



PUENTE DE AMISTAD

Team Leader's Manual

Team leaders are required to read through both the *Team Leader's Manual* and the *Team Member's Manual* every year before visiting.



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Introduction

This document contains important information and guidelines to help you prepare your team for a successful missions trip to **Puente de Amistad** in **Tijuana, Mexico**. Additional ministry information is available on our website at www.puentedeamistad.org

Requirements for a Team Leader Position

Team leaders must be devoted to seeing God's purpose accomplished for each team member and for Puente de Amistad. If the leader sets a good example, the team will have a rewarding experience. The leader should be respected as spiritually mature, flexible, good-natured, and encouraging. He or she must be willing and able to counsel and discipline individual members when necessary.

Accommodations

Part of the ministry of Puente de Amistad is to provide a safe, clean, and comfortable environment for visiting teams. We provide the following:

- Shuttle services to and from the airport
- Dormitory-style rooms furnished with bunk beds
- Pillows, sheets, blankets, and towels
- Modern (U.S.-style) bathrooms and showers (with hot water)
- Meals prepared by Puente staff
- An ample supply of safe, purified drinking water
- Daily transportation for a fee

Additionally, Puente staff will work with you to help you plan your ministry tasks. Let us know the types of ministries you are interested in, and we will schedule visits to churches, orphanages, feeding kitchens, schools, parks, etc. We will assist you in your ministry tasks and provide translation as needed. Remember, this is your missions trip. It is your responsibility to plan what type of ministry your team would like to do (examples: VBS, preaching, games, crafts, skits, human videos, etc.). Please come prepared.

Critical Information

- **Reading the manuals is a requirement.** Regardless of how many previous trips a team has made, team members are required to read through the *Team Member's Manual* every year prior to coming to keep abreast of the most recent changes. Likewise, team leaders are required to read through both the *Team Leader's Manual* and the *Team Member's Manual* every year. Each team member will need to sign off that they have done so.
- **Supplemental travel medical insurance is required.** The team leader and/or sending organization/church is expected to carry supplemental medical travel insurance for each team member. It is up to the team leader to verify that each member is covered in San Diego and Tijuana in the event of an emergency.
- **Renting Puente vans.** Puente has two 15-passenger vans at the disposal of visiting teams scheduled on Puente's calendar. Even though they are 15-passenger vans, only 13 seats are available to a team. (Two

seats are reserved for a Puente van driver and staff member.) That being said, the ideal team size is fewer than 26 members unless the team is providing its own transportation. Teams with more than 26 members will assume the responsibility of renting additional vans in San Diego that are approved for cross-border travel. Please note that even if your team has only 12 or 13 people, a second vehicle may be needed due to the volume of ministry materials you have.

- **We are confident of your safety.** We take the safety of each team very seriously. For this reason, available opportunities could change from year to year. Based on recent events, you may or may not have the opportunity to conduct the same ministries that you did in previous years. All safety decisions made by the director of Puente are final.
- **Prayer is important.** Every effort should be made to form a prayer support team for yourself and your team.
- **No one is permitted to be at the base alone.** This is our policy. Therefore, team members are not allowed to “hang back” at the base without prior consent and arrangement with the director of Puente. This is for the safety of everyone.
- **Bring a gift for every ministry.** We ask that you plan on bringing a monetary blessing of at least \$125 for each ministry that your team visits or a blessing of necessities (e.g., soap, toilet paper, oil, eggs) equivalent to \$125 for each ministry your team visits. We can purchase these things when you arrive in Tijuana. Our presence as a team is not blessing enough for ministries that are struggling to make ends meet each month. Let’s be generous!
- **Under no circumstance should any member of the team promise (or suggest the possibility of) financial gifts or any ongoing commitment to any of the ministries, ministers, or families without prior discussion with the director of Puente de Amistad.** We are often aware of things teams are not, and a well-informed decision is better than a decision made off a ministry pitch.
- **Please notify the missionaries of any financial contribution to any ministry or individual in Tijuana.** We have had several teams get talked into meeting the same “need” because teams don’t discuss financial decisions with Puente staff first. Ministries are never supposed to request money from team leaders or team members directly.
- **Puente shuttle services pick-up times run from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** That means that if you arrive in San Diego earlier than 9 a.m. you won’t be picked up till after 9 a.m.
- **Puente shuttle services drop-off time.** On the day that your team is scheduled to leave Puente de Amistad, your team will depart from the base at 7:45 a.m. Puente staff will escort you to the Otay all-traffic border crossing if you have driven yourselves in Mexico, or Puente staff will drive you to the Otay walking line, where your team members will walk across the border with all their luggage. The team will then be picked up on the United States side and driven to the San Diego Airport. **We recommend that the team’s departure flight be no earlier than 12:30 p.m.** If your flight’s departure time is earlier than 9 a.m. you will need to get a hotel with shuttle service on the San Diego side the night before. (Remember, most hotel shuttles start at 6 a.m.) If you arrive in San Diego after 5 p.m. you will need to get a hotel that night and Puente’s staff will pick you up the next morning after 9 a.m.
- **No Deposit=No Reservation.** Your reservation at Puente de Amistad is not official until we’ve received the \$500 nonrefundable deposit. **All deposits are nonrefundable.**
- **Reservations are on a first come, first served basis.** If more than one team wants a particular date, whoever’s deposit is received first will receive the reservation. **All deposits are nonrefundable.**

- **Small construction projects.** If your team desires to do a small project (e.g., a painting project) the total cost of the small project must be received 90 days prior to your arrival. Once the materials are bought for the small project, the money becomes non-refundable.
- **Puente house deposit required.** If your team desires to participate in building a home for a family in Mexico, a deposit of \$1,000 must be received 90 days prior to your arrival. This is a non-refundable deposit as the materials for the project will be purchased prior to your team's arrival. All deposits are nonrefundable.
- **Receiving a testimony/bio for a family.** A family's testimony will be provided to you once the full cost of the house has been received by Puente de Amistad. This is to ensure that the family who was promised a home will indeed receive that home. If the team is unable to come build the house themselves, the Puente staff will use the provided house funds to build the promised home for the absent team.
- **All deposits are nonrefundable.**
- **Team Member's Application for Adults and Minors.** Global Missions (our parent organization) requires that all participants complete the appropriate online application form at least one (1) week before arriving in Tijuana. The application form can be found on our website at puentedeamistad.org. If anyone shows up without said applications, they will not be allowed to enter Puente de Amistad property (including vehicles).
- **Team leaders are expected to enforce appropriate dress.** Your team needs to be dressed modestly while visiting Tijuana. You hold the relationship with your team members; it is your responsibility to enforce and uphold modesty. It is not the director's job. Please do your job. (If you're not sure what is appropriate look at the *Team Member's Manual*, page 2).
- **Pack your personal medications.** If medications or CPAP machine/parts are forgotten, sourcing those items is very difficult and will usually cost an entire day. Any cost that Puente incurs will be added to the team's invoice (e.g., extra fuel in vehicle, extra translator labor, etc.).
- **Close-toed shoes are required.** Flip flops and sandals are permitted only at the beach and base. This is a safety issue.
- **Physical Requirements.** Puente de Amistad is a ministry located and serving in a third-world country. Team members will not have all the luxuries of the United States while visiting us. Although we do our very best to accommodate reasonable requests from team members, everyone on your team should be physically and mentally fit to meet the demands of your mission trip. As the team leader, it is your responsibility to make sure that your team members are physically fit to meet the demands of Puente de Amistad and all its policies.

Physical requirements include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Must be able to remain standing in a stationary position for 1 to 2 hours.
- ✓ Must be able to move heavy objects up to 40lbs at different locations.
- ✓ Must be able to work in outdoor, sunny weather conditions up to 80 to 90 degrees.
- ✓ Must be able to climb multiple flights of stairs and/or sandy hills without the assistance of hand railings.
- ✓ Must be able to walk a ½ mile continuously.
- ✓ Must be able to stay active for up to 12 hours per day.

In the past we have had several teams bringing members with limited mobility and much falling has occurred. Due to the number of stairs present in the base, strenuous outdoor activities, walking up or down sandy hills, and walking across the border into the United States, those with limited mobility are not recommended or advised to choose this mission trip.

- **Tijuana weather.** It is the team leader's duty to ensure that the members of his/her team are physically and emotionally able and willing to tolerate the elements/weather and stress of planned ministries. There is no air-conditioning anywhere and little to no shade for any outdoor ministry. Bring sunscreen and hats.
- **Minimal age requirement.** A missions trip can be an eye-opening experience for a person of any age. Parents love the opportunity to bring their children on a missions trip to show them how other cultures live. But it is your job as the team leader to evaluate the maturity level of the individuals and the overall cohesiveness of the team. We have had seven-year-olds who have been fantastic and fourteen-year-olds who have been terrible. Be realistic in your evaluation and acceptance of children as members of your mission team. You get to make the final call, not the parents. It is perfectly acceptable to say NO to someone who will not help achieve our overall goal. **No special concessions will be made for children.** They will be required to participate with the rest of the missions team.
- **Attitude is important.** Bring your servant's heart and attitude. Compassion and patience are mandatory.
- **Sundays are holy and meant for rest.** Even though missionaries have superhuman strength, they need their rest too. Therefore, missionaries at Puente take Sundays to be replenished by their local church. Puente's translators and volunteers will lead the short-term missions teams on Sundays and allow only extremely light Sunday schedules.

Requirements for Puente

- **A \$500 Calendar Reservation Deposit as soon as dates are agreed upon between Puente staff and the team leader. (Remember: No Deposit=No Reservation.)**
- **90 days before the trip (or as soon as possible):**
 - ✓ Puente house deposit of \$1,000
 - ✓ Total amount for any small project
 - ✓ Remember: to receive your family's testimony the full cost of the house build must be paid.
- **30 days before:**
 - ✓ The team leader must submit the Group Application online.
 - ✓ All team member applications need to be submitted online.

The following needs to be with the team leader at ALL times:

- ✓ Copies of all team members' passports
- ✓ Mexican insurance (if driving your own vehicles)
- ✓ Copies of supplemental medical coverage for every team member
- ✓ Copy of the Team Leader Application with everyone's emergency contact information, medical insurance verification, and a list of special medical needs for each team member. **Keep this with you at all times.**

Puente Services Prices

Vehicle Rental:	\$185/per day/per vehicle*
Puente-provided meals:	\$7/per person/per meal
Lodging:	\$35/per person/per night
Standard Puente house build:	\$11,000**

*The number of people and luggage items will need to be factored in.
 *Additional charges may apply for special requests and/or groups of 12 or less.

**Due to the material spike of 2021, the cost to build a standard Puente house was raised to accommodate the increase.

**If the cost of materials jumps significantly and exceeds \$11,000, we will have a discussion by phone and work out a plan for the balance.

James 2:16
If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?

Planning

As a team leader it is your responsibility to be in correspondence and communication with Puente de Amistad's staff. To ensure that you are accepted for the calendar dates that your team wishes to come to Puente de Amistad, you need to obtain those calendar dates a minimum of 12 months (18-24 months for prime times) in advance. This will give you time for fundraising and recruitment. It will also allow more time for potential team members to raise funds and arrange their individual schedules so that they can participate in the missions trip.

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 is required to secure your dates on Puente de Amistad's calendar. This deposit must be received before your dates will be reserved. Please note that scheduling is done first come, first served. **"First come" means first to have a date secured with a deposit, not the first one to request a date.**

Most team stays are planned for approximately seven to eight days (two days for travel and five to six days for ministry). A variety of ministry opportunity venues can be arranged for visiting groups. There may be construction projects available for various ministries and house-building projects for low-income families. We can arrange visits to feeding kitchens, orphanages, and churches and opportunities for street ministry. The selection of your ministry activities will depend on the skills and strengths of your group members. The base staff in consultation with team leaders will arrange these ministries.

When we visit these ministries (other than construction sites), all teams are required to provide two things:

1. **A gift.** The number one need of many of the ministries we visit is resources. Many of the ministries we visit are hard pressed just to meet basic operating costs and needs. We always want to be a blessing; we never want to show up empty handed. We suggest that the gift be equal in value to at least \$125. Cash makes a wonderful gift too!
2. **A ministry plan.** Simply showing up and blessing a ministry with your presence is not enough. Your team is not engaging in poverty tourism; they are here to minister and share the Gospel. Groups can use mime, skits, puppetry skills, singing, and testifying with the help of translators. Google is a wonderful resource for Spanish skits, songs, color sheets, etc. We encourage you to think outside the box and

create new ways to convey love and the Gospel. Again, coloring with the kids and kicking a soccer ball around is nice, but it's not enough. You need a well-thought-out, well-rehearsed plan of action.

Things to consider:

- Scheduling
 - Begin planning early and have several alternative dates in mind while you are still in the planning stage. This will allow more people to participate and help us fit you in our calendar.
 - Select and secure dates with a deposit early. We recommend at least one year in advance.
- Ministry
 - Determine what type(s) of ministry your team wants to do. You can do this one of two ways:
 - Make ministry suggestions early and trust the Lord to draw people to your team with skills to match the needs.
 - If your team has already been selected, make an honest evaluation of the skills and abilities of your group.
 - Contact Puente de Amistad for suggestions of ministry resources.
 - Visit the FAQ section of the website for ministry ideas.
- Transportation
 - Determine how you will travel to the San Diego/Tijuana area. If you fly (into San Diego) check schedules and rates, including the possibility of group rates.
 - Puente provides shuttle service between the San Diego airport and the Puente base. See “Puente Service Prices” on page 5. See page 3 for shuttle hours.
 - Puente has two vans available for a fee. There are 13 seats available in each van. Again, we rent these on a first come, first served basis. See “Puente Service Prices” on page 5.
 - Unless otherwise arranged by Puente staff, you are responsible for providing your own transportation when you visit Puente de Amistad. Van rental information is available on the FAQ page of our website.
- Costs. When estimating the total cost of your trip, be sure to include:
 - Transportation and meals to/from Puente. Include the amount of gas to the airport and home and parking fees (If driving yourself).
 - Lodging and meals provided by Puente. See “Puente Service Prices” on page 5.
 - Van rental or other ground transportation while in Tijuana.
 - Mexican vehicle insurance (required by law, included if vans are rented from Puente).
 - Supplemental travel medical insurance, which is required for every member.
 - The team leader is required and responsible to make sure everyone is medically covered for all legs of their trip.
 - Ministry money
 - Gifts for ministries. See “A Gift” on page 6. Contact Puente staff to answer further questions and for explanation.
 - If you’re doing a construction project, don’t forget to figure those costs in.
 - To build a standard Puente de Amistad house see “Puente Service Prices” on page 5.
 - **Extra money (in small bills such as ones and fives) for tacos, ice cream, and souvenirs.** These bills need to be in pristine condition – no, tears, writings, discoloration, etc. Bills in poor condition will not be accepted in Mexico. When groups go out to eat at a taco stand, it is up to the individual to pay for his or her meal. Puente does not pay when groups go out to eat.

For additional information and suggestions, please visit our website at www.puentedeamistad.org or contact us at pdeamistad@gmail.com

Checklist for Team Leaders:

15 months before

- Prepare a preliminary budget.
- Select approximate dates (have several alternatives). Contact Puente de Amistad and get scheduled on the calendar as soon as possible!
- Get approval through a proper church/organization authority.

12 months before

- Make Go/No-Go decision.
- Contact Puente de Amistad to schedule your dates and send in \$500 non-refundable deposit.
- Inform Puente staff about the approximant team size that will be coming.
- If interested in building a Puente home, send in the \$1,000 non-refundable deposit.
*Remember: to receive the family's testimony, the full amount of the house build must be received.
- Encourage all team members without current passports to apply or renewal their passports. This can take up to a year.

9 months before

- Check airfare rates for estimated costs.
- Prepare a specific budget.
- Have an informational/recruitment meeting.
- Interview assistant leaders (recommended for teams of ten or more).
- Encourage team members to go online and fill out their Team Member Applications.
- Select leaders and team members.
- Collect a deposit from each team member.
- Encourage all members to apply for their passport or make sure their current passport does not expire until their return from the trip.

7 months before

- Develop a team meeting and activity schedule, including a commissioning service.
- Plan material for your first meeting. Don't forget to incorporate these things into your meetings:
 - Praise, worship, and group prayer
 - Ministry practice
 - Devotions
 - Encouragement
- Agree with the team on a fundraising plan.
- Encourage team members to go online and fill out their Team Member Applications.
- Encourage participants to enlist prayer partners.

6 months before:

- Ensure that all team members without valid passports have applied for a new passport or a renewal.
- Communicate with Puente de Amistad concerning ministry desires/options and relay travel information and meeting times with Puente leaders.

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- Encourage team members to go online and fill out their Team Member Applications, if they have not already done so.
 - Collect at least 50 percent of the amount due from each member.

5 months before:

- Arrange vehicles, get vehicle permission, check registration and insurance.
- Make a list of team members' special medical needs (allergies, e.g.).
- Make all necessary travel and lodging reservations.
- Assign someone to put together a First Aid kit.

4 months before:

- If your team is building a house, send the house deposit of \$1,000 to Puente de Amistad at least 90 days prior to your arrival.
- Finalize all immunization requirements (check for latest advisements at www.ustravel.gov).
- Acquire major equipment for ministry. Check with Puente de Amistad regarding equipment available at the base (puppets, puppet stage, etc.).

3 months before:

- Team Leader: Be sure your Group Application has been submitted online.
- Purchase group airfare.
- Reconfirm all reservations with Puente de Amistad.
- Make a digital copy of each member's passport. This is for the Team Leader's records. (A digital copy needs to be of the entire photo page of the individual's passport. Examine each member's passport to make sure it does not expire before their return from the trip.)
- It is mandatory that ALL team members go online and submit their Team Member Application.

2 months before:

- Put together all devotional materials.
- Covenant to pray with and support each other.
- Check all required forms for correct information.
- Make sure to have scheduled times of practice for ministry (skits, songs, etc.).

1 month before:

- Ensure that copies of all necessary documents have been copied for the Team Leader records.
- Plan a Commissioning Service.
- Check all vehicles and equipment mechanically (if driving).
- Collect the remaining amount due from team members.
- Make final detailed departure plans.

2 weeks before:

- Triple-check all forms.
- Collect all the passports.
- Spend a lot of time in prayer; collectively and individually.

Don't Forget God

At Puente de Amistad, we believe that *faith without works is dead*, but we also believe that *works that don't glorify God are meaningless*. God is best glorified when ministry is done by His strength and His Spirit rather than under our own power. Your goal as a team leader is not only to reach the people of Tijuana with the Gospel, but also to encourage your own team to walk more closely with Jesus. You will be more successful at both if you commit to doing God's work instead of good works. The following describes how:

Prayer

Prayer advance has long been used everywhere by Christians to "take" geographical areas for the Lord. Teams came to pray over the city of Tijuana even before the base existed. If possible, team leaders are encouraged to do the same prior to planning their trip. Coming to pray over the city and to see what the team will be facing in both the spiritual and physical realm will greatly improve team leadership. During team preparation, every detail and each session should be approached prayerfully. In this way, you will be coming against any spiritual forces that are working to distract or interfere. The spiritual battle for Tijuana is strong. The city has long been a haven for evil and is therefore a stronghold of the enemy. Attempts to bring the Gospel to this city will not be ignored in the spiritual realm. The weapon of prayer is absolutely essential for this battle.

Each morning in Tijuana the team should gather together to ask God's guidance for the activities of the day. The leader, in particular, should be in prayer for guidance throughout the trip. The tendency among believers, even among leadership in the church, is to think of prayer as extracurricular, the icing on the cake, or, like insurance, good to have but relatively unproductive. On the contrary, prayer is paramount. **Your team's effectiveness will be proportional to your belief and practice of prayer.** If your team isn't comfortable with prayer, this trip provides an excellent chance for discipleship in that area. **We serve a powerful God! Prayer works!!**

Please don't forget to pray regularly for Puente, its missionaries, and its staff.

Nightly Debriefing

In recent years we have emphasized a nightly team debriefing time. Helping people process their experience in a group setting can make a powerful impact and amplify the experience for the individual as well as the team. The concept of debriefing is simple: at the end of the day the team sits down together or in small groups (recommended for groups larger than 20) to share their experiences for the day. Each group should have a discussion leader who poses a question for everyone to take turns answering. Here are a few question examples:

- What was the best part of your day?
- What affected you the most today?
- What has God been showing you during your time here?
- What do you think God wants you to learn?
- How will you be different in light of all you've experienced?
- What did you see in someone else that you admire?
- Who and how did God use a teammate today?

The leader of these groups must know that his or her role is to listen, keep the conversation moving, and prevent anyone from interrupting or dominating discussion. Some will want to verbalize their excitement, which is good; however, those who are more reserved need to be encouraged and protected while they share.

Steering

Studies performed on short-term mission trips indicate that those who participate in such trips are significantly more likely to become involved (or more involved) in their home church, especially with ministries that involve ministering to the less fortunate and other missions-type activities. These studies also find a significant increase in time spent in prayer and giving. Yet the failure by home churches and team leaders to prepare for this is one of the greatest sources of unrealized short-term missions potential.

“Steering” is the act of assisting people to separate emotion from conviction and turn their convictions into action. Steering is particularly effective when coupled with times of debriefing. You might ask questions such as:

- What do you feel God putting in your heart to do?
- What would it look like to follow up with what You feel He wants?
- What’s the next step in your faith journey?

You might want to give “next step”/goal suggestions such as:

- Getting involved in the local church
- Getting involved in the community
- Starting a ministry to the homeless, battered women, or single moms support group
- Joining INSTE or getting other biblical training
- Becoming a faithful giver
- Supporting and praying for foreign missions

At the end of the trip (or shortly after returning home), the team leader might want to challenge the team to make a written commitment to go after what God has put on their hearts. Use simple questions such as “What specific things can I do to allow what I learned on this trip to become part of my overall commitment to Christ?” This can be extremely effective if the questions are well thought out and coupled with accountability.

Picking your devotions purposefully can also be useful. Topics such as committing to a deeper walk with Jesus, or how to act as a member of the body of Christ, or prayer, or some other teaching that will challenge the status quo are appropriate.

Note: Team leaders should work with their pastors and be ready to help newly motivated people get “plugged in” and find their place in ministry.

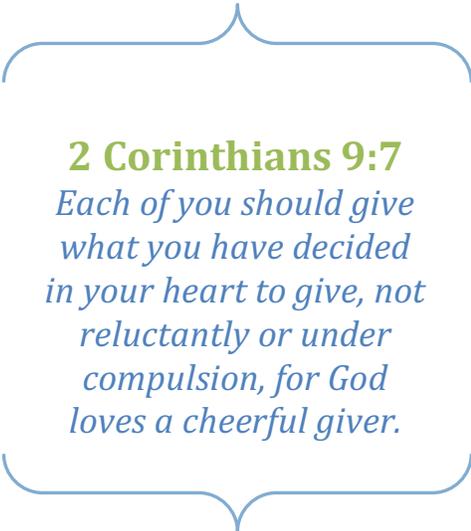
Journaling

It might be helpful to provide team members with a manual for devotions and journaling questions. Allow plenty of room for them to write their answers, thoughts, and musings. An additional page with questions that could be discussed by the group during debriefing would also be helpful. At a minimum, team members should be encouraged to record their thoughts and feelings each night.

Preparing Attitudes

A key part of preparation is helping each member check his/her motivation and expectations for the trip. Each member must examine his/her heart and pray about any motivations that might interfere with our missionary

objective. Personal conflicts between team members should be worked out before the trip. Unrealistic expectations should be discussed openly. Orientation to the Mexican culture using the material in the *Member's Guide*, should be presented early in the preparation process. Members should be taught to look for opportunities to bless others with a reassuring word, hug, or moment of prayer together. Consideration of others must be stressed because the group will be living in close quarters, will have to share facilities, and, in general, will be forced to put up with each other. When combined with the stress of a foreign culture and a busy ministry schedule, little irritations can become big distractions. Members should be trained in the Matthew 18 principle of resolving conflicts. Some members may experience emotional stress upon seeing the poverty in Tijuana. Other team members need to be sensitive to those who experience culture shock.



2 Corinthians 9:7
Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Personalizing and Final Debriefings

After a time of intense outreach in a foreign culture, personal changes will have taken place in team members that they may be unaware of at first. These changes become a factor when the team gets ready to leave. A wise team leader prepares the team for the emotions they will be sensing and provides a time between leaving Tijuana and arriving home to “debrief” the team, helping them to personalize the experience and prepare for the return to his/her own culture.

Goodbyes can be difficult. They represent the end of a very rewarding time and the abrupt severing of enjoyable new relationships. Mexicans, especially children, tend to cry when saying goodbye. Team members should be told to feel free to express their feelings. Taking photographs is a good way to preserve the moment. It is unwise to get carried away and make promises to write, visit, or send photographs. Many nationals have been hurt when these promises are not kept. It is not a good idea

to give money at this time. This can confuse the feelings and muddle the relationship. Promising to pray for a new friend is a much better idea. Writing down names will help you remember to pray.

Under no circumstance should any member of the team promise (or suggest the possibility of) financial gifts or any ongoing commitment without prior discussion with the director of Puente de Amistad. Emotional decisions that result in unkept promises ruin testimonies and trust. Instead, we ask that you work with the Puente de Amistad leadership team to make prayerful commitments that are well thought out.

After leaving Mexico, team members need time to personalize their emotions and should be prepared for the reverse “culture shock” they may face at home. A time to get together and share memories and impressions from the time in Tijuana helps members deal with emotions. This can be followed by small group prayer or quiet time. Journaling should continue during this time. Writing down feelings and impressions can be very therapeutic and time talking to God in prayer can be life changing. Hearts may be more open to God’s call at this point than at any other time in the person’s life. Team members should be encouraged to write in their journals what God has placed on their hearts.

Members should be warned not to expect too much from others once they arrive home. Newly developed criticisms of American culture or attitudes toward Mexicans must be presented very gently to those who weren’t

on the trip. Members should be told that a bit of nostalgia is common after a trip, and they may experience loneliness now that they are no longer with the team. Communicating the experience to your home church is an excellent idea. Perhaps church leaders could set aside a service for this purpose or hold a potluck to which the whole church is invited. Keep presentations moving along. In a good presentation each picture is shown for five seconds or less. Do not get into “rabbit trails” as you describe the slides, and stay away from meaningless facts such as “on Wednesday, June 23rd” or “it was around 5 a.m.” People don’t care about insignificant details; they will lose interest and their attention will tend to drift. Personal testimonies of what the trip meant to individuals are excellent. They should be limited to one or two minutes so a large number of members can testify.

A final team session a few weeks after the team’s return may prove worthwhile. Members will have begun to get back to their old routines and may have forgotten plans they made for spiritual follow-up. The session should include a time to reflect on lessons learned on the trip and how emotions were affected. Responses to God should once again be encouraged, as well as follow-up activities. The team leader can recommend a list of appropriate outreaches, such as supporting a child in an underdeveloped nation, ministry to the poor, local street evangelism, or writing to one of Open Bible’s Schools of Ministry for more information about a missions major. Don’t forget to encourage your team to pray for the staff of Puente de Amistad as well. The possibility of another trip the following year or a reunion gathering on the trip’s anniversary could also be discussed at this time. A closing prayer to keep hearts open to God’s calling may help those who are still contemplating life-changing decisions. The leader may wish to follow up one on one with such members. Finally, don’t forget to express gratitude to the senior pastor, congregation, members’ families, and individual supporters for making the trip possible.

We are excited for you to step out in faith for this new experience in a cross-culture, short-term missions trip!