

Adult Mission Trip 2016 - San Diego and Tijuana

At the end of September last year, St. Mark's sent 11 people to San Diego on our Adult Mission Trip. Sierra Service Project (SSP) helped us plan the trip. SSP is very good at incorporating learning experiences into mission trips. Our learning experience was about refugees and border issues.

Learning about an issue while you are helping in some small way to alleviate the problem gives the work greater meaning. Using our hands along with our hearts and minds helps me, personally, feel closer to God.



A view through the fence into Mexico.

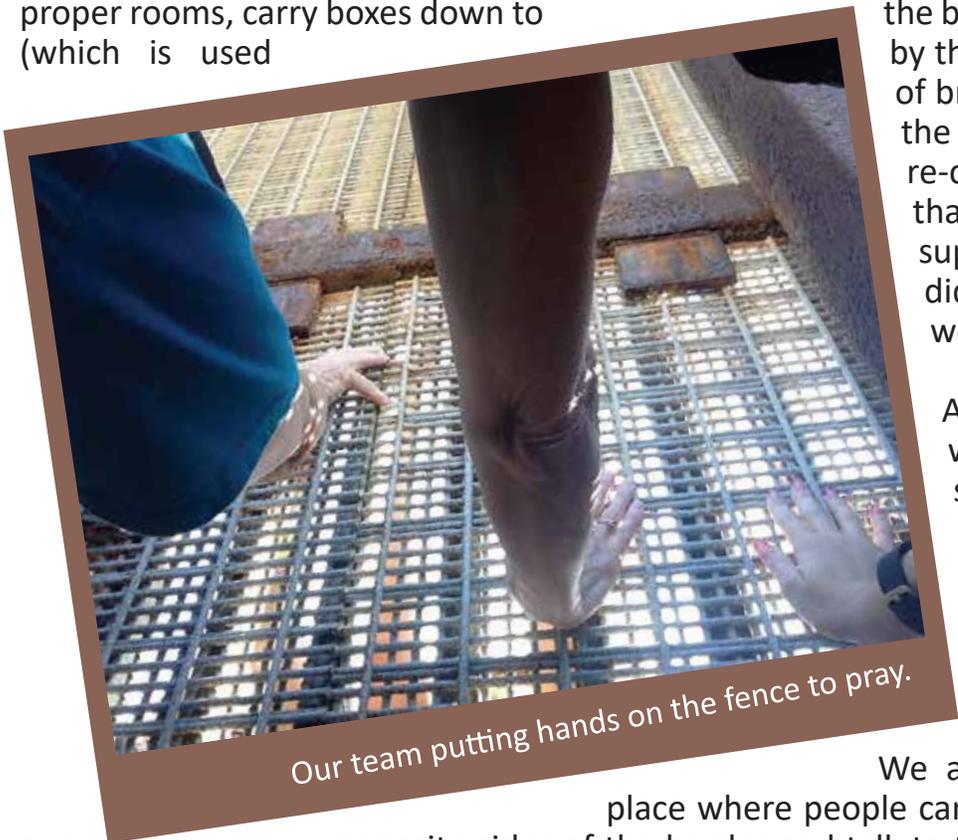


A view through the fence of one of the border ministers praying in Mexico.

Part of our work was at an old church that is hosting refugees. They just had some of the carpets replaced upstairs, and there was too much to do before the refugees returned in a couple days. They had been moved to a different, temporary shelter. The lady in charge was a complete

basket-case from stress and worry. Our group was proper rooms, carry boxes down to (which is used

able to move furniture back to the the basement, restock the food pantry by the refugees), clean up a room full of broken tiles, and start clearing out the next area that will be re-carpeted. Everything we did at that church felt like we were helping support the refugees, even if we didn't get to meet the ones who would be coming.

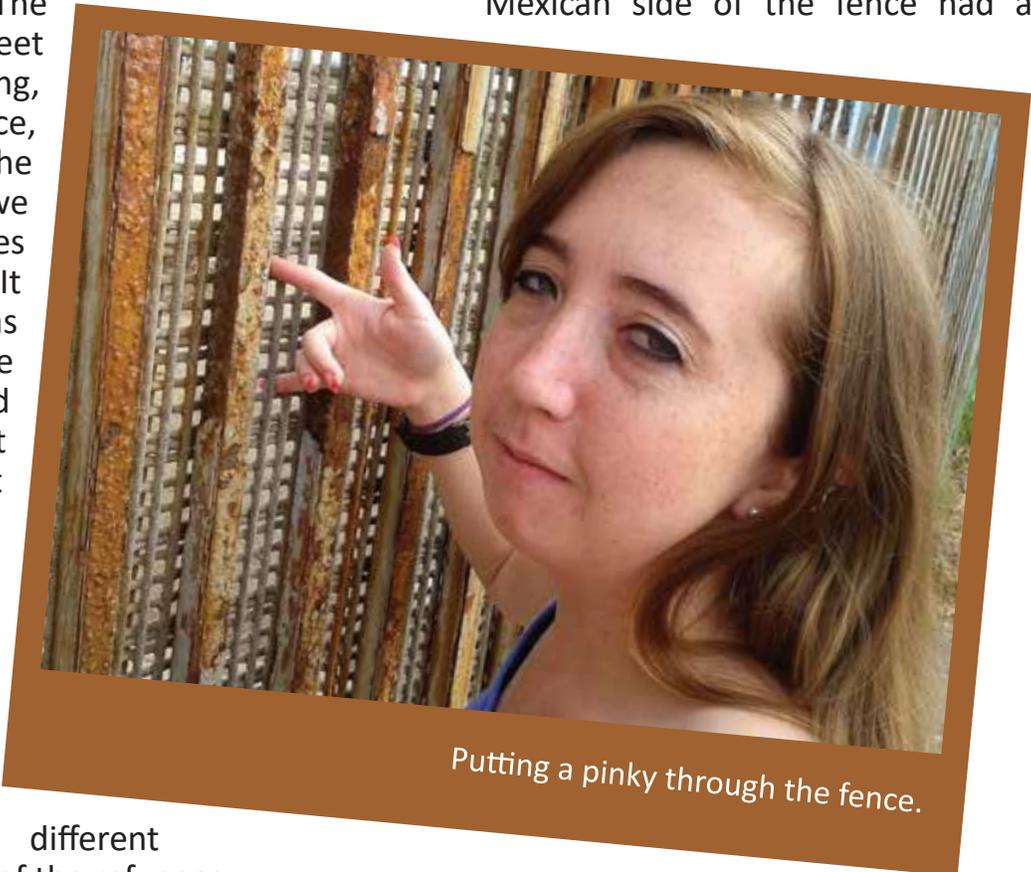


Our team putting hands on the fence to pray.

As part of our learning experience, we went to Tijuana and heard stories from actual refugees. We heard about their journeys to Tijuana and what their goals are. Some travelled from Africa and up through Central America. One was deported from the US and just wanted to get "home".

We also went to Friendship Park, a place where people can actually meet loved ones stuck on opposite sides of the border and talk to them, and touch pinkies through the fence. I think this was a moving experience for most of us. We first visited the Mexican side of the border. The party atmosphere. Street vendors, people dancing, colorful murals on the fence, and people swimming in the ocean. The next day we visited the United States side. It was very different. It was hard to believe it was the same fence. Very little color, border guards, and restricted movements that only allowed 15 people at a time to approach the fence. And they only allow you to approach the fence for four hours a day on Saturday and Sunday. It was a great trip and will leave some good memories. And it definitely taught us different perspectives on the plight of the refugees.

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Putting a pinky through the fence.

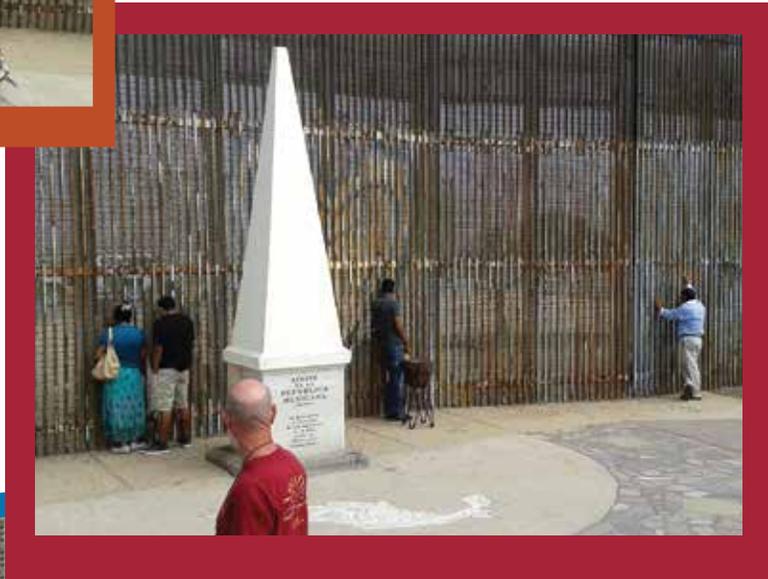
Picture of a mural on the Mexican side.



People in Mexico talking to loved ones through the fence.



This pillar represents the actual border. The fence is built three feet in, so it is entirely on U.S.A. soil.



Our group listening to one of the border ministers on the U.S.A. side.

