



# Christmas Family Project 2016

## Information Packet

**Location:** Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

**Project Dates:** December 19-28, 2016

**Participation Fee:** \$775

\$625 for children 12 and under

*(Age determined on the start date of the project)*



*Flight to Santo Domingo or Punta Cana is not included in the participation fee*

## Maranatha in the Dominican Republic

Maranatha's history with the Dominican Republic stretches back over several decades. The first contact with the country was made when Maranatha volunteers helped to construct churches and homes that were destroyed when a devastating hurricane hit the island in 1979.

Then in 1992, Maranatha embarked on an ambitious project to build 25 churches in Santo Domingo. Called Santo Domingo '92, more than 1,200 volunteers flew to the Dominican Republic in a period of three months to build. It was a watershed moment, and it changed how Maranatha operated as an organization. Santo Domingo '92 was also a significant moment in the Dominican Republic's Seventh-day Adventist history as the project resulted in a membership surge. The churches sprouted daughter congregations, and then those groups needed buildings too.

Maranatha returned in 2002 for another effort—this time to build 50 churches. Once again, construction generated another growth spurt in membership. For this most recent effort, the Adventist Church in the Dominican Republic has requested Maranatha's help in providing more places of worship for new congregations.

## Project Overview

Volunteers on this project will have an opportunity to participate in several service activities.

First, the group will finish construction the block walls for the Portadores de Luz church. This church building was started in July, but the walls still need to be finished and the roof needs to be set. In addition, the group will construct a retaining wall for the church.

### Project Schedule

**Monday, December 19**  
Arrival in the DR (SDQ or PUJ)

**Tuesday, December 20 – 23**  
Work days

**Saturday, December 24**  
Worship with the local congregation

**Sunday, December 25**  
Christmas celebration and community outreach

**Monday, December 26**  
Work day

**Tuesday, December 27**  
Excursion day

**Wednesday, December 28**  
Departure from the DR (SDQ or PUJ)

They need a retaining wall on the property to keep the ground from eroding and damaging the foundation that has been put in place. Volunteers on this project will lay the foundation and blocks for this wall as well.

Second, volunteers will paint and do finishing work for the La Colina church that was recently completed by Maranatha.

The group will also reach out into the local communities through outreach activities such as children's ministry programs and health education.



## About the Family Project

Each year, Maranatha offers at least two mission projects specifically for families. One takes place in the summer, and the other is during 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 say the experience has not only broadened their perspective on the world and missions, but it's brought them closer together as a family. Families of all types and sizes are welcome, and individuals are also welcome to join. Family projects fill up very quickly, so register early if you are interested in joining 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 or older 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, but they must work under the supervision of a parent or designated adult.

For younger volunteers, Maranatha will have a day camp with different activities organized during work hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), which could include the following:

**Work** | We'll plan simple tasks so kids can put in a few hours on the construction site.

**Play** | We'll schedule time for kids to let loose and have fun, because playtime is an important part of being a kid. Children's activities will include swimming one or two days during the project.

**Cultural Experiences** | We'll introduce kids to local customs, such as visiting a marketplace or washing clothes in a river.

**Outreach** | We'll encourage kids to help with children's ministry programs and other service activities.

We won't necessarily have all of these components every day, but these categories will make up the activities available for young volunteers. Parents can drop their child off with the program leaders, stay with their child, or keep their child with them throughout the day. We will need some parents to help rotate as staff on this program.

## Accommodations

Volunteers will stay at a church camp and mission center operated by World Grace Mission. The camp is located approximately one hour from the Santo Domingo airport and three hours from the Punta Cana airport. It is only 10-30 minutes from the job sites. The group will travel together each day by private bus.

The small dorm rooms have a mixture of bunk beds and freestanding beds. Mattresses are provided, but volunteers will need to provide pillows, sheets, blankets, and towels. A full packing list will be provided in the final information packet. The rooms do not have air conditioning, so you might consider bringing a personal fan to use during the trip. Each room has a private bathroom, but hot water is not available in all rooms.

The group will meet together for worships in one of the meeting rooms on campus as well as use the dining room for meals.

## Excursions

At the end of the project, the group will take time to enjoy some of the beauty of the Dominican Republic. Together, the volunteers will travel to Isla Catalina, an island located about 1.5 miles from mainland Dominican Republic. The group will take a bus to La Romana, and from there, board a boat that will take them to the island. The tour includes a half hour snorkeling stop at “The Wall” where volunteers can explore the underwater world. Snorkeling equipment is provided. Once at the island, the group will have a section of beach chairs with some shade. The picturesque island has white sand beaches, warm clear waters, and palm trees. The group will have lunch on the island as well as opportunities to purchase souvenirs from the beach vendors.

## Leadership

**Julie Lee and Milbert Mariano, Project Coordinators** | Husband and wife team Milbert and Julie join the group from California, where Julie works as Maranatha’s Vice President of Marketing, and Milbert is the Chair of the Visual Arts Department at Pacific Union College. Julie has been on numerous projects in her work with Maranatha, and the entire family went on their first mission trip together in 2014 to Brazil. Julie, Milbert, and their two sons, Diego (age 10) and Luca (age 6), are looking forward to sharing another mission experience together—and to sharing this special Christmas with you.



**Danny Poljak, Overall Construction Superintendent** | Danny will be leading the construction aspect of this year’s Christmas Family Project. He joins the group from Roseville, California, where he works in the construction industry. He has served with Maranatha in Nicaragua, India, the Dominican Republic, and Panama. Danny has led the construction on several Family Projects, where he is often joined by his wife Branka and his daughter Anella. Danny is enthusiastic that something tangible, like a building, can be so transformative to a congregation and a community, and he is passionate about his daughter growing up with a desire to serve others.



These leaders will be joined by a network of experienced Maranatha employees and volunteers from North America and the Dominican Republic who will work together to provide this volunteer opportunity.

<b>Rebekah Shephard</b>	Maranatha Office Contact
<b>Margarita Martinez</b>	Head Cook
<b>Jon Harvey</b>	Construction Assistant
<b>Larry Fox</b>	Construction Assistant

## We Need Your Help

The team is looking for someone to help lead the children’s ministry program and health education. If you would be interested in leading out in any of these areas, please contact Maranatha at (916) 774-7700 and join the Christmas Family Project.

## Expenses

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

Maranatha must receive all funds and paperwork by November 21 due to application processing time. Wait for confirmation of acceptance on the project before purchasing your airfare.

Maranatha participation fees are tax-deductible. For Canadian tax-deductible receipts, payments must be made by check to the Maranatha Association (address located at the end of this information packet). For U.S. tax-deductible receipts, payments can be made by cash, check, or credit/debit cards.

If you are fundraising or receiving donations, please either 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. 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 Santo Domingo or Punta Cana:** \$600 - 900

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

**Tourist Tax:** \$10 (paid upon arrival in Santo Domingo)

## **About the Dominican Republic**

The Dominican Republic is a beautiful tropical country, located on the island of Hispaniola. The landscape boasts white sand beaches and luscious green mountains. It is the second most popular destination in the Caribbean after Puerto Rico. Visitors flock to the island to indulge in fancy resorts and year-round golf courses.

Yet a look beyond the tourist attractions reveals a history that is not so picturesque. The Dominican Republic lies on the eastern part of an island shared with Haiti. Originally, the entire land mass was inhabited by the indigenous tribe of Tainos. The Spanish colonized it in the late 1400s, making it the first permanent European settlement in the Americas. Hispaniola suffered centuries of a tug-of-war between the French and Spanish. In 1804, the Spanish ceded the western third of the island to the French, and that portion of the island became Haiti. The remaining land became the Dominican Republic, which gained independence in 1844.

Since then, the Dominican Republic has had a turbulent history with ownership returning to Spain only to have a war to regain independence. The country also fell into the hands of a dictator from 1930-1961.

Today, the Dominican Republic is a democracy, working toward maintaining a stable and healthy country. Tourism fuels its economy, and it has the second largest economy in Central America and the Caribbean. However, poverty continues to be a problem in rural parts of the country, particularly near the Dominican-Haitian border.

Given its history with colonization, the country's culture is a blend of several influences. Spanish architecture is evident in areas of Santo Domingo, particularly in its cathedrals and cobblestone streets. Merengue, the national music and dance, is ubiquitous in the Dominican Republic, and it originated from slaves who worked in the sugar beet fields, their feet connected to each other by chains. Baseball, an American export, is an obsession for people of all ages and children can be seen playing games wherever there is space.



### **Facts and Figures**

**Capital:**  
Santo Domingo

**Population:**  
10.5 million

**Language:**  
Spanish

**Climate:**  
Tropical maritime. Little seasonal temperature variation

**Religion:**  
95% Roman Catholic

**Currency:**  
Dominican Peso (approximately 45 pesos to \$1USD)

# Travel Information

Volunteers will purchase their own plane tickets to either Santo Domingo or Punta Cana, Dominican Republic (see below). Please wait for confirmation from Maranatha before purchasing your airfare to ensure there is still space on the project. Together volunteers will travel by bus to the project location. The Santo Domingo airport is approximately an hour from the place the group will stay while Punta Cana is a little more than three hours away by bus.

## Flights

### Arrival |

**Santo Domingo:** If traveling to Santo Domingo (SDQ), please plan to arrive between 11:30 a.m. and 8:45 p.m. on Monday, December 19.

**Punta Cana:** If traveling to Punta Cana (PUJ), please plan to arrive between 11:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on Monday, December 19.

### Departure |

**Santo Domingo:** If departing from Santo Domingo (SDQ), please plan to depart in the morning or early afternoon of Wednesday, December 28.

**Punta Cana:** If departing from Punta Cana (PUJ), please plan to depart in the early afternoon of Wednesday, December 28. Departures should be scheduled for after 11:00 a.m.

In an effort to accommodate volunteers and lower ticket costs, we are offering flights into two different cities in the Dominican Republic. However, airport transportation will depend on the bulk of the flight itineraries; so if you book certain flights you might have to wait a little bit at the airport prior to pick up or boarding. Any volunteers with flights arriving or departing outside of these flight guidelines will be responsible for their own transportation to meet up with the group or to return to the airport.

## Arriving Early or Staying Late?

The Dominican Republic has some beautiful travel destinations. Some of you may choose to arrive earlier than December 19 or stay beyond December 28 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, feel free to 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 passports must be valid for at least six months from the dates of intended travel (June 30, 2017). 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.

In addition to a passport, visitors must pay a tourist tax upon arrival in the country. There will be stations at the airport to make this purchase. The fee is \$10 and must be paid in U.S. currency. Please bring new, unmarked bills to make this transaction. This tourist card will act as your visa for up to 60 days in the country.

Citizens of other countries, please consult the Dominican 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 Julie Lee, 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 Center of Disease Control (CDC) also recommends vaccines for hepatitis A, typhoid, and an anti-malarial medication.

Some of these you may already have and some of them you may deem unnecessary for this trip. You should schedule a consultation with a travel clinic doctor to talk about the medical risks in the Dominican Republic and the ways to minimize them.

## Zika

Recently the Zika virus has been spreading around Central America and the Caribbean. This mosquito-borne disease acts very similar to a hard-hitting flu with symptoms lasting about two weeks. There is currently no vaccine or treatment for the disease, and the CDC has issued a **Level 2 warning**. This warning does not suggest that you postpone all travel, but it does urge travelers to take **heightened precautions** to avoid being bitten (see recommendations above). This virus is still being studied, and information is continuing to be released. There are currently no known long-term effects; however, there does seem to be a link between the virus and possible birth defects in babies born from women who were infected during their pregnancy. The virus can remain in a woman's body for approximately eight weeks and in a man's body for approximately six months, and it can be spread through physical contact. If you or your partner is pregnant, think you might be pregnant, or trying to get pregnant in the next six months, Maranatha recommends speaking with your doctor to determine if you should travel.

## 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:**

Maranatha Volunteers International  
Association  
c/o V06494C  
PO Box 6494, Station Terminal  
Vancouver, BC V6B 6R3  
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### WATER BOTTLE \$15



The autospout water bottle by Contigo features a one-touch-button spout for convenient one-handed drinking. It also has a spout shield to protect the spout from debris and dirt when not in use—perfect for the project site.

### HARD HAT \$11



This MSA V-Gard hard hat, with Staz-On suspension, ensures excellent shock absorption on the job site.

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OR CALL (916) 774-7700**

All prices are excluding sales tax and shipping.