

MBC & GLOBAL OUTREACH CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) TRAVEL GUIDELINES

Updated: March 13, 2020

AS OF TODAY MBC HAS DECIDED TO SUSPEND SHORT-TERM TRIPS UNTIL AUGUST 1.

Due to the unusual and extreme immediate travel adjustments that are occurring around the world, Global Outreach has decided to suspend short-term trips for the next 45 days (until May 1). The current airline travel situation is fluid and quickly changing. We are looking to avoid the disruptive hardships that could develop if trip participants are stranded due to health concerns (hardships can include financial, emotional, etc.).

Until August 1, Global Outreach will continue our weekly COVID-19 check-in and re-evaluation of our entire approach (including dates listed above). We will also contact partners for all trips through August, 2020, to develop backup plans and communicate our ongoing commitment to them and their work.

Unfortunately, until further notice by CDC, Global Outreach will strongly recommend that persons over 55, or pregnant persons, or persons with compromised immune systems not joint short-term trips.

With rare exceptions, MBC will not purchase airline tickets for short-term trips until 60 days prior to the trip date and no further trip tickets will be purchased before re-evaluation of the trip on August 1.

In addition, Global Outreach will communicate with affected partners in order to evaluate the gospel impact and discouragement that trip cancellations may have on our partners around the world. Global Outreach will communicate immediately with affected partners to assure them of our commitment to their ongoing ministry and how we can continue to support them during this season.

At times like these we want our partners to know that we stand with them and are strongly considering the potential gospel opportunity of doing what we can to purposely be present even in times of risk while also mitigating the spread of a virus while listening to governing authorities.

We will make sure that none of our partners incurs financial loss for projects already committed to and planned in coordination with our joint short term trip project and will encourage them to do the ministry they had planned with our financial support if it is possible.

There is always an inherent risk in any type of travel, whether that be national or international. Our intention is to mitigate risk and engage missions with wisdom. Global Outreach and MBC take the safety and security of our short-term trip (STT) participants seriously. In preparing for any international trip, we continually consult various sources; our ministry partner(s) in-country, The State Department, our Insurance, like-minded churches, and organizations like the Center for Disease Control or the World Health Organization. Should a situation arise that potentially compromises the ability for us to travel to a destination, options and alternatives may be considered.

The spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a rapidly changing event in our world. Many countries and the U.S. government are implementing aggressive measures to slow and contain transmission of COVID-19 both here and abroad.

Currently, our STT policy as it relates to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is as follows:

- **Cancellation by the In-Country Partner:** Our Global Outreach staff is in regular contact with our in-country partners the months, weeks, and days leading up to a trip. If at any point the partner, or the partner's organization, feel like their environment is unsafe, we will cancel or postpone the trip immediately.
- **Cancellation due to CDC guidelines:** Our Global Outreach staff is reviewing and making decisions based on the [CDCs Travel Health Notice](#) guidelines.
 - o CDC - Warning Level 2
 - If the CDC categorizes a country as *Warning Level 2*, meaning that travelers should practice enhanced precautions, we will still make an effort to carry on with the trip.

- While the CDC is not recommending an entire ban on travel at this level, they do suggest that high-risk travelers, older adults or those with chronic medical conditions, postpone nonessential travel. For STT participants in this category, we would still allow travel, but would strongly recommend consultation with a doctor before making a decision.
- o CDC - Warning Level 3
 - If a country we are traveling to is classified as *Warning Level 3*, meaning that nonessential travel should be avoided, we will cancel or postpone the trip immediately.
- **Routing of Flights:** Additionally, considering the warnings above, this would also mean that we would avoid flight paths or layovers into or out of any countries with a Level 3 warning.
- **Financial Policy**

All contributions for Global Outreach short-term mission teams are tax deductible (to the extent allowed by law) and therefore nonrefundable. The donor acknowledges and releases control of how their contribution will be utilized for the team. However, if the team is successful in raising their financial goal, all excess funds will be applied to either the needs directly related to the ministry of the trip or to fund additional mission needs within Global Outreach. In the rare case when a trip is cancelled and depending on what point the cancellation happens, Global Outreach will work with the team participants to potentially reschedule the trip in that calendar year.

WHAT IF I NEED TO APPLY FOR A PASSPORT OR RENEW A PASSPORT?

As of March 27th, the State Department issued a statement that all regular passport services are delayed and all expedited services have been canceled due to COVID-19. Please review the State Department Passport information [HERE](#). **Because of this, MBC recommends that those who do not currently hold a valid passport or need to renew an existing passport, do not travel prior to August, as there is no way to predict if/when a new passport would be issued.** Additionally, as a general rule, passports should have at least six months of validity when traveling internationally. Most countries will not permit a traveler to enter their country unless the passport is set to expire at least six months after the final day of travel.

DOES SUSPENSION OF TRIPS MEAN SUSPENSION OF FUNDING?

No. However, we have decided to suspend funding until April 15th. Once funding is re-opened, we will continue to receive funds for trips. Funds are always given with the understanding that there is a risk that trips may be cancelled or postponed. All contributions for Global Outreach short-term mission teams are tax deductible (to the extent allowed by law) and therefore nonrefundable. Donors acknowledge and release control of how their contribution will be utilized for the team. However, if the team is successful in raising their financial goal, all excess funds will be applied to either the needs directly related to the ministry of this trip or to fund additional mission needs within the Global Outreach ministry. In the unlikely event that a trip is cancelled, funds raised by the team will help cover any cancellation costs for the trip. Any remaining funds will be donated to efforts in the country with the partnering ministry and/or help to fund additional needs within the Global Outreach ministry. Normally, funds raised for one trip cannot be used for a subsequent trip (donors give to the original trip). However, in rare situations, exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Global Outreach Director.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MONEY I'VE RAISED IF THE TRIP IS CANCELED?

After paying for non-recoverable expenses, all remaining excess funds will be donated to efforts in the country with the partnering ministry at the discretion of MBC staff. For more information, see Global Outreach Trip FAQs [HERE](#).

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE TRIP?

Team members work to raise the support necessary through personal support letters and fundraising, and each trip participant should commit to fully participating in this process to raise their necessary funds. Once you are accepted to a team, you will be given resources to help in this support raising process. If you feel God is leading you to participate on a short term mission trip, He will provide the necessary funds...so, we encourage you to step out in faith. It is the expectation of Global Outreach that each member fully raises their support. Each trip participant should have a plan to personally contribute any funds that they fail to raise through donors so that they are able to meet their individual portion of the overall team funding goal. As unique situations arise, Global Outreach will work with each team/team members to extend trip giving goals past the end date of the trip. In exceptional situations

Global Outreach can help establish a payment plan through the end of the calendar year in order for the trip to not incur a deficit for an individual participant.

REMINDERS

There is risk in life and risk in following Jesus. Even though we will always work to minimize unnecessary risk, we cannot avoid all risks when we travel. Also, we cannot avoid risk by not traveling. The decision of acceptable risk is ultimately a matter between each individual and the Lord. Should a brother or sister decide to forego participation in a trip, that decision will be respected and honored. We remain confident that the Lord is our shepherd (Psalm 23) and that in uncertain times we can rest in his Sovereignty. 1 Peter 4:19 says, “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” In both serving and suffering, God is faithful in His care for us. We also recognize that the greatest risk for many is not that they may contract a virus but that they may never hear the gospel. Our trips are designed to help people hear the gospel and encourage ministers of the gospel where they live, which is often in difficult places.

- MBC will not plan or allow travel in 2020 to any country with a CDC Warning Level 3, and would cancel an already planned trip if the warning level increased from a 2 to a 3
- The decision to travel or not is personal, and should be decided wisely through prayer, consideration with family, and consultations with your doctor as needed

HELPFUL HEALTH RESOURCES

- [State Department](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [World Health Organization; Coronavirus Updates](#)
- [John Hopkins Center for Health Security](#)

MORE QUESTIONS?

- See our [Trip FAQ](#)
- Email scott.logsdon@mcleanbible.org, Director of Global Outreach