with the US Embassy here in El Salvador through the State Department's website. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us or the UVMIM office in your jurisdiction.

While we recommend that you register and get your insurance through UVMIM, we must insist that you have Emergency Travel Insurance of some kind that covers each of your team members for the duration of their time in El Salvador. It is unlikely that you will ever need to use the insurance, however, if there is an accident and you are not insured there is little that we will be able to do to financially help in this situation. Again, please make sure that each member of your team has adequate Emergency Medical Insurance that will cover them during their time in El Salvador. *

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Each team must comply with their conference's or church's Safe Sanctuary Policy. Team Leaders should check with their Conference UVMIM Coordinator for specific policies, requirements, or expectations related to Safe Sanctuary/Child Protection Policies, background checks, and insurance before registration on the UVMIM, SEJ site. If you have any questions, please contact your Conference UVMIM Coordinator at your Conference Office. If your conference does not have a Safe Sanctuary Policy, UVMIM has created a general one that can be found and downloaded at UMVIM.org.

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