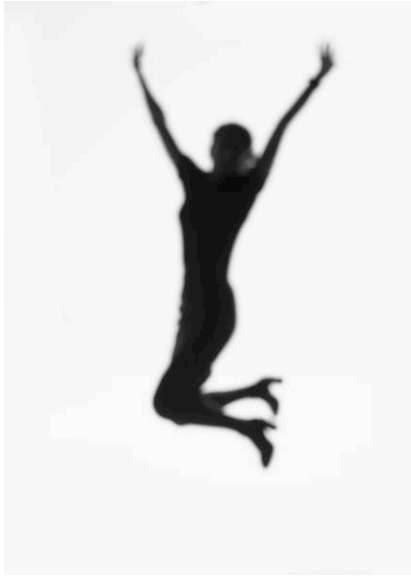


Prayers and Meditations for the Journey



Jump In!
Bosnia 2010

A Word from the Author

You will be in my thoughts and prayers as you travel. Each day I will see you jumping in joy, jumping in freedom, being a little daring, feeling the excitement and challenges of it all. I will hear the children laughing, I will see the tears of sadness as you hear some of the stories, I will hold you in my heart through it all.

I feel blessed to be offering you these prayers, meditations and exercises. I pray that God will touch you through them.

Blessings,

Rev. Wendy L. Abrahamson
Servant Trip 2005

Saturday, June 19

Depart Newark

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Luke 10:1-6 (NRSV)

"Everything that is in the heavens, on earth, and under the earth is penetrated with connectedness, penetrated with relatedness."

— Hildegard of Bingen quoted in *The Sun & Moon Over Assisi* by Gerard Thomas Straub

The day of departure has arrived. Perhaps you are reading this as you await departure sitting in the airport, or perhaps you are in mid-air. Wherever you are, pause to say a word of thanks to God for the blessings of this day. Ask for God's presence as you journey forward.

Hopefully your luggage, the equipment and school bags will be waiting for you when you arrive in Sarajevo. There have been years when that wasn't true and yet the work continued and camps were held and children laughed and played, learned and loved. New clothes were bought and life went on, and most importantly the work of God went on. Pause for a moment and thank God for the clothes upon your back and the shoes upon your feet.

As you enter each new town, offer to it a gift of peace. As you enter each school building, offer it a gift of peace. We don't need fancy things to do the work that we do, we just need a heart full of love and the gift of peace.

Pray that each town, each school, each child will receive your gift of peace, accept it as its own, and share it in return.

Sunday June 20

Arrive Sarajevo

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Deuteronomy 6:4-5

"Saints have a heart full of justice."

— Thomas Aquinas quoted in *Confessions* by Matthew Fox

Put your hand upon your heart. Let it rest there for a while and feel it beat. Each beat is a gift of life as blood flows through your body. Say a prayer of thanks to God for life-giving blood and for your heart filled with God's love.

Bring your hand out with your palm up as if it is holding your heart. Cup your hands together as if they are cradling a precious gift. Pause for a moment and consider the precious gift of God's love within your heart. Then extend your hands out as if you are offering your heart as a gift for another.

Indeed you are offering your heart to another, and another and another in the days to come. God will be sending children and adults into your life, and your gift to them will be God's love, the love that is in your heart. What an incredible gift that will be to those who will receive it. Say a prayer that God will so fill your heart with love and grace that it will overflow to another and another and another.

Carefully bring your hands back to your chest and rest them upon your heart, feel your heart beat. Each beat is a gift of life. Thank God for your life, and for the lives of those you are about to meet. Each of you are precious, know it, believe it, now jump in and live it!



Monday June 21

Visoko is a town just north of Sarajevo. During the war many refugees fled there from Sarajevo and other parts of the country. The main part of the school first housed refugees and the military, which left it in ruins.

He will give a signal to the nations, and he will bring together the refugees from Judah and Israel, who have been scattered all over the earth. Israel will stop being jealous of Judah, and Judah will no longer be the enemy of Israel. Isaiah 11:12-13(CEV)

“What we have to do... is to find a way to celebrate our diversity and debate our differences without fracturing our communities.”--
Hillary Clinton

Today you are part of the work of God

- in gathering folks together and ending the jealousies,
- in diffusing the differences,
- in preventing the children from seeing one another as enemies.

Celebrate each person who enters your life today.

- Look them in the eye, notice the brilliance of color.
- Listen to their laughter, notice the joy.
- Look at them, and if there is sorrow, offer a prayer of comfort.

Truly notice the one that God puts before you and say a prayer of thanks for their participation in your life.

As you look back on the day, remember someone special and thank God for their life.

Tuesday June 22

Gradacac Camp

Gradacac is a town in north-central Bosnia that bravely defended itself from many attacks during the war

Brcko Camp

This school is one of the best examples of honoring children of all ethnic backgrounds.

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt. Deuteronomy 10:17-19 (NIV)

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28 (NRSV)

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stifled. I want all the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.” -- Mohandas K. Gandhi

Close your eyes, take a deep breath,

- Breathe in the Spirit of inclusivity, exhale partiality
- Breathe in the Spirit of acceptance, exhale judgment
- Breathe in the knowledge that you are loved by God, the lives that you touch today are loved by God, those working beside you/with you are loved by God, exhale self-doubt, distrust, fear

Pray for the gifts of diversity and inclusivity.

Wednesday June 23

Kozarac/Trnopolje Camp

During the war, Kozarac had a rape house set up by the Serb authorities, and was next to the notorious Trnopolje Concentration Camp, where detainees were abused, some tortured, raped or even killed. In Kozarac, our team stays in Srcem do Mira's (Through Hearts to Peace) remarkable House of Peace.

Prijedor Camp

This town saw no direct fighting during the war because of its Serb control. Much of the atrocities in the area were based out of Prijedor, which makes our need to work with the children of this community all the more imperative.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 (NIV)

Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Matthew 19:13 (NIV)

“We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make, which, over time, add up to big differences we cannot foresee. “

— Marian Wright Edelman

Make today a heart day. Pay attention to what your heart is telling you. What are you feeling? What emotions are tearing at you because your heart may be feeling the pain of this town? Let them shape you, but do not let them get you down. Give the feelings of pain and anguish to God. What we want to jump into today is love, joy, peace and mercy.

It is through your heart of love that God is working peace. Let's change the words from Deuteronomy a little—Love the person before you with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. May each person you encounter today be upon your heart.

Pray for God's love in your heart to be lived out in the work that you do. Let your excitement jump out of you and into the lives of others.

Thursday June 24

Sanski Most Camp

...from the spring of 1992 to 1995. During this time, large parts of the non-Serb population either fled or were forcibly expelled. In October 1995, the city was entered by the forces of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina, shortly before the end of the war. This triggered a mass exodus of the Serb population. Today its population is primarily Bosniak.

Travnik Camp

*Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me,
for in you my soul takes refuge.*

*I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings
until the disaster has passed.*

*I cry out to God Most High,
to God, who fulfills his purpose for me.*

He sends from heaven and saves me,

rebuking those who botly pursue me;

God sends his love and his faithfulness. Psalm 57:1-3

“When men and women are able to respect and accept their differences then love has a chance to blossom.” -- John Gray

Psalm 57 is attributed to David and thought to have been written as he was fleeing from Saul into a cave.

Remember today that God walks with you. God is with you in creation's morning. God is with you in the heat of midday. God is with you as the sun sets and darkness looms. God is with you fulfilling God's purpose for you. God is with you, loving you.

Pray for a sense of God's presence in your life today.

Friday, June 25

Sipovo Camp

Since the war it has struggled to recover economically, as Republik Srpska receives little international aid. This is one of the towns we visit where many of the children seem to suffer from significant poverty.

Jajce Camp

Recently this became a “two schools under one roof”, where they separate the Croat and Bosniak (Muslim) children into separate rooms, each with their own, different curriculum. While this (illegal) situation is deplorable, it is all the more reason for us to be in this community, with these children.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

“Compassion is a foundation for sharing our aliveness and building a more humane world.” — Martin Lowenthal in *Opening the Heart of Compassion*

Today children in Sipovo and Jajce will be laughing, playing, learning and eating. Not one will look like another, for we are all uniquely created.

Say a prayer of thanks to God for our uniqueness. See a special gift or talent in one with whom you are working today and say a prayer of thanks to God for their special gift. Let them know.

See how each gifted individual works to complete the whole. How marvelous it is when all work together!

See each child today and the gift that they are to the world. Thank God for the children of this world.

Saturday, June 26

Rest, relax, nap, tour, breathe

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested ^a from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Genesis 2:1-3 (NIV)

*My soul finds rest in God alone;
my salvation comes from him.*

*Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;
my hope comes from him.
Psalm 62:1,5*

It is requisite for the relaxation of the mind that we make use, from time to time, of playful deeds and jokes. —Thomas Aquinas

Go ahead and have some fun. Enjoy the sights and sounds of Sarajevo. Don't miss enjoying the ice cream. Jump into the excitement of the city.

But take time as well to rest.

Find a moment for refreshing quiet, perhaps a nap!

Take a moment to be inactive, put your feet up and breathe the fragrance of the moment, watch the folks in town.

Cease from motion and just be.

Offer to God whatever may be making you weary, or troubled or disturbs you at the moment

Sit in the presence of God.

Sunday June 27

Srebrenica (Leptir) Camp

During the war, Srebrenica was declared a UN Safe-Zone. Near the end of the war Srebrenica (with its large Muslim population) was overrun by Serb forces who, in their attempt to ethnically cleanse the area, massacred over 8,000 unarmed civilian men and boys. This is the largest massacre in Europe since WWII. Today Srebrenica still bears many deep scars from the war; psychologically, physically, socially, spiritually. At this Friendship Camp we'll hold a party with the children of Leptir (butterfly), a wonderful program for children with disabilities.

*The LORD gives strength to his people;
the LORD blesses his people with peace. Psalm 29:11 (NIV)*

“Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength.”---Arnold Schwarzenegger

Before you today is the gift of strength. Your rest from yesterday will be your strength as you experience the grief of what this town endured at the end of the war.

Look at this town deeply scarred and see the strength of its people.

- The energy present as it continues to rebuild
- Its courage
- Its resources
- Its power to resist the forces still at work to keep the town from being truly at peace
- Its power to rise from the ashes

Some have returned to rebuild. Some stay and tell the stories of loved ones lost either in death or from flight from which they have yet to return.

Pray for the continued strength of the people of Srebrenica. Give witness to the strength of God's love as you work with the children of Leptir. Extend your hands, palms up and offer a gift of strength to one who enters your life today.

Monday, June 28

Foca Camp

During the war most of its Muslim population left or was driven out, and went from being almost 50% Serb, 50% Muslim (Bosniak) to nearly all Serb today. Foca was also the site of a rape camp which was set up by the Serb authorities in which hundreds of women were raped.

Gorazde Camp

*He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid;
for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken. Micah 4:3-4*

Peace is not an absence of war, it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice. -- Baruch Spinoza

Neither shall they learn war anymore. It isn't that we learn peace either. What we do is live peace as if it is our very being. When we love unconditionally, forgive **and** forget we live peace.

Take a moment to seek forgiveness. Search your heart and ask God to forgive those moments of impatience with another, the judgments made, the things said or left unsaid, done or left undone.

Ask God to wash you clean of your sin, to create in you a clean heart and to renew your spirit.

Tuesday, June 29

Mostar Camp

During and since the war, it has been a city divided between the Croats in the western part of the city and the Bosniaks (Muslims) in the east. When we visit this city we stay with our dear friends at the Mostar Orphanage. This year we will hold a Friendship Camp at a school in the center of the city, hoping to engage children from both ethnic groups.

Sarajevo Camp

The city was attacked in mid-1992 and was under siege from that time until the end of the war - making it the longest siege in Europe since WW II. The school where we hold this Friendship Camp is a rare (possibly unique) model of diversity in Bosnia, with Serb, Croat, Bosniak (Muslim) AND Roma (gypsy) children, as well as a number of children with disabilities. This is a trend that we want to support and encourage as much as possible.

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2

"As we grow in awareness of one another – whether two people beginning a romance or two disparate and far-removed strangers taking an interest in the other's culture – a wonderful thing begins to happen: we begin to care for the other as if the other is part of us. This is the magic of life that our ancient teachers have bid us to see; the invisible filaments of interconnectedness that bind us together in love and appreciation." -- Scott A. Hunt

It is a contrast of worlds today. One team in a city divided; another team at a school that serves as an example for others as a model of diversity. No matter where you are today each child you encounter is a part of you—love and appreciate them.

We are interconnected, not a one of us can exist in this world without the other. When we begin to truly realize this, peace will reign.

Thank God for the gift of interconnectedness. Think on the folks in your life and how it all fits together, each one an integral part of the circle of life. Offer a word of thanks for the folks of this world and the gift that each of us are to the other.

Wednesday, June 30

Vojkovici Camp

Vojkovici is a community/town immediately to the east of Sarajevo, right next to the Sarajevo airport. During the war it was in the Serb-held territories and the school was heavily bombed, leaving craters in the neighborhood that still exist today. The children in the area also must take great care because of the many land mines that are still in the ground, posing a very real threat to life and limb.

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

Deuteronomy 30:15,16

"We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community...Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own." --Cesar Chavez

Before you has been life and prosperity, death and destruction. Cling to life and prosperity. Pray it for the folks of Vojkovici, for they have seen more than their fair share of death and destruction.

Witness in word and deed today what it is to walk in the way of God—that is the way of love, faithfulness, mercy and forgiveness. Examine your spirit and see how these gifts freely given have felt when you have received them. Offer them to those you will meet this day.

Thursday July 1

Fly Home!

*The fruit of righteousness will be peace;
the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.
My people will live in peaceful dwelling places,
in secure homes,
in undisturbed places of rest. —Isaiah 32:17,18*

The war gave

- Bombed out buildings
- The loss of loved ones
- The countryside filled with cemeteries rather than playgrounds
- Mine fields rather than wheat fields

You gave them God's love—not with great words, not with great deeds but through

- Smiles
- Laughter
- Acceptance
- A simple handshake
- Games where no one wins and no one loses

You gave them hope that they will indeed come to live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. You gave them hope that never again will gunfire be their lullabies.

You jumped into the waters of your baptism and splashed the waters onto the lives of so many these past weeks. Feel for yourself the power of your own transformation that has resulted. You are not the same person you were on June 19, may God continue to work in you, through you and with you. Know that I thank God for you.

Additional Prayers for moments of contemplation

A Morning Prayer

God of all times and places, you have brought us to the beginning of a new day. Surround us in the same with your all-embracing love, and grant that this day we turn not aside into sin, nor be overcome by adversity, but let our thoughts, words, and deeds, in some small way, make for the coming of your Kingdom on earth. Through Christ our Lord.



Grant us, Lord God, a vision of your world as your love would have it:

- a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;
- a world where the riches of creation are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;
- a world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect;
- a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.

Give us the inspiration and courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



O God,

Open our eyes that we may see the needs of others;

Open our ears that we may hear their cries;

Open our hearts that we may feel their anguish and their joy.

Let us not be afraid to defend the oppressed, the poor, the powerless, because of the anger and might of the powerful.

Show us where love and hope and faith are needed, and use us to bring them to those places.

Open our ears and eyes, our hearts and lives, that we may in these coming days be able to do some work of justice and peace

for

you. *Amen.*