

2015 Listening Opportunities

Pacific Garden Mission

- Visiting PGM is an opportunity to listen to and see how God is at work in Chicago amongst the homeless population. PGM operates on a comparatively huge scale, being the largest homeless shelter in the United States as of 2014. It is a valuable experience on several levels. First, a person who has gone through PGM's long-term rehabilitation and bible program leads the tour of their facilities. This person shares not only what PGM does on a day-to-day basis but also share how PGM has impacted their life individually; this is a usually powerful message of restoration. Touring Pacific is also beneficial because it exposes students to the realities of institutionalized homeless outreach while also demonstrating the faithfulness of God to provide for his people.
- Debriefing PGM is also a very valuable experience. It is an opportunity for students to express what they appreciate about PGM and what may have given them pause; or simply made them uncomfortable. It is also a great way to discuss the differences and merits of charity vs. empowerment.

Lawndale Community Church/ Lou Malnati's

- Each week, we provide a meal of deep-dish Chicago style pizza from the Lou Malnati's, located in the Lawndale neighborhood. In addition to the obvious benefit of enjoying a fantastic meal, visiting this particular location has additional value. Lawndale Community Church has been operating in the Lawndale community for over 40 years and during that time they have seen an expansive ministry develop. They have started a large church and bi-weekly hip-hop outreach ministry, several health centers and clinics, a healthy-alternative restaurant, a large fitness center, a fine-arts center, a half-way home, the Lou-Malnati's restaurant, affordable housing and various other methods of response to their community. It is a central figure in the CCDA world and remains a wonderful representation of how God can work in an area over a long period of time to bring holistic, empowering restoration.



Emmaus Ministries

- Visiting Emmaus is a radical experience. Emmaus ministries is located in the heart of Chicago's LGBT neighborhood and is primarily an outreach to male prostitutes. While specifically engaging in such work is too sensitive for a short term team, Emmaus has developed an evening lesson wherein they explain their work and how they believe Christians are called to respond. After the lesson, students take the train a few blocks into a portion of the neighborhood where there exist various businesses whose primary clientele are LGBT persons. Upon arrival, students disperse and are instructed to respectfully engage the community and various businesses for about two hours. The Emmaus staff lead a debrief afterwards. Due to the nature of this experience, we do not offer it to high-school teams.

Meal Share

- The meal share experience has been a staple of our Bridgebuilders experience and functions as a follow-up to the tour of PGM. This experience was designed by Bridgebuilder staff and remains one of the most perspective-altering periods of the week. In short, we divide our students up into groups of 2-3, have them each pack a sacked lunch and one extra lunch per group. After an orientation period, we drive to downtown Chicago where students are given geographical boundaries. Once the boundaries have been established, students freely walk around and request to share their lunch with a person in a state of homelessness or obvious need. While sharing lunch, students are instructed to simply converse with the person that they have come across. This conversation can be evangelistic in nature, but that is not required. With surprising regularity, the person with whom the students are speaking know scripture as well or better than they. This experience has the effect of demonstrating in a relational manner that persons with obvious need are just as human as the student without such obvious physical need.
- In debriefing the experience, students regularly confess that they have been deeply convicted of personal prejudice towards homeless persons. This experience serves as a reminder that Christians are called to love all people, including those we frequently turn away from. Our debrief session is also a great way to expose students to the experiences of others; each story is different and valuable to the entire group.



El Experience

- The El Experience is another staple of our week and was developed by Bridgebuilder staff. It is both simple and profound. Students are taken from one end of the city of Chicago to the other by use of public transportation. The task given to students is threefold; 1) notice racial differences amongst persons on the train, 2) notice the changing Chicago landscape and how it varies depending on where you are in the city, and 3) speak with someone about Chicago, their experience and how they view the city. While some teams choose to include an emphasis on evangelism, this is not a primary emphasis for us.
- Debriefing the El Experience, in concert with our lesson on how the city and our neighborhood came to be the way they are, provide students with information and tools to deal with structural and economic realities of the city. This experience provides students with a tangible experience of social stratification, racial segregation and economic disparities. It is also a great way for our students to listen to members of our community while seeing the places that people live and work.

Neighborhood Tour

- This tour, typically led by Joel, focuses on exposing students to our community and the beauty that is often ignored. This normally is done later in the week after we have had a chance to explain how our neighborhood was formed and how it arrived at its current state. Driving is the most common method of transportation, though walking tours have also occurred. Commonly visited sites include the Lorraine Hansberry home, the Obama residence, the University of Chicago's campus, New Beginnings Church, various sculptures and monuments in the community.



Stratified Monopoly

- This hands on learning activity is new to the Bridgebuilders repertoire but has been well received. Students are assigned roles and proceed to play monopoly in a manner which can mirror our society. Students are assigned the roles of upper class, middle class, working class and lower class. Each class begins with a different “inheritance” and has differing “salaries.” There are also different requirements for exiting jail should one be sent there in the game. Once the structure for the game has been provided, students simply play monopoly. It does not take long for the game to become a microcosm of our society in its class divisions.
- Debriefing this activity is also valuable because it allows for several things to happen. First, students are asked to think about how the game does or does not mirror our society. Second, it allows for students to discuss their experience playing the game and how it differed from their fellow players. Third, by causing students to engage in a game, it allows them to gain a small amount of insight into the psyche of a person stuck in poverty. Finally, and not insignificantly, it gives students a time to express their frustrations with the game and fellow players.

DuSable Museum of African-American History

- Not far from Sunshine exists the DuSable Museum, the first and oldest Museum of African-American history in the United States. Touring this museum provides students a historical perspective of various portions of African-American culture which are not generally discussed during the week; including: African cultures, the role of African-Americans in US wars, the Harold Washington story, important artwork and other significant exhibits. Though small in size, the information and experience of visiting the museum is significant in the minds of many students.

