International Trip Guide

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

STCH MINISTRIES International

Mission Trip Guide

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Important: You will need this address and phone number for the customs form:

Calle 13 #21
Urb. Vista Bella
Villa Mella, Santo Domingo
(809) 569-1239

Other Important Information

Please copy the address above and the numbers below on a small card to carry with you at all times to ensure good coordination and communication in all events. These numbers may also be given to family members to reach you in case of emergency.

- Pastor Rudy's home phone: 809-569-1239
- Russell Jerez:
  rjerez@stchm.org
  829-917-2660
- Rebeca Dinzey:
  rdinzey@stchm.org
  809-545-1975
- Joanna Berry:
  jberry@stchm.org
  361-290-6733
  (please text; calls will be returned, if need be)
- Mark Lozuk:
  mlozuk@stchm.org
  361-944-4413
- Amanda Longoria:
  alongoria@stchm.org
  361-255-8604

Dear Team Member,

We are so glad that God has led you to join a mission team with us. Since 1952 God has called STCH Ministries to minister to the needs of abused and abandoned children and strengthen families. Through a unique process, God has now chosen you to partner with our International ministry to carry this mission to the Dominican Republic. You will work with established local congregations, Christian schools, and childcare facilities so that the seeds of your ministry will continue to be nurtured long after the trip is over.

We encourage you to individually listen for God's voice on this trip, as you offer your gifts (your loaves and fishes) to meet the needs of children and families. We go with the Gospel message, but we also go to be the hands and feet of Christ as we personally demonstrate God's love.

Be prepared to offer Christ your tired body, and maybe a backache or a blister.

Be prepared to offer Christ your heart...and know God will fill it up to overflowing.

For all of this and more, together we will offer our praise. We will worship Him who is above all names and unites us beyond all barriers of custom, culture, or language.

Enclosed you will find information that will help you prepare for this trip. You will also find additional information online at **www.stchm.org/mission-hub**. If you have additional questions do not hesitate to call us or to visit with your trip coordinator.

Trip Coordinator: _____

STCH Ministries Staff

Joanna Berry, VP of Family and International Ministries
jberry@stchm.org | 361-290-6733

Mark Lozuk, Director of International
mlozuk@stchm.org | 361-944-4413

Amanda Longoria, Associate Director of International
alongoria@stchm.org | 361-255-8604

Trip Preparation

What to Pack

Because the culture of the Dominican Republic is radically different from that of the United States, and we go to Santo Domingo to serve Christ, sometimes we must adjust our behavior for the sake of our testimony in their culture. Be aware that we dress and conduct ourselves in a pretty conservative manner on the mission field, and we ask you do so as well.

Packing Checklist

- ☐ Travel Documents (Passport or Visa)
- ☐ One-week supply of clothing; remember your swimsuit (ladies, a one-piece), extra undergarments for frequent showers, work clothes, jeans, ***knee length*** shorts, and sleepwear (***no*** spaghetti straps, halter tops, or crop tops)

Here are examples of knee length shorts. Please do not wear shorter shorts, which are immodest in Dominican culture.

- ☐ Church clothes for ministry and evening services: skirts for ladies and long pants and collared shirts for men (no jeans, flip-flops, or tennis shoes at church)
- ☐ Clothing for activities with children: athletic or knee-length shorts for recreation
- ☐ Closed-toe shoes for work projects, good walking shoes for uneven terrain, and water shoes
- ☐ Towels, washcloths, soap, deodorant, shampoo, comb or brush, and sun protection (i.e. sunscreen lotion, hat, sunglasses)
- ☐ Bible and reading material and writing materials as desired
- ☐ Light cover with pillow
- ☐ Earplugs, CD player, or iPod for sleeping
- ☐ A small flashlight or night light for reading
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Hand sanitizer
- ☐ Camera, film, and batteries

- ☐ Any prescription drugs you are taking
- ☐ Personal first aid kit (band-aids, aspirin, Pepto-Bismol, etc.)
- ☐ Personal snacks
- ☐ Water shoes for swimming or wading
- ☐ Refillable water bottle provided by STCH Ministries

Carry-on Baggage Recommendations

- Change of clothes, including underwear
- Toiletries
- Prescription medications
- Any special or irreplaceable items
- Snacks for flight
- Bible and other reading materials
- This Trip Guide
- Documents (tickets and passport)

Please check with your airline for rules on size and weight limitations and extra charges for your luggage, including both checked luggage and carry-ons. We ask that you reserve space for supplies (like crafts, medicine, and school supplies) depending on the focus of your mission trip.

Never pack jewelry, cameras, and other electronic equipment in your checked bags.

Four Things to Keep in Mind as You Pack

1. Bring clothing you can wear comfortably for long hours in potentially hot weather.
2. Prepare to dress in layers, as some locations get chilly in the evenings.
3. Avoid flashy or expensive jewelry.
4. Make sure your clothing will be considered modest among Christians in the culture we are visiting as an indication of our respect and regard to them.

General Information

Food and Water

We drink only bottled water, and STCH Ministries will provide individual bottles to take with you at all times. We ask you to refill your bottle at the lodging site whenever possible. It is important to drink plenty of water to keep your body hydrated in the warm weather. Safe alternatives to bottled water include drinks made out of boiled water (coffee, tea, soup), as well as canned or bottled carbonated drinks.

When eating at the mission center, *all* food is carefully prepared and safe to eat. STCH Ministries policy is that you take all that you want to eat, but that you eat all that you take. STCH Ministries has also carefully chosen other eating locations that prepare foods safely. However, as a precaution, we recommend that you *not* eat fresh fruits or vegetables that cannot be peeled. Avoid lettuce and other leafy vegetables. Do not eat raw fish and avoid milk or dairy products, such as soft cheese. **It is strictly forbidden to eat foods from street vendors**, and we ask you to respect this restriction.

Illness

In case of illness, or even a mild case of diarrhea, please let us know immediately. We have been through this many times and feel that we can get you back on your feet and enjoying the trip in short order.

Be careful of getting too much sun, of getting overheated, or of becoming dehydrated. The sun in the tropics is more intense and can do more damage than you might think. Don't try and get your tan all at one time or you may burn. Always wear sunscreen, and seek the shade from time to time to avoid overheating. If you have had trouble with this before, be twice as cautious. Take a short rest from time to time and drink plenty of liquids to keep up body fluids. It is a good thing to wear a hat, as too much direct sun exposure can cause illness.

Symptoms of Dehydration

1. Cotton Mouth
2. Extreme thirst
3. Muscles begin to get tired

4. Legs may get cramped
5. You may feel faint

Giving of Money or Goods

It is not beneficial to the ministry to give money or goods of any kind to the Dominican people without the input of the Quisqueyana leadership and STCH Ministries staff. Please consult with leadership who know where the greatest needs are and have the experience to facilitate giving in a manner which does not take away from the Dominican Christian's dependence on God. If given through STCH Ministries, tax-deductible receipts can also be given. Again, please consult with staff to determine needs and procedures.

Security Measures

Santo Domingo is a large city of approximately 4 million people. It has all the problems of a metropolitan area, including crime. **Please observe the following safety measures at all times:**

1. **Never** go off alone, whether in ministry, sightseeing, or at lodging accommodations...*no exceptions*.
2. **Always** communicate with a staff leader before leaving. For your safety and coordination with others we must know where you are at all times. We do not leave the compound after 8:00 PM.
3. **Do not leave valuables lying around openly**, even in your room or dorm. Keep cameras, purses, wallets, etc., attached to your body at all times when you are out of your room, and generally keep them out of sight.
4. **Do not bring expensive jewelry to the field**, or even costume jewelry, that attracts attention and would label us as "rich" Americans.
5. **If you leave the compound**, leave your passport, ID, cell phone and other valuables behind.

Bathroom Procedure

Put nothing but human waste in the toilet. This means that all tissue paper, sanitary napkins, and anything made out of cloth or paper must be placed in the wastebasket that is located

beside the toilet. Because of the small size of pipe used in Latin America, failure to do this will result in a clogged sewer line and toilets that do not function at all.

Laundering Clothes

Laundry services are not available, except on a limited basis. It is more convenient to bring enough clothes for the entire trip.

Dollars and Pesos

Please place dollars you wish to convert to pesos in a plain white **unsealed** envelope, with your name and the amount you are exchanging, and turn it in to staff when requested. We will convert your dollars to pesos at the best rate offered. At the week's end, you may convert any remaining pesos back into U.S. dollars at the airport exchange houses. Some groups choose to donate remaining pesos to be divided equally among kitchen staff.

Do not bring traveler's checks. The exchange houses often will not accept traveler's checks.

Picture Taking

Take all the pictures you want, *except* of uniformed persons. This is especially important of immigration and customs officials. **Do not take their picture.** Also, those people who are police, military, or armed guards do not want their pictures taken.

Help us share photos from your trip and spread the word about mission trips to the DR. Our Facebook page can be found at facebook.com/stchm.international. We love getting tagged on social media!

Guy-Girl Relationships

Dominicans are a warm and friendly people. Due to cultural customs, and to avoid any misunderstandings, please observe the following rules:

1. We encourage you to be friendly with everyone, Dominican and American, and not with just one particular person. In showing that friendship, it is best to do so in groups and out in the open.
2. We do not allow unmarried couples to go off alone.

Telephone, Email, Internet

- Pastor Rudy's home phone: 809-569-1239
- Rebeca Dinzey's cell phone: 809-545-1975
- Russell Jerez's cell phone: 829-917-2660
- Joanna Berry's cell phone: 361-290-6733 (*please text*; calls will be returned, if need be)
- Joanna Berry's email: jberry@stchm.org (message received on location almost anywhere)
- Mark Lozuk's email: mlozuk@stchm.org
- Amanda Longoria's email: alongoria@stchm.org

Please copy these numbers on a small card to carry with you at all times to ensure good coordination and communication in all events. These numbers may also be given to family members to reach you in case of emergency. You can also have international service added to your personal cell, but please be aware that international calls are expensive.

Because our focus is to minister to the needs of the Dominican people, as well as supporting and ministering to each other as a team, we ask that you limit communication with others back home during this week. We especially request that cell phones *not* be used when we are involved in ministry events.

Limited internet service and Wi-Fi is available at IBQ – STCH Ministries Compound and at most resorts and hotels.

Travel Insurance

It is the policy of STCH Ministries that every traveler should verify that they have emergency medical insurance coverage for the Dominican Republic either through their personal insurance policy or their church.

If you do not have this coverage we can refer you to a medical resource provider.

For more information, contact Amanda Longoria at alongoria@stchm.org or 361-255-8604.

Resources Needed

Many times when churches, families and friends hear that you are going on a mission trip, they will ask how they might be able to help. **These are some examples of continuing needs for children, schools, and orphanages.** For questions about additional needs for the ministries that your mission trip is planning, please contact us.

School Supplies

- Backpacks
- Erasers (small)
- Pencils
- Crayons
- Markers
- Small individual pencil sharpeners
- Ballpoint pens or extra fine rolling pens
- Foamy paper
- Glue
- Block letters
- Spanish children books-for all ages

Clothes

Boys Sizes 2-12 yrs. old

- T-shirts
- Polo shirts
- Pants/jeans
- Shoes

Girls Sizes 3-12 yrs. old

- Shirts
- Skirts
- Shoes
- Sandals

Medicines

- Children's chewable multivitamins ***(no gummy vitamins)***
- Prenatal vitamins
- Children's Tylenol
- Children's ibuprofen

Culture Shock

Who decides what is normal or weird, friendly or rude, important or without value? Is respect earned or is it dependent on position? What is most important—the task or the relationship? The answers to these questions will depend on the beliefs and values shared by a group of people—their culture.

The Apostle Paul is recognized as the first missionary, after Christ. He must have experienced significant "culture-shock" as he carried the message of God's love and grace to formerly outcast Gentiles in other countries. His advice? Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other...and don't think you know it all!

For a successful mission trip in terms of relating to persons of another culture, take some time to learn about the history, culture, and values of the country you will be visiting.

For instance, in the Dominican Republic, did you know that twice in their history they were conquered by the Haitians? As Americans we have all studied our Civil War, and have read about the long-lasting scars of prejudice and injustice, so we might have some empathy for the results of the Haitian occupation. We might also be able to admire the way the Dominican church has overcome prejudice through Christ's love. (You will find a brief history of the DR in the next section.)

The effects of poverty on the culture are often criticized, sometimes ridiculed, by Americans who rarely have been exposed to the entrenched poverty in which the majority of people live. When the most important goal every day is to find enough food to feed your family, how important is picking up trash? If you did pick it up, where would you put it if there were no trash receptacles, and no regular trash pickup? If existence depended on a job (no unemployment compensation exists), would you mind riding in over-crowded transportation, or driving cars that look worse than those in U.S. junkyards?

If home construction loans were inaccessible, would you live in half-finished rooms with dirt floors and build one cement block at a time as you could spare a few pesos? The Dominican ingenuity, and their positive attitude while overcoming obstacles, is quite remarkable.

Two values are often misunderstood by Americans. First is the value of time. Americans value efficiency and are task-oriented. "On-time" is no more than five minutes late, and the important thing is to accomplish the task. In the Dominican culture, relationships are the most important thing, and the task is best accomplished when all are included, greeted, and hugged. "On-time" is a relative term, depending on traffic, weather, and other responsibilities (like feeding your family)!

The second value is the concept of respect. Americans believe respect must be earned. In cultures like the Dominican Republic, respect is often granted due to position—pastor, teacher, doctor, parent, or an elderly person. People are often addressed by their title—Pastor, Doctor, Professor, Hermano or Hermana (brother, sister).

Respect also influences how one dresses. When attending church, a concert or a wedding, dressing more formally is considered respectful—that means modest dresses with heels, long pants, knit polo or button-down dress shirt with tie, and dress shoes (not flip-flops and tennis shoes!)

The following Christian virtues will go a long way in helping us represent Christ in a different culture:

Honor—Treat people with respect rather than pity; view people as Christ would.

Patience—Time is valued differently; be flexible.

Humility—Realize that you have more to learn than you do to offer; adapt yourself to the leadership of the Christians who are hosting you.

Kindness—Always greet each person with a handshake or a little hug, even if you've met them before.

Respect—Avoid comparisons with our American ways. Be sensitive about comments or jokes that may seem critical. Don't just huddle with your own team members. Try to communicate—with hand gestures, learn their name, practice a basic question, and smile!

And finally, follow the advice of missionary Paul, "In humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3b-4, ES)

Country Information

Overview of the Dominican Republic

WHEN ESTABLISHED	Explored and claimed by Columbus on his first voyage in 1492, the island of Hispaniola became a springboard for Spanish conquest of the Caribbean and the American mainland. In 1697, Spain recognized French dominion over the western third of the island, which became Haiti in 1804. The remainder of the island, by then known as Santo Domingo, sought to gain its own independence in 1821, but was conquered and ruled by the Haitians for 22 years. It finally attained independence as the Dominican Republic in 1844.
LOCATION	Caribbean, eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, east of Haiti.
CAPITOL	Santo Domingo
POPULATION	10.65 million (2015 estimate)
CLIMATE	Tropical maritime; little seasonal temperature variation; seasonal variation in rainfall. Average temperatures: highs in the mid-to-upper 80's; lows in the upper 60's to low 70's year-round. Average precipitation per year: 54.5 inches Average coolest month: January Average warmest month: July Average wettest month: September
ETHNIC GROUPS	White-16%; Black-11%; Mixed-73%
RELIGIONS	Roman Catholic-95%
LANGUAGES	Spanish
CURRENCY	Dominican Peso
TIME ZONE	UTC/GMT - 4 hours; no daylight saving time (at this moment)

History

The Dominican Republic is a nation on the island of Hispaniola, part of the Greater Antilles archipelago in the Caribbean region. The western third of the island is occupied by the nation of Haiti, making Hispaniola one of two Caribbean islands that are shared by two countries. Both by area and population, the Dominican Republic is the second largest Caribbean nation (after Cuba), with 48,442 square kilometers (18,704 sq. mi.), and an estimated 10.65 million people.

The Taínos

The Arawakan-speaking Taíno moved into Hispaniola, displacing earlier inhabitants, circa A.D. 650. The Taíno called the island Kiskeya or Quisqueya ("mother of the earth"). They engaged in farming and fishing, and hunting and gathering. The estimates of Hispaniola's population in 1492 vary widely, from one hundred thousand to two million. Due to intermarriage over the centuries many Dominicans have Taíno ancestry. Remnants of the Taíno culture include their cave paintings, as well as pottery designs.

The territory of the Dominican Republic was reached by Christopher Columbus in 1492 on the first of his four voyages to the New World. Columbus claimed the island for Spain and named it La Española. In 1496, Bartholomew Columbus, Christopher's brother, built the city of Santo Domingo, Europe's first permanent settlement in the "New World." Christopher was buried in Santo Domingo upon his death in 1506.

Spain ceded the colony to France in 1795, and Haitian blacks, under Toussaint L'Ouverture, conquered it in 1801. In 1808 the people revolted and captured Santo Domingo the next year, setting up the first republic. Spain regained the title to the colony in 1814. In 1821 Spanish rule was overthrown, but in 1822 the colony was re-conquered by the Haitians.

In 1838, Juan Pablo Duarte founded a secret society called La Trinitaria, which sought the complete independence of Santo Domingo without any foreign intervention. On February 27, 1844, the Trinitarios (Trinitarians), declared their independence from Haiti. They were backed by Pedro Santana, a wealthy cattle rancher from El Seibo, who became general of the army of the Nascent Republic. The Dominican Republic's first Constitution was adopted on November 6, 1844, and was

modeled after the United States Constitution. Faced with an economy in shambles, disorder continued. In 1916, the U. S. sent in a contingent of marines who remained until 1924.

A sergeant in the Dominican Army trained by the marines, Rafaél Leonides Trujillo Molina, established a dictatorship that lasted until his assassination in 1961, thirty-one years later. In 1962, Juan Bosch of the Dominican Revolutionary Party became the first democratically elected president in four decades.

In 1996, U.S. educated Leonel Fernandez secured more than 51% of the vote. Since then, the Dominican Republic has moved toward a representative democracy.

Dominican Republic Today

The Dominican Republic has adopted economic liberalism, and has the second largest economy in the Caribbean. Though long known for sugar production, the economy is now dominated by services. The country's economic progress is exemplified by its advanced telecommunication system and modern metro transportation system. Nevertheless, unemployment, government corruption, and inconsistent electric service remain major Dominican problems. The country also has "marked income inequality."

International migration greatly affects the country, as it receives and sends large flows of migrants. (Haitian immigration and the integration of Dominicans of Haitian descent are major issues.) The total population of Haitian origin is estimated to be 800,000. A large Dominican diaspora exists, most of it in the United States, where it comprises 1.5 million. They aid national development as they send billions of dollars to their families, accounting for one tenth of the Dominican GDP.

The Dominican Republic has become the Caribbean's largest tourist destination, with the country's year-round golf courses among the top attractions. In this mountainous land is located the Caribbean's highest mountain, Pico Duarte, as is Lake Enriquillo, the Caribbean's largest lake and lowest elevation. Quisqueya, as Dominicans often call their country, has an average temperature of 26° C (79° F), and great biological diversity.

In Santo Domingo stands, among other firsts in the Americas, the first university, cathedral, and castle, the latter two in the Ciudad Colonial area, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Unique Facts

The Dominican Flag: A Unique Symbol

The flag of the Dominican Republic has a large white cross that divides it into four quarters. Two quarters are red and two are blue. Red represents the blood shed by the liberators. Blue expresses God's protection over the nation. The white cross symbolizes the struggle of the liberators to bequeath future generations a free nation. An alternate interpretation is that blue represents the ideals of progress and liberty, whereas white symbolizes peace and unity amongst Dominicans. In the center of the cross is the Dominican coat of arms in the same colors as the national flag. The coat of arms pictures a red, white, and blue flag-draped shield with a Bible and cross. The shield is surrounded by an olive branch (on the left) and a palm branch (on the right). A blue ribbon above the shield reads, "Dios, Patria, Libertad" (meaning God, Fatherland, Liberty). A red ribbon under the shield reads, "República Dominicana." Out of all the flags in the world, the depiction of a Bible is unique to the Dominican flag.

Sports

Baseball is by far the most popular sport in the Dominican Republic. The country has a baseball league of six teams. After the United States, the Dominican Republic has the second highest number of Major League Baseball (MLB) players. Some

of these players have been regarded among the best in the game. Ozzie Virgil, Sr. became the first Dominican to play in the league. A few of the others born in the Dominican Republic are: Julian Javier, Pedro Martinez, Manny Ramirez, David Ortiz, Albert Pujols, Juan Marichal, and Sammy Sosa.

In boxing, the country has produced scores of world-class fighters and several world champions. Basketball also enjoys a relatively high level of popularity. Al Horford, Felipe Lopez, and Francisco Garcia are among the Dominican born players currently, or formerly, in the National Basketball Association (NBA). Olympic gold medalist and world champion over 400 m hurdles, Félix Sánchez, hails from the Dominican Republic, as does former defensive end for the San Diego Chargers (NFL), Luis Castillo.

Illegal Haitian Immigration

Haiti is much poorer than the Dominican Republic. In 2003, 80% of all Haitians were poor (54% in abject poverty) and 47.1% were illiterate. The country of ten million people has a fast growing population, but over two-thirds of the labor force lack formal jobs. Haiti's per capita GDP (PPP) was $1,300 in 2008, or less than one-sixth of the Dominican figure. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Haitians have migrated to the Dominican Republic, with some estimates of 800,000 Haitians in the country, while others put the Haitian-born population as high as one million. They usually work at low-paying and unskilled jobs in building construction, household cleaning, and in sugar plantations.

Children of illegal Haitian immigrants are often stateless and denied services, as their parents are denied Dominican nationality because they are deemed to be transient residents due to their illegal or undocumented status, and the children, though often eligible for Haitian nationality, are denied it by Haiti because of a lack of proper documents or witnesses. A large number of Haitian women, often arriving with several health problems, cross the border to Dominican soil during their last weeks of pregnancy to obtain much needed medical attention for childbirth, since Dominican public hospitals do not refuse medical services based on nationality or legal status. Statistics from a hospital in Santo Domingo report that over 22% of childbirths are by Haitian mothers.

STCH MINISTRIES

... to all people

The STCH Ministries Mission

STCH Ministries has been caring for children and families since 1952. The mission statement that guides us each day is:

Honoring God
Reaching hurting children and families with His love and truth
Enabling others to join us in this ministry

Our vision is to show the love of Christ to each and every child and family to whom we minister. We do this by creating a culture where the needs of families are seen and met in creative and innovative ways.

STCH Ministries offers Christ-centered assistance through nine branches of our ministry:

- **Homes for Children** enables children to be cared for in a loving family home for as long or as short a time as needed.
- **Homes for Families** is a program for mothers and their children who are living in situations that threaten the stability and safety of the family.
- **Family Counseling** provides Christian-based counseling from Corpus Christi to San Antonio to Houston, and many locations in between.
- **International** gives opportunities for families, individuals, and groups to minister internationally through mission trips and humanitarian aid sponsored by STCH Ministries.
- **Faith & Work** guides people to discover God's purpose for their lives and how to fulfill that purpose through their work.
- **Faith & Finances** teaches families and individuals how to overcome financial obstacles. Using biblical principles, we help people of all ages with the practical issues of money management.
- **Pastor Care** offers private, two-day Marriage Intensive Counseling and other programs to strengthen and replenish the wellbeing of pastors and their families. We also have ordained ministers on staff who are available for pulpit supply when a pastor just needs a break. Pastor Care is here to serve the ones who are always serving others.

- **Family Support** connects needs with resources. Whenever a family has needs that can be served by one or more of our ministries, Family Support helps them understand what we offer and how to begin. For needs that are beyond the scope of our ministries, we guide families to other services that are available in the community.
- **Ministry Consulting** shares expertise and resources with ministries that are closely aligned with our purpose and values. Sometimes the best way to help a child or family is by helping another organization that is already in a position to meet their needs. Working together, we accomplish more than either one could accomplish alone.

STCH Ministries is an affiliate of Texas Baptists (the Baptist General Convention of Texas).

We do not accept state or federal funds for operation and relies solely on the generosity of individuals, churches, businesses, organizations, and foundations. ***All STCH Ministries services are made available to individuals and families regardless of their ability to pay.*** Contributions toward services are welcome and appreciated.

International

Our international work is a natural outgrowth of the STCH Ministries mission statement. First, it stretches us beyond our borders to minister to at-risk children and families. Secondly, it offers additional opportunities to strengthen families through a focus on family mission trips. Families are able to share a hands-on mission experience that will create memories and impact their lives forever.

STCH Ministries International is not a church-planting ministry. We partner with established churches and ministries in the Dominican Republic that help children and families. One of our goals is to ensure that local Christians continue to minister to those reached by our short-term mission efforts.

As an extension of our mission, International will emphasize:

1. Opportunities for mission trips that strengthen families and marriages.
2. Mission opportunities for children in care at STCH Ministries, allowing them to experience ministry with other children beyond their borders.
3. Sponsorship of children through Samuel's Fund and college students through CLEP to help them receive an education and meet specific individual needs.
4. Ministry focus on orphans and at-risk children through loving interactions, as well as providing material resources, opportunities for education, and preventive health and dental care.
5. Support for churches in their efforts to reach children and families for Christ through VBS, camps, schools, evangelistic outreach, and discipleship classes with a special emphasis on parenting and marriage issues.
6. Partnerships with Christian schools to enhance their resources and provide training for staff, so that children in their care can become skillful, independent adults prepared to make an impact in their culture for Christ.
7. Completing light construction projects and repair/maintenance to support orphanages and Christian schools.

Funds to help with international projects are greatly appreciated and may be donated online through our website (www.stchm.org/donate), or mailed to:

STCH Ministries International
4438 S. Staples St.
Corpus Christi, Texas 78411

Samuel's Fund

STCH Ministries is reaching beyond our borders to provide needed resources to Dominican children through Samuel's Fund, a sponsorship program that matches a sponsor with an at-risk child to provide them an opportunity to get an education, to be nurtured spiritually, and to have other critical needs met.

Every moment of every day in the Dominican Republic, and throughout the world, neglected children live and die without the hope of a better life. For only **$35 a month**, you can bring hope and help to a child who desperately needs it. The ultimate goal of this project is to provide the resources to help a child, age 4 through high school, develop into an independent young adult who can impact their culture for Christ and become a leader in their church.

Every sponsorship dollar goes directly to meet the needs of the sponsored child.

To sponsor a child, you may select a child from the available children listed on our website (www.stchm.org/sponsor). You may also contact Victoria Orr at 361-994-0940 to request additional information or let us know your preference of the age and gender of the child you wish to sponsor. STCH Ministries will work to match you with a child that meets your desired specifications, when possible. Rebeca Dinzey, a Dominican schoolteacher and faithful Christian, serves as our Samuel's Fund Director and administers Samuel's Fund contributions. She also counsels caregivers and tutors and lovingly follows each child's progress.

As a sponsor, you will receive pictures, drawings, and/or letters from your sponsored child. A yearly report on your child's progress in their educational, spiritual, and physical growth will also be provided. One of the special joys for many sponsors is the opportunity to visit their sponsored child in the Dominican Republic. STCH Ministries will be happy to assist you in making these arrangements.

CLEP Sponsorship Program

STCH Ministries also provides resources to young people in the Dominican Republic eager to continue their college education. We do this through the Christian Leadership and Education Project (CLEP), a sponsorship program that matches sponsors with DR college students. Each CLEP student is required to contribute a minimum of 10 hours a month in ministry to younger Samuel Fund's children as tutors and mentors.

The cost for a college education in the DR is surprisingly affordable at about $100 a month. You may become a sponsor for this full amount, or become a co-sponsor for $50 a month. As a CLEP Sponsor, you can help develop independent young adults who can impact their culture for Christ. You may also choose to send one-time contributions of any amount to the CLEP fund to help the many CLEP students who are waiting by faith for the opportunity to get their college degree.

Every sponsorship dollar given goes directly to meet the educational needs of the sponsored student. Rebeca Dinzey, our Samuel's Fund Director, also administers all CLEP contributions and follows each student's progress.

How to Give

Sponsorship gifts can be made monthly, quarterly, or annually. Contributions toward administrative costs, which make Samuel's Fund and CLEP possible, are also greatly appreciated.

To make your tax-deductible contributions online with a credit card through our website (www.stchm.org/donate), and be sure to designate that your gift is for sponsoring a Samuel's Fund/CLEP student.

Contributions may also be sent to:

STCH Ministries International
4438 S. Staples St.
Corpus Christi, Texas 78411

Daily Journal

God Speaks Into Our Lives

An opportunity to process individually or as a family.

DAY 1

"Those who know Your name trust in You, for You, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek You." Psalm 9:10

"I can do all this through Him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13

The Bible contains many stories about how God can meet needs, often in miraculous ways. A widow's depleted cooking oil lasted through a famine, 5,000 people were fed with twelve loaves of bread and two fish, water turned into wine at the wedding feast, Gideon's 300 soldiers defeated an army of 10,000--these stories and more fill the pages of Scripture. God's provision and power…always enough.

A mission trip often involves trusting God for the unknown, for obstacles or interrupted schedules and plans. God's promises come alive during times like these. We have heard, "I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me." During our mission trip will God really provide enough—love, wisdom, strength, endurance, and grace? Will we have enough medicines, translators, crafts, and other supplies? Will I be able to communicate effectively?

It is only when we follow God's leading into the unknown, that God's promises become more than pretty words on a piece of paper. As we begin to personalize His word, our faith will grow and mature.

In what ways have you experienced God's provision (God's enough-ness) during this mission trip?

Write a promise from God's Word that has become more personal to you during this trip.

DAY 2

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

Blind-walking—a description of faith, the essential ingredient without which "it is impossible to please God." The Dominicans challenge and convict us with their blind-walking ability. Looking only to God as their source, they boldly step forward in obedience to God's calling in their lives and ministry. They cannot see the resources they need and they have no assurance that their situation can change. Their obedience is not conditioned on personal risk or the guarantee of success or recognition. They blind-walk in obedience. Lacking every material resource, all they see is Jesus. God's Word memorized and hidden in their hearts becomes their daily manna, their lamp to light the next step of obedience. Rosa Elena's school, the Betesda Boys Home, IBQ church, Villa Altagracia, and Raquel's school–all examples of blind-walking!

Blind-walking is not just for Dominicans, however. STCH Ministries also blind-walks as we step forward in faith to develop and expand ministries in the USA. Certainly, International has required blind-walking as we choose partners and make decisions and commitments. Truly, everyone who chooses to go on a mission trip must blind-walk. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen."

In what ways did you have to blind-walk as you prepared for this trip, acting in faith for what you could not see?

For what do you need to trust God now?

DAY 3

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:1-2

Every mission trip requires extensive planning and preparation–for DR staff, as well as the mission trip participants. The days count down and the preparations begin on both sides of the Caribbean–transportation arrangements, purchasing supplies for construction, grocery shopping, packing, and collecting supplies for VBS games. We pray. We pack. We pray some more.

Finally, the group arrives, glassy-eyed and usually late at night after a combination rollercoaster-scary-movie ride through Dominican traffic. The first morning arrives. Sleepily, we trudge up four flights of stairs for morning devotions to the Upper Room overlooking the city, anticipating our mission activities. Behind the scenes, I can only imagine God's still, small voice as He smiles and whispers, "Now, I will begin My mission in each one of you!"

God will use our money, messages, tools, songs, VBS costumes, and stories. But His mission is hidden beneath all of those "props." God's methods can include unsettling our carefully prepared schedules with last-minute changes and humidity and sweat! God also uses special "aha!" moments, a shared meal with a Dominican family, a child's smile, music that lifts us to glory though we can't understand a word.

Through all of these things God is working His mission in our lives, rearranging our priorities, learning about patience and faith, and connecting our hearts with Dominican brothers and sisters. Through these experiences, God's mission is to change us into the image of His son, Jesus.

How is God speaking to you through this mission trip?

What do you think God might want to change or grow in your own life?

DAY 4

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household."
Ephesians 2:19

On a mission trip, people often focus on what has been accomplished—construction projects, medical clinics, people responding to the Gospel message. These are all a tremendous blessing. However, the most important and lasting accomplishment are the relationships we grow. Dark skins and pale skins often fade into one indistinguishable blur of love and intimate friendship. A Dominican man and an American man shared a bear hug and joked, "Brothers with different mothers!"

Barriers of language and culture are torn down. We discover that often words aren't needed between hearts that know Christ. "It feels like a relationship with someone I've known all my life," said one trip participant. Especially children seem to have an innate kid telepathy.

"I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God," the old familiar song says. We hope that by the end of this mission trip, your feelings will echo what one participant shared, "We came to a different country, a different culture, a people who spoke a language we couldn't understand. But I never felt like a stranger. I felt we came to be with our family." So it is for those of us blessed to know Christ and become the children of God.

Relationships like this don't end when the mission trip is over. In some ways it can be a just the beginning as we return to our homes.

What has impressed you about the people and culture of the Dominican Republic?

As a result of your experiences on this trip, how has your understanding of "the family of God" been impacted?

DAY 5

"Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you." James 1:27

The sight of God…interesting to contemplate. What does God see from Heaven's borders?

Yes, it's true He sees into the secret places of our hearts, but James reminds us that "genuine religion in the sight of God" is active. We care for orphans and widows in distress. We live an honorable life, doing good works, full of mercy and good deeds.

During one of the dental clinics last year a young girl came into the dental clinic with her hand covering her mouth. The reason became obvious when she removed her hand. One front tooth held a gaping hole filled with decay. "I can't smile anymore," as she bowed her head. It seemed a hopeless case to save that tooth. Prevailing wisdom and practice in this culture would have meant an extraction. One dentist worked for hours, cleaning out the decay, and then rebuilding the tooth. Genuine religion responded, full of mercy and good deeds.

We can often be overwhelmed by the poverty that we see on a mission trip. God, on the other hand, sees affluence--wealth of faith and love that we cannot fully comprehend. At a deep subconscious level we may sense our poverty of spirit and long for that richness in our own lives. It often happens that while serving others we become rich in faith, love, and compassion in our own hearts.

When you contemplate God's perspective, how does that impact what you have seen and experienced during this mission trip?

If you imagine God looking at your life from Heaven's borders, how might that adjust your own priorities and concerns?

DAY 6

"...as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain."
Philippians 2:16

A grandmother who had organized a family trip to include adult children and grandchildren explained her motivation for the trip. She responded, "We wanted to leave a memory that would serve as a legacy with our family—serve God and love people."

Commenting on the life of Dorretta Brown, pioneer missionary in the Dominican Republic, the CEO of STCH Ministries, Eron Green, expanded on the topic of a legacy. "The way we live will determine the legacy that we leave…[Dorretta] will leave a tremendous legacy but she is too busy living one to be concerned about that."

Living a legacy requires action. Each of us can have all the knowledge of how we should live life from a Biblical perspective, but if we do not put these commands into action we have not sufficiently lived our legacy. Be assured, everyone leaves a legacy. For good, bad, or indifferent, we all leave footprints behind us. The way we live will determine the legacy that we leave.

No matter your age, you can choose the kind of legacy you want to leave for family and friends. In a few words, write the legacy you would like to leave for your family and friends.

As you return from your mission trip, what actions do you want to take to LIVE out your legacy?

DAY 7

"...Truly You are the Son of God."
Matthew 14:33 b

A contemporary praise song by Lauren Daigle questions, *when the waters don't part, when the mountains don't move, when my prayers seem unanswered, what then?* On a mission trip, as well as in life, we may confront storms, or face uncrossable waters, or an insurmountable mountain of circumstances. The wood ordered a month previously for the construction project doesn't arrive, a tropical downpour or a power outage interrupts planned activities at the orphanage, the playground constructed with such care and effort won't fit through the gate opening!

During morning devotions Mark Lozuk, Director of International, once reflected on the storms of life and what they teach us. When the disciples were caught in the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus appeared, entered the boat, and calmed the winds and waves. It was through that storm that they recognized more about Jesus. "Truly You are the Son of God."

The downpour of rain, the wall that blocks delivery of a playground, and the obstacles and storms of our everyday lives force us to trust and rely on the God we proclaim to love and serve. Driven by need or desperation we dig deeply into His resources of grace, wisdom, strength, and patience. Our faith stretches and our trust grows.

What obstacles have you faced in your life or on this mission trip?

What has God taught you, and how has your trust and faith grown?

Journal

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