Church of the Presentation

Mustard Seed Jamaica Mission Trip

July 3-10, 2027

Applications are due no later than Sunday, November 29, 2026.

Destination

Jacob's Ladder, nestled in Moneague, Jamaica, spans 150 acres and serves as Mustard Seed Communities' haven for nearly 160 adults and 17 children living with physical and mental challenges. Filling a crucial gap in Jamaica's state-operated care infrastructure, Jacob's Ladder offers peace and dignity to persons with a variety of disabilities, providing a safe and nurturing home for those in need (MSC). For further information generally on Mustard Seed Communities in Jamaica and specifically on Jacob's Ladder, please see <mustardseed.com/where-we-serve/Jamaica/>.

What we will be doing at Jacob's Ladder?

During the week, we will perform various maintenance and small construction projects under the guidance of Mustard Seed personnel. In the past, these projects have included doing laundry for the residents, building a fence, and painting various structures at the location, including a wall, a fence, a gazebo, a kitchen facility, a community gathering room and residential cottages. Most importantly, we will interact directly with the residents, by attending together Mass and prayer services, playing games and general socializing, as well as, depending individual disabilities, assisting in the residents' daily meals and care. Each evening, as a group, we will enjoy a reflection on our experiences of the day in the context of Christ's teachings.

Who can apply?

Any Presentation parishioner who will be at least 18 – 35 years old by July 3, 2027, may apply for this mission trip. (The opportunity to apply for interested persons younger than 18 years of age will be determined at the close of the initial application period.)

Each application must include the following:

- Completed Application form (pp. 4-5 of this packet)
- Typed, signed letter of intent, 500-700 words in length
- Copy of the photo page of your passport - that **expires after January 31, 2028**, or a copy of your application for a new passport, including the passport photo.
- Summary of your availability to be in the parish area from December 2026 through June 2027
- A deposit of $500.00 towards travel costs, submitted by personal check, payable to Church of the Presentation, memo "Mustard Seed Jamaica-2027",which, upon selection, will be non-refundable.
- The COMPLETE PACKET (Application form, as well as letter of intent, copy of passport photo page and deposit) is **due by Sunday, November 29, 2026**.

Dates & Cost

Mission Dates: ***Saturday July 3 - Saturday July 10, 2027***

Fundraising Dates: To be determined in partnership with other Church of the Presentation mission trips. *Each missionary is expected to participate fully to the extent of their availability in the joint fundraising projects.*

The overall cost of the mission trip is anticipated to be approximately $2000.00 per person (the exact amount to be determined by prevailing airfares), which amount includes a significant donation ($1200.00) to Mustard Seed Communities, as well as airfare, ground transportation, and luggage fees.

Historically, the cost of the trip has been subsidized in significant part by (1) the individual letter writing campaign conducted by each team member and (2) by mandatory group fundraising events. **After application of the deposit and proceeds from the individual letter writing campaign and from the apportionment of the respective fundraising efforts, each team member ultimately will be responsible for the net individual cost of the trip.**

Letter of Intent

This helps us understand why you want to go on this trip and what you hope to get out of this experience. Please be detailed and specific in this letter about what gifts and talents you will bring to this mission trip and what gifts and blessings you anticipate receiving during the trip.

What commitments are required to participate in this mission trip?

There are several required elements of the Jamaica Mustard Seed trip. Formation and community building meetings and events are *critical* to the group's formation and success for the week. It is *essential* for the group to develop a level of trust that will empower a good working relationship, beginning prior to the trip. These events also help the team leaders to assess each team member's ability to handle the physical and emotional challenges of living and working in a potentially uncomfortable environment.

Given the potential that a large portion of the team will be made up of college-aged students and others, who may not be in the area of Church of the Presentation for regular formation meetings, there is a high likelihood that most of the mandatory meetings will be hybrid – in person and by Zoom. For this reason, **it is imperative that applicants fill out the availability section of this application so that as many in-person events as possible may be offered.**

Through the course of the formation meetings, the group will work together on team building activities, fundraisers, and lessons for getting to know the population we intend to serve. There will be opportunities to participate in cultural sensitivity training, explore Catholic Social Teaching, and cultivate a deeper personal relationship with Christ so as to be better able to become a servant as he was.
****Dates for formation meetings and fundraising events will be provided after applications are submitted. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we work to coordinate dates as efficiently as possible.*

When will I find out if I have been accepted or not?

All completed applications will be considered for this mission trip that are submitted by **Sunday, November 29, 2026**. **Applicants will be advised of their acceptance on the mission trip by December 13, 2026, at which**

time, you will be required to confirm your participation and your $500 deposit will become non-refundable.

What are the next steps to take if I am accepted for this year's trip?

Once an applicant receives notice of their acceptance and confirms their participation, medical paperwork, waiver forms, and additional information will be distributed at the first meeting (*Exact date TBD, but anticipated before New Year's Day*).

If you have any questions about any follow up information, please contact Tom Mierswa: Thomas.Mierswa@gmail.com.

Fundraising Events

As an individual, all missionaries will have an opportunity to fundraise through a letter writing campaign, for which guidance will be provided. As a mission group, we will plan as many fundraising events as possible in partnership with the other planned Church of the Presentation 2027 mission trips. Again, given that our mission team will be largely made up of college-aged students and others, who may not currently live in the Church of the Presentation area, the team will work together in conjunction with the other mission teams to come up with creative ways to spread the word about our missions. After the application of individual non-refundable deposits, missionary letter writing fundraising proceeds and of the allocated portion of the group fundraising efforts, **each individual mission participant on our team will then be *personally responsible* for the balance of the cost of the trip, which must be paid by Sunday, May 2, 2027**, in order for the timely purchase of airline tickets. **Your participation in group fundraising events is mandatory**.

> EXAMPLE: If 20 people are on our team, and the group fundraising efforts result in an allocation to our team of $10,000.00, your financial obligation would be reduced by $500.00, leaving a net amount of approximately $1,500 (using the anticipated overall cost of $2000.00), to which your $500.00 deposit would be applied, resulting in a residual amount of approximately $1,000.00. Against this residual amount would be applied the proceeds from your individual letter writing efforts. Should the results of your letter writing efforts not equal or exceed the residual amount, you would be responsible for paying the difference by May 2, 2027.

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APPLICATION FORM

Name_____Date of Birth_____Gender_____.

Address_____City_____State_____.

Email_____Phone_____ .

Please provide by separate confidential email to Tom Mierswa: Thomas.Mierswa@gmail.com, information concerning any medical condition and requested accommodation that you may require during the mission trip (*this information will be held confidential by the mission team leaders; the ability to make appropriate accommodations once at Jacob's Ladder will be subject to the ability of the Jacob's Ladder community and outside of the control of the Church of the Presentation*)

You must include with this application form the following:

❑ **Letter of Intent (**500-700 words in length) **explaining:**

- Why do you want to participate in this mission experience? What do you hope to gain from this experience?
- What gifts, talents, motivations, and interests can you offer that would enhance the experience for the group?
- If you have been on a mission/service trip before, what experience/expertise will you bring to the group? Why do you wish to do another mission/service trip? How do you see your participation in this mission trip assisting you to grow as a Catholic Christian?

❑ **Copy of the photo page of your passport, which has an expiration date after January 31, 2028, OR a copy of your new passport application and photograph (and, by no later than February 28, 2027, provide a copy of the new passport photo page).**

❑ **Your Availability (from December 2026 through June 2027)**

1. What dates will you **be available at the parish** to participate in formation/fundraising events?
   - ⇨ College students, **please list the dates you will be home for any breaks** between the date of your application submission and trip departure on July 3.

2. List days of the week that work best for you for in-person and/or Zoom meetings.

3. If there is a weekend fundraising event or formation experience (such as a team retreat) that is scheduled, indicate the likelihood you would be able to travel to the parish for that weekend.

Please describe your availability from December 2026 through June 2027:

1.

2.

3.

❑ **Deposit of $500.00** towards travel costs, submitted by personal check, payable to Church of the Presentation, memo "Mustard Seed Jamaica-2027"

Statement of Agreement

By signing this form, I am agreeing that all of the information I have supplied is accurate and truthful. I am stating that I have read through and understand the entire application process and further agree that by applying for this mission trip:

Please initial each of the following understandings:

_____ I understand that, if my application is accepted, I will be personally responsible for the overall cost of the trip (approximately $2,000.00), which will be reduced by my deposit, that upon my acceptance will become non-refundable, and by my individual and group fundraising.

_____ I understand that I am committing to participate in mandatory formation and fundraising activities and that, should my deposit and individual fundraising and allocated portion of group fundraising not equal the entire cost of the trip (approximately $2,000.00), I will be responsible to pay the residual uncovered amount in order to participate on the mission trip.

_____ I further understand that if I have not submitted by February 28, 2027, a copy of my valid passport (which expires no sooner than January 31, 2028), I may be ineligible to go on the mission trip and my deposit and all raised funds would be non-refundable.

Applicant Signature_____Date_____.

Please deliver the completed application packet to:

Church of the Presentation
Attn: Nancy Mierswa - Mustard Seed Jamaica - 2027,
271 W. Saddle River Rd.
Upper Saddle River, NJ 07458

or email to nmierswa@churchofpresentation.org, a PDF of *all* completed documents and deliver your $500.00 deposit to Nancy on your next visit to the church.