

My Father's House International

Ministering to children and families in
El Salvador



Team Member Handbook

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My Father's House Mission Teams

As a member of a My Father's House mission team, you have answered God's call to be His witness in a foreign country. You may be asking yourself what this means. The purpose of this section is to help you understand what a team is and what you will do as part of this team.

What is a My Father's House mission team?

A My Father's House mission team is a group of volunteers who have been called to serve in El Salvador. Each team member is one vital part of the body of Christ demonstrating His love to children and families in crisis in El Salvador.

Your team might include members from more than one denomination. Most members of each team are Christians, though we do not require a statement of faith. We do require a recognition that, as a team, we represent Christ.

What is the purpose of short-term missions?

Mission trips sponsored by My Father's House International (MFHI) serve a variety of purposes, including:

1. To fulfill God's call on the life of the believer to share Christ's love.
2. To serve, using your gifts, talents, and resources.
3. To learn from each other about how to use our gifts and talents in service to God and His creation.
4. To experience the culture of El Salvador and to learn from the people who have suffered through civil war, economic poverty, and hopelessness.
5. To meet the children and workers at *La Casa de mi Padre*, a Christian children's home.

Those interested in taking a trip are asked to be sure their motivation for joining a group is aligned with one or more of the above purposes. In addition, all participants are asked to serve with:

- Humility
- Flexibility
- Compassion
- Sensitivity

While the services provided by the team benefit those served, of perhaps greater importance are the benefits that the team members gain. These benefits include:

- Learning how to serve
- Interacting with other believers
- Watching miracles take place
- Learning dependence on God

What is my job as a part of the team?

Each team member is called to be a servant to the other team members as well as the children and adults in the facilities and towns where you will work. You are called by God's grace to serve in gratitude and humility and to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). The purpose of the trip is to bring God's love to the children and adults you will meet.

In general, there are three main purposes; on any given team, we may include any or all of these three purposes (sub-teams):

1. **Medical**- in many trips, we will have a medical team made up of doctors, dentist, and medical students. In addition to assisting with the medical care of the orphans, we will visit villages in the surrounding countryside to offer medical and dental care. We also work with a medical school and hospital, participating in educational programs of these facilities.
2. **Construction**- we will be involved in the site preparation and building of the buildings on the property. We will also do minor repairs at the current site.
3. **Service**- we will assist in the care of the children, tutor the older children, and do whatever we are asked.

There will be identified team leaders for any sub-team. That individual will assure that we are serving the needs of the people and that team members understand their roles. They will arrange transportation and procure the supplies needed for us to be of service.

How can I prepare myself spiritually for this trip?

- Begin now praying for God to strengthen and to use you and the other team members in bringing His love to the children and adults you will meet.
- Pray for the children in the children's home and the people in the towns we visit. Pray that God will open their hearts to accept His love.
- Ask at least three friends to be your prayer partners both before and during the trip.

We ask that you to reflect on eight questions as you prepare for the trip.

1. What can I learn about myself?
2. What can I learn about God?
3. What can I learn about community and the church?
4. What can I learn about culture and its impact on faith?
5. What can I learn about poverty and justice?
6. What can I learn about discipleship?
7. What can I learn about my lifestyle?
8. What can I learn about my vocation?

How can I prepare myself emotionally for this trip?

There are inherent challenges in short-term missions. Consider these issues and what the Bible has to say about them.

1. Short-term missions often serve as a wake-up call to the inequity especially evident in the developing world. Often first-time travelers feel overwhelmed by the injustice.
Psalm 146:5-10
Isaiah 59:14-16
2. Entering a new culture requires us to be sensitive.
Philippians 2:1-15
3. Varying expectations among team members can lead to conflict.
Colossians 3:12-17
4. The lack of time, money, or other resources can lead to feelings of inadequacy.
I Corinthians 15:58
I John 4:4
II Corinthians 12:9

How much will it cost to take a trip?

Most trips cost between \$1000 and \$1500, depending on cost of airfare. This includes airfare, lodging, food, transportation once there, and contributing to the projects of the trip. The only cash that will be needed would be for several meals that will be on your own, personal items and/or souvenirs.

Going on a mission trip is never a financial decision. Where God guides, He provides.

La Casa de mi Padre (My Father's House)

Ministering to the abandoned of El Salvador

Mission

La Casa de mi Padre is a ministry providing Christ's love, healing, and hope to children in crisis with the desire to restore their hearts, relationships, and lives.

History

La Casa de mi Padre had its beginning in October, 2001 when several Christian couples living in El Salvador visited an orphanage in a run down building. After seeing the state of the building and the condition of the children, these couples prayed about how they might help. God gave them a vision for a children's home and immediately doors began opening. *La Casa de mi Padre* opened in May, 2002. Subsequently, they moved to more spacious quarters. God has faithfully provided the people and the finances to open and maintain the ministry which currently houses over 30 children.

La Casa de mi Padre is a children's home that has been granted foundation status by the Salvadorian government and has been identified by the government as a model orphanage.

Who we are

La Casa de mi Padre is a Christ-based interdenominational ministry whose board is made up of American expatriates and Salvadorian citizens. The staff of the children's home are all Christians. The school-age children attend a private bilingual Christian school where they are taught English.

Budget

The monthly budget for *La Casa de mi Padre* requires more than \$30,000. The Lord has been gracious in supplying those needs through the generosity of many individual and corporate sponsors. For more information visit www.mfh-elsalvador.org

My Father's House International

My Father's House International is a Christ-centered ministry to children and families in crisis which:

- promotes the ministry of reconciliation, reconciling people to God and families to each other. *2 Corinthians 5:20*
- provides opportunities for those called to serve. *Matthew 25:35-36*
- partners with other ministries whose goal is to facilitate hope and healing. *Jeremiah 33:6*

We were formed in 2004 as a means of support for international ministries such as *La Casa de mi Padre*. We are recognized by the US Internal Revenue Service, under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, as a tax exempt organization. We are an affiliate member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. You can learn more about MHFI at www.mfhinternational.org

Mission Trip Basic Planning Information

Travel Documents:

- **US Passport.** If you do not already have a passport, you should start working on one **right away**. Passports cost \$97.00 and are good for 10 years. Passport applications can be picked up at any US Post Office or can be downloaded from the internet, and require proof of citizenship and a picture. It normally takes anywhere from 6-8 weeks for your passport to come after you've ordered it. More information about passport procedures and directions for downloading the forms from the internet can be found at:
http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html
- **Driver's License or Military/Dependent ID.** Sometimes, a second form of picture identification is requested.

Travel: There are several airlines that travel directly to San Salvador (TACA, American, Continental and Delta). Schedules in the past have included a very early morning departure from Washington-Dulles with arrival in San Salvador around noon. The schedule on the return trip has varied, but the arrival time is normally sometime between 1:00 and 3:00 PM. In country, we will travel by rental vehicles, host automobiles, and the MFH bus.

Time: Central Standard Time (all year long). So, they are either one or two hours behind Eastern Time.

Lodging:

- Some team will stay at the Hilton Princess Hotel, a beautiful 5-Star Hotel in San Salvador, the capital city. We receive "Missionary" rates from the General Manager, who happens to be on the board of *La Casa de mi Padre*. The Princess provides us with a bountiful buffet breakfast, a secure location and an English-speaking staff. If you want to leave the phone number for someone to reach you, it is (503) 7 298-4545, FAX (503) 7 298-4500.
- Other team will stay at our mission house. The housing here is similar to dormitory with 2 meals per day supplied by our missionary family, the Ackermans. The house is in a gated residential area in San Salvador.

El Salvador Meals: As noted, breakfast and dinner are usually at the hotel or the mission house. Lunch will be provided on site. Salvadoran food tends to be fairly bland, with lots of chicken, fish, rice, beans and thick flour tortillas. The typical Salvadoran street food is the "pupusa", which is kind of like a burrito or soft taco. Later, we will provide you more detailed guidelines on how to avoid getting sick from food.

Clothing and Packing: You will be given some specific guidance later on what other clothing and items to bring. There are laundry services at the hotel. My Father's House team members use one of their checked luggage allowances to ship large duffle bags

containing clothing, toys, and supplies for the kids as well as medications and supplies needed for the team.

Baggage allowance- one carry-on with a maximum weight of 22 lbs and dimensions (length + height + depth) of 45 inches and one personal bag (purse, camera case, briefcase) and 2 pieces to be checked each with a maximum weight of 50 pounds and dimensions of 62 inches

Pack one change of clothes in your carry-on in case a checked bag is delayed in arriving.

El Salvador Money: El Salvador has a dollar-based economy, so all businesses accept US currency. Visa and MasterCard are accepted in many places, but ATMs are scarce. The only out-of-pocket expenses are souvenirs and personal drinks and snacks. Normally \$200 would be more than enough.

Security: As in most places where there is a lot of poverty, there is a fair amount of petty street crime in El Salvador. However, it's like anywhere else – a few precautions will avoid problems. Our hotel is in a relatively safe section and we take the usual precautions of not wearing expensive jewelry or flashing money around. One absolute rule of our groups is that no one goes anywhere alone under any circumstances. We have sent multiple teams there and have never had a problem.

Other Notes:

- **Updates:** As plans “jell”, we will send a series of newsletters, preferably via e-mail, to the team members.
- **Team Meetings:** There will be at least one team meetings prior to the trip. You will be expected to attend any meetings.
- **Packing:** Approximately one week prior to leaving, we will meet to pack the extra checked bags. It is important you be there and help pack the bags that you will check on the flight to El Salvador.

A Final Note: The most important thing to remember is “*Semper Gumby*” – Always Flexible. If it's one thing we've learned with these trips, it's that things don't always go the way we've planned them, but they always go the way that God has planned them. We may end up on slightly different dates, we may end up doing different things, and we may even end up at a different center entirely. But whatever happens, we always remember that, in the words of John Wesley, “Best of all, God is with us.”

MISSION TRIP TRAVEL AND PACKING TIPS

Keep In Mind:

- It will be hot and humid (temp in low-mid 80s). During the rainy season (April-October) it will rain every day with high humidity. Plan accordingly.
- Travel light. Everything for your personal use must fit in whatever you're allowed to carry on – 1 carry on bag and 1 personal size bag (briefcase, computer case, small backpack). For airline security information, go to www.TSATravelTips.us or call 1-800-289-9673.
- Don't take anything you can't afford to lose.
- Don't take anything with a camouflage color scheme. There are some local sensitivities involved. Also, avoid bright red or red, white, and blue items as they carry political connotations.
- Don't take or wear a bandana – they're associated with gangs.

MUST HAVE Items:

- _____ Passport
- _____ Any medications you take
- _____ Eyeglasses (if needed)
- _____ Driver's license (for those who will be driving)

Good to Have:

- _____ Health Record (including immunizations)

Clothing Hints:

- Shorts/casual slacks T-shirts will be fine for working in the children's home. Ladies knee-length shorts or Capri pants are best, short shorts are not appropriate (shorts should be no shorter than where the tips of your fingers fall against your leg when standing). Please no spaghetti straps or revealing tops.
- One "nice" casual outfit (collared shirt and slacks for men; collared shirt or blouse and skirt for women) to wear to church on Sunday.
- Comfortable shoes – you'll be on your feet a lot.
- One set of clothes that you don't mind getting paint on if we do any of that kind of work.
- A pair of work gloves.

Other Items:

- Personal toiletries
- A Bible – we will have devotions every morning
- A couple of pens and pencils and a small notebook for personal use
- A travel pack of baby wipes (TP not always available)
- Small package(s) of Kleenex
- Waterless hand sanitizer
- Chewable Pepto-Bismol
- A camera and film – we'll want lots of pictures. Disposable cameras work well. A small video cam would be handy if anyone has one.

Health Concerns:

Most illnesses will be gastrointestinal infections (traveler's diarrhea). We do carry health insurance in case of serious injury or illness.

- Immunizations. Since we tend to work in urban areas, serious tropical illness is not as much of a risk as if we were out in the countryside. However, there is a certain amount of risk in any of the Central American countries. Depending on the itinerary, we recommend you consider the following inoculations/preventive medications:
 - Hepatitis A
 - Tetanus
 - Typhoid (optional)
 - Depending on the itinerary, we may recommend Malaria prophylaxis. You will be informed with enough time to begin the medication
- Traveler's diarrhea prevention and treatment. You will be given hygiene recommendations intended to prevent this illness. You should bring with you chewable Pepto-Bismol and Imodium. Your doctor will prescribe a course of antibiotics in case of severe traveler's diarrhea.
- It's going to be hot. Drink plenty of water – more than you think you need. If you get thirsty, you're already dehydrated.
- If you get a cut or scrape, make sure you wash it with clean, bottled water and put antiseptic on it.
- Wash your hands frequently and/or make frequent use of antibacterial liquid.
- Food: The food in the hotel and better restaurants will be OK. Avoid food from street vendors. Don't get ice in your drinks unless you're sure of the source. Drink only bottled water or beverages. We'll buy plenty of water.

DOs and DON'Ts

- DO
 - Interact as much as possible with workers, teachers and volunteers at the children's home. This is an important aspect of your mission experience. We are in their country and need to show them that we are there to help them. Becoming close builds trust and faith. Everyone works better and more effectively when there is total respect and honor for each member of the team.
 - Try to speak at least a few words of Spanish
 - Be patient with one another and with our Salvadorian counterparts. There will be stressful situations – just take a minute and pray for patience.
 - Be a helper—to the teachers and volunteers and to your team leader. Offer your gifts, your talents, and your service—we are there to serve and to be used in some, yet unknown, ways.
 - Be flexible. God has his own plans for this trip and they may not mesh precisely with ours. Things can change rapidly, so be ready to go where the Lord leads us.
 - Follow the dress code (see page 9). The dress code is implemented at the request of the staff at *La Casa de mi Padre*. The code recognizes the past of some of the children, respects the therapeutic program, and prevents our giving mixed messages to the children.
 - Be careful with expressions of affection with the children. While we want to show the kids that we care about them, inappropriate expressions of affection give the wrong message.

- DON'T
 - Promise anything to any of the kids or staff. Refer all requests for money, gifts or anything else to our hosts.
 - Discuss adoption.
 - Give things to some children and not others.
 - Spend time with only one volunteer or only one child. Mingle with the entire staff and children.
 - Wear expensive jewelry or watches.
 - Carry a large amount of cash or any unnecessary credit cards. Don't flash large amounts of money in public.

My Father's House International
Standards of Conduct Agreement
Short-term Mission Trip

The purposes of trips sponsored by My Father's House International are to witness for Christ, to serve people, and to experience faith lived out in a new setting. I recognize and accept the following conditions which will further the usefulness and safety of our short-term mission. As an MFHI team member, I agree to:

1. Obtain the stated financial support for the trip as well as the necessary documents and immunizations.
2. Maintain an attitude of respect, compassion, and understanding both towards my fellow team members, our hosts, and all nationals whom I meet.
3. Respect any advice I am given by the team leader or leaders of the mission organization concerning attire, eating and drinking, and traditions that will help me assimilate into the local community.
4. Respect the rules and regulations concerning attire and behaviors deemed inappropriate at *La Casa de mi Padre*.
5. Abstain from consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol.
6. Be punctual and contribute to the work that the team came to do.
7. Accept and submit to the leadership role and authority of the team leaders and follow any specific directives and decisions.

Signature

Name

My Father's House International

P.O. Box 20673; Roanoke, VA 24018

Mission Team Information

Legal Name (as it appears on passport): _____

Preferred Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

The following information will be used for travel purposes only.

Birthdate: _____ Social Security: _____

Passport Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Are you a US Citizen? _____ yes _____ no _____ other
(please provide)

Medical Information

€ I am free from any medical problems, which would cause difficulty on this trip.

€ I have medical condition(s) that might cause a problem on this trip (describe below).

€ I have the following allergies (include medicines):

€ I am currently taking the following medications:

Primary Insurance Or Other Insurance Plan:

Company Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Policy Number: _____

Name of Family Doctor: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Emergency Contact Information:

Name: _____ Relationship to you: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Day Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

We secure travel insurance for all trip participants. Please list a beneficiary:

Name _____ Relationship _____

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SECTION BELOW IF YOU ARE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER:

In the event of an emergency requiring medical treatment I give permission for the leaders of this event to administer needed treatment as deemed necessary. The doctor or hospital has my permission to treat

_____ as deemed necessary
(your name)

Your Signature (IF 18 YRS. OR OLDER): _____

Date: _____

My Father's House International

Deputized Worker Policy

My Father's House International, Inc. (MFHI) is a Christ-centered ministry to children and families in crisis. One means of achieving this mission is by having deputized workers (missionaries) and participants in short-term mission work (team members) who are allowed to raise support using various methods and styles.

Support account.

1. Missionaries

- Each missionary who is approved to raise support through MFHI will have an individual account. Donations to MFHI preferenced toward a missionary is intended to provide the funding necessary to provide compensation, fringe benefits, and other expenses necessary to support the work with MFHI will be credited to this account.
- The balance of these accounts does not represent funds of the missionary and donations credited to this account must be donations to support the ministry MFHI, not the missionary or participant personally.
- At the end of each month, the donations received, less an agreed upon withhold, will be sent to the missionary. If the amount received is under the monthly budget, only that amount received will be sent to the missionary. If the amount received is greater than the budget, MFHI, with input from the missionary will determine how the funds will be distributed.

2. Team members

- Donations to MFHI preferenced toward a participant in short-term mission trip are placed in a mission trip account and provides the funding necessary to cover the costs of the travel, lodging, and expenses related to the work to be done.
- The balance of these accounts does not represent funds of the team member and donations credited to this account must be donations to support the ministry MFHI, not the team member personally.
- Team members who raise funds in excess of the agreed upon expenses do not have access to these funds nor will these excess funds be refunded to the donor or the team member. These excess funds can be used for team members who are unable to raise adequate support or for the work of the ministry.
- Any balance in the Trip account at the conclusion of the trip can be used for future mission trips or for the work of the ministry at the discretion of the board of MFHI.

Communications to donors.

Missionaries and team members must maintain appropriate communication with donors who partner with MFHI to provide gifts preferenced for their support.

For contributions to be tax-deductible by donors, the gifts must be to MFHI and not to the specific individual. It is important for donors to understand that MFHI has full control and discretion over all contributions. The following guidelines should be used with respect to terminology used in missionary prayer letters, email, verbal, and other communications with prospective donors to MFHI.

1. **Use** the following:

- “Pray that God will provide the support that I need to raise for MFHI”
- “Thank you for your prayers and gifts to MFHI”
- “I need to form a team of ministry partners who will support MFHI with monthly financial commitments and prayers”
- “God has provided 80% of the support I need to raise for MFHI”

2. **Avoid** the following:

- “Please provide funds for my support”
- “I need \$1,000 more in gifts to my account”
- “My financial support is short this month”
- “Please support me”
- “Your support of us is appreciated”
- “Thanks for your support of my ministry”

Prayer letters.

Each missionary and team member who has supporters should communicate with these individuals. Missionaries should communicate at least quarterly and are allowed one working day per month for verbal and written communications with supporters.

My Father's House International
Sample Short-Term Mission Trip
Fund-Raising Letter

Date _____

Dear _____,

I am writing to tell you about a door that the Lord has opened for me to serve Him this summer. My Father's House International (MFHI) (www.mfhinternational.org) is sending a team to El Salvador for a week in _____ to work with children in crisis. These children range from 1 to 18 years old. Many have spent most of their lives living in an orphanage. All have lived through difficult, sometimes tragic, times; statistics show that the future for many orphans offers much of the same. *La Casa de mi Padre* (www.mfh-elsalvador.org) the children's home we partner with is a ministry that brings encouragement and hope through the love of Jesus Christ to these children.

I will be joining a team of doctors, dentists, and others sharing Christ's love among the people of El Salvador. We will set up clinics in poor communities where we will offer free medical care and medicines. In addition, we will assist with the staff of *La Casa de mi Padre*. Our desire is to bring hope and joy to the children and their families through a program where they will learn important Biblical truths and solid values.

Would you prayerfully consider becoming a financial and/or prayer partner for this mission? The cost of the trip is \$_____ which each team member is responsible to raise in gifts to MFHI. The deadline is _____. I will need prayer partners who will lift up the team, the children and staff, and me before and during the trip.

If you are able to assist this ministry, please detach and return the slip below to me. Donations can be made out to My Father's House International with an expression of preference to assist with my trip expenses, and they will issue receipts for this tax-deductible donation. Please include the bottom portion of this letter with your donation. If I am unable to go on this trip, your gifts will be used to support the ministry of MFHI

I hope you will join me in making this important mission a reality.

In Him,

(your name)

Yes! I want to partner in ministry with ___(your name)___ in El Salvador this summer. I can help by:

_____ Gift of \$ _____ _____ Prayer Partner

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Detach and mail checks to: (your address)