

Right Place to Be

Why return to the World Spirit Forum in Arosa, Switzerland, year after year? For the scenic train ride up into the Alps from Zurich, to see the red rock of Arosa, for the cheese fondue in the Tschuggenhutte or for the gorgeous walk down the mountains by torch-light? I have returned to Arosa, Switzerland three times for the conversations I've had there. I have met amazing people who try to live life large, who work on global projects, and who feel something bigger is calling them to this work.

Yes, I usually fly in a snowstorm by attempting to travel to Zurich from Chicago in January. Since I don't speak German yet, I also do things like nearly get on the wrong train, and ask a woman at the Zurich Hauptbahnhof about the correct train to which she answers, "You are very wrong. Upstairs." For me, it has been worth it.

Faces come to mind: From the second World Spirit Forum, my friend Colinne Bartel, an entrepreneur I met there; having dinner with the whole crew gathered with Mike Anson, Eric Gerelle, Grant Stapleton, and Colin Morley or meeting Father Terry Gallagher, a kindred spirit. Over the years I've valued Sven Nieder's eye for detail, Andre Niedermann's global interests, Peter Hesse's dedicated work in Haiti, and the wisdom of both Teri Mahaney and Diane Longboat. Getting to meet Dr. Jane Goodall and her vice president Mary Lewis was indeed a highlight, at the third World Spirit Forum in 2006. Of course by mentioning some people, countless people and conversations go unnamed here, people I admire, people whose presence in this world I am thankful for. And, each year there's a gathering of such souls in a ski village in the Swiss Alps, as the World Spirit Forum gathers people to talk, dream, and demonstrate ways to do good in this world.

When I am in Arosa, I always feel my cup runs over, my spiritual tank refuels. Sure, I stay up too late talking with people, get up too early to gather somewhere, while slightly jetlagged. I marvel at the deep snow and the mountains and the faces of people who are eager to make a difference. That's why I return. I leave Arosa with a handful of business cards and email addresses. The World Spirit Forum reminds me this is really a much smaller world than I imagined. For a few days in January, people from Russia and Thailand, India and Australia, from near and far gather to listen and speak about things of the spirit. This forum occurs before people gather in Davos to discuss economic issues. I trust that our gathering in Arosa makes a difference, for me, it certainly does.



Photo: Sven Nieder

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I'm grateful to have a number of roles in life. I am ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA). I have been a pastor in churches in Springfield, Peoria, and Rochester, Illinois. I am currently a parish associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Normal, Illinois and have been active in our Presbytery's partnership with churches in north-eastern Brazil (Brasil).

I write daily in a number of forms; whether its sermons, essays, or poetry. My writing, besides being plastered on the refrigerator as grocery lists, has appeared in the Chicago Tribune, Spirituality & Health magazine, Writer's Digest magazine, Church & Society, denominational publications, www.rhinopoetry.org, and in anthologies by Outrider Press.