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## **St. Croix Volunteer Rebuilding Mission Frequently Asked Questions**

*Last updated on December 18, 2019*

We hope the information here will help you decide whether this is the mission trip for you and will help you be prepared for volunteer rebuilding on St Croix. Like with any disaster recovery area, conditions and programs change frequently, so if you have a particular concern, please check with us rather than relying solely on the information here. We want to answer your questions and help you make the best decision and be prepared so please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Our email is [stcroixrebuilding@lssvi.org](mailto:stcroixrebuilding@lssvi.org) and our office phone line is (340) 719-1760. The Director's name is Chris Finch.

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## **Frequently Asked Questions and Answers**

### **General Questions and Answers**

1. What is the primary focus of this mission trip?

Mission teams will provide home repairs in the rebuilding efforts of St. Croix for homes damaged/destroyed by Hurricane Irma and Maria in September 2017. Most of our homeowners are low-income senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Without the volunteer assistance they are not able to rebuild their homes.

2. Hurricanes Irma and Maria hit over two years ago. Is there still a strong need for volunteers?

Absolutely! The Virgin Islands was hit by two category 5 hurricanes two weeks apart on September 6 and September 19-20 2017. Large sections of each island were devastated. A lot has been rebuilt and a lot is left to do. We do much of our work in the southwest side of St Croix which had the most impact. On virtually every street in that area you can find hurricane-damaged homes that have not been repaired. We like to say that we are “the safety net’s safety net”. In every disaster there are people who fall between the cracks and have tremendous difficulties recovering. Most often low-income seniors and persons with disabilities are the last people to recover. These are our clients.

### 3. Who should consider participating in this mission trip?

Healthy, hearty, hard workers! Unlike some mission trips where local labor does all the heavy lifting, we do *all* of the work! The work itself primarily consists of roofing repairs on corrugated metal roofs. Often, we must repair the masonry walls of the home prior to repairing or replacing the roof. This translates to a need for skilled labor with carpentry, roofing, and/or masonry experience in great need. We encourage teams to organize with a minimum of two skilled carpenters or general construction persons to each four unskilled workers.

Up to eight-hour days, five days a week in the Caribbean sun is the work environment. The minimum age is 18 years old unless prior arrangements are made for younger volunteers. There is no upper age limit. We have had lots of volunteers in their 70s working all day on roofs. If you are a senior citizen, you know your abilities and limitations and can decide if physical, outdoors work is for you.

### 4. Who is the host agency on St. Croix?

Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands (LSSVI) is the host agency. LSSVI has been in the Virgin Islands for 115 years working with abused and neglected children, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens. LSSVI operates residential care, subsidized housing and Early Head Start programs. You can learn more about the agency at [www.lssvi.org](http://www.lssvi.org).

Since 1989, LSSVI has responded to major hurricanes by implementing a Lutheran Disaster Response program (LDR) when needed. LDR manages the volunteer rebuilding program and will be your host while you are volunteering.

### 5. What has LDR done after the 2017 hurricanes?

Following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands restarted a Lutheran Disaster Response program. Initially we managed the federal crisis counselling grant for the Virgin Islands. We manage a grant fund that replaces essential storm damaged appliances and furniture. We provide disaster case management services. We started hosting volunteer builders in June 2018. The rebuilding program continues to be our major recovery service.

### 6. Is there FEMA financial assistance for volunteers' travel costs?

No longer. For the first 16 months of volunteer rebuilding, FEMA paid for volunteer airfare and provided a per diem for food and lodging through its "invitational travel" program. This was done through an agreement between FEMA, United Methodists Volunteers in Mission and Lutheran Disaster Response. Five hundred volunteers travelled to St Croix with this assistance for which we are very grateful. All good things come to an end and the invitational travel assistance ended in early November, 2019.

### 7. Volunteers used to sign up through UMVIM (United Methodist Volunteers in Mission). Now volunteers sign up through LDR (Lutheran Disaster Response). What has changed?

LDR and UMVIM have been great partners since the beginning of this work. Initially, UMVIM which was experienced with FEMA invitational travel, asked FEMA for permission to bring 6 work teams to St Croix. Permission was granted and then expanded on UMVIM's request to bring teams through the end of 2019. In 2018 and 2019, UMVIM sent over 500 volunteers to St Croix on 37 teams. UMVIM has more than successfully completed its commitment. Starting in 2020, LDR is managing the process

directly for all rebuilding volunteers whether from UMVIM, other groups or individual volunteers.

## **Construction**

### 8. Describe the usual rebuilding work?

We build to a standard of "Safe and Dry and Sanitary and Functional". Safe means that doors and windows are in place and can be closed. Dry means the roof does not leak. Sanitary means there is at least one working bathroom. Functional means there is at least a rudimentary working kitchen. The exact work done on every house varies according to several criteria. The LDR staff agree on a scope of work with the homeowner.

We mostly repair roofs. This work ranges from simple repairs to complete roof replacement. As needed, we install windows and doors and repair walls. We install simple kitchens. These usually involve installing pre-built cabinet bases, a countertop and kitchen sink. We seek grants to purchase refrigerators and stoves as needed. We build wheelchair ramps. We have widened doorways and retrofitted bathrooms for wheelchair access. When we have the skills available, we do light plumbing and electrical work.

### 9. Will we have construction supervision, guidance on local building practices and code requirements?

Yes, LDR has construction staff. The Lead Construction Manager provides guidance on the scope of work and the process we will use. He visits work sites daily, brings materials, and stays in contact with the work site leaders. He assigns volunteers to specific work sites and coordinates the transportation to the work sites. For some difficult projects, a LDR construction supervisor works onsite alongside the volunteers. Construction experienced volunteers often take on the role as work site leader for particular jobs.

### 10. Tell me more about the roofing?

Virgin Islands roofs are constructed to withstand the constant sun exposure, catch rain to be stored in an under-house cistern, and not be pushed or sucked off in hurricanes. Most roofs are built with wood rafters topped with plywood sheathing which is topped with felt paper, 2"x4" wood purlins and corrugated, galvanized metal. Local building codes require rafters to be spaced 24" on center and most of the materials to be screwed together. The houses that LDR has repaired have tended to use 3"x 6" or 3"x 8" rafters. Codes also require use of hurricane clips and straps. Another common roof type is "elastomeric roofs". These roofs do not use corrugated metal panels. Instead the plywood sheathing is painted with several coats of an elastomeric product. Wood roofs are usually either hip roofs or gable roofs. Occasionally we work on concrete roofs and roofs that are a combination of wood and concrete.

Our work has ranged from simple repairs of replacing corrugated galvanized metal or applying new coats of elastomeric to complete roof replacements.

Our philosophy regarding our construction is to mitigate or to replace a roof once. We don't want to have to re-do the same roof after a future hurricane. So when we install a roof we use the necessary wind engineering practices consistent with local

building codes and practices. This may be different than what you are used to especially if you build in an environment more concerned about dead weight loading versus uplift. The Virgin Islands significantly changed its roof building practices after the category 5 hurricanes in 1989 and 1995 and again now after 2017. We will be happy to answer your questions about local building practices.

#### 11. How high up and steep are the roofs?

Nearly every house we have worked on has been a single story home with a pitch ranging from a flat concrete roof to a 3:12 wood roof. (This means the roof angle rises 3 inches over a 12-inch span). When we have had roofs that were higher or steeper, we have ensured that more experienced volunteers have worked on them. However, working on roofs requires going up and down ladders so you should be comfortable with this. Good ground people are essential to assist roofing crews so not everyone needs to be comfortable with ladders.

#### 12. What is the pace of work? I want to make sure I can keep up.

We want quality work done safely. That is all. We are not interested in speed. We encourage regular breaks and for volunteers to stay hydrated. We never estimate the number of labor hours a job will take so we never push volunteers to work faster. We start work at 7am to take advantage of the cooler mornings.

#### 13. What is a typical one or two-week schedule for a volunteer?

We generally work 7:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. When working outside in a tropical climate it is generally prudent to begin early and accomplish as much as possible during the cooler hours of the day.

##### Typical 2-week schedule:

Day One – Saturday: Arrive on St. Croix by plane. LDR staff pick you up at the airport and takes you to home base. Get your room assignment and meet other members of the group. From 5pm- 6:15pm attend the volunteer orientation. At 6:30pm the group goes to dinner with LDR staff as the guests of LDR.

Day Two – Sunday: Sleep in a little, many volunteers attend church. Attend a house meeting to choose chores and go over some of the protocols. Attend a construction and safety meeting to learn about the houses we are currently working on. Often there is an island tour with stops at a beach led by the LDR staff.

Day Three – Monday: 7am brief construction meeting after which its off to work.

Days Three through Seven – Monday – Friday of week one: Weekdays generally follow the schedule of breakfast at 6am, voluntary devotions at 6:20am; fix lunches and load the vehicles with tools and equipment. At the worksites at 7am. Work is 7am – 3:30pm. Eat lunch around noon at the work site. Start cleaning up at 3pm and leave work at 3:30pm. Often groups choose to go to the beach after work and cool off in our incredible water. Dinner is available at home base around 6pm. Vehicles are available to go off campus in the evenings but most groups stay in and go to bed early.

Days Eight and Nine – Saturday and Sunday: Free weekend! Go to the beach, explore the island, go shopping in Christiansted or Frederiksted, go on a snorkel excursion to Buck Island, go scuba diving, go hiking, go out to eat or just relax.

Days Ten through Thirteen – Monday – Thursday of week two: follows the same schedule as Monday – Friday week one.

Day Fourteen – Friday of week two: Same schedule as week one Friday except stop work at noon. Afternoon is devoted to cleaning the volunteer housing and helping prepare the housing for the next group.

Day Fifteen – Saturday: Departure day. LDR staff provides transportation to the airport.

A typical one week schedule follows the first week of the two week schedule.

#### 14. What about tools and building supplies?

Building materials are paid for by the homeowner or by LDR. We deliver materials on site as needed. St Croix is a small island with lots of building going on and few lumber yards and hardware stores. Sometimes even the most basic items are not available for several days/weeks. At recent times the island has been out of 2"x4"s and galvanized metal for days. We work at keeping up a list of homes needing repairs so we can move to the next house if our progress is delayed due to lack of materials. There are ample quality tools available provided by LDR, hand tools and power tools. As described above you are welcome to bring your own gloves, tool belt and hand tools.

#### 15. Are volunteers allowed to use power tools?

Yes, on this mission trip volunteers use power tools. If you are asked to use a tool you are unfamiliar with, your site leader or another volunteer will show you how to use it correctly and safely. We consider this an opportunity for volunteers to not only help others, but to also increase their building skills and knowledge. If you are uncomfortable with using a particular tool, you just need to tell the site leader and you will be assigned a different task.

#### 16. How do you handle safety on the job sites?

In several ways. First, we strive to match volunteer skill levels with appropriate jobs so we do not put less experienced volunteers on jobs that should be done by professionals. Second, we conduct an initial safety briefing with each group. Third, each job has a site leader and we ask the site leader to go over safety concerns daily. Fourth, since most volunteer building job injuries are from stepping on protruding nails, we require that nails and screws be removed from all wood that is part of demolition. Fifth, our experience is that most accidents happen going up or down ladders. We teach ladder safety and ask the volunteers to all ensure that ladders are properly stationed and secured and to hold ladders for each other. Sixth, we require the use of gloves when handling wood or roofing metal. Seventh, we keep our work sites as orderly as possible with building supplies neatly stacked or arranged and debris out of the way. Eighth, and this is in no way least important, we encourage regular water breaks and we do not ever emphasize a need for speed. We want volunteers properly hydrated and taking enough time to perform their tasks safely.

We have a variety of safety equipment such as gloves and hard hats and face masks and hazmat suits.

Safety is enhanced with volunteers communicate with each other, use the correct equipment correctly, and watch out for each other.

## **Volunteer Life**

### 17. Where will we be staying?

Volunteers are housed at a closed former church school. We call this "home base" or "the ranch". The facility has hot and cold water and showers. The classrooms act as sleeping rooms that are shared space with other volunteers. Beds are all twin size. Team size will determine whether couples can stay together in private rooms. With larger teams we cannot give couples their own room. There is a full kitchen where the teams cook their own breakfasts and prepare their lunches. We employ a cook to make dinner on weekdays. A washing machine is provided with a clothesline for drying. The volunteer housing is not air-conditioned. It has ceiling fans and floor fans.

### 18. Is there a Volunteer Housing Coordinator organizing the living accommodations?

Yes, the LDR Volunteer Housing Coordinator assigns sleeping rooms, organizes chores, supervises the cook, ensures we are stocked with food, toiletries, cleaning supplies and other needed items, and in general ensures the smooth operation of home base. The Volunteer Housing Coordinator works with the Team Leaders to organize outings and off duty use of our transportation.

### 19. What about meals?

LDR stocks the home base with food for all three meals as well as ice and water to take to work sites. Along with the common foods we buy, we try to accommodate group preferences. Groups prepare their own breakfast and pack a lunch or take lunch items with them. Groups prepare their weekend meals or go out to eat at local restaurants.

We provide a cook who prepares evening dinner Monday through Friday. She prepares dishes in a local West Indian style which gives groups a taste of local culture. She starts cooking while you are at work and has dinner ready by 6pm. Most volunteers love her cooking and love not having to make dinner after a day of work. If your group wants to make a special meal or their signature dish, that is fine. Two of the island's largest grocery stores are nearby home base. However, we are a small island and sometimes it can be hard to find even basic ingredients. If your dish requires very specific ingredients you may want to consider bringing them with you. We strive to accommodate dietary needs such as gluten-free or vegetarian. If you have some special foods that are absolutely necessary, consider bringing them with you. If you have some very specific food allergies please be aware that we are preparing meals together for groups and it can be difficult to accommodate specific limitations.

### 20. Is the water safe to drink?

The water at the volunteer housing and in most places on the island is primarily rainwater caught on the roof and stored in cisterns underneath buildings. Locals generally drink the cistern water, especially from their own home cistern. We do not drink the water at home base since when we have to replenish the cisterns, we use well water which doesn't taste as good. It is fine for bathing and face washing. Purified water will be provided for you throughout the mission trip. Please bring a large reusable water bottle. We are reducing our use of single-use small plastic water



bottles and you can help us by providing your own water bottle. If you forget it, no worries, you can buy one on island.

21. I have some unique challenges, medical conditions, food sensitivities, etc. Should I come?

We hope you will feel comfortable privately discussing this with us prior to deciding to volunteer. We can help you decide if this is a trip you should make. St. Croix is a small, somewhat isolated island and has limitations that a U.S. mainland city doesn't have. While we have basic medical care, some medical specialties are not available on island. A volunteer had trouble filling a unique prescription that is not stocked by local pharmacies. Other needs may be difficult to accommodate in the group environment our volunteers live, cook and dine in. Most of the homes we work on have leaky roofs and have mold. We are not a good destination for people with severe mold sensitivities. Severe allergies should also be discussed with us beforehand. A volunteer who was allergic to a specific type of local fruit tree came during the season when those trees were in full bloom. If we had known beforehand, we would have advised the person to come a different time.

22. What are the rules for alcohol and tobacco use?

Alcohol drinking and tobacco use are not allowed at home base or in agency vehicles. The U.S. Virgin Islands does not allow smoking in restaurants or public buildings. When you are out to eat or for entertainment, we require that any alcohol consumption be in moderation. We require drivers of agency vehicles to not drink any alcoholic beverages before driving.

23. How will we get to and from the work sites? How will we know where to go? Who can drive? Can we use the vehicles for recreation?

The most important thing to know is that in the US Virgin Islands, we drive on the left-hand side of the road. Steering wheels are on the left side where you are used to them, but we drive on the left.

The second most important thing to know is that you do not have to drive if you don't want to.

LDR has vans and trucks that volunteers use to travel to and from work sites. Vehicles are refuelled at specific gas stations where LSSVI has accounts. LDR staff ensure that team's drivers how to get from home base to the work sites.

Volunteers may drive agency vehicles once they give us a copy of a valid stateside drivers license. This enables us to add the driver to our agency vehicle insurance policy. We require volunteer drivers to sign an agreement that lists our expectations of their driving behavior.

During work hours, the vehicles are strictly used for work purposes. We strive to have a vehicle available at every work site. The vehicles are available after work and on non-work days for volunteers to use. We have a limited number of vehicles, so teams need to plan their recreation use to accommodate all.

#### 24. Is there a recommended packing list?

For clothes, two guidelines to keep in mind – safety and appropriateness. Lightweight casual clothes that can be washed will be all you need. Remember you are working on a hot metal roof when packing. You can work in t-shirts and shorts but you should have clothes that provide more coverage if you start to get too much sun. Consider bringing a lightweight long sleeve shirt or two to keep sun off your arms and a pair or two of lightweight pants. Shorts and t-shirts are acceptable at many restaurants, or you may want to include some casual pants and shirts. For church services on Sunday, jeans or shorts are acceptable, but dressier clothes are the norm. Don't forget your swimwear. If you want to do any hiking, bring sneakers. Be sure to bring essential toiletries, medication, spare glasses or contact lens, hats, sunglasses, sunscreen and mosquito repellent. Please note the VI now requires sunscreen that is certified to not harm coral.

Please bring a coverup for your swim clothes. Virgin Islanders, do not like to see people in towns in swimwear without coverups. They expect men to wear shirts in public, except at the beach. Even if you are used to working shirtless, its not culturally appropriate here, so bring t-shirts to wear on the job sites. To best fit in, its useful to know that in general, Virgin Islanders dress conservatively.

If you have an epi-pen or other medication you need for insect bites and stings, bring it and keep it with you at all times.

Closed-toed shoes must be worn at construction sites. Some volunteers bring work boots, most work in sneakers. Not necessary, but If you wish, feel welcome to bring your own gloves and tool belt and favorite hammer or other hand tools. Some vols are most comfortable with their familiar gloves and tool belt. Otherwise LDR provides these items.

Bring a good-sized personal water bottle that you can refill as needed. This helps us reduce the waste of single use plastic bottles.

Bring your smart phone with camera or other camera equipment and laptop or tablet if you wish. We have wifi. Dont forget your chargers.

Our beds are all twin size. You may bring your own twin size sheets (or use a set that has been left from previous volunteers), pillow, pillow case, towel(s), and bath cloth(s). We have all these items, but we know some people wish to use their own. We encourage you to bring a beach towel. We have the fewest of those.

Kmart is open on the island in case you forget something.

#### 25. When I have traveled outside the continental U.S. before I've needed special electrical adapters, had to exchange money, and needed a passport – are these things I will need for travel to St. Croix?

No. St. Croix is part of the U.S.A. You will not need a passport. If you have a passport you may want to bring it as it seems the best form of ID to get through airport security. You will need a valid state driver's license to be able to drive a team vehicle. We use U.S. currency, so no need to exchange money. Your U.S. credit cards should work fine, especially VISA and Master Card. There are ATM's and banks available on the

island. No special electrical adapters are needed, our current is the same as stateside, but it's always a good idea to pack an extension cord!

26. Will my Cell Phone Work on the Island? Will I have access to the internet?

Cell phone coverage is fairly good island wide. AT&T and Sprint are the national companies that service St Croix. Typically, there are no additional charges as St Croix is a U.S. Territory. We have not had problems with major carriers but you may wish to confirm with your provider if additional charges will apply. If you use a small local or regional provider, you will want to check with them beforehand about service in the US Virgin Islands.

Home base has free Wi-Fi that works relatively well.

27. How much spending cash should I bring with me?

You should be comfortable with about \$200 in cash. You should bring no less than \$100. Your ATM cards will likely work at our bank ATMs but you want to be prepared with some cash in case they don't. If you have a VISA logo debit card, it will likely work at many establishments. VISA and Master Card are widely accepted, fewer establishments accept American Express. Some businesses are cash only or may have a minimum purchase requirement before a card is accepted.

28. Is there a religious requirement for participating?

Team membership is open to volunteers regardless of religious affiliation or practice. Lutheran Social Services is a faith-based agency. Most of the volunteers come through faith-based organizations. Many of the volunteers are acting on their motivation to put their faith in action to help others. We typically have morning devotions during breakfast, pray before meals and many volunteers choose to attend church services on Sundays. These activities are open to all but are not mandatory.

There are numerous faith institutions on island including most Christian denominations, a synagogue, and a mosque.

29. Please tell me about available medical care on island.

St Croix has one hospital, the Juan F. Luis Hospital located mid-island. The hospital has a 24-hour emergency room. ER waits can be extremely long. Nearby the hospital is an Urgent Care medical center that remains open in the early evening. Frederiksted Health Care is a federally qualified health center with locations around the island and accepts walk-in patients. There is a VA clinic on-island with limited services directly available. There are several private doctor offices on the island, some of which accept walk-in patients. There are several pharmacies on island.

30. What is the minimum required stay as a volunteer?

Five days of volunteering is our minimum for volunteers who stay in our housing. We love for you to work with us for two weeks as we have found that is a good length of time for volunteers to really feel good about accomplishing a lot of great work. It helps construction quality to have the same volunteers work on a house for a longer time. We recognize that not everyone can stay for two weeks, so one week of volunteer work, not including travel days, is okay.

## Signing Up and Becoming a Volunteer

31. Can I plan to stay longer than one or two weeks? Can I extend my stay if I want to? Can I return with another team?

The answer to all three questions is “yes”. For your first trip its advisable to plan for no more than two weeks to make sure the work and mission is a good fit for you. While volunteering on island, if you decide you want to volunteer longer, remain in LDR housing, and delay your return flight, it is possible to do so with LDR’s approval. Its best for our planning if this decision is made during your first week. Many volunteers return with a second, third and additional teams. One volunteer has come 6 times for a month each time. Some returning volunteers know they want to stay for a month and make those extended arrangements when registering.

32. How do I start the process? How do I join a team?

Email or call us (Chris Finch, LDR Director, email: stcroixrebuilding@lssvi.org, 340-719-1760 LDR office) with questions or to express interest. We will send you application forms and the choice of dates for open teams. Once you send us completed application forms and a deposit, we will add you to the team of your choice.

33. What are the 2020 Team dates

#	Team Name	Dates
45	2020-1	1/11 – 1/25/20
46	2020-2	1/25 – 2/8/20
47	2020-3	2/8 – 2/22/20
48	2020-4	2/22 – 3/7/20
49	2020 – 5	3/7 – 3/21/20
50	2020 – 6	3/21 – 4/4/20
	<b>2-week break Easter</b>	<b>4/4 – 4/18/20</b>
51	2020 – 7	4/18 – 5/2/20
52	2020 – 8	5/2 – 5/16/20
53	2020 – 9	5/16 – 5/30/20
54	2020 – 10	5/30 – 6/13/20
55	2020 – 11	6/13 – 6/27/20
	<b>2-week break July 3/4</b>	<b>6/27 – 7/11/20</b>

34. What is the cost to participate?

It is negotiable. Our normal charge is \$30/day per volunteer. This is divided into \$15/day for lodging and \$15/day for food and drink. We don't make a profit at this rate, its what it costs us.

We recognize that airfare to St Croix can be expensive and that some volunteers/groups cannot afford the airfare plus an additional \$30/day per volunteer. Thus we are willing to negotiate a reduced rate with volunteers and volunteer groups who request one.

Food in St. Croix is very expensive. We conducted a recent survey that showed a simple basket of food cost 40% more in St Croix than it did in Mississippi. The \$15/day we request for food is based on an average of our costs over time and multiple volunteer groups. As describe elsewhere in this document, we strive to have sufficient food and drink on hand for all meals and we provide a cook to prepare dinner 5 days a week.

35. Do I have to pay a deposit? What is the easiest way to pay?

Yes, we are asking for a \$50 deposit. Your \$50 is kept by Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) as an initial deposit for room and meals.

You can pay by using one of the following methods:

1. Best method: PayPal – right click on this link, go to open hyperlink and click (this will take you to the PayPal form to complete and submit payment.)  
[https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=\\_s-click&hosted\\_button\\_id=CT922YRFLTMNC](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-click&hosted_button_id=CT922YRFLTMNC)

Please note, the PayPal link looks like a donation link. This was the best match of the format choices PayPal provided. We understand you are making a payment for your food and lodging while on St Croix.

2. Mailing a check made out to Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands to 516B Hospital Street, Frederiksted, VI 00840-3824. Please write the “Volunteer deposit” on the memo line.
3. Call in a payment using your credit card information 340-772-4099 ext. 26 to Ms. Luz Silva, LSS Accountant.

36. How do I pay the remaining charges?

Whether you are paying the \$30/day or a negotiated lower rate, we will appreciate if you can settle the bill before leaving St Croix. The same methods, listed above, that can be used to pay your deposit also apply to paying the entire bill.

If necessary, we can invoice you after you complete the mission trip.

37. Do I need to purchase trip medical insurance?

We are not requiring this for those with other health insurance coverage, but highly recommend it. If you do not have any other health insurance coverage, then trip insurance is mandatory.

You should contact your insurance provider and ask about your coverage while in the Virgin Islands. Specifically ask about your co-pay requirements, out of network impact, and whether your coverage includes air ambulance service from the VI. If an air ambulance is needed to get you off-island to another medical facility that can handle your needs, it can cost \$25,000 so you want to have that coverage.

Mission trip insurance can be purchased from several vendors.

United Methodists Volunteers in Mission provide an UMVIM mission trip health insurance option that can be purchased by volunteers. It costs a little over \$4/day for \$50,000 worth of coverage for a 15 day trip. We recommend getting that level of coverage

since it is nominally more expensive than coverage for half the amount. US Territories require the international insurance, but only charge the domestic processing fee.

For information about the insurance coverage, go to the following link: [http://umvim.org/send\\_a\\_team/international/registration-and-insurance-updated.html](http://umvim.org/send_a_team/international/registration-and-insurance-updated.html)

You may also call Gray at the UMVIM,SEJ office for any help you may need, she can walk you through it. The number is 205-453-9480.

38. Forms needed for the trip include team member application, medical release form, and skills assessment form. Where do I send them?

If possible, please scan completed forms and forward to LDR at [stcroixrebuilding@lssvi.org](mailto:stcroixrebuilding@lssvi.org)

The physical address to mail documents is:

Lutheran Social Services of the VI

Attention: LDR

516B Hospital Street

Frederiksted, VI 00840-3824

39. How do I get there? Which airlines serve St. Croix?

This changes from time to time and is different during tourist season (November - April) and off season.

American Airlines operates a daily flight from Miami. For much of the year, AA operates two daily Miami-St Croix flights one at midday and one leaving in the evening. During off-off tourist season this drops to a single daily flight. Spirit Airline flies to St. Croix from Ft. Lauderdale. For part of the year, American operates a Saturday only flight from Charlotte to St Croix and Delta operates a Saturday only flight from Atlanta to St. Croix. These Saturday only flights are part of the reason we have teams start and end on a Saturday. Some volunteers travel through San Juan, Puerto Rico which is served by additional major carriers from several cities. From San Juan, Cape Air and Seaborne/Silver Airlines fly small commuter planes to St Croix. Other volunteers travel through St Thomas, USVI which, as a larger tourist destination, is served by more stateside flights than St Croix. It may be possible to fly to St Thomas non-stop from Dallas/Ft. Worth and Chicago. Cape Air, Seaborne/Silver and Sea Flight fly between St Thomas and St. Croix airports. Seaborne/Silver also operates a seaplane with several daily flights between St Thomas' Charlotte Amalie harbor and St. Croix's Christiansted harbor.

The St Croix airport code is STX; the St Thomas airport code is STT; the Puerto Rico airport code is SJU.

There is a daily ferry service between St Croix and St Thomas. Presently it leaves St Croix at 8am for St Thomas and leaves St Thomas at 3pm for St Croix. The trip takes about an hour. There is no ferry service between St Croix and Puerto Rico.

**Putting a Team Together and Volunteering to be a Team Leader**

40. I want to create a team and/or be a Team Leader. How do I do this? What does the Team Leader do?

Contact us as soon as possible (Chris Finch, LDR Director, email: [stcroixrebuilding@lssvi.org](mailto:stcroixrebuilding@lssvi.org), 340-719-1760 LDR office) if you are interested in one of the open team slots and you want to recruit a team. We will work with you to create your team. We suggest that you only try this option if you have led previous mission teams and/or have some skilled construction volunteers on board to join you.

A Team Leader does much of his or her work (or their work since many couples co-lead) before the mission trip. Team Leaders help recruit and help keep the various team members informed. The Team Leaders assists LDR staff in making sure the team members complete their paperwork and other pre-trip requirements. The Team Leader reaches out to the members to have them make their reservations and collects the travel data and passes it on to LDR. The Team Leader is an extra point of contact person for team members. Once on the trip, the Team Leader is a liaison between the team and LDR staff, advocates for the team, helps with any problems, mediates any interpersonal disputes involving the team members, works on keeping a high esprit de corps among the team and assists in planning group recreational activities. The Team Leader does not need to be the construction leader. Some of our Team Leaders are also the most skilled in construction, some have no construction experience, and some are in the middle of the pack.

Please let us know if you are interested in being a Team Leader.

41. I want to put together my own team. Do you have recommendation for the construction skills we will need?

Yes, its helpful to think of a system of A, B, C where an "A" person is someone who is skilled enough that he or she can see a damaged house and know how to repair it and can lead a work group instructing others what to do. We particularly need volunteers who are "A"s in roofing. A "B" person is someone with not as much knowledge as an "A" yet has building skills and experience, perhaps from working on their own home, is comfortable using power tools, comfortable on ladders and roofs, and once instructed can work with minimal supervision. Volunteers in this category may range from B- to B+. A "C" person is someone who is not experienced in construction, but is willing to work hard, learn, take directions and do the less glamorous work of cleaning up debris, pulling nails, filling dumpsters, loading and unloading materials, handing tools and materials up to the roofers, painting as needed, etc.. All this work is important. A well-rounded team has a couple of "A"s to lead work sites, several "B"s, and several "C"s to assist and be the ground crew.

In addition to the above, we seem to always need volunteers with electrical, plumbing and masonry skills.

42. I want to put together a team with my friends/family/colleagues but not stay with LDR. We want to arrange our own separate housing and food. We would like our own project that our team can work on together. Can we do that and still volunteer through you? What will you provide?

Yes, this is possible and has been done. We will need to coordinate beforehand your travel dates and your work dates and hours and where you are staying. We will need

to know your group's construction skills so we can assign you an appropriate project. You will be required to sign our volunteer release forms. You will need to arrange at least some and likely all of your transportation and bring more tools than you would bring if you were staying with us. In such a situation, we provide you a house to work on, the building materials you will need and if available, some tools and equipment. If we have extra vehicles, we will help you with transportation. Your work will be supervised by our construction staff and you will be expected to follow their directions. They know the local building codes and our agreed scope of work with the homeowner.

## **Conclusion**

43. I understand that volunteer rebuilding programs also operate on St Thomas and Puerto Rico. Is LDR managing those?

Yes there are volunteer rebuilding initiatives on St Thomas and Puerto Rico. We are not managing those.

The St Thomas program is operated by the St. Thomas Recovery Team. We can provide contact information for that program upon request.

There are several agencies operating volunteer rebuilding programs in Puerto Rico. Lutheran Disaster Response of Puerto Rico is one of those. We are in the same synod, however they are a separate agency. We can provide contact information for that program upon request.

44. Where can I get information on the recreational options on St Croix?

There are several on-line sources. While on island LDR staff can provide suggestions. Volunteer groups have enjoyed Buck Island snorkelling excursions, kayaking, hiking, island tours, shopping in Christiansted, and just relaxing on the beach.

Virginislandsthisweek.com/st-croix (also pick up a free copy of their magazine at the airport)

Stcroixtourism.com

Stcroixcalendar.com

Stcroixsource.com – go to arts-entertainment-events section; you can also find local news on this site

45. What if I think of another question?

Please contact:

Chris Finch, LDR Director,

Email: [stcroixrebuilding@lssvi.org](mailto:stcroixrebuilding@lssvi.org),

LDR Office Phone: 340-719-1760



