



Journey to Haiti: 2012

July 12-July 20, 2012

-Background

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere and one of the poorest and most densely populated countries in the world. Haiti means "high place" in the native Arawak language and is about 70% mountainous. Most of the people are subsistence farmers who live on their own plot of land and try to grow enough food to feed themselves and their family. In the towns and cities, poverty and unemployment is very high. The roads are in poor condition and there is little electricity or other infrastructure. The Haiti earthquake has made matters even worse, particularly for residents of Port-au-Prince.

A trip to Haiti can be a life-altering experience. For those travelers who have not been to a "third world" country, the living conditions can be surprising or even shocking. Nevertheless, in Pignon and other rural areas where participants will spend most of their time, the living conditions are marginally improved and the people are very friendly and relaxed. Time seems to slow down, and the beauty of the country and the people is evident.

-Haiti Outreach

The vision of Haiti Outreach is "For Haiti to Become a Developed Country," with clean water and sanitation, sufficient food and medical care, and educational and economic opportunities for the people. Haiti Outreach's mission is "To collaborate with the people of Haiti to build and maintain community-initiated projects that advance their development."

Although Haiti became popular with relief organizations after the earthquake, Haiti Outreach has been operating since 1997 helping Haitian communities create sustainable development projects. The principal project foci are clean water, education, and economic development. Haiti Outreach has drilled wells and built water systems benefiting over 110,000 people. These water systems help prevent disease.

In addition to clean water, Haiti Outreach has helped two communities build and furnish schools. The organization has also partnered with Fonkoze, a Haitian micro-lending bank, to create lending opportunities for poor women in rural communities. This trip's focus will be primarily a cross-cultural immersion with a fair mix of service and heavy emphasis on teaching students about sustainable community development. Haiti Outreach will build houses but would prefer not to because houses benefit one family or individual. Instead Haiti Outreach concentrates its efforts on projects that benefit a community, like wells and schools. When asked if we could help build a school, Dale Snyder the Executive Director replied "no, because that would take away too many local jobs." Students would participate in projects with the local economy in mind. The organization's commitment to sustainable and community-initiated and owned development since 1997 and experience leading week-long trips for groups sets them apart from other organizations.

All Haiti Outreach trips are guided by an experienced American who has been to Haiti many times before and safety is a main priority.

-Goals of the trip

- To experience God already present in the people and culture of Haiti
- To learn more about sustainable community development in the third world
- To fully experience Haitian culture and share what we've learned back home
- To serve in a way that is responsible, promotes dignity, and is in keeping with the goals of Haiti Outreach and the needs of our Haitian community hosts

-Important Dates

Currently	Applications are available in the Youth Office
May 22, 6:00p.m.	Student/Parent information meetings
Oct. 6, 6:00p.m.	(attend one info meeting)
Oct. 17	Applications due to Barb at SOTV for priority consideration (with \$200 deposit)
Nov. 2	Final deadline for applications
Nov. 6, Noon-2p.m.	Pre-Trip Meeting at SOTV
Jan 14, 2012	Hunger Meal/Fundraiser
Feb 1, 2012	\$500 due or equivalent in fundraising
April 1, 2012	\$500 due or equivalent in fundraising
June 1, 2012	\$500 due or equivalent in fundraising
July 1, 2012	Remaining balance due
July 12, 2012	Depart
July 20, 2012	Return

-Cost

Cost is around \$1800-\$2000 per participant. This cost fluctuates with the cost of air fare and includes everything (meals, transportation, housing, etc.) except meals while traveling there and back. This cost window also reflects costs for passports, trip insurance, and pre-trip meetings.

* Cost also fluctuates if the group will be funding its work project (suggested \$2,000).

-Fundraising

Regular summer trip fundraising opportunities will be open to Haiti trip participants (this includes pizza). Additional fundraising opportunities will be planned specifically for the Haiti trip.

-Service Work

While the main focus of our trip will be to be immersed in a culture that is different than our own, our group will also get to participate in one of Haiti Outreach's projects. Projects other groups have done include: building a concrete block well housing, building school desks, household repairs, and painting. Projects vary based on community requests but the hope is to work alongside Haitians. The group will also visit various different development sites, experience how Haitians live, and the town (including churches, schools, businesses, the market, etc.).

"Our group painted a school everyday during our trip. Although a good half of the time painting was really spent playing with local children who would come in droves to play with us."
-Rev. Donald Hanna, St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Minnetonka, MN

-Packing

We will go over a recommended packing list during our pre-trip meetings. Haiti is a tropical location. However, we will be working and staying on a plateau between mountain ranges about 1,000 feet above sea level. Daytime temperatures will range from 80-95 degrees Fahrenheit but nights are usually pleasantly cool. A sweatshirt and long pants are even recommended for evenings.

Do not pack extra items to give as gifts to Haitians. This includes but is not limited to clothing, candy, and money. This is not acceptable behavior. It is disrespectful to our Haitian hosts and goes against the Haiti Outreach vision and mission, teaches recipients to beg, and is very unfair to give to some who beg and not to others who know it is not right to beg.

-Travel

Our trip will be a total of nine days (Thursday to the following Friday). We will fly to and stay the first night in Miami. The next morning we will fly to Port-au-Prince, transfer by cab to a smaller airport and take propeller planes to the grass landing strip in Pignon. Once in Pignon, travel is by walking or by truck. When traveling by truck, most of the group stands in the back, holding on to secure bars. A few travelers usually can travel inside the cab.

-Trip and Emergency Evacuation Insurance

Haiti Outreach does not require trip or emergency medical insurance. However, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church does. After researching, the youth staff will have recommendations and cost comparisons available to travelers.

-Accommodations

We will be staying at Haiti Outreach's volunteer house known as "Kay Visite" (pronounced ki ve-zeh-tay), Haitian Creole for "Guest House" which was built in 2008-2009. It has 8 guest rooms, each with its own separate bathroom with a shower and two single beds. There is a kitchen and dining area, a living room/gathering area, and patio areas. It is located on Haiti Outreach's property near the airport, adjacent to Haiti Outreach headquarters building, and within walking distance to the town of Pignon.

Haitian cooks prepare three meals a day for guests. Although the guest house has solar panels/electricity and running water, conservation is strongly encouraged as very few people in Haiti have these luxuries. Bed and bath linens are furnished.

-Safety

First and foremost, Haiti Outreach is aware that the U.S. State Department has issued a travel warning for Haiti. This has been the case for many years, even before the earthquake. The UN has around 9,000 troops stationed throughout the country, including a small force in Pignon, to keep the peace. This is common in many third world

countries where resources are scarce and there is a visible gap between the haves and have-nots. Haiti Outreach's focus on the safety of groups is a main priority.

Haiti Outreach has full-time staff and modern communications that help them stay informed of events around the country. If Haiti Outreach staff should feel there is a threat to any of the travelers, extreme caution will be used to keep the group safe. Also, please note that this trip has been logistically arranged to avoid much time in Port-au-Prince where most crime or disruption occurs.

Haiti Outreach has hosted many student groups and has a lot of experience in knowing what to do and not to do. Haiti Outreach and Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church have very strict rules about students being on their own/unaccompanied. There is to be an adult leader with each group of students. Haiti Outreach has a security guard working on its property 24/7. Our group will also be accompanied by an employee of Haiti Outreach at all times (this staff person also stays in the guest house). Participants are given keys to their rooms, the doors remain locked while the group is away, and people not connected to Haiti Outreach are not allowed on the premises. Upon arrival, participants leave passports in a safe in the main building. For additional safety, curfew for the guest house is 10pm. More in-depth training will be given to trip participants during pre-trip meetings. In Haiti Outreach's experience, residents of Pignon treat Americans very respectfully and are excited to have groups in their community.

"I don't think that anyone in our group ever felt unsafe in anyway. We were able to spend a lot of time in Pignon and were given a lot of freedom in determining what we wanted to see and so forth. We have a lot of great memories including joining in with a church band for an impromptu jam, a Sunday church service, and visiting a local orphanage (I highly recommend this visit)."

Rev. Donald Hanna, St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Minnetonka, MN

-Medical

A trip to Haiti can be physically tasking at times. The primary mode of transportation is walking. If you have concerns, consult your physician. On your trip application, there is a page relating to medical issues. Make sure you pack enough of your prescription medications.

No shots are required to go to Haiti, but many travelers choose to be inoculated or take pills for various potential diseases that are more common for a tropical climate. Please make sure all of your vaccinations are up to date, especially tetanus, and inform your doctor of your trip plans at least 3 months before departure so they can make recommendations. Also, please discuss management of any ongoing health issues and how best to deal with them on the trip with your physician. Some trip participants choose to take malaria antibiotics (malaria exists but is not prevalent), some take hepatitis shots (A & B), and some take typhoid shots or pills.

The cholera outbreak following the earthquake has weakened but is also centralized in Port-au-Prince and other overpopulated areas. We are going to great lengths to bypass much time in Port-au-Prince and the majority of our time will be spent in rural Haiti.

Most diseases/bacteria are avoidable using common sense rules about the drinking water, eating, and washing hands/using hand sanitizer before putting anything in your mouth. These precautions will be gone over at length during our orientation meetings.

The SOTV staff person and all adults on SOTV summer trips are trained in First Aid and CPR. In case of emergencies, there is an international phone at the Haiti Outreach headquarters and the trip adults will have a cell phone with international calling capabilities. Also, Pignon has a hospital that is better-equipped than most in Haiti.

-Conduct

We expect trip participants to behave in a way that positively represents the United States of America, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, Haiti Outreach, and Jesus Christ. In keeping with SOTV's other summer trips, students are expected to adhere to a dress code and SOTV's no drugs, alcohol, or sexual misconduct policies. If the SOTV Staff Leader should deem a participant's behavior unacceptable, that participant may be sent home at their own cost.

In addition, we will be guests of Haiti Outreach and the Pignon community. During pre-trip meetings we will go over certain cultural expectations as well as several Haiti Outreach Guest House rules. The most notable rule at this point is that you may want to bring gifts to give away while in Haiti. Do not do so. As you walk around town, many people will try to get you to buy things as well. Politely say no thank you or you can let them know that on the group's last day you will be able to purchase items to bring home. When asked for money or gifts, simply but politely say "no." Haitians work very, very hard for their money. Just giving money away diminishes the value of their work. Your actions can be resented, especially by adults, even if you mean to be helpful. Also, do not give out your email address, phone number, or contact information unless you really have an honest commitment to stay in communication and know that you WILL be contacted over and over by them (sometimes to ask for money or other forms of assistance).

-Development vs. Relief

The goal of relief aid is survival following a major disaster, including war, famine/drought, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, etc. Relief is intended to be a short-term solution to provide people with medical attention, shelter, and food while infrastructure is rebuilt. The danger with relief aid, although necessary, is that if it is not coupled with development, relief must continue and creates a cycle of dependency. For example: after the earthquake in Haiti, millions of dollars poured into the country to provide temporary shelters and meals to those affected. Relief aid has continued for so long that people are dependent on it for daily life—little has been done to help people get back to work or improve infrastructure so Haitians can purchase their own food and shelter. Without a job or income, people remain in need of emergency assistance.

The goal of development is to help communities develop long-term solutions to problems including education, clean water, economic vitality, medical care, and infrastructure. This is a long-term process that utilizes people as the participants in order to foster ownership by the community. Haiti Outreach's embodiment of development is what makes them stick out from other organizations. In accordance with Haiti Outreach's development model, the request for assistance must come from the people.

Frequently Asked Questions:

-Why not just emphasize the Tanzania trip?

SOTV's connection with Tungamalenga, Tanzania, is a wonderful partnership, and traveling there is an experience of a lifetime! The high cost (~\$4000) of that trip, however, is a huge barrier for participation. Furthermore, although students highly value building relationships with partner churches and brothers and sisters in Christ, many students also want to participate in an act of service while participating in a cross-cultural immersion.

-Why travel to Haiti when there is plenty to do in Dakota County?

Serving locally is a top priority of SOTV. For this reason, the Haiti trip will happen during a summer when a Minneapolis service trip will also be offered. In addition, we have students who regularly participate throughout the year in serving others locally through HYPE, Summer Stretch, A Night on the Street, LSS Holiday Shop, Feed My Starving Children, Serve Together events, and much more.

Several of our trip goals can only be met by traveling to another country:

- this unique cultural immersion will transform participants' lives in ways that staying in Minnesota would not—and give them the opportunity to see that (and how) God is present and active in Haiti
- *experiencing* sustainable community development—rather than simply reading or hearing about it—will be life-changing
- upon returning from Haiti and in light of what they learn about sustainable community development, participants might help evaluate the effectiveness of current service practices and partnerships through SOTV

-Why not just stay local and give the money you would spend on airfare to Haiti Outreach?

Haiti Outreach could definitely do a lot with the money we will be spending on airfare. However, it is our belief that a one-time gift of money might not go as far as a one-time experience that could lead to a life transformed, and that, in turn, keeps serving others (through Haiti Outreach or otherwise). The cost of airfare is a small price to pay for an investment we believe will yield huge dividends in faith growth and students coming back empowered and inspired by the Holy Spirit to create and engage in sustainable community development in our own neighborhood.

Also, part of donating responsibly includes “due diligence.” This means visiting their work project sites, meeting with their staff, enjoying a meal together, and seeing how God is working through them to help others.

-What extra things should participants pack to give away in Haiti?

Nothing. In keeping with Haiti Outreach's goal of sustainable development that fosters independence, a group giving away items creates dependence on free sources of needed materials and further harms the local vendors who may be selling such items.

-What is the food like?

Participants will eat some Haitian and some American foods prepared by Haiti Outreach's cooks at the guest house.

"The food there was wonderful. The kitchen staff did a great job. If you have any vegetarians in your group they might want to bring a little something extra along. We had two on the trip (myself being one) and we ended up eating a whole lot of toast. Most of us did have a little bit of an upset stomach at one point in the trip or another, so you might want to bring something to counter the foreign buggies that you run into in a new place."

Rev. Donald Hanna, St. Luke Presbyterian Church

-Is the drinking water safe?

Drink the water that the Haiti Outreach staff tells you to drink and you will be fine. The water in the guest house is very safe and participants are advised to fill water bottles at the guest house to bring with them throughout the day.

-Are there poisonous snakes or spiders?

There are no poisonous snakes but in the region we will travel to there are poisonous spiders. However, none are deadly.

-What is the average temperature?

Summer gets around mid-80s to 90s. Humidity is similar to a summer in Minnesota.

-What else will we get to do while in Haiti?

We will visit several of Haiti Outreach development sites. Haiti Outreach staff will also lead us in discussion about community development. Devotions will be facilitated by the SOTV staff person and participants. A highlight for other groups who have gone to Pignon is visiting the market, an orphanage, attending worship on Sunday, and interacting with the droves of children who follow them around.

-Helpful links for further exploration

Haiti Outreach: www.haitioutreach.org

Podcast with Dale Snyder, Haiti Outreach Executive Director:

<http://theconversationhub.com/episode-34-dale-snyder-and-haiti-outreach/>

Water.org video from Haiti: www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9xFCV-fjZ4

Tony Campolo on Short Term Mission Trips:

http://www.tonycampolo.org/podcast/tonycampolo_podcast.xml, click on "Campolo – Short Term Mission Trips"