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*Preston Trail Community Church Youth Mission Trip
photo provided by Preston Trail Community Church*

Faith, Love and Hope

By Penny Martin

SUMMER, in addition to family vacation time, is traditionally the season of mission trips for many churches. Some may venture a few miles from home and others may travel thousands of miles to faraway countries, all praying to make an impact by exercising their faith. The common thread for these travelers is to share their joy and hope to inspire others. Being truly inspired is not so easy these days. Inspiration may be elusive, but it's here; just beneath the surface.

"We are so blessed to have the opportunities we have," says Vicki Guynes, resident of Frisco and member of the Women's Connection Ministry at the Reformed Church in Plano. "I feel so fortunate to have family and friends I love, a church that means so much to me, a roof over my head and fresh water to drink."

WOMEN HELPING WOMEN

Ms. Guynes embarked on a trip to Africa

in August of 2005 that has made a lasting impression on her. She and several others traveled to Zambia to work with an organization called ALARM (African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries). The purpose of the trip was to teach the women of the area that together they have a voice and can make a difference.

"The women there have limited resources and opportunities to care for their families. They may not know what meal they can provide their family that evening. It depends on what they can find in the market that day and if they have money to pay for it. If their children get sick, doctors and medical supplies are scarce," Ms. Guynes adds. "The impact of this trip creeps up on me in subtle ways and when I least expect it. I can go to my refrigerator any time I like and have the choice of several beverages. I can cook dinner or order it brought to my door. When I go to bed I have a comfortable

place to lay my head."

For Ms. Guynes, curiosity about the women of this country peaked her interest. "I was hoping I could make some small impact on someone's life, but in fact, it was the other way around. They have insurmountable odds, yet they have a joyous spirit. I've never heard such beautiful voices with an eagerness to sing out. Even though we went to Africa to encourage and share our faith, we learned as much from them. We learned about resilience, faith and simply the love of life."

TEENS CONNECTING WITH CHILDREN

Ben Johnson is fifteen, lives in Prosper, and spent his spring break in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico at the Casa Hogar Elim orphanage with several other members of Preston Trail Community Church. "I wanted to go because I had never been

on a mission trip before. I thought it would be a good experience for me,” Ben explains. “The kids living at the orphanage had parents who had either passed away, were not well enough to support their needs or had abused them. Even though they didn’t have as much as we have, they were always happy to see visitors at the orphanage.”

“My emotions were mixed between depression and happiness. I was depressed to see all those normal, beautiful children forced to live a lifestyle most of us could never imagine, but I was also happy when I saw that the children didn’t care about what they had. They always had a glow about them.”

AGE AND EXPERIENCE NOT AN ISSUE

Joy Preston, a sixty-two-year-old grandmother, lives and works for the Bright Future Church in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. As board member and advisor, Ms. Preston’s vision is to connect all the churches in the nation. She and many others travel throughout the country encouraging the churches, teaching them and praying with them.

“Mongolia is a vast nation and most of the churches are isolated,” Ms. Preston explains. “They need to know they are connected to others and not alone. I counsel and encourage pastors and church members so they can help those who are in need. We also go on prayer journeys; specific, targeted areas where we meet the Christians who live in that area and pray with them. Along with these journeys, we spend time encouraging the soldiers who are stationed there.”

“I really like working with the Mongolian people,” says Ms. Preston. “They are very warm and friendly. Even though the living conditions can be difficult, working with the people here is very rewarding. I feel what we are doing here is helping to strengthen a whole nation.”

“When the opportunity came up I just laughed. I thought I was too old, too poor and wasn’t qualified to be a full-time missionary. I have learned that when God gives you an assignment, He will give you the strength to do it. I believe God gave me the desire and I feel my true destiny is just beginning,” Ms. Preston adds.

“I made a choice that I would give my all for the work. I could be at home watching



Michael Bos with mission group in Oman

photo provided by Michael Bos

my grandchildren grow and I would love to do that, but I can see that even though I may be missing some of their special moments, I am influencing them in a greater way. I hope that one day they will be traveling with me!”

IMMERSED IN A CULTURE

Michael Bos, director of the Al Amana Centre in the Sultanate of Oman, which is located at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula, lives and works in the area with his wife, Tina, and two children, Alicia and Austin. “Our goal at the Centre is to work with religious, civic and governmental leaders to develop programs that allow people to learn about each other, from each other,” Reverend Bos explains.

“I spend my time working with Muslims and Christians and both have impacted me. I’ve been deeply inspired by our students, many of which are deeply committed Christians. They all represent people of good faith, open to learning about one another and working together for the good of the communities in which we live.”

Reverend Bos believes we live in a global age where one act, whether it be political, economic, religious or cultural, can have a worldwide impact. “Our futures are now interconnected and it will take the cooperation of all segments of society to live in harmony with one another,” he insists. “This is the reality of the world and the need to which Al Amana Centre is responding. Positive initiatives here have a global effect and provide a path of



Vicki Guynes in Africa
photo provided by Barb Nauta

dialogue and coexistence that others may follow.”

Maybe deep inside us all there’s a longing; a wanting to give of ourselves to help others and our world. We’re unsure how to step out and do what needs to be done. We may even be afraid. Feeding our knowledge with inspirational stories like Vicki’s, Ben’s, Joy’s and Michael’s can help us understand. They inspire us to look for our own opportunities to reach out and make a difference.

Penny Martin is a freelance writer living in Little Elm.