

## A Devotional for "A Time to Serve": A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

*By Rev. Mary Beth Mankin, President, AB Women's Ministries of Colorado*

"... For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me (Matthew 25:35-36)."

"A picture is worth a thousand words"... and yet, seeing something in person is many times better than a picture! In March, as part of a mission trip from our region, I visited missionaries Tom and Terry Myers in Bulgaria, and met many people who benefit from their ministry.

When is it "A Time to Serve"? Whenever we see a need and have the means to meet the need. I witnessed ways in which the Myers serve Jesus by serving others. And I learned that American Baptist women's giving has funded much of their ministry!

White Cross has sponsored the literacy classes for the Roma children who come to Sofia Baptist Church for mid-week tutoring in math and in reading and writing Bulgarian. It was nice to put names with faces and to get smiles from these children, who have so little of the material necessities of life, but who enjoy learning! White Cross money has also fed and clothed some refugees.

We met members of the outreach team who visit the women that stand by the road to await their clients that purchase sex from them. The team gets to know these women by name, offering God's love through coffee and cookies, as well as Scripture cards, literature, and books for their children. A Break the Chain and Stop the Pain grant

has helped fund this ministry, as well as provide education for the outreach team.

Particularly impressive is the vision that is being realized in the Sofia Baptist Church's new building project, the Hope Center. This six story building, well on its way to completion, will house their church worship center, Bible classes, and literacy classes, as well as a feeding station for homeless and single moms, medical and dental clinics, a Christian library/bookstore, and a coffee shop, where job training will occur. Many thanks to Pennsylvania/Delaware women whose special project has supported this ministry!

Jesus told [Thomas], "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed (John 20:29)." And blessed are all the women who have believed in our mission work, and who serve by giving, even without seeing, so that God's love reaches "the least of these" in Bulgaria and around the world.