

Incoming Freshmen Boston Mission Trip 2006

This is the trip summary of the North Atlanta Collegiate Ministry Boston Mission Trip. This summary was written by several of the students who attended this trip, so the flavor and writing style of this summary may shift a bit, but it will definitely keep you on your toes. Enjoy!

SATURDAY [June 10, 2006]

The day was finally here; the last official Youth Mission trip, or better put, the Incoming Freshmen Mission Trip. This was to be the trip that launched us in to collegiate life. This was missions at its best...designed to help us use what we had learned the previous years on mission trips and apply it in a more real life setting. This mission trip was planned with one thing in mind...to teach us that Jesus was a lifestyle.

We all gathered at the church, packed the van, got dropped off at MARTA and were on our way. We did the usual security checks at the airport, boarded our plane and arrived in Boston before we could say, "Go Red Sox!" It was drizzly, but awesome. The girls went straight to the hotel (for one night), while the guys checked in to this really cool hostel. It was interesting to say the least. Mark and Brian had their own room where they met a Christian Korean traveling throughout the States. They invited him to church the next day and he came with us. Caleb, Zach and David had a different room and shared bunks with travelers as well. They had interesting stories to tell about their 3 traveling roommates. What a great dorm like experience. After dinner that night, we got all settled in and tried to get a good nights rest for church the next day.

SUNDAY [June 11, 2006]: Tiana Evans

The girls stayed at a hotel the first night so we were to meet the boys at the church before service started. We were close to on time as we walked out of the hotel to get into a cab. The cabby that the hotel had called for us was not told how many people he was to be picking up and had a regular-sized car. Since there were five of us and our luggage, we had to squeeze to fit four of us in a two person back seat and one in the front. Our luggage was jammed into the trunk but the trunk wouldn't close. The ride to the church was fun in spite of our cramped space and the cabby got us there safely.

Once we got to the church we were greeted by the preacher and taken on a tour. We found out that the church building was originally an art gallery that was owned by a man that was a friend of two famous painters, Monte and Rousseau. Rosemary and I both found this information very exciting because many of their paintings had been originally housed and shown there. The church had many other fun hidden features including two passageways that seemed to be secret passageways, from their placement and size, which we were allowed to explore after the service was over.

The church planned their sermons in accordance to a prearranged schedule, and on that particular Sunday the sermon was on the Holy Trinity. Some of us were invited to teach the children's class that morning and because the adult sermon was on something that even many adults have a hard time understanding, we were told we could teach anything. As a few of the girls were trying to decide what we wanted to teach to the children's class, we were informed that we had been invited to participate in praying for and serving that Lord's Supper. We were excited, slightly unsure about it, but all agreed to do it anyways. Rosemary Lindsey prayed for the bread and I prayed for the cup. Sarah Alongi and Ashly Kemp served. The experience was amazing and I am extremely grateful for the blessing and honor and will never forget that day.

That night, Brian and Mark had bought us Red Sox tickets, but we didn't know it. We went to Fenway Park and were given our assignment. Here's the deal: when Mark and Brian bought the tickets, they got the last 11 tickets available, selling out the game, but none of the tickets were together. So they told us to spark up conversations with people next to us and tell them why we were in Boston. We did okay, but it was hard considering people wanted to yell at the umpires and watch the game. We joined in like regular Boston fans. It was awesome, even though Boston lost the game. Almost everyone got some sort of Boston Red Sox paraphernalia and then with our stomachs empty, we headed out for dinner and closed out a great day.

MONDAY [June 12, 2006]: Sarah Alongi

Today our group arrived at the New England Seafarers Mission around 9:00 a.m. Steve, our contact at the mission, explained that the New England Seafarers Mission and other missions like it work to reach out to those who are subject to poor working conditions on ships coming into the harbor, specifically cruise lines, which are known to treat their employees very poorly. These employees are usually from Third World countries. The mission provides a store with all kinds of food, toiletries, books, souvenirs, and necessities. It also has a chapel to allow the workers a quiet place to reflect, worship, pray, or just spend time with God. There's a place to send money back home, and telephones and computers to access the internet or talk to family they have left behind. The group split up and worked in all different areas. As Caleb, Zach and Brian worked with lifting and organizing donations, Christina, Tiana and I inventoried the Bibles, a harder task than it may sound considering the vast range of languages the mission had. David, Ayesha, Mark, Ashly and Rosemary worked to rearrange their telephone/Internet café to make it more efficient. It was tough work but very fulfilling.

After Steve led us to a fantastic lunch place, we headed to the Boston Rescue Mission where the group helped serve two of the six meals that the mission serves every day. To be able to see how dedicated and hardworking the volunteers are, most of whom have gone through the rehabilitation program at the mission, was very inspiring to a lot of our group. I know, for me and the rest of the servers, we were amazed at how good the food smelled, looked and tasted. You would probably understand this more if you saw the tiny kitchen they worked in, as well as the small number of volunteers besides ourselves. How they make all that food six times a day, a different meal each time, and make it actually taste good is beyond my comprehension. The volunteers and people coming in to be served were all great, unique people who we were lucky to meet and work with. A few of us were also able to help out washing dishes, which was a dirty, overwhelming experience to say the least, but when we thought about the volunteers who have to do that everyday, six times a day, we shut up, and actually made it fun. I had so much fun at the Boston Rescue Mission that I went back two more times on the trip.

That night we began our study of Ephesians. Mark and Brian decided that the best place to implement spiritual disciplines is on a mission trip, so we spent daily time in the Word. Being in God's Word was so enlightening.

TUESDAY [June 13, 2006]: Zach Graham

Tuesday was the fourth day of our mission trip to Boston. On our schedule, we were to visit Boston College in the morning and visit the Samaritans Teen Crisis Center that afternoon. We woke up early Tuesday morning and got ready for our trip to Boston College. Boston College was a beautiful campus, but most of us were disinterested because we had already applied and been accepted into our respective colleges. Sensing that we were losing interest, Mark and Brian decided to cut our tour short. They assigned us into separate groups and told us that we were free to roam the city, but it was our job to look for people in need. We were told to meet at the Samaritans Teen Crisis Center around 3 o'clock.

I was paired with Rosemary Lindsey. As we rode the subway towards the Teen Crisis Center, Rosemary offered her seat to a woman who was standing; however, the woman refused to accept Rosemary's seat. People declining our help was often an unfortunate common occurrence in Boston. I felt that people were uncomfortable with accepting unsolicited help from strangers. When we reached the Teen Crisis Center, we met up with three other people from our team, David, Sarah and Tiana. We arrived at the Teen Crisis Center around 2:45, after conversing with the security guard, Ashe, on the first floor. When we were in the Teen Crisis Center, we were shown an informational video about people who've had to deal with suicide in their lives. After the video played, we discussed our thoughts and opinions with the members of the Teen Crisis Center. When we were done, our entire group talked with Ashe, who shared with us his beliefs on God. Talking to Ashe and seeing the positive outlook that he had on the world affected me. Through his words, I was able to see the world in a new light.

WEDNESDAY [June 14, 2006]: Ashly Kemp

On Wednesday we decided to go check out the Harvard campus. We left our hostel at about 9:30 a.m., made a pit stop at the corner Starbucks and then hopped on the T and headed for Harvard. The tour was only about an hour and a half but VERY informational...and our tour guide was the first person we had ever met that could talk faster than Mark Miller! I even think Mark was pretty impressed! The school is beautiful and has so much history, and I think we all started rethinking where we wanted to go for graduate school! We stopped by the school bookstore, the "Coop," and did some souvenir shopping and then had lunch at a locally famous burger joint. Then Mark and Brian paired us up into teams for our first "assignment." They told us that they had built in free-time into our schedule because they wanted to give us a chance to look for opportunities to serve others. They wanted to show us that being a missionary is a lifestyle and not just something you do one week out of the year, so they broke us up in pairs and told us that we needed to be open to finding ways we could impact someone and show Jesus in our actions. Then let us loose on Boston.

We regrouped later and started talking about the things we did that day. Some things were as simple as stopping to give directions, carrying bags for someone, striking up a conversation with a stranger, or just giving a complement. A couple of the groups had the idea to feed a homeless person and visit the Boston Rescue Mission. One of the best benefits of that day was that we all were paired with someone that we didn't know very well so all of us had the chance to get to know someone in our group a little better. That night we had a delicious dinner at the home of a member from the Brookline Church of Christ. Afterwards we had a deep devotional and everyone contributed so much to our discussion. We realized that we all have a lot more in common than we might have thought. Everyone was very open and honest in sharing struggles, and we all talked about ways that we hoped to grow spiritually. I think that Wednesday was the favorite day for many of us, and the group all connected more.

THURSDAY [June 15, 2006]

Thursday ended up being our free day since our plans went amuck because of the rain. No worries. We headed down to the Boston Common (the main park) and decided to be touristy and follow "The Freedom Trail" which leads you along this 3 hour hike to all these historical monuments in Boston. Some of it was really cool, and then some of it was...well...DULL! We saw Paul Revere's grave and house. We saw the Old North Church where they hung the lanterns to tell if the British were coming by sea or by land. We walked past the site of the Boston Massacre, which really wasn't much of a massacre, considering only 5 people (I think) were killed there. But regardless, the historical sights were fun, until it began to rain. Then all 11 of us found ourselves crammed in this little café off the beaten path. It was fantastic. After the rain stopped, Brian and Mark sent us on our way to enjoy Boston at our own pace. We were just supposed to go in pairs and be back at the hostel in time for dinner.

FRIDAY [June 16, 2006]: Christina Gifford

It was once again time to tackle Ephesians, but this time we had a plan. We would replace feet smell (the girl's room at the Hostel) with the fresh air of Harvard's Arboretum (tree sanctuary). It was a good plan, or at least it might have been—if God had not created the mosquito. (One can only imagine the casualties if it were not for Sarah and her trusty bottle of “Off”.) Devilish insects aside, we devoted the next hour to Ephesians 2:11-22. By the end of that hour, each of us had identified specific steps that would bring us closer to our spiritual goals. We were already looking ahead to Atlanta, but there was still one last “assignment” for us in Boston.

We were circled around Brian and Mark, huddled away from the outpour of subway commuters. Continuing with the trend of our “chaos” mission trip, none of us knew what to expect out of the next four hours. Earlier in the week we had done various forms of outreach work in pairs, but as Brian fished out a roll of twenties and divvied them out we quickly realized that this time would be different—this time we would have resources. Equipped with time, money, and a desire to do God's will, we set out in pairs to do... whatever God wanted. For four hours, four pairs of high school seniors set out to turn each twenty-dollar bill into an act of servitude, healing or kindness. In the end, each person had a story to tell. Here is mine.

Tiana and I exchanged our twenty-dollar bill for three bouquets of flowers, scissors, ribbon and note cards. Sitting on a park bench, chatting with an elderly man who sat watching our progress, we assembled sixteen miniature bouquets. Attached to each bouquet was the message: “Love: pass it on.” As we passed our bundles out to locals on the street, I learned so much about myself, others and the nature of giving. Hardly anyone accepted a bouquet before first questioning, “How much?” Giving freely is almost suspicious in today's society. Our response to it is either shock or mistrust. Along with this is our phobia of “the stranger.” Most people shy away from the unknown, labeling it “dangerous”. I did too.

SATURDAY [June 17, 2006]: Rosemary Lindsay

Saying goodbye to Boston, we woke up at 6:30 a.m. to head toward the airport. At the airport we broke up into 2 groups, because we had 2 different flights. Flight 1: Tiana, Mark, Ashly and Ayesha. Tiana sat next to a marine who was headed to Iraq. After some talking, she told him our group would pray for him and then they both departed with “God Bless” as they left. Flight 2: The rest of us! Both flights were filled with sleeping, but when we reached Atlanta, I connected with the family in front of us and was able to tell them about what we did in Boston. They told me that what we did was a great thing. When we reached the baggage claim, a beautiful sight happened. A group of soldiers walked past and everyone broke out into cheering. It lasted until everyone had passed. Everyone arrived home safely. It was a perfect ending to an amazing trip.

SUMMARY...*what you learned on this trip*

Tiana Evans: On this trip I learned many things and had a number of amazing experiences. The main thing that I personally learned is that in life, whether you mean to or not, we as Christians are always examples of God. Therefore, it's important that we take time to think of ourselves so that we can be the best testament to Christ that we can.

Sarah Alongi: The thing I really appreciate about the Boston mission trip was the honesty and open minds of everybody involved. I, along with most if not all of my peers, was able to speak truthfully about my spiritual walk, and ask questions and participate in discussions that always seemed taboo. I was challenged to find my own answers and in turn, find (or maybe just strengthen) my own faith. Spiritually, I was able to grow, discover and be challenged more than I have ever been able to on any other mission trip or retreat I have participated in at North

Atlanta over the years. I think I went to Boston feeling a bit lonely and hopeless in my faith and spiritual walk, but the trip to Boston helped me realize that there is no reason to be hopeless and instead of getting frustrated or down about my struggles, especially intellectually with my faith, I should be motivated to do something like turn to my Christian brothers and sisters, pray to God and spend time in the Word.

Zach Graham: On the trip, everyone was struggling with faith. Throughout the week we were challenged to read and understand verses in Ephesians. However most of us found it difficult to even do that, since many of us were doubtful of our belief in God. Yet, after spending a week in the Word, I understand now that I have to become more steadfast in it so my faith can become strong.

Christina Gifford: On this trip to Boston, I experienced just what being “a stranger” feels like. I will no longer fear a conversation with a stranger just because they’re “a stranger.” Kindness and openness aren’t just for close friends and family—they belong also to the countless sick, hungry, and lonely souls that are friend and family to no one. If nothing else, this trip has shown me why the Jesus of Nazareth was also a Jesus of the poor and weary. Being open with “strangers” was good enough for Christ. It is good enough for me.

Mark Miller: I’m always amazed at how God’s timing is so perfect. When you’re in a crisis, it seems like no advice or hand offered can actually help. What I saw this week was God displaying His perfection once again. Many of these students had a faith crisis on this trip, realizing that if they don’t know who they are now, then in college someone will decide that for them. They questioned God, questioned their beliefs, questioned what they grew up “knowing” was true, and questioned the actual crisis they found themselves in. I was so proud. It was exactly where they needed to be, and how perfect it was for us to be in a study of Ephesians that kept talking about who you are in Christ and what you possess in a relationship with Him. By the end of the week, God didn’t necessarily answer all their questions, but He did mature them by helping them start developing their own faith, which at this age is indispensable to their future relationship with the Lord. What an honor it was to be a part of a process where our students made positive, Kingdom impacting choices that will affect generations and college campuses to come. God, honestly, is like the coolest thing ever. I love Him.

On behalf of our trip to Boston, our whole mission team would like to thank everyone who supported us. However you contributed, through your prayers, moral or financial support, we thank you very much for the blessing that this trip was to us. God worked in incredible ways and showed His glory at every turn and twist. He is a wonderful God.

Thanks,

The 2006 Boston Incoming Freshmen Mission Team:

Sarah Alongi, David Bingham, Rosemary Lindsay, Caleb McLaughlin, Tiana Evans
Zach Graham, Christina Gifford, Ashly Kemp, Brian Offutt and Mark Miller