

FALL 2018

THE MICAH CENTRE

A Note from the Director
Jonathan Nicolai-Dekoning

My desk at The Micah Centre sits next to the desk of Roy Berkenbosch, our founder and first director. Roy continues to teach and mentor students, giving them a chance to benefit from the wisdom Roy gleaned from his many years of teaching and working in communities around the world with King's and WorldRenew. I hope Roy keeps his desk for some time. I always enjoy our conversations, and my own theology of justice and poverty is sharpened each time we talk.

We inevitably hear one question when Roy stops by: "Still here, eh?" My guess is that Roy is 'still here' at The Micah Centre because it is an exciting place to be! Our students continue to surprise us with new insights into our perennial question: How do we respond to the prophet Micah's call to 'do justice and love mercy' in a world of persistent poverty, injustice, and violence? Our students are curious about their world and their place in it, and they are beginning to sense that they have a unique contribution to make to the healing of God's groaning creation. Who wouldn't want to stick around to witness and encourage that?

We are preparing for a busy year: the Honduras Water Project in a new community (El Espino) in May, a Full Quest Mexico trip in February to explore the challenges of globalization and injustice in central Mexico, a new initiative called 'The Justice Semester' in Winter 2020, hosting Do Justice Week on campus, and student internships in Uganda, inner-city Edmonton, and more! In all of our work, we are encouraged by this generation of students who feel God's call to help build a world of beauty, justice, and peace and so witness to God's story of all things being made new. A few of those students – McKenzie, Saúl, and Erin – share their stories in this newsletter. Read them, delight in them, and be encouraged by them, as I was.



FEATURED IN NEWSLETTER

Directors Note
Student Reflections
Micah Centre Updates



Depending on the Kindness of Strangers

A Journey to the Other Side of the World

Written by: Mckenzie Tilstra
4th year BSc in Chemistry

Towards the end of May 2018, I did something that absolutely terrified me: I boarded a plane and flew all the way to Bangladesh, by myself. Bangladesh is almost exactly on the other side of the world from Alberta, and it is a 12-hour time difference. It essentially took three days of travel, with a day-long lay-over in Thailand, to arrive. These three days were filled with anxiety, tears, and a lot of grace and protection by my heavenly Father. I depended heavily on the kindness of strangers who seemed to waltz into my life in the exact moments that I was falling apart. The foremost of these strangers were a group of American Nazarene pastors and missionaries that I met at a guesthouse in Thailand who helped me feel less alone during my travels, one of whom has become a dear friend and prayer partner.

When I finally arrived in Bangladesh, there were new strangers on whose kindness I would depend: Nancy and Kohima and the rest of the staff at World Renew Bangladesh. Quickly, however, they moved from kind strangers to a loving family. I spent three weeks learning, laughing, and working with them while I was attending language school, but it honestly felt like I had known them for years by the time I had to go.

I experienced Dhaka, said to be one of the worst places in the world to live. Despite the city's blaring imperfections, I found beauty and light in the greenery that literally burst through concrete walls and the people who delighted in sharing their culture with me.

The time came for me to move up country and begin my internship work with one of World Renew's partner organizations, PARI. Pari in Bangla means "I can," and I was utterly inspired by how much "they could." I met so many empowered people, especially empowered women, who, despite all the forces that acted against them, were doing incredible things for their communities. Once again, I was utterly dependent upon the kindness of strangers for cultural guidance, for translation and communication, for help when my health suffered, and so much more. And, once again, these kind strangers became my family—my Bangladeshi brothers and sisters, mother and father. I contributed what I could and discovered a great deal about my own abilities while I learned about their research and development, interviewed people to hear their stories, and did numerous things like editing reports and inputting data. I realized what I had to offer was not necessarily what I had expected to be able to offer, but it was somehow even better than I expected. What I gained from this experience, however, is so much more than anything I could have given. I was blessed by the wisdom and love of the Bangladeshi people in ways I am still unearthing months after I have come home. All I can do is give the glory to God for everything he did through, by, and for me and the people I came to love while there.



"Once again, I was utterly dependent upon the kindness of strangers for cultural guidance, for translation, and communication".

Learning to Serve

Sharing in Joy & Injustice

Written by: Saúl Alberto Carvajal
1st year secondary B.Ed student.

I was part of the Quest Mexico team from King's in February of 2017. It was a transforming learning experience, that lead me to pursue the opportunity of an internship in Cuernavaca for six weeks this past summer. Quest Mexico is a non-profit organization devoted to creating peace and justice with dignity through transformative and experiential education. Most of my responsibilities as an intern included bringing up to date the material that Quest Director Gerardo Debbink uses as part of the program itself. I also researched updated information on current socioeconomic data, related to the new "left-wing" government elected in Mexico.

Even though a lot of my time was spent at the Quest house in front of a computer, surrounded by material that needed to be reviewed and updated, Gerardo ensured I could spend half of my week days in La Estación. Considered as a squatting settlement by local authorities, as it developed (around and) on top of the old train tracks of the former Cuernavaca Rail Station, for years local officials and authorities have implemented ineffective and often violent programs in order to relocate its inhabitants. Many of the people living in La Estación are farmers of Náhuatl descent from the neighbouring state of Guerrero, which provides for the majority of produce sold at the Cuernavaca People's Market. I spent many of these days at the breakfast centre or El Proyecto, a cooperative breakfast and meal program run exclusively by women in the community. I also spent time at the Kindergarten, where young children from Náhuatl descent and/or very low income are prepared by devout missionary nuns from Northern Mexico to embark on their education journeys into the Cuernavaca public school system.

For most of my time in La Estación, I was asked in both centres to help by painting, which I later came to understand was for the sake of bringing colour and light from within the walls of two of the most important buildings within the community. I was able to hear many stories of struggle as well as perseverance from people full of dreams and hopes which are briskly blocked by acts of corruption and injustice. And I shared laughter and fellowship with those who welcomed me into their homes, to host and feed me with amazing local and rural gastronomic delights. From Paseo de la Reforma avenue in Downtown Mexico City, to La Calzada de los Muertos in the pyramids of Teotihuacán; and from the Mole Poblano served generously to anyone that walks into a home during the Fiestas in Amatlán, to the chilaquiles verdes made for 180 people at El Proyecto by the women in La Estación, my time at Quest exposed me directly to a world of diversity, an array of colour, a wheel of flavours, and an oppressive history, embodied so elegantly by a people that still struggle to face the bitter end of injustice.



"I shared laughter and fellowship with those who welcomed me into their homes, to host and feed me with amazing local and rural gastronomic delights"

Empowerment in Honduras

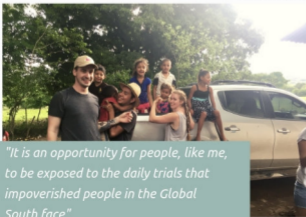
Written by: Erin Greidanus
5th year BSc in ENVS w/ concentration in Biology, as well as the Micah Certificate

After four years of listening to friends and fellow students at King's tell me about the Honduras Water Project, I finally decided to participate myself. Having spent most of my childhood growing up in the context of mission work in Africa, I ignorantly thought I knew everything there was to know about these types of projects. Particularly, I knew how destructive they can be to communities when done without careful consideration. Over the years, my family and I saw many short-term missionaries come and go, many of whom were forgotten about as quickly as they came. In my experience, short-term projects of building churches or schools, or a water project for that matter, had more to do with crossing off "international volunteer work" from a personal bucket list than actually helping communities in need.

At first glance, I thought the Honduras Water Project must be the same type of white-saviour development trip – well-intentioned but harmful nonetheless. Now, this sounds extremely pessimistic – I know. But after taking a class with Roy Berkenbosch, I knew that the Honduras Water Project could not possibly be one of these 'mission trips' and I was interested.

I have now come to realize that the Honduras Water Project is one of the best international development projects you can get involved with as a student. The focus is on serving alongside the community, but more importantly learning. We are not there to dig wells and build latrines; we evidently saw that the community members can do this significantly better than us. It is an opportunity for people, like me, to be exposed to the daily trials that impoverished people in the Global South face. We want to hear their stories and hopefully leave changed, with a passion for justice.

This past year was King's third and final year in Varsovia (the community receiving the water project). We heard stories of transformation from the women and men of these communities. The water project has saved lives – children no longer need to drink from the river, a river that carries many pathogens and tragically took the lives of some Varsovia children in the past. The water project has also brought the community together and empowered them to set goals for development in the future. The next step for Varsovia is to continue with a roofing project they have started. The goal is to have a functional roof over each and every person's head so that their belongings and homes are not swept away during the rainy season. In 2019, we will be heading to a new community to do a water project, where I hope the community can have the same transformative experience that Varsovia had. And I also hope that our 2019 team can have the same transformative experience that I had. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to be involved in such an amazing project.



"It is an opportunity for people, like me, to be exposed to the daily trials that impoverished people in the Global South face"

What's Happening at the Micah Centre

From October 22nd to the 26th we hosted Do Justice week on campus. The staff and students were able to participate in a number of events including a Faculty Panel on Journeys to Justice, The Blanket Exercise, advocacy presentations, a justice-themed chapel, and more. A highlight was hosting social entrepreneur Shaun Loney with our Leder business students. Do Justice week gave us a small glimpse into what people across Canada are doing every day to seek justice in their communities.

We are excited to begin the initial planning of our Quest Mexico Learning Tour and Honduras Water Project, which take place in February and May. We are looking forward to engaging with our students on their own journeys to global justice and awareness.

The Micah Center has had the privilege of hosting many guest speakers, including most recently The Mennonite Central Committee, and their Speak Our Peace Campaign.

What We're Reading

Engaging Globalization:
The Poor, Christian Mission, and Our Hyperconnected World
By Bryant L. Myers



"The Christian gospel is a summons to peace, calling for justice beyond anger, mercy beyond justice, forgiveness beyond mercy, love beyond forgiveness"
— Wendell Berry

A Prayer from the Iona Community

We have heard about you, God of all power. You made the world out of kindness, creating order out of confusion; you made each one of us in your own image; your fingerprint is on every soul. So we praise you.

We praise and worship you.

We have heard about you, Jesus Christ; the carpenter who left his tools and trade; the poor man who made others rich; the healer who let himself be wounded; the criminal on whom the soldiers spat not knowing they were fouling the face of God; the savior who died and rose again. So we praise you.

We praise and worship you.

We have heard about you, Holy Spirit, You broke the bonds of every race and nation, to let God speak in every tongue; you made the disciples drunk with grace; you converted souls and emptied pockets; you showed how love made all things new and opened the doors to change and freedom. So we praise you.

We praise and worship you.



If you would like to support The Micah Center financially, you can do so by cheque or online. If giving online, please visit our webpage at <https://www.kingsu.ca/alumni-supporters/give/donate-online> and designate your gift to The Micah Center. Cheques can be made out to The King's University – remember to write 'The Micah Center' in the designation or memo line.

The Micah Center sends 2-3 newsletters each year. If your mailing address has changed or if you would like to stop receiving our newsletters, please contact The Micah Center office at 780-465-3500 Extension 8319 or email our Program Director at jonathan.nicolai-dekoning@kingsu.ca.