
Children of the Promise Handbook

*Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name
welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.
For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest."
Luke 9:48*

Table of Contents

The “Basics” About COTP	Page 2
The Structure of COTP	Page 3
General Expectations	Page 4
Guidelines for Serving at COTP	Page 5-6
What to do before you come?	Page 7
What to know as you travel	Page 8
Packing: To bring or not to bring?	Page 9
Food at COTP	Page 10
This and That	Page 11
Prayerful Considerations	Page 12-13



Children of the Promise

The “Basics” About COTP

We cannot thank you enough for giving up a part of your life to serve at COTP! We pray that your time here will be fulfilling and fun, not only for you but for our staff and children as well.

This packet should serve as your guide as you prepare for your trip. Included in this packet you will find information about COTP, our expectations of you, what you can expect from us, helpful hints for your time at COTP, general volunteer rules, a packing list, and a lot of other information. **We expect you to read and understand everything contained in this packet before your arrival at COTP.** Let us know if you have any questions or concerns about any of the information provided before you arrive at COTP.

ABOUT CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE

COTP is a non-denominational Christian organization that was started in 1998 by Bud and Jan Bonnema. The mission of COTP is to promote the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare of infants and children in the Cap Haitien, Haiti area. We strive to reunite the children in our care to their birth families whenever possible. When this is not possible, we help facilitate the adoption process of those children to their forever families. We are a faith-based ministry, meaning that we trust God to meet all of our needs. Our name, Children of the Promise, is based on Galatians 3:29 - *“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

COTP has come a long way since those first years in the apartment in Cap. Our current facility is the combined efforts of many volunteers and supporters, born out of God's grace and leading. The purpose of COTP has remained constant throughout the years, it is about the children who God brings into our care. However, the scope and means by which this is accomplished continually changes. Over the past several years, COTP has been able to expand the way that we help children in Haiti. **Caring for sick and malnourished children until they return to a family continues to be our primary focus.**

Our **formula program** provides formula for a time to struggling families who have young babies. In this way, we are working to prevent some of the instances of extreme malnourishment, which we have seen in the past.

Consistent education continues to be one of the key struggle for families in Haiti. Most families struggle to afford tuition for even the cheapest schools in Haiti. In an effort to extend our care and work in Haiti, we facilitate a **school-sponsorship program**. The program pays the tuition and supplies for children who were once in our care and children who, at one time, had siblings in our care.

The Structure of COTP

Our staff here at COTP is basically comprised of three parts: short-term volunteers, long-term volunteer staff, and a Haitian staff. The primary responsibility of all those who work at COTP is to provide a safe and healthy living environment for the children in our care. However, each group plays different roles in order to accomplish our goal. All roles are necessary for the well-being of our children.

We employ a Haitian staff of over 65 men and women. This includes all of our nannies, cooks, laundry ladies and other workers on our property and orchard areas. The nannies typically work 24 hour shifts. The job of our nannies is to be the primary care givers to our children. Most of the nannies have worked at COTP for several years. It is their responsibility to meet the basic daily needs of our children, such as feeding and bathing.

Although it varies from time to time, we will typically have several individuals volunteering as our long-term staff in Haiti. Their role is to oversee the health and care being given to the children, as well as the other various programs we offer (prenatal, formula, school-sponsorship). There is a lot of behind the scenes work that goes into organizing and providing care for 50 plus babies, our long term staff is responsible for most of this work. Typically, the staff will consist of the following positions: Director, Nurse, Adoption Worker, Maintenance Person, Volunteer Coordinator, and Teacher. *Check the website for a current list of the individuals who are currently filling these positions.*

COTP relies heavily on short-term volunteers as well. The primary role of the short-term volunteer is to provide love and attention to our children. Short-term volunteers will also be asked to assist in other capacities at the request of the long term volunteers. However, the majority of their energy should be focused on loving the children.

General Expectations

What we expect from volunteers:

- We expect you to respect the authority and privacy of our long-term staff.
- We expect you to adhere to our rules and regulations, even if you do not agree with them.
- We expect you to be willing to take a sick child during the night to give our long-term staff a much needed break.
- We expect you to come with a servant attitude.
- We expect you to be up and ready to go by 7:30 a.m.
- We expect you to stick to the schedule given you when you arrive and willingly help with tasks in the volunteer house.

What you can expect from us:

- We will treat all volunteers with respect and kindness.
- We will correct you if we see you doing something that is inappropriate or wrong.
- We will do our best to answer any questions you have.
- We will help you in the best way we can with any problems, difficulties or sickness you may be dealing with during your stay at COTP. Feel free to talk to us if any issues arise or if you have any troubles.

Guidelines for Serving at COTP

The first and most important part of volunteering at COTP is your willingness to be self-directed. We cannot stress this enough. You must be willing to jump in wherever it looks like help is needed.

Our staff will do their best to give you a job if there is something specific that needs to be done. Often times, they get busy and do not have time to oversee volunteers. If this is the case, do not take it personally and just jump in wherever you see a need.

A missionary working at the OMS radio station in Cap Haitien once stated, “If you are unsure of what to do, just do the next thing.” Typically, at COTP, the “next thing” means spending time with the children. It might also mean changing a dirty diaper, comforting an upset child or helping the nannies feed and bathe the children. You will get a feel pretty quickly of which children need extra attention. Try to spend time with the ones that hang back and are withdrawn. Feel free to take a child or two from the baby house onto the patio or away from the other children for some one-on-one time spent reading, doing a craft, playing a game, playing with play-doh, etc.

If you have a background in the medical field or medical experience, you should know what our expectations are in that area before arriving at COTP. Our nurse oversees all the medical care of the children. She may ask for help in caring for sick children, but all medical decisions and other decisions regarding the care of the children will be made by her. A volunteer may possibly be asked to help carry out the decisions made by our nurse and our long-term staff, but volunteers will not be asked and should not make these decisions themselves.

For many volunteers the **language barrier** can be very intimidating. There are two books we would recommend that you may find helpful. “Simple Language for Adoptive Families – Haitian Creole”, by Amy Kendall, is a book and CD combo that teaches simple phrases that are directly related to children. If you are looking to learn a few phrases before coming to COTP, this is a great book. “Creole Made Easy”, by Wally Turnbull, takes a more in-depth look at Haitian Creole. It is a great option if you want to be able to say more than just a few phrases. It also teaches pronunciation and grammar. Both of these books are available on Amazon.com.

During your stay at COTP, you may come into contact with the **biological families** of some of our children. If our long-term staff is dealing with a situation with a biological family, please respect their

privacy. Even though you may not understand the situation, often times it is pure desperation that leads these families to our doors. For a lot of our biological families, the best decision they can make for a child is to give them to us. Regardless of the circumstances, this is a very hard decision for many of these families. Please do not interrupt these discussions or stand and watch. They deserve your respect and should be treated accordingly. If you have questions about a particular situation, please feel free to ask our long-term staff at a later time when the family has left COTP.

Most of your time should be spent next door in the baby house or outside with the children. This is work and it is helping us out tremendously, even if it does not feel that way to you. You may feel like you are not doing anything because the visual results are not always as apparent as building, painting or construction projects. However, the impact of spending time with a child is immeasurable.

Again, **JUMP IN WHEREVER YOU SEE A NEED AND GET BUSY!** This will definitely make your trip much more enjoyable and memorable. Of course, feel free to ask questions if you are not sure!

PHOTOGRAPH & BLOG POLICY

Please remember and respect our picture policy when taking pictures of the children. No photos are allowed by one day visitors. Photos are allowed by volunteers only after they get to know the children (day or two). **ABSOLUTELY NO PHOTOS of frontal nudity or children who are not clean (waiting for their bath or a new diaper) by volunteers. We also prohibit pictures of our children on blogs, FACEBOOK, and websites.**

The reason for these policies is strictly for the protection of our children. Unfortunately, when pictures are posted on the web they are out there for anyone in the world to take and use as they wish. Even if your blog is marked as a “private” blog, people can still access your pictures. Feel free to write about your experience at COTP online, but please do not make your comments child-specific.

We do not want to keep you from spreading the word about COTP and the time and hard work you have put into making COTP what it is. Please feel free to share your pictures via email or by passing them around to your friends and family. You can also direct anyone to our website to see more pictures of the children. We really appreciate your cooperation and understanding as we make every effort to protect the children. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

What to do before you come?

Travel Arrangements: Once your application has been approved to volunteer at COTP, you may begin to make your travel arrangements. You can book a flight into Cap Haitian, usually from either Fort Lauderdale or Miami. We recommend you use IBC Travel to fly from Florida to Cap, you can book tickets online at ibctravel.com. IBC Travel offers daily flights into Cap and is pretty reliable. Once you have made your reservations with IBC Travel, proceed with making your domestic flight reservations. You may have to fly into Florida the night prior to your flight into Haiti because the flights leave very early in the morning. Both Miami and Fort Lauderdale airports have many good hotels nearby with free shuttle services. Please ask us if you have any questions or problems booking tickets.

Vaccinations: Before arriving in Haiti we suggest that you get a current tetanus shot and vaccinations for typhoid fever, hepatitis A and hepatitis B. You may also ask your physician about preventative medication for malaria and nausea. You can check with your family physician for these vaccinations but you may find that your local health department offers them for much cheaper. Most insurance companies do not cover the cost of preventative vaccinations.

Suggested Donation for Your Stay: All volunteers are asked to raise/contribute a set amount of funds depending on their length of stay. The volunteer coordinator will provide you with the amount you need to raise based on how long you are volunteering for. Please send your payment, before arriving in Haiti, to Children of the Promise at:

US donations: Children of the Promise, Box 123, Prinsburg, MN 56281

Canadian donations: J and M DeJonge, 995 Concession 2, R.R.1, Selkirk, Ontario, Canada, N0A 1P0 in Canada.

Packing List: Please see the packing list at the end of this handbook for a list of what you should bring.

Emergency: In case of an emergency, your family/friends should send an email to Nick Stolberg (Haiti) at cotpfielddirector@gmail.com and Jamie Groen (US) at cotpdirector@yahoo.com. Nick and Jamie both check their email throughout the day and will be able to get word to you to contact home within 2 hours of an email being sent. We do have access to an emergency phone if you would need to call home.

What to know as you travel

Airport: Our staff in Haiti will pick you up at the airport in Cap Haitien when you arrive in Haiti. You will probably be very surprised and even overwhelmed by the conditions you see upon your arrival. Please remember to be kind and courteous to the Haitians. Many of them, even children, will ask you for money or try to carry your bags. Just graciously tell them no and keep walking. Under no circumstances should you pass out money to anyone at the airport or in town. If you feel that you want to give money or items to anyone, please discuss it with our staff first. They know and understand the culture and can help you decide what is best for the situation. Please refrain from gawking and taking pictures of the people in and around the airport.

Immigration: You will be given a form to fill out when you are arriving in Haiti. Airlines in Cap don't always hand out immigration forms so don't be surprised or worried if you don't get one. In the section that asks where you are staying, check "private residence" and the address of COTP is Lagosette, 3eme Section, Milot. You will give this form to the immigration officer who will stamp it and your passport. KEEP THIS FORM, as you will need it when you depart Haiti. You will also need cash to pay the "exit tax", which typically ranges from \$25 - \$35, when you leave.

Trouble: If you would happen to have any trouble along the way, please attempt to contact us and we will do our best to help you figure things out. Haitians are generally pretty quick to help if you have a need. However, most Haitians speak very little English. If you arrive in Haiti and are not able to meet up with someone from COTP, here are some tips:

1. Do not panic, one thing you will learn in Haiti is that God is in control and that he doesn't always do things in our comfort time-frame.
2. Ask around if anyone is familiar with Children of the Promise and if they can help you contact us.
3. If you cannot find anyone who knows of us, ask if you can borrow a phone from someone (airport workers usually are a safe bet) and call any of our numbers:

Nick: 509-388-92-447

Amy: 509-364-02-726

COTP: 509-349-27-260

Jamie (US): 320-444-8180

Packing: To bring or not to bring?

Clothes

- skirts – knee-length or longer, more comfortable and less hot
- long shorts – can be worn at COTP, but women should not wear them in town
- tank tops – can be worn at COTP, but not in town or to church, no spaghetti straps
- short sleeve shirts – lightweight is best
- shoes – comfortable sandals & tennis shoes for work projects or walking
- pajamas – something cool and lightweight, but modest
- lightweight jacket or sweatshirt and a pair of pants – sometimes the evenings can get cool!
- Swimsuit – there may be a chance for beach, but it's not guaranteed, please be modest
- Remember, you will be living in community during your stay here, so modesty is the key. Please keep this in mind while packing, especially in regards to your choice of swimwear and pajamas.

Toiletries

- Bring anything you might need in your time here, there are not a lot of options for purchasing things once you get to Haiti.

Miscellaneous

- towel/washcloth – we can always use extras if you can leave them
- Bible/journal
- Camera
- Alarm clock (with batteries), We have some battery fans if you bring batteries (D or AA)
- Reading light
- Books/DVD's for down time (we love it when you bring to donate)
- snacks or easy meals for evenings
- DO NOT bring curling irons, hair straighteners, or blow dryers. They draw too much electricity for our system to handle

Money

- Travel: Exit tax(\$28) and whatever you need for food along the way!
- You *might* have an opportunity to go on a day trip to the beach or to the citadel. A trip to the beach costs \$15US or a trip to the citadel costs \$10US. Volunteers pay their own way on these outings. **You will not have access to an ATM in Haiti and they do not accept credit cards!**
- You will likely have the opportunity to purchase souvenirs from local craftsman. They will gladly accept American money.

Food at COTP

One thing that you realize when you spend time in an impoverished place such as Haiti is that we are tremendously blessed with food elsewhere. We are not only blessed with massive quantity and amazing quality, but also staggering variety. By Haitian standards, we are amazingly blessed here at COTP. However, the quantity, quality, and variety of food we have will likely be different than you are accustomed to. We ask that you please come with an open minds and understanding that you are not at home and may not be satisfied in the same way as you are at home.

- Our cook, Maud, prepares two hot meals each day. Breakfast is served around 9:30 a.m. and lunch at 2:00 p.m. Evening meals are “fend for yourself.” The volunteer house is stocked with food for dinner. However, we also encourage you to bring your own food to satisfy your own particular needs and tastes.
- Just to get an idea of what to expect, here are some normal dishes:
 - Haitian dishes: Beans and rice, fried plantains, fried chicken, veggies in sauce, shrimp/chicken w/cashew sauce
 - Non-Haitian dishes: Shepherds pie, tortillas, cheeseburgers, macaroni casserole
 - Breakfast: Crepes, french toast, waffles, Haitian spaghetti, eggs
- If you have any specific dietary needs or problems with food, please let us know and we will see if things can be changed. Please do not ask our cook directly to change how she prepares a meal.
- We will direct you to what water is OK to drink. This is purified water that we treat with a system at COTP. It is clean and safe to drink. Use this water for drinking, ice, making bottles, and brushing your teeth. Do not drink tap water anywhere in Haiti, unless you are explicitly told it is OK.

This and That

- If you have any valuables you do not feel comfortable keeping unlocked, we can lock them up for you (passport, money, etc.).
- **All communication with adoptive parents** should be left to COTP staff. Do not send adoptive parents pictures or updates for their children.
- If you become sick, let us know. We have medical resources on hand and can usually make you a bit more comfortable. Please let us know of any allergies to medications, however irrelevant they may seem.
- We have a laundry staff that comes every day and is available to wash your clothes. They typically come back the same day cleaned and folded. They are hand-washed and dried in the sun.
- Email access is available. There is a computer in the volunteer house that volunteers may use. *Please be considerate of other people's needs and don't spend too long on the internet if other people are waiting.* **You are allowed to check your email or be on the internet while the babies are napping in the afternoon or in the evenings.** When the babies are awake you should be playing and interacting with them. Downloading or uploading is not allowed as it can cause our internet usage to go over and our internet to stop working.
- If you have a laptop, you are allowed to bring that with you to COTP. Please remember we are not responsible if your laptop is ruined while you are at COTP. We do have internet, but we do not have the bandwidth to sustain extra computers and internet users so you will not be able to log on with your laptops. However, you will have access to a computer with internet during your stay for brief email updates to family and friends.
- Sundays are our day off and we try and keep the volunteer house as relaxed and quiet as possible. Feel free to relax with us! If you want to be with the children, play with them outside or in the baby house.

Prayerful Considerations

Here are some things to prayerfully consider as you prepare for your trip to Haiti:

Haiti will not be what you expect it to be. It will be what it is.

The people you stay with will not be what you expect them to be. They will be who God made them to be - imperfect people that need His help just as much as you do.

Anyone who serves at COTP is a reflection of the organization. In many ways, you will be the face of the organization to the kids, workers, and anyone you meet while in Haiti; no matter how long or short your stay. Each word and act has an impact on those we serve in Haiti. You will be asked to do and not do several things during your time at COTP. Our requests and guidelines are based on years of work in Haiti. Unfortunately, many are based on mistakes we and those working with us have made in the past. We have seen and had to repair the negative impacts of seemingly innocent decisions. Our guidelines seek to keep volunteers safe and protect the relationships of our long term staff with the local community, we cannot ask you enough to strictly adhere to these guidelines.

Often our definition of helping needs to change drastically if we want to make any long-term difference in a place like Haiti. Remembering that your definition and the definition of the organization you are working with may not line-up is an important thing. Remembering that the organization has probably changed its definition many times based on in-country experience is an even more important thing. Doing or not doing the things that the organization asks you to because of their definition of helping is the most important thing.

Our nannies work very hard to provide good care for our children and they deserve your utmost respect. Please remember that although they are different than you are, they are people too and should be treated with respect and kindness. It can be intimidating because you might feel as if you are stepping into their territory. Just remember that you *are* in their territory so be respectful of them, their life in Haiti and the way they do their jobs. They really do appreciate your help, so put your fears aside and lend a helping hand. Just jump in and help in any way you see necessary. The nannies will show you how to do something if you are not doing it right. Sometimes they laugh at the way we do things, but

they appreciate the help nonetheless! Some of them even know English so try to communicate and connect with them as much as possible. Making friends with the nannies will make your trip much more enjoyable for you and them!

Please keep in mind that COTP is not just a short-term mission trip for our long-term staff. COTP, the children in our care, life in Haiti.....all of these things are the reality of life for our long-term staff. They do not get to go home after a couple weeks so they have an entirely different outlook on things than you do. Remember that this is *their life and their home*, so think about how you would feel having guests in your home. This means remembering that they need their own private space to be alone. Do not intrude on their space, particularly in their bedrooms and bathrooms. This is *their space, not community space*. It is not open for you to hang out in or make yourself comfortable in. Again, think about how you would feel having house guests in your home for a week or even several weeks.

Please be respectful of the hard work and dedication to the children of COTP that our long-term staff has endured. They have worked and sacrificed much of themselves for COTP. They understand the children, the culture and the conditions of life in Haiti. If you have any concerns or questions, please address them kindly and appropriately with our long-term staff.