

Mission Trip Overview
Written by Jenny Magee (Pastor Shannyn's Sister)
Adult Representative from Peace Lutheran in Waunakee, WI

Day 1, 6.20.24

"The mountain is out." This is the Seattleites' way of saying, "Good weather, we're having." Today held pristine blue skies, the most delightful temps with low humidity, and Seattle showed off as we took the Light Link train from SEA-TAC to Roosevelt Station to meet our rides who took us to our home away from home for the next few days, Faith Lutheran Church. Ralph, Mary, John, and Merle all met us and helped get us settled. Sally showed up with extra sleeping bags and pillows, and it took the kids all of 18 seconds to settle in.

Within moments they'd claimed Sunday school rooms and air mattresses, on loan from Faith members. They discovered the foosball table and two pianos in the Fellowship Hall. I was sure food was going to be the first inquiry, but I'd also spent two hours at Costco this morning giving lots of people a good giggle as identical sisters loaded two ginormous carts with food for the next few days. The kids literally skipped through the downstairs of the basement, exploring, and the actual first question they asked was, "Is all of this really our space for the week? Like, all of it?" The answer of, "Indeed it is," brought cheers and laughter, followed by footsteps as they scattered to explore what was behind each door and down each hallway. For the next hour piano duets were played and foosball matches concentrated upon. It was hard to gather everyone for dinner; too much fun was already being had!

We walked to a Latin American restaurant called Mojitos for supper. It is tiny, triangle shaped, and run by family members. Each Faith person whom we met upon arrival and heard we were going there ardently agreed we couldn't have had a better recommendation in the neighborhood. It was truly a "mom and pop" restaurant with incredible Venezuelan and Cuban food. We were squished in tight at the table so chit chat was easy across all 10 of us. One of the proprietors got the boys playing the bongo drum located at the corner of our table, and he played jokes on them that had us laughing genuine belly laughs. When I asked about a painting on the wall, we were told it represented sharing what gifts and bounty you have - - that they have a commercial kitchen across the street where every Tuesday they make at least 200 meals to be distributed to shelters, homebound elderly, and food support centers. During Covid they did this every day to provide for others who needed some way to have a connection in their day and/or good, wholesome food in their bellies.

If you remember, Seattle was home to the first Covid case in the U.S., identified about 10 minutes from where we are. Shannyn reminded us how quickly, extensively, and extendedly the city shut down. But the cooks and owners of Mojito stepped up and stepped out to offer support with food and fellowship. Shannyn said she didn't know about this; it only came up because I'd asked about the painting. The gentleman's explanation was brief, humble, and said with a tone of love for others. He wrote something on his order pad, ripped it out and handed it to me. "Luke 12:48." When we got back from dinner, I looked up the passage. It reads, "*From everyone*

who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." Already, at dinner, the Holy Spirit was on the loose with our trip's first connection to Christ at work in the world.

For evening devotions we reintroduced ourselves to our Peace group, with a tidbit of something we wanted the others to know. The kids wanted us to know their interest in being able to not just hear about people in the world who live differently than themselves but to experience it firsthand to understand better. Shannyn read the Beatitudes to us and said that at the end of a mission trip, we don't want people to just say that they had fun, to be patting themselves on the pack, and saying, "Look at what I did." We want people to realize, "I have seen Christ in the world and I am changed." We want them to be able to say they saw Christ in others, Christ in themselves, and Christ at work in the world.

This will be the discussion of our evening devotions, and the focal point of our work and play this week.

We are really excited to be here in Seattle. We've only just kicked off, and there will be much more to share!

Day 2, 6.21.24

We ended today with highs and lows, and everyone had to think really hard to scrape up something for the latter. Sore feet from the miles of walking and being sung happy birthday by strangers on the Space Needle - not because it wasn't nice but because the center of attention is not preferred - were all anyone could come up with. The Gum Wall kind of grossed us out, too. Today was a full day of Seattle sight-seeing in order to orient ourselves to the city as well as have fun, so highs were bountiful. These were some of the highs:

- Getting to be together with people we like.
- Getting to know everyone better.
- Laughing together.
- Eating really good food together.
- Seeing so much beauty everywhere.
- All of the little things - the chatting while eating the best peaches and nectarines anyone ever tasted, sitting together at lunch, and talking on the escalators.
- Getting to see Mt. Rainer, Mt. Baker, and the Olympic Range all in one turn.
- The fruit.
- The gyros with french fries in them.

We did a lot of sightseeing today, and it was a full, active day after breakfast and morning devotions:

We checked out the Pike Place Farmers Market and had a great chat with the fruit stand man, Tor. He's been to Madison (he only knew we were from WI, not a specific area) and said with

authority that you can't get this type of fruit in Wisconsin. We loaded up on Rainier cherries, white and yellow nectarines, peaches, grapes, and tried out lychee fruit for kicks. We then stood out on the street hunched over with juice dripping down our arms. We saw a ragtag band, added more gum to the gum wall, took our picture with the golden pig, and saw fish being thrown around, reminding me of a sermon Pastor Erica once preached about the Pike Place market rhythm.

The kids were enthralled by the sight of the waterfront with the mountains beyond and asked if we could please do the Big Wheel. What a treat of a view this ferris wheel gave us!

Lunch was found at the Pike Place Market with people trying different things from the many different options. Beecher's Mac and Cheese, the Mediterranean Gyros, and lavender-blackberry apple cider were big hits. We found a picnic table and ate together, digging into more of our fruit stash. At breakfast it had been mentioned that we could go out for ice cream together tonight, and at lunch the kids asked if instead of getting ice cream we could use that money to get more of the incredible fruit to eat back at the church.

From lunch we climbed a really big hill and hiked our way to Chihuly Gardens (Dale Chihuly's work is hung in the Kohl Center, him being a UW Alum). The downtown tour ended with a ride up the Space Needle where the view couldn't have been better on this sunny, clear day. After that we caught the monorail to the Light Link train, and back to the church for dinner.

We all had a phenomenal day together. It truly could not have been better. Interestingly, we had done all of these amazing "outing" type things - and believe me, the kids were full of thank yous, and they gave plenty of exclamations of awe at what they were seeing and experiencing - but at the end of the day, it was the fellowship that was their high.

We were two hours later than planned but the Faith folks had dinner ready and waiting for us (we'd planned to help cook but they sprang into action when I called to say we were still out and about). In Fellowship Hall we spread out to sit among the Faith folks while eating then heard a panel of people speak about their volunteerism. They shared stories to the questions of what they do, how they got involved, what led them to their involvement, and why it matters. We heard stories and asked follow up questions for not quite two hours then got into small discussion groups to discuss out our "whys" for why we serve. During the day we'd gotten a view of the number of unhoused people in the city. We saw needs. We also saw the city's follow through on protocols for going green, recognized the astronomical expense of being in this city, and felt a bit claustrophobic by the number of people we had to navigate among. Tomorrow starts our series of days of service. Before scattering to take late night showers and settle in for sleep, we stood around in the church kitchen eating grapes and cherries while chatting informally about tomorrow.

Today was phenomenal, and I am intrigued to see what tomorrow will bring out of the kids. I have seen so much compassion, friendliness, respect, interest, and good communication already, and I think they are itching to step into service. I work with a lot of kids; I just finished

year 21 of teaching. But our young people on this trip, our old people on this trip, and our “whatever age” people on this trip are special people. It is a privilege to be interacting with them, and I can only imagine their abilities to serve, especially after hearing their “whys.”

Day 3, 6.22.24

Yesterday we played hard, today we worked hard. That said, the attitudes and investment in the work today were playful and soulful. More on that in another Holy Moment posting because for this one, I want to speak to what I am learning from our youth.

Part of this trip is to have our stereotypes and assumptions challenged. Mine certainly are. If you’ve read my Holy Moments pieces before you know that I have tremendous respect for kids and their thinking. But I am also teaching between 25-74 kids in a day so I move fast between people. For the last number of years, as the pace of school has picked up to border on constant chaos, I don’t get to sit with kids for long periods of time to listen, observe, and learn from them, as I’d like. Additionally, my school kids will interrupt my teaching to ask to have their pictures taken or to show their work, and a number want to be velcroed to me throughout the day. It is sweet, yet the day is very much driven by showmanship and requisitions for it to be delivered out via technology.

Thus, I anticipated constant photo taking, iphone use, and some complaints to be voiced on the mission trip. I anticipated it wrongly. I am very, very wrong.

The youth on our mission trip are living in the moment, absorbing all that is around them, asking thoughtful questions, and engaging in conversation with the different people we meet and work with. They don’t have phones out - while I do - and they subtly and politely requested we adults cool it on the photos. They are flexible, adaptable, and positively communicative in all their actions. I feel as though I am learning so much about Gen Z; I am most certainly rewiring my brain about how I’ve thought about young people and their technology use, as well as their quality of connections with others. I came on this trip expecting to observe kids being humbled about their fast-paced lives, but instead it is I being humbled, awed, and learning to broaden my understanding of people right in front of me.

Following morning devotions, our work had us making sack lunches for a day shelter, getting a tour and discussion with leaders of Immanuel Community Services which provides services for people who are unhoused, working for the afternoon at The University District Food Bank, and touring the Capitol Hill area of Seattle. This area was prominent during the Black Lives Matter protests as a place of peace, care, and healing together and which is also an area of Seattle that cultivates a strong inclusive community for folks who are LGBTQIA+.

As we started to gather for a cookout at Shannyn’s house to be had with the members of Faith Lutheran, we couldn’t miss the large brown horse in the backyard next door. A vet’s office neighbors the parsonage. The backyard has chickens, bunnies, fish, and dogs. But tonight there was a horse added to the mix. Shannyn is dog sitting, so her house currently has two big

and two small dogs, which the kids are loving, and when after a laughter-filled dinner the vet invited all of the kids over (aged 4 to 17), none refused. In the middle of the city of Seattle Nolan sat atop his very first horse, and each kid who wanted had the chance to ride the horse up and down the sidewalk, guided by the vet. Around 9:00 the Faith members started to head home, but our Peace kids were still full of vigor. We stayed in the vet's yard until after 10:30 playing with and petting dogs, bunnies, and chickens, but everyone also pitched in to currycomb the horse and braid its mane. The vet's kids, Chisty and Cody, did the teaching. We had to do a baby bunny check before coming back to the church for bed to make sure none had slipped into pockets, and the evening came to a close with good-natured groans of wanting the day to continue, not end.

Today I learned a lot from our Peace kids.

I learned about the Army as I asked questions to one of the kids who is planning for his future.

I learned about animal training from one of the kids who wants to be a vet.

I asked the kids about their phone use and why they are using theirs so little when it seems like device use drives the lives of so many people. I learned that phones are fun when you first get them, like when you first learn to drive. Some people do get addicted or want to constantly be on the edge of anything new coming. But it was explained to me that while it seems like you're on the edge of new things, it's just a cycle of the same things over and over. I'm told it's much more fun to enjoy life by looking out at real things, talking to people, and reading actual books. So the phone, while novel at first, doesn't really have the allure adults think it does.

I learned that our kids have incredible eye-hand coordination as they competed in throwing Pirates Booty puffed chips off of the second floor deck into the mouths of people waiting in the yard below.

I learned that kids still know how to play a mean game of Hearts and that Spoons can be an ultra-competitive sport, not just a card game.

I learned the kids will do anything asked of them, from carrying boxes to eating lunch in 10 minutes so we can get to our next service project on time, to going all-in on doing every helping task to the highest level of quality.

It is now nearing midnight as I wrap up this particular reflection. I have so much more I want to share from this full day, but just as we at Peace have a priority of supporting our youth, how I am humbled by these incredible youth leading me though I am supposed to be leading them, seemed like the most appropriate notes to prioritize for sharing out this evening.



Day 4, 6.23.24

The day is just winding down at 11:47p.m.

There is so much to say, but for today bullet points will suffice.

- Church this morning-children's sermon, regular sermon, full traditional liturgy, blessing of the quilts
- After church David, the music director, showed the boys, myself, Amy, and Kathy the 9 foot grand piano and harpsichord. He spoke of the history of the instruments, how they came to be at Faith, a bit about his illustrious career but working at Faith - even after all the prestige - is his favorite experience, and he explained why. After a very fast lunch, the girls joined David and the boys for another hour plus of trying out the organ, piano, and harpsichord. David talked with them about music history, that art and music are all ways to experience and express faith, and he let them play around on the three magnificent instruments.
- Presentation by Lutheran World Relief.... I learned so much!
 - a. Where quilts go
 - b. Admin costs
 - c. Training
 - d. What they do
 - e. Number of employees
 - f. Local empowerment
 - g. Collaboration
- Making hygiene kits
- Amazing Race - food pantry
 - a. Comparison of costs
 - b. Different types of stores to shop at
 - c. Variety of options... or not
 - d. Distances
 - e. Credit card vs cash
 - f. Value of money to food
 - g. Branding
 - h. Thank you to Mojito staff for their community work
- Chill hour - games played; Extended chat time
- Dinner with Faith people - lots and lots of conversation - people brought their dogs
- Mom asking 4 yo - "Do you want to sit by Nolan? He's a really nice big boy." "No, I want to sit by Pastor Shannyn. Where did she go?"
 - a. Connecting himself to Shannyn with a dog leash
- More dogs brought over, including one they think I should adopt
- Ian and Thomas enjoying elevator rides
- More games
- Evening devotions - for most kids the high was the music with David. One of the kids' high is Julie (82 year old from Faith) and her personality

- Ice cream - Molly Moon's
 - a. That parking job.....
 - b. ALL the dogs
 - c. Abby and Kathy stayed back to hold bunnies
- Kids went for a run, puppy play, visiting
- Showers and creation of dog name list
 - a. Also, a pull-up competition at Shannyn's
 - b. I got to connect more with Thomas, Kara (chatted gymnastics), and Greta (Thomas and Greta made a long list of potential dog names)

Day 5, 6.24.24

Whew! Another big day! Today was both a learning and action day. We, per usual, began the day with morning devotions. Because we're in a bigger city, two of our morning site visits - Low Income Housing Institute's [Tiny House Village](#) and [God's Li'l Acre](#) - were both canceled last minute as their staffs both had a slew of Covid cases hit after fundraisers. This gave us a longer time at two other visiting sites, [The Oaks](#) and the [Elizabeth Gregory Home](#). Only five of us, and they had to be female, were allowed to visit the Elizabeth Gregory Home, so all the other participants from Faith and Peace went to tour The Oaks Shelter. Reported out about The Oaks is that it is a nursing home that shut down and was turned into a 60 room "enhanced shelter" for people who are unhoused. It is a "low barrier" shelter, meaning that people do not need to be completely free from substance abuse. However, illegal substances (drugs/alcohol) cannot be used on property, and when a person is on property they can't pose a problem to themselves or others. There is not a limit on the amount of time to stay there, so a person can stay from a few days to a year or two if needed. At the facility people have their own room in which to lock their belongings, hot meals are provided at night by different churches, and churches around Seattle - including Faith Lutheran - pack and deliver sack lunches for residents to eat on the weekends or during the day if they are out job hunting or working.

There were two things that especially stood out about The Oaks facility. One was a big rewiring project that was in process because the building, while a solid structure, did not have updated circuitry. As a result, washing machines leaked and did not properly clean clothes and dryers could not be used because they would overload the circuits. People had difficulty cleaning their clothes well, which in turn made being in society and searching for employment more difficult. Once the wiring project is finished they will be able to run a number of washers and dryers at normal capacity with the results of clean, dry, and good smelling clothes. A second stand out was that 40% of the people who have used the facility are now in permanent housing. The Oaks provides transition services and there has been a number of low-income housing units built in the nearby community into which they can transition. Because it is affordable, housing is possible on a minimum wage salary.

The Elizabeth Gregory Home is a day shelter for anyone who identifies as a woman. Open from 9:00-4:30 it provides day respite to women who are unsheltered. Many women stay awake at night to protect themselves from harm, so there are recliner chairs they can sleep in. Hot meals

as well as sack meals to go are available. There are individual shower facilities and hygiene materials/towels can be borrowed. Also available are laundry machines, computers, and a soundproof phone booth. Many of the mental health services are conducted online, so the soundproof booth offers privacy for therapy calls. There are protocols in place for frequency of use and caring for the facility. A Health Navigator supports women in connecting with dental, medical, and mental health services, including substance abuse programs and trauma therapy, applying for Medicaid, and learning to manage medications and other health-related needs. Medical and dental health mobile clinics visit the site regularly to provide services to the women. Hairdressers volunteer regularly to provide haircuts. These many services are provided from a small space. It used to be the basement Sunday School rooms of University Lutheran Church. Elizabeth Gregory was a member of the church who had a passion for working with the unhoused, especially women trying to survive the situation, so when the nonprofit started in 2001 it was named for her.

On our tour and talk with the director (it is only possible to volunteer if you are over the age of 18), we learned lots about nonprofit funding, intentional use of the space, protocols, consequences, how they handle problems that arise, and how the staff sustains their own well-being when working in a role that constantly challenges the heart. I took notes and will write a longer Holy Moments piece about the Elizabeth Gregory Home at a later date.

Back at church a Faith high schooler showed us the Hygiene Pantries outside of Faith, which were built and are maintained by her Girl Scout troop; they meet at the church. Lunch was sandwiches then we were off again for an afternoon of volunteering. Our whole group of Faith and Peace people went to Bridge of Promise, a day facility for people with significant developmental disabilities. As we arrived, a music therapist was starting her session with the group and we joined in. We sang silly songs that one perhaps might sing with kindergarteners, danced with ribbons, and chatted between songs with the clients. Each person's disability was a bit different, and some people were verbal while others were not. We played bingo together and celebrated the birthday of one of the gentlemen attending for the day. We had a wonderful time! When I thanked one of the leaders of the program he commented that they're never quite sure what to expect when a big group comes to volunteer, so they tend to hold low expectations and not expect the best. He said they're not always sure how people will respond. He liked that we jumped right and were comfortable from the get-go, that we treated everyone with respect, and he wants us back anytime we possibly can come. People are people, and of course we let that lead our actions. Faith Lutheran members will have opportunities to volunteer at their own church site come Fall when Bridge of Promise will open a third site in their basement fellowship hall area.

Back at church we played games for a bit then our group made dinner for everyone. So many people came that we ran out of the main food! After dinner we did our final evening debriefing and devotions. It lasted almost two hours because we had so much to reflect on with awe and happiness from the day. Conversation was rich, funny, and heartfelt.

The day ended with some people going for a run around the neighborhood, then showers and more incredible conversation.

None of us really wants to come back to Wisconsin. We'd like the mission trip to last another week, please.

Closing highlights by Pastor Shannyn:

The Mission trip was a twist on what we once did, showing how we ground ourselves and use our roots, while adapting to the current needs of individuals, households, and families. There was a deep eagerness by people of all ages to participate. In the end the age range spanned 4yo-82yo. People joined via Zoom and in person. There was positive feedback of the ability to adjust schedules and participate in some areas but not have to commit time-wise to all. This made it possible for more people to participate in ways that were lifegiving and worked with individual schedules. There was a balanced approach of hands on, learning, and fellowship opportunities which was well received. A big thank you to everyone who helped and joined in together in numerous ways.

It was beneficial to have a group join us from Wisconsin. Not only did it provide a base number of participants for each learning, service, and fellowship experience but it also allowed the people of Faith to articulate and explain the current partnerships. As someone said, "If we didn't have people to tell these stories to who didn't know about our area, we wouldn't have shared them in the same way." It allowed us to share our why, our experiences, the needs of the community, and the ongoing development of service and outreach. It also gave the people from Faith an opportunity to ask about the ministries happening in Wisconsin.

If you were part of the mission trip in any way, please share your stories and your experiences. Please share your learning and what made you excited or opened your eyes with awareness. We look forward to doing this again next summer and hope you are already excited. I know I am!

Pastor Shannyn