



 GCLA
GREAT COMMISSION LATIN AMERICA

MISSION TRIP GUIDE

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WHO IS GCLA?

With a mission to plant, develop, and multiply churches in the Latin American world, and a vision to plant a growing church in every major city of Latin America, Great Commission Latin America (GCLA) is an association of churches that are united with the same doctrine, central values, history and a common call to make disciples of Jesus Christ. With an emphasis to reach Latinos, GCLA has 33 churches in 11 different countries. Latin American countries that are on the brink of economic, political, social, cultural and moral collapses, this need is more crucial than ever. Latin American societies need Jesus' message of hope and transformation. GCLA builds partnerships with US churches and ministries to strengthen its local churches and transform communities with the Gospel.

Missionaries who visit GCLA churches' project sites serve in holistic community development projects aimed at restoring the quality of life of individuals and their families. These mission efforts are primarily directed to serve single mothers, the elderly, children and youth at risk.

For more information, visit english.igcla.com



MISSION TRIP POLICIES

- 1 Great Commission Latin America's (GCLA) main purpose for all mission trips is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" Matthew 28:19-20
- 2 In addition to sharing the Gospel together, we are a mission team of humble servants going to serve. We are open to God's will and His plans. Therefore, we must always be willing to be flexible. No plans are ever set in stone, and on a "typical" mission trip, one can expect plans to change rapidly and radically! Remember to be flexible.
- 3 All monetary deadlines will be communicated well in advance. If you know ahead of time that you are unable to meet a financial deadline, please tell the team leader. Due to GCLA's non-profit status, no money may be refunded after a donation is turned in for a mission trip. However, money may be transferred to another trip within one year of the most recent donation. If a person cancels within six weeks of the departure date, he or she may have to forfeit all funds raised for a mission trip since GCLA may be required to pay travel cancellation fees.
- 4 All trips require a passport. Each team member must show a current passport by the fourth training meeting. Try not to procrastinate, as this process can take weeks and even months. Delays are not uncommon. Expiration date should be at least 6 months from the date of the mission trip.
- 5 Team unity is a must for all mission teams. Therefore, please make your best effort to attend all 4 training meetings.
- 6 Respect others and present yourself humbly, modestly, and positively.
- 7 Discretion with attire, language and behavior is essential and temptation is ever present. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7.
- 8 Because we choose to be discrete, profanity is not acceptable at any time. "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." Ephesians 4:29



- 9 Personal appearance and conduct should always glorify the Lord. God made each one of us unique, and while it's OK to express our individuality, we do not want anything to distract from our emphasis on Jesus Christ and His gospel.
- 10 Complaining of any sort will not be tolerated. If you have a problem or complaint with anything or anyone, take your concerns directly to your team leader. "For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases." Proverbs 26:20
- 11 Be thankful, appreciative, and sensitive to your hosts from the local church and/or organization. A majority of what they do for your group is voluntary and may not be paid for by their church.
- 12 Unacceptable activities during missions trips include but are not limited to:
 - Using narcotics (prescription medicines are the only exception)
 - Consuming any alcoholic beverage
 - Gambling of any kind
 - Flirting, dating or attempting to start a romantic relationship of any kind
 - Use of tobacco

YOUR SIGNATURE DEMONSTRATES THAT YOU ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO UPHOLDING ALL GREAT COMMISSION LATIN AMERICA TRIP POLICIES:

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____



WHY DO WE GO ON MISSION TRIPS?

Jesus says in Mark 16:15-16, "And he said to them, "Go into all the world and uproclaim the gospel to vthe whole creation. Whoever believes and is xbaptized ywill be saved, but whoever wdoes not believe will be condemned."

Again in Matthew 28:18-20 He tells us, "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" In short, we go on mission trips because Jesus commands us to "Go!"

Notice that He didn't just tell the religious leaders and scholars, the pastors and theologians, to "GO." His message is to the Church, to the entire Body of Christ, to each and everyone of His followers ... to you and to me! The God of the universe gives us the authority to go and speak on His behalf, however insecure and hesitant we may feel about our adequacy. "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." II Timothy 1:7.

That God would entrust us to be His ambassadors is nothing short of amazing! Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:18b-20b, "...[God] gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ..." Every person who has chosen to receive the forgiveness offered by Jesus has the privilege and responsibility to be His representative, His ambassador. And every person you encounter, whether at home in Miami, FL, or thousands of miles away in Honduras, El Salvador or Dominican Republic...is deeply loved by God.



SO WHY ELSE DO WE GO ON MISSION TRIPS?

WE GO because God has blessed us immeasurably, therefore we are called to BE a blessing to others. This is God's way: Blessed to be a blessing.

WE GO as humble learners with teachable hearts.

WE GO so that we can increasingly mature into sacrificial world missions' supporters; whether through prayer, generous giving of our money, time, talents and resources; or even deciding to go long-term into the mission field.

WE GO to become influencers, who will motivate and mobilize others to come alongside God's heart for the lost and the poor.

WE GO with the confidence that we will return home forever changed.



MISSION TRIP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. WHAT FORM OF IDENTIFICATION DO I NEED?

You are required to have a passport. If you do not have one, you will need to obtain one as soon as possible. Most post offices are full service passport providers. In most cases it takes 4-6 weeks to obtain a passport, but sometimes there are delays. Plan accordingly.

2. AM I REQUIRED TO GET SHOTS AND/OR TAKE MEDICATION?

We highly recommend you see your doctor before going on a mission trip. We do ask all short-term missionaries to get a tetanus shot and all routine vaccines (ex. flu shot). You are not required to take anti-malarial medication for most trip; however, it is strongly suggested.

Specific vaccines or medications may be suggested or even required depending on which country you visit. A very valuable resource is cdc.gov. On this website, you will find specific vaccines to consider getting based on the country which you are traveling to. We recommend you check this website three months before your departure date.

3. SHOULD I TAKE INSECT REPELLENT?

Yes, bring some! It is important to take insect precautions at all times. Use an insect repellent under 28% DEET, anything more doesn't add any more protection, just skin irritation.

4. WHAT ABOUT TRAVELING SICKNESS OR DIARRHEA?

Talk to your doctor about bringing along antibiotics for traveler's diarrhea. Also visit cdc.gov/travel to find more information on safe food and water, special needs travelers, and information on insect protection. Some medicines to keep in mind when talking to your doctor are: Zithromax, Cipro, and Levoquin.

5. DO I NEED TO KNOW THE LANGUAGE OF THE COUNTRY I WILL BE VISITING?

No, but it is extremely helpful to learn basic words, sounds, and phrases such as "Yes", "No", "Please", "Thank you" and "Where is the bathroom?" Attempting to learn even a



little of the language also communicates respect to the locals. You can purchase simple, inexpensive, pocket-sized books at local book stores, Half Price Books, and on Amazon to provide some of the basics.

6. IS THE WATER SAFE TO USE AND DRINK?

The water is NOT safe to drink in most places. We strongly recommend you drink only bottled water. This includes brushing your teeth and rinsing out your mouth. We even recommend you keep your mouth closed in the shower.

7. IS WHERE I AM GOING SAFE FOR AMERICANS?

- We always travel in groups. Don't wander off alone or even with another person. Always let people know where you are and never walk around at night.
- Don't wear fancy or expensive jewelry.
- Do not carry cell phones in your back pocket.
- Make sure money/cash is never exposed.

8. WHEN IN-COUNTRY, WILL I BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE IN THE STATES? WILL I BE ABLE TO USE A CELL PHONE?

Yes. We typically stay in places that have Wi-Fi available. Most cell phone carriers will charge extra fees to use cellular data. While we do encourage you to communicate with loved ones and supporters regularly to let them know how your trip is going, we also suggest that you do not spend too much time on phones and computers, since it can detract from your overall experience.

9. IS IT OK TO GO TO PLACES ALONE AT ANY POINT DURING THE TRIP? CAN I BE ADVENTUROUS OUTSIDE THE GROUP?

Team members are encouraged to never go anywhere alone and must always inform a team leader about their whereabouts. Most, if not everything you do will be done together as a team.

Please stay with the team as much as possible and be respectful to your team leader who is in charge of and accountable for knowing where you are. This is *for the safety of the team*.



10. AM I ALLOWED TO GIVE MONEY OR GIFTS TO THE LOCALS?

Yes, absolutely! When giving gifts, particularly money, we would appreciate you speaking with your team leader and the local pastor/leader before offering the gift. The local person will best know the needs of the people you encounter, and be able to suggest what gifts may and may not be helpful or appropriate.

Although smaller, inexpensive items (toiletries, school supplies, etc.) are generally ok to give anytime, we still prefer you first check with your trip leader, as well as the local/national leader.

11. AM I ALLOWED TO RECEIVE GIFTS FROM LOCALS?

Yes, absolutely, as long as the gift is reasonable and nothing extravagant. You may find that people want to give you something to thank you for your visit and service. It communicates gratitude and respect to accept small, inexpensive gifts from the locals. However, if you are given food or beverages that are homemade, we strongly urge you to use caution, as they may not be safe to eat or drink.

12. WILL OUR TEAM HAVE A DETAILED PLAN?

Typically there is a plan for the day, but that may change depending on what comes up on any given day. Last minute changes should be expected and flexibility is very important no matter where you go. Keep in mind that other cultures view time different than we do. For example, your definition of being punctual may be much more strict and literal than the definition of punctuality in some cultures. Remember where you are.

13. WHAT KIND OF TRANSPORTATION WILL I BE USING IN-COUNTRY? I.E. MOTOS, MOTORCYCLES, BUSES, ETC.

Typically , we travel in vans and buses. We rarely use public transportation because it may not be safe. We do not want trip participants to use public transportation during free time unless your trip leader has deemed it safe.



14. CAN I BRING ELECTRICAL DEVICES, I.E. HAIR DRYERS, ELECTRIC RAZORS, C-PAP MACHINES, ETC.

Yes. We will inform you well in advance whether you will need a converter. We also recommend using caution bringing computers, tablets, and other expensive electronic devices, as they are typically worth much more in Latin America than what you paid for them in the U.S. Generally speaking, if you can live without it, do not bring it. When deciding what items to bring on the trip, keep in mind that the local church is not liable for lost or stolen personal property.

15. WHAT IF I HAVE FOOD ALLERGIES OR AM A PICKY EATER?

Please let your team leader know in advance and in-country if you have food allergies so we can accomodate your food needs for all meals. We ask that you be open to trying the food that is prepared for the team. In some cases, locals are volunteering their time to make meals for mission teams.

**FUNDRAISING STRATEGY****LETTERS AND FOLLOW-UP CALLS**

As you place your trust in God and carefully implement each of these four steps, you will see success!

I. NAMESTORM

Start by developing an initial list of potential ministry partners. As with brainstorming, in namestorming, there is one cardinal rule—anything goes. No name is unqualified. Just erase any clouds of doubt from your mind and let there be a “blue sky.” Don’t decide for an individual whether or not they are interested. If you limit yourself to those you feel will or can give, you may be prematurely disqualifying those God wants to become partners. Later you will need to prioritize whom to contact first, but for now, don’t disqualify anyone.

You may be thinking you could never generate more than a handful of names, but research has shown the average individual has a personal network of at least 400 friends and acquaintances. So you could easily be able to develop a list of at least 50 potential ministry partners. For instance, you have probably had at least a dozen schoolteachers alone. If you’ve ever had a toothache or a cavity, you know a dentist. If you’ve ever been sick, you’ve been to the doctor. As you think about the people in your life, there will be numerous sources of people to contact that will come to mind.

As you namestorm, think through various professions, businesses, and places for any friends and acquaintances that you may have. To aid you, we have provided over 75 thoughts provokers in the following list. Take plenty of time—at least half an hour—to mull over these categories.

After taking one hour or so for free-wheeling “namestorming” mark next to each contact, either “T” for a top priority, or “M” for medium, or “L” for low priority. These designations refer to your evaluation of how likely they are to give. Start by contacting your top priority people first, and then work through your medium and then the low priority people.

Great! Now you know how to start the process.

**LIST OF POTENTIAL MINISTRY PARTNERS**

Aunts and Uncles	Apartment manager	Foundations that give to charities
Banker		Fraternity brothers
Beautician		Friends
Bible bookstore owner/Manager	Bible	Friends of your parents
Study Groups Members	Brothers and Sisters	High School and college friends
Christian businessmen		Insurance agent
Church Directory		Missionary Societies
Church friends		Neighbors
Church missionary budget committee		Neighbors at former residences
Civic clubs		Nieces and nephews
Coaches from your youth		Parents
Cousins		Parent’s associates
Dentist		Parent’s employers
Dentist’s nurse		Pastor(s)
Doctor		People you led to Christ
Doctor’s nurse		Relatives
Downtown businesses		Restaurant manager and workers
Eye doctor		Retired people
Family attorney		Sororities
Former customers		Sisters
Former employees		Sunday school class members
Former employer and co-workers		Tax preparer
Former college professors		Teammates
		Those who have influenced you spiritually
		Veterinarian
		Wedding and Christmas Card lists

II. WRITE A FUNDRAISING LETTER

A. You can see much success by typing a personal letter representing the GCLA short-term mission trip. Then make a personal phone call to ask each potential ministry partners to support this GCLA-sponsored mission trip. Remember to tell donors that you are raising support for GCLA to send you on a mission trip. (As opposed to raising personal funds for you to go overseas.)

B. When writing a ministry team letter, the personal segments in the sample letter which follows obviously must be rewritten. However, the body of the letter should be copied substantially “as is” (see the sample letter below). The following are items that all ministry team letters should include:

1. Give your letter a **specific date**. (Not “June, 2003”)
2. Your **greeting** should be handwritten (unless you normally type your correspondence) and to a person—not “Dear Friend!”
3. **Acknowledge** your relationship with the reader. What can you say that will help the person identify with you? Refer to your last visit or letter, business concerns, sports interests, known struggles, hobbies, etc., to help him/her say, “I know who you are!”



4. Bring your reader **up to date** on what you're doing.
5. **Educate** your reader. Explain what the short-term mission trip is, the purpose of the trip, why you have decided to participate, and what you hope to accomplish.
6. **Explain** the need. The purpose of your letter is to give your reader an opportunity to help. Make sure you explain exactly what is needed. GCLA needs to raise funds to send people like you overseas on mission trips. We will be providing your team with detailed information on what you will be doing, the difference that your trip will make and how that fits in a larger scale strategy to reach the local community.
7. Then **involve** your reader by asking them for specific action. Specific action includes not only your request, but also your commitment to follow up by telephone.
8. Acknowledge your relationship again with an emphasis on thanks, appreciation, gratitude, partnership and commitment. This ties your opening acknowledgment to your request.
9. **Close** the letter and sign each one personally.
10. **Add** a "P.S." Commit yourself to a specific action you will be taking. Example: "I'll be calling you in a week, if I don't hear from you by then. I look forward to hearing from you soon." If you are sending a printed letter, hand write your P.S.
11. **Emphasize** the text. Use parentheses and underlining to emphasize the most important parts of your letter (i.e. GCLA's needs, your request and the time and date you will call them for a decision).
12. **Enclose** a self-addressed, stamped return envelope for a quick and easy response. Research shows that the easier you make it, the higher the response rate will be. So, make sure to include this critical element.
13. Enclose a response device that allows them to choose an amount to support GCLA at. Also, have it include a space for their name and address. GCLA has provided one for you to use, if you'd like.

C. Things to avoid when writing ministry team letters:

1. Never apologize for writing or calling a person whom you wish to involve in helping meet a need. You are providing them with an opportunity to be involved in a spiritual ministry through their resources. Remember, the giver needs to give far more than any person or cause needs to receive a gift. "Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account" (Philippians 4:17). When you apologize, you end up appearing to be a beggar rather than a child of the King obeying the Great Commission.
2. Never ask for a general amount, without a time frame in which to take action. You should challenge people to give a specific gift, or at least give them a specific range. The specific challenge of \$100, \$75 or \$50 or whatever amount is comfortable has been included in this material. Never ask for less than this challenge. If people want to support GCLA but can't give at least \$50, they will let you know and not be offended by your request.

SAMPLE GCLA FUNDRAISING LETTER

Date (today's date)

Dear Mr. And Mrs. Johnson,

How are you? I thought of you a lot this last week. How was Leslie's wedding? I sure wish I could have been there. I'm looking forward to seeing the pictures when I get home next month.

As you may be aware, I am living in Columbus, Ohio and working at Nationwide Insurance Company as a computer programmer. I am also very involved with my church and spreading the good news about Jesus Christ. Over the last year I've gained a strong desire to go overseas to tell others about Christ.

This summer I will finally get an opportunity. I will be going to _____ on a Short-Term Mission Trip sponsored by Great Commission Latin America (GCLA). The purpose of this trip is to share the gospel in a community where the local church is involved in the development of the families. I will also have a chance to work serving and ministering to children who are part of a Malnutrition Recovery Program. Many people in Latin America are hungry for spiritual growth and this trip will provide an incredible opportunity to partner and support the local church on this endeavor.

In order to make this possible, I need to develop a ministry team for GCLA – a group of ministry partners who will join with GCLA and myself in this effort. I am responsible to raise at least \$(amount). In order to meet this need as quick as possible, I am trusting the Lord to provide people who would like to invest gifts of \$100, \$75, \$50 or whatever amount is comfortable.

Mr. And Mrs. Johnson, will you prayerfully consider giving GCLA to meet the need and send me on this Short Term Mission Trip? You will be helping influence people for Christ by helping to send me to (name of the country). I must complete my financial support responsibilities by (date). I have enclosed a response card with information about how you can help GCLA meet this need, and also a stamped self-addressed envelope. I will give you a call in two weeks to see what you have decided. I can answer any questions you may have then.

I appreciate your friendship. Thank you for your interest in GCLA and my desire to serve the Lord in this ministry opportunity.

Sincerely,
(Your Signature)

P.S. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Gifts to support mission trips sponsored by Great Commission Latin America, Inc. (GCLA) are tax-deductible. Checks must be made out to Great Commission Latin America. The donor may list a "mission trip" and a "missionary" by writing the names in the check memo (example: El Salvador mission trip- Marc Holtey). Should the mission trip become over-funded, GCLA will use the excess funds for mission activity to be determined by GCLA. In the unlikely event that the mission trip is changed or canceled, or the missionary is unable to make the mission trip, GCLA will use the collected funds for mission activity to be determined by GCLA.



III. THE FOLLOW-UP PHONE CALL

A. The degree of your success in the letter-writing strategy depends on your follow-up phone call. The follow-up phone call is critical for three reasons:

1. Most people suffer from “Information Overload.” Consequently, mail is easy to ignore or forget.
2. Your time frame. You have a lot to raise in a short period of time. A follow-up phone call will help you get decisions as quickly as possible.
3. Courtesy to potential ministry partners. Many people will want to help GCLA, but won’t unless you call to answer questions and to get their decision. Your phone call takes the burden of response off them and puts it on you.

B. Be sure to establish a specific time to get their decision.

C. When you call, ask directly for a response. Then be quiet. Let the person respond. Talking more at this point will distract them from making a decision.

D. When you call, if a potential ministry partner has not made a decision, set another time to call within a day or two.

E. If an individual decides to become a ministry partner, arrange a time to stop by and pick up their gift. If they live out of town, ask them to mail it to you in the self-addressed, stamped envelope you included in your letter.

F. If you arrange to have a ministry partner send you a gift and it doesn’t come, you will need to follow up with a phone call.

G. A ministry partner’s check must be made payable to Great Commission Latin America.

H. After getting a person’s decision, always ask them to refer you to other people who might be interested in your short-term mission trip.

SAMPLE CALL FOR A DECISION

1. Introduce yourself.

“Hello, Mr./Ms._____. This is _____ calling. How are you?” Let them respond. “That’s great. By the way, have I called at a convenient time?” Take a few moments to establish rapport, but be politely brief.

2. Explain your ministry training plans.

“As I mentioned in my letter, I am planning to go on an overseas mission trip, sponsored by Great Commission Latin America.”

3. Share what you hope to see God do on the mission trip. 4. Be very specific to ask for a definite response.

“In my letter, I mentioned that I’m in the process of developing a ministry team for GCLA for the short-term mission trip to_____. I wrote asking you to consider becoming a GCLA ministry partner by investing in the short-term mission trip



to_____that I will be going on. I was wondering how God has led you in being able to give?” Let them respond, even though the silence may seem uncomfortable for you. People will expect you to ask because of your letter.

IV. HOW TO GET ADDITIONAL NAMES

You must continue to add names to your list of potential ministry partners. Ask everyone you contact to give you names and telephone numbers of people they know that might be interested in GCLA’s ministry.

A. Who to ask for additional names/referrals: Ask everyone you contact. Both those that join GCLA’s ministry team and those that are unable to give will probably want to help in this way.

B. When to ask for additional names: Don’t ask anyone for additional names until they have first made a decision about joining GCLA’s ministry team. If you don’t wait, your request for other names will distract them from making their decision. BUT do ask everyone at the time they give you their decision, whether their decision is yes or no. If you get a decision on the phone, you will ask for additional names, right then, over the phone. If you get a decision while on an appointment, ask for additional names right then, in person.

C. How to ask for additional names:

1. Get your pencil out and be ready to write.

2. Say: “Mr./Mrs._____, I need your help in another way. You can help me complete my GCLA ministry team responsibilities by giving me names of other people you know that I may contact.”

3. Lead the conversation by mentioning potential categories (i.e., “What are the names of some friends or business acquaintances you know; possibly you know some people from church.” Ask them to get out their church, office, and any club directories they have. When they start to slow down, probe their memory by mentioning other categories of people you think they may know. Use the categories listed in the “Namestorming” section.

Note: Do not say, “Do you know anyone” or “Can you tell me the names of...” but say, “What are the names...” and “Who are people that...”

4. Assure the individual that their friends may not be able to help financially but they may know others. This gives the individual more freedom to refer you to others.



V. THANK YOU NOTES

- A. Send a thank-you note the same day you receive their decision or their gift.
- B. Be sure to keep a record of this so you'll know to whom you've sent one and so you'll not send two to the same person.
- C. The thank-you note is an important part of developing a relationship with a ministry partner. It should be a personal, handwritten note. Do not print or photocopy a form letter. Always include something personal in your note to show specifically how GCLA and Christ's cause has been benefited by their generosity. You owe them a good thank-you note.

SAMPLE THANK-YOU NOTE

Date (Today's date)

Dear (Ministry Partner's Name,

Thank you for your gift to Great Commission Latin America. Your generosity helps missionaries, like myself, go on GCLA short-term mission trips. Your prayers for me and financial gifts to GCLA are greatly appreciated. Your investment will have far-reaching results. It will allow GCLA to send me as a short-term missionary to be part of reaching the world for Christ. Please join me in praying that God would continually deepen my commitment to the cause of Christ. Your prayers are most important. Thanks again for your gracious help.

Sincerely
(Your Signature)



MISSION TRIP INFO

In order to maintain the best possible communication, please fill out the information provided by your team leader.

TEAM LEADER: _____

CELL: _____

EMAIL: _____

MISSION TRIP COST: _____

DEADLINES: _____



GCLA
GREAT COMMISSION LATIN AMERICA