

## Preparing and Packing for My Week In La Plata, Puerto Rico with MDS

ACC, MDS and La Plata Mennonite Church Joint Rebuilding Project

### Volunteers

Thanks for responding to God's nudging to support our brothers and sisters in La Plata, Puerto Rico, as they work to try to rebuild their beloved children's education building that was destroyed by Hurricane Maria, in 2017. Below are some things to think about and prepare for as you get ready for this experience.

### Preparing States Side – Registering with MDS & Buying Tickets:

1. Send the following information to your Crew Leader for the purchase of the plane tickets and to ensure that you are registered with MDS for this trip (MDS provides the liability insurance umbrella for this trip, but not the medical insurance: you provide that):
  - a. Your full name, as seen on your Drivers' License
  - b. Date of Birth
  - c. Your home Church
  - d. Email address
  - e. Phone number (preferably cell phone if you have one)
  - f. Your home address
  - g. Have you volunteered with MDS before?
  - h. Your level of experience in construction work (experienced, home owner, former MDS volunteer, little to no construction experience)
2. Talk with your Crew Leader (CL) to see if the CL was registering you or if you are to register yourself. If you need to register, you can go to this link to register:  
**<https://mds.mennonite.net/volunteer-registration-form/>**
  - a. As you complete the section "**Indicate where you would like to go (1<sup>st</sup> choice)**" please choose "**Other**" (at the bottom of the list: ignore the Puerto Rico weeks since that is other work in PR); Do this for your 2<sup>nd</sup> choice as well.
  - b. Then as you get to the bottom of the form and to the "**Comments**" box, please:
    - i. Indicate that you are "**signing up for ACC & La Plata MC Project in Puerto Rico**";
    - ii. List the week (or weeks) you are interested in volunteering;
    - iii. Indicate if you want to "work" or be the 'Crew Leader/Site Coordinator' for this time;
3. MDS (Bob Brubaker) will be sending you (by email or snail mail) some material to read, and a couple forms that you need to process, sign and return to them: code of conduct, medical waiver, skills rating form, travel reimbursement form (to be completed after the trip: keep your plane ticket receipt!)
4. Talk with your CL about your plane tickets. If you are all going from one general area/Lancaster, the CL will choose the flights to and from Puerto Rico. Then you will need to find out if the CL plans to buy all the tickets together or if the CL expects you to buy your own tickets. Please fly on the same flight if at all possible, or arrive in San Juan at similar times (if coming from different parts of the USA). Keep in mind that MDS will reimburse you for \$200 towards your flight to San Juan and back again, but you (or your church?) will have to pay for the remaining cost of these tickets. If you buy your own tickets, please send your flight itinerary to your CL so the CL knows when to expect you to arrive in PR.

5. Arrange with your CL about your trip to and from the airport, keeping in mind you want to be at the check-in counter at least 2 hours before the flight. Arrange for long term-parking if you need to leave your car at the airport for this week.
6. Confirm your flights at the earliest 24 hours early. You can print out your boarding pass, send it to your cell phone or pick it up at the check-in counter as you check-in your bags.

## **Preparing States Side – Packing for the Week**

1. Contact your credit cards and let them know that you will be in Puerto Rico for the week, so you can use it there if you like: they use US currency and credit cards in country;
2. Contact your Medical Insurance to also verify if they provide coverage while you are in Puerto Rico since MDS does not cover your medical insurance while there;
3. Let your CL know of any medicines you take regularly, any allergies you have (food, medical and/or others) and any food restrictions while in Puerto Rico.
4. Pack the following:
  - Drivers' License: this is your ID for the plane ticket
  - Your medical card
  - one-set of church clothes for their Sunday service: guys, no short pants, ladies, no pants
  - 5 sets of working clothes: *no shorts shorter than your knees and no sleeveless shirts (short sleeves are ok)*
  - 2-6 sets of leisure of clothing for the evenings and the trip home
  - Sleeping clothes
  - Personal bathroom items and medications
  - Sunscreen for the work place
  - Bug spray for the evenings
  - Hats to work with, to keep the sun off
  - Keep electronics to a minimum: the electricity and plugs are just like here in the US
  - Bring your devotional materials and journal
  - A light jacket for the mornings
  - Rain jacket or small umbrella in case of rain your week
  - Your labeled water bottle for the job site
  - Granola bars, snack food for the jobsite if you need it: lunch will be provided at the jobsite
  - Reading material or games for the evenings
5. Security should not be a concern: La Plata is a very small town with no grocery store in the town, just some small corner stores.

6. Spend time thinking and praying about this opportunity to minister to our brothers and sisters who have lost so much in the last year and half because of Hurricane Maria. Things will not go as you have planned and will not function like it might at your work place or in your home, but remember, this week is not about pleasing us, but serving our brothers and sisters in La Plata. They might do things differently than you do: learn something new, and try to do it their way for a week, teaching yourself to be flexible and usable by God this week. Focus on serving others all week, and you will have a great week in La Plata.

## **Life in La Plata During the Week**

1. All your physical needs will be cared for by the church once you land in Puerto Rico. The church will provide:
  - a. Transportation to and from the airport in San Juan
  - b. Sleeping accommodations in a house near the church: towels, wash clothes, bedding, pillows will be provided.
  - c. Running water, in-door plumbing and electricity
  - d. Three delicious meals a day.
2. Your Crew Leader will be the person who will connect you with your hostess and with your work boss (Paco or one of the General Contractor's hired people). Please talk to your Crew Leader if something is out of order as you understand it: let the Crew Leader run interference for you, the Volunteers.
3. Mornings start off early with breakfast and devotions together as we team. If you want to help lead devotions, please contact your CL.
4. You will walk a short distance to the church and jobsite. The General Contractor and his workers will determine the work day for you, but generally speaking, they start earlier and end mid-afternoon. Lunch will be provided at the jobsite.
5. Evening time will include some "team time", discussing the day and praying together. You will have time to relax, read, call home, etc.
6. Set a goal of getting to know someone new each day on this trip: most of the folks from La Plata hear some English, so don't be afraid to speak with them, but be creative in learning to communicate without English, if needed!
7. Friday afternoon or evening, please ensure that your plane tickets are confirmed. Talk to your CL if you need help in this process.