

“Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” – Ps. 82:3-4

Paths of Justice

Being Global Christians

So far, the Justice Team has investigated, led, and/or assisted in a number of outreach opportunities, most of which have been local. We will continue to do this, evaluating past initiatives and discerning how to best connect the time, talents, and resources that you and Faith Community Church (FCC) have to offer with the needs of those facing injustice. It is challenging to go beyond the immediate needs and demands of work, our families, and our church community, yet it is what God has called us to do. There are many people in our community who need the life-saving and life-transforming message of Jesus Christ and His power to heal, correct injustices, and help us live a life of love.

At the same time, God calls us to go even farther. Just as in the Cultural Mandate, recorded back in Genesis, we are commanded to multiply, fill the earth, and care for it, and in the Great Commission, we are called to go and

make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:19-20). This is enough motivation as any for us to further investigate how we can reach out to those abroad. Our neighboring country of Mexico is one of the only two countries in the Western Hemisphere that is among the top 50 countries for having the most persecution of Christians (it's ranked #39 by Open Doors; Columbia is the other one, being ranked #49). So this is one good place where we will further explore the needs and opportunities.

An organization that helped us develop our Justice Mission is the International Justice Mission, and while they aren't working in Mexico yet, they have been involved in the neighboring country of Guatemala, so our main article will focus on some of what's happening there. We pray that this will help you learn more about these important developments in the Body of Christ, including some of the avenues we at FCC are exploring. – Doug Dunsmoor

IJM in Guatemala

A few weeks ago, one of the big news stories was about more than one thousand Central Americans traveling north through Mexico to come to the U.S., some of whom planned to stay in Mexico. This was only the latest caravan of people seeking entry to the U.S., legal or illegal. In the 1960s, less than 100,000 people from Central America obtained lawful permanent resident status; from 2000 to 2009, there were nearly 600,000 people ([details here](#)). The [U.S. has more immigrants](#) than any other country in the world by a wide margin. In some way(s), they are [seeking a better life](#), such as having greater protection of human rights and finding [more opportunities](#).

How can some of the problems, which make people in certain countries worse off, be solved? The International Justice Mission (IJM) is one of a few organizations that fights crime from a biblical position. IJM opened a Guatemala field office in 2005 because of the amount of sexual violence affecting children in that country. The government designates dangerous areas in the country as “red zones.” Most of these are places where natural disasters occur, but some neighborhoods are so designated because of the extreme violence against as many as 25% of the adolescent girls. School is one of the more common places where sexual violence



Jessica, 16, outside her home in Guatemala City (native trying to help others be safe)



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Definition of injustice:
Injustice occurs when someone with greater power deprives someone with lesser power of freedom, dignity, treasure, or livelihood.

"But God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perish."
– Ps. 9:18

IJM in Guatemala - Continued

occurs, leading young girls to leave school. When IJM was exploring the idea of setting up an office there, human rights experts told them that the system was too broken and would never protect the poor. Now the government has a sex crime unit and they are beginning to get serious about protecting their citizens.

IJM works within the governing system to strengthen the law, the courts and the police. After opening the office in 2005, IJM and other groups worked with government officials to strengthen the law. In 2009 the law was revised. Trafficking and sex crimes were defined and penalties strengthened. In 2012 the 100th conviction was secured for these crimes in Guatemala. In 2013, with IJM's input, Guatemala created new national standards for handling child sexual assault cases, which have been approved by the Attorney General and Supreme Court. And lastly, in 2014 IJM was approved to train police, focusing on the new sex crime units.

- IJM rescues children out of dangerous situations. They receive case referrals from the courts, public prosecutors, social services, churches and families. They bring every child to a place of safety.
- IJM investigators help police develop and track down leads to find and arrest suspects. This takes time, maybe months or years, but it probably wouldn't happen at all if it weren't for IJM. IJM lawyers then represent the survivors in court or

work with the prosecutors to build cases and prepare testimony.

- IJM restores survivors by providing support to the child and the family so that he or she can heal in a safe and stable environment. IJM social workers and psychologists develop treatment plans for each survivor.
- IJM strengthens the justice system by equipping prosecutors, judges and police to respond to sex crimes against children and treat the victims with sensitivity. In a review of court files, IJM discovered that only 3 of 10 cases received a full investigation. The work that IJM began in 2014 was to strengthen the police so that effective investigation can be carried out, leading to building cases so that trials can occur.



A typical night scene in the gang-run Barrio Limon, Guatemala City. Hanging shoes from electricity lines indicate a nearby drug-dealing hot-spot.

Sexual crimes against children are a blight on the world. It is estimated that there

are nearly two million children in the worldwide commercial sex trade. Human trafficking is a \$150 billion a year enterprise. IJM is one ministry standing against this ugliness. These child victims certainly meet our definition of injustice. IJM has not solved the problems in Guatemala. Gangs rule the streets at night and there are still too many crimes. This condition did not occur overnight and will not be resolved quickly. IJM is one of the few missions that bring political and spiritual help to the people. By creating safety in their homelands, IJM wants to allow these people to stand and fight for their own nation.

Opportunities / Activities / Resources

- The women's SOAR survivor group will run from June 11 to July 30. We have leaders, some participants, and other helpers. Please let others know of the opportunity to participate, pray for those who will participate, and let us know if you can assist (more help is needed from men or women).
- It would make a big difference for men in our community to run a SOAR survivor group for them as well. In order to do this in a few months, we would need people to step up to help with it. Please let us know if you can do this.
- We are investigating a couple of other outreach opportunities for this summer to serve victims of injustice – please pray for those plans to come together.
- Do you want to get more involved with righting injustice? Come to our Justice Team meetings where prayer happens, plans are made, and investigations continue.
- Check with Tom Castor (tcbus7@att.net) or Doug Dunsmoor (dwdunsmoor@hotmail.com) for more information about these and more opportunities.