

Atlantic District Youth On Missions Trip 2012
Guatemala

Below is some useful information that will help you in preparing yourself for this mission's trip. Please read carefully, as this information will assist you and make everything run smoothly for you and the group.

Thank you for considering being a part of this trip. We know you will be blessed and your life will be changed forever.

Stan O'Donnell & The Atlantic Youth Team

(Below is information we have received directly from Bro. Brad Thompson.)

Missionary Team:

Brad and Regina Thompson are the field superintendents for the UPC of Guatemala. They have been in Guatemala since 1985, first as AIM workers and then becoming fully appointed missionaries in 1989. They have 3 sons: Anthony(20), Ryan (17) and Tyrell (12).

Lynne Jewett came to Guatemala on AIM in 1989, spent a few years in Mexico, received full missionary appointment in 1996 and then came back to Guatemala in 1999.

We often have AIM (Associate in Missions) workers present in Guatemala. We will let you know ahead of time how many of the missionary team will be traveling with you.

Orlando Juarez is my administrative assistant. He is one of our ministers and will be doing a lot of the preparations for your trip. He is fairly bilingual and would be with you during parts of your stay in Guatemala.

I want to be very clear in letting you know up front that the entire missionary team will not be with your group all the time. We have a large, growing work in Guatemala and we cannot leave our local responsibilities totally abandoned for 7 to 10 days. Also, we have boys in school and we cannot suspend their normal activities while groups are here. With anywhere from 7 to 12 groups a year we have to be very careful with our time management. We will always have a team member with you and you will be

well taken care of, but we do not want you to be disappointed when the entire team is not with you every day.

The Church in Guatemala:

The United Pentecostal Church of Guatemala presently has over 185 established churches throughout the country, 45 of these are in the greater capital city area. There are also over 230 daughter churches. We have 205 licensed ministers. On a normal Sunday we will have 13,000 in attendance in our churches.

We also have one of the largest Bible Schools of the UPCI. In 2011 there are 393 students enrolled and 54 trained teachers. Our churches currently have 16 radio programs throughout the country. Our dream is to have a National Radio Station!

Some of the projects that we are currently working on are the construction of 28 new church buildings, completing the construction of the Bible School in Guatemala City and the purchase of a property for our Bible School among the Indian tribal groups. One of our newest projects is the Restoration Home for Street Children. We presently have 10 children in residence and we are excited about what God is doing in their lives.

Valuable Information in Planning for the trip:

- 1.** The rainy season begins in May and extends thru to the end of October. **Normally** it rains in the afternoons from around 2 pm to 4 pm, and it is clear the rest of the day. Notice I said 'normally'. November thru April are normally dry!
- 2.** The temperature in Guatemala City, Lake Atitlan, Antigua, etc... stays around 75 degrees all year. It will cool off in the evenings so a sweater may be in order. Our cooler time of the year is in November thru January and the warmer time is April and May.
- 3.** All travelers need to have a VALID passport. No visa is required. You will be given a tourist permit in the airport in Guatemala City. It will have no charge. You will have to pay a \$3.00 airport tax PER person when you leave Guatemala.
- 4.** The government of Guatemala does not require any immunizations for people entering the country. However, it would be wise to call your local Health office and ask what their recommendations are.
- 5.** Travelers should bring US dollars for spending. Visa and Master card are accepted in most restaurants and hotels, but not in most market areas where souvenirs are purchased. It is difficult to change Travelers checks and a fee is charged. American Express and Diners are accepted in some areas, but not everywhere. Discover card is **not** accepted in most places in Guatemala. We do have ATM

machines. It is important that the travelers inform their Credit Card companies and banks that they will be traveling to Guatemala, or some of them will end up with their cards blocked after the first time they use them in Guatemala. Most banks will do this for security reasons, as the computers will flag these cards as possible stolen cards. This happens with almost every group that comes so it is important for the travelers to take care of this BEFORE coming to Guatemala, and that they bring contact telephone numbers with them in case they need to contact their bank. The majority of ATM machines will only allow you to withdraw around \$130 US per transaction with a total of around \$500 per day. Your bank will charge an overseas transaction fee for each withdrawal, so it would be wise to check on their fees before coming. They can often charge \$5.00 for each transaction.

6. The group will want to bring some of their favorite snacks with them. Many snacks are not available in Guatemala or are very expensive. We have plenty of drinks and bottled water. Yes, the bottled water is safe here. There is no need to bring it from the US.

7. The electrical current in Guatemala is the same as the US. Group members will want to bring toiletry items with them. Most items are available in Guatemala, but not all the same brands that you have in North America. Do not fear...we have plenty of toilet paper! Should someone in the group need distilled water for breathing machines, etc... please let us know ahead of time so that we can have that available.

8. The local currency in Guatemala is the Quetzal. The exchange rate is \$1 US = Q 7.50 Quetzales. We will give you all a currency exchange card during the orientation.

9. Make sure the group understands that film, batteries, memory sticks, etc... for cameras are much more expensive here, IF they can be found. We have spent literally hours searching for simple items that could have been purchased at your local Walmart before coming to Guatemala.

10. Medications should be brought with them. We do have the basics available here, but we do not have all the variety of North America. Make sure they bring something for stomach upset, diarrhea, headaches, aches and pains, motion sickness (we will be riding on a buses and maybe a boat) or any other ailment that might pop up! We do have good English speaking doctors and fairly good hospitals should an emergency present itself. Medical Insurance cards from North America are not normally accepted here. We have to pay upfront and then send our claims to our own company. It would be important to make sure that your medical coverage extends to overseas countries. We will be traveling in the mountains and possibly by boat, so those who suffer with motion sickness should come prepared.

11. It is important to remember that you are coming to a third world country. Although Guatemala City has a lot of modern conveniences, it is not North America. Food will be different, hotels will not be perfect and most things will be different than what you are used to. Look at it as an adventure and enjoy your time. Most people here do not understand English, but they do understand facial expressions and attitudes.

12. The churches that you will visit in Guatemala will not be near as fancy as what you are accustomed to. Many of our pews are rough wood and some floors will be dirt. You do not have to dress in your 'Sunday Best'.

13. Services in the capital will be held in nicer church buildings with more contemporary style worship. Worship will be lively and from the heart. The Indian churches have more of a 'Guatemala country' flavor. Testimonies by group members should be short and upbeat. If any group members know any Spanish at all they should try to put together a short testimony, even in limited Spanish. Our people will love it! If the group would like to put together a choir that would be awesome. Try to learn a Spanish song! Songs in English are also well received, especially if they are of a faster beat or an old hymn that our people may know.

If your group has a special way they want to minister that would be great. We have had groups do mimes, sign language, silent drama, etc... Just pass it by me to make sure none of it would be offensive in this culture. The vast majority of things are well received and a blessing.

Food

This is a very hard call to make as every group is so different. Breakfast will be included in the price of your rooms, so our concern here will be your noon meal and evening meal. Normally we will eat at a fast food style restaurant or food court for the noon meal and eat a much more substantial meal in the evening. Most group members can eat on \$30 per day. It will depend on your eating habits. If group members order seafood and steak everyday then the cost will go way up. Also, the restaurants here do NOT offer free drink refills and also charge for water. If the individual asks for several drinks and then desert every meal they will not be able to stay in the budget. We recently had a group come that stayed below \$15 per day on food as they kept to a strict budget, but we have had construction teams that will spend \$50 on one meal!

It is much easier to control the food expense if the group pools their money and we limit the options available at the restaurants here. MOST restaurants in Guatemala have a hard time with separate bills at the tables, so it makes it much easier on this end if it is one bill. It is also important to note that most menus do NOT come in English!

If you have any questions or concerns please call or email.

Stan O'Donnell

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