



Handbook

www.bajamissions.us

Bienvenidos

MISSION STATEMENT

Baja Missions exists to demonstrate the love of Jesus by bringing spiritual, physical and emotional relief to the people of Baja and the planting of Christ's church in communities and villages in Baja where the gospel has never gone. Surprisingly, there is a significant lack of churches along the Baja peninsula, just a short drive from our homeland.

MISSION VERSE

"...go and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." - Matthew 28:19

PURPOSE

Our purpose is to help U.S. churches and Christians in serving the people of the Baja by utilizing and coordinating various talents and resources of those who choose to serve. The purpose of Baja mission trips is found in Matthew 28:19-20: ***"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*** All mission trips are centered on Christ's command to reach out to the hurting with His love. We believe that Baja presents a unique opportunity to do this, literally in the shadows of America. The Baja people are kind and loving, and the receptivity to the gospel is remarkable. The quick establishment of the Lord's church is a testimony of the power of the saving message of Jesus, in a land where there is respect for God, His word, and His messengers. Once they are exposed to compassion, love with no strings attached, and the truth, they respond much like the early church story. We simply ask you to "come and see."

GOALS

- Assist local U.S. churches and elderships in planting churches in Baja, in areas/locations where the church has not gone
- Help coordinate and assist mission teams traveling to Baja
- Increase participation in Baja Missions by offering past Baja workers as speakers at churches who have an interest in being involved in the mission of spreading the gospel in Baja
- Oversight of support staff in Baja (headquartered at Ensenada)
- Secure funding for general staff and operations
- Secure funding for benevolent and physical needs of the people of Baja

Essential documents

- Passport REQUIRED.
- Photocopy of your passport picture page in a secure place other than where you keep your passport
- **Photocopy of your passport picture page provided with your application for border/checkpoint crossing information**
- **Mexican VISA** required when riding the bus & often when riding the vans (web site address <http://www.inm.gob.mx/fmme> to register for your visa).
- Medical insurance information
- Emergency medical information (allergies, medications, etc.)
- If you choose to use traveler's checks (NOT WIDELY ACCEPTED), make sure and keep your check numbers and contact phone numbers for the company securing those checks in a secure place
- Airline tickets or in the case of e-tickets, a photo ID (obviously, a passport will work)

God's plan

God created each one of us lovingly with a plan in mind for our lives. To that end, He gifted us with a unique personality and set of abilities. God, by His very nature, is missional. He originates the mission, and it is a mission of reconciliation. Though it is almost incomprehensible, God established His plan for reconciliation before creation! Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:4, that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world so that we might be holy and blameless.

God intends for the world to know Him and His character when we manifest His holiness by the lives that we live. Short-term mission trips give us a taste of how God can use us when we make ourselves available to Him. We get so busy in our normal, every day lives that we sometimes forget what is most important. Use this experience as an opportunity to set into place the kind of spiritual disciplines that will cause you to reflect in the first moment of every day that the only reason to live is to bring glory to God in whatever we do.

Your life will be changed through this experience. It is amazing to see what God can do through you when you make yourself available to Him – no matter what you are doing.

Baja Missions, Inc

Baja Missions, Incorporated (Baja Missions) is a not-for-profit entity. The official name of the organization is Baja Missions, Incorporated. Our federal identification number is 20-0507229. The Baja Missions, Incorporated is recognized by the Internal the Internal Revenue Service as a U.S. Non-Profit Corporation under section 501(c)(3) in a letter dated 9 January 2004.

Donors may deduct contribution to Baja Missions, Incorporated such as gifts, transfers, bequests and legacies from appropriate federal taxes. The corporation was formed to oversee and fund the support of churches of Christ in Baja California, Mexico.

Our **mailing address** is: Baja Missions, Inc. c/o Rex Watson 337 Lake Valley Drive, Franklin, TN 37069

For online donations go to our website: **www.bajamissions.us**

Mexico Contacts

Baja Missions

- **Pilar Natera** - Chief Operating Officer: pilar@bajamissions.us
- **Panfilo Cristobal** – Spiritual Development and Events: panfilo@bajamissions.us
- **Aida Santiago and Liliana Hernandez** - Papalote Clinic Administrators: amorporbaja@gmail.com
- **Aholibama Figueroa** - Zorrillo Clinic Administrator: amorporbajacbv@gmail.com
- **Daniel and Fabiola Martinez** - Guadalupe Clinic Administrators: clinicaamorporbajavg1@gmail.com

US Contacts

- **Rex Watson** - Chief Executive Officer: 256.508.0500 rexwatson10@hotmail.com
- **Regina Cook** - Administrative Assistant: reginajcook@gmail.com
- **Jill Freeze** - Administrative Assistant: jillfreeze@yahoo.com
- **Pat McRight** - Information Technology Coordinator: patricio@bajamissions.us
- **Dr. James Parnell** - Baja Clinic and Medical Advisor

The officers and Board of Trustees of the Baja Missions, Incorporated are:

Rex Watson	Denton Kimbrough	Dane Richardson	Pat McRight
Lee Milam	Darryl Wortman	Rick Harris	James Parnell
Jill Freeze	Wendy Cantrell	Tim Nichols	

The Baja Missions provides leadership and support to do the following:

1. Purchase property in the Baja
2. Build a church building
3. Find a preacher
4. Find support for the preacher from a congregation willing to come help
5. Schedule visits and work projects to the participating congregations.
6. Support Baja Bible Institute

Group planning

All visits are to be scheduled through the Baja Missions office in Mexico. Please contact Pilar at pilar@bajamissions.us. Dates can also be reserved at the Fall Missions Conference. All dates are tentative until the scheduling committee confirms them with the preacher at the location to be visited. Adequate adult supervision is required for all senior high school mission trips. All requests for dates should include the following information:

- Sponsoring congregation and person in charge (team leader)
- Dates of arrival and departure
- Home number and work number of team leader
- Email address
- Mailing address
- Approximate number on trip
- The names of church leaders coming on trip
- Our recommendation is to have a good balance of adults and youth (high school and older) – **a minimum of 1 adult for every 2 teens is required on trip**
- What you are planning to do during your visit
- How many of your people speak Spanish

*** There is a \$50 fee per person to help offset the cost for the vehicles and staff. This should be paid in advance of the group coming, or if not, upon the group's arrival.**

City of Children

With the devoted work of Stan and Carole Stout, former directions, the City of Children has been rescuing children for over 50 years. These children come from all over Baja, Mexico, leaving a life of abandonment, abuse, neglect or even worse situations. Many churches of Christ, individuals, and other groups provide these children with an opportunity to have a stable environment, while receiving an education, spiritual nourishment, meals, health care and lots of love. Located in Ensenada, Mexico, 75 miles south of Tijuana, teens and adult have the privilege to travel to the City of Children each summer. They provide Vacation Bible School for the children at night, have the opportunity to be involved in work projects, to play with and love these special children. Many Mexican children have been saved, and hearts have been touched around the world because of God's refuge for his children in Ensenada, Mexico. Through Stan's visionary leadership, Baja Missions was established and continues to grow. It is now managed separately from the City of Children.

To learn more about the work at the City of Children, please visit their website at: www.cityofchildren.com.

Behavior

Guidelines are helpful tools. They allow us to identify basic behavioral expectations for all team members and leaders participating in mission efforts. As you consider these guidelines, remember that above all, you are representing the kingdom of God to people who may have little or no exposure to it. You may be the only visible portrayal of a dedicated disciple of Christ Jesus that some will encounter. We pray that you will take to heart Paul's words, "Live wisely among those who are not Christians, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone." (Col. 4:5,6 - NLT). Jesus wants our light to shine in such a way that the world sees the glory of God through us at all times.

We believe in the principle of praising God in all things, therefore:

We encourage every team to set aside time daily for praise, prayer, worship, and encouragement. While at times this may not be possible, any team that doesn't pray and worship together is missing out on its greatest source of power.

We believe in the principle of unity of the Spirit, therefore:

Each worker is to understand that he/she is not to promote his/her ideas that could potentially disrupt unity within the team. All will be expected to speak only favorably of other team members, the local congregation, and local workers. If problems arise that need to be confronted, these are to be resolved immediately in a way that manifests love and concern.

We believe in the principle of working together in community, therefore:

Any behavior that disrupts the sense of community within the team is strongly discouraged. This is similar to the principle of unity, but we want to state the importance of team building. Leaders and team members will make decisions and commitments for the team as a whole. No single member may make such commitments for themselves or the team without the approval of the team.

We believe that humility is a foundational Christian attribute, therefore:

We should all remember that we are guest in the hosts' country. With humility in mind, we will be culturally sensitive and never arrogant about "how things are in America." We will be open to learning how things are done in other cultures, appreciating what is offered – such as food (even if we don't like it!), and manifesting a continual spirit of submission to God and others.

We believe that our love for one another will show the world that we are disciples of Jesus, therefore:

We ask you to intentionally think of ways to show your love and appreciation for all members of the team and for all those in the local congregations with whom you work. Please be aware that comments made in jest can be taken in negative ways. Once again, personality conflicts and other problems between team members are to be resolved immediately.

We believe in being the most effective witnesses for Christ as possible, therefore:

In keeping with our desire to effective witnesses for Christ while in Baja, **alcohol and tobacco use (Cigarettes, dip, snuff, etc.) is not acceptable while with a Baja Missions group.** These are things that are heavily frowned upon by the Church and culture in Baja, and will quickly reduce our effectiveness as ambassadors of Christ in the communities in which we find ourselves. We never can be sure what child or struggling brother or sister is watching and we must, in everything, strive to be the most effective witness of Christ that we can.

Because Jesus is Lord of our lives, we are subject to Him and the behavioral guidelines of this mission effort, we agree to the following:

- We will be subject to the appointed leadership of the team.
- We will "walk in His steps" with Christ as our example in all things.
- We will reach out to the people of the Baja and serve them in the name of Christ.

Baja Missions policies

INTERPRETERS

Interpreters are an invaluable part of your trip. Baja Missions will do its best to provide each group with an adequate number of translators. In most cases more than one interpreter is available. Groups are encouraged to bring, when possible, Spanish-speaking members from their local congregations to aid in the many interpretations that a group will come across in their week of work here in Baja. There are also interpreters available for hire here in Ensenada, but expect to pay well for their services.

Many of the Baja Missions interpreters are young adults who are either studying or starting a career—often times both. They are very familiar with the goals and beliefs of Baja Missions and also with the needs of your group—many have years of experience interpreting for Baja Missions. While having an interpreter is a necessity for any group, having an interpreter who shares in the beliefs of your group and can provide insight to your group on how to most effectively put its plans into action is a true blessing. For these reasons we ask that you follow these requests when interacting with our interpreters:

- Please notify Baja Missions regarding the number of interpreters needed by your group at least two months before your scheduled trip.
- They will be treated as members of the group. This means that their meals will be provided by the group, as well as their lodging, during the full extent of their time with the groups. Please budget for these expenses.
- Since many are giving up jobs/school to aid serve your group an honorarium of at least \$100+ per week of service is suggested. This amount should not include food or lodging.
- Interpreters are not errand runners. They are more than willing to go with group members to aid them in their tasks, but should not be sent out alone to bring things back for the group—they are not permitted to drive the Baja Missions vehicles.

TIMELINE

We ask all the group leaders to give us tentative dates for the upcoming summer at the Baja Fall Conference. In January, your dates will be confirmed by Baja Missions. Groups need to confirm plans for your trip by May 1st including: number of team members, the group's tentative schedule, supplies (medical, construction, etc.). We ask the \$50 dll per person fee be paid by May 15th.

VEHICLES

In an effort to serve the groups that come to serve the people of Baja, we are happy to be able to provide vehicles. Groups that come are not required to use the vehicles that Baja Missions offers and are free to rent vehicles if it better serves their group's planning and budget.

We are asking all groups to bring their tools and supplies and leave at the church.

Our current fleet of passenger vans are available for groups to use. When scheduling vehicle usage, we will do our best to accommodate your group's transportation needs. Also, group coordinators need to understand that we have a limited supply of vehicles and we may not be able to provide you with all the vehicles that you request. All passengers riding in a Baja Missions vehicle must be at least thirteen years old. Once again we ask that you give us four (4) weeks notice regarding your vehicle needs. Below are a few essential requirements for using the Baja Mission vehicles:

- Each group should have assigned drivers before their trip ever begins. These drivers need to be over the age of 25, have a good driving record and experience driving large passenger vans and trucks with trailers.
- At NO point should a person without a valid US drivers license be behind the wheel of the vehicle, which includes any translators or Mexican brothers or sisters. Mexican law prohibits anyone but US citizens from driving cars in Mexico with United States License plates.
- We ask that each group return the vehicles washed and at least full of gas. Many times there is less than a day between groups, and out of courtesy to the next group the vehicles need to be returned ready to head back out.
- If your group experiences problems in the field with a vehicle, we ask you to do whatever is necessary to get the vehicle fixed..

Finally, Baja Missions requests each group to maintain an attitude of service, cooperation and understanding when it comes to the use of the vehicles and tools. We ask that you make every effort to leave equipment in the best condition possible. In this way, we will all be better able to serve the people of Baja.

Dress

At all times we must be aware that, while in Baja, we find ourselves in a place and culture that is not our own. In everything we do we seek to honor and glorify the name of Jesus. In an effort to be respectful and courteous visitors here in Mexico we need to respect and honor a culture that is not our own. For this reason, we ask everyone who comes on a trip to consider carefully his or her dress. **All shorts must be knee length. Skirts and dresses should follow the same guideline.** The shoulders must be covered at all times (No halter tops, spaghetti straps, cut off t-shirts, etc.). Again, we must always remember that we are here for one reason, so that people may come to know Christ, and we must always do this in a the context of the culture in which we are visitors

Culture and customs of México

As in all cultures and people groups around the world, there are generalizations that can be made. This, however, does not mean that they can be used a hard and fast rule with which to approach every situation when interacting with members of that culture. Just as in the United States, many generalizations can be drawn about our culture, we are acutely aware that there are differences depending on geographic area, social status, place of residence (rural/city), level of education, etc. The same is true in Mexico. The information that follows will give you a great idea and general understanding of the Mexican culture that you will experience in rural Baja, but we need to be sure to remember that every individual is different and loved by their Creator!

FAMILY TIES

Family ties are strong. The eldest family member is the most respected and controls the family actions. The father is usually the dominant person working to provide for the family. The mother, however, is a major unifying force and has a key role in raising the children. Many women also work to support their family. The children respect and obey their parents very much. Occasionally, small children are not strongly disciplined or inhibited. Don't be surprised to see young kids wandering around during church services - this is normal.

TIME

In the United States, the clock and the chronology of events dictate people. People are constantly rushing from one appointment to the next, trying to be "on time." Sometimes cutting off people who have real needs is done to make it on time to the next appointment or activity. In Mexico, people are dictated by relationships and are more seasonal in following up on events and appointments. **Building relationship is much more important than keeping a schedule.** Rather than moving on to the next appointment, and cut short a conversation, they will prefer to arrive late. From this emphasis on people, tasks are easily put off until tomorrow. For them, this is right and good. Time efficiency, therefore, is not a high value. However, do not allow this as a "justified" scapegoat for yourself. Focus your attention on building relationships with the people you meet. Make it a point to remember peoples' names. Allow time for people to arrive late to your church services or other scheduled ministry events. You may say the service starts at 7:00p.m, however many people may arrive at 7:15 or 7:30. Do not be frustrated at this! "Go with the flow!"

HOSPITALITY

No matter how little they have, the people are very generous and will easily give you their last meal or an item they own. Don't refuse them out of fear of getting sick - you won't (They drink bottled water also, as their bodies cannot handle the municipal water). Being in a Mexican home is a wonderful opportunity to learn about them and provides a friendly trusting atmosphere in which to share the gospel.

EDUCATION

There are varying levels of education among adults and children alike. Keep in mind that some of the church members may be illiterate. Originating from different parts of Mexico, some speak Spanish as a second language and may be more timid in conversing.

RELATIONSHIPS

Mexican people can be very reserved. Team women should not spend much time alone with the Mexican men and team men likewise, should not pay more than polite attention to the Mexican girls. Couples, even married couples, should be reserved in their displays of affection. Holding hands and kissing in public are very much avoided in some areas of Mexican culture and should be avoided by all team members.

ATTITUDE

“Consider others better than yourself.” Bear in mind that you are guests in your host’s country and city. Mexicans take hospitality very seriously and should be sincerely thanked when making an effort to extend it. Although you are there to serve them, the Mexican Christians, while thankful and blessed by your service, also look upon your coming as an opportunity to serve and minister to you. Try to be conscientious of your facial and body expressions, as these can also convey messages. Remember a smile can transcend any number of language barriers.

GREETINGS

Be sincerely forward. Greet people with a warm handshake and a friendly smile, even if you don’t speak a word of Spanish. It is appropriate to express thanks for their hospitality toward you as a visitor. It is strongly encouraged to remember names! Older men should be addressed as “Senor” (Sir) and women as “Señora (Mrs.) or with the church members, “Hermano” (meaning Brother) or “Hermana” (meaning Sister). Children should be addressed by their first name. Reserve “amigo” (friend) for those with whom you develop a friendship. Please keep in mind that these are not strict “cultural guidelines” that must be followed. Don’t be afraid of making a mistake. They will prefer that you be sincere with them, rather than acting like a mechanical robot.

SPEAKING & COMMUNICATION

It would help if you learned some Spanish words and phrases before the trip to help you communicate better in times of emergency and need, to help you build relationships, and to minister more effectively. The Mexican people always appreciate it when you make an effort to fit in and adjust to their culture. One way to solve this problem is to use a nametag (try to have a name that is Spanish and make sure you can say it. Don’t make up words or attempt to say English words with a Mexican accent (you could end up saying something offensive without realizing it!). Also, be careful of gestures. Hand and arm movements are okay, but you should try to keep them to a minimum. Ones used in the U.S. may not have the same meaning in Mexico. Also, be conscious of the kinds of music you listen to, as we aim to exemplify Christ in all we do.

MAKING PROMISES

The Mexican culture views promises with much more gravity than does the American culture. Do not promise that you will write or send pictures to anyone unless there is a 150% chance that you will be able to keep this promise upon returning to the U.S. You might ask them to write first, which will then remind you to write back. As surprising as it may seem, it is quite likely that nearly all Mexicans you are introduced to once will remember your name for years to come; especially the children. Do not promise things like: sending them money, building them things, offering them work in the states, or helping them get to the states. If you are presented with any questionable situations, please talk with us.

THINGS ARE CERTAINLY DIFFERENT HERE

Perhaps the most important thing to realize as short-term missionary in Mexico is that you are a guest in a foreign country. You are the one who does things that seem different. In fact, many things, which are thought innocent or “normal” at home are may not be so in Mexico and may keep people from hearing the message of salvation. A good measuring tool for your actions is this: If you are not sure of what is appropriate to do, don’t be the first or last to do it. Follow their lead as you seek to form lifelong bonds with people of a beautiful culture. As a representative of Jesus Christ, it is critical that we be careful of the impression we create..

Liability release form

BAJA MISSIONS, INC. RELEASE AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY

This is a legal document that affects your legal rights!

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

THIS RELEASE AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY (the "Release") executed on this ____ day of _____, 20____, by [your name] _____ (the "Volunteer") and, if the Volunteer is a minor, the Volunteer's Parent or Guardian, in favor of Baja Missions, Inc., staff, agents, and board of directors.

The Volunteer desires to work as a volunteer for Baja Missions and engage in activities related to being a volunteer in the Baja region of Mexico (the "Activities"). The Volunteer understands that the Activities may include constructing and rehabilitating residential and church buildings, loading and unloading building materials, working in churches, visiting Baja area residents in their homes, living in housing provided for Baja Mission volunteers, engaging in teaching endeavors, etc.

The Volunteer hereby freely, voluntarily, and without duress executes this Release under the following terms:

Release and Waiver. Volunteer does hereby release, forever discharge, hold harmless, and covenant not to sue, Baja Missions, their successors and assigns, from any and all liability, claims, and demands of whatever kind or nature, either in law or in equity, which arise or may hereafter arise from Volunteer's Activities with Baja Missions.

Volunteer understands that this Release discharges Baja Missions from any liability or claim that the Volunteer may have against Baja Missions with respect to any bodily injury, personal injury, illness, death, or property damage that may result from Volunteer's Activities with Baja Missions, whether caused by Baja Missions, Inc., The Mayfair Church of Christ, and/or their respective elders, employees, ministers, officers, interns, members, trustees, and agents, or otherwise. Volunteer also understands that Baja Missions does not assume any responsibility for or obligation to provide medical, financial, or other assistance, including but not limited to medical, health, disability or life insurance in the event of injury, illness or death.

Medical Treatment. Volunteer does hereby release and forever discharge Baja Missions from any liability or claim whatsoever which arises or may hereafter arise on account of any first aid, medical, or other treatment or service rendered in connection with the Volunteer's Activities with Baja Missions.

Assumption of the Risk. The Volunteer understands that the Activities may involve conditions and circumstances that pose some risk or hazard for the Volunteer, including, but not limited to, construction, loading and unloading, transportation to and from the Activity sites, unsafe and unsanitary conditions, etc.

Volunteer hereby expressly and specifically assumes the risk of injury or harm in the Activities and releases Baja Missions from all claims and liability for injury, illness, death, or property damage resulting from the Activities.

Insurance. The Volunteer understands that, unless otherwise agreed to by Baja Missions in writing, Baja Missions does not carry or maintain health, medical, disability, or life insurance coverage for any Volunteer. Each Volunteer is expected and encouraged to obtain his or her own medical, health, disability or life insurance coverage.

Photographic Release. Volunteer does hereby grant and convey unto Baja Missions all right, title, and interest in any and all photographic images and video or audio recordings made by Baja Missions during the Volunteer's Activities with Baja Missions, including, but not limited to, any royalties, proceeds, or other benefits derived from such photographs or recordings.

Other. Volunteer expressly agrees that this Release is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the State of Alabama and that this Release shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Alabama. Volunteer agrees that in the event that any clause or provision of this Release shall be held to be invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity of such clause or provision shall not otherwise affect the remaining provisions of this Release which shall continue to be enforceable.

Parental Consent. The undersigned Parent or Guardian, having legal custody of _____, a minor (date of birth: _____), having been informed about the nature of the volunteer Activities, as set forth above, does hereby (1) consent and agree to my son's/daughter's participation in such Activities, and (2) release, forever discharge, hold harmless, and covenant not to sue, Baja Missions, Inc., staff, agents, and board of directors from and against any and all liability, losses, claims, for bodily injury, personal injury, illness, death, or property damage resulting from my son's/daughter's participation in such Activities, whether caused by the negligence of any individual associated with Baja Missions or otherwise. IN WITNESS WHEREOF Volunteer, and if Volunteer is a minor, Volunteer's parent or guardian, have executed this Release as of the day and year first above written.

VOLUNTEER

Name _____

Signature _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Phone _____

Phone _____

Add me to email list _____

Group Affiliation (if any)

Insurance Co.

VOLUNTEER'S PARENT/GUARDIAN

Name

Signature

EMERGENCY CONTACT

Name

Phone

Phone

Witness Signature