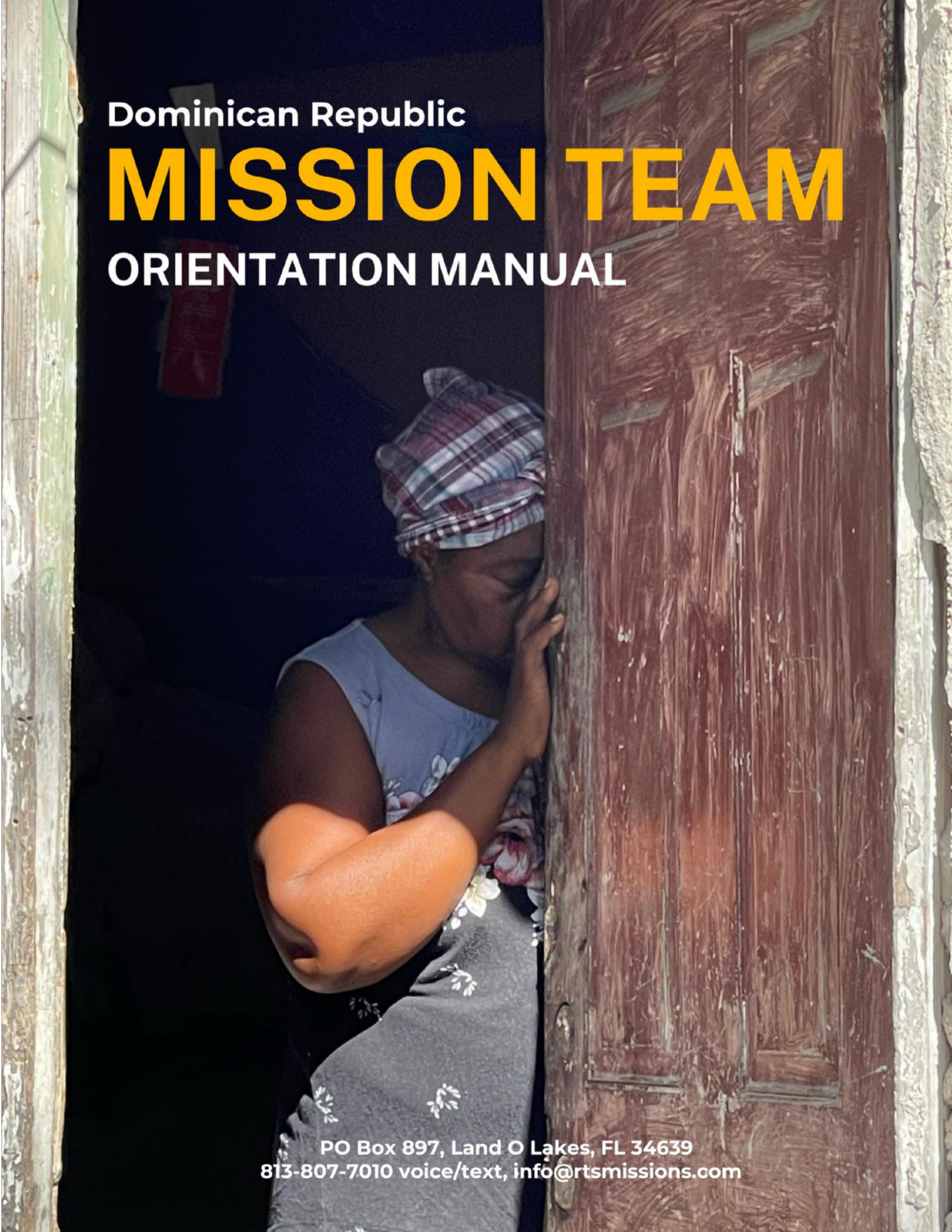




Dominican Republic

MISSION TEAM

ORIENTATION MANUAL

PO Box 897, Land O Lakes, FL 34639
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About the Mission Manual for Mission Teams

Welcome to the RTS Mission Manual, a guide that will accompany you throughout your missionary journey, from planning to final reflection. Here, every step is designed to make your experience profoundly transformative, both for you and for the communities you will visit.

Purpose of the Manual

The purpose of this manual is to provide a comprehensive resource for each mission team joining RTS Missions. Our desire is for every team member to feel fully prepared, both physically and spiritually, for the work God has called them to do. Through this manual, we aim to facilitate a fulfilling experience where the heart of each member is transformed, and the love of Christ is extended to those who need it most.

This manual also aims to guide the teams through every aspect of the missionary journey, helping to set clear expectations, offering practical travel advice, and ensuring that the mission is carried out with excellence and in alignment with the Christian values promoted by RTS Missions. We want this journey to be not only a time of service but also an opportunity to grow in faith, compassion, and the knowledge of the gospel of Christ.

What You Will Find in the Manual

Introduction to RTS Missions Ministry

- A brief history of RTS Missions, including our global vision and mission.
- Information about the geographical areas in which we operate, particularly the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

Preparation for the Trip

- Pre-trip recommendations: health requirements, vaccinations, necessary documents (such as passport and medical coverage), and what to pack for the mission.
- Information about the local culture, both in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, to ensure that teams have a respectful and understanding view of the cultural context.

Mission Team Expectations

- Practical advice on expected behavior during the trip: appropriate attire, respect for local culture, and guidelines for conduct in church services and activities.
- How to foster an environment of unity and teamwork during the journey.



Spiritual Aspects of the Trip

- Suggestions for pre-trip devotionals and daily meditation that will help teams prepare their hearts and minds for the mission.
- Guidelines for making effective prayers and maintaining an emotionally and spiritually healthy perspective during service activities.

Trip Logistics

- Practical details about accommodation, transportation, meals, and daily mission activities.
- Key information about airport procedures and how to reach your destination safely.

Reflection and Farewell

- A final process on what was experienced during the mission, with a successful debriefing designed to help your team understand how everything you've experienced connects with God's work in your lives and the communities you served.

This manual is designed so that each mission team member not only carries out a service mission but also becomes a living testimony of Christ's love. Every step you take will be supported by an eternal purpose, reminding you that you are doing the work of God on earth.

RTS Missions is not just a physical journey but a spiritual journey. We invite you to deeply engage in every aspect of this manual, and through it, become agents of change and hope to those God has called you to serve. Thank you for being part of this great mission of love, faith, and transformation!



01

Welcome



Welcome to RTS Missions,

From the depths of our hearts, we welcome you to this extraordinary journey of faith, service, and transformation. RTS Missions is not merely an organization; it is a living testimony of God's unwavering power to change lives, restore hearts, and bring hope where it is needed most. When we first answered God's call, we never imagined how far it would take us. What began as a single act of obedience in Haiti has become a movement of love and discipleship that has touched thousands of lives. We have witnessed children receiving an education that will change their destiny, families nourished in their most vulnerable moments, the sick cared for with compassion, and above all, souls surrendering to Christ.

Today, RTS continues to grow, expanding into the Dominican Republic, right on the border with Haiti, where God has allowed us to establish a mission center that serves as a refuge for those seeking help and salvation. Here, every effort, every prayer, and every step we take is guided by an eternal purpose: to be active agents of God's redemptive love, extending His grace to the most vulnerable, cultivating a culture of deep and transformative discipleship, and equipping communities with the knowledge and resources to build a future anchored in lasting hope.

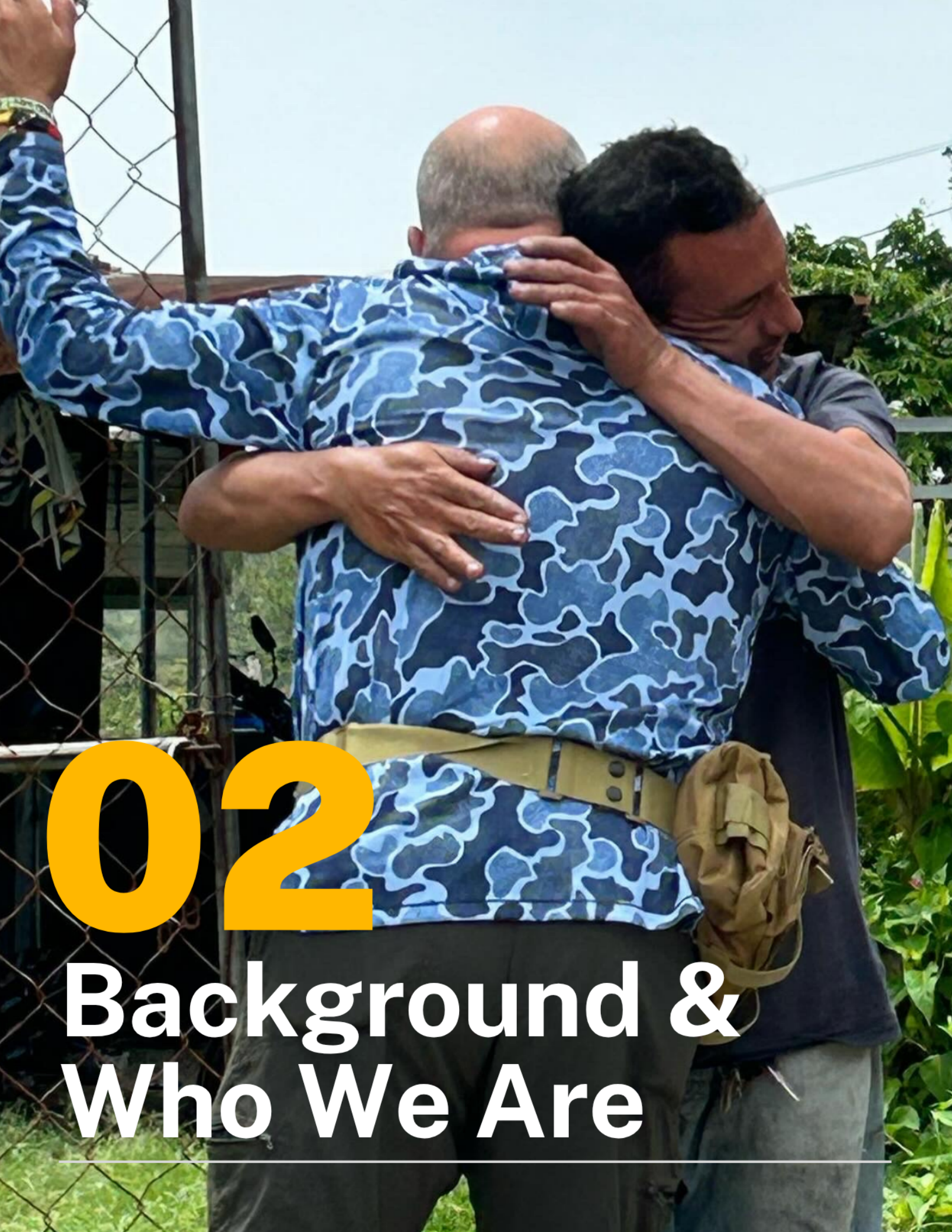
This mission is not ours alone; it belongs to God. And if you are reading this, it means He has called you to be a part of this work. You are not here by chance. Our prayer is that through your journey with RTS, your faith will grow, your heart will burn with passion for the Gospel, and your life will be transformed as you become a vessel of Christ's love in the lives of others.

May the Lord use you powerfully in this mission. Welcome to the RTS family.

With gratitude,

Greg & María Shepherd

Co-Founders, RTS Missions



02

**Background &
Who We Are**



Ministry Description

RTS Missions was founded in 2006 by Greg and Maria Shepherd. For eight years RTS led teams from churches all over the country into Haiti. RTS quickly became a trusted leader in facilitating trips into the country of Haiti. The Shepherds moved to Haiti full time in October of 2014. Over the next five years God grew the organization from a missionary family to a registered Foundation in Haiti with over 80 national employees. They started two schools educating just under 800 children, a food distribution ministry providing 40,000 meals a month, an elderly ministry, and six Haitian churches within their network. God used RTS, its staff, volunteers, and the wonderful teams from the United States to witness thousands come to Christ.

In 2020, God provided an opportunity for RTS Missions to expand into the Dominican Republic. RTS now operates a twenty plus acre ministry compound in Jimani, Dominican Republic. The ministry compound is minutes from the border of Haiti giving us access to continue ministering to Haitians as well as nationals in the DR. Our ministry in the DR has a guest house that will accommodate over fifty people at a time. It has a fully functional medical hospital, an open-air chapel with inground baptistry, a mission's house and twostory missions training center with three apartments and thirteen large classrooms.

Our priority is spiritual sustainability (Discipleship). We follow three avenues in which to make our ministry decisions: education, spiritual development, and physical and emotional needs. Our heart is to reach the next generation for Christ.

Location Information

The Dominican Republic shares an island called Hispaniola with the country of Haiti and is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea. Nearly 80 percent of the country's 49,000 sq. km is covered with mountains, but some 20 distinct topographical areas exist in Dominican Republic. About half of the nearly eleven million residents live in rural areas, and more than two-thirds of the island's people live in substandard conditions. Roman Catholicism is the country's official religion and about 90 percent profess this. About half of the population are believed to be involved in occult practices. Only five percent claim to be Christian.

The Dominican Republic is the second largest Caribbean nation by size and third by population. Despite improvements in recent years, there is still significant poverty throughout the Dominican Republic. Large communities of Haitian people have moved to the Dominican Republic in hopes of a better life, but they have instead been met with challenges.

For complete demographic and history background on the Dominican Republic, visiting the CIA World Fact book is highly informational.

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/dominican-republic/>



What We Do

RTS Missions is an all-inclusive mission sending organization. From the moment God places a trip on your heart, RTS ***will help you every step of the way to bring this trip to fruition and magnify His glory.*** Once a team has begun to form RTS will:

- Meet with team leaders via video call or in person (if possible) to discuss the trip and offer any suggestions pertaining to your future team meetings that will prepare them for the experience God has called them to.
- Schedule a full team orientation via video call or in person (if possible) explaining every facet of the trip they will be part of.
- Excluding airfare, RTS will oversee all logistics of the trip including lodging, meals, in-country transportation, and day-to-day itinerary.
- Offer suggestions for team devotions and daily scripture meditation. This is an excellent way of preparing the team's hearts for their trip. A favorite pre-trip daily devotion is **"Before You Go"** by Jack Hempfling.
- RTS Team will guide your team through the entire mission trip
- Hold an exit debriefing the night before we fly out. This is very important as these missionaries will have seen things they have never imagined and will need time to talk about it before coming back to the states.



RTS MISSIONS

03

Travel Instructions



Travel Instructions to and from the Dominican Republic

Before you leave:

1. We strongly recommend that every team travel with emergency extraction medical coverage. There are many that provide this, but RTS Missions recommends www.missionarytravelassociation.com. We have used them for years and consider them one of the best. You can purchase for your team directly from their site. The insurance is roughly \$28 per person for eight days.
2. You will need a current passport. Check with local officials: in some locations you can get the application at a post office and in other places you will find it in the “Clerk of Courts” office. Please verify immediately that your passport does not expire until at least 6 months after your scheduled return home.
3. Although not required, the CDC recommends various vaccinations for people traveling to the Dominican Republic. Please visit the CDC website for more information. Please contact us with any questions you may have.

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/dominican-republic>

When packing for the Dominican Republic, keep these things in mind:

1. It is hot. Pack light-colored, loose-fitting but covering, modest clothes. As a ministry organization, we must maintain decency and modesty standards as we serve our community, so as not to detract from our message. Your attire should reflect your mindset of serving in the name of Christ Jesus and appropriate to the ministry you represent think mid-thigh or longer shorts, lightweight pants, short-sleeved shirts, longer skirts and short-sleeved sundresses. Please, no tight-fitting or revealing clothing. Bring extra undergarments and socks. Be prepared to sweat.
2. The sun is bright. Bring sunglasses, sunblock, and a hat.
3. You will be on your feet. Bring comfortable shoes, at least one pair with hard soles.
4. You will be expected to dress modestly and nicely for all church services, especially if you have a part in the worship service. Dress for ladies. Khaki pants or nice jeans and dress shirt or polo for guys. If you choose jeans, please no tears or holes, and still wear a nice shirt. Please, no shorts in church.
5. Be sure to pack all your toiletries since shopping is not a real option. Women need to pay attention to their personal hygiene items and be sure they have an adequate supply.



Before you fly:

1. Arrive at the airport no less than two and a half hours before departure in the U.S. We will do our best to get you to the airport three hours before departure leaving the Dominican Republic. Possible delays are ever present.
2. We strongly encourage you to purchase your airline tickets to arrive in Santo Domingo between 12:00pm and 4:00pm and schedule your return to leave Santo Domingo after 1:00pm or later if possible. Please contact RTS Missions to notify us if this is not possible.
3. There are no more customs forms to fill out on the plane to your destination. It is all done electronically now. Please visit the website below to fill out your e-ticket. This will be your customs, immigration, and health affidavit all in one.
4. You will need to complete this process one or two days before you board your plane. In doing so you will complete your return affidavit as well. This must be completed in order to receive your tickets at the counter. Once you have completed your form, you will receive two QR Codes, one for your arrival and one for your departure from the Dominican Republic.
5. If traveling with family and you want to include those traveling with you, please select "Yes" to the question "Are you traveling with someone else?" Please note: Give the number of people traveling with you, do not include yourself. If your spouse and child are going with you, the answer would be 2 to the question "How many are traveling with you?"

We will send a video explaining how to fill out the form to the team leader during the week of your trip. The form is to be filled out within 72 hours of your departure date.

<https://eticket.migracion.gob.do/auth/travelregister>

When you arrive in the Dominican Republic

1. Basically, follow the crowd. You will enter the terminal and proceed through immigration. You will need your passport, and your luggage claim ticket readily available. You will see two lines forming. One for nationals and one for visiting foreigners (Most of the time, not always). Just follow the crowd.
2. It is possible that the immigration agent will ask you where you are going and the address. Tell them you are going to Jimani (Him-a-knee). The address is Gaspar Polanco 120, but they do not normally ask for the address.



3. You will then move to the luggage area to claim your luggage. Just follow the crowd. Once you receive your luggage, once again follow the crowd to the exit. You will come to another station, and they will ask for your QR Code and luggage tag (Maybe, this is always changing). After that, you're home free. Just continue to follow the crowd to the exit and walk out the door. As you exit, an RTS Missions representative will be waiting for you.
4. As you exit the building area, there is usually a large crowd and will seem very chaotic, but our team will be there to meet you. If for some reason our team does not find you as you come out of the building, go to the right and wait in front of the restrooms and we will be with you shortly. Never leave with anyone other than RTS Missions personnel. Do not go with anyone who says, "I know the pastor. Come with me."

WELCOME TO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC!

¡BIENVENIDO A REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA! (Spanish)

BYENVENI NAN REPIBLIK DOMINIKÈN! (Haitian Creole)



Accommodations

The RTS Missions' guest house is very comfortable. All rooms are set up with multiple bunk beds, bathrooms, air conditioners and fans. We supply sheets, pillows, and a towel for the week.

Keep these things in mind:

1. It is not the Holiday Inn. You do have a comfortable bed to sleep in, and after a day of travel or missions work you will sleep fine anywhere.
2. Although we have water from wells, do not drink the water or brush your teeth with it. Our guest house will have plenty of bottled water for you to drink and utilize.
3. Please do not flush any paper or any foreign products down the commode. Please use the trash can. (Disposable dog waste bags may be helpful to bring.)
4. Please limit water use to 1 shower daily, 2 in extreme circumstances.
5. Although we provide one towel per person for the week, we strongly suggest that you bring another towel, especially if your team chooses to go to the waterfalls and the beach on the last day.

Food

Great care is taken in food preparation. While out of the country, you must always know where your food comes from. Don't buy any food items off the street. While in the guesthouse, all meals will be prepared by staff cooks. You are welcome to bring snacks to supplement the 3 square meals a day provided by RTS. Always drink the bottled water supplied to you by RTS Missions. There will be plenty of water and drinks for the team to stay hydrated. Please let RTS Missions know of any food restrictions or allergies.

Christians in Dominican Republic

The people of Dominican Republic are very proud of their heritage. This is true of Christians in the DR also. The Christian Dominican Church differs slightly from the churches in the United States:

1. **Buildings** – None of the churches look the same. Many look like regular buildings from the outside. They may lack electricity, furniture or even windows.
2. **Worship** – Dominican Christians are very expressive in their worship. You will find excitement in their music and preaching. There is usually some type of service going on during the week: prayer, worship, bible study, youth, young adults. Some worship experiences can be extremely loud; you may want to bring some ear plugs.



Travel and Security Issues

- **Travel**

The roads in the Dominican Republic are very good, but in the cities, travel is slow and difficult. Many travel memories will be made. RTS Missions uses vans, small buses, and larger full-size bus coaches for larger teams.

- **Security Issues**

As of this time, we have never had a problem with any type of violence or crime. We tend to be more proactive in this area. We provide security at our compound every evening. Follow all directions of the RTS Missions staff; the security; and the Dominican leadership. No one should ever wander off alone.

- **Money Issues and Shopping**

The currency in the Dominican Republic is the Dominican Peso. They will take U.S. dollars as well. There is very little chance for you to spend money during the week. All your in-country expenses are taken care of before you arrive. The only expense you will have will be for anything you need while traveling to and from the Dominican and any snacks you may want when we stop during our travel to the guesthouse.

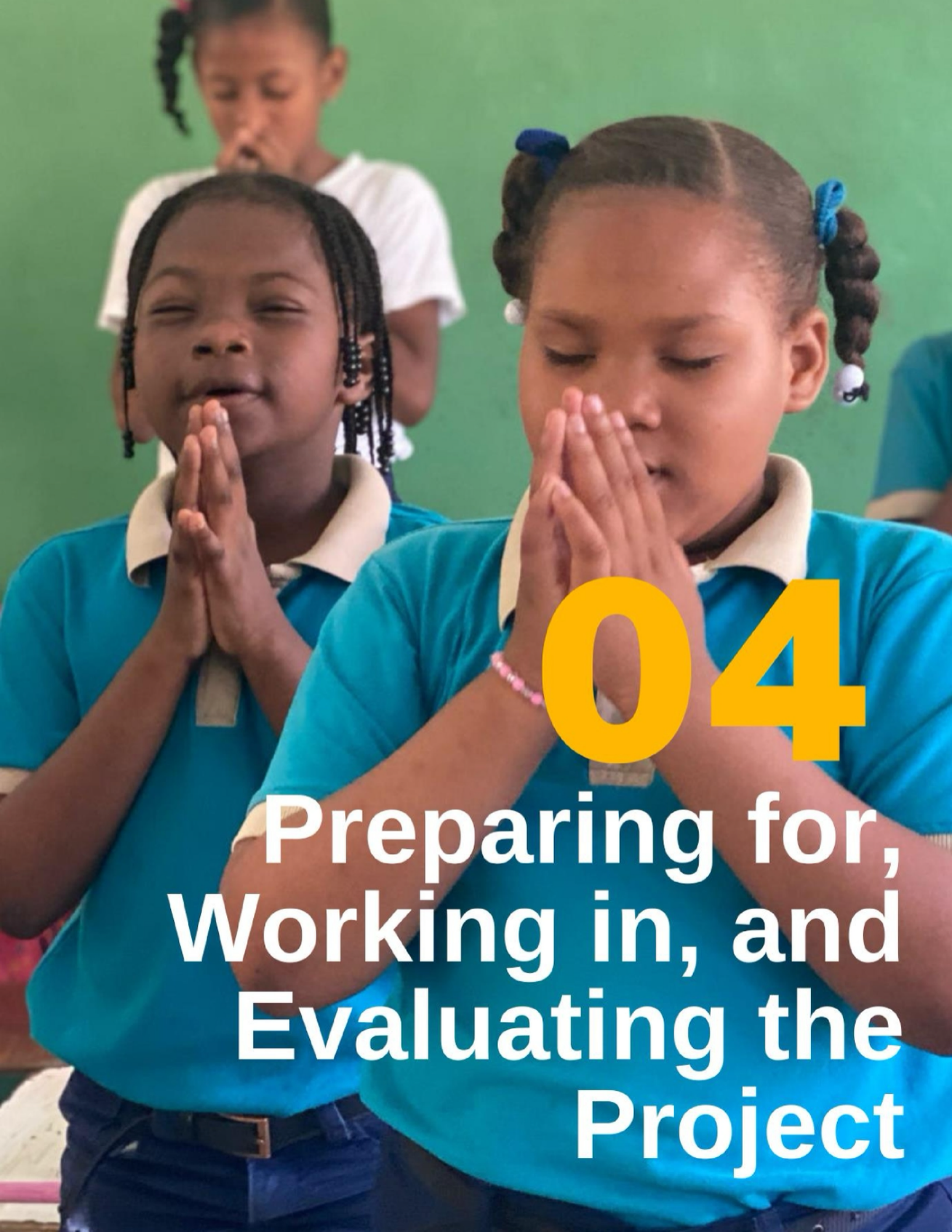
There will be an opportunity to purchase souvenirs if you would like. We recommend you bring \$20-\$50.

If you bring money, please bring small bills. Also, please feel free to give an offering during our church services. We will attend a service Sunday morning and a different service Sunday evening.

- **Contacting Home**

Although RTS Missions desires everyone to do their best to unplug from the life they are accustomed to when on a mission trip, we understand that people need to hear from you. RTS Missions will post to the RTS Missions Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/rtsmissions) once you land letting people know you have arrived. Once in Jimani at our guesthouse you will have access to Wi-Fi.

Important Note: If you do not have an International Plan for data on your phone, please keep your phone on "Airplane Mode." We suggest turning off your "Cellular Data", so you do not have to worry about accidentally turning your airplane mode off. If you do not do one of these two things and do not have an international plan, you will get a surprisingly high cell phone bill the next month.

A photograph of three young girls in school uniforms. They are standing in a row, with their hands clasped together in front of their faces in a prayer-like gesture. The girl in the foreground on the right is wearing a blue shirt and has her hair in two braids with blue ties. The girl in the middle is also wearing a blue shirt and has her hair in braids. The girl in the background is wearing a white shirt. The background is a plain green wall.

04

**Preparing for,
Working in, and
Evaluating the
Project**

Preparing for, Working in, and Evaluating the Project

1. Learn some Spanish phrases. "Please" (Por favor) and "thank you" (Gracias) are a great way to bridge the language barrier (see attached list of phrases).
2. Build a prayer team. Begin to pray early for the project, the people of the Dominican Republic, and your team members. Being prayed up is important.
3. Plan several meetings / training sessions with the group before you leave. Everyone will need to know what they will be doing before you get to your country.
4. Always remain flexible, "Blessed are the flexible for they will not get bent out of shape." See things as opportunities, not obstacles.
5. Plan daily personal and group morning devotionals. At day's end, plan to have "decompressing" time to assimilate the day's activities and plan the next day.
6. Make sure all your flights are planned. Make sure RTS Missions knows your flight itinerary as soon as you book your flights.
7. All in-country expenses need to be paid in full 30 days in advance. Contact RTS Missions for balances. For cancellation policy: <https://www.rtsmissions.com/cancellation-policy>
8. BE A TEAM. Each team member should have a job assignment, i.e., devotion leader, team photographer, logistics manager, teaching, preaching, etc. PRAY with each other and PRAY for each other.
9. Have your church commission you as a missionary. A commissioning service could be done in the morning or evening worship service and will be very meaningful for you and your church.

Evaluation

1. RTS Missions will conduct a debriefing on your last night in the DR.
2. Celebrate your trip. Set a time during your worship service to celebrate your mission trip. Let the group give testimonies about their experiences.
3. Take plenty of slides, pictures, video, and souvenirs for display.



When you return home:

1. During the exit debriefing led by RTS Missions, they will “walk” you through the exit procedure and will be guiding you through the process. This includes filling out your e-ticket and getting your QR Code for departure if you did not complete the exit eticket at the same time before you left.
2. Plan to arrive at the airport 3 hours before departure. This may mean having to leave very early in the morning.
3. There is only one door that everyone enters. Follow the crowd through the door and straight up the ramp. At the top of the ramp go to your right for the American Airlines and Delta ticketing counters. Other airlines are very close by. You will need to show the agents your QR Code before you can get your tickets.
4. After you have your boarding pass, you will proceed to the security and customs area. (If not with RTS Personnel, please ask for directions to the security line as they have changed their process and are doing remodeling.) Once you go through security, you will come out right at the main concourse. There are only two airsides. One to the right and one to the left. Both directions have plenty of restaurants and stores. It is possible that your flight information may not be on the screens when you arrive. It will tell you when it will be available.



05

Spanish Phrases Everyone Needs

<u>Spanish</u>	<u>English</u>
Dios te bendiga	God bless you
Dios	God
Cristo	Christ
Jesús	Jesus
Espíritu Santo	Holy Spirit
Gracia	Grace
Oración	Prayer
Sí	Yes
No	No
Tal vez	Maybe
Claro	Of course
Baño	Bathroom
Dónde está el baño	Where is the bathroom
Me llamo	My name is
Mi Nombre es	My name is
Hola, soy	Hi, I am
¿Cómo te llamas?	What is your name?
(Yo) tengo ... años	I am Years old
(Yo) soy de...	I come from...
Buenos días	Good morning
Buenas tardes	Good afternoon
Buenas noches	Good evening / Good night
¿Cómo está usted?	How are you? (formal)

¿Cómo estás?	How are you? (informal)
¿Qué tal?	How are you? (informal)/What's up?
¿Cómo te va?	How's it going?
¿Qué haces?	What are you doing?
¿Qué pasa?	What's happening?
Bien, gracias	Good, thank you
Muy bien	Very well
Así, así	So, so
Como siempre	As always
¿Y tú?	And you?
¡Gracias!	Thank you!
¡Muchas gracias!	Thank you very much!
¡De nada!	You're welcome! / No problem!
Por favor	Please
¡Perdon!	Excuse me!
¡Disculpe!	Excuse me!
¡Lo siento!	Sorry!
¿Qué...?	What?
¿Quién...?	Who?
¿Cuándo...?	When?
¿Dónde...?	Where?
¿Por qué...?	Why?
¿Cuál?	Which?
¿Cómo...?	How?
¿Qué hora tienes?	What time is it?



¿De dónde viene?	Where are you from?
¿Dónde vives?	Where do you live?
¿Podría ayudarle?	Can I help you?
¿Entiende?	Do you understand?

06

Meet Our Team





President and Founder
Greg Shepherd
greg@rtsmissions.com



Director, Relationships & Latin America
Carolin Paredes
carolin@rtsmissions.com



Jimani Ministry Directors
Chad & Amy Tardie
chad@rtsmissions.com



Emerge Directors
Joel & Shelby Marmolejo
welinmejia96@gmail.com | shelbymasuck@gmail.com



Who to Contact?

Once your Impact Trip has been placed on the calendar, deposit made, and you have met with RTS to start planning your trip, you may have some specific questions other members of our team can help answer.

- **Carolyn Paredes – Director, Relationships & Latin America:** for questions, schedule and expectations for leading teams and overseeing the direction of our work and relationships in Latin America.
- **Chad and Amy – Jimani Ministry Director**
General team logistics: ground travel point-of-contact and availability of supplies and equipment while at RTS and for communication about food allergies.
- **Joel and Shelby Marmolejos – Emerge Directors**
For any questions regarding the Emerge program once accepted into the program.



THANK YOU!

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."
– 1 Peter 4:10 With deep gratitude, the RTS team thanks each of you for joining us in this work of evangelism and service. As our founder always says: **"Nothing we do is insignificant."** Every action, no matter how small it may seem, has an eternal purpose in God's Kingdom.

We understand that leaving your home, family, and comfort to join us in the calling God has given us as the body of Christ is no easy task. However, your obedience to His divine calling, your sacrifice, and your willingness to serve are a testimony of the love and faith that drive you. We deeply appreciate the trust you have placed in us to carry out this mission. Together, we are strengthening the work of Christ in this community and touching hearts with His love and hope.

We pray that the Lord continues to guide your steps, multiply the fruit of your labor, and sustain you at every moment. Thank you for being beacons of His light and reflecting His love in every action.

With gratitude and in Christ,

Team RTS