

Mission Trip 2018

Rio Grande Valley, Texas

February 17-24

When Donald Trump announced he was running for President, he said of undocumented immigrants from Mexico, "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." Whatever your political leaning, we all can agree that this is a gross generalization. Can we say that all Wall Street bankers are crooks, raiding corporations for their own personal gain? Of course not. Undoubtedly, there are Mexican criminals that have crossed the border illegally. But the vast majority are good, hardworking people who want a better life for their families. I personally know several immigrants that have sacrificed more than any one person should, and all so they can have a shot at the same American Dream that we take for granted.

One of the most troubling aspects of this country today is how polarized we have become. Assumptions are made by everyone – Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, Progressives, Green Partiers, anarchists... wherever on the political spectrum we may fall. We all do it, branding a group we disagree with as evil, and using that vitriol to further our own cause. This Mission Trip we will start to break down those barriers. We will not go to the Rio Grande Valley to ask about peoples' immigration status. We will not go to build a wall. We will not go to build a tunnel under the wall. We WILL go to talk to the residents of the area. We WILL ask them about their hopes and dreams. We WILL go, as it says in Micah, "...to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God."

Our hosts for the fourth year in a row will be Experience Mission. EM has proven themselves to be a great fit for us, as they focus the trips on the relationships that we build with those that we serve. We will be doing construction projects, but they are but a means to this end. As the founder of EM explained it to me, "The walls and roofs that we build will not last, but the relationships we build, learning about people different from us, will impact us for our whole lives."

We are fortunate that the EM point person that will be with us in Texas is Yonathan Moya. He grew up in South Texas and recently traveled the entire 2000 mile border from Texas to California, taking pictures and interviewing those that he met. I strongly encourage everyone thinking about signing up for this trip to read about his journey here <http://mymodernmet.com/yonathan-moya-border-perspective/>.

The Mission Trip is open to all high-schoolers, whether your families are active members of the congregation or not. However, we do require that all participants participate in the life of the church. To be specific, you MUST

attend Confirmation Class, Sunday Night Youth Group or Wednesday Night Discussion Group at least once per month. If you are unable to do this, you can participate in other ways, such as volunteering in the church on Sunday mornings (Church school, usher, choir...) If you sign up for the trip, but do not follow through with this commitment, then you will be asked to leave the trip and any payments that have been made to that point will not be refunded. Please think carefully about this before you sign up. In addition, all participants must attend all pre and post trip meetings, and participate in the Mission Trip fundraising, post trip service and dinner. The schedule is attached.

Due to an increase in the program cost, and ever spiraling air fare, we must increase the fee to participate. The cost for this year's trip is \$1300 for families that financially support the church, and \$2000 for those that do not. Applications, along with a \$100 non-refundable deposit, are due in the church office by Sunday, October 15th.

The cost of the trip for each participant is significantly more than what we ask families to pay. The rest comes through donations to the church, the church Mission Committee support, and fundraising efforts. Scholarship inquiries can be made to Judy Walpole at the church office.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Nick Bruning

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