

# Panama Open Team

## Information Packet

**Location:** Changuinola, Panama  
**Project Dates:** January 28 – February 9, 2015  
**Participation Fee:** \$ 1,325

*Flight to Panama City is not included in the participation fee.*

*In-country flight from Panama City to Changuinola is included.*



## Maranatha in Panama

Maranatha's first major initiative in Panama was nearly twenty years ago. Starting in the mid-1990s, Maranatha constructed 31 new churches, refurbished 16 churches, and built five Education and Evangelism Centers. Since then, those schools and churches have helped Seventh-day Adventist membership to grow.

In 2013, Maranatha responded to Panama's request for additional churches and schools in hopes that the buildings will have the same, positive impact.

## Project Overview

Maranatha first visited Changuinola over 18 years ago when volunteers built the Changuinola Seventh-day Adventist School. Since then, the school has flourished; it now provides a Christian education for more than 450 students. The central Adventist church in Changuinola has experienced an increased interest in the church as well as membership growth during the last several years. This has led to the birth of two new congregations in nearby communities, Finca #6 and Las Tablas.

Volunteers on the Panama Open Team will be assembling a One-Day Church structure and completing the block walls for the Las Tablas congregation, located in a poor neighborhood about 30 kilometers from the town center. The congregation has approximately 55 members, and it is continuing to grow due to the work of local Bible workers. They have been meeting on a property near a church member's house, and the children's Sabbath school classes meet under the trees outside. However, they sold the property to purchase a new and better site for a church. Now the congregation is eagerly waiting for volunteers to arrive so they can start worshipping in a new church building.

## Project Schedule

**Wednesday, January 28**  
Arrival in Panama City (PTY)

**Thursday, January 29**  
Fly to Changuinola

**Friday, January 30**  
Work day

**Saturday, January 31**  
Worship with the local congregations

**Sunday, Feb. 1 - Friday, Feb. 6**  
Work days with midweek excursion

**Saturday, February 7**  
Worship with the local congregations

**Sunday, February 8**  
Fly to Panama City and visit Panama Canal

**Monday, February 9**  
Departure from Panama City (PTY)

In addition to the construction of the Las Tablas church, volunteers will also paint the Finca #4 church, which was built in 1996. The inside of this church is absolutely gorgeous, but the outside paint has experienced wear due to the tropical storms and hot Panamanian sun. Community members and visitors walk right by the building not even recognizing that it is a church. Volunteers will paint this church so that the outside also reflects the inner beauty of the church and the God who is worshiped within.

A group of volunteers will also have the opportunity to travel on a short boat ride to the small congregation of Solon. Volunteers will assemble the One-Day Church structure for this church group who will then finish the walls and floor at a later date.

Volunteers will also help refurbish the Changuinola School. Projects include repairing the kitchen, constructing a roof over the main entranceway, and interior and exterior painting. In addition to the construction and refurbishment projects, there will also be opportunities for volunteers to participate in various forms of community outreach, such as children's ministry and health education. We are still looking for a children's ministry director. If you are interested in leading this area, please contact Maranatha and join the Panama Open Team.

## Accommodations

Volunteers will arrive in Panama City on Wednesday and spend the night at the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel, a short drive from the airport. The following morning, the group will travel to Changuinola, where they will stay at the Bocas Ridge Hotel and Residences, which is located approximately an hour from the construction site.

This beautiful hilltop resort overlooks the Caribbean ocean and has comfortable accommodations. Volunteers will stay in private houses and apartments with single and double beds, complete with bed linens and towels. The hotel has hot water, air conditioning, Wi-Fi, a restaurant, and a pool.

For more information and photos visit: [www.bocasridge.com/bocas](http://www.bocasridge.com/bocas)

## Excursions

**Manatees** | During the project, volunteers will have the opportunity to travel to the Caribbean for an afternoon excursion with Panamanian wildlife. Volunteers will see monkeys, turtles, and feed manatees in a nearby cove. This excursion will be an additional cost and is not covered by your participation fee. It is approximately \$30, and if you would like to join this excursion, please bring cash with you on the project.

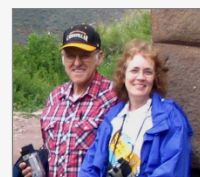
**Panama Canal** | Volunteers will have the unique experience of seeing Panamanian and American history when they visit the Panama Canal, which cuts across the Isthmus of Panama. Completed in 1914, the canal enabled cargo ships to take a more direct route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, instead of traversing the dangerous waters of Cape Horn. Ownership of the canal passed from the Colombian government to the French and eventually the American government, until it finally was returned to Panama in 1999. The Panama Canal is considered one of the seven wonders of the modern world. This short excursion includes an overlook of the working canal locks and entrance to a canal museum walking visitors through the history of this landmark. This excursion is included in your participation fee.

## Leadership

**Merrill and Diane Zachary** | Merrill, who goes by Zack, and Dianne are Maranatha regulars. Most recently, their Maranatha travels have taken them to Zimbabwe, Curacao, and Ecuador. The Zacharys are retired farmers from Manitoba, Canada. Zack's positive attitude, warm heart, and extensive experience always promise a memorable mission experience. Zack will oversee all aspects of the trip as project coordinator.



**George and Becky Alder** | George and Becky join the group from Palmer, Alaska. They are both Maranatha veterans who have participated on and led many projects. When not on a Maranatha project, they both enjoy spending time with their children and grandchildren. George will bring his expertise in construction as the construction superintendent.



**Dolores Morgan** | Dolores has lived all over the world with her husband, who is a naval officer. When not serving as head cook on Maranatha projects, she and her husband live in Hawaii. She is well known on Maranatha trips for her delicious meals and desserts; no one goes hungry on her trips!



**Jim and Linda Kincaid** | Jim and Linda are graduates of Walla Walla University and have dedicated 38 years of their lives to missionary service in Alaska. They have served as missionaries to the Eskimo and Athabaskan peoples, as church pastors, and as church administrators. They currently operate a small air-charter service in northwest Alaska. Jim and Linda have joined six Maranatha projects, and it is becoming a habit in their lives. Jim will be leading the spiritual focus of this volunteer group as the spiritual coordinator.



**George Hill MD** | George joins the group from Colorado where he lives with his wife of 58 years, Myrna Ann. He served in the US Navy for 34 years as a Hospital Corpsman Medical Officer and Flight Surgeon. He enjoys joining Maranatha projects each year, and whenever he's not on a Maranatha trip, he can be found fly fishing. George is looking forward to leading the Medical/Dental Team in Panama because he always receives hugs from happy and healing patients.



## Expenses

The participation fee covers housing for 12 nights, three vegetarian meals a day, a domestic flight from Panama City to Changuinola, ground transportation, secondary accident insurance, a Maranatha t-shirt, and luggage tags.

Maranatha must receive all funds and forms by January 5, 2015. Please wait for confirmation of acceptance on the project before purchasing your airfare.

If you are fundraising or receiving donations, please either have checks sent directly to you or work with your local church treasurer to collect funds and issue tax-deductible receipts, since it is difficult for Maranatha to track individual small checks. If your church will not work with you, please wait until you have collected the full amount of your participation fee before submitting your participation fee to Maranatha.

## Estimate of Additional Costs

**Flight to Panama City:** \$525-750

**Passport:** \$130 or \$110 for renewal

## About Panama

Panama is approximately the size of Mississippi, and this long, narrow country marks the border between North and South America. Early inhabitants of Panama tended to reside on both sides of the country near oceans, swamps, and rivers. It is no wonder that the country was named Panama, meaning "Abundance of Fish." As an illustration of its moniker, Panama is full of fish markets.

Panama is perhaps best known for its canal, a thoroughway connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. Constructed by the United States after a failed attempt by the French, the canal opened on August 15, 1914. It was a historical moment for the world and the United States, as the country's sovereignty over the "Canal Zone" marked America's rise as a superpower. Nearly a century later, the canal is now under the control of Panama's government, and it remains an important link in world trade. It has seen the passage of more than 800,000 vessels so far.



## Facts and Figures

**Capital:**  
Panama City

**Population:**  
3,510,045

**Language:**  
Spanish and some English

**Climate:**  
Tropical, hot and humid. Long rainy season from May to January

**Religion:**  
Roman Catholic 85%, Protestant 15%

**Currency:**  
U.S. Dollar

Aside from the canal, Panama is a fast-growing country with 3.2 million people. Great progress has been made in education, as access has been broadened to reach rural areas, and the literacy rate is 93%. Interestingly, female enrollment at secondary schools is dominant, and in 1999, Panama elected its first female president.

Unfortunately, Panama still struggles with socioeconomic disparities. Poverty is great, particularly among the indigenous people. While the government has implemented social programs, the problem is still widespread.

Weather in Panama is fairly tropical. Temperatures average in the 70's and 80's year round. The rainy season lasts from May to January, and in June, visitors can expect anywhere from 10-20 inches of rain. This weather provides an excellent environment for tropical animals. Panama boasts a vast biodiversity with 218 different mammal species and the largest number of avian species in Central America, including large populations of macaws, quetzals, parrots, and toucans.

## Travel Information

Volunteers will purchase their own plane tickets to the capital of Panama City (see below). Please wait for confirmation from Maranatha before purchasing your airfare to ensure there is still space on the project. The first night will be spent at the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel in Panama City. For more information or to see the address of the hotel, visit [www.riandehoteles.com/contactenos](http://www.riandehoteles.com/contactenos).

The following day, the group will travel on a chartered flight by Air Panama from Panama City to Changuinola. This flight saves the volunteers from a 24-hour round-trip bus ride across country. Air Panama has a very strict baggage limit. Passengers are allowed one 14-kilo (approx. 30 lbs) checked bag and one 5-kilo (approx. 11 lbs) carry-on bag. If you will be bringing luggage in excess of this limit, please plan on packing in such a way you can give us all your luggage, except for an overnight bag, as soon as you arrive in Panama City. We will have a luggage truck travel through the night and meet the flight the next morning in Changuinola. Any charges for overweight baggage on the flight will be the responsibility of the volunteer. Air Panama charges \$2.11 per kilo over the 14-kilo limit. The cost of this flight is included in your participation fee, but we will need a copy of your passport, as soon as possible, in order to secure this ticket.

### Arrival

Please plan to arrive in Panama City (airport code PTY) in the afternoon or evening of Wednesday, January 28, 2015.

### Departure

Please plan to depart from Panama City (PTY) on the morning of Monday, February 9, 2015.

### Travel Resources

**Azumano Travel:** 800-454-4099 or by email with Erle at [edpenha@azumano.com](mailto:edpenha@azumano.com)

**Butler Travel:** 503-879-5005 or by email with Nathanael at [nathan@butlertravel.com](mailto:nathan@butlertravel.com) or with Ellen at [ellen@butlertravel.com](mailto:ellen@butlertravel.com).

**Kayak:** [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)

When contacting the Azumano or Butler travel agencies, mention Maranatha for the best fares.

### Entry Requirements

All U.S. and Canadian citizens must present a passport that is valid for at least six months beyond the date of your scheduled return from Panama (August 10, 2015). Tourists are permitted to travel in Panama for up to 180 days without a visa.

If you do not have a passport, US citizens can apply at any US post office or online at [www.travel.state.gov/passport](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport). Canadian citizens can apply online at [www.passport.gc.ca](http://www.passport.gc.ca). It can take up to two months to complete the entire process, so plan accordingly to give yourself enough time to receive your passport. If time is short, you can expedite the process for an additional fee. Photos can be taken at a FedEx office, Walgreens, or Costco.

Citizens of countries other than the U.S. or Canada, please consult the Panamanian embassy or consulate in your home country for entrance requirements.

## Medical Requirements

Maranatha requires that every volunteer have a current tetanus vaccine (within the last 10 years). The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends vaccines such as hepatitis A and B, typhoid, and an anti-malarial medication other than Chloroquine.

Because Maranatha is not a medical organization, we recommend that you schedule a consultation with a travel clinic doctor prior to your departure to discuss the medical risks in Panama and how to minimize them.

## How to Register

To register, please complete the online registration and pay the full participation fee or an initial deposit of at least half the total participation fee. You can make this payment by credit card online, over the phone, or with a check made out to Maranatha Volunteers International and sent to the address below. If for any reason you need to cancel your participation, Maranatha will do their best to refund your deposit up until one month before travel. After that point, \$150 is non-refundable and the remainder will depend on the reservations and the project arrangements already made.

Register online at [Maranatha.org](http://Maranatha.org) or over the phone.

## Contact Information

**Phone:** (916) 774-7700

**Fax:** (916) 774-7701

**Email:** [volunteer@maranatha.org](mailto:volunteer@maranatha.org)

**Website:** [www.maranatha.org](http://www.maranatha.org)

**Mailing Address:**

Maranatha Volunteers International

990 Reserve Drive

Suite 100

Roseville, CA 95678

**Canadian Payments Only:**

Maranatha Volunteers International  
Association

c/o V06494C

PO Box 6494, Station Terminal  
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