

SAN LUCAS MISSION

VISITING GROUP ORIENTATION PACKET

Welcome to the San Lucas Mission!

Thank you for your interest in visiting our Mission. In this folder you will find important information for your stay here that will help you and your group with logistical information, Vision and Mission statements of the visitor program and Mission, background on the Mission and our programs, contextual information about Guatemala and international service, and suggested reflection topics and questions. There is also an FAQ section; we ask that you refer to this first before searching out a volunteer coordinator or long-term volunteer, as you can find many of the answers to your questions here.

The overarching purpose of your visit here is to **learn**. This packet is designed primarily to support the learning process and provide educational resources for your group. We hope you use as many of the resources included in the packet as you can, and if you are in search of further, readings, articles, or more, please ask. Please let us know if you have further questions or desire further learning materials.

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SAN LUCAS MISSION VISITING GROUP PROGRAM

OVERVIEW AND INFORMATION

VISION

The San Lucas Mission Visiting Groups come to the community on a short-term basis with University, College, Church, High School, Youth, or other groups of people to learn. The primary objective, motivation, purpose, and reason for coming is to learn. We are dedicated to learning from, respecting, growing in solidarity with, and lending gracious support to the people of San Lucas and the Mission's project of **sustainable, integral human development**.

Group visitors will humbly yet critically interact with their surroundings, supporting one another in their experience of learning, personal growth, community-forming, and with the exploration of their faith and values. By the time of their departure, groups will have been informed enough to discuss the place which they have visited (i.e. the Mission philosophy, history, and efforts, and the history and culture of Guatemala), and serve as active representatives for the principles of social justice, wherever their paths may lead them. Through **active accompaniment** (i.e. working with Guatemalan people and forming relationships with the San Lucas community at large), through our brief time at the Mission we learn and grow as mature human beings and engage in a mutually beneficial relationship with the Mission.

As is the case with the Mission's community development efforts, the experience will affect **sustainable change** in the visitors that influences the way in which they carry themselves and choose to live their lives after leaving San Lucas. The San Lucas Mission Visiting Group Program is aimed to foster a spirit of service. Visitor Alumni, who also make up an important community, will serve as ambassadors for social justice, and will leave San Lucas as more thoughtful, aware, reflective, active, and responsible **global citizens**.

As alumni, visiting groups also commit themselves to be involved in fundraising- and awareness-raising activities in their home communities. Our presence here, as well as being present to the people of San Lucas, involves **impacting our own communities** (university, church, city, etc.) in a positive, service-oriented way. The experience of a visiting group does not end at the culmination of one's time in San Lucas. Rather, visitors carry with them their knowledge and lessons learned, in turn sharing this with their communities in the US.

MISSION

The Visiting Group Program is committed to the support of the San Lucas Mission, that is, the project of **integral human development** guided by the **expressed-felt need** of the Mission community and the people of San Lucas Tolimán, and grounded in the principals of Catholic Social Teaching.

The empowerment of the local community and the sustainability of development projects are possible only through a relationship of equality between Guatemalan and North American counterparts in the effort. The presence of visitors – committed to learning – emphasizes and reinforces the Mission's efforts to create such a relationship. This relationship represents an attempt to break the cycle of inequality and a historically oppressive role of outsiders. Visiting groups participate in the active accompaniment of the people of San Lucas, and work to form a cross-cultural community based upon solidarity, mutual respect, and the desire to learn.

Through their experience here, visitors set an example of “another way” of involvement of outsiders in developing countries, and learn to more critically examine their own role in the “big picture.” This “**other way**” is focused on learning and solidarity, rather than direct physical intervention with the goal of “helping” or “doing”. Visitors communicate the Mission philosophy as well as what they have personally learned both to family and friends once they have left San Lucas, serving as ambassadors for the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and, more broadly, social justice.

Therefore, our Mission is to work with and help educate responsible global citizens, and to foster positive cross-cultural exchange in which all parties benefit and are able to learn in a safe environment of respect and mutual understanding.

THE FRIENDS OF SAN LUCAS

The Friends of San Lucas is a Non Profit, 501c3 Organization, who will oversee the day to day operation of the San Lucas Mission.



We are a bridge, between the “Friends” of our Brothers and Sisters in San Lucas, who are here in the United States and the culture, struggles, hopes, and aspirations of the people of Guatemala and through this avenue of solidarity provide funding to keep the projects going as we respond to the expressed felt needs of the people of San Lucas Tolimán, while upholding the Christian Social Doctrine that Fr. Greg weaved through all his decisions and practices.

INTRODUCTION TO OUR PROGRAM

We want to emphasize that your role here in the community is that of students. Your primary reason for being here is to learn. You will find readings addressing this issue in the latter pages of this packet, but before going any further you must understand and embrace this “other way” of service discussed in our Mission Statement.

This “**other way**” of service, to reiterate, is focused on learning and solidarity. Our goals are not to “help” or “do” but rather to accompany and inquire with respectful curiosity. We recognize that our physical labor is helpful in advancing projects, buildings, and more, but that is part of a greater educational experience. We have found that groups focused on learning and committed to learning are more satisfied than those who come to work. Learning can take place at any time of the day, in any context, even amongst the group. However, working can only be done between the hours of 9-4 every day. Focusing your group’s discussions, conversations, activities, and reflections on learning can help you to get the most out of your experience in San Lucas.

The following are guidelines for your experience and behavior in San Lucas that should be shared with your group. Most of this information is provided in the group orientation given upon arrival, but for reference we have included it here.

Solidarity. Our role as visitors and volunteers is to grow in solidarity with our Guatemalan counterparts. Through living out this “other way” of service, we work alongside Mission workers together for a common goal. We walk with the people and **do not tell them what to do**. Similarly, we **do not give handouts**. A relationship of solidarity is built on equality. This equality is made difficult

when North Americans are consistently giving out gifts, candy, money, etc. to Guatemalans. Some people you meet and even work with may ask for items or gifts, **but under no circumstances should you give things out to people.** If you have formed a relationship with a particular group of workers and would like to show your appreciation of their guidance at the end of your stay, please check with the volunteer coordinator or long-term volunteers to see what kind of gesture would be appropriate.

Respect. In all that we do, we must show humble respect to the community. We must dress appropriately (for women – nothing that shows the knee, no shoulders or midriff showing, and no tight-fitting clothing; for men – no open shirts, sleeveless is okay but not open and sleeveless). Shorts and tank tops are not appropriate for women of any age. Again, do not wear anything that does not cover your knees. We try our best to mirror the dress and behaviour of those around us.

We must be quiet when walking around town. We must ask before we take pictures and be conscientious of how we are portraying those we are photographing. We must respect the church property and not buy souvenirs or gifts from on church grounds. At all times, we must hold ourselves to a high standard of conduct where we act as **good ambassadors to the Mission.** Keep your voices down when walking through the streets. **DO NOT SHOUT.**

Logistics, Daily Schedules. Meal times are as follows: Breakfast – 8:00, Lunch – 12:30, Dinner – 6pm. The general workday goes from 9-12, then 1:30-4. Volunteers are invited to come and have a cup of coffee from 7-8am, before breakfast, and accompany the program leaders in an informal meeting before the workday begins. This is an excellent opportunity to ask respected directors of Mission programs any questions you may have about how things work.

If you are here over a weekend, there is a boat trip on Sunday that is covered by your contribution to the Mission. None of the projects work Saturday afternoons, as that is the beginning of their family time, so that would be free time for groups.

There is a **strict 9pm curfew** for all volunteers that is for your own safety. Please be in your hotels by this time, as there have been recent events occurring after this hour that put the safety of your group members in jeopardy.

There is a **phone** in the Mission that you may use to call home –please leave a donation to cover the cost of the phone call (it is approximately Q5/minute). There are several **internet cafes** in town if you would like to send e-mails to your family or friends.

SAN LUCAS MISSION GENERAL INFORMATION

SAN LUCAS MISSION STATEMENT

As disciples of the Lord, open to the movement of the Spirit, we are called to promote the kingdom of God as a viable option for the people of San Lucas. Based on the life of Jesus, revealed in the Scriptures and reflected in the inherent spirituality of the people, we seek to facilitate each person's and each community's spiritual journey through the celebration of the sacraments and a life of mutual service.

As Jesus responded to the people and their needs, we believe it is our mission also to respond to the expressed felt needs of the people of San Lucas and of the surrounding areas that form the larger community.

In our response, we include the individuals with specific needs who come to the mission seeking help. Our purpose is to deal with both the immediate effects of poverty and their root causes.

Recognizing that all of us are made in the image and likeness of god, our goal is to enhance and enrich the whole person. Thus, we promote the dignity, self-respect, and development of the people we have been called to serve. This is a step-by-step process which shows itself in educational, medical, nutritional, spiritual, and socio-economic planning and programs.

As a cross-cultural mission we are aware of the rich heritage of the Guatemalan people and recognize that the process of on-going conversation for all of us is facilitated by the mutual sharing of cultural values and spiritual insights.

Thus, we recognize we are called to be a bridge, to share with our brothers and sisters in the United States of America who have been associated with our mission, either as members of the Diocese of New Ulm or as benefactors, by offering hospitality, and by sharing the culture, struggles, hopes, and aspirations of the people of Guatemala.

Within our mission we constantly seek alternative ways to peace and justice that are based on the interdependence of people who share their gifts and resources in an atmosphere of Christian love.

MISSION PHILOSOPHY

Beginning foremost with recognition and appreciation for the rich Maya culture and the heartfelt understanding that God's love is for all, efforts at the San Lucas Mission attempt to respond, as Jesus did, to the expressed felt need of the people, using the Preferential Option for the Poor as its foundation, and drawing on Christian Social Teaching to guide efforts in the integral human development of our people and community.

Preferential Option for the Poor:

In 1968, the Catholic Bishops of Latin America gathered in the city of Medellin, Colombia to reflect on and dialogue about how the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) could be best implemented in the countries they served.

A key phrase arose from that reflection and dialogue that was to make a powerful impact on how the church would serve throughout Latin America. The phrase: A Preferential Option for the Poor.

Speaking from Medellin, and since, the Preferential Option for the Poor promotes that the moral test of a society is how it responds to its most marginalized.

As the poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation, we are thus called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they respond to the poor.

Understanding that the poor and marginalized are signs of illness in a society, the option for the poor promotes that a healthy community can be achieved only if its members give special attention to those with special needs, to those who are poor and on the margins of society.

Christian Social Teaching:

- *Dignity of the Human Person:* Belief in the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching. Human life is sacred, and the dignity of the human person is the starting point for a moral vision for society. This principle is grounded in the idea that the person is made in the image of God. The person is the clearest reflection of God among us.
- *The Common Good:* Human dignity can only be realized and protected in the context of relationships with the wider society. How we organize our society – in economics and politics, in law and policy – directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The obligation to "love our neighbor" has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social commitment. Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society, to the common good.
- *Solidarity:* We must walk with the people. Authentic development must be integral human development. It must respect and promote personal, social, economic, and political rights, including the rights of nations and of peoples. It must avoid the extremists of underdevelopment on the one hand, and "super-development" on the other. Accumulating material goods and technical resources will be unsatisfactory and debasing if there is no respect for the moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of the person
- *Subsidiarity:* The principle of subsidiarity holds that in our efforts to work with another culture, we must begin from where the people are, at all times safeguarding their efforts to address the situation of poverty in which they live. When the needs in question cannot adequately be met, then it is not only necessary, but imperative that our efforts, in solidarity with theirs, work to find solutions.

MISSION PROGRAMMING AREAS

Land Distribution/Food Security

“Help us buy land so we can produce our own food.” With these words, efforts to address the food security needs of the people of San Lucas were initiated over 35 years ago. The need expressed by the people for land has since lied at the heart of the Mission’s efforts to promote a systemic and structural response to the need for food security in San Lucas, which over the years has distributed land to more than 4,000 families.

Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways, without having to resort to emergency food supplies. Inversely, food insecurity is a limited access to a steady food source, commonly resulting in chronic undernourishment – a situation common in the San Lucas area and throughout Guatemala, which has some of the highest chronic malnourishment rates in the world.

Agricultural programming, based primarily in the acquisition of land, attempts to address the situation of food insecurity, providing farming assistance through the Small Farmer's Program, and agricultural farming techniques through the Juan Ana Experimental Farm. Through these efforts, small farmers in the area have seen an increase in agricultural productivity, which in turn, has enabled farmers to grow more food, translating into better diets and healthier lives.

Likewise, as families have been able to develop their cash crop – coffee – the Mission's Juan Ana Coffee Program provides a level playing field for small coffee producers, providing just prices for high quality coffee. With more income, farmers are able to diversify production and grow higher-value crops, benefiting not only themselves but the local economy as a whole, providing the stable local agricultural base that is key to a community responsive food system and less vulnerable to food insecurity.

Healthcare

San Lucas is materially a very poor community with an estimated per-capita income of less than \$1,000 (US) per year. Most families are engaged in agricultural labor with an average daily wage about \$3 per day. The health problems in San Lucas directly reflect the poverty of the community. More than one in every 25 infants will die before their first birthday. Malnutrition affects about a quarter of all children and infections, including diarrhea and pneumonia, cause widespread suffering and preventable death. Tuberculosis remains a hidden killer, a cause of chronic lung disease and disability that can affect whole families over a number of years.

The goal of health effort in San Lucas is to couple broader community development initiatives with health strategies that will ensure that the best preventive and treatment interventions are provided to all those in need. Currently, the **Mission Clinic** is a 65-bed facility that serves as the primary source of direct health care services for the town. It is focused on providing high quality outpatient services and emergency care for urgent health problems. Approximately 50-100 patients a day are treated at the Clinic. The Clinic is the only health facility open 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Dr. Rafael Tun, the supervising physician, is native to San Lucas and has been working with the Clinic for almost ten years.

Children requiring intravenous and intensive antibiotic therapy are commonly hospitalized here, as are adults with a variety of chronic disorders. Complicated births are delivered at the clinic as well. Emergency patients are brought to the clinic for immediate treatment at all hours and can either be admitted to the clinic or transferred to the National Hospital in the departmental (state) capital, Sololá, for major surgery or complex interventions.

Additionally, the **Mission Health Promoter Program** educates a core and committed group of individuals in the surrounding 22 communities to ensure the delivery of appropriate preventive and therapeutic health care has been through the training of local community citizens as health promoters. This program now serves 17 communities with the hope of expanding into more. The promoters have basic education are also specially trained in prevention strategies, health education, and the early recognition of serious disorders. They also have the capacity to provide emergency first aid and arrange referral and transport to the Mission clinic in San Lucas. The promoter program is coordinated by the Mission Clinic and the promoters meet and continue their training on a regular basis.

Education

“Before the Colegio San Lucas, there were no doctors or lawyers in San Lucas. Now in San Lucas we not only have doctors and lawyers in town, but we have Maya doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, architects, priests, construction workers, bakers, blacksmiths, and other professionals in town. The Colegio gives the opportunity for us, the Maya people, to advance and better ourselves in society.” - Encarnación ‘Chona’ Ajcot

Education places high as an indicator of development. Through education, an individual is provided with an opportunity to an informed participation within greater society, an informed participation politically, economically, culturally, and spiritually. The Mission elementary school, Colegio San Lucas, is one of the pioneer programs of the San Lucas Mission, striving for more than 40 years to provide holistic and affordable education. Founded in 1967, by Fr. Greg Shaffer and a group of School Sisters of Notre Dame, Colegio San Lucas was the first school in the San Lucas area that made education a viable option for *all* children living in the area, regardless of race or resources.

The Colegio serves children from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, with a student population of approximately 550 students. The average class size is about 25 students, and the school is constantly growing and the mission is looking to add classrooms this year to the existing 19 classrooms to better suit the needs of the school. The school is served by 47 dedicated members of the faculty and administration, many of which attended the Mission school during their elementary education.

When the school first opened, educational indicators in San Lucas were well below national standards. A study done in 1964 showed 2.5 percent literacy in the area, with one school operating in the area. A current census shows literacy rates well over 85 percent, with the majority of illiteracy in older adults. Comparably, national literacy rates are at 70.6 percent. Much lower, however, are national literacy rates for the indigenous population, which remains at 57.5 percent. Female literacy rates even lower at 49 percent. These changes are witness to the positive impact of the Mission school.

Priding its effectiveness in the inclusive nature of the school and its open access for all children in the area, the school has been responsible for the primary education of many professionals in San Lucas throughout the past 40 years. In the Mission’s efforts to provide an education that is not only high in quality but accessible to the people – families pay tuition fees of Q 10.00 per child per month (approximately \$1.30 US), a declining fee as more children in a family are enrolled. This fee, in concordance with the rest of the mission’s programming, is based on a family’s ability to pay.

Work

“Employment is at the heart of development,” speaks Bishop Rammazzini of the San Marcos Diocese in Guatemala. The mission strives to provide consistent work to employees of the Mission offices, the school, the clinic, and the coffee program. There are other projects that provide work to community members, many of which focus on construction projects and infrastructure building. The Mission employs nearly 400 people each week and is able to build fuel-efficient stoves, houses, and more in the community. Carpenters, plumbers, electricians, stonemasons, apprentices, and more make up the workforce overseen by Mission Program directors.

Also, as part of the agricultural program, there is an experimental farm that specializes in developing the best practices for small-scale farming. A reforestation project strives to plant trees throughout the country to prevent against erosion and soil deterioration. Wherever someone is employed through the Mission, a family is being supported.

Goals for Learning

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION – THEMES THAT VOLUNTEERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DISCUSS UPON COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAM

While not by any means required to be experts, all volunteers should be able to discuss, at least on a basic level, the following topics; these themes are integral to understanding the Mission's efforts and processing one's experience in San Lucas

Why are we, as visitors and volunteers, here – Visitors should be able to discuss their own motivation for coming to San Lucas while also articulating the purpose of the Volunteer Program at large. Volunteers must be able to recognize the potential difficulties and setbacks to international volunteering and short-term trips and discuss the potential benefits for the individual, the community, and the Mission's work. What does it mean to live the “other way” of international service work?

Mission history, philosophy, daily operations – Volunteers should be able to speak to the mission and philosophy (integral human development guided by the expressed felt need of the people) and the reason for the existence of the volunteer program (beyond their own personal reason for coming to San Lucas). Volunteers should be able to discuss the mission projects and how they fit into the mission's broader philosophy and goals. See www.sanlucasmision.org.

Social Justice – What does social justice mean for you, the Mission, and in general?

Catholic Social Teaching – What are the core tenets, what do they mean and require of us in the way we conduct ourselves and organize society? How does CST play out in the Mission projects?

Basic Economic Principles – Major economic activities in Guatemala (export crops, immigration remittances, manufacturing, tourism, subsistence farming), unequal distribution of resources and power (LAND), and the role of the global capitalist markets and trade regimes (CAFTA, bilateral trade agreements) in shaping the fortunes and standard of living for the people of Guatemala.

Poverty – Immediate effects and root causes, broader social impact and effects (health, education, etc.). The “process of poverty” – poverty as a social syndrome that effects various areas of life. Historical marginalization of certain sectors of the population (women, indigenous) and the link to conquest and economic and political structures of colonization. What is life like for those living the process of poverty?

Basic History –

- Pre-Colombian Society and the Maya
- Conquest (Pedro de Alvarado) and Colonialism
- Independence and Ladino Monopoly on Power
- Internal conflict and civil war (causes, legacy)

- Current social, political, economic situation in Guatemala – inequality, institutional weakness, corruption, impunity, resurgence of civil society in the post-conflict era, continued threats to human rights, insecurity and violence, social stratification, racial discrimination, failed implementation of Peace Accords

Culture – Along with basic Mayan history and the accomplishments and make-up of Pre-Colombian society, volunteers should be aware of the continued influence and evolution of traditional culture in the community. They should be aware on at least a basic level of elements of traditional Mayan culture, including spirituality, food (corn!), and dress.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. When and where I can I change money? How much money should I change?
2. What do I do if I or a member of my group falls ill?
3. Is San Lucas safe?
4. Where can I store my valuables? Can I get into the safe to retrieve valuables throughout the week?
5. I brought donations – where and to whom do I give them?
6. What am I going to be doing on any given day? How do I get my work assignment?
7. Can I or a member of my group work in the school or clinic during our stay?
8. Where can I purchase souvenirs?
9. Where can I buy coffee?
10. Can I go for a run or walk in the morning or evening?
11. Where can I play soccer?
12. Who are the long-term volunteers?
13. How can I become a long-term volunteer?
14. How can I donate to the Mission, and which projects can I support?
15. How can I stay involved and up-to-date on the Mission's efforts?

1. When and where I can I change money? How much money should I change?

You may change US dollars into Guatemalan quetzals with the Mission. Margarito Mucía Campa, the head accountant, is in charge of all money changing. He will be in his office and available to exchange money from 5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. each day. Please be aware that the Mission cannot keep large sums of money on hand, so if you plan on exchanging more than \$200 from U.S. dollars to Quetzals, please make arrangements to do it before you arrive at the mission. Large amounts can be exchanged at the airport before coming to San Lucas, or through your local bank in the U.S. **Personal checks** are the best way to exchange money at the mission. Please do not plan to exchange cash, as it is difficult for the mission to make cash deposits in dollars at the local bank. You can also convert your money back to dollars before leaving, assuming availability of time (many groups will leave in the early hours before the office opens) and availability of cash on hand.

Depending upon your plans for shopping and eating out, the amount you may want to change will vary. You could potentially not change any money at all, as your meals and housing are covered in the cost of your stay at the mission. However, most visitors will want to change at least some money, particularly for the boat excursion. \$40 - \$50 should be enough to cover several basic souvenirs (bags, weavings, jewelry, coffee, etc.), a meal or two out, and some other snacks or small expenses during the week. If you plan on doing some more shopping or eating out more frequently, \$80 - \$100 should do the trick.

2. What do I do if I or a member of my group falls ill?

Getting sick is, if not desirable, absolutely normal. Most visitors will experience at least some degree of “intestinal adjustment.” This is usually simply due to the presence of bacteria different from that to which our bodies are accustomed or a change in diet. Travelers’ diarrhea will usually subside in a couple of days, but in the mean time be sure to stay hydrated, and Immodium or Pepto Bismol should do the trick.

If you or a group member experiences vomiting, fever, diarrhea for more than two or three days, or has intense cramping in the upper stomach, be sure to alert the volunteer coordinator or a long-term volunteer. While these symptoms are probably not indicative of a serious illness and are experienced by many visitors, it is best to get it taken care of quickly so as not to spend your entire stay bedridden. We can collect and take a stool sample to the clinic (Monday through Friday) and get the appropriate medication from the clinic pharmacy.

It is preferable to deal with any such health issues before departure, as our clinic is highly experienced and familiar with the types of problems visitors might experience, whereas it may be more difficult (and expensive) to receive treatment once back in the U.S.

3. Is San Lucas safe?

San Lucas is, by and large, a safe community. It is a small town, and in general everybody knows one another. Acts of overt violence, particularly directed towards foreigners, are extremely rare. You should feel safe walking around town during the day and in groups.

However, we do ask that you exercise caution and common sense during your stay here. San Lucas may generally be safe, but it is an unfamiliar place and an unfamiliar culture, and with this comes a certain level of risk. Do not wander around by yourself, particularly after dark. There is a strict 9:00 p.m. curfew for a reason, as there is not much nightlife and those out late tend to be heavy drinkers. Furthermore, several incidents of concern (though not involving foreigners) have occurred over the past six months, and we do not want our visitors or volunteers to get mixed up in anything by accident.

Females are not to wander around alone under any circumstances. Exercise caution while in the company of men. While the vast majority of the community is friendly and welcoming, it takes but one bad apple to sour your trip. If you have any further questions regarding security, please refer to the volunteer coordinator.

4. Where can I store my valuables? Can I get into the safe to retrieve valuables throughout the week?

Either the day of or morning after your arrival, you will have the opportunity to store **your passport and anything you wish to store and do not need access to during the week** in the Mission safe. The volunteer coordinator (or Margarito) will collect all such items. Be advised that if you choose to store items such as cash, credit cards, and cameras in the safe, you may not be able to access it during your stay. The hotels in which we lodge our groups are trusted business partners, and as such your belongings should be safe in your locked room.

5. I brought donations – where and to whom do I give them?

We ask that you direct all donations through the Long Term Volunteer Coordinator, as direct donations and handouts to people in the community are strongly discouraged and strictly prohibited for the aforementioned reasons. If you do have donations, you can alert either the volunteer coordinator, a long-term volunteer, or the kitchen staff, and then leave your items in a bag in the back room (with the round table and couches). Your donations will be subsequently sorted and distributed accordingly by local staff.

6. What am I going to be doing on any given day? How do I get my work assignment?

The Mission assigns groups to various projects, including various construction efforts, the garden, and coffee processing, according to the need. Visitor work in the school and the clinic is strictly prohibited. **Be advised that we may not be able to accommodate specific requests for work assignments, depending upon our current needs and/or resource limitations.**

A key part of visiting groups' contribution to our efforts is to provide labor **where it is needed**. As such, we appreciate your flexibility and willingness to do what is requested of you and your group. Our projects can be greatly assisted by your support of our efforts where it is considered most effective. We thank you for your cooperation.

In general, you will receive your work assignments after breakfast and after lunch, before going out to work sites. Work assignments often take careful planning of rides and juggling of groups, and also require consultation with project leaders each morning. As such, the volunteer coordinator may not know what you will be doing the day before. **We ask that you be patient and sit tight – when your work assignment has been determined, you and your group will be advised.**

7. Can I or a member of my group work in the school or clinic during our stay?

Visitor work in the clinic and the school is strictly prohibited. While we understand why these programs may be of particular interest to visitors (we're pretty proud of them, too!), we cannot accommodate guests in these areas. It is the Mission's belief that health and educational service should be both high in quality and offered in the safest, most comfortable, most stable and most sensitive environment possible. As such, even visitors fluent in Spanish and/or with professional qualifications are not able to receive the extensive orientation and cultural sensitivity training or build the necessary relationships to make such work successful. We have thus been asked to keep visitors clear of these sensitive areas.

Think of it this way: would you want foreigners or tourists regularly visiting your child's classroom or sitting in on a private consultation with your family doctor? Probably not. We take pride in providing high-quality service, and thank you for your cooperation in making this possible.

8. Where can I purchase souvenirs?

Souvenirs (including coffee, honey, weavings and other *cosas típicas*, books, and other items) can usually be purchased after informational talks with Chona, or the volunteer coordinator. Additionally, you may request to buy these items at other points during your stay. The best way to proceed is to ask Mynor, the young man who works in the office, after work but before dinner, between the hours of four and six Monday through Saturday.

We ask that you avoid purchasing from people trying to sell souvenirs in front of the church or on Mission property, out of respect for the space. Additionally, we advise all visitors to avoid doing business with the two shops directly in front of the church, as our visitors have recently had negative experiences with these two vendors. Both have exhibited a lack of respect and mistreated visitors and volunteers, and as such we ask that you exercise caution.

9. Where can I buy coffee?

You can buy Granja Juan Ana Coffee at the Mission. The best way to do so is to ask Mynor or Mario Tax Campa (the young men who work in the Mission office where the phones are) to assist you. One 16 oz. bag is \$ 9 US or 70 Q. The price is the same for ground, whole bean, and dark roast. You can also purchase and learn more about our coffee at www.sanlucasmision.org.

10. Can I go for a run or walk in the morning or evening?

Due to safety concerns, we suggest that you avoid running or going for walks, particularly in the morning and evening hours and certainly at night. **We strongly advise females not to run or go walking as this has proven dangerous in the past.**

11. Where can I play soccer?

There are several places in town where you and group members can kick around. The first is on the synthetic field behind the Mission, and the second is in the central park, and there are a few dirt fields in town. The former is probably a bit nicer, but goes for 100Q/hr. This cost is manageable when divided between several group members, but be advised that this can be a burden or cause awkwardness or embarrassment if locals are invited, even if you offer to pay. The latter is not a field per se, but rather a concrete basketball court. However, plenty of locals use it as a soccer field, and it'll do the trick.

12. Who are the long-term volunteers?

From the Long-term Volunteer Program vision statement:

The San Lucas Mission Volunteers will form a core team of capable, motivated individuals who have chosen and have

been chosen to live and work on a volunteer basis in the San Lucas Mission for an extended period of time. The volunteers will comprise a community dedicated to learning from, respecting, walking in solidarity with, and lending gracious support to the people of San Lucas and the Mission's project of sustainable, integral human development.

13. How can I become a long-term volunteer?

Long-term volunteers are selected in a three part application process, including resume submission and short-answer questions, an essay application, and a phone interview. Applicants may also be asked to provide references and/or transcripts. Approximately one out of every two applicants is accepted, as we have far more applications than we do places in our program. The application process may become more competitive at particularly popular times of the year and posts fill up quickly, so we suggest that prospective volunteers apply early.

Volunteer posts are awarded only to those who have formally applied and the program is becoming increasingly competitive.

For more information on the volunteer program or to apply, visit www.sanlucasmision.org.

14. How can I donate to the Mission, and which projects can I support?

You can support the Mission and our projects by donating to the “Friends of San Lucas” (You will be given an envelope to mail when you return home or online at www.sanlucasmision.org, where you can either submit a onetime donation or set yourself up to donate on a monthly basis.

100% of our funding comes from donations. Donations typically go into a general pool, with which all of our costs (salaries, supplies and medications for the clinic, operating costs for the school, construction materials, etc.) are covered. Funds are allocated according to the need as it is determined here in San Lucas.

15. How can I stay involved and up-to-date on the Mission's efforts?

We encourage you to keep in touch and keep involved once your trip is over. Our hope is that your first visit won't be your last, and that this is but the beginning of a journey of learning and discovery. We encourage you to continue learning and asking questions while back home, and upon request can suggest some reading materials that we have found useful.

To stay up-to-date on the goings on in San Lucas, you can subscribe to our seasonal newsletter by signing up at www.sanlucasmision.org, or by leaving your email address with the volunteer coordinator.

We also encourage you to get organized, to remain in contact with your group, and to spread the word about what you have learned. If you would like more ideas for informational or fundraising events, you can speak to the volunteer coordinator.

REQUIRED READING LIST

- “The Cost of Short Term Missions”** – JoAnn Van Engen..... 10
This article addresses some of the pros and cons to international service or “mission” trips and suggests we take into consideration larger issues when serving in an international context. It provides crucial insight into what our presence here means to the community and how we impact the communities we visit.
- “Rethinking Volunteerism in America”** – Gavin Leonard..... 13
Although written about volunteer projects in the US, this article addresses the theme of solidarity and how an educated volunteer can serve as a better volunteer. The author discusses how an approached founded in solidarity can make lasting impacts on the volunteer and the host community.

THE COST OF SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

BY JOANN VAN ENGEN

A MISSIONARY FRIEND just called to see if we would house a short-term mission group she was coordinating here in Honduras. While on the phone, I asked her what she thought of these groups. Her answer might surprise you: "Everyone knows," she said, "that short-term missions benefit the people who come, not the people here."

Is that true? If so, then thousands of people are raising millions of dollars each year to do something not for others, but for themselves. Are we fooling ourselves by pretending these trips help people when they are really just an excuse to see a foreign country? If our good works are not doing good, why do them?

Take this example. A group of eighteen students raised \$25,000 to fly to Honduras for spring break. They painted an orphanage, cleaned the playground, and played with the children. Everyone had a great time, and the children loved the extra attention. One student commented: "My trip to Honduras was such a blessing! It was amazing the way the staff cared for those children. I really grew as a Christian there."

The Honduran orphanage's yearly budget is \$45,000. That covers the staff's salaries, building maintenance, and food and clothes for the children. One staff member there confided, "The amount that group raised for their week here is more than half our working budget. We could have done so much with that money."

TIMES HAVE CHANGED. Missionaries used to raise small fortunes to sail to Africa and Asia, often never returning home. The decision to become a missionary was life changing and usually permanent.

Today, air travel makes even the farthest corners of the earth accessible to anyone with money for a ticket and a few days to spare. Thousands of people – students, retirees, and busy professionals -- go all over the world on short-term mission trips, building schools, running medical brigades, doing street evangelism, and working in orphanages.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying that everyone goes on short-term missions to get a free vacation. People usually sign up for very good reasons – a successful doctor wants to use her skills to help needy people, a young person seeks to share his faith with others, a construction worker knows that cement floors will keep poor children healthier.

But maybe you've noticed the same thing I have. When people return from their trip, they don't talk about what they did, but what they saw and how it changed them. They describe how amazing it is to worship with Christians in another language, or how humbling it is to encounter people who live with less than they could ever imagine. They don't often talk about the importance of what they did, but about how much they learned about themselves.

Certainly short-term mission trips can go beyond religious tourism and provide memorable experiences. My husband and I run a semester-abroad program in Honduras. The college students who study with us often have been on previous international mission trips. They say these trips awakened their interest in the third world and the poor. For most, seeing a world outside North America that they had never imagined shook their reality and made them question their own lifestyles.

Our students call those experiences "life changing." But often that "life changing" experience is based on an emotional response to a situation they do not really understand. Too often the students return home simply counting the blessings they have of being North Americans having gained little insight into the causes of poverty and what can be done to alleviate them.

I think our students' experiences are typical. Most short-term mission trips have a number of problems in common.

First, short-term missions are expensive. Each member of the spring break group I mentioned raised over \$1,000 to spend two weeks in Honduras. That is a lot of money anywhere, but in the third world, it's more than most people make in an entire year.

Second, short-term mission groups almost always do work that could be done (and usually done better) by people of the country they visit. The spring break group spent their time and money painting and cleaning the orphanage in Honduras. That money could have paid two Honduran painters who desperately needed the work, with enough left over to hire four new teachers, build a new dormitory, and provide each child with new clothes.

Even medical brigades are difficult to justify. The millions of dollars spent to send North American physicians to third-world countries could cover the salaries of thousands of underemployed doctors in those countries – doctors who need work and already understand the culture and language of the people they would serve.

Short-term groups are also unable to do effective evangelism, which is a main goal of many groups. Since most group members do not speak the language or understand the culture, their attempts are almost always limited. I know of one group that travelled all the way to Senegal to distribute copies of a Christian video to people on the street, but could not hold even the most basic conversation with these people.

HOW WOULD WE FEEL if visitors came to the United States to spend a week volunteering at the Salvation Army, ate only the food they brought from home, talked only with each other, (because they couldn't speak English) and never left the building? Most of us would feel offended and bewildered that our visitors were not interested in learning about our country.

But I have met many short-term groups in Honduras that do just that. They take along food they are used to (or eat every night at McDonald's or Pizza Hut), stay in the best hotels, and spend all their time together. They are willing to serve as long as it's not too uncomfortable. Often, they leave without having spent any meaningful time getting to know the country's people.

Short-term missions also require a great deal of time and coordination by their hosts. A Nicaraguan doctor I know runs a health clinic for poor families. He trains community workers to promote better health and treats serious illnesses at almost no charge. The clinic can barely keep up with the demands. But the doctor spends three months each year preparing for and hosting U.S. medical brigades. He admits that the brigades accomplish very little (visiting doctors mostly hand out aspirin for headaches and back pain), but hesitates to complain since the U.S. organization that promotes the brigades also funds his clinic.

Short-term groups can also send the wrong message to third-world people. A Honduran friend is a bricklayer and was excited to help a work team build two houses in his neighborhood. After the group left, I asked him about his experience. "I found out soon enough that I was in the way. The group wanted to do things their way and made me feel like I didn't know what I was doing. I only helped the first day," he said.

Because short-term groups often want to solve problems quickly, they can make third-world Christians feel incapable of doing things on their own. Instead of working together with local Christians, many groups come with a let-the-North-Americans-do-it attitude that leaves nationals feeling frustrated and unappreciated. Since the groups are only around for about a week, the nationals end up having to pick up where they left off but without the sense of continuity and competence they might have had they been in charge from the beginning.

THESE PROBLEMS ARE NOT just pesky details. They raise serious questions about the value of short-term mission trips.

So, what should we do? Declare a moratorium on all short-term missions and only support full-time workers? Refuse to give money to any group planning to visit a developing country?

I don't think that is the answer. Our world is becoming smaller, and global business has made us all neighbors. Our lives in North America have become inextricably linked with our brothers and sisters in the third-world. Now, more than ever, Christians need to share one another's problems and support one another. But short-term missions as they stand are not the answer. Third-world people do not need more rich Christians coming to paint their church and make them feel inadequate. They do need more humble people willing to share in their lives and struggles.

I believe North American Christians need to start taking seriously our responsibility to the people of the third world – and visiting another country can be an appropriate place to begin. But we need to ask each other: What is the purpose of the trip? Are we going through the motions of helping the poor so we can congratulate ourselves afterwards? Or are we seeking to understand the lives of third-world people – to recognize and support their strengths and to try to understand the problems they face and our role in them? Are we ethnocentrically treating the people of the third-world as tragic objects to be rescued – or as equals to walk with and learn from?

I SUGGEST we stop thinking about short-term missions as a service to perform and start thinking of them as a responsibility to learn. Let's raise money to send representatives to find out what our brothers and sisters are facing, what we can do to help, and how we can build long-term relationships with them.

Groups like The Christian Commission for Development (CCD), in Honduras intentionally provide learning experiences to short-term groups. CCD accepts North Americans only if they are serious about learning. Their groups visit Christian development projects, speak with rural and urban poor, and dialogue with Honduran leaders.

The groups often spend some time working, but only on CCD's facilities, not in rural villages or poor neighborhoods. CCD recognizes that outside groups can unintentionally destroy the cohesion and sense of empowerment. Groups

return to North America with a better understanding of the injustice and sin that oppresses people in developing nations, and what they can do to make a difference.

It is possible to change traditional short-term missions from religious tourism into genuine service, but it requires a better understanding of how God calls us to serve. Preparing for your trip means more than packing your suitcase and getting your shots. Read as much as you can about the people and culture. Find out what some of the problems are. Learn a little of the language you will be hearing. Find someone from the country you will be visiting who can speak to your group about its culture. Show respect for people by knowing something about their lives before you arrive.

Second, focus on learning, not doing. Most Christians don't like sitting on their hands. We like to serve by doing. But in a third-world of high unemployment and low wages, it makes little sense to spend our time painting a wall, when we could be learning about the country, its people, and problems. Ask your contact person to set up visits and speakers who will help you understand questions like these: Why is this country so poor? What problems do the people face? What has our own country done to help or harm this country? What can we do to help? These are not questions with pat answers. Struggling with them is a learning experience that can have an impact long after the trip ended.

Spend time with locals. Make sure nationals are fully involved in your visit and follow their lead. If you are working on a project together, ask your national co-workers to teach you. If you have a skill they could use, ask if they would like to learn it. Ask questions about the lives and problems of the people you meet. Learning from the people of the country you visit will give you an understanding of the country that a foreigner can not give.

One good rule of thumb for short-term missions is to spend at least as much money supporting the projects you visit as you spend on your trip. Invest your money people and organizations working on long-term solutions. If you are interested in evangelism, support nationals who want to share the gospel. If you are concerned about the health issues, support programs that are seeking to address those problems. Better yet, find programs that minister to people holistically by meeting their spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and economic needs.

Get involved as a global Christian when you return. By asking the right questions, you will find out how the actions of rich countries affect those in the third world. Support organizations working to fight injustice and poverty. Write letters to your congressional representatives telling them what you learned and what you believe our government should do. Speak to churches, schools, and other groups and encourage them to act.

Short-term missions are expensive. They spend money that third-world Christians could desperately use. But short-term missions can be worth every penny if they mark the beginning of a long-term relationship. Money invested in learning about the causes of poverty in developing nations – and what can be done – is money well spent.

(SOURCE: "THE OTHER SIDE, JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2000)

RETHINKING VOLUNTEERISM IN AMERICA

BY GAVIN LEONARD

About a year ago, an old friend of mine asked me if our old Mennonite church youth group – the one we both attended and he was now leading – could come down to Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood to do some volunteer work. I work for an organization that develops and maintains affordable housing in this city's poorest neighborhood. My friend thought it would be a good opportunity for the youth from small suburban town Bluffton, Ohio to see what is going on in the inner city.

I had been working with volunteers for about seven years now and lately, I had been thinking a lot about the two types of distinct volunteerism approaches: 'charity' versus 'solidarity.' As I see it, charity means coming in and helping somebody, with little or no regard for what that person or group of people wants or how they want to get it. There's an assumption made that anything a volunteer does is helpful. It's a top down process.

Solidarity, on the other hand, is about working with that somebody to identify what it is that the people that are being helped need and want, along with how they want to get it. Solidarity assumes equality or at least recognition of a volunteer's privilege that leads to working more collaboratively and with respect. Solidarity is based on an idea that social inequalities exist in a context that one needs to take time to understand. Working in solidarity requires patience.

The lines between charity and solidarity are never clearly drawn, and I'd say the chances that somebody is going to say they're all about charity, are pretty slim. But, given the opportunity to take a bird's eye view of an organization or individuals' interaction in a volunteer setting, I think it's possible to see the distinction.

I talked through some of these issues with my friend and expressed my desire for this group of volunteers to intentionally be in solidarity with people that they are trying to help. Theoretically, I saw the chance to develop a process that would start far before the group came to Over-the-Rhine and would continue long after.

With deeper knowledge of the situation they were entering, how they relate to it, and how that relates to national policies, I feel like the opportunity could exist for a truly long-term positive change. In my work locally, the best volunteers have been the people who came to the organization through a charity-minded group, and then stayed connected by themselves in various ways. People who read our newsletter, stop by just to check in, read books or materials we suggest - these are the folks who add real capacity and value in a model of solidarity.

Volunteers who are aware of their shortcomings, vulnerabilities, and stereotypes, and who are willing to confront them head on, make a lasting difference. There is a recognizable feeling of authenticity and truth that emerges as we begin to notice our own problems and issues while we are working with others to address their needs.

In contrast, my vision of a charity-minded volunteer is one where the experience is a single, short-term event. I've seen more than a few individuals take in difficult and complicated explanations of serious social issues and then within minutes walk away joking about this or that. I'm not saying people need to pour their lives into the organization they are supporting for that day or two - but a concerted effort to extend these conversations into peoples' everyday lives would be valuable in creating real, longer term change.

I talked to my friend about the differences I saw between charity and solidarity and I was hopeful we could do more than just your typical weekend-charity outing to the hood. I suggested that the youth group participate in a process that led up to the trip to Cincinnati, and then spent significant time talking about it afterward. I suggested an essay that tackles some of these issues -- a review of the "Sweet Charity," a book by Janet Poppendieck -- as a starting point for discussion. It seemed to me that setting up structured conversations and background in the months prior to a visit, would lead to an experience with considerably more depth and impact.

I heard back a little while later that my friend couldn't commit to a process; he just didn't have the time. He was passing it on to the new youth group leader, along with copies of our correspondence. The next time I heard from the new leader, it was to say that the youth did not have time to do something like this, and they were sorry, but they wouldn't be able to make it.

To say I was disappointed would be an understatement. I really had hoped that the group would be interested in engaging at this level. It's the kind of thing I really only felt safe asking of a church that I had attended for many years and I don't feel it was unreasonable.

Realistically, it's hard work. Working in solidarity takes a commitment and ability to listen and learn that often raises very tough issues that most of us would rather not deal with: racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other socially divisive realities can't be ignored once you really start to pay attention.

I wrote back expressing my feelings and decided that this was a fight I'd have to fight another day. As a leader on the non-profit side that works with volunteers, I'd like share a level of responsibility here. I really need to work harder to carve out space and time to engage with potential volunteers in a way that not only suggests, but also supports a process of working towards solidarity. I also feel that the supervisors and community service liaisons at churches, schools, and universities need to carve out similar time and energy. At the end of the day, the full burden of moving such a process needs to be shared.

Engaging in a better way

My involvement as a volunteer has been fairly extensive for my age and I've spent a lot of time and thought on what it should look like. What I've come to believe is that we need to be very intentional, forthcoming, and thoughtful about how we engage in the communities we want to help.

"Sweet Charity" by Poppendieck is a well-researched look into the unintended consequences of charity work. It shows how volunteers are often just playing out their own guilt and working to achieve a level of personal fulfillment. It shows that charity often views the poor as sub-human and if and when this benevolent mentality is not checked it has the potential to actually hurt, not help the people who are supposed to be gaining something. We often ignore the systemic problems that are actually causing the holes we seek to plug. I think she's right to question this process, and it's something that all of us should take a hard look at in the current context of the growing wealth disparity and increasing reliance on charities.

Charity often comes across as patronizing and disingenuous. Corporations often spend nearly the amount of money advertising the fact they made a contribution to a non-profit as the amount of the contribution itself. And it's truly shocking how few of the volunteers I interface with actually ask a heartfelt question.

Solidarity takes more time. To think about and learn about a person is difficult. Not to mention that poverty is depressing.

Still, without professing to have the whole thing figured out, I'd like to make four suggestions for working towards a better way of engaging as volunteers:

- 1. Learn about the organization.** Spend some time learning about the organization you'll be going to work with before you start the job. Don't create more work for it -- do your research independently and then ask questions.
- 2. Learn about the larger issues.** Look for resources that focus on the systemic issues that create the conditions you'd like to see eradicated. That way you can join the dialogue on how to eliminate the problem itself, not just its symptoms. Ask thoughtful questions of the leader or liaison.
- 3. Express your appreciation.** Recognizing that volunteer work is often much more beneficial to you -- whether as an opportunity for personal fulfillment, or a way to see a place you might not otherwise have access to, or simply as a way to pay off your parking ticket -- saying 'thanks' is something far too few people do.
- 4. Find small ways to engage after leaving.** Sign up for an email list, a newsletter, stop by once in a while. If all of us take baby steps towards becoming more engaged as active citizens, we'll be on the right track.

Leaders of non-profits should work to maintain an up-to-date resource list for volunteers and leaders at institutions bringing volunteers could establish a checklist that they discuss with volunteers covering ways to stay engaged before, during, and after the brief engagement.

So, how do we actually implement these types of steps and conversations so that we are moving in a positive way towards solidarity?

Volunteerism in America is a complicated web of individuals, groups, and institutions that are all shaping how we view people that are not like us. I think it is high time we make a concerted effort to share the responsibility and move towards a long-term solidarity model for volunteerism that is respectful, dignified, and purposeful. Charity will only get us so far.

(SOURCE: WWW.WORLDTVOLUNTEERWEB.ORG)

SAN LUCAS MISSION GROUP REFLECTIONS

NOTE TO GROUP LEADERS: This reflection was put together by long-term volunteers and the volunteer coordinator. It aims to put your experience, as a short-term group of volunteers visiting the Mission, in perspective. We want to contribute to your group's learning experience by providing these materials and thus enriching the education of your group. This reflection is for your own use without the supervision of long-term volunteers and the volunteer coordinator. Questions are to be treated as a guide for your reflection, though in the "Purpose" section, we outline our goals and hopes for the reflection. These goals are themes we believe **all visitors to San Lucas** must have addressed or struggled with during their time at the Mission.

GUIDELINES: On the following pages you will find short paragraphs (in italics) introducing concepts and hints to let you know what the Mission's stance is on certain themes. These can be read aloud to the group or used for your own purposes as the group leader. Then, you will find questions (numbered for organization) for discussion. If your group members find the larger questions difficult to answer, we have provided follow-up and probing questions to spark further discussion.

GROUP REFLECTION 1: WHY ARE WE, AS VOLUNTEERS, HERE?

PURPOSE/GOALS: As the volunteer program of the San Lucas Mission, we strive to create an experience for volunteers here in San Lucas is founded in **learning**, solidarity, intentionality, and a sharing of experiences. In this reflection, we aim to present an **“other way”** of international service work.

Your goal here in San Lucas is to learn. The topics we believe important to address include, but are not limited to: a) what life is like for those living the process of poverty, b) Maya culture and life-way, c) the Integral Human Development work of the Mission, d) Catholic Social Teaching, including issues related to solidarity, e) Guatemalan history, including the Civil War and years of overt violence, f) broader world issues such as economic policies and structures that create systems that impoverish people, such as those from San Lucas, g) our personal role in the process of development and the Mission.

This **“other way”** of service work, founded in learning, puts us on a more level playing field with Guatemalans and San Lucans. It is our belief that *educated* volunteers make *better* volunteers – more able to understand the situation of those we are serving with, more able to make changes to our own lives to be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Guatemala, and more able to share the message of their suffering with our friends and family in the US. The “other way” speaks to more equality between North American volunteers and our Guatemalan counterparts where **Guatemalans tell us what to do**. We recognize that our physical labour is important, but only useful if it involves a coming together in solidarity. We recognize that we have much to learn from the people associated with the Mission. We recognize that we come not to “help” but to “learn”.

These are themes this reflection will touch upon, but it is essential that members of your group come away with the realization that we are here to learn, not to help. We hope that your group members will come up with their own reactions and reflections to this topic, but hope you will use this topic, the quotations we provide, and the questions, to aid in this reflection.

We want the reflection to start out on a personal level, starting with an easy theme to “get people talking”.

- 1) What are your personal reasons for coming here? Why did you all choose to come on this trip when you signed up x months ago?
 - a) Have any of these reasons changed since you arrived?
 - b) Knowing what you know now about San Lucas/Guatemala/the Mission, would this change your reasons for coming? If so, what caused the change?

Next, we want to reiterate that we are here to learn – whatever our personal motivations may be for this trip in particular, what should unite us is a desire to learn and grow in solidarity with our Guatemalan counterparts. The following are quotes from the articles mentioned previously:

- “I suggest we stop thinking about short-term missions as a service to perform and start thinking of them as a responsibility to learn. Let’s raise money to send representatives to find out what our brothers and sisters are facing, what we can do to help, and how we can build long-term relationships with them.”
 - “Volunteers who are aware of their shortcomings, vulnerabilities, and stereotypes, and who are willing to confront them head on, make a lasting difference. There is a recognizable feeling of authenticity and truth that emerges as we begin to notice our own problems and issues while we are working with others to address their needs.
“In contrast, my vision of a charity-minded volunteer is one where the experience is a single, short-term event. I’ve seen more than a few individuals take in difficult and complicated explanations of serious social issues and then within minutes walk away joking about this or that. I’m not saying people need to pour their lives into the organization they are supporting for that day or two – but a concerted effort to extend these conversations into peoples’ everyday lives would be valuable in creating real, longer term change.”
- 2) What more do you want to learn?
 - 3) What do you think solidarity means?
 - a) *“Solidarity...is about working with that somebody to identify what it is that the people that are being helped need and want, along with how they want to get it. Solidarity assumes equality or at least recognition of a volunteer’s privilege that leads to working more collaboratively and with respect. Solidarity is based on an idea that social inequalities exist in a context that one needs to take time to understand. Working in solidarity requires patience.”* What do you think of that?
 - 4) How do you think you can actively live in solidarity with the people during your time in San Lucas?
 - a) What might be some obstacles to achieving solidarity with the people? Why do you think solidarity is important, and why is it important to the mission’s efforts and to your learning experience here?
 - 5) **Respect**, along with solidarity, is essential to the Mission’s integral human development efforts. Sustainable change can only be achieved if it occurs within the scope of the local culture and recognizes the wishes and the dignity of individuals comprising the community and the community as a whole. Without respect, the Mission’s efforts would only be participant in a long history of oppression of the Mayan people. How will you respect the people while you are here?
 - 6) Why do you think this trip or similar trips is/are important/ why do you think it is important that you are here?
 - a) Imagine that your trip had been cancelled last-minute, and your group had never come to San Lucas. Would the community be affected (for better or for worse)? If you think so, how?

b) How would you or your group be affected or what would you have missed had you not come?

Hint: We hope that by this point in your experience, you are grasping the idea that the physical work that any group contributes is not essential to our efforts. However, your willingness and attempt to learn all you can about our efforts and your consequent support are essential to our work here. Although your economic contribution – both to the Mission specifically and the community at large – is a part of what you have to bring to your experience, it is only a part of your role and part of how you can support our work. Equally if not more important is that you continue to engage with and learn about the issues that we have and will introduce to you this week. We hope that this trip is a beginning for you, and opens the door to learning about social justice issues.

7) Do you think that any perceptions that you hold have changed at all on this trip thus far? Will you try to change any behaviors or your lifestyle at all as a result? If so, how?

Hint: We find that baby steps are often the surest of steps. It is much easier to sustain small, conscious changes in your lifestyle – such as seeking to waste less food, or making a monthly donation – than to revolutionize your way of life. The important thing is to internalize and be conscious of the things you have learned.

8) Has this trip “opened a door” for you? How? What have you learned, and what are you curious about now that you had not been aware of before? Do you plan to continue to find out more? If so, how?

9) How will you continue this experience after you have gone home? Do you plan to stay involved? If so, how?

10) One of the articles you read (“Cost of ST Missions”) made the valid point that the thousands of dollars groups spend on taking trips could be put to good use in the organization’s local setting – paying local employees, completing construction projects, etc. In the case of the Mission, the funds visiting groups contribute merely covers the basic costs of lodging, food, and transportation, and usually provide no direct financial benefit to the mission. However, the money groups spend on airfare and lodging, if donated, would increase our yearly operating budget by 50-100%. That’s a lot of dough.

a) In light of this reality and other points raised in your readings, is this trip justifiable or worthwhile? Why or why not, and if so how?

b) How is the effort spent by Mission employees and volunteers helping you around town, cooking, driving, arranging lodging, or showing you how to do their job a valuable use of Mission resources? Put it another way, how is the money you spent to be on this trip put to greater use through this visit than by simply giving it to the Mission or a similar organization?

c) What do you and your group have to do in order to make this trip beneficial and worthwhile both for yourselves and for the Mission? Are you endowed with any special duties or responsibilities as a result of the investments made by the Mission and you and your group?

Hint: We see the Mission as an opportunity for cross-cultural collaboration and learning. Thus, visitors to the Mission can greatly benefit from cultural immersion and the opportunity to participate in a “reverse mission.” In a world that is increasingly and ever-more intricately interconnected, understanding the lifestyle and struggles of one’s fellow man is important to grasping big issues like social inequalities, as well as essential commonalities that we all share as human

beings and children of one God. These lessons can be put to active use in every walk of life, and can help to make our visitors more responsible and aware global citizens.

Additionally, while we do not immediately benefit financially from groups' presence, the Mission is always seeking to spread the word about our work and our philosophy. It is in the greater interest of a movement for global equality and social justice that we wish to spread this message. We also believe that a broader network of supporters and friends around the globe will make us a stronger organization better able to respond to the express-felt need of the community of San Lucas, in part through their continued financial support and collaboration. It is our hope that visitors will be inspired to tell their friends and family about our efforts, and remain connected with the Mission for many years to come.

GROUP REFLECTION 2: THE PROCESS OF POVERTY

Imagine a day in your life in San Lucas. Now imagine a day in the life of someone from San Lucas – How does your experience here differ from that of a person born here? How does your having chosen to come here and your ability to leave alter your experience and separate you from people who may not have those options?

It is important that, even while striving to achieve solidarity, we recognize how our privilege has given us a different and broader set of life options than those living in the process of poverty.

What does the word ‘privilege’ mean to you?

Privilege as a social concept can be defined as follows: “There is basic agreement among authors (Lucal, 1996; McIntosh, 1992; Robinson, 1999) regarding the definition of privilege... [I]t seems that five core components provide the defining boundaries of this concept. First, privilege is a special advantage; it is neither common nor universal. Second, it is granted, not earned or brought into being by one's individual effort or talent. Third, privilege is a right or entitlement that is related to a preferred status or rank. Fourth, privilege is exercised for the benefit of the recipient and to the exclusion or detriment of others. Finally, a privileged status is often outside of the awareness of the person possessing it (McIntosh, 1992; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000).”¹

What do you think about this definition? What are some examples of ways in which a person or group can be privileged?

Can you think of some ways in which relative privilege (either the possession or the lack of privilege) has affected your life options? (examples to get the ball rolling: education, travel, choice of where to live, discretionary spending etc.)

*One common initial reaction that many North Americans or people from so-called “industrialized” or “developed” nations have when they encounter poverty in the developing world is that people are “lucky” or “privileged” because their lives **seem** comparatively simple. A common impression is that impoverished society are not as tied to material objects, not as “stressed” and more relaxed. Think of the image of Mexico as “the land of mañana.”*



¹ Black, Linda L. and David Stone. “Expanding the definition of privilege: the concept of social privilege.” *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*. 1 Oct. 2006.

What do you think of the perception that the poor are in some way “the lucky ones”?

Do you think those who live in the process of poverty are less materialistic than those who are comparatively affluent? If so, why? If not, then why not?

“Despite pervasive inequality and other potential injustices, much evidence suggests that people are motivated to defend and bolster the societal status quo and to maintain the belief in a just world (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Lerner, 1980). This motivation often manifests itself in tendencies to blame the disadvantaged, thereby deflecting blame away from the social system itself (e.g., Lerner & Simmons, 1966; Napier, Mandisodza, Andersen, & Jost, 2006; Ryan, 1971). Criticizing the poor for being unintelligent, lazy, disagreeable, or dishonest is one common way of preserving the belief in a just world (Furnham & Gunter, 1984; Hafer & Be`gue, 2005; Montada & Schneider, 1989).

Research conducted from the perspective of system justification theory has demonstrated that an alternative to derogation is to justify inequality by endorsing or thinking about complementary stereotypes that ascribe compensating benefits and burdens to disadvantaged and advantaged groups, respectively (Jost & Kay, 2005; Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Guermandi, & Mosso, 2005; Kay & Jost, 2003; Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005; Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007). The idea is that complementary stereotypes contribute to the perceived legitimacy of the social system by suggesting that no single group in society holds a monopoly on all that is desirable (or undesirable). They portray a system, in other words, that is fair and “balanced” because no group “has it all” and no group is bereft of valued characteristics. For instance, the notion that despite their financial hardships the poor are happier or more honest than the rich rationalizes the unequal division of wealth by creating an illusion of equality (see Lane, 1959).

Studies by Kay and Jost (2003) demonstrated that exposure to “poor but happy/rich but miserable” and “poor but honest/rich but dishonest” stereotype exemplars led people to score higher on a general measure of system justification. That is, reminding participants of complementary (vs. noncomplementary) stereotypes of the rich and poor bolstered their perceptions of the fairness and legitimacy of the social system. This suggests that, in the context of disadvantaged groups, enhancement may be an alternative to derogation as a means of satisfying system justification needs (Kay et al., 2005).²

In a nutshell, the claim that people in San Lucas – or anywhere else – are poor but on the whole “happy” is just plain wrong – it collapses a person’s life experience and range of emotion into one word. It also justifies the status quo – including poverty and inequality. The implicit suggestion that it is okay that poverty exists, and even that those living the process of poverty are the “lucky ones,” freeing those more economically fortunate from guilty pangs or any responsibility to help to change the situation.

What do you think of this? Is there any truth to “poor but happy”? In what other ways do you see problems with this conception? What have you seen in your experience to either confirm or deny the assertion that people in San Lucas are “happy” people?

One more question on this: if you were going through a difficult time in life, or had experienced a great tragedy, would you share your deepest feelings and your emotional vulnerability with strangers? Would you walk down the street constantly expressing your despair?

² Kay, Aaron C. et al. “Left–right ideological differences in system justification following exposure to complementary versus noncomplementary stereotype exemplars,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 39, 290–298 (2009)

Here's big one for you: WHY DOES POVERTY EXIST, AND WHY DOES IT PERSIST?

What is your role, as a person from a “developed” and wealthy nation who is able to afford international travel, in the system of global inequality?

How has your conception of what poverty is and what it means for a community changed (or not) over the course of this experience? Why?

THANKS FOR VISITING, AND ENJOY YOUR STAY IN SAN LUCAS!