

Departure day!

In just a couple of hours, I will be leaving Dover to drive to Dulles Airport, a good 2 1/2 hours away, for a trip of a lifetime -- Southern India, to provide extensive children's ministry programs in churches there, and to teach Jr. Cotillion.

I've always admired the people of India. I think they are the most beautiful people physically on the face of the earth, their food is incredible (I wake up in the middle of the night often craving it!), and the Indian dress for women, the saris, is lovely. Oh, and the children are just precious. For as long as I can remember, I've always wanted to adopt a child from India, but it just hasn't been possible circumstantially. Our family's life has been touched greatly by the humility and kindness of these gentle people. Our children's pediatricians are Indian, as is my primary care physician, my radiologist who taken great care of me since we arrived in Dover, and my precious son was delivered by an Indian OB/Gyn in Raleigh.

The preparations for this trip have included one miracle after another. The following story is how it all came into being. After seeing a program at church in late February about a United Methodist Church team traveling to the Congo to provide needed medical care, I thought how fun it would be to travel with a team in the future, where I could provide Children's programs, as I have wonderful memories of the fabulous Children's Ministries programs my children participated in when I was a member of Bible Study Fellowship. In addition, I thought, perhaps, I could teach Jr. Cotillion in a cross-cultural exchange. I held onto this dream, and the very next Sunday, I felt the dream was confirmed in church. The choir performed "We are Marching in the Light of God," on African drums. The very next day, I called Anne Winters, the Executive Director of the National League of Junior Cotillions and asked her if we were allowed to travel to other countries as missionaries and teach Jr. Cotillion as I wanted to go to the Congo in the future. She asked, "How about India first, as we've been asked to travel there sometime and teach?" India -- my dream country, absolutely I would go, when such a trip could be arranged. I thought perhaps it was maybe three years away. I never dreamed that six months later I would actually be boarding a plane with my suitcases packed with gifts for the children in the orphanage, arts and crafts supplies for an extensive Children's Ministry program we'll be providing in the little villages around Madras and other parts of Southern India. Plus, I have 15 pairs of Jr. Cotillion white gloves for the young ladies packed as we will be teaching Jr. Cotillion to the minister's children and the many children of Hope Home. This is a wonderful opportunity for me to slow down and let God oversee this effort, as I will be working through an interpreter when I teach the Bible lessons, tell those favorite Bible stories, and lead the children through craft projects we've always enjoyed doing with our own children.

In preparing for this trip, I've experienced one God-Wink after another. (If you haven't read *When God Winks*, by Squire Russell, you must read it. What a treat!) In May, when I applied for my India Visa, I went to the post office, where Bill, a strong Christian gentleman, helped me finalized my papers. The man standing behind me was from India, and the woman behind him had been a missionary in India. And it has been that way ever since -- when I was preparing for the trip and perhaps a little nervous about it, God would send a native of India across my path to give me encouragement! It happened just this past Saturday. I was watching my children's' Karate Class and catching up on bill paying, and a fellow Karate student came up to me and asked me what I was doing. Michael and I have been members of Karate for about the same length of time -- he's a much better student at it than I, and he's preparing for his black belt test. I've always been impressed by his grace and athletic ability but also his calm and thoughtful nature. When I told him I was going to India on Monday for 10 days and was getting the household caught up before I left, he told me he was from India, and that he had been adopted at 18 months from a Mother Teresa orphanage by Americans who were stationed in Belgium.

Everyone has been so generous towards this effort: my church has helped significantly, as have friends in Dover and from the Beach area, and members of my Middletown-Odessa Rotary Club and members of the Southern New Castle Rotary Club. Even a cashier at a local department store donated to my effort, as I was trying to purchase the backpack and walking shoes for the trip; I had the money for those, but my next stop was going to be a craft store to purchase more supplies, and I was short of cash. The donated items will hopefully be such a blessing to the children in the orphanage, and Pastor Rajan and Beckye's children, and other pastors' children we'll meet along the way. I have probably 50 pairs of crew socks and anklets, dozens of packages of crayons, supplies for rainbows, Joseph's coats, white doves, a beloved Fishers of Men project, book bags for school, and lovely clothes for the children donated by Georgia Renck of Camilla Cottage. Yours truly is taking her wardrobe on her back in a pink back pack that can be brought on as carry-on luggage. My husband, knowing full well what my closets look like, is having a hard time believing that! (When it comes to clothes, I still have not reached the level of minimalist, as it is hard parting with things such as my first interview suit (a size 2 and I'm now a size 10), my pageant gowns, and things I hope I'll be able to get into someday (NOT happening, I'm sure, but I can always hope!))

There have been some struggles as well. Right after school was out, I contracted a terrible cold, which turned into sinusitis and bronchitis. I was sick for three weeks and could not begin to be vaccinated until I was well. Once I did start my vaccines, I had a terrible reaction to the Typhoid shot, where my fever spiked to 102 the day we were to leave for vacation, and I slept all day. But by that evening, I was fine. I've started the malaria preventative meds, and so far, so good. No nausea, which is a plus for me!

In preparing for this trip, I look back and see how God, with a tremendous sense of humor, has toughened me up a bit. First of all, to prepare me for the hot temperatures over there, its been very, very hot over here in Delaware. To save money on our electricity bill, we don't turn on the A/C in our house until we're going to be there for several hours, which means that the house has stayed at a constant 85 degrees F. all summer. We've utilized the ceiling fans, etc. I find I'm getting used to it. Our summer vacation was also a character-building experience for me, including an 8-mile hike without water bottles (I'm not doing that in India), getting lost on that waterless, 8-mile hike, flies and gnats, an aborted camping trip where the temperatures plunged into the 50s and we were without blankets, etc. , transportation issues, and general discomfort a good bit of the time. However, I retained my sense of humor throughout it all, with a good story to boot. I just pray I stay healthy throughout the entire trip and have plenty of water bottles close by.

Yesterday, our church service, led by Pastor Jim Dorton and the Youth Missions Team who had just returned from five days in Zanesville, OH, was such an encouragement to me. These incredible youth spent hours each day performing extensive repairs on homes in that area, building handicap ramps, new porches, and providing tremendous love to the people they ministered to. Their theme was Living Love Out Loud -- providing the much-needed practical help this community needed through the Love of Jesus. Their stories were such an encouragement to me -- Jim reminded us all that God often does not call the abled; He enables the called. I will hold onto that throughout today and everyday, as I will be traveling throughout a country and culture I know about only through relationships, books, food, and movies.

I will write more as time permits. Whomever is reading this, please continue to pray for travel mercies for both Elizabeth Anne and me, exciting and thoughtful Children's Ministries programs for the children in and around Southern India, and wellness and health for all of us, and God's perfect timing and provision on this trip. For future entries, please go to www.wyomingumc.com.

Lisa