



Sister Parish, Inc. FAQs

Which denominations participate in Sister Parish?

- ☞ Sister Parish is an ecumenical organization which offers participants an inter-cultural faith experience and a long-term, transformative relationship with faith communities in Central America. US member churches include Catholic, Lutheran (ELCA), Episcopal, Methodist, and Congregationalist (UCC) communities. You may or may not be partnered with a southern community of the same denomination.

Is this a one-time mission trip?

- ☞ No, Sister Parish is a different kind of "mission", where participants build a long-term relationship with a faith community in Central America. Several of the churches we work with have had a sister parish relationship for over 15 years. We ask for a minimum commitment of 3 years.

If we aren't going to "build" something, paint something, or hand something out, then what will we actually DO in Central America?

- ☞ You will be surprised at how busy you will be! The idea of each delegation is to foster an ever-deepening relationship between the two groups. Activities are carefully planned by staff to further the vision of consciousness-raising, solidarity, reconciliation, and ecumenism, and-- most importantly-- to bring people together so that we can learn from each other.

What will our commitment/relationship consist of?

- ☞ The Sister Parish model emphasizes the deepening of cross-cultural relationships through consistent communication and delegation visits. Direct financial aid and charity is discouraged from the outset. The relationships focus on empowerment, especially in the Central American communities.

Which countries in Central America can we choose to work with?

- ☞ Guatemala or El Salvador, where we have staff to help ensure the continuity of the relationship.

Do we have to speak Spanish to participate in delegations?

- ☞ Sister Parish staff in Central America is bilingual and will provide any translation or cultural interpretation necessary in the relationship. This includes letters, notes, e-mail communications, and interpretation on all delegations.

What are transportation and accommodations like when we travel to Central America?

- ☞ During the first part of your delegation, you will stay in the Sister Parish Center (in Guatemala) or a simple guest house (in El Salvador). While visiting your Sister Parish linkage, you will stay in pairs in the homes of people who live in that community. We believe strongly that this is the best way to form bonds that deepen the relationship and allow for maximum interaction. Translation in the homes is provided. You will travel in private, rented vehicles, and will be accompanied by bilingual staff that lives in the country.

How is Sister Parish, Inc. funded?

- ☞ Sister Parish, Inc. is a non-profit organization that relies on two main sources of income: donations from private individuals and income generated from charging a minimal administrative fee per delegate on each delegation. We also ask member churches to pay an annual linkage fee of \$1,000, which helps with program costs, and we have an Annual Fund Drive at the end of each year.

Is it safe to travel?

- ☞ We encourage you to talk openly about safety-related questions that arise in your community and staff is available to follow-up. One of the strengths of Sister Parish, Inc. is that staff lives in Central America and they are aware of potential security risks. There are no longer civil wars in either El Salvador or Guatemala, but there is crime and violence, not unlike large cities in the US. Staff takes every precaution and conducts a thorough safety orientation for each delegation. Travel is done in private vehicles to minimize risks. On occasion, if a situation seems volatile, delegations have been rescheduled to make sure safety is a priority.

What do you eat on a delegation?

- ☞ The staple diet varies from region to region in Guatemala and El Salvador, but corn tortillas are often served at each meal. In Guatemala, it is very common to eat black beans (either refried or whole beans), eggs, and tortillas for supper and breakfast. In many communities, chicken soup is served for guests. In El Salvador, red beans are more commonly served with cheese, cream, and rice. You may also be served eggs, plantains, or other fried foods. In both countries, food is very salty, and coffee or tea is served weak and already sweetened with sugar.

What does a delegation cost?

- ☞ The estimated cost for a 10 day trip is \$1025 per person. This cost covers all in-country expenses while you are traveling, including: food, lodging, interpretation, and local transportation. Delegates are responsible for purchasing their own airfare, which typically costs \$500-\$800 per person.