

## **Internship at Migrant Centre, Seoul (Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea)**

I arrived in Seoul at 6pm on the 11th after over 24 hours of travel. First port of call was to get to the migrant centre, which took a timely 1 and a half hours to get to from the airport. I was impressed on the sheer size of Seoul though, apparently holding 20 million residents! I met Pastor Kim when I arrived at the centre, who is a very inspiring man; he has been arrested and beaten on the behalf of better rights for migrant workers in Korea. He would later show me the work he had done over the course of 20+ years; a school for foreign children, a shelter and kitchen for the homeless foreign workers which also provides education and a hospital (all funded through donations), and a counselling system for migrant workers who are in need of help. For a man who has done so much, he is extremely humble and giving. He took me out for dinner to a traditional Korean restaurant where we ate a wide variety of Korean food such as Kimchi. The following day I had a tour of the buildings and was very moved by all the work they were doing and proud to be somewhat apart of it by contributing through any means possible.

My first job was to team up with the church labour crew to scrounge heaters and desks and chairs at an abandoned building. Nobody there spoke English as my interpreter had to leave me and go back to the migrant centre, so it was quite an experience trying to work coherently and effectively. It ended with a lot of shouting and pointing at various objects to get a point across, but the job got done. My accommodation was also quite a culture shock for me. I arrived at a group dormitory run by the migrant centre for foreign children, where I was told I would be getting my own room. Little did I know it would only be just that. In Korea, it is quite common for people to sleep on the floor, which is what I've had to adjust to. It isn't as bad as people think, and the floor is heated to a warm 25C, so I'm never cold at night! And the food is amazing! But mainly vegetables so I'm pretty much becoming a vegetarian while I'm staying here!

On Thursday I took English classes for the whole day, which as a person who has never taught a class in my life, was quite a ride. To say the least my time here already has already lived up to more than I thought it would be and I'm not expecting a lapse in events anytime soon!

*Max Westropp, November 2014*