A team from across the Diocese spent a fortnight in SE Asia in October supporting Bishop Michael in strengthening the links with our companion dioceses there.

The visit included time in all the dioceses of the Province of SE Asia - Singapore, West Malaysia, Kuching and Sabah. Here are some reflections.

*The most interesting thing is talking to Christians in Malaysia, living in an Islamic country and relating to the Christians in the UK living in a secular society. The sense was of a hostile environment because of the political, social and legal pressure on them from a Muslim community of about 85%. The communities were very different there. In Terrenganu they felt to us as though they’d got their backs to the wall. It was tough being Christians in a very hostile environment because of the political, social and legal pressure on them from a Muslim community of about 85%.*

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*The sense was of a Chinese community in an enclave and they’d feel frightened if they lived anywhere but those two streets. But the ministry they’re doing with university students is inspiring — the find ways round so many restrictions to reach out and share the gospel. It’s quite sobering how lukewarm we can be and yet how they still reach out to Chinese students. The fervour of some of those young people is so encouraging. The challenges are very different between the two countries.*

Gill Carding - Reader, St Giles’ Shrewsbury

*One of the best things I experienced is visiting the Orang Asi people in their home. Unlike most of the people we’ve met, we had no shared culture other than the language of smiling - just being as far culturally as we can get from home and yet having that shared faith in Jesus.*

“In talking to the young people and experiencing a bit of the youth culture here, I’ve noticed one similarity and one difference. I’ve been really aware of the privilege we have in the UK – I can go into a school assembly and speak to 2-300 young people, I think I may have taken it a little bit for granted - you just can’t do that here. The similarity is that I’ve spent different churches prioritise young people differently: some where young people are front and centre of ministry and others where they’re just little people who will one day grow up to be responsible members of church.”

Hannah Moore - leader, Shrewsbury Youth for Christ

*It’s been an amazing experience. I was so enthusiastic about going partly because I’d been to other parts of Malaysia but never to the east coast myself.*

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