

# Christmas Family Project

**Location:** Chiriqui, Panama

**Project Dates:** December 20-30, 2015

**Participation Fee:** \$835

\$635 for children ages 12 and under

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



## Information Packet

### Maranatha In Panama

Maranatha's first major initiative in Panama took place 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

Volunteers on the Christmas Family Project will be completing various projects around the Chiriquí province. Each of the job sites is located within five minutes to an hour of the school where the group will be staying.

The first project will be the construction of a Sabbath School classroom walls at the Bonga Arriba church. Volunteers on the 2013 Christmas Family Project built the One-Day Church structure with hopes that the congregation would build the walls. But unfortunately, the group was unable to come up with the funds. So this year, Maranatha will help to finish the job.

The existence of Sabbath School rooms is a luxury for most churches in Panama; most cannot afford the additional construction costs. Children's divisions typically meet outside or in other shoddy spaces. The addition of this Sabbath School classroom will make a huge difference for the church—especially for the children!

### Project Schedule

**Sunday, December 20**  
Arrival in Panama City (PTY) and spend the night at the Riande Hotel

**Monday, December 21**  
Travel to housing location (IAP)

**Tuesday, December 22 – Friday, December 25**  
Work days

**Saturday, December 26**  
Worship with the local congregation(s)

**Sunday, December 27 – Monday, December 28**  
Work days

**Tuesday, December 29**  
Travel back to Panama City and excursion at the Panama Canal

**Wednesday, December 30**  
Departure from Panama City (PTY)

We still need to raise **\$4,000 dollars** to fund this Sabbath School project for Bonga Arriba. The majority of the funding has been provided by the local conference, but we need to finish the job! Our deadline is the end of September. Will you help? Please talk with your friends, family, and church family to enlist their financial support for this portion of the project. The funds should be sent to Maranatha marked "CFP Classroom Fund." The gifts are tax-deductible when giving through Maranatha. Please contact Maranatha for more information.

The second service opportunity on the Summer Family Project will involve painting. Volunteers will paint the Santa Marta de Boqueron and Los Planes Churches, which were completed by previous Maranatha volunteer teams. Both congregations used to meet in inadequate spaces, the new churches have been answers to prayers. The final step to completion is a nice coat of paint!

In addition, volunteers will assemble three One-Day Church frames in various communities around region. The Bajo Chiriquí, Aguacate, and Maseta Arriba congregations are anxiously awaiting the volunteers who will arrive to assemble their One-Day Churches. The congregations will then complete the walls with materials common in the local area.

Volunteers will also organize community outreach projects, children's ministry programs, and medical services.

### About the Family Project

Each year, Maranatha offers at least two mission trips specifically for families. One takes place in the summer and the other is at Christmas. Designed to accommodate volunteers of any age—from two to 92—the project is an excellent alternative to a theme-park family vacation or gift-centered holiday. Volunteers who participate have said that the experience has not only broadened their perspective on the world and missions, it's also brought the family closer together. Individuals are also welcome to join. Family Projects fill up very quickly, so register early and join us on this mission trip!

### Children at the Project Site

We have different expectations for young volunteers, depending on their age and maturity. We expect children, ages 13 and up, to put in a full day of work—whether it's on the construction site, in the kitchen, or with outreach activities. Children 12 years and under may help with construction and other activities, but they must work under the supervision of a parent or designated adult.

### Accommodations

Volunteers will stay in the dormitory at the Instituto Adventista Panameño (IAP), the only Seventh-day Adventist boarding academy in Panama. The school is in a beautiful location surrounded by lush jungle. Each room in the dormitory has several bunk beds, and each family will stay in a dormitory room or in an additional classroom furnished with bunk beds. Bedding is not provided, so please plan to bring your own sheets and blankets or sleeping bags, along with towels and washcloths. Mattresses are available, but some are old and not in the best condition. You may consider bringing a cover or pad to place on top of the mattress provided. Or you may consider bringing an air mattress or sleeping pad to use instead, especially if you're tall.

There are community bathrooms, separated by gender, located in the dorm and around campus. Each evening we will meet in a campus chapel for group worship. Vegetarian meals will be provided in the school cafeteria. The group will travel by private bus to the various work and outreach locations each day.

### Excursions

**Panama Canal** | Volunteers will have the unique experience of visiting the Panama Canal, which cuts across the Isthmus of Panama. Work was finished on the canal in 1914, and it enabled sailors carrying trading goods to make a more direct route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific and vice versa, 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 a stop at the Miraflores lookout tower, which gives a view of the working canal locks, and a visit to the Panama Canal museum.

## Leadership

**Vickie and Bernie Wiedmann** | Vickie and Bernie have enjoyed volunteering with Maranatha projects around the world over the past 22 years. When not on a mission trip, they own and run a small electrical business in the state of Washington. Through the years, Vickie has had experience leading Maranatha's Ultimate Workout, Open Team volunteer groups, and the Christmas Family Project. When Bernie can join her, he leads out in the construction area with the building, painting, and electrical work. This will be their sixth Christmas Family Project, and they look forward to guiding the group through this amazing service experience.



**Elizabeth Brenes** | Manuel and Elizabeth Brenes have been working with Maranatha for more than ten years. They have served in Costa Rica, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Panama, and Honduras. They often join Maranatha projects with their daughter, Carolina. This year, Elizabeth will be joining the Christmas Family Project to prepare delicious, vegetarian meals for the group.



## Expenses

The participation fee covers housing for ten nights, three vegetarian meals a day, ground transportation to and from the airport and project site, a local excursion, secondary accident insurance, a Maranatha t-shirt, and luggage tags.

Maranatha must receive all funds and forms by November 20, due to the time needed for the final package mailing. Please wait for confirmation of acceptance on the project before purchasing your airfare.

If you are fundraising or receiving donations, please have them 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 for each volunteer. 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** \$500-900

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

## About Panama

Panama is approximately the size of Mississippi in the United States. 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 throughway 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.

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%. Female enrollment at secondary schools is dominant, and in 1999, Panama elected its first female president.



### Facts and Figures

**Capital:**  
Panama City

**Population:**  
3.6 million

**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

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 Panama City, the country's capital (see below). Once the group has arrived, volunteers will travel by bus to the project location, which is approximately seven hours from the airport. Please wait for confirmation from Maranatha before purchasing your airfare to ensure there is still space on the project.

### Flights

**Arrival** | Please plan to arrive in Panama City (airport code PTY) anytime on Sunday, December 20. Early morning arrivals on Monday, December 21 (before 6:30 a.m.), are also acceptable, but please **do not** book anything arriving after 6:30 a.m.

**Departure** | Please plan to depart from Panama City (PTY) on Wednesday, December 30.

### Arriving Early or Staying Late?

We have scheduled our arrival date so that none of you should have to travel during Sabbath hours. If you want to arrive earlier in Panama, you are welcome to do so; but we will only be able to meet those arriving during the designated times on Sunday and Monday morning before 6:30 a.m.

Panama has some beautiful travel destinations. Some of you might arrive earlier than December 20 or stay beyond December 30 to explore the country on your own. Please make your own hotel and transportation plans for any days outside of the Maranatha project dates. If you have any questions, please call Maranatha at (916) 774-7700.

### Travel Resources

**Azumano Travel:** 800-454-4099 or by email with Erle at [edpenha@ciazumano.com](mailto:edpenha@ciazumano.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, make sure you mention Maranatha to receive a discounted service charge.

### Entry Requirements

All tourists must have passports valid for at least six months from the dates of intended travel (June 30, 2016). If you do not have a passport, U.S. citizens can apply at any U.S. post office or online at <http://travel.state.gov>. 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.

U.S. and Canadian citizens can travel in Panama for up to 180 days without a visa. Citizens of other countries, please consult the Panamanian embassy or consulate in your home country for entrance requirements.



## Traveling with Minors

If you are traveling with a legal minor (under the age of 18 on the date you depart), both parents or legal guardians must travel with the minor. Otherwise, you must have two parental consent forms notarized. This provides government entities with evidence that both guardians have consented to their child leaving the country with the other guardian and Maranatha. One original must be mailed to Maranatha, and the other original must stay with you while you travel. If a parent is divorced, the missing parent still needs to sign the form unless the parent traveling with the minor has sole legal custody. In that case, a copy of the divorce paperwork, indicating sole custody, must also be included. If a parent has died, a copy of the death certificate must be included. You can download a PDF of the Parental Consent Form at <http://www.maranatha.org/resources>. This form will ask for two people as appointees of the minor. The first appointee will be the guardian traveling with the child. The other will be Vickie Wiedmann, Maranatha's project coordinator for the Christmas Family Project.

## Staying Healthy

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 for hepatitis A, typhoid, and an antimalarial medication other than Chloroquine.

When many people think of Panama, they recall stories of malaria and yellow fever during the construction of the Panama Canal, 100 years ago. However, many of these disease-carrying mosquitoes have since been eradicated through aggressive interventions. Our group will be staying in the Chiriquí province west of the canal, and currently the CDC does not have advisories for malaria in any region west of the capital. However, mosquitoes do thrive in the tropical environment, especially during the rainy season, and they can carry other diseases as well. We recommend taking personal precautions to avoid being bitten during the project, especially during dawn and dusk. If you choose to take malaria preventative medication, keep in mind that Chloroquine is not effective against the strain of malaria present in Panama.

You should schedule a consultation with a travel clinic doctor to talk about the medical risks in Panama and the ways 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 or 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:**

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