

***Global Interfaith
Partnership
Pilgrimage to Kenya***



***reflecting on your journey
through the eyes of faith***

A pilgrimage is a journey undertaken in the light of a story. A great event has happened; the pilgrim hears the reports and goes in search of the evidence, aspiring to be an eyewitness. The pilgrim seeks not only to confirm the experience of others firsthand but to be changed by the experience.

Pilgrims often make the journey in company, but each must be changed individually; they must see for themselves, each with his or her own eyes. And as they return to ordinary life the pilgrims must tell others what they saw, recasting the story in their own terms.

Paul Elie, *The Life you Save May Be Your Own*

- How do you see yourself as a pilgrim on this journey?
- How will you make note of what you have seen and how you have changed, such that you will be able to tell others the story in your own terms?

1. In the name of god, the most beneficent, the most merciful

2. All appreciation, gratefulness and thankfulness are to Allah alone, lord of the worlds

3. The most beneficent, the most merciful

4. The possessor of the day of judgment

5. Only You do we worship, and only from You do we seek help

6. Direct all of us to the straight path

7. The way of those on whom you have bestowed your grace, not the way of those who have earned your anger, nor of those who have lost their way and are astray

Al Fatiha: The Opening (the first chapter in the Qur'an)

- What is your prayer for this experience?

***My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually
doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.
And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this, You will lead me by the right road
although I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.***

Thomas Merton

"Verily all actions are judged by their intentions."

Hadeeth (one of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad)

- What are your desires about how this journey will allow you to grow in your understanding of faith?
- What fears do you carry?

A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

- In what ways do you feel yourself being stretched by your experience in Kenya?
- How do you see yourself developing "new dimensions"?

Open my eyes so that I may behold wondrous things. (Psalm 119:18)

- What may affect your willingness or ability to experience a new culture with open eyes (e.g., assumptions, deeply-held beliefs, prior experiences, fears, etc.)?
- What new wonders do you behold?
- What are you learning to appreciate about the Kenyan people, culture and environment?

Let us then make it our aim to work for peace and to strengthen one another. (Romans 14:19)

- How do you see people in Kenya working for peace and strengthening one another in the midst of deep social problems?
- What are you learning about what it means to “strengthen one another”?
- In what ways does your experience in Kenya affect the way you feel called to work for peace?

Live in such a way that those who know you, but don't know God, will come to know God because they know you.

(Author unknown)

- How has God been revealed to you through the people you have met in Kenya?
- Has your image or understanding of God been stretched or challenged because of this experience?

I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little. I can do all things through the One who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11-13)

- How has this experience made you more aware of how little _____ (knowledge...experience...understanding...etc.) you really have?
- What do you believe you are being strengthened to do?

There are only wispy walls and leaky roofs between us. The planet is in fact one interwoven web of life. The command to love my neighbor as I do myself is not an admonition to be nice: It is a statement of truth like the law of gravity. However much and in whatever way I love my neighbor, that will turn out to be in the way I love myself. If I pour contempt upon my neighbor, hatred will recoil upon me.

Only a world where all communities feel vulnerable, and therefore connected to all other communities, can prevent such acts of rage and mass murder.

The sukkah not only invites our bodies to become physically vulnerable, but also invites our minds to become vulnerable to new ideas. To live in the sukkah for a week, as Jewish tradition teaches, would be to leave behind not only the rigid walls and towers of our cities, but also our rigidified ideas, our assumptions, our habits, our accustomed lives.

By leaving our houses, we create the time and space to reflect upon our lives... For we have built a culture that has little space for the sukkah of reflection, of hospitality to new, uncomfortable ideas, as it does for the sukkah of vulnerability and physical discomfort.

Arthur Waskow

- How has this experience made you feel vulnerable? How have you been challenged to “leave behind” cherished ideas, assumptions, and habits?
- How has your awareness of your own vulnerability in this experience connected you with the vulnerability of the Kenyans you have met?

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; live peaceably with all. (Romans 12:15-16)

- How do cultural, language, economic and racial barriers make it difficult for you to rejoice and weep with Kenyans you have met?
- Have there been moments in which the barriers which separate Americans from Kenyans have been reduced or overcome?

After sitting down with them to eat Jesus took bread, said the blessing, then broke the bread and began to distribute it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus, who immediately vanished from their sight. They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning inside us as he talked to us? (Luke 24:30-32)

- How have your eyes been opened to recognize Sacred presence in the people around you?

Many people live enclosed in their own self-love, a prison defined by the limits of their comfort, possessions, or reputation. Others extend the walls somewhat farther to include one other person or a chosen few. Some draw the boundary around their family, their country, or their church. All these have their value. The question is whether we are open to the voice that calls us deeper. When love is the horizon and not the boundary of our existence, then all things reveal their hidden depth and draw us onward. Not simply all that is beautiful but even the commonplace and routine, things accounted as poor and worthless, can serve as windows on the infinite.

Robert Ellsberg, *The Saints Guide to Happiness*

- How have you experienced “the voice that calls us deeper” in this experience?
- Where have you discovered “hidden depth” or “windows on the infinite” during this experience?

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

(1 John 4:7-8)

49:13 “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

“Do not be people without minds of your own, saying that if others treat you well you will treat them well, and that if they do wrong you will do wrong to them. Instead, accustom yourselves to do good if people do good and not to do wrong (even) if they do evil.”

Muhammad, son of Abdullah,

May peace and the blessings of God be upon him.

- What does it really mean for us to “love” the people of Kenya?
- How have you experienced or come to know God through relationships with Kenyans?

“Some parts of this work are unbearable and take a piece of your soul away. I suspect when I lose the capacity to feel that pain, it will be time to head home. For now, we must rebuild our smiles and our hope and tackle the next Pamela with courage – this place is full of Pamelas...” (Joe Mamlin, in a letter to photographer Karl Grobl, referencing the death of patient who Grobl had photographed.)

- How do you need to grieve what you have experienced on this trip?
- Where do you experience hope and courage?
- How do you “rebuild your smile” when overwhelmed by the problems you encounter?
- How can you be a source of courage and hope to others?

“When we are manipulating, changing, controlling, and fixing, we are not there yet. We cannot be present to something and trying to change it at the same time.”

Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs*

- In what ways might your well-meaning desires to effect change in Kenya affect your relationships with the people?

Like good stewards of the grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

- What personal gifts have you been aware you bring to this experience?
- How do you see those gifts being strengthened?
- How can you share those gifts back home?

Do not forget the things your eyes have seen nor let them slip from your heart all the days of your life. (Deuteronomy 4:9)

- What glimmers do you have about the way this experience will impact your life?
- How has what you have seen affected your heart?
- What can you do to keep this experience from slipping from your heart once you return to your usual life in the United States?

From there Paul and Barnabas sailed back to Antioch. They gathered the people of the church together and told them about all that God had done through them.” (Acts 14:26-27)

- How has God worked through you during your time in Kenya?
- How best can you share with others your experience of God working through you and others?

To enjoy the fruit of your labor is a gift of God. (Ecclesiastes 3:13)

- What have you received during your time in Kenya?
- For what do you give thanks to God?
- How have you been able to give to the people of Kenya?
- How might you continue to give?

“Vocation is defined as the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.”

Frederick Buechner

- In what situations have you experienced “deep gladness” while in Kenya?
- Do you anticipate your Kenya experience will affect your sense of vocation?

This is what Yahweh asks of us, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

- What is your experience in Kenya teaching you about what it means to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly?
- Specifically, where do you feel you are being asked to grow in your understanding of justice, love and walking humbly with God?

Jesus told them, “Go home to your people and tell them what our God has done for you.”
(Mark 5:19)

- Who are the people or situations you want to remember from your experience in Kenya?
- What is it you want to tell others about those people or situations?

Jesus sent them forth...“As for those who don’t receive you, leave that town and shake its dust from your feet...” (Luke 9: 2,5)

- What has challenged you about this experience? Difficult things you have learned about yourself? Others? Issues facing Kenya? Unmet expectations? Disappointments?
- Do you need to shake the dust from your feet regarding any aspect of your journey?

There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.

Nelson Mandela

- How will you help others to understand the ways in which this experience has altered you?
- What are your resources for dealing with the culture shock of returning home?

If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

An Aboriginal Australian woman

- In what ways has your experience in Kenya affected your understanding of what it means to help someone else? Partnership?
- How do you see your own liberation bound up in the liberation of the people of Kenya?

Travel in the earth and see how God began creation. Then God will produce the final creation. Indeed God, over all things, is competent.

Qur’an, Chapter 29; verse 20

- How has your experience affected your understanding of what it means for you to live in hope? To live in trust?

*We cannot merely pray to God to end war;
For the world was made in such a way
That we must find our own path of peace
Within ourselves and with our neighbors.*

*We cannot merely pray to God to root out prejudice;
For we already have eyes
With which to see the good in all people
If we would only use them rightly.*

*We cannot merely pray to God to end starvation;
For we already have the resources
With which to feed the entire world
If we would only use them wisely.*

*We cannot merely pray to God to end despair;
For we already have the power
To clear away slums and to give hope
If we would only use our power justly.*

*We cannot merely pray to God to end disease;
For we already have great minds
With which to search out cures and healings
If we would only use them constructively.*

*Therefore we pray instead
For strength, determination, and will power,
To do instead of merely to pray
To become instead of merely to wish;
That our world may be safe,
And that our lives may be blessed.*

Rabbi Jack Riemer (adapted)