



Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions  
507 5th Ave SE  
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## Stay Connected to our mission

[www.catholictherapymissions.org](http://www.catholictherapymissions.org)

 Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions

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# *Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions*

*Elevating the dignity and quality  
of life of those living with  
disabilities across the world.*



# Pursuing Purpose, Not Comfort

About two years ago, Shannon came to speak to our religion class. She introduced herself and began sharing about her life and the mission she helped found. Something clicked inside me. I hadn't thought about going on a mission trip before, but by the end of her talk, I knew it was something I wanted to pursue.

On the drive home, half-jokingly, I asked my mom if I could go on a mission trip. I had fully prepared myself to hear a "no," along with an explanation about being too young—I was just 14 at the time. My mom said, "If you can organize it and set it up, you can go." I was surprised, but I filled out an application and was later accepted.

When the time finally came, I felt a mix of nervousness and excitement. It was hard to believe it was actually happening. My experience in Jamaica was nothing short of incredible—words don't fully capture it. It was the most fulfilling thing I have ever done. The trip was not just a break from my everyday life but an immersion into something greater. The children I spent time with were, without a doubt, the most vibrant and joyful part of my experience. They had this pure innocence about them, despite their challenging circumstances, they found happiness in the smallest of things—whether it was playing with a crumpled flower or a simple toy. Their joy was contagious. In every interaction, I witnessed how truly pure their hearts were. They weren't bogged down by the complexities and struggles that often come with maturing. Their approach to life was refreshingly simple: they cherished the present moment, and had limited expectations of the future. They taught me the importance of finding joy in the simplest parts of life. Their smiles, their laughter, and their enthusiasm became a powerful reminder of how easy it is to be content when you focus on what truly matters.

In the year and a half since the trip, I have been reflecting on the direction my life should take. I continually find myself coming back to the possibility of mission work or working with children. I think about the kids I met in Jamaica every single day. They've become a constant in my thoughts. I know that going again will help me discern what path I should take in the future. The opportunity to give my time and energy to children in need is one I cannot pass up. I believe that returning to Jamaica will be a joyous experience, one that will help explore my calling to serve others. While I still don't know exactly what God is calling me to do with my life, I do know it isn't to sit idly by and wait for something to happen.

When I shared the news about this year's trip with the group I had traveled with last time, most of them were uncertain about whether they would be able to go again. For a while, I found myself hesitating too. Would I still want to go if no one I knew well would be there? The thought of being in a new environment, potentially surrounded by people I didn't know as well, made me uneasy. I started to worry about what it would be like to go without anyone my age. What if I ended up feeling lonely or isolated, missing the connections I had formed on my previous trip?

However, the more I thought about it, the more I began to realize this could be an incredible opportunity. The absence of familiar faces could actually be an advantage. Without the distraction of relying on people I already knew, I would have the chance to truly reflect on the experience in a deeper way. Being away from my comfort zone might allow me to focus more fully on the mission and its purpose—on serving others and connecting with the people I was there to help, rather than focusing on the comfort of being surrounded by friends. It would be an opportunity to grow stronger in my own faith and to learn more about what my future might look like. So, while the uncertainty made me nervous at first, I now see it as a chance to step outside of my comfort zone and truly embrace the mission in its entirety.

This time, I'll be 16, likely still the youngest on the team, but that's okay. I've come to understand that God calls everyone, regardless of age, to serve. I've realized that we are all called to serve in our own way. Sometimes that service takes unexpected forms, but it's always an opportunity to grow. The mission trip taught me to look beyond myself, to be selfless, and to prioritize the needs of others.

Lucy Zimmermann



# Nonprofit vs. Charity



Until recently, I used the words 'nonprofit' and 'charity' interchangeably. But during the Sugar Bowl this year, I had a realization—this college football event is run by a nonprofit. In 2024, the Sugar Bowl reported \$26.9 million in revenue, held over \$85 million in assets, and paid its CEO nearly \$1 million. Its mission? To promote amateur/college sports and boost tourism in Louisiana.

Reflecting on this, I feel fortunate to be a part of Little Flower. As treasurer of a small 501(c)(3), I appreciate that some expenses are necessary to function. But our organization is uniquely positioned to maximize every dollar we receive. We have no payroll, no compensated board members, and no rent or building costs.

## How We Steward Your Donations

In fiscal year 2024:

- 94% of expenses directly supported our mission, including sponsoring a therapy provider for Bethlehem Home and continuing our wheelchair project
- 4% was dedicated to evangelization (website and newsletters)
- 1% covered charitable compliance costs
- 1% we toward necessary financial expenses (bank fees, IRS filings)
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## Looking Ahead to 2025

This year, our mission remains the same: serve those in need with love and dignity. Our goals include:

- A mission trip
- Continued sponsor of therapy staff
- Continuing work on wheelchairs

Though our mission trips are primarily funded through the participants on the trips, we determined that we wanted to start a scholarship fund this year. On a case by case basis, these funds will assist with essential trip expenses. If you wish to sponsor a missionary, please designate your donation accordingly.

We continue to sponsor one therapist at MOP to provide ongoing therapeutic care for children in need. This year, we have budgeted \$11,960 for this program and are grateful to have received a \$10,000 grant toward this goal. While we hope to expand to additional MOP homes in the future, we remain committed to financial prudence, ensuring that we never overextend beyond what God has provided.

One of our biggest challenges has been sourcing used complex manual wheelchairs. So far, we have collected 12 chairs in need of refurbishment, which we estimate will cost \$400–\$500 per chair. Beyond that, purchasing new chairs may be necessary, with costs ranging from \$400 for a basic pediatric chair on Amazon to \$2,000–\$3,000 for a complex tilt-in-space or positioning chair.

I do not intend to criticize the functioning of any non-profit. I merely wish to express that your donations are a gift from God and we will treat it with the utmost respect. With every prayer, donation, and act of volunteering, our mission becomes your mission. To borrow from St. Teresa of Calcutta, though our mission may not accomplish great things, together we can do a lot of little things with great love.

Grant Hillestad  
Treasurer, Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions



# June 2025 Mission Trip

June 14, 2025, 11 missionaries from across the continent will leave the comfort of their homes and come together in Jamaica. From the moment they step out of the Kingston airport, they will begin to experience the summer heat with a constant stream of sweat. However, the heat and the jet lag will not hinder their joy as they join with the Jamaican people in praise the next day at a special Caribbean Sunday Mass! As they meet the residents at Bethlehem home where they will work each day, their joy will be complete. They have been preparing for this moment for months through the long process of discerning, applying, interviewing, booking flights, meeting with the team, and preparing special projects. While they hope to build up the therapy programming at Bethlehem home and perhaps lay the foundation to expand therapy programming to other homes, the real impact of this mission will be on the hearts of these 11 missionaries. The people they encounter, the tiny touch of little hands, the enormous smiles of suffering children, each will leave an imprint. As they board the plane to head home, they will undoubtedly feel more grateful for the gift of life, more ready to give of themselves, and thus experience joy in new and profound ways.

This team, consisting primarily of therapy professionals encompassing the 3 major disciplines, is truly a dream come true. When we founded the nonprofit, a major objective was to recruit more faithful therapists to serve with our core team. Praise God, that dream is coming to fruition! We ask you to keep our team in your prayers, especially from June 14-21 when we will be on mission. Pray for our safety and the success of our projects, but more than anything pray for the conversion of hearts for that is what mission is truly all about.

Shannon Hillestad  
 President, Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions



## Mail-in Donation Form

*Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions - 507 5<sup>th</sup> Ave SE, Saint Cloud, MN 56304 - (770)572-7295*

*Elevating the dignity and quality of life of those living with disabilities across the world.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in receiving information on future mission trip opportunities.

I would like to make a monthly commitment to building therapy programs.

Prayer requests: \_\_\_\_\_

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