

Elective in Egypt: An Interview

We are Natalie and Enoch, and we have just graduated from King's College London after five long years. In the summer of our final year, we had the pleasure of going to Egypt for our elective with the British University in Egypt (BUE) and so took this opportunity to also do some Christian volunteering work in the country too.



Looking after children at the Church of Saint Anthony and Saint Paula

We spent most of our days in the University, attending lectures and workshops, learning from leading consultants in their field and even had the chance to shadow a bi-sagittal split osteotomy. In our spare time we also got to experience Egyptian culture. Through all this, we also recognised that God had put us here for a reason, and so we wanted to make the most of our privileged position and do what we can to help those who are not so fortunate.

What was your favourite part of your elective and which part was the most challenging? With so many great memories, we are almost spoiled for choice, but I think it would have to be the overwhelming kindness of the people we met... and the food. From the moment we landed in the country we were constantly looked after (Natalie's family are Egyptian and the nicest people, with a gift for hospitality), but even when we were at the BUE, all the students were so eager to hear about us. The teachers were also eternally cheerful - even when we pestered them with clinical questions. From morning to the end of the day, we were surrounded by people who were happy and this happiness quickly made its way to us too. We were also introduced to the delight that is Feteer, only to be topped by Feteer with Pastrami, and have been missing it everyday since we arrived back in London.

One major struggle was actually making it to the church. Originally, we were at a different location with the rest of our travel group, but we had sacrificed an afternoon of arcade games to volunteer at this church. However, making it to the meet-up spot proved difficult when a taxi driver insisted on cash only. As we stood in the heat, thinking about one of Natalie's family friends who had driven us once before, he appeared in his car where we were standing and asked why we were stood in the car park of a mall. After a brief explanation, he kindly offered to drive us back to our apartment, where we met Natalie's cousin who had helped arrange the visit in the first place. She shared the sad news that we had missed the bus taking the volunteering group to the Church of Saint Anthony and Saint Paula in the City of Hope. We tried our best with Google Maps (which doesn't function in the Nasr area), but ultimately, we knew that relying on God was all we truly needed. As we turned onto a narrow side street, we miraculously came across the bus we had missed, and by God's grace, we made it to the church.



Natalie and Enoch at the BUE campus following a surgery

What did you learn about yourselves and God while you were there? "Everything always works out" - this became an ongoing phrase amongst us as even in times when it seemed that everything around us was going wrong, we were constantly reminded and shown that God works for the good of His people (Romans 8:28). He is everywhere. We learnt to trust Him with all our heart, especially when we were travelling to the church and struggling to find the right directions. Proverbs 3:5 really stuck with us during this time as we couldn't lean on our own

understanding, since we had no clue where we were, but we still managed to find our way to the church.



Visiting the Pyramids of Giza with friends

What is one thing you want to remember from your elective? The entire elective was filled with great times and memories that we would love to cherish forever, but one of the biggest things would be the hospitality shown to us and how far people we had barely met, let alone properly known, were willing to go to accommodate us down to the smallest details. For me (Natalie), sharing my culture with friends really made me appreciate Egypt and how blessed I am to have such a loving community in Christ.

How can we pray for the place where you did your elective? Any prayers are really appreciated, thank you! Here are some of the main prayer points that we'd like to share with you:

Please pray for the children and volunteers at the church we visited. We thank you God for the incredible work being done here, for the dedication of the volunteers, the passion of the teachers, and the enthusiasm of the children.

We also would like to pray for the staff and students at BUE. Lord, continue to help them in their studies. As they prepare for a career in dentistry, may they also prepare to be vessels of Your love, bringing comfort and healing to those in need.

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone at CDF who has supported us on this journey. This trip has left a lasting impact not only on our approach to clinical dentistry but also as a positive influence on our spiritual lives.

Natalie Gabrawi and Enoch Tilahun