

Youth President trip to Mexico 2016

HOSPITALITY AND CARE

Myself, along with Hayley Moss, felt truly humbled by the hospitality and care shown to us by the Church in Mexico. The church offered us lots of opportunities to visit and experience the local area and the church, yet were caring in letting us rest if we needed it! We were never short on food as well, although it took us a few days to understand the concept of large meals in the morning and smaller meals in the evening.



We were offered opportunity to visit places that we had a particular interest in, be it as a tourist or as a professional. Hayley, for example, was provided the opportunity to visit a local prison along with members of the local church.

I would like to particularly mention my thanks to the Bishop for allowing Sam and Ivan to take care of us during our time in Mexico City. It was an absolute delight to meet these young leaders within the church, visit various locations with them and hear more about their context and ministry.

MIGRATION



Before I went over, I must confess that I didn't know much about the Migration situation in Mexico, aside from that a large amount of people attempt to migrate to America for a better life. That, and the racist rhetoric from the GOP nominee over the last year....

What we were not expecting to hear about was the inhuman treatment of migrants by Coyotes (Traffickers). If a migrant was caught by Coyotes, then one of many inhuman things would happen, including, but not limited to:

- Forced to traffic drugs across the USA/Mexico Border
- Extorted for more money
- Forced to break the law, due to threats to family.
- Kidnapped, raped and tortured

A shelter we visited in Celaya explained to us that, only a few weeks before we arrived, a migrant was kidnapped and tortured within a house in Celaya. He managed to escape, but was unable to explain where he was being kept.

The church is actively working with migrants to provide them with shelter and food. In addition to these provisions, the church (and indeed the Mexican government) are providing psychological care for migrants. This is either to help aid them deal with being deported from the USA or to deal with their experience of migration. Any shelter for migrants in the north of Mexico encouraged migrants to attempt to find work during the day, while the shelter in the south did not press this, due to the threat of kidnap.

The migration situation is, sadly, expected to continue in Mexico. In the next year, there is expected to be a large migration of Haitians moving through Mexico, due to the humanitarian visa's provided in Brazil after the earthquake are expiring. We also heard of migrants from Eastern Europe and Western Africa migrating through Mexico to America.



THE CHURCH

From my perspective as not only Youth President, but as a youth worker, I found the context that the Mexican church interesting.

Firstly, the age range of youth ran up to thirty years of age. As such, there were a mix of young people and those who were older than me, but also considering themselves young people. From conversations I've had since my return, I've come to realize that this is similar around the world.

During the visit, we had opportunity to participate in an open forum with various members of the church (Pastors, Young People, lay workers and lecturers) on a range of topics that were on the minds of the church in Mexico. These topics are similar to those that we are talking about within the UK Church, and were interesting to myself to hear about where the Mexican church are currently in grappling with these issues.

The re-occurring issue that kept cropping up across all conversations (both in the open forums and in general conversation) were:

- Social Media and the Church
- Rise of secularization
- Impact of hate speech and racist rhetoric

Not being an expert on any of these subjects, I could only offer my opinions (and whatever I could find online and in books). It helped me develop my own stance on these issues a bit firmer, but also offered an insight to the context of the local church.



OVERALL

Overall, I found the experience of visiting Mexico immensely enriching, not just for my own personal growth, but also to inform my year as Youth president.