

## INFORMATION SHEET

### MEXICO MISSION TRIP

January 11-15, 2018

#### DESTINATION

Piedras Negras, Mexico (pop. 200,000) is located on the Rio Grande River about three hours south of San Antonio. Its sister city is Eagle Pass, Texas (pop.20,000). Unlike many partner cities along the US/Mexico border, Piedras Negras is the larger one and more cosmopolitan. It is more likely for persons to go to Piedras for entertainment, shopping and dinner than to Eagle Pass. The cities have an excellent relationship. The area is semi-desert and not what you'll see featured in tourist brochures. In February, expect highs in the upper 70's, and low in the 50's. The movie *Like Water for Chocolate* was filmed in Piedras. It is the site of the creation of nachos.

#### SAFETY

Our groups have not experienced violence. One needs to exercise the same prudence that is used in any unfamiliar city. We travel in groups and on main roads. Our hosts are very concerned with our safety and make sure we are chaperoned. The orphanage is fenced with locked gates.

#### ACTIVITIES

We shall probably not know what our work will be until we arrive. Judging from the past, it won't be demanding or require much skill. In the past we have painted, laid tile and linoleum, repaired play structures, dug footers, installed fences, and prepared an area for concrete. Bring work clothes that you don't mind ruining and work gloves. We shall spend most of our time with the children playing games and stuff that kids do. Please do not plan on losing weight! Our hosts will feed us very well. From their point of view, the goal of the trip is to build relationships so the meals are very important. While we shall be at the orphanage for the bulk of the time, we shall visit Templo Aleluya and tour the colonia that surrounds it. On Sunday we'll worship at Templo Aleluya and Jehovah Salma. The former is a new church for the poorest of Piedras; the latter is a new church of middle class persons. On Sunday night we usually have a closing banquet with our hosts and their families at a local restaurant. After that the orphans who are still awake usually have a farewell prayer service. Finally, we'll have a translator, Laurel LaFrance, assigned to us. Laurel is from Marysville and lives at the orphanage.

#### INFORMATION VIDEOS

There are informational videos on the conference website. Here are the countless steps.

[www.westhioumc.org](http://www.westhioumc.org). On the home page, go to Connectional Ministries. Then Mission & Justice. Then Mission. Then Global Mission. Then Oriental Conference Mexico. Just like that you are there!

## STAFF

Things are in flux. Ricardo and Carla are still the house parents at the orphanage. Laurel LaFrance is still on the job as the liaison for visiting groups. Pastor Miguel suffered a cerebral aneurism in the early fall and is incapacitated. His condition makes things at Jehovah Salma Church uncertain. Please hold him and his family in your prayers. The Methodist Conference moved Pastor Hector from Templo Aleluya in June. So they have a new pastor. Scott and Nancy Vaughan have recently returned from Piedras Negras. They report the orphanage is running well and the new pastor at Aleluya is a ball of fire.

## LODGING

We stay in one of the dormitories on the orphanage grounds. The dorm rooms have AC; the main room does not. Since this is my first winter, I doubt AC will be an issue. I need to check on heat. We do not need to bring sheets and towels, but you want to bring a washcloth. There is a refrigerator and potable water cooler in the dorm so be sure to bring refillable water bottles. It is better than some college dorms. Since we are staying on the grounds, it is easy to slip away to the dorm to take a discrete nap!! N.B. Toilet paper should not be flushed. It is to be placed in the wastebasket next to the toilet.

## MEALS

We shall prepare our breakfasts in the dorm, usually dry cereal, fruit, donuts. Lunch is at the orphanage. Dinner is with church members. Do not plan on losing weight. We are well fed.

## EXPENSES

All of our expenses are covered except food purchased on travel days, souvenirs, and offerings in church. We'll probably stop for souvenirs at the downtown market at some time. It is not great stuff. This will be a time to stock up on Mexican vanilla which is primo.

## MONEY

US money is accepted everywhere, but your change may not always be in US money. US credit cards are accepted at the stores and restaurants we'll frequent.

## ELECTRONICS

Most people have had good luck with cell phones and laptops. Outlets are compatible with US outlets. WiFi may be spotty. It may necessitate a trip to a WiFi Café in town

## TRAVEL

January 11 and 15 are travel days. We shall rent two minivans in San Antonio, have lunch at Freddy's Steakburgers and Custard (a traditional stop), and then drive the 2 ½ hours to Piedras Negras. We'll have supper at the Casa.

## PASSPORT

***YOU MUST HAVE ONE!***

## ATTIRE

At the orphanage t-shirts and Levis are fine. For church on Sunday, men are fine in khakis and polo shirts. Women are fine in slacks, skirts, or dresses. Tops should have sleeves. I have never looked too closely, but I don't think hose are required. Wear comfortable shoes on Sunday because we stand a lot. It is okay to wear shorts around the dorm. Youth and children are pretty much okay with shorts and t-shirts, but one outfit for church is needed.

## WATER

We'll drink bottled water.

## TRIP MOTTO

***BE FLEXIBLE!!!!*** Plans change from day to day on a mission trip. Stuff happens. More than once I'll probably give you the following answer: "I don't know." It is a good experience learning that we can't control everything and it still works out beautifully. Most times better than expected.