

I LOVE TAIWAN MISSION CAMP

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Background

Every year the Church of Scotland has the opportunity to send a young person to participate in the 'I love Taiwan' Mission Trip. This trip is set up by the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan and invites delegates from all over the world to join together in Taiwan to share in faith together and culture. It is also a chance for international and ecumenical delegates to learn about Taiwanese culture and history. During the trip you are encouraged to share and communicate with the Taiwanese people in order to achieve an insight into life in Taiwan. This year I was fortunate to have the chance to take part in the trip.

Orientation

On arrival to Taiwan we were taken to the first stage of ILT which was the Orientation, which lasted 4 days. This was held in the Presbyterian Christian College in Taipei. Here, the youth were introduced to Taiwan and the programme. We were also taught about three of the main issues that the people of Taiwan face. There are LGBT, Nuclear Waste and the Sunflower Movement, which saw students joining forces against the proposed Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement by the Republic of China. These were issues that we may come to face with throughout our time in Taiwan.

We participated in multiple 'Song Sharing' which involved different countries introducing and teaching the different methods in which they worship in their own countries. I found these particularly interesting as I loved experiencing a completely different culture. We witnessed the traditional rituals of a Taiwanese wedding and joined together in singing Korean and Malaysian hymns.

As well as education, the Orientation allowed us to meet the individuals who would be in our group. The group would travel together to our local church, where we would spend the next ten days working and worshipping with the residents. We each had different language abilities, which together we quickly overcame and were able to communicate effectively.

Local Churches

Our group travelled from Taipei to Houli, in the city of Taichung which took around 3 hours. I was initially very nervous considering I was unable to speak Mandarin and had no idea how I was going to communicate. I also was anxious in regards to what to expect once I arrived at the church in respect to the mission itself.



On arrival to Tun A Kha church we were greeted by the child co-ordinator of the church and the minister who welcomed us and made us feel at home. After this we had our welcome meal at the church where we meet the elders and their families. We joined together in an evening worship where all my fears were quickly forgotten as everyone I met was so enthusiastic and friendly.

My first experience of a Taiwanese Sunday Service happened the next day. The service itself, though conducted in Mandarin and Taiwanese, was very similar to a traditional Church of Scotland service. I enjoyed this experience a lot and found it very interesting. We were also told during the service that the main aspect of our mission at Tun A Kha would be to plan and hold a five day long children's summer camp where we would teach English to the children. The next few days consisted of us getting together with the youth of the church to plan and develop our ideas to form a successful summer camp. We decided that there would be classroom style teachings, as well as song and games to make the learning more fun.

When we were not planning, the youth of the church would take us to experience what life in Taichung was like. This consisted of going a trip into the city, visiting a night market, climbing a mountain range and visiting a few of the tourist sights of Taichung. The memory that sticks out to me here is my first trip to a night market. Stalls lined the streets and it was so busy and full of life. I had never experienced anything like it before. The place smelled of wonderful aromas and I had such an amazing experience there that the young people of the church would take me back any night off that we had.



The first day of the summer camp came and we met the fifty children who had come along to attend the camp. All our planning had paid off as we worked through the schedule. The children were all incredibly enthusiastic to learn and participated whole heartedly in every activity that was presented to them. It was incredible to watch as the days went on that they became more confident in themselves and their English abilities. Over the five days, we continued teaching and coming up with new, fun ways to keep the children interested.

I will always remember one little girl who was too shy to let go of her sisters hand on the first day. She was in my group for English class and when I would speak to her she would look away or hide her face. However, slowly she started to open up and began to take part. I was so delighted by the end of the summer camp she was running up

to me and speaking full sentences of English, that at the start of the week she would never have even dreamed of doing.

The last day of the summer camp was one filled with fun. In the morning we had a huge water fight which saw the children turn on us and soak us to the bone. Next we had a meal together around a bonfire in which we all shared our favourite parts of the camp. I was so happy to hear that so many children had a good time and enjoyed themselves. To round off a great evening the children performed the English songs we had taught them to their parents. I was sad for such a great camp to come to an end and to be leaving Tun A Kha church the following day. However, I felt happy and blessed to be part of something so unique that I couldn't help but enjoy every moment that I got to spend there.

When it came time to leave emotions were running high between my group and the young people of the church as many friendships were formed over the ten days there. I left knowing that my time spent at Tun A Kha is one that I would never forget.

Debriefing

The final stage of the 'I love Taiwan' Mission trip was to travel to Tainan in order to report back to everyone else. We put together a group presentation which we felt most accurately depicted our time at Tun A Kha. On the last night we all participated in the 'Culture Night'. Here, three countries would come together to combine different aspects of their culture and perform. For me this meant combining traditional Indian and Japanese dance to the tune of 'Scotland the Brave'. It was an exciting last night but before long it was time to get prepared to say goodbye to Taiwan.

I feel blessed to be able to part of such an incredible experience and God's love was present throughout the whole trip. The theme of this year's mission was 'Embrace Taiwan with Love'. Now reflecting back on the amazing experience I had while I was there, I feel that I have truly embraced Taiwan in my heart. I will never forget the time I spent at Tun A Kha or any of the wonderful people I met throughout the trip.

