

We Traveled to Hear God's Word

“Are we going to Summer Services this year?” our five-year-old asked.

“We would love to go,” I answered, “but it’s very far from where we live.”

Our plans had not yet been confirmed as to when and how we would travel from our home in the Toronto-area to LLC’s Summer Services in Seattle. We had taken all of our children in our motorhome across the continent in 2013, when services were in Spokane. We were aware of the distance and the amount of planning involved in such a trip. There is limited space in a motorhome, so packing had to be efficient. Essentials included camping gear, food and clothes, and priority was made for strollers, bikes and a few toys. Non-essentials were limited—for example, with the ten children we had at that time, and two adults, a minimum of two pairs of shoes each meant 24 pairs!

Special Memories Remain

We all have great memories of our previous trip. It was adventurous in many ways. Learning how to operate a large motorhome for the first time on the road and at campsites proved to be a challenge at times, which we now can look back at with humor. Learning about the limitation of the RV reserves of water, power and waste were good lessons prior to arriving at services.

Driving through vast lands of ever-changing landscapes was beautiful and scenic. Some highlights included the Badlands, Yellowstone and the Rocky Mountains. We marveled at the beauty of God’s creation. Each day on the road brought adventure in new areas. New experiences and memories were made swimming, fishing, biking and hiking. Unfortunately, the “old Adam” made his way along in the ride at times. Tiredness of the journey resulted in impatience, arguments and offences that needed to be cared for with the gospel. The journey continued again with joy and renewed strength!

The days many times ended with roasting hotdogs and marshmallows over a campfire and singing songs of Zion. Evening discussions were about adventures of the day and what the plans were for the next day. The children often asked how many days were left until we would get to services. That, of course, was the destination and the biggest highlight of the trip!

Bedtime usually went well as the children were tired from the travels and went to sleep soon after bedtime prayers and the preaching of the gospel. When the silence of the night fell and all was quiet, I felt like a mother bird with all her babies tucked in the nest, safe and secure from the world around us. It was then that a silent prayer was sent to the Heavenly Father, that He would always keep us together in this precious faith and protect us in this evil world.

Trip Plans Began Again!

This year plans were different with services in Seattle, but with not enough time available to make the trek across the country. Yet, all of our 12 children desired to go. We started to consider options early and after much planning decided to fly to Vancouver, B.C., rent a RV there and drive to Seattle. The excitement ran high when the children learned they would be flying in an airplane. Our four-year-old promptly packed her backpack and proudly

presented it filled with stuffed animalsÑthey, too, apparently wanted to go to services! The younger children eagerly began doing extra chores around the house to earn money for the candy shop at services.

After much planning and organizing, we left the house early July 4th to catch our flight. Most of our children had never flown before, so this was an exciting experience. We got some curious looks at the airport and many inquiries about the size of our familyÑwere they really all ours? After five hours of flying, rental arrangements made and a shopping trip for necessities, we were ready to head south to Seattle. Even though the traveling had made us all tired, excitement began to build again as we neared the services site.

Precious Visits, God’s Word Fed

It was necessary for us to be at the site early for the LLC Board meeting, but we were happy to learn that two other Board members and their families were coming early as well. This meant that the following day while our husbands were in meetings, we wives could visit and our children had friends to play with. This was a special time. We were able to visit about the most important matters and encourage one another in our similar walks of life. The children made new friendships, played together all day and were able to familiarize themselves with the service site.

The days had finally arrived that we had been anxiously waiting and planning for. Summer services had begun and were being held in a beautiful location amid lush greenery and beautiful mountains. The guests seemed happy and excited to be there. God gave precious Words to His servants. As so many times before, our hearts were warmed throughout the service days. This was a special time again to be together with many dear believers all needing to hear the beautiful messages from God, to be reassured in our walks of faith and encouraged to look forward to that destination that awaits all those who believe.

Our family’s youth had many opportunities also to attend the services and the youth discussion. They enjoyed their time and mentioned many times afterwards that this trip was better than they expected. The younger children commented that they enjoyed meeting new friends and listening with them during services. They said that playing at the playground and frequent stops at the candy store were fun, too!

After services, we had the opportunity to visit with dear friends in the local area, where we had good discussions, sharing our joys and sorrows. It feels as though we are all walking together on this journey of life, lifting and encouraging one another, with heaven as our goal. On the return trip to B.C. we had a chance to see the coast and the beautiful mountains, camp in various locations and enjoy the holiday time with our family before flying back home.

Thankful Hearts

God richly blessed our trip again! Even though there is much planning and work involved, we have never regretted going to services. All of our services trips have been uplifting and strengthening to our faith. We’ve hoped our children will learn that mom and dad saw it important to take them to services and we’re so thankful that God has given us that opportunity. We hope that they will throughout life look forward to services as the highlight of their summer, too!

Mary Hotari

Discussion Points

1. Do you have memories in your life from special trips to services? Share these.
2. If you haven't been able to travel with your family to services far away, have you taken part by listening online? What were your experiences?
3. Tell of friendships that have developed because of meeting others at LLC Summer Services, or other such service occasions. Have these friends in faith remained dear to you?
4. God's Word says that we should gather together all the more as the end time comes near. Why do you think He instructs in this way?