

MS Delta – Jonestown Orientation Document

*“If short-term trips truly have an important role in missions and poverty alleviation, and if we, as comparatively affluent believers, are willing to spend thousands of dollars on them, then we have a heavy responsibility to prepare for those opportunities well, stewarding them to God’s glory and the edification of His people.” – **Helping without Hurting in short-term missions, pg. 112***

But God Ministries seeks to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ through acts of compassion and to share the love of Christ through every aspect of the project as we develop sustainable communities.

If ever there is a time to see the impossible become possible in the MS Delta, that time is now! While most people are “fleeing” the Delta, we desire to step in and be the change that we desire to see. Having been overlooked in our state for many years, we see God beginning to shine a spot light on the region that has many odds “stacked up against it.” With high unemployment, high obesity rates, educational and economic challenges, many locals doubt that it will ever get better. But we believe that Jesus loves the MS Delta and that it is time for a spiritual awakening and our prayer is that God will use BGM and your Church team to be a part of the answer! In order for this to happen, many things are required but we ask that as far as it depends upon you, that you will seek to be prepared, prayerful and patient as you serve and build relationships.

But God Ministries expects all team participants to understand and share this compassion for the people of Jonestown and our dedication to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ through all we do there. Thus, each team participant serving in Jonestown with But God Ministries will be expected to abide by the Team Member Covenant:

- Willing to follow the doctrinal beliefs of BGM (found at www.butgodministries.com)
- Willing to abide by the BGM dress code* (found in this document)
- Willing to refrain from use of tobacco products, alcohol or profanity while on the mission trip
- Willing to refrain from pairing off between members of the opposite sex during the mission trip
- Willing to perform any ministry related task assigned to you.

NOTE: BGM reserves the right to decline any application for team membership for any reason, including (but not limited to) theological differences or personal behavior deemed incompatible with its ministry and/or testimony.)

General Information

Food/Water

We will provide two meals a day. You are responsible for breakfast and snacks. Consider cereal, granola bars, protein bars/shakes, crackers, jerky, fruit snacks, pop-tarts, etc.

Charity

Please follow these guidelines to promote healthy behavior throughout the community.

- Please do not give out money or pay any expenses for anyone.
- Consult the BGM community manager if someone asks you to give or for something of yours.

Money

We recommend taking up to \$100 for drinks, snacks and souvenirs at the local stores. Other extra money you will need will depend on the activity you choose for the night out - Consult your team leader.

Clothing (See Packing List for Specific List)

- **Regarding tops/shirts:** Wear only t-shirts with sleeves and modest necklines. Do not wear tank tops. If you wear a sleeveless shirt or shirt with low V or scoop neckline, you will be asked to change. If you do not have t-shirts with sleeves and modest necklines, you will need to purchase or borrow them.
- **Regarding shorts:** Do not wear Nike shorts or running shorts. Wear basketball or soccer length shorts. Shorts should be at least mid-thigh. If you wear inappropriate length shorts, you will be asked to change. If you do not have appropriate length shorts, you will need to purchase or borrow them.
- **We reserve the right to ask an individual to change any attire that is not appropriate.**
- **Shoes:** Wear one and bring a second pair of comfortable shoes. Consider bringing flip flops for the shower. Closed-toe shoes must be worn outside of the Hope Center.
- **Church:** Women – modest attire; Men – long pants and golf shirt
- You may want to take enough clothes to wear the entire week, although you can wash if you bring detergent.
- Don't bring anything you can't live without.
- It is hot, but the answer is not less clothing. Consider clothing hikers would choose. "Quick dry" clothes are not required but they are helpful.
- **Worksite:** Long pants and long sleeves will protect from the sun and the environment. Bring a hat with a wide brim or a protective flap for your ears and neck.

Jonestown background we should all know

Quick Facts

- Males – 42.4% and Females – 57.6%
- Median age – 26.3 years
- People in poverty – 53.2%
- High school graduate or higher – 64.4%
- Bachelor Degree or higher – 4%
- People without health insurance – 23.9%
- Median Family income -- \$25,707
- Married households – 22.7%

Historical

The Matagorda Plantation, located north of Jonestown, was established by Colonel D.M. Russell and his wife before the Civil War. Matagorda was named after a special variety of long-staple cotton raised there. Jonestown was a stop on the Mobile & North Western Railroad, completed from Jonestown to Lula in 1879. Jonestown was

incorporated in 1880. In 1965, John Wing was elected mayor of Jonestown, the first Chinese-American mayor in Mississippi. The current Mayor, who has been in office for 12 years, is Patrick Campbell.

Jonestown is located in Coahoma County, which is located in the northwestern part of MS in the Yazoo Delta region.

See www.coahomacounty.net for more information

Economic

Delta Oil Mill has been producing cottonseed products in Jonestown since 1942. The Mill closed down several years back but has recently re-opened on a smaller scale under new management.

In a 2000 study published by Mississippi State University, Jonestown was described as a community "plagued by difficult problems." Agriculture no longer supported the town as it once had, and many Jonestown residents were employed outside the community. "The direction of Jonestown has declined because of the loss of its financial independence. Citizens have been forced to seek opportunity outside of their own town. As people become more dependent on other cities, the need to stay in Jonestown diminishes."

Spiritual

There are 4 main local churches that play important roles in the spiritual climate in Jonestown. Being in the "Bible belt", they are quite familiar with Church and "religious talk", like most people. This, however, does not mean that they have a full and accurate understanding of the Gospel and are applying it to their daily lives. Praying for and serving these local churches are going to be key in seeing God do work in the spiritual lives of the people in the community.

Existing work of ministries and organizations in Jonestown

- **Jonestown Family Center** – The center was started by Sister Teresa Shields, a nun who planted her life in Jonestown for over 30 years. It promotes education and health to the families of Jonestown. Sister Teresa also opened up a Montessori School for the community many years back. These schools give the people in Jonestown an opportunity to begin educating their kids early in life. In 2016, Sister Teresa retired and left Jonestown to return to her Catholic Order on the West Coast.
- **Sister Kay Burton** – Catholic Charities still has a presence in Jonestown through Sister Kay. She is a very well-known local leader who began an after-school program for middle and high school students. This program teaches students life skills, servant leader skills and tutoring if needed. She also ministers through G.E.D certification training, gardening skills, etc.

- **Habitat for humanity** – This organization has been a presence in the community for years. They have built houses for different families during this time and brought in many out of state college students to serve and intern.

Cultural Training for Jonestown

(Most information taken from “Helping without Hurting”)

Cultural Norms – Subconscious assumptions, behaviors, and protocols that people naturally follow without even thinking about them.

“Culture is good, and the diversity of culture reflects the diversity of the people of God – and of God Himself, as three-in-one.” – Helping Without Hurting, pg. 63

Concept of Time: What is time and how is it to be used?

1. **Monochronic Cultures:** Time is a limited resource that must be used carefully, so you need to save time and not waste time. Punctuality and efficiency reign supreme.
2. **Polychronic Cultures:** Time is nebulous and almost limitless. There is always more time, so relationships trump efficiency.
 - Most communities in the States have a monochronic view of time, however most low-income communities, like Jonestown, are polychronic. They view time as an almost limitless entity.
 - Jonestown focuses on relationships, families and immediate needs at the moment.
 - Schedules and long-range planning are not high priorities. However, don’t mistake this attitude for one of not caring, they simply view outcomes differently than you might.
 - Your team’s daily schedule and interactions with people will be directly affected by this viewpoint, therefore it’s imperative that you maintain a FLEXIBLE ATTITUDE.
 - Do your part to plan and prepare well for the Lord, and then leave the rest up to the Holy Spirit to guide you during the week.

Concept of Self: What is “Self” and where does it find importance?

1. **Individualistic Cultures:** Identity is found in being unique and success is “being all you can be” by exercising freedom of choice. Independence is a core value.
2. **Collectivist Cultures:** Identity is found in being a part of a broader group and success is knowing and fulfilling your role in the group. Interdependence is a core value.
 - You will see both tendencies in this community. A “collectivist” tendency exists in the older generations and more of an “individualistic” tendency is noticed in the younger generations in Jonestown.
 - In Jonestown, ties and harmony among family, friends, and community are extremely important!
 - Trust is not easily earned for those on the “outside of the community”. It takes time and consistency.
 - Knowing this, it’s important for your team members to be intentional in their
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 - conversations with the people, ask open-ended questions and listen. This will gain trust.
 - For ideas on questions to ask, see **Community Engaging Questions** below.

COMMUNITY ENGAGING QUESTIONS*

**Open-ended questions (questions that do not require a “yes” or “no” answer) are the key to quality conversation.*

FAMILY:

1. *Tell me about your family.*
2. *What are their names?*
3. *How long have you lived in Jonestown?*
4. *What are some of your favorite things about your family? Why is that?*

JOB/EDUCATION:

1. *What grade are you in?*
2. *What do you like most about school? What do you enjoy the least? Why is that?*
3. *Out of all your teachers/coaches, who do you look up to the most?*
4. *What do you do to make a living? Why did you select that job?*
5. *What do you enjoy most about your job?*
6. *If you could change someone what would it be? Why is that?*
7. *(if they don’t work) If you could work, what would you choose to do? What would hold you back from trying to go after a job?*

FRIENDS:

1. *Who are some of your best friends? Where are they from?*
2. *What do you like most about them?*

3. *How long have you been friends?*
4. *What interests do you share?*

FAITH:

1. *Tell me about your spiritual life.*
2. *Where do you go to church?*
3. *What do you enjoy most about your church? Why?*
4. *(If they don't) Tell me what you know about Jesus.*
5. *What have been some of your good experiences at your church? Why?*
6. *What are some of your favorite Bible verses? Why?*
7. *Who has influenced you the most in life? Why is that?*

PASSIONS/DESIRES:

1. *What do you love to do? Why is that?*
2. *What are some of your hobbies? Why do you like those?*
3. *What impact on the world/Jonestown do you want to make?*
4. *If you could do anything in life, what would it be? Why? How do you think we can help make that happen?*

Team Training Suggested Resources for MS Delta

1. Helping without Hurting in Short-term Missions by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert – This comes with a Leader's and Participant's guide. I would suggest purchasing both. Below is a link to christianbook.com

[Helping without Hurting in Short-term Missions](#)

2. Mission Trip Prep Kit by Kevin Johnson – (Focuses on training middle and high school students) – See link below

[Mission Trip Prep Kit](#)

3. LeaderTreks Ministry Resources – These resources are some of the best out there for students. They can be tailored for college and adults as well! See link below to their website and resources.

[LeaderTreks](#)