El Salvador Mission Trip

Philosophy of Mission Travel: In order to justify the large outlay of funds that this trip requires it is imperative that all parts of the trip achieve a desired goal. The over-arching purpose of this trip is to deepen our walk with Christ and bond us closer to our own church members. Some of the ways you are asked to do an assigned task may not seem to be the most efficient, however, it may achieve the larger relational goal. Never is the project itself to supersede the relational considerations of the trip. Our larger goal is to build community, brotherhood, and sisterhood. We are connecting with our church family in the Inter-America Division and we are expanding our vision for how our American privileges can be used to advance God's cause. This trip is designed around the bonding process. We are never wasting time when we are connecting with each other.

This is a work trip. Expect to work 8 hours a day, and in some situations, longer. We don't want anyone pushing to the point of exhaustion or frustration, however, we hope everyone comes planning to make a difference. Your joy will be a function of attitude and sacrifice. Jobs will be assigned and preference will be considered, but wishes may not always be able to be accommodated. Thank you in advance for a beautiful spirit.

Communication: It is important that we stay in good communication with trip leaders and coordinators. We prize a very happy and healthy family experience for those who attend. Please talk with someone in charge before a problem or a bad attitude develops. Believe the best about each other and share your encouragement and concerns with those who can make adjustments to the program. Fatigue, sickness, heat conditions, etc, should always be shared with the leaders who can make adjustments to protect health and happiness.

Travel: Group leaders and departure time will be given at our 2nd orientation meeting. It will be very important that you stay together, look out for each other, and bring a good spirit to this part of the mission trip. It will be an important first step in bonding together.

You are allowed one carry-on and one check-through. Your check-through must weigh 50 lbs. or less. No exceptions! There are limits on the size of liquids that can be carried on the airplane. **Absolutely No fresh vegetables, fruits or plants can be brought into the U.S.A. If you are pulled out of line for this and miss your flight you are responsible for re-ticketing.** Canned food, and processed food are allowed.

A $12.00 immigration fee is required for entrance into El Salvador. This is your responsibility. Please come prepared. Upon clearing immigration and customs you will wait for your group and when directed, proceed out to the waiting buses that will take us to ECAS (Union boarding school).

All participants are to wear their group t-shirt on travel days. When passing through TSA security checks, do not joke about bombs, weapons, etc. You will need your boarding pass and ID to pass through airport security. No water can be taken through security, but an empty water bottle is encouraged, which can be filled on the other side of the security check point.

Travel leaders: Travel leaders will be responsible for shepherding their groups through the travel process. Please show them the utmost cooperation.

Food in Transit: All food on the days of travel will be the responsibility of the individual members of the group. Feel free to bring snacks or buy food in the airport (O'Hare).

Cultural Sensitivity: How we live as Christians is a significant part of our witness. In Central America, **Seventh-day Adventists dress modestly**, **refrain from drinking caffeinated beverages, including Coke, Pepsi, and coffee**, and conduct themselves as most Adventists did a generation ago in the U.S. We are coming to strengthen their witness, not compromise it. Please respect their Christian values. **No jewelry is to be worn at any time on the trip.**

Job Placement: All workers will be assigned to their work place. Preference will be highly considered, but a willingness to serve wherever assigned (with a good attitude) is a pre-requisite of this mission trip.

Housing: We will be staying in dormitory rooms. Bunk beds will be provided with mattresses. You will need your own sheets and light blankets. Bathrooms are typical for dormitories: there will be a women's restroom and a men's. There are no individual bathrooms. Showers are individual stalls. No toilet paper is to be flushed down the toilets. The rooms are not air-conditioned. Fans are provided.

Safety: No one is wander from the group at any time, be it a day of work, the excursion, church service, etc. Moving as a group is imperative to your well-being. On the job site safety is a priority. The rebar sticking out of the concrete is sharp and can easily gash or pierce. Wherever you are assigned please conduct yourself with an awareness of the potential risks in your area.

El Salvador is known for its gangs and lawlessness. However, over the years the President of the country has brought about a great change. But as in all countries there are risk. We are going under God's direction, seeking His care and making prudent arrangements to avoid problems.

Timeliness: It is important that you **arrive in a timely manner for all appointments**. This includes: meals, group meetings, work assignments etc. All meetings are required.

Passport: **Everyone must have a passport that will not expire before September 28, 2026**. A color copy of the passport must be given to the trip coordinator with your application and deposit (Pr. Dennis Page).

Hygiene: It is important to follow good hygiene on the trip. Everyone should bring a small supply of hand sanitizer. No one should eat from street vendors. All fruits and vegetables served to the group will be washed in bleach water. Only drink the bottled water we will supply. Do not drink from the tap under any conditions. **Everyone should have a bottle of charcoal tablets or capsules**. Brush your teeth with bottled water.
Do not share your hats with the nationals – People can spread lice.

Group Duties: Everyone will be assigned to certain general group duties, such as washing dishes, picking up and taking out the trash, sweeping and bathroom cleaning, etc. A group leader will be assigned and it is important that these duties are done well. We will mix up groups so we continue to grow together.

Technology and Cell Phone Usage: Cell phone usage will be limited. You will not need, or have time for computers. If you choose to bring one, remember that your devices will be difficult to protect. Your dorm rooms will lock but rooms are not thief proof. So please leave unnecessary devices and valuables at home.

Currency: El Salvador uses the American Dollar. You are discouraged from bringing large amounts of money. We have attempted to meet all of your typical needs. Souvenirs and incidentals, as well as travel day food expenses will be all that you might need to purchase.

Transactions with the nationals: In the markets everyone expects you to bargain. Don't sacrifice your Christian principals by pushing too far.

Church Services: We will have our own Sabbath Schools on both Sabbaths that we are there. Please bring your Sabbath School quarterly. We will be looking for volunteers to teach the lesson as we break into small groups for the lesson study. We will worship together on the first Sabbath on campus. The Second Sabbath place of worship will be announced are our next meeting. You might want to bring a Bible that you are willing to leave behind.

Sabbath Dress: No jeans please. For as simple as some of their homes are, you will notice how clean and tidy their Sabbath dress clothes are. Women should wear modest dresses that extends below the knees and men should wear dress shirt and tie.

Swimwear – There is a pool on campus. Women and girls are required to wear a modest one piece bathing suit with shorts. (shorts must come down to the end of your fingertips when your hands are to your side). Men and boys are to wear a t-shirt with swim shorts. Please abide by dress code and keep a good attitude.

Food: Most of our meals will be typical American fare. We will ask the school to prepare local cuisine for a few meals. Please do not waste food. If you are uncertain as to whether or not you will like it, take a little and go back for more. We will always have enough food for everyone to get full. We will spend more money on food than it takes to build a church. Please do not waste food!

Do not buy food from street vendors - especially items that have meat in them.

Birthdays: If you know someone who will be having a birthday on the trip, please let us know. We would like to make the day special for them.

Emergency Contact numbers will be provided.

Animals: Please do not pet the animals, especially the guard dogs. They will bite. An animal bite will change your trip experience. Shake your shoes out each morning to minimize potential spider bite. Expect to see small lizards running around your room. Do not go tromping out through the brush as there are poisonous snakes in El Salvador. There will also be cockroaches - just expect them, and some of them will be large :) But don't worry, they flee in the light.

Recreation and Entertainment: Every evening after worship we encourage socializing with each other and our El Salvadorian brothers and sister. Their campus has a very nice pool. Swimming will only be allowed during certain hours and under supervised conditions. **All swim wear must be modest. One piece suits for women with modest shorts and a T-shirt covering as well. Males will wear swim suit and T-shirt.** Soccer, Basketball, Volleyball, etc will be available for groups to play. On Saturday night before we leave we will have a talent show. We encourage those with small musical instruments to bring them and share in the church services as well as the talent night. No playing cards please.

Laundry: You will not have access to a washing machine — at least not the kind you are used to. Do not try to bring enough clothes to last for 10 days. Plan to do some laundry part way through the week, or pay one of the nationals to do it for you. We will arrange these connections. If you hire your laundry done, expect it to come back stiff, stretched out and smelling a bit more earthy than you typically expect. If you do it yourself on a

washboard, expect the same thing:) Consider bringing clothes that you might leave behind for the church community or their community services.

Curfew: It is important that when the day ends everyone finds their way to bed quickly. The morning comes early and we encourage some time for personal devotions.

Electrical current is the same as the U.S.

Emergency Telephone Numbers will be provided.

How to help someone: Please do not disperse candy, money, clothes, etc., on your own. This can create an unruly result and gathering of people that works contrary to our immediate and long term goals. It can draw unnecessary and harmful attention to our presence in the country. If you make a special connection with someone on the trip you will be advised about how and when to give them assistance.

Excursion Day: We will have one day to experience the country and its culture as a group. Everyone participates in this experience. Typically it will be on Thursday.

Non-negotiables:

Bad Attitude

Uncooperative spirit or failure to take direction from any trip leader or coordinator

Being in the wrong gender's room, or inappropriate interaction with the opposite sex

Not showing up to your work assignment

Not attending group meetings

Ignoring safety concerns

Wandering off by your self

We are looking forward to a wonderful trip!