

BMH Frequently Asked Questions



Who is BMH affiliated with?

Bahamas Methodist Habitat is an outreach ministry of the Bahamas Conference of the Methodist Church. BMH is also supported by the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). BMH is NOT AFFILIATED with Habitat for Humanity.

Who can participate in a short term mission trip?

BMH hosts young and adult volunteers alike. Youth must have graduated from 8th grade in order to participate with a youth group. Younger youth may participate if accompanied by a parent or guardian during their week of service. We typically host church youth groups and college campus ministries in the spring break and summer busy seasons and adult teams throughout the rest of the year. We can accommodate up to 50 people at our Camp facility, so teams may share service weeks.

Who supervises participants?

BMH requires a ratio of 1 adult per 4 youth (17 and under). Adult leaders are directly responsible for the actions of their group and must adhere to BMH policies. We also ask that groups bring skilled leaders to aid in construction projects.

How much does it cost?

A week in service with BMH costs \$750 per person. Your travel to the island, UMVIM travel insurance, and Friday lunch are EXCLUDED from this price.

The Volunteer Fee is broken down as follows:

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|----------------|----------|
| Programming | \$30.00 |
| Transportation | \$150.00 |
| Food | \$135.00 |
| Housing | \$75.00 |
| Materials | \$150.00 |
| Merchandise | \$15.00 |
| Administration | \$150.00 |
| Contingency | \$45.00 |

Please keep in mind that our ministry operates year round. Your volunteer fee covers the cost of your week and ensures our continued operations, employment of local staff, and community support.

What does BMH provide?

- Breakfast, lunch (Friday excluded), dinner, and fresh drinking water
- Lodging
- Construction materials and tools for worksite (you may bring your own tools or provide tools as in-kind donations)

- Local site leaders (employed by BMH)
- On-island transportation
- BMH t-shirt
- Bahamas Excursion Day Experience
- Pre-trip planning with Team Leader
- Continued year-round project oversight and community support

What does BMH expect?

Volunteers must come with a servant's heart and mind that is flexible to change. God may surprise us with new opportunities to serve and we must be willing to follow that calling. Prepare yourself for conditions that do not include all the comforts of home. Respectfully interact with people who are different from you within your group and the community.

What about insurance?

Due to the nature and location of our ministry, and in case of unforeseen emergency, we REQUIRE EACH VOLUNTEER to purchase traveler's insurance. Insurance may be purchased through UMVIM at www.umvim.org. This policy ensures continuity when emergency circumstances arise.

*You do not need to be a member of the United Methodist Church to obtain UMVIM insurance.

When can we serve?

Our ministry operates YEAR-ROUND! Summer and spring break are our busiest seasons, but we have fall and winter opportunities which are great ways to beat the cold back home. Short term mission trips are one week, with arrival on SUNDAY AFTERNOON and departure the following SATURDAY MORNING. Reserve your dates early to ensure your desired trip.

Do I need to bring tools?

No, we provide tools and materials for you while you are here. However, if you have tools that you would like to bring as in-kind donations, we encourage you to do so. We are in constant need of new or good quality used tools and accept donations with open arms. We will be in contact with your team leader before your arrival to inform your team of our current projects and needs.

What are the lodging facilities like?

The majority of teams stay at Camp Symonette in James Cistern, Eleuthera. This is a dormitory style building with a capacity for 50 volunteers. Amenities include: bunk beds, individual shower stalls, A/C units in dorm rooms (for night use only), dining hall

Teams that serve on Current Island usually stay at the Zion Methodist Church building. Teams stay on mattresses and eat meals either at the church or at the manse next door.

Teams that serve in Nassau stay on air mattresses at St. Michael's Methodist Church. Meals are eaten at the church.

What kinds of project work will we do?

Work projects can include painting, roofing, interior/exterior repairs, plumbing, and electrical based on the available skill sets of your team. We try to let teams know where they will be working a week prior to their arrival, but project specifics may not be determined until the team's arrival.

Teams perform their service work at homes referred to BMH by community contacts, including the Department of Social Services. These will include homes in need of emergency home repair or community buildings that require service. Our criterion for home selection helps to ensure safe work and living conditions for volunteers and homeowners.

How are work crews arranged?

Teams will be divided into work crews by their team leaders, dependent on the size and difficulty of the project. Work crews range in size from 6-8 people. Each work crew must have at least 1 adult per every 4 youth.

What is a typical day like?

7:00am Breakfast
7:30am Chores
8:00am Leave for worksite
8:00am-12:00pm Project work
12:00pm Lunch
3:30pm Wrap up project work for the day
4:00pm Leave worksite for the beach
5:30pm Return from beach to camp
6:30pm Dinner
7:30pm Evening activity/free time
9:00pm Devotions
10:00pm Quiet time
10:30pm Lights out

What kind of money is used?

U.S. dollars or Bahamian currency is accepted on Eleuthera, and the exchange rate is 1:1. You may receive a mixture of currencies as change. Cash is primarily used, as opposed to card.

Do I need to bring a power adapter?

No. We use the same electrical service as is used in the States so no adapters are necessary.

Can we snorkel?

Yes! There are a few great places to snorkel here. We do not have the equipment for your use, but feel free to bring your own.

*Donated snorkel gear would provide for future groups if you would like to leave yours after your week of service.

How bad are the bugs?

Depending on the time of year they can range from not too bad to incredibly annoying. Mosquitoes and No-see-ems (sand flies) are worst at sunrise and sunset. We suggest cool long pants, socks, and shoes to keep them off your legs. We also recommend you bring bug spray with a Deet content over 40% to ward off the bugs.

How safe is the island?

The Family Islands of The Bahamas are very safe. Still, it is important to use common sense (always travel in groups, keep your valuables safe, don't jump off cliffs) and be respectful of cultural differences. Your team will be safe here as long as proper precautions are used and policies are followed.

What language is spoken in The Bahamas?

Bahamians speak English and with their dialect you should be able to understand about 80% of what they say. The BMH staff and other community members will help with the other 20%.

What if I have dietary restrictions?

On our volunteer information sheet, we ask for a list of allergies and dietary restrictions so that we can be aware of them. However, Bahamian cuisine does not often accommodate such restrictions (specifically vegan, gluten free). Our meals usually have something for everyone, but for those with strict dietary needs we recommend bringing supplementary meals. There are grocery stores in town if supplementary items need to be purchased.

Can we donate used clothing?

We graciously accept gently used clothing donations at the end of your week of service. We take these items out to communities throughout Eleuthera, so we tend to accept donated clothing that you would wear again.

How do I get to Eleuthera?

Most teams travel one of two ways:

1) Fly from the U.S. to Nassau to Governor's Harbour (GHB) airport. Small charter services, including Pineapple Air, Southern Air Charters, and BahamasAir make this short flight. Please allow AT LEAST 2 HOURS in between flights in Nassau in order to go through customs.

2) Fly direct from the U.S. to North Eleuthera (ELH). American Airlines, Delta, and Silver Airways make this flight from cities such as Ft. Lauderdale, Atlanta, and Orlando.

Do I need to pack sheets and towels?

If you have room in your suitcase to pack sheets (single) and towels then we recommend you do so*. If not, we offer sheets and towels at a \$5/person charge (additional to your volunteer fee). This charge is for laundering after your departure. Sheets and towels are only available to teams staying at Camp Symonette.

*We graciously accept donations of sheets and towels after your week of service. This would certainly give you a bit more room in your bag for any Island Made souvenirs.

What should I bring?

Please see our packing list!

Do I have to be Methodist to participate?

Nope! We welcome volunteers of any background with a heart for service. We would love to have you serve with us!

What is the worksite dresscode?

We require all volunteers to wear long pants and closed toe shoes on the worksite. This is a safety precaution against sunburn, bug bites, and any other worksite hazards. We also recommend hats, gloves, and shirts with sleeves.