



FARM OF THE CHILD

Volunteer Program Discernment Guide 2011

And whosoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes me . . .
. . . Y el que recibe en mi nombre a un niño como éste, a mí me recibe.

Matthew 18:5

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THE FOUR PILLARS
OF
VOLUNTEER LIFE:
Community
Spirituality
Service
Simple Living

The following discernment guide uses these four pillars as its framework. Commitment to the pillars includes both a spiritual or ideological commitment & a practical, day-to-day one. We ask that you prayerfully consider your understanding of & your connection to the pillars on both levels.

Community

A community is not simply a group of people who live together and love each other. It is a place of resurrection, a current of life, one heart, one soul, one spirit.

Community and Growth, Jean Vanier

Volunteers at Farm of the Child unite themselves in one spirit, as an **intentional, Christian community**. Community members not only work together, but they also live together, pray together, and share in each other's lives. The success of the community depends on each member's humble commitment to participate in community life.

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.

Acts 4:32

Ask yourself...

- ***Do I desire to live in an intentional Christian community? Have I contemplated the dedication, humility, and flexibility necessary for community living?***
- ***Can I commit to openly participating in community? Will I pray with & share in the lives of fellow community members? How might I build community with those to whom I do not have an immediate connection?***
- ***Am I capable of sacrificing my needs for those of my community members?***

Community members share in household responsibilities- such as cooking and cleaning, and they participate in established group activities- including business meetings, weekly community nights, and community retreats & prayer times. Additional community activities may be decided upon by the group.

Ask yourself...

- ***Will I approach the day-to-day schedule of communal living as an integral part of my commitment to my fellow community members?***

Community decisions are frequently put to a vote, and naturally, community members disagree with each other. Willingness to accept the majority decision of the community may be difficult, but it is important!

I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace

Ephesians 4:1-3

Ask yourself...

- ***How do I envision myself fitting into a community in which I may have to put my own opinions and desires aside for the sake of the community and the children?***

- ***Am I willing to work for compromise so that the minority opinion in each community decision is heard & represented in the outcome?***
- ***Do I enter community with a humble heart? Am I open to different viewpoints? Do I receive constructive criticism well? Am I open to learning from others?***

While some aspects of community life can be adapted to the needs & personalities of a particular community, there are a number of program norms which have been developed over the years to help a community comprised mainly of foreign volunteers to maintain an extremely high degree of cultural sensitivity. These norms also provide continuity for the children.

Ask yourself...

- ***Do I understand the no-dating policy? Living in close quarters with members of the opposite sex can make this rule challenging; do I have any concerns about this rule? What relevant experiences have I had that would prepare me for this?***
- ***Do I understand the dress code policy? Am I willing and able to sacrifice certain forms of self-expression such as piercings, hairstyles, and forms of dress that are not culturally appropriate for life in rural Honduras?***
- ***Do I understand the Farm's policies on drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes? Am I willing to limit my drinking or smoking to the appropriate cultural contexts? What effect would breaking this rule have on the reputation of Farm volunteers and on my ability to be a good example for the Farm children?***
- ***Do I understand that I will be asked to take careful safety precautions even in situations where I might feel that such precautions are unnecessary?***

The Farm's volunteer program welcomes volunteer families and volunteers from countries other than the U.S. & Canada. This diversity allows for more holistic formation of our children, with deeper examples of Christian life and family.

Ask yourself...

- ***For English-speaking volunteers, have I thought about the possibility of living in a house where Spanish is the predominant language? What challenges might this present?***
- ***For Spanish-speaking volunteers, have I thought about the possibility of living with mostly native English-speakers who come from a unique culture? What challenges might this present?***
- ***For volunteer families, how will we balance participation within the volunteer and Farm communities with our own family life? How do we see Farm life being stressful to our relationship and how will we work to ensure we are maintaining solid communication? What would happen if we were to have a/another child?***

Spirituality

Blessed are the humble of heart; they will receive the land that God has promised.
Matthew 5:5

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
Acts 2: 42

Spirituality is the basis and heart of our community life. Volunteers come to the Farm to personally develop their relationships with God and to share their unique spirituality with one another. The foundation of our community is based on our shared prayer life and spirituality. When facing hardships in relationships with others and in our work, our community prayer life serves as a source of strength to resolve difficulties.

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires
Galatians 5: 22-26

Then Jesus told them...about their need to pray always and not to lose heart
Luke 18: 1

Ask yourself...

- ***Do I pray routinely now? Do I want to develop my faith life? Does a routine prayer schedule excite me? Does it make me nervous? What would challenge me about such a routine? How would I work to overcome those challenges?***
- ***Can I be vulnerable to God and others?***
- ***When I am outside my comfort zone (lonely, in unfamiliar territory), what do I turn to for comfort/perseverance? What sustains me?***

At the Farm, most days begin and end with communal prayer. The spiritual life on the Farm takes place in the Catholic tradition and in Spanish. Though rich in its own way, it can be a foreign environment for volunteers who are unfamiliar with the language and the culture. Volunteers are encouraged to supplement their faith life with additional spiritual activities; however, they are asked to make specific commitments to community prayer.

The volunteers' schedule of spiritual activities is shown below, with items that all volunteers commit to attend in bold:

<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>
Mass in Trujillo 8am	Volunteer Prayer 5:45am	Volunteer Prayer 5:45am	Volunteer Prayer 5:45am	Volunteer Prayer 5:45am	Volunteer Prayer 5:45am	
or	Divine Office 6am	Divine Office 6am	Communion Service 6am	Divine Office 6am	Communion Service 6am	
	English Communion Service 5pm					
Mass in Trujillo 6:30pm	Community Night 7pm	Rosary 7pm	Entire Farm Spiritual Gathering 7pm	Holy Hour 7pm		
				Adoration 8pm		

Ask yourself...

- ***Can I commit to a disciplined prayer schedule?***
- ***In addition to this commitment, am I willing and able to dedicate additional time and energy to my personal/unique spiritual life?***
- ***Do I believe that relying on this faith formation will help me face the challenges of life at the Farm? Post-Farm life?***

Service

Out of His solitude, Jesus reached out His caring hand to the people in need. In the lonely place His care grew strong and mature. And from there He entered into a healing closeness with His fellow human beings.

Out of Solitude, Henri Nouwen

The Farm offers an invaluable opportunity to serve others, taking Jesus as our example. We provide for the needs of our children: food, shelter, health, and holistic education. We strive to teach them to take advantage of the opportunities they have with grateful hearts. We attempt to build in each member of the community a desire to serve, as we grow together in the spirit of mission through works of charity both inside and outside of the Farm.

In addition to one's role and job responsibilities, circumstances arise daily that challenge volunteers to act with compassion, to share their gifts, lives, and time with those in need. Neighbors arrive early in the morning with an emergency ailment; a poor man asks for food; an abandoned child needs a home; a young orphan acts out in his desire for attention.

Many situations in daily life at the Farm call volunteers to step out of their comfort zones, view the face of Christ in another and ask how Jesus would respond. Sometimes tangible solutions can be offered. Often, however, no solution to the problem exists except for the presence of a loving, compassionate, and listening ear and the strength of prayer.

In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Acts 20:35

Ask yourself...

- ***What are my personal strengths and weaknesses that I feel called to offer in service at the Farm?***
- ***Am I willing to rise to the challenge and serve in unpredictable and unfamiliar situations? How do I deal with situations when I am stretched out of my comfort zone?***
- ***Am I willing to put my personal agenda aside in order to respond to the daily needs that others will place before me?***

Every volunteer at the Farm is tasked with very different roles as determined by their main job responsibility and their additional minor job tasks. This difference in roles allows for the consistent and constant care for the children. Nonetheless, it demands a willingness by each volunteer to understand his/her own roles and to serve to the best of his/her capacity within that role, without comparing with others.

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but (also) everyone for those of others.

Philippians 2:1-4

Ask yourself...

- ***Am I willing to take on the role that the Farm community asks of me, even if I would rather serve in a different capacity?***

A local Honduran once said to tell prospective Farm volunteers that they have to be ready to love. Being a volunteer at the Farm demands love 100% of the time, often in very challenging circumstances. What people are lacking physically or emotionally cannot always be fixed with a handout. Many of those at the Farm carry crosses that make it very difficult for them to accept the love you may offer them.

It can be shocking, or at least surprising, to remember that many of the children at the Farm are dealing with serious issues from their pasts, such as the loss of a parent, abuse, neglect, and abandonment. Volunteers come into contact with these issues when we learn the story of a child's past or when we see certain behaviors that are a result of their past.

In response to the challenge of working with a diverse population of at-risk children, we have adopted the Common Sense Parenting discipline method as a consistent means to teach good behavior without corporal punishment. As a community, our service aims to protect children and to ensure that the Farm is a safe place where the children and adults might come to find God's unconditional love through those around them.

For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians 5:13-14

Ask yourself...

- ***Am I "ready to love"?***
- ***Do I feel called to work with children in this way? How will I react if my efforts do not seem to have the same fruits as in the States? Am I willing to give even if it hurts?***
- ***Sometimes volunteers have found that while working and living with this population, some of their own, personal past experiences resurface. Do I have any concerns, based on past experiences, about working with and caring for this population?***

Though volunteers offer much to the children and the people in the surrounding area, we inevitably receive more than we actually give. By opening ourselves up to others, allowing ourselves to love, to care, and to share our gifts, we serve others. In turn, we are served by others, receiving their generosity, time, wisdom, and love.

Simplicity

Live simply so that others may simply live.

Mahatma Gandhi

At the Farm, we focus on the Christian life, having only what we need in order to minimize the distraction caused by material things, using our belongings appropriately and maintaining a life of simplicity in order to grow in human and spiritual values and live in solidarity with those most in need, following the example of Jesus.

Simplicity is a commitment to both an ideal and an action. When we surround ourselves and fulfill our wants and needs with material goods or overworking ourselves, we have little room for God's presence and grace to work in our lives. By decreasing our dependence on these goods and taking personal time, we recognize our greater need for God's guidance in our lives and open ourselves up to spiritual fulfillment. Therefore, simplicity is both practiced internally and externally.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4: 16-18

Ask yourself...

- ***Am I willing to evaluate my personal habits, traits, and values and then prayerfully consider making choices to live simply?***
- ***Am I willing to evaluate and admit my internal distractions, weaknesses, and shortcomings and challenge myself to grow in my faith life and focus more fully on the mission of the Farm?***

Volunteers at the Farm of the Child make a commitment to simplicity. Some choices are personal (i.e.: use of spending money, use of free time, etc.) while others are decisions established norms for the larger community (i.e.: the food rations each house receives, limits on watching movies, etc.) As part of their commitment to simple living, the current volunteer community has decided to eat a simple lunch of beans and rice on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Additionally, possessions that may be common in the US (i-pods, laptops/i-pads, etc.) can create distance/hinder solidarity between volunteers and their Honduran neighbors. All are asked to commit to the ideal of simple living and to be willing to incorporate this into their experience in Honduras. Volunteers encounter opportunities to recommit to this ideal on a daily basis.

All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed.

Acts 2:44-45

Ask yourself...

- ***Am I willing and able to give up material comforts to live in solidarity with Honduran neighbors? (trading blow dryers, i-pads, & fast food for rustic accommodations, creepy crawlies, & a limited diet)***
- ***Am I willing to spend time with Hondurans to understand their lifestyle, poverty and simplicity?***
- ***Am I willing to uphold the community decisions to maintain the values of simplicity?***

Contact with family and friends can be irregular while on the Farm. Commonly volunteers only have access to email about once a week and less frequent access to phone calls. Currently, there is no internet access on the Farm. For at least the first six months as a volunteer, personal cell phones are prohibited. Volunteer cell phones are not to be used while on the Farm because volunteers are asked to be present to the children and to learn to depend on fellow volunteers in community.

Ask yourself...

- ***Do I want to live in this way?***
- ***Am I willing to make the active decision to be present to the Farm and Honduran community, accepting a lifestyle where I will not always be in constant communication with my US community?***
- ***Have I discussed the limited communication with my family and friends, especially in the light of difficult situations that can arise such as hurricanes, political unrest, earthquakes, etc.? What was their response?***

The typical volunteer from the United States raises approximately \$10,000 to cover the volunteer expenses for the duration of their 27-month commitment. The typical volunteer from Latin American raises approximately \$3,000 for the duration of their 27-month commitment. Volunteers have successfully raised sufficient (even extra) funds to take care of their volunteer expenses.

Fundraising provides indispensable support to the Farm and plays a key role in new volunteer formation. By sharing the Farm with others, volunteers open themselves up to tremendous support and begin their service from a place of humble need, relying on the support of others.

Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is a hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4: 4-7

Ask yourself...

- ***Am I ready to accept the responsibility of fundraising in anticipation of serving at the Farm of the Child?***
- ***What obstacles might I encounter while fundraising and how might I overcome them?***