



Mission Handbook 2025



We're thrilled about the chance to partner with your mission group in El Salvador. This Handbook is designed to be a guide for new groups, offering a starting point to address any questions or issues you or your team might have. For those who have previously worked with us, you'll notice some updates. We encourage you to thoroughly review all the content to become acquainted with the fundamentals. Should you have any further questions after going through it, please feel free to ask. We appreciate your ongoing and new support, and we eagerly anticipate your visit.

Brian Dubberly

Missionary Salvadoran Mission Projects
El Salvador 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 14 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 Ahuachapan.

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45



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.



Missions 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 be the light of Christ here on the Earth.



IEMEES

The Evangelical Methodist Church in El Salvador is an autonomous Methodist Church founded in 1994 by Salvadorans. While not a United Methodist or Global 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, Apeneca, Cuidad Real and Soyapango.



Your Safety in El Salvador



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.

While the US State Department still has a Level 3 travel alert, reconsider travel, El Salvador is currently one of the top ten safest countries in the world. This lockdown on crime has launched El Salvador into the spotlight worldwide and President Nayib Bukele has been both praised and criticized for the changes his administration has done to fight crime. I would encourage you to search for articles on the subject to get a better understanding of the radical changes that have taken place here in El Salvador since 2022.

Your safety is our top priority and while we cannot make any promises or guarantees, we will do our best to make sure your team is as safe and comfortable as possible.

Time Magazine Article On The Changes El Salvador's President Has Made To Fight Crime

<https://time.com/7015598/nayib-bukeles-iron-fist-el-salvador/>



How Do We Get To There

Located around 40 kilometers outside of San Salvador, Monseñor Óscar Arnulfo Romero International Airport (SAL) serves as El Salvador's international airport. A \$12 single-entry tourist card must be purchased at immigration, along with a pre-arranged address. We will arrange for your transportation once you exit El Salvador's airport. It takes two to three hours to get there by bus if you work in Ahuachapán. Unless you request a meal expressly, we will stop at a convenience store near the airport where you can buy snacks and drinks to tide you over until you reach your destination. Keep in mind that meals in transit are not covered by team expenditures.



Where Do We Sleep

The Methodist church in El Salvador owns a home in which we use to host teams called the Methodist Mission Residence and we can accommodate most sized teams there. The cost of staying here is \$55 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 and if your teams elects to stay here let us know and we can inform you of the costs. Once we have you on the calendar, we can discuss your team's lodging.



At immigration in the airport the official will ask for your foreseen address. The address at the Mission Residence is "Colonia Las Victorias Pol. 5 Lotes 1y2 Ahuachapan"

Staying Healthy and Happy

Pre-Travel Preparation:

Consult Your Doctor: Before embarking on your mission trip, we advise scheduling a visit with your family doctor. Together, you can determine the necessary vaccinations and medications for your trip to ensure your physical health.

Bring Your Medications: If you take daily medications, pack enough for the entire duration of your trip in your carry-on luggage.

Health & Safety in El Salvador:

Water Safety: The local water in El Salvador isn't safe for consumption. Ensure that all liquids you drink come from a bottle. We will provide safe drinking water, but to minimize plastic waste and costs, please bring a refillable water bottle.

Staying Hydrated: Staying hydrated is crucial for your well-being. Drinking plenty of water will help you feel better each day.

Hand Sanitizers: Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are recommended, but remember they don't replace soap and water. Purchase a sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for effective hygiene.

Medical Assistance:

On-Site Clinic: If you fall ill, the Methodist Church operates a clinic staffed with a full-time doctor. Professional medical care and medications are readily available.

Prompt Reporting: We understand that some health issues can be embarrassing, but the sooner we know, the faster we can help you recover and stay healthy.

Zika, Chikungunya and Dengue!

El Salvador, like other Central American nations, has experienced the effects of illnesses spread by mosquitoes. These viruses are spread by mosquitoes that are active throughout the day. Your best defense against these viruses is to use insect repellent frequently.





What Does It Cost To Bring A Team

The project or projects your team will be working on while in El Salvador and where you decide to stay will determine how much it costs to bring a team here. The daily cost of food, housing, and transportation will be \$55 if your team is staying at the Mission Residence. In order to offset our costs for hosting your team, we additionally ask that each team bring \$400 for coordinating purposes.

The following are the expenses for every project:

- *\$7,000 for a home construction project
- *\$5,500 for church construction (including supplies and expert labor from the area)
- *\$1,600 for food distribution (100 bags)
- *Bible school teams are responsible for bringing their supplies, but there are no in-country fees.
- *The cost is \$20 per translator per day if one is required.

Every 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.

“not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

Philippians 2:4

How Do We Pay You

Given El Salvador’s banking and money laundering laws, all team expenses need to be brought in cash (large bills are just fine). We understand some teams may have reservations about carrying cash, but this is the most feasible method. Note that if one person is carrying more than \$10,000, it must be declared at customs. You can avoid this by distributing the funds among several team members. We will provide you with a receipt, and if you need us to send an invoice to your financial administrator before releasing the funds, please let us know.

Additionally, meals during transit and any stops for meals upon arrival or departure will be at the team's expense and are not included in the food, lodging, and transportation expenses.



Important Things To Share With Everyone On Your Team!

- While we encourage building relationships, we must insist that you do not give monetary gifts to anyone, including staff members. We do not want to create an expectation or dependency that mission teams are sources of cash
- This also applies to giving money to individual churches or pastors. You are, of course, welcome to contribute the offering at church services.
- If you or your group wants to provide additional support to a particular church or person, we ask that you coordinate through the conference. Due to safety concerns or logistical reasons, we are not able to take teams to all of our churches. Directly giving money to one church or one pastor can create an appearance of favoritism and cause division within the church.
- Alcohol is a serious social issue throughout Latin America. Most Protestant Christians abstain from consuming alcohol, so 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 consuming alcohol can be confusing, so please be prepared to refrain from drinking while in El Salvador.
- Please make sure the impact your team makes is a good one and not one that those of us that call El Salvador home have to fix or undo once your team leaves.

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



Our Current Projects



●**Church Construction Projects:** We are almost always building, whether it is a church expansion, new church facilities, or buildings at the Methodist School. All our projects are constructed with concrete blocks. We ask each team to budget \$5,500 for church construction projects.



●**Home Building:** We construct simple homes of concrete blocks for families that own their own property but live in substandard housing. These 36 squaremeter houses are built according to a government-approved plan and are available to both church members and nonmembers. A review process ensures that the family receiving the house cannot obtain a home through other means. The cost to build a home is \$7,000, which covers the materials and local professional labor.

●**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 adequate 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 \$1,600 for 100 food bags.

Do We Get A Day Off

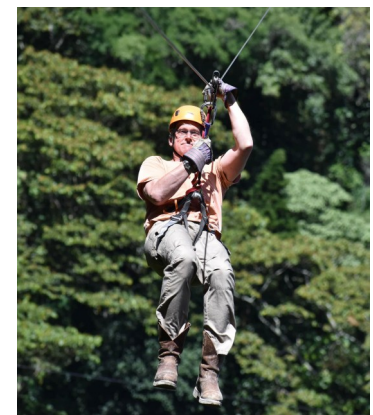
Teams typically spend Sunday on the Ruta de las Floras (the Blue Ridge Parkway of El Salvador). We make two stops, the town of Concepcion de Ataco to do some shopping and a coffee plantation for lunch. In addition, the Mayan ruin of Tazamal is a short drive away and the thermal hot springs of Santa Taresa 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



A Few Things To Keep In Mind

- 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 success 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 every day distractions that fill your life. Gods peaks loudest when we are free from these distractions

"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."
Romans 12:10



Things To Be Sure To Pack



“John answered, ‘Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.’”

Luke 3:11



- Work Clothes
- Toiletries and Medicines
- Clothes you are comfortable to worship in.
- Sunscreen and a Hat
- Shoes: work (closed toe), non-work, 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
- 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 Cabra Verde coffee.
- If you have something special or sentimental that you can not live without it is probably best to leave it at home

UMVIM Registration, Insurance And Safe Sanctuaries

Team Registration and Emergency Medical Insurance

We highly advise and suggest that every mission team registers and obtains insurance via UMVIM, overseen by the Southeast Jurisdiction, which handles both processes online. Furthermore, we suggest that the leader of the mission group should participate in UMVIM Team Leader Training. Our experience shows that this significantly enhances the mission trip experience. It's also beneficial to register your team with the US Embassy in El Salvador through the State Department's website. Should you have any inquiries or worries, please don't hesitate to reach out to us or the UMVIM office in your area.

*****We suggest that you sign up and secure your insurance via UMVIM. However, it's crucial that you ensure each team member possesses Emergency Travel Insurance, which should protect them throughout their stay in El Salvador. Although it's rare, should an accident occur and you're not insured, we'll have limited options to assist you financially. Please ensure every team member is adequately covered by Emergency Medical Insurance for their duration 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 or local pastor for specific policies, requirements, or expectations related to Safe Sanctuary/Child Protection Policies, background checks, and insurance before registration on the UMVIM SEJ site. If you have any questions, please contact your Conference Office.

Contact Information

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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.

