

Serve the Children



Our mission is to offer hope and a future through God's love to underserved children and families around the world by meeting their educational, physical and emotional needs.

GO LEARN RESPOND

**Liberia Mission Team Book
2024**

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We Give Children Hope and a Future

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INTRODUCTION

Too often, short-term mission trips emphasize the adventure of the trip instead of the impact on the people to be served. If you are looking for a relaxing vacation or a visit to local tourist sites, you are going on the wrong trip. We go to work alongside local educators to help give poor and underserved children hope and a future.

Liberia is an English-speaking country located on the western coast of Africa. It is slightly larger than Tennessee. This area of West Africa has a tropical climate consisting of a dry season and a rainy season. The rainy season lasts from late May into October, which is when our teams typically visit. Temperatures range from 68-97°F, although it can feel much warmer on sunny, humid days and cooler during stormy weather.



The team will stay in the capital city of Monrovia. Many visitors struggle with the heat. The guest house we will stay at will have running water and electricity most of the time. Some visitors are uncomfortable with the lizards, mice, spiders, flies and cockroaches that are common in the area.

With little effort, you will fall in love with the people of Liberia. The Christians there have a deep faith in God drawn from years of struggle. They will sacrifice to make you more comfortable.

Some of you might be asking, “*What can I do in Liberia?*” We ask you the question, “*What do you want to do in Liberia?*” Your very presence makes an impact on the children and adults whom we serve. Education teams, medical and dental teams, recreation, hygiene skills, singing, skits, pastor and teacher workshops; share with us what you are interested in doing and we will try to find a place to match your skills and desires. Our short-term trips make an impact by meeting direct needs and communicating our care and support. But the long-term needs of the children in our schools are met by local people who commit their service to children day-in and day-out. It is the dedicated people here in the U.S. working throughout the year to raise funds, network with other agencies, and pass along the vision of our work in Liberia, that support local efforts and the on-site work of the ministry. It is our hope that the impact of your trip will continue long after you return as you tell the story of your own journey. Team members give hope to Liberians.

Pray. If God leads you, come with us to Liberia. Come prepared for an experience that will change your life if you let it. All we ask of you is a willing heart and a servant’s hands.

Many Americans do not realize the sheer size of Africa. It is a huge continent with a vast variety of peoples, cultures, and climates. While there may be some similarities from one African country to the next, it would be wrong to make assumptions and generalizations about *all* Africans.

Here is a visual to consider....



You can fit *three* United States on the continent of Africa.

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FACTS ABOUT LIBERIA
From the CIA World Factbook (cia.gov)

Liberia's high fertility rate of nearly 5 children per woman and large youth cohort – more than 60% of the population is under the age of 25 – will sustain a high dependency ratio for many years to come. The mean age for a woman's first child is 19.2 years. Significant progress has been made in preventing child deaths, despite a lack of health care workers and infrastructure. Infant and child mortality have dropped nearly 70% since 1990; the annual reduction rate of about 5.4% is the highest in Africa. Life expectancy is only 63.3 years.

Nevertheless, Liberia's high maternal mortality rate remains among the world's worst; it reflects the frequency of early childbearing, lack of quality obstetric care, high adolescent fertility, and a low proportion of births attended by a medical professional. Female mortality is also increased by the prevalence of female genital cutting (FGC), which is practiced by 10 of Liberia's 16 tribes and affects more than two-thirds of women and girls. FGC is an initiation ritual performed in rural bush schools, which teach traditional beliefs on marriage and motherhood and are an obstacle to formal classroom education for Liberian girls.

About 54% of Liberia's population exists below the poverty line (2014 estimate). Only 75% of the population has access to clean drinking water and only 17% has sanitation facility access. The risk of contracting a water borne disease is very high. Mission team members must drink only bottled water.

Age Structure:

0-14 years: 43.82% (male 1,038,452/female 1,016,491)
15-24 years: 19.56% (male 457,806/female 459,289)
25-54 years: 30.33% (male 699,879/female 722,244)
55-64 years: 3.43% (male 82,616/female 78,003)
65 years and over: 2.86% (male 65,979/female 68,262) (2017 est.)

Literacy rate:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 47.6%
male: 62.4%
female: 32.8% (2015 est.)

WHAT WILL I DO THERE?

Many times, people think they have no skills that can be used on a mission trip. However, your skill level is not what makes a difference on a mission trip. It is your presence and willingness to serve that make a difference. On the top of the front page of this mission team book are three important words- **GO, LEARN, RESPOND**.

Go- It sounds simple but for many people this is a major hurdle to get over. Everyone has issues to work through. Finances, work, family, and school can all complicate planning a trip. It is sometimes a very complex decision-making process to go on a mission trip. What we need to do is look through the issues that seem to prevent us from going and see a solution. Is God calling you to go? I guarantee that He has a great solution for any challenge you face. Before you say no, let's talk.

Learn- You will learn so much about yourself, your teammates and your relationship with God. It will amaze you at how different you will be after the trip "appears" to be over. I tell people that Americans know a lot about faith. We can purchase and read many books on this topic and hear many sermons- on line and in person. When I go on a mission trip, I learn about faith from people who actually depend on it every day for meeting their most basic needs.

Respond- Do not expect your mission trip to end when you arrive back in the United States. When you return, that's when your mission trip really begins. This is not a "check this off my list of things to do" trip. This is a life changing experience. What will you do with it now? Get involved with Serve the Children, find sponsors for the kids you have grown to love, get more active in your church, keep up your prayer life and maintain your devotions.

There are three goals we want mission team members to have as they prepare and go:

1. What can you do to impact your relationship with God? How is your daily prayer life and what do you do for daily devotions? Set goals to pray daily and read your Bible daily.
2. What can you do to make an impact on your team members? Pray for them daily, engage in discussions with them, help them when they get sick, get involved in their lives.
3. What can you do to impact the people we are serving in Liberia? Spend time with the kids, the teachers, the staff. Find out about their lives, ask to visit where they live, listen to them talk. This will change your life.

What do we do there? This is a normal question. Personally, I like to ask, "What is the impact of us being there?" No matter our task, the most important thing we will do is make new friends and share our lives. Spending time with the kids and with our staff leaves them with memories they cannot get from reading a book or listening to a class on some topic. Yes, teaching them is important and many within our reach need this, but building a relationship is eternal.

REQUIRED TEAM MEETINGS

In the U.S.

We will have team meetings beginning several months prior to leaving for Liberia. **These meetings are required for team members.** Spouse and friends are welcome to come. The purpose of these meetings is to prepare you for your experience, to bond as a team, to communicate the goals and objectives of the trip and to plan how we will accomplish them. Topics include:

1. Trip Logistics, i.e. communication, dress code, travel arrangements, etc. These items are covered in your team book so we will not spend a lot of time going through them in the team meeting. **Read your team book thoroughly!**
2. Cultural issues
3. Team member roles and preparation
4. Spiritual preparation
5. Immunizations and medications for malaria and other medical issues
6. Keeping a journal
7. Packing and luggage needs
8. Passport and visa requirements
9. Questions and concerns

In Liberia

Once we arrive in Liberia, we will gather regularly as a team. Usually we meet during mealtimes, so presence at meals is required whether you plan to eat or not. At breakfast we will review the daily agenda and our goals for the day. At dinner we will do a daily summary of how things are going and how the trip is impacting you.

Another reason we gather as a team is to give you a chance to retreat from everyone in the area who will be persistently trying to spend time with you. We need time together as a team. Sometimes conflict within our team needs to be handled as well.

Married couples need time alone. Leaders need time alone. You will need time alone. But we also need time to just relax with each other. It is a good chance to decompress and cope with all of the things you will be experiencing. Anytime you are ready, there will always be a group of Liberians who would love to spend time with you. Please read #6 in the team covenant all team members must sign.

Re-entry

Your team leader will plan to meet with you after we return to the US. This is a casual meeting, an opportunity for us to learn about how your experience impacted you and to help us evaluate our short-term mission trips. Everyone reacts to Liberia differently; seeing the journey through your eyes will help us do a better job at STC and on future trips. We hope that you will share your journal with us or give us some excerpts for use with future team members or on our website.

IMMUNIZATIONS/MEDICATIONS

You should be up to date on all of your regular immunizations before traveling (Check on Tetanus). In addition to our regular schedule of immunizations, it is recommended that you receive the immunizations for **Hepatitis A**. The inoculation is completed in two doses, 2-4 weeks apart, so plan ahead. Additionally, you will need to have the **Yellow Fever** vaccine before traveling. Many African nations, like Liberia, do not permit entry to travelers without the Yellow Fever card. This includes people in transit. When you receive the Yellow Fever vaccination you will be given a card. Your name on the card must match your name on your passport and the two will remain together for the duration of the trip. **The Yellow card is considered part of your travel documents.**

There are several anti-malarial drugs to consider. Talk to your doctor about the right one for you. Products containing Deet and mosquito nets are also effective. Nothing is worse than being sick on a trip... especially extremely sick... and should you have a dangerous strain, the long flight home may delay essential medical treatment.

Most people with medical insurance will find the best rates for immunizations at their doctor's office. If they do not carry a particular immunization (such as Yellow Fever), you have several options:

- Local pharmacies - call ahead so they can make sure to stock what you need
- Franciscan Infections Northwest - 1624 S. I Street, Suite 405. Schedule 30 days in advance: 253-274-4545

Medical Checklist:

- Acquire vaccinations: Tetanus, Hep A (Hep B for medical workers), Yellow Fever
- Talk to your doctor about anti-malarial medications
- Make sure you have adequate supply (plus a few extra) of regular medications
- Consider over-the-counter medications for comfort: pain relief, allergy, sleep aid, upset stomach
- Don't forget essentials like contact lens solutions and sunscreen

PASSPORTS

If you are applying for a passport for the first time, you must do so in person. Visit the Department of State webpage (<http://travel.state.gov/passport>), collect the appropriate documents, and search for an acceptance facility convenient for you.

If you have had a passport in the past you may renew by mail under certain circumstances, so check the website above regarding your situation.

If you have a passport already, check the expiration date. **You may not travel to Liberia with a passport that will expire within six months of your dates of travel.** Do the math and make sure your passport is valid for the travel dates plus the following six months. Also, confirm you have at least two blank pages for your visa stamp.

In any case, **apply early**. Obtaining a passport can be delayed for any number of reasons.

If you are not a U.S. citizen, you will need to take extra steps to ensure your passport and travel documents are in order.

VISA

You will receive a visa application for Liberia at a team meeting. The visa applications for the team will all be submitted together. Cost is currently \$210 per person including the service fee and it is good for one year. You need a passport photo for your visa. You can get these at Costco and many other places.

WHAT SHOULD I TAKE?

Important Items

This is a suggested list of items and you will not need to purchase all of these. But if you are sensitive to the sun and this causes a lot of headaches, you should bring in more than one head covering, stronger sunscreen and more aspirin than someone who is not as sensitive. Other team members will also bring items that can be shared (zip ties, for example). Your supporters can use this list to help you with your expenses.

Clothing- Many of these items are recommended out of respect for the Liberian culture.

Everyone: 3-4 changes of outerwear in breathable fabric that dries easily, no military styles, hat, light night wear (2) and robe; sandals or flip flops for in-house wear; sturdy shoes & socks (closed-toe sandals are good); underwear (4-5 changes). In the rainy season you should have a sweatshirt and long pants available. You can spray your clothes & bedding with bug repellent. We suggest no jeans due to the heat. LABEL EVERYTHING!

Women: Skirts & dresses are preferred and should be at least knee length, pants are acceptable; no spaghetti straps or strapless tops; no bra, underwear or midriff showing; no transparent clothing and no tank tops. Shorts that reach below fingertips when standing are acceptable around the AGC compound. No pierced jewelry other than earrings.

Men: T-shirts and shorts are fine except for church, when long pants and dress shirts are required.

Passport- Store this in a zip-lock bag to prevent damage from the humidity.

Money belt (and/or necklace) – cash in a combination newer \$20, \$10, \$5, and \$1 bills- they do not give change normally in US dollars- amount should be at least \$300 depending on how much you want to spend on souvenirs and eating out or at the airports. One credit card for the US and Europe (visa or American Express). **Credit cards do not work in Liberia even though you will occasionally see an ATM, but the risk is too high to use one.** Snack size zip-lock bags work well for holding cash to keep it dry. US currency is preferred in Liberia.

MUST HAVES:

Bible

Clothing

Bug Spray-40% to 100% depending on your skin sensitivity and the time of year

Journal and pens/pencils

All/any medications (including anti-malarial)

Money belt (optional, but consider how you will carry cash)

Passport with Yellow Fever Card and \$50-dollar bill

Sunglasses

Sunscreen (SPF 30+)

Toothbrush/paste

Towels and wash clothes (consider microfiber towels)

Personal toiletries

Checklist for packing

Carry-On: Your bag should be able to fit into a 22" x 14" x 9" box

- Any electronics, expensive, or non-replaceable items (theft can be an issue with luggage in transit)
- A few of the toiletries that will keep you comfortable during a long trip (i.e. toothbrush/paste, washcloth in a zip lock bag (microfiber towels work best or body wipes), comb, deodorant, chap-stick) Remember to keep fluids under 3 oz.
- A book, magazine, game to keep yourself entertained
- Snacks (although they feed you well on international flights)
- Ear plugs, eye mask, neck pillow
- ALL** your *necessary* medications for the entire trip
- Journal
- One change of clothes (2 pair undergarments) and anything else you cannot live without for a couple of days incase luggage is delayed
- Towels and wash cloth
- Sunglasses/eyeglasses/Contact lenses
- Mosquito net
- Small battery-operated fan
- Camera/phone for photos and essential charging chords
- Travel-sized Kleenex tissue packs to carry in pocket or purse (for restrooms with no TP!)

Checked-in Luggage: Your bag should weigh less than 50lbs

- Toiletries, including over-the-counter medicines for your comfort
- Clothing- 2 or 3 additional changes of clothes
- Sunscreen
- Nail clippers
- Chapstick
- Insect repellent
- Waterless hand cleanser for purse or pocket
- Feminine products
- Something with an alarm (phone, travel clock) and appropriate chargers
- Small flashlight
- Photos of family to show Liberian friends
- Handy items: sharpie pens, zip lock bags, pocket tool (checked-in luggage only) a garbage bag or plastic grocery bags for soiled laundry, zip ties, tape, extra batteries

The electrical current in Liberia is mainly 220 volts, 50 cycle's alternating current (AC); you may want to bring a converter.

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Rule of thumb to follow: If I need this in the US, I should be bringing this with me to Liberia. Think about these questions as you prepare for the trip:

What medications do I take- occasionally, a lot, all the time?

What items I use every day, weekly or occasionally but I really need them?

Things I use when I do not feel well?

Stuff I wish I had when I am away from home?

You also need to keep your boarding pass until your luggage is picked up in Liberia.

Give your baggage claim tickets to your team leader when you check your luggage in at the terminal.

TRAVEL TIPS

Airline travel can be an exhausting experience. You probably did not sleep well the night before you left because of the excitement of the trip. You might have stayed up late preparing for the journey and taking care of last-minute details.

There are a number of things you can do to make your travel experience more pleasant. Drink plenty of water on the plane. Purchase bottled water after you pass through security and before you board the plane. You can always ask the flight attendant for more water once you have boarded. On long flights it is important to get up and walk around occasionally to maintain good circulation and avoid stiffness.

Simple stretching exercises while flying help a lot; stretch your feet, turn your head and hold it, flex some muscles. Wear support hose. Wear comfortable clothes and layer them. Take off your shoes. Take books, crossword puzzles, games to play, shows & music on your iPod if you have one. Remember to pack for both ways!

We will be crossing many time zones. Liberia is 7 hours ahead of us but if we fly through Europe, we will cross even more time zones.

How can I improve plane travel?

Most people don't have any problems when they fly, but it's possible to make airplane travel safer and more comfortable. Here are some tips:

- Carry enough of all of your medicines to last your whole trip in your carry-on luggage. Ask your doctor whether you should change your dosages if your eating and sleeping times will change at your destination. Take extra medicine with you in case your return trip is delayed.
- If you have diabetes or epilepsy, carry a notification and identification card (such as the "Diabetes Alert Card" from the American Diabetes Association). Have the name and phone number of your doctor with you in case of an emergency. Remember to bring along the names and dosages of all of your medicines.
- The air in airplanes is dry, so drink nonalcoholic, decaffeinated beverages and water to avoid becoming dehydrated.

What can I do about jet lag?

- Get plenty of sleep before you leave.
- Don't drink a lot of alcohol.
- Eat well-balanced meals.
- Avoid overeating.
- Exercise as much as you can on your trip.
- Use sleep medicines for only a few days.
- Get used to a new time zone by going along with the local meal and bedtime schedules.

What about pain in my ears?

If your ears hurt when you fly, try taking a decongestant medicine (such as pseudoephedrine) before you get on the plane. You can also swallow often and chew gum during the flight. Talk to your doctor about taking any kind of medication.

Other suggestions:

- Place a washcloth in a zip-loc bag in your carry-on. This way you can wash up and put away the washcloth without getting everything else wet. Or bring pre-moistened bath wipes for the outbound and inbound trips.
- Neck pillow!!
- Trade a few outfits to pack with a teammate so that if your bag is lost you still have something to wear.
- Lock your luggage with luggage locks (must be TSA approved)
- Do not pack anything in the small outer pockets of your bags.
- Keep record of your bag brand, size and color in addition to saving your luggage receipt, in case your luggage is lost, and you have to describe it.
- Do not haphazardly toss your used boarding passes. They contain all your personal information!
- Keep it simple, but do not be afraid to bring what makes you comfortable. Comfort is king!
- Drink a ton of water and eat a clean diet in the days leading up to the trip. You will be amazed at how poor diet and dehydration contribute to swelling feet and jetlag.
- For those who take medications, consider how crossing time zones impact the time of day you are to take medicines. Write a schedule in your journal.
- International flights are more accommodating to stiff bodies and tired people. Take advantage of the ability to walk the plane or stretch.
- Start the trip being well-rested and take opportunities to sleep during travel if you can. Traveling to Liberia can take anywhere from 28-36 hours!

TRIP LOGISTICS

We will meet at the airport and check in together. Be prepared for a long flight. Regardless of the route we take, we usually have long flights and long layovers. Bring whatever you need to be most comfortable for this part of the journey.

When you arrive in Liberia you will pass through immigration, where they will check your passport. At baggage claim, you will need the baggage claim ticket that the ticket agent gave you in Seattle to clear your bags to customs. **This is critical!** If your bags are missing, they will want to see the claim ticket, your boarding pass (plane tickets or E-ticket) and they will ask you the brand of your luggage, the color of the bags and the contents (did you write this down in your journal?). The airport is hot and crowded, which can be very challenging after such a long journey.

We will cram into whatever transportation has been arranged for us and drive the 35 miles to Monrovia. The air will be thick with humidity and the smells will be quite distinct. You will pass by some extreme scenes of poverty.

Breakfast is around 7.30 AM. We want to develop daily habits of praying as a team, so we begin each day praying together. We will have a short devotional and business meeting after we eat.

After breakfast, we will tour the school, go to meetings, the market or wherever we are working that day. We will return for lunch or take it with us, depending on the plans for the day. We can work with the staff to prepare a menu.

The afternoon is typically the hottest time of day. You will need to remind yourself and your teammates to drink plenty of water (usually at least three liters per day), lather on the sunscreen and bug-spray, and wear a hat when outdoors. The sun burns quickly in the tropics. You will need to drink more water the first few days as you adjust.

Daily activities typically wrap up by 3:00 pm so that we can return home to rest. Napping, talking, playing cards and writing in your journal will easily complete your day until dinner.

Dinner varies, but almost every night you will eat rice and fried plantains. The main course will consist of chicken. There is usually store-bought bread, peanut butter and jam as well. You are expected to eat the food out of respect for our cooks. Illness or a queasy stomach is an exception. During/after dinner we will usually go over what we did during the day, what we need to do differently and what our plans are for the next day. Evenings cool down and the wind and rain tend to increase. Thunderstorms often provide the evening entertainment.

Evenings are spent playing cards, building relationships, preparing for the next day, updating your journal, downloading photos (did you bring your camera cable?), bathing, or spending some quiet time with God, among other things. If there is power, you can charge electronics. The sun will set before 7:00pm, so pray that the generator works. Bring candles and flashlight batteries in case it doesn't!

What will we do there?

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Our activities will vary while we are in Liberia so preparation in the US is important. We must plan ahead so we are prepared.

1. Child sponsorship program- Sponsorship is a key method of support in countries where we serve. Each team member is asked to find five people who will commit to sponsoring a child. You will find a child for each of them while you're there. You can also help update our sponsorship information on children currently sponsored. We need team members to photograph children currently sponsored, get a letter from them to their sponsor and interview new children for sponsorship.
2. Sports- be prepared to lead some outdoor activities like group games. The children play soccer, four square, hopscotch and other games.
3. Classroom- read stories, read poems, teach phonics, math, science, art and crafts.
4. Picture taking and display- the children love to have their pictures taken
5. Get involved with the staff.
6. Visit the homes of staff or some of the local children (never leave the compound without a Liberian staff member with you).
7. Some teams may do teacher and staff training based of the needs of the school.

Picture taking

If a stranger came to my child's school to support the staff and took photos of my child and posted them on Facebook, I would be LIVID. Granted, the context is not the same, but all posted images should be nameless and should point positively to the local ministry, not to our "personal work." Social media relating to overseas ministry is a complex issue. Respect that you are publicly posting images of someone else's reality. It should honor, lift up, and reflect what God is doing. ASK before you take a photo.

CULTURAL ENTRY

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved." 1 Corinthians 10:31-33

- As you enter a new culture and begin to make observations and experience life in a new setting, you will either find this to be a positive time of growth or a very difficult and frustrating time.
- Let go of expectations. Let the Lord speak to you. Let Him reveal new things to you about Himself, yourself and others. Be flexible. Keep a journal and maintain a daily quiet time. Lean on the Lord.
- Rather than being suspicious, fearful, prejudiced or feeling superior, try to see things with openness, acceptance, trust and adaptability. It is inevitable that you will feel uncomfortable as you live in a new cultural setting. At times, you may become frustrated or feel

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misunderstood, confused, tense or embarrassed. This is to be expected. It is your response to these emotions that will determine a negative or positive outcome. Rather than rationalize, criticize or isolate yourself, try to observe, inquire and listen. If you do, you will find that you will establish a rapport with the people and empathy for their plight rather than alienate yourself through withdrawal. Don't assume anything. Ask questions and observe. You will be stretched.

- Cultural differences exist all around you. Some are visible. In Liberia, almost all things are rundown or destroyed from the war. The concept of throwing trash in receptacles is foreign to many. Bathrooms are few and far between, and the beach becomes a latrine for many. Dress is different from America. Traffic is not controlled by the police force; few traffic lights operate and driving is basically a "sport."
- Cultural beliefs are not visible, but they govern the thoughts of the people. Women care for the home and children and may work outside the home as well to bring in more income. Men work outside the home, if they're lucky. Many Christian churches teach against dancing, drinking, smoking, excessive make-up and jewelry and hold to varying degrees of legalism about these matters. Some churches combine Christianity with a tribal religion. The society is event and people oriented versus time oriented. Liberians live in the present, while Americans are always looking to the future. Liberians tend to communicate in oral versus written form.
- The purpose of your short-term mission is to be a support to the STC staff and children and be a witness for Christ. It is about dying to self and living for Christ for two weeks. It is about being sensitive to the culture. If it means wearing a long skirt, or removing an earring, or eating a food that you are not particularly fond of...just do it... for the Lord. You will be blessed.

(Portions taken from Intervarsity STIM Manual)

SPIRITUAL MATTERS

Your spiritual life could be challenged on a mission trip. Lack of privacy, a different schedule of activities (eating times, work, etc), and lack of sleep can impact your time with the Lord. But you must adapt your new situation to your daily time with God. Set regular times in your day for prayer, reading God's Word, and journaling.

We cannot emphasize the importance of having a daily quiet time. Satan will be doing his best to keep you away from God. If he succeeds, this will impact the team and the goals of our trip. Read Ephesians 6:10-19. Be prepared for spiritual warfare!

Bring a simple devotional along with you. Set the pace for your roommates by having a daily devotional. Let them see how important this is to you.

A great book to study on a mission trip to a country like Liberia is the book of Philippians. This is sometimes called the book of joy since the word joy appears about 20 times. Read 4-5 verses a day and meditate on them. Paul was in prison when he wrote this personal letter of thanks to the Christians in Philippi.

Be prepared to share your faith with the people that we come in contact with. Most of our staff are Christians but you may meet some who are not believers during your journey. Some of our students are from families who are not Christian. Liberians are very open about their faith and you could be asked to share the story of how you came to know and follow Christ during a church service.

Sharing your story is not hard. You do not have to create a theological discourse to explain how you came to know Christ. Talk about how your life was before you chose to follow Christ, explain how you came to a point when you chose to put your faith in Him, and end with a verse that has a special meaning to you or talk about the importance of Christ in your life now.

If you are a pastor or church leader, be prepared to preach in Liberia. We've learned from experience that it is a cultural expectation that you will speak while you are there.

Privacy will be a challenge and sometimes this can cause conflict. If you are experiencing conflict with another team member, mention this to the team leader. This needs to be taken care of and not allowed to fester. Only Satan wins when we do this. All of us are hot and sweaty; do not let the environment impact your testimony or the testimony of the team.

Please refer to point 6 in the team covenant that all team members must sign.

COMMUNICATIONS

We will have access to several cell phones in Liberia. It does not cost money for incoming calls to Liberia. You can purchase prepaid phone cards in Liberia if you need to call home on one of the cell phones.

Most phones will work in Liberia, but you need to talk to your phone service provider to confirm the cost of calls. However, your phone is not designed for the heat, dust and humidity that it will experience in Liberia. We suggest you leave your phone at home if it is an expensive one.

Texting is usually available, but you should confirm the cost as it can be expensive.

Internet- We should have internet access at our Sinkor facility. Internet access can be very slow and sporadic. I suggest you communicate with your supporters, friends and relatives with regular Facebook updates. Do not plan on downloading pictures as this takes considerable time in Liberia.

Facebook- The easiest form of communication about what the team is doing is to have your friends and family join the Serve the Children group site on Facebook. **This is updated regularly during the mission trip.**

Email updates- if your family or friends are not on Facebook, we can update them with regular email updates. Please provide us with their names and addresses.

However, I want to emphasize that you are in Liberia on a mission trip and you need to focus on the team and why we are here. Do not plan on spending all of your free time chatting with your friends in the US; that is not the reason you come to Liberia.

Emergency contact- We will provide you with a name and phone number to give to your family so if an emergency occurs at home, they can call the number and we will be contacted. Please remind them there is a seven-hour time zone difference.

WHY RAISE SUPPORT?

- **A Prayer Team Will Result**

When people are challenged to give financially, they are likely to pray for you, too. You will need their prayers even more than you need their financial support.

- **Your Faith Will Grow**

Support raising is a faith journey. When days go by and your support level does not increase, you may be tempted to question your call to missions. Those are the days when you will be challenged to step forward in faith that God has called you and, in His time, will supply every need. You will learn how to adapt to divergent, difficult, and sometime desperate circumstances. That's when you realize that you are limited, and God is limitless.

- **It Broadens the Missionary Vision for You and Your Church**

The best recruiter for world missions is the missionary yourself. When you meet face-to-face with others, you are able to communicate your vision and your call. Your enthusiasm and dedication stimulate and challenges interest and involvement in missions.

How to Raise Support:

1. **EVALUATE your contribution.** Other team members can tell you the surprising places God provides money (unexpected refund checks, garage sales, extra income opportunities). Challenge yourself to plan ahead, evaluate what sacrifices you can make in the next few months to contribute toward your trip.
2. **LOOK outside of your church.** Friends, relatives, co-workers and neighbors, whether they are Christians or not, will feel blessed to invest in you and God's leading in your life. Seek out their support. Use Facebook and other sites.
3. **ASK inside your church to see if your** small group or ministry team friends would pray about God's leading to give you prayer and/or financial help for this opportunity. Do not give requests to people that do not know you personally unless they hear of your need and want to be a part of your team.
4. **DEVELOP your financial supporters** into prayer supporters. Use the Prayer Covenant form included in this book to gather prayer team members. Your prayer partner can keep a copy of the covenant to remind them to pray for you. They should return one to you so that you know that you have prayer supporters lifting you up each day during the trip.

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Clegg, Claude. The Price of Liberty. Chapel Hill: University of South Carolina Press, 2004.
- Cooper, Hellene. The House at Sugar Beach. Simon & Schuster, New York, 2008.
- Ellis, Stephen. The Mask of Anarchy. New York: New York University Press, 2001.
- Elmer, Duane. Cross-Cultural Servanthood. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- Huffman, Alan. Mississippi in Africa. New York: Penguin Group, 2004.
- Kulan, Arthur. Liberia Will Rise Again. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Pham, John-Peter. Liberia Portrait of a Failed State. New York: Reed Press, 2004.
- Powers, William. Blue Clay People, Bloomsbury, USA, 2006
- Shaw, Elma. Redemption Road. Cotton Tree Press, Washington DC, 2008. Note: This is a novel.

VIDEOS

You Tube- Search for Liberia and you will find many videos

PBS- they have several series on Liberia- www.pbs.org/wgbn/globalconnections/liberia/

INTERNET

Keep up on news about Liberia on <http://allafrica.com/liberia/>

AFTER YOUR TRIP - RE-ENTRY

RE-ENTRY is the experience you will have as you return to your home, family and friends. You may have experienced changed attitudes and values. The greater the change in attitudes and values, the more unsettling the **RE-ENTRY** to your personal home culture will be.

Although you may not realize the impact this short-term mission has had on you, there are a few things to consider:

- The things you have experienced here are very unique. Some people will never have such an impacting experience in their entire lives. As you go home, it will be as though you were in a time-warp...so much has happened to you, while it has been 'life as usual' for most of the people you know back home.
- Values you have maintained all your life may come into question. You may feel convicted about certain things you have always done or become disturbed by things that others say or do. Things that once seemed very important may suddenly appear trivial or meaningless.
- Though people may ask you, "How was your trip?" many do not really want to know the details. Not everyone will share your enthusiasm or want to hear about your trip. Be prepared with a short story or quick anecdote. If they really want to know, you'll most likely find it easy to keep on talking.
- It is important to connect with your teammates after you return to help you adjust.

The following are some ways that people deal with **RE-ENTRY** and the above reactions:

ALIENATE (negative)

- Assume the: "Nobody understands. Nobody cares." attitude
- Withdraw or become an elite group that excludes others
- Become depressed, judgmental, critical

ASSIMILATE (negative)

- Compartmentalize the experience. It is over. Check it off the calendar and get on with life as though nothing significant happened
- Dive into diversions: movies, malls, activities
- Channel your desire to do something by overcompensating or assuming 'black and white' mentality
- Be tough and untouched

INTEGRATE (positive)

- Use lessons from your experience as a springboard for positive growth and change
- Search for platforms where you can share your experience with a selective audience
- Become a 'bridge' between your experience and how those at home can benefit
- Use your experience as a tool for evangelism
- Be a spokesperson sharing with others so they can 'catch the vision' of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20

There are more positive ways for you to handle your transition back to life at home. Here are some steps you can take before you return that will help things go smoothly:

- Prepare for re-entry shock
- Pray and listen to God
- Journal and re-read your mission journal one day at a time
- Share your journal with others. Post it on Facebook or your Blog.
- Become a good listener with others. Be interested in their lives
- Prepare a 'snapshot' of your trip
- Become a storyteller. Learn to salt your speech to make others thirsty
- Seize the opportunity to share with that person that really wants to listen
- Get together with others from your team who shared the same experience
- Be a point of strength by living out your newly identified values at home
- Remember successes and accomplishments
- Use the 'talents' God has given you
- Write a note of thanks and share your experience with everyone who received your request for support letter
- Eat well, rest and exercise. Understand that you will probably feel a physical letdown upon your return as well
- Realize that long-term changes may take time and patience
- Continue to make plans to impact your life and the lives of others
- Make the minutes of your life count for eternity

Be prepared for flashbacks or re-runs; memories of your trip that were negative-the poverty that you witnessed, malnutrition of the children, etc. Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people or to children? Do you serve a big God who cares for you or a little god who cares nothing about you? You will be forced to ponder these questions and more.

(Portions taken from InterVarsity STIM Manual)

CONTINUING YOUR MISSION INVOLVEMENT WONDERING HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR CORNER OF THE WORLD?

Discover Your Unique Life Mission

“What do I need to do next after a mission trip?”

- God has a mission for the world and is already working to reach out to the hopeless, hurting, and lost people groups. He has invited us to respond to his call to join Him at work around the world.
- We don't want you to develop an interest in going on multiple short-term trips for adventure travel. We want to help you develop a heart for your world.
- You have something unique to give! God desires to use your gifts, passions and life experiences as a unique life mission to the world. To where or to whom will it be?

“What is a unique life mission?”

It is allowing God to use your gifts and abilities, life and vocational experiences (both the good and the bad), and passions and interests for the Great Commission of reaching out to people with Christ's love.

Plan your schedule for the next 30 days by committing to some of these suggestions. Keep these commitments with you as a reminder in discovering your life mission.

1. PRAY FOR A WORLD VISION

*"When he saw the crowds, he felt sorry for them because they were hurting and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus said to his followers, "There are many people to harvest but only a few workers to help harvest them. **Pray to the Lord**, who owns the harvest, that he will send more workers to gather his harvest." Matthew 9:36-38*

- Pray for 5 friends, family members or neighbors who need a relationship with Jesus. Include someone of a different ethnicity than your own. How can God use your recent mission trip experience to expand your vision locally?
- Ask God daily for the next month: "Help me see the world the way you do."
- What can you volunteer for to help Serve the Children?
- Pray for your passion issues globally (i.e. abortion, homeless children, health, and women's shelters).
- Turn your current life roles (Little League coach, consistent customer, employee, neighbor, etc.) into a mission field. Ask God to give you opportunities to share God's love in practical, serving ways and to share a bit of your faith story with them.

Our mission is to offer hope and a future through God's love to underserved children and families around the world by meeting their educational, physical and emotional needs.

2. CONSIDER WHERE YOUR LIFE DREAMS COLLIDE WITH THE WORLD'S NEEDS

- Ask yourself: What would I do for God if I knew I couldn't fail? Then write it down! Commit to praying about that dream.
- Read the international sections of the news. (The Bible tells us what God wants to do in the world: the news tells us where He needs to do it and where we need to be involved through our prayers.)
- Pray daily for the staff of Serve the Children.

3. GET CONNECTED

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." Hebrews 10:24

- Invite a speaker from Serve the Children to your church, Sunday School class, small group or Bible study
- Volunteer some time in your church
- Commit to sponsoring a child or staff person at Serve the Children.
- Take a next step in leadership. How would you like to lead a short-term trip for Serve the Children? Contact dougc@servethechildren.com.

4. EXPLORE THE NEXT STEPS

"My children, we should love people not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring." 1 John 3:18

- Lead out in an opportunity to practically serve in the community. Encourage other members to participate with you.
- Meet with a staff person of Serve the Children or your church to discuss in greater detail how God wants to use your experience for life mission around the world.
- Tell your mission story. Encourage others to step out in faith and be stretched to see and experience their world in whole new ways.
- Serve the Children has many openings for volunteers. We would love to talk to you about using your skills in our organization.

SERVE THE CHILDREN
SHORT TERM MISSION POLICIES AND TEAM COVENANT

I realize that the following principles are crucial to the effectiveness, quality and safety of our mission together. As a member of the short-term mission team, I agree to adhere to these policies:

1. Remember that I am a representative of SERVE THE CHILDREN (STC) and the church I attend, and as such I will seek to represent good spiritual values, moral conduct and a likeness to Christ that is embraced in that assembly. I will adhere to the STC Mission Statement and Statements of Faith and Belief in my conduct and conversation.
2. Remember that I have come not only to teach, but also to learn. I may be exposed to procedures and practices that I feel are ineffective or insufficient. I may also be confronted by attitudes that I feel are narrow or close-minded. As this occurs, I will resist the temptation to "correct" my hosts and inform them about "how things are done back in the United States."
3. Respect my host's culture and distinctive practices of Christianity. I recognize that the Christian faith has many different faces throughout the world, and that one of the purposes of my trip is to witness and experience faith lived out in a different culture.
4. Develop and consistently maintain a servant's attitude toward all nationals and my teammates.
5. Respect our team leader(s) and their decisions and the guidance of our host country staff.
6. Refrain from gossip and keep my promise of giving only good reports. If there are policies and decisions made by the leaders with which I disagree or do not understand, I will go to the team leaders in private and make my concerns known to them rather than to other team members. In so doing I will avoid the possibility of sowing seeds of dissension and division. If someone on the team offends me, I promise to remain silent and forgive the person before God in my heart (Mk. 11:25), allowing love to cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8), or go to the person privately and seek reconciliation. I will resolve to approach an offender in the spirit of gentleness and genuine love, having first corrected my own attitude and actions (Gal. 6: 1, 2). Only if I am unable to restore an offender will I share the problem with others according to the principles of Matthew 18: 15-20. When I violate these aforementioned principles, I resolve to ask the forgiveness of my brother or sister and the Lord, knowing that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). By doing all these things I will seek to promote harmony on my team.
7. Be patient, forbearing and forgiving toward the short comings of the other members on the team.
8. Refrain from complaining. I realize that travel can present numerous unexpected and undesirable circumstances, but the rewards of conquering such circumstances should be my goal. I will resolve to be flexible, supporting and adaptive on such occasions rather than grumbling when circumstances are difficult.
9. Respect the work that is going on in the host country with its pastors and leaders. I realize that our team will be there for just a short time, but the local church and ministry is there long term. I will respect their knowledge, insights and instructions.
10. Refrain from negative comments or hostile discussions concerning the host country's politics and culture.
11. Remember not to be exclusive in my relationships with the team. If my best friend or spouse is on the team, we will make every effort to interact regularly with all team members of the team.
12. Refrain from activity or undue interest that could be construed as a romantic interest toward a national. I realize that certain actions that seem innocent in my own culture may be inappropriate in another culture.
13. Refrain from any consumption of alcoholic beverages, including beer, wine, and liquors. While this is not an attempt to bind the conscience, I understand that such indulgence may cause another to stumble. I realize and accept that failure to adhere to this mandate will result in my exclusion from further short-term trips with STC.
14. Refrain from use of any tobacco or tobacco related products while on this trip. This is due to the different cultural or religious views of tobacco usage the team may encounter and I do not want to hurt my witness or the team's testimony.
15. Remember my financial commitment as a team member and to STC in choosing to be a part of this team.
16. Attend team meetings in the US and in the country where I am serving.
17. I will help with fundraising activities for the team as much as my schedule will allow. All pictures or videos that I am in are the property of STC.

I understand that if I cannot abide by this covenant, I may be asked to return home early at my own expense and will not have any funds that were spent on this mission trip returned to me.

Signature _____ *Date* _____

Our mission is to offer hope and a future through God's love to underserved children and families around the world by meeting their educational, physical and emotional needs.

**SERVE THE CHILDREN
SHORT TERM MISSIONS APPLICATION**

PERSONAL INFORMATION-Name must be as it appears on your passport

Name _____ Phone _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Birthplace _____ Date of Birth _____

Email Address _____

Are you a U.S. Citizen? _____ Passport Number _____ Date _____

Height _____ Weight _____ Hair Color _____ Eye Color _____

Physical identification marks _____

Spouse name _____ Spouse phone _____

Nearest relative _____ Relationship _____

(Emergency contact)

Address _____ Phone _____

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Doctor's name _____ Phone _____

Office address _____

Medical insurance company _____ Phone _____

Plan name and number _____ Travel coverage? _____

If you are presently under a doctor's care for treatment and/or medication, describe care and dosage of the medication (attach additional pages if needed). _____

Describe any allergies or problems relating to food, medicine, heat or lifting. _____

Do you smoke or use tobacco? _____

Would you have trouble walking 2 miles carrying your suitcase? _____

If yes, explain _____

Describe any health problems in detail _____

SPIRITUAL INFORMATION

How long have you been following Christ? ___How long at your current Church? _____

Positions or involvement include: _____

A close friend that is active at your church is _____ Phone _____

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Employer _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Your position _____ How long? _____

Describe any duties that might relate to this trip _____

MISC. INFORMATION

Describe any skills and proficiency _____

List present and past leadership positions _____

Foreign countries you have been to _____

Foreign languages you speak _____

Do you have a flexible work schedule? ____

Do you have the ability to raise funds to pay for this trip? ____

Will you need help to pay for this trip? ____

Can you help with fundraising activities for the team? ____

EMERGENCY RELEASE AND RIGHT OF REPRESENTATION

I, _____, in consideration of my participation on this mission trip to Liberia, represent and agree that:

- 1. I am prepared physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually for this trip. The scheduling, environment and other foreign country and travel conditions are not averse to me. I will be flexible and have a servant attitude.
- 2. I grant to any of the Serve the Children leaders or their contracted agents the right to represent me in decisions relating to my welfare or the group welfare during the trip. I will follow the suggestions made on my behalf.
- 3. I understand the administrative role that Serve the Children plays in putting together our mission trip. I also understand that the mission trip could be handled by a contracted agent of Serve the Children in country and the contracted agent of Serve the Children will be responsible for the trip and the team.
- 4. I hereby grant any of the Serve the Children leaders or their contracted agents my permission to authorize medical treatment and medication on my behalf. I will not hold any of the Serve the Children leaders or their contracted agents responsible for the results of such treatment, medications or decisions made on my behalf.
- 5. I am aware of the hazards and risks to myself and property associated with this mission trip. I have read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory (if any) for this country found at <http://travel.state.gov/travel>. These risks include, but are not limited to, death or injury by accident, disease, terrorist acts, weather conditions, and inadequate medical services and supplies. I accept these conditions with full awareness, and I assume all risks of death, injury, illness, terrorist assaults and personal property loss or damage associated with such risks.
- 6. I attest and certify that I am physically fit and have no medical conditions that would prevent me from performing my assigned duties which may include long hikes, high altitude, and heat, limited and infrequent meals. I am aware of the disease risks associated with foreign travel and I accept these risks.
- 7. I waive any and all claims for damages against Serve The Children leaders or their contracted agents, arising from death, injury, illness, inconvenience, or in property damage or loss occurring as a result of this mission trip for any reason including but not limited to any negligent act or acts of Serve The Children leaders or their contracted agents which may in any way cause death, injury, illness, inconvenience, or property damage or loss to me. I have read this release in its entirety, understand its contents and agree to them of my own free will.
- 8. Governing Law/Venue: In accepting service from us, this agreement shall be governed only by the laws of the State of Washington. Venue for any action hereunder shall be in Pierce County of the State of Washington.

Signature _____ Date _____

Parent signature (for minor) _____ Date _____

Please return to: Serve the Children along with your application and covenant

Serve the Children
Child Protection Policy

Purpose: To create a secure and nurturing atmosphere where children will be treated with honor and respect and be properly protected. We want to assist children to be capable and to learn to protect themselves.

We believe that every child regardless of gender, creed, caste and color should have a basic right to get protection from sexual or other exploitation.

Each and every staff and visitors of the organization are obliged to follow the child protection policy as mentioned below.

I _____ hereby declare that I am obliged to abstain from the following:

1. To beat or physically manhandle any child. To abuse a child physically, mentally or sexually.
2. To establish a physical or sexual relationship with any child.
3. To establish a relationship with a child that results in exploitation.
4. To engage in any action that is dangerous to children.
5. To engage in physical actions or sexually provocative language or comments.
6. To pressure a child under his/her care and protection.
7. To use or force children to do our personal work.
8. To involve a child in illegal or dangerous behavior or to neglect a child's essential needs.
9. To purposely engage in any action that insults the child.
10. To favor selected children and to discriminate against other children.

Any complaint received from the children or anyone found breaking conduct of the above-mentioned policy will result in investigation by management and a report will be lodged with law enforcement.

DECLARATION:

I _____ have read the above-mentioned child protection policy being implemented by Serve the Children. I declare that I accept and am obliged to follow this policy. Failure to follow this policy will result in the team member immediately returning to the United States at their own cost.

Signature and date

Sample Fundraising Letter

Dear (name):

(Make your first paragraph a personal greeting and introduction.)

God has opened the door for me to go on a short-term mission trip to Liberia with Serve the Children. I will be involved with the (education, recreation, medical team) as we work with the children and the staff at a local school.

You can find out more about the ministries of Serve the Children by visiting their web page at www.servethechildren.com or joining their Facebook group site.

This is a team project, and you are needed on the team. First, I need to have a prayer team in the US supporting me while I am on the trip. Would you be willing to sign a prayer covenant and commit to praying everyday for me and the team while we are gone?

Second, please pray to God about becoming a financial partner with me in this project. The total cost is \$xxxx. Would you consider investing \$xx to help me pay for this trip? Much of the cost of the trip is due by February 1, 20xx.

If you would like to join me in this, please make your check payable to "Serve the Children." Either return your check to me or you can send it directly to Serve the Children, 6314 19th Street West, Unit 18, Fircrest, WA 98466. Just place my name on the memo line of the check and the funds will be directed to my trip expenses. Your donation is tax deductible.

If I do not hear from you by _____, I will attempt to contact you to see what you have decided. I can answer any questions you may have at that time.

You are very important to me. Thank-you for praying about being a part of my team.

Letter tips:

1. Avoid mass produced letters
2. Avoid long words and sentences
3. Establish a deadline
4. Mention the amount of money that you need. Maybe suggest an amount to give
5. If you have been on a mission trip before, briefly explain to your supporters how the trip changed your life or impacted you personally
6. Follow-up

Serve the Children
Liberia Mission Trip- Prayer Partner Covenant

I do hereby covenant to pray daily for _____
from this date until they return from the mission trip. Further, I will pray for safety for the
mission team, that God will work in their lives and for the people they are serving.

Your Name _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Stay informed during my mission trip by joining the Serve the Children Facebook group. We will
update this regularly during our trip.

www.servethechildren.com

Cut here- keep one copy for yourself and return one copy to your prayer partner

Serve the Children
Liberia Mission Trip- Prayer Partner Covenant

I do hereby covenant to pray daily for _____
from this date until they return from the mission trip. Further, I will pray for safety for the
mission team, that God will work in their lives and for the people they are serving.

Your Name _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Stay informed during my mission trip by joining the Serve the Children Facebook group. We will
update this regularly during our trip.

www.servethechildren.com

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

TIMELINE ESTIMATE

Six months before the team leaves, we will begin holding informational meetings and request that you provide us with your application. You need to ask yourself, “Why do I want to go on a short-term mission trip?” Schedule your vacation time at work. Join the Serve the Children Facebook group.

Five months before departure, you need to complete the medical release form, the team covenant and submit a \$500 down payment. You also need to confirm that your passport is current and renew it if necessary.

To be a valid passport, the expiration date cannot be within 6 months of the trip date. You also need an adequate number of blank pages for the visa.

Send out your fundraising letters.

Be prepared for a spiritual battle! Satan does not want you to go on this trip and he will attempt to discourage you. The Holy Spirit is there for you to battle Satan. Your teammates are praying for you.

Four months Your plane ticket must be paid for. Start your journal.

Three months Review the “What Should I Take” list and start gathering these items.

Two months before departure, you should begin thinking about the clothes and other items that you will need to take. Look for breathable clothing that dries quickly. REI and many sports type stores have this. Book your appointment for your immunizations.

Six weeks before departure, the remaining balance is due. You need to complete a visa application, provide us with your passport, immunization record, the visa fee and two passport sized photos.

One month before departure, confirm that you have a ride to the airport, purchase your supplies and make sure you know when to begin taking your malaria pills. You should also think about who will pick you up at the airport when we return.

1, 2 days before departure- usually we have a packing party and weigh all of our suitcases to confirm they are within the weight limits for check in luggage. Review the check list- Do you have everything? Go to you bank and get newer currency.

Start taking malarone for malaria if this is the pill you will be taking.

HISTORY OF SERVE THE CHILDREN

Serve the Children was founded to give opportunity to children without access to an education. Poor and underserved, they are vulnerable to malnutrition, disease, child labor, and a lifetime of poverty. Without the hope an education provides, they have little chance to rise above the hard circumstances of their lives. Serve the Children exists to offer hope and a future through God's love to underserved children and families around the world by meeting their educational, physical and emotional needs.

Liberia

Fourteen years of civil war-ravaged Liberia between 1989 and 2003. Rebel factions kidnapped children, forcing them to abuse their own families as a way to condition them into being ruthless soldiers. The UN estimates that 15,000 children fought, murdered, and pillaged during the war. Warlords gave soldiers of all ages psychedelic drugs to force their dependency and extinguish their inhibitions. Families fled to the capital of Monrovia to escape looting, rape, and murder. The city, crippled with no infrastructure or government, became overcrowded with refugees. More than 150,000 people were killed, leaving more than 50% of the population under the age of 18.

Liberia has been steadily rebuilding since the war ended in 2003, however, it is a low-income country and around 54% of the population lives below poverty level. Education must be a priority for Liberia to go forward. Only about 62% of males over age 15 and about 32% of females over age 15 can read and write (2015 estimates, CIA World Factbook, cia.gov). Government schools are full beyond capacity, suffer corruption, and offer low pay for barely qualified teachers. Modest school fees or uniform requirements for private schools put basic education out of reach for most families. A 2013 news report indicated that many young girls were turning to prostitution to pay for school.

The founders of STC were compelled to help the war orphans and former child soldiers of Liberia after witnessing firsthand the atrocities of the civil war. In 1997, we helped found a school in the capital city, Monrovia. At that time, it was the only tuition free school in the country, and the only school focused on Christian education and counseling for former soldiers and war orphans. Our schools operated consistently and expanded steadily, even during wartime, unless forced to close by the fighting. As former child soldiers have aged through our schools, the mission has expanded from war orphans and former soldiers to reach children who simply cannot afford to pay for school. Currently, STC partners with Action Faith Institute that serves preschool through 12th grade students.

India

Our mission is to offer hope and a future through God's love to underserved children and families around the world by meeting their educational, physical and emotional needs.

India's forgotten children are living on meager subsistence in rural tribal villages. They live hours away from access to clean water or education. Generational poverty and an unrelenting caste system create little opportunity for children to have a better life than their parents. The government and a number of non-governmental organizations are seeking to provide food and education to India's impoverished rural families, but the need continues to outweigh the help.

In 2007, we began partnering with Hosanna Ministries, an Indian ministry. In Lasina we offer a vocational school and currently teach young people from local villages Microsoft Office and tailoring. Without these skills, these young people would probably end up as farm laborers earning about \$3 per day. Lasina is a very rural village and we are the only option for vocational training close by.

In 2017, Hosanna Ministries began serving women and children in Mumbai. Many women and children live in the slums and earn a meager living by picking rags from the dump and selling them. They are vulnerable to human trafficking, disease, and malnutrition. We offer sewing classes for women to help them better provide for their families, other vocational training including computer classes, a preschool, and a day school with a meal for children who would otherwise have no hope of education.

Zambia

In 2018, Serve the Children began partnering with Pure Nard Ministries to help continue the amazing work that is being done in Mungu, Zambia.

Zambia is a nation of peaceful people. Rich in natural wonders and with hospitality as a cultural cornerstone, Zambia has much to offer, but like many other Southern African nations, Zambia has been ravaged by HIV/AIDS, extreme poverty, and a lack of resources. Almost half of the nation's population is under the age of 14 (46%) due to high rates of disease and poor health care. Health and nutrition, education, job training, and food security are all major issues of concern for rural families. Pure Nard Ministries serves to address these issues in community and by the community.

Pure Nard Ministries is located in Mungu, a rural community south of the nation's capital, Lusaka. The preschool has three classes; a baby class (3-year olds), a middle class (4 and 5-year olds), and a reception (which we know as kindergarten, for 6 and 7-year olds). It is an English-medium school, giving a head-start for some of the world's poorest as they gain school readiness. The school serves its children and their families by providing an education, but it also serves the community by providing a meal for students and by drawing families into the church. In 2024 the Pure Nard Grade School opened with first grade and will add one class a year up to grade seven, preparing students for the grade seven exams and secondary school.

All our STC supported schools are led fully by local leadership. We partner with local leaders who understand how to best serve their own communities. Our objective is to resource and equip schools in a shared vision to improve the future of children.

The children in our schools are eager and ready. Each one has a dream to be something greater than the poverty they see around them. Our goal is to equip them to fulfill those dreams by providing free education. We believe God made them with amazing talents and potential for today and for the future.

We invite you to come join us on a life-changing mission trip to one of the countries where we serve. Help us to achieve our vision of “educating the underserved”. You can partner with us to change a life by sponsoring a child or one of our teachers. Contact our office via email at info@servethechildren.com and we will get back to you.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR LIBERIA

1817-The American Colonization Society is formed. Its purpose is to raise funds to send freed American slaves to Africa, their ancestral home.

1820-The first group of freed slaves arrives in Africa.

1847-Liberia declares itself an independent country, the first republic in all Africa.

1862-America recognizes Liberia as a country.

1926- Firestone Tire and Rubber Company open their rubber tree plantation in Liberia.

1951- Women and indigenous Liberians receive the right to vote.

1958- Racial discrimination is outlawed.

1980-Sergeant Samuel Doe leads a coup, assassinating the president and his cabinet to successfully take over the country.

1989-On December 24th, Charles Taylor launches an uprising against Samuel Doe that quickly degenerates into an inter-ethnic conflict lasting 14 years.

1996- “April 6 War.” There is fierce fighting throughout Monrovia.

1997-Charles Taylor is elected president of Liberia by a landslide vote but does little to improve the state of the country, instead benefiting himself and his family. AGC was founded in Sinkor.

2000-In July, a rebel group known as the LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy) invades Liberia from Guinea.

2003-In April, a new rebel group named MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia) launches an invasion from Cote d’Ivoire.

2003-In August, peacekeeping soldiers sent by ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) arrive in Liberia. Eventually the UN brings in more than 15,000 soldiers from around the world to staff UNMIL, the peacekeeping force currently in the country. A transitional power-sharing government is formed by the three warring factions. Gyude Bryant, a politician with no ties to any of the warring parties, is named interim president.

2004-Disarmament begins for all former soldiers, called combatants.

2005-Parliamentary and Presidential Elections—the first peaceful, free elections in more than 50 years. The first woman president of an African nation is elected President of Liberia- Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

2005- President Johnson-Sirleaf switches on generator powered streetlights in the capital for the first time in 15 years.

2006- Former president Charles Taylor appears before a UN backed court and is charged with crimes against humanity.

2011- President Sirleaf is re-elected for a second six-year term as president.

2013- Charles Taylor appeal for his crimes against humanity conviction is upheld by the World Court.

2014/15- Ebola Crisis- Possible 15,000 Liberians died during this time. The government shut down all schools, all non-essential government offices, it was illegal to shake hands or hug, you could not gather in groups. People suspected of having Ebola were enclosed in their homes for 21 days.

2019- Our Sinkor school is destroyed in a fire.