

New Vision 2002-03 Journal

Date: 9/24/2002

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Wow!! What an amazing past few days. Many emotions have passed through me. From the sorrow of leaving camp and the community that was created after 5 weeks of training, to anticipation, nervousness and excitement of our first booking, to joy when we arrived at our first church, and finally, to peace after we completed our first day on the road. In particular, the first booking we had (Alden, MN) was the perfect experience for me. I had been at this church on my North Central team and it was a pure joy to be there again, catching up with familiar faces, exchanging hugs and smiles. In addition, we were blessed with 7 partners!!! Amazing! God has blessed us abundantly! There are truly no words. As I sit here typing, I'm not even sure how to express everything. Most of the fear of doing this again and adjusting to life on team has subsided, and has been replaced with contentment, peace, and joy. I know I'm where the Lord has placed me and directed me. I thank Thee.



Tiffany Schmader

Date: 9/26/2002

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Today we drove back to Minneapolis and recorded our song for the team CD. It was nice to have a little break after our first few bookings, especially since we ran into three other international teams!! We also got to spend some time in the office which is always fun – I don't think the staff really minds it either because they get to stop working for a bit! The hard part of being back here and seeing familiar faces is that I have to say goodbye again. Goodbyes are hard enough the first time so I really don't enjoy dragging them out over several days like we've been doing.

I still don't think I've adjusted fully to the fact that I'm actually spending another year on the road and that I have five new teammates to work with. I know I'm supposed to be here, but I just haven't figured out why. Maybe that will come, maybe it won't. I'm still tired and not as focused as I would like to be, but I know that God can and will still use me no matter how I feel emotionally or spiritually. Plus my teammates are wonderful. They're so understanding and comforting as I continue the transition process to a new team. I am constantly amazed at all the blessings God gives to His people, and also usually frustrated that I don't take enough time to think about them and thank God for them. Today, though I'm a bit sad and confused, I have been blessed indeed.



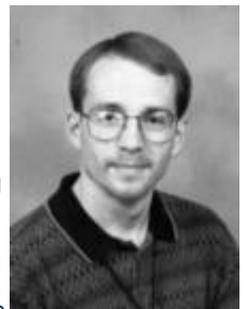
Sarah Liggett

Date: 9/28/2002

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Welcome to the beginning...we have come through training, "survived" our first few programs, recorded our song for the team disc and completed our "on the road" training without having to leave the Twin Cities. We have bid farewell (multiple times in some cases) to the other international teams that stayed with us as our recording schedules coincided and said goodbye to our wonderful office staff (don't worry, we'll still call in faithfully), and with all of that behind us the great state of Minnesota is for the first time visible only in our van's rear view mirror (metaphorically speaking, of course – we can't actually see anything out the rear view mirror except for the trailer). Six weeks into our year together, two weeks after commissioning and one week after the end of training, it finally feels like our tour has really begun. Of course, it begins with a "housing only" at Rachel's old camp in Iowa, but begin it did. We thought about going into nearby Ames for supper, but opted for the closer Story



Steve Ellwein

City instead, which turned out to be a good decision given that Iowa State fans were busily turning Ames into a hotbed of celebratory activity following their team's defeat of Nebraska. (On the same day that Iowa beat Penn State, no less – congratulations, Dad; sorry, Tiffany.)

This is my second year with Youth Encounter, having spent the past year on Watermark. When this fact comes up in the few host homes we have had so far, variations of two questions are common: "Did you enjoy last year?" and "Are you ready to do this again?" The first one seems obvious – yes, or I wouldn't be here – but combined with the second it sometimes gives me pause. Because I have done this before, I now understand what my second-year teammate meant early last year when he said "I know how good it can be, and I know how bad it can be." As other alumni will agree, some of the best experiences of my life to date happened in the last year, and some days I wanted to be anywhere else. Am I truly ready to get on this roller coaster again, especially given that it may be too soon after I got off the first ride to fully know if I enjoyed it? One of my greatest struggles in these next 11 months will be the temptation to take the square pegs of last year's experience – the processes, the personalities, the things I loved, the things I didn't care for – and try to make them fit into the round holes of this year's experience, so much of which is yet to be discovered, as opposed to relived. One of my greatest comforts will lie in a phrase that jumped out at me during both trips through training – "God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called." God gives us the power not merely to endure but to thrive in all situations. I remain confident of my calling, believing that I am indeed still where God wants me. Knowing that, taking the highs and lows of last year as a whole and looking forward at what is to come, the answer to both questions is yes. Here's to beginnings. – Isaiah 6:8

Date: 10/1/2002

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Hi Everybody!!! Its my first journal of the year...hooray! Its been really neat to be traveling through Kansas for the past few days. We've had the opportunity to meet many people who are very important to Sarah and its always nice to get to know your teammates through those that they love. We've gotten to meet her family, college friends, and church community...what a blessing! I'm really enjoying the road so far, we have a good time together as a team, and even in the little rough spots we tend to put the person before the problem. I have to admit it's a bit hard to get used to new people and new ways of doing things, but soon it will all be "normal" and I'll forget that I ever thought twice about it. It's funny what a person can take for granted. Sometimes I take for granted that we should know the most efficient way to set up and tear down our equipment because my Captive Free team had it down to a science 2 years ago, but how can I expect that with an entirely new group of people who have only had the opportunity to go through the process a handful of times together. Or maybe I'll take for granted that we should be able to automatically communicate everything effectively right off the bat even though I'm still learning how each person works and how each of them give and receive information.

I think I tend to do the same thing with God. He blesses me in so many ways that I never notice. I try and put His blessings into a box labeled neatly with the things I think blessings should look like. But often, I overlook many of them because they come in forms that I may not be looking for...or maybe in ways that I'm not used to. God has a way of mixing life up for us, and showing Himself to us in new ways. I'm learning to look in unexpected places and not to take Him...or my teammates for granted. Look around today and see what blessings you've been overlooking or taking for granted.

Until next time...God keep you,



Rachel Bolte

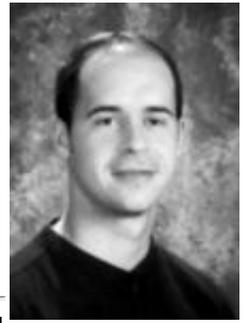
Date: 10/3/2002

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

I love being on the road. This lifestyle of ministry is my ideal way of living. We carry only what we need and most of that is provided for by others. Being about God's business

and playing music, I tell you, this is the life. Being on New Vision this year is much different than my time spent on North Central 6 years ago. The schedule this year is more relaxed, giving us more time for other ministries, of course my teammates are all different, and the area of the United States we visit is different as well. I am excited for this year as we prepare to go to Australia and worship with the people there and experience a new culture. I can only imagine how God is going to use us this year.
God's Peace – Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 10/5/2002

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Hey all, its Ryan McLuen reporting from Kansas. We are in Lavant at the moment, and having a blast. Things are going very well but at times it feels as if we didn't have a ton to do, which would seem a good thing, but we haven't had much consistency in our schedule yet, and it is hard. But as time goes on, we are getting more into the swing of things. I thank you all for your prayers and support, we need as much prayer as we can get. :) Tiffany had to go to her sister's wedding, so she left on Wednesday and we have had to do a few programs without her, which were kinda rough at first, but I think we are all good now. We do look forward to when she comes back on Monday, it seems that you don't realize how much a person is needed on a team until they aren't there and you have to fill in the spaces that are left. With Tiff gone, we see all of the places in which she fills, and it was tough to cover all of it, and we still weren't able to do it the best.



Ryan McLuen

God is working on our team as well, He is stretching and helping us each to grow in our own ways, and together we are growing tighter and tighter. At first I wasn't sure how this was all gonna work, and I hoped that our team clicked well together and didn't separate and cause tension and just be an awkward experience. But that isn't the case at all, at first there was some tension as we just got used to each other and being a team that had to live with each other for a year. And since that realization, there has been much growth personally and emotionally, as well as spiritually. And as a person who is very new to Youth Encounter and the team experience, I see this all from fresh eyes and it is invigorating and exciting to see all that God has in store for us as we head out each and every day and trust in His unfailing love.

I would like to share a verse that means a lot to me, and is something that should be thought about every day. It is from Romans, chapter 12 verse 1, and it reads, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship." I share this with you, so that when you think of "worship", it isn't looked at as just a time of singing. That can be a part of it, but it is not what encompasses the essence of worship. It is a lifestyle, one in which everything that you have is given to God. Your bodies and all that they contain are to be offered back to God to be used for all that He has in store for us. I hope that this passage means as much to you as it does to me. I thank you all for the blessings that you have been in my life and my teams. I love each of you..

Date: 10/8/2002

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

We just had a day off after a Sunday evening program in Lakewood, CO (a suburb of Denver). I am always amazed at the love and generosity that host families give to teamers – they are so willing to give of their time and sacrifice their own comfort in order to make us feel at home. I love so many aspects of this ministry, but my favorite is definitely time spent in host homes. It's a joy to watch parents interact with their kids and to get to know families on a deeper level.



Sarah Liggett

I have loved the time we've had in Colorado – the mountains are beautiful and we have been blessed with some beautiful fall days. On Monday I spent an hour hiking and running on Green Mountain, a popular spot for the bikers and hikers of Denver. God reveals Himself so much to me in

nature. When I actually take time to soak up the beauty of His creation, I'm reminded of my smallness, yet I'm also reminded of how carefully and lovingly God designed me. I am reminded of Psalm 139, verses 13-14: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

Date: 10/10/2002

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

The past day, as I've looked at the geography around me, I'm amazed at how much variety God has placed in this world!!! Being from the trees and hills of western Pennsylvania, it's incredible to see a brand new landscape: deserts, mountains, mesas. After a few days without bookings, tonight was a welcomed evening! And, it was a unique program for us, as we were invited to the Navajo Lutheran Mission on the Navajo Nation in Arizona. We were welcomed with Navajo Tacos, which were served on fry bread. Cool to eat authentic food and to be welcomed into their culture. As we were preparing for the program, many kids were around and it was fun to talk with them. During the program, their smiles were so encouraging. And after the program, we were asked to pray with a woman who had recently become a Christian. We joined in prayer, both in English and in the Navajo language. It's just so neat to be reminded at how big God is and how he knits us all together as a community of believers: different languages, different cultures, from hills and trees to deserts and mesas. Thanks, Lord, for this precious reminder and encouragement.



Tiffany Schmader

Date: 10/12/2002

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

One of the wonders of this universe God has created is that no matter how much we think we have traveled, there is always uncharted territory waiting to be "discovered." This week has brought me to the states of New Mexico and Arizona for the first time, bringing my state count to 44. (Now I just have to vacation in Hawaii and go on a team that tours the Southeast and I'll hit 50.) Unfortunately, uncharted territory can sometimes be dangerous, as proven by our last few days. First, it is a well-documented fact that the only parts of the U.S. that do not observe Daylight Savings Time are most of Indiana and the whole of Arizona. Yeah, that's what we thought, too. As it happens, the Navajo Nation does indeed observe Daylight Savings Time, something we did not discover until Friday morning. Only then did we realize that when our hosts in Many Farms, AZ asked us at 4:00 the afternoon before if we were ready for dinner (when it was scheduled for 4:30) and at 5:45 if we were ready to start our program (when it was scheduled for 6:00) that it was in actuality 5:00 and 6:45, respectively. Fortunately, God's grace and a relaxed (and forgiving) attitude about time on the part of our hosts were working in our favor, making our pronounced embarrassment much less than it could have been. I suppose the whole episode was good preparation for overseas ministry. In terms of time, we and our hosts were saying the same thing but meaning something completely different – or, more accurately, we were just a little bit (say, an hour) out of phase with each other – but eventually an understanding was reached and everything worked out in the end.



Steve Ellwein

Second, there was today. When the day starts with a trip to the hospital, the likelihood of it being a typical day goes down rapidly. The theory is that the cause was some bad hamburger last night, but instead of a day of rehearsal, team meetings and such we had a day at the Yavapai Medical Center in Prescott as two of our number got a few bags' worth of IV fluid to replace what was lost overnight and two more (myself included) battled a fair amount of queasiness. After several hours at the hospital, we headed to our host home armed with the essentials of the "BRAT diet" (bananas, rice, applesauce and toast) and enough Gatorade and ginger ale to feed a small army, or a team. Our host mom was wonderful (she said we "made her feel needed"), and even the healthy among us decided to call it an early night after a long day, especially given that tomorrow morning our first of three worship services (plus Sunday school), which we will be doing with four people, starts at 7:45

a.m. Time and time again, we have been shown that we are absolutely unable to get through this ministry, to say nothing of this life, without God. It is only through his strength and guidance that we are able to make it through our "uncharted" territory, which is not uncharted at all because God has already been there, preparing the way for us. Praise God for his protection and his constant presence with us. – Exodus 15:13

Date: 10/12/2002

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

One of the wonders of this universe God has created is that no matter how much we think we have traveled, there is always uncharted territory waiting to be "discovered." This week has brought me to the states of New Mexico and Arizona for the first time, bringing my state count to 44. (Now I just have to vacation in Hawaii and go on a team that tours the Southeast and I'll hit 50.) Unfortunately, uncharted territory can sometimes be dangerous, as proven by our last few days. First, it is a well-documented fact that the only parts of the U.S. that do not observe Daylight Savings Time are most of Indiana and the whole of Arizona. Yeah, that's what we thought, too. As it happens, the Navajo Nation does indeed observe Daylight Savings Time, something we did not discover until Friday morning. Only then did we realize that when our hosts in Many Farms, AZ asked us at 4:00 the afternoon before if we were ready for dinner (when it was scheduled for 4:30) and at 5:45 if we were ready to start our program (when it was scheduled for 6:00) that it was in actuality 5:00 and 6:45, respectively. Fortunately, God's grace and a relaxed (and forgiving) attitude about time on the part of our hosts were working in our favor, making our pronounced embarrassment much less than it could have been. I suppose the whole episode was good preparation for overseas ministry. In terms of time, we and our hosts were saying the same thing but meaning something completely different – or, more accurately, we were just a little bit (say, an hour) out of phase with each other – but eventually an understanding was reached and everything worked out in the end.



Steve Ellwein

Second, there was today. When the day starts with a trip to the hospital, the likelihood of it being a typical day goes down rapidly. The theory is that the cause was some bad hamburger last night, but instead of a day of rehearsal, team meetings and such we had a day at the Yavapai Medical Center in Prescott as two of our number got a few bags' worth of IV fluid to replace what was lost overnight and two more (myself included) battled a fair amount of queasiness. After several hours at the hospital, we headed to our host home armed with the essentials of the "BRAT diet" (bananas, rice, applesauce and toast) and enough Gatorade and ginger ale to feed a small army, or a team. Our host mom was wonderful (she said we "made her feel needed"), and even the healthy among us decided to call it an early night after a long day, especially given that tomorrow morning our first of three worship services (plus Sunday school), which we will be doing with four people, starts at 7:45 a.m. Time and time again, we have been shown that we are absolutely unable to get through this ministry, to say nothing of this life, without God. It is only through his strength and guidance that we are able to make it through our "uncharted" territory, which is not uncharted at all because God has already been there, preparing the way for us. Praise God for his protection and his constant presence with us. – Exodus 15:13

Date: 10/15/2002

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Journal number 2 for me...and here I am in Sedona, AZ!!! What a blessing to be able to spend time in a familiar place and with family! I've had a wonderful time with my Mom and Bill and it's been neat to be able to share a piece of me with my teammates. God is so evident in His creation here, if you haven't had a chance to experience the beauty of the Sedona red rock formations, I highly recommend it! We played at an assisted living center this morning after a BEAUTIFUL drive down from Flagstaff. The people there were so fun and joined in when we sang some good 'ol hymns. It was a blessing to hear them lifting their voices in praise to God with songs that they obviously knew so well.



Rachel Bolte

I feel so blessed to have had amazing opportunities to see some of God's amazing artistry on this side of the country. Sedona's red rocks are awesome, and on our day off we were at the Grand Canyon...unreal! And there is more to come...I'm in awe!

We're at a church that has never had a team tomorrow, so I'm excited to see how that goes. I know I'm learning and growing every day, I just pray that I stay open to the things that God wants to teach me and the ways He wants to stretch me.

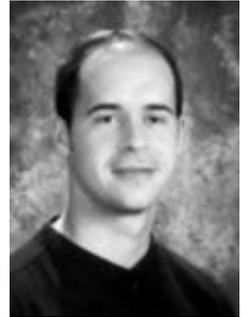
Hello to all other teams out there and all the alum who like to check up on us! I hope and trust that God is using you all in mighty ways! And hello to family and friends...we're having a good time!!! God keep you, Rachel

Date: 10/17/2002

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

Hi all! We are in Mesa, AZ enjoying an October-fest. There are bratwursts and mugs of rootbeer for everyone. Tonight there was no shortage of polkas, lederhosen, and good old German fun. We only played a few songs to add to the festivities, but the people were still more than generous. I very much enjoyed the conversation I had over dinner with two couples from the congregation. They were very friendly and welcoming. Things have been pretty relaxed lately, which is good because this next week is full with programs every night. I am excited to get to do our program more often. God rocks!



Ryan Legler

Date: 10/22/2002

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

San Diego!!!! Weeeeeee! An amazing weekend. Rachel and I got to dip our toes into the Pacific - myself, for the first time ever!!! In addition to experiencing the beach, which included touching the water, building a fire, and sharing with a homeless man, we took a team outing at the San Diego Zoo. What a time?! I am amazed at how many different animals there are. To think that God created all of them to be part of this circle of life! Incredible.



Tiffany Schmader

From San Diego, we headed to Agoura Hills, CA – our host church. What a blessing! It was fun to connect with Pastor Mark, a former teamer, and to meet the congregation that we'll get to spend time with two more times this year!!! We are encouraged by them and are excited and blessed by their hospitality.

And partnership!! Holy amazing – two \$500 partners in back to back programs. We are just humbled. God is good. Wow!

Date: 10/24/2002

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

I love arriving at a church and finding all sorts of fun, unexpected things. For example, last night we arrived at Grace Lutheran in King City, CA and found out that a rummage sale was being held in the church basement! I think we all walked away with more stuff to add to our bags – I just couldn't pass up the opportunity to buy two books for twenty cents. We also picked up some team necessities – like Christmas lights for our van!



Sarah Liggett

I'm enjoying our travels, but as our schedule becomes more hectic I'm finding it hard to balance my free time so that I accomplish all the things I want to. After evening programs, there are very few hours left to chat with host families, communicate with friends and family, journal, e-mail, run, read, and sleep. Usually I get caught up in so many small tasks that I leave myself little if

any time for daily devotions and prayer. Sometimes I feel as if I am more attentive to my physical health than my spiritual health, so this year I'm challenging myself to prioritize and manage my time better. If I take time to renew myself spiritually each day, I can only imagine how much more effective this ministry can be!!!

Date: 10/26/2002

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

We have officially turned the corner in our tour. First, we have reached the halfway point in our circle of the western U.S. and are now making our way north through California. Second, we are almost through our first fully booked week and are learning what it's like to live and work with each other in "real" team life, when we don't have 2-3 housing only days per week. Friday's drive took us away from the coast and through the mountains to Madera and our second straight small sanctuary – another chance to build my skills in flexibility and working in unique situations. Since we loaded our equipment Friday night, Saturday was a late morning for us, giving us a chance to sleep in – well, most of us, anyway.

King City-Madera long drive through mountains, tiny/long sanctuary

Sat morn van adventure (rotate, clean, brakes), atlas wrong (Merced-Stkn 65 not 50)

Program interspersed with WS Gm 6 updates



Steve Ellwein

Date: 10/26/2002

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

We have officially turned the corner in our tour. First, we have reached the halfway point in our circle of the western U.S. and are now making our way north through California. Second, we are almost through our first fully booked week and are learning what it's like to live and work with each other in "real" team life, when we don't have 2-3 housing only days per week. Friday's drive took us away from the coast and through the mountains to Madera and our second straight small sanctuary – another chance to build my skills in flexibility and working in unique situations as our sound tech. Since we loaded our equipment Friday night, Saturday was a late morning for us, giving us a chance to sleep in – well, most of us, anyway. For me, it was yet another early opportunity to get to know our van better. I thought I would just be getting the tires rotated and going to a truck wash to get the last bits of Arizona off of the van & trailer, but the tire place had a recommendation for the brake trouble we had been having. After taking it to yet another place, we confirmed that that was not the problem and that I should take it in again on Monday, bringing the count to three out of four days that will involve me sitting in garages. A lot of the "work" of team life takes place away from the programs, worship services, etc. that most people see, behind the scenes in the 15 jobs that we hold between us. They can be time-consuming or challenging at times, but without them this ministry could not operate.

Today's drive took a little longer than expected, partially due to distance inaccuracies – for those with a Rand McNally Road Atlas, Merced to Stockton is closer to 65-70 miles, not the 50 indicated. Though a little rushed, we got set up in time for a program that was a little more sparsely attended than our hosts had hoped. Of course, tonight was Game 6 of the World Series and we are fairly close to San Francisco (although there were a couple of Angels fans in the congregation as well, and as it turns out they were the ones with reason to celebrate). □ When the World Series began we were in the San Diego-Los Angeles area, and as it has continued we have been making our way north, so it has been interesting to watch the shifting of loyalties between Anaheim and San Francisco even as the interest level has remained high. We thought it appropriate to recognize the sacrifice of those who were at tonight's program by providing updates at a few points and by putting the radio feed through our system afterwards so everyone could hear the end of the game. The variety of things that bring people together never ceases to amaze me – whether it is people gathering to watch other people hitting, throwing, shooting or kicking balls or whether it is people gathering to celebrate



Steve Ellwein

and be encouraged in their relationships with God. Personally, I am thankful for both. Praise God for the work he gives us as part of our ministry, the varied gifts he gives us to carry it out, and for our many opportunities for fun and fellowship. – 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Date: 10/29/2002

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Hello again everyone! I hope you're all doing well wherever you are. Me, I'm in Citrus Heights, CA having a good time and serving JESUS! I guess it doesn't get much better than that. I was able to see family yet again (am I blessed or what!?!?) this past day off. It was much fun and I smiled a lot! Today we drove from Windsor, CA here to Citrus Heights and we met some way fun people. How cool is it that we get to meet new and fun people every day! That's what I'd like to talk about in this journal. I just can't believe how blessed we are by the people we meet as we travel. Almost every day we drive to a new place where we are greeted by a group of friendly faces who volunteer to spoil us for a day or two. It's crazy to me to think of how generous people are to us when they've never even met us before...and they agree to be generous to us before we even arrive! We are welcomed into people's homes, given a place to sleep, a family to belong to, and meals to keep our bellies full all by people who have never even seen us before. You know, the few times I've had time to turn on the news since I've been on team the things I've heard have been downright scary. It's sad to me to know that there is so much good out there that no one ever takes the time to notice. We spend so much time focusing on the negative. Let me tell you some positive things that I think should make the news. First of all...not to toot my own horn, but there are over 80 young adults on the road right now just because they want to love on people and share Jesus around the country and around the world. Second of all, my little nephew is learning how to talk...it happens every day I realize, but think about how awesome it is. And here's the coolest part...he's only one and he's bi-lingual!!! He's a genius! And here's another thing that is pretty cool, I know of people all over the country who are planning mission trips to share Jesus all over the place and planning youth trips to learn more about the Lord and share His love everywhere. I've also run across families who love to help out at homeless shelters and youth who spend their time serving their communities in different ways. And then there is my host Mom who is involved with an outreach ministry for women who are in halfway houses after they've been released from prison! There are plenty of fantastic things happening every day! Let's choose to celebrate those for once... even if you're the only one who passes the GOOD stuff around people will hear something positive during their day!!! God is good let's not forget that He's in charge!!! Have a wonderful and positive day!!!
God's Peace
Rachel<><



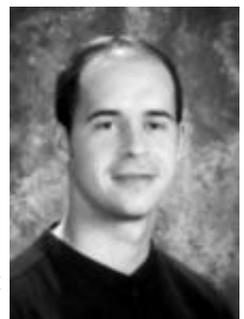
Rachel Bolte

Date: 10/31/2002

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

Things have been exciting lately. Lots of programs to keep us busy. California has been great. We've been to the beach a few times. Host homes have been great. God is blessing our socks off. I am excited because tomorrow we get to do a program on a boat. We are supposed to play on the boat in the marina and then go on a cruise with students from Stanford University. I've never played on a boat before. I hope I don't get sick.
-God's Peace
Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 11/2/2002

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen
Journal Entry:

Hello all of my friends and family, I thank you for your prayers and support in this amazing ministry. I can't believe all of the amazing things that God is doing here on this team and in the lives of all of the people that we meet. There have been so many people that God has had us meet that are so amazing and just show God's love in all that they do and all that they are. Through their generosity and giving, and in their allowing each of the New Vision team to be a part of their lives. It has been an eye opening journey, and I continue to thank God for it. Our list of partners grows more and more in each place that we go to and it has been so great to see how God has blessed others and they are passing that blessing along.



Ryan McLuen

Last night we had a regular program, and it was so much fun. Well, to correct myself, it wasn't really a normal program, because what is that anyways, but it was totally different than anything that we have done, and even more so than my teammates had even heard of. We were near Stanford, and some friends of the congregation of the church/campus ministry had a very large boat. To be more specific it was a 53 foot yacht, and our program was on that large boat. We played for a bunch of college students that were going to Stanford, and were mainly if not all graduate students. Well as we played, the boat was driven around the bay, which turned out to be the San Francisco Bay area, and we got to cruise underneath a very large bridge, it was not the San Francisco Bridge, although that was where we turned around, and we were very close and it was an incredible view. But we also went around Alcatraz, so our journey had its fair share of beautiful scenery. And to top it all of, it was under the cover of night, so everything was lit up and was gorgeous.

Well that concludes my journal for today, but I thank each of you for reading it and supporting this ministry by doing such. I will end with lyrics to a song that some of you may know and some of you may not.

"Hush my love now don't you cry, everything will be alright. Close your eyes and drift in dream, rest in peaceful sleep. If there's one thing I hope I showed you, Hope I showed you. Just give love to all. Oh my love...in my arms tight. Every day you give me life. As I drift off to your world, will rest in peaceful sleep. I know there's one thing that you showed me, That you showed me. Just give love to all, let's give love to all."

Just think about that as you know that God holds you tight in His arms in everything that you are going through.

In Christ,
Ryan McLuen

PS. That song is called Lullaby by Creed

Date: 11/5/2002
Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader
Journal Entry:

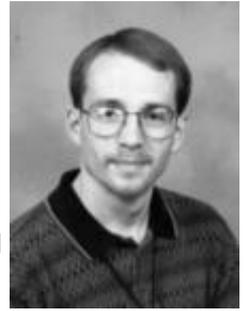
The end of our time in California. It was a nice few weeks, and great to have a busy schedule. Although God can use us in any situation, it was nice to be doing more music ministry, which is often a cool bond within a music ministry group. Praise the Lord for music. It's such an amazing thing! I just love it! I love how it brings people together, how it can set a mood of reflection, how it can get people smiling and dancing, how it unites!



Tiffany Schmader

A good time was had in the small town of Willows, CA. There's just something about small town people that I just adore. Being a rural gal myself, perhaps it's just a sense of "home" and simpler living that gets me. An enjoyable program, more partners (God is just rockin' our socks off with this one), root beer floats, and a fella that offered genuine encouragement and sincerity that truly warmed my heart. It's amazing how much we get encouraged from the people we meet. God puts people in our paths just as much as He places us in other's paths.

Date: 11/9/2002
Submitted by: Steve Ellwein
Journal Entry:



Steve Ellwein

We had one fully booked week earlier this year, anyway...here's what our week has looked like thus far: on Tuesday (remember, Monday is our weekend), we spent our evening (well, I did and by extension anyone staying with me) watching the election results roll in. Naturally, the two Senate races I was most interested in – Minnesota and South Dakota – were the ones that took the longest to call (actually, South Dakota still isn't completely resolved), keeping me up until the wee hours. □ Then, after more than two weeks in California, we headed north to Oregon for two nights of housing, with one nursing home program to occupy our time. Friday took us the rest of the way northwest, to the peninsula of Washington and Redeemer Lutheran Church, nestled between the communities of Chimacum and Port Hadlock. There we had...a night of housing.

At least today was a little more eventful. Even on days without travel we seem to find plenty to do, so we were at the church for most of the day – a typical "work day" with a few firsts thrown in. If I remember correctly, this was my first one-on-one spent walking around a grocery store (in the U.S., that is – there were a few overseas last year). Being on team we see a fair number of potlucks, but the potluck before tonight's program marks the first time I have seen one with salmon – yet another reason for me to love the Northwest. □ And yes, you read that correctly, we did indeed have our first full-length, full-setup program of the week tonight. (In another first, it was the first time I have done a program with my board wedged against a baptismal font.) The program was a fun one and the congregation was enthusiastic – a few of them are even planning to come to tomorrow's program in Sequim (just under 45 minutes away), making them our first groupies. □ Even on a team of mostly alumni, we are still being reminded that despite our fairly consistent routine (except for the lighter-than-normal schedule), each day still brings new experiences and new blessings, making us realize just how thankful we are to be here and involved in this ministry with the opportunity to share God's life-changing message with God's people. – Acts 5:20

Date: 11/12/2002
Submitted by: Rachel Bolte
Journal Entry:



Rachel Bolte

OH, the importance of FUN!!! We did our team outing this evening and it was a joyous occasion!!! Sarah was our planner and she decided we'd take a bit 'o cash to the thrift store to dress each other up in fun clothes. The guys drew a gal's name and we drew the guy's names and off we went! It was much fun to find clothes to make each other look silly.

From there we went to a Mexican restaurant and had a wonderful meal. We actually exchanged our "new" clothes there and changed while our waitress was away. It was pretty funny to see the look on her face when she came back. Even funnier was the fact that she never said a word about it...just inwardly believed us to be crazy! Then we went back to the guy's host family which Sarah and Tiff had decorated for a Fall Festival! There were balloons, streamers, candy, brownies, and even Chai tea! It was very fun and very festive. We ended the evening watching Disney's cartoon version of Robin Hood. All in all it was a very enjoyable experience and was a testimony to the importance of having FUN together!!!

Its easy to get caught up in the "work" parts of team and to forget that the people that you "work" with every day are also wonderful and fun people with much to offer outside of a typical team day. So, today I am thankful for FUN times with my FUN teammates and the opportunity to laugh and play together!!! Praise the LORD!!!

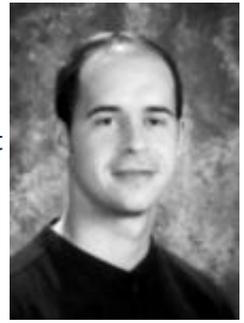
God keep all of you!!!

Rachel<><

Date: 11/14/2002

Submitted by: Ryan Legler
Journal Entry:

So here we are for a housing only in Montana tonight. Our host mother was not there to meet us when we arrived as she said might be the case. She had asked that if we get home before her that we let the dog out on the leash in the back yard. I volunteered to do it. After going through the garage and finding the back door, the dog and I head outside. I have the dog's collar in my hand as we walk through the snow to find the outside leash. After a few steps the dog stops, backs up, and takes his head out of the collar. I'm left standing in the back yard, still holding the collar, as the dog runs away. This would not be so bad, except for the fact that there is NO FENCE. I take off running after the dog, and by the time I reach the front yard, he's gone. I looked around a few corners of the block, and came home. Showing Ryan the collar still in my hand, I asked him to help me find something I had lost. He said he would be out in a minute, so I went out again to the backyard. Suddenly this things comes tearing through the bushes and it hits me, hey that's 'my' dog. I called to him and as quickly as he had run away, he ran inside. God is good. I'm glad I didn't have to tell our host, "Hi my name is Ryan. Thanks for letting us stay in your home. I let your dog run away." Other than that, we had a great night. Tomorrow morning we will have worship as a team as we look out the window and see these beautiful mountains God has created for us.
God's Peace – Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 11/16/2002
Submitted by: Ryan McLuen
Journal Entry:

These past two days or so have been full, full of driving. We had 2 days in a row that we drove about 7-8 hours, and then today we drove only 3 or so hours and ended up in Laurel, MT. Our program went very well and the church that we were at, River of Life, was so much fun. They were so welcoming and loving. Although the church was small in size, it was not small in the love of Christ that they shared. And on top of a fun program, a friend of mine, who lives close by Laurel, was able to come and see us play. It was so great to see her and get to hang out a little bit.

Well, as you can see God is good and is working in amazing ways, like He always does. And I am so glad to be on the team that I'm on. They are each such a blessing and an encouragement to me. And what I have heard in the past about not getting along with teammates and things like that have not found any hold on New Vision at all, and each day it seems like we grow closer. So praise Jesus for that. Please continue to keep each of us in your prayers as we get to the end of our tour before Mid-Winter and that we will keep our focus on the places that we are at and not on the next month where we will do some more training and then on our Christmas break. But God has been working and will keep working and opening our eyes to great things that He is doing. Peace and blessings from Christ.

In Him,
Ryan McLuen



Ryan McLuen

Date: 11/19/2002
Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader
Journal Entry:

There's a first time for everything! Over the weekend, the church we were at had some free clothes available.....After a fun dinner, one of the youth helped us select some fine clothes for the evening. Legler and I were fortunate enough to get to wear matching overall style zip up work suits!!!! It was quite a hoot! Interesting things this ministry will throw in your path!

And, from fun to serious - In talking with the pastor after the Sunday worship, he shared how nice it was to be able to worship with his wife at his side, as she leads



Tiffany Schmader

music and he preaches. Neat that we could provide a break and special time for them. I love the mutual encouragement that happens between us and people we meet.

Date: 11/19/2002

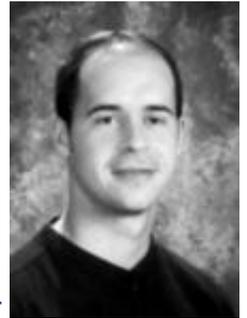
Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

It's pretty crazy being on a team with five returning teamers. Everybody knows all the shortcuts, how to grab every little bit of rest, how to pack a suitcase, and also a ton of practical jokes. Just the other day, Rachel and Steve rigged my monitor so that the only thing I could hear out of it was Steve singing along with the entire concert. And Steve has a good voice—even though he denies it—but I was kind of hoping to hear the guitar and the bass and keyboards to keep my drumming steady. I played through; I am, after all, a good drummer. But first year teamers probably wouldn't have had the guts to try something like that.

I learned a couple of things. First, double check my monitors before the concert. Second, that kind of joking around helps keep this alive for all of us in the band. Praise God.

Ryan L.



Ryan Legler

Date: 11/21/2002

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Wow, it's hard to believe that Thanksgiving is less than a week away. If it wasn't for the cold Montana weather (and the Charlie Brown Thanksgiving special on TV!) you could probably convince me that it was mid-July rather than the end of November. These past few months have gone by incredibly fast, I think partly because this is my second year on team and I'm used to the routine of being on the road. I also think that the older one gets, the faster time seems to pass. However you look at it, if our fall tour is any indication of how fast the remainder of the year is going to go by then August will be here before we know it. I'm a little nervous about this, considering I'm not sure where God is leading me next. I've always been a planner (and a bit of a control freak) so not knowing what's going to happen next in my life leaves me feeling uneasy. Yes, this is a struggle for me, but in the same breath I can say that it's a joy because I know that God is preparing something great for me. I take great comfort and peace in Jeremiah 29:11-13: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.'" How amazing to think that God is planning something for me, and whatever that "thing" is, it is so much bigger than what I could plan or even imagine! If I had to name how team is challenging and changing me, I would say I'm developing patience (something I've always struggled with) and I'm learning to surrender my will to God. Last year, with the help and encouragement of my friend Paul, I started to understand what it meant to be patient and to wait on God. I found that the Bible is full of verses that command just this. Psalm 27:14: "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." Psalm 40:1,3: "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God." And perhaps my favorite, Isaiah 40:31: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

It's incredible to think what God can accomplish through us if we lay aside our own plans and wait for God to reveal His plan and purpose for us. Yes, it's hard to get out of the way and just let God work, but I know that this is what I must do. I'm thankful for the places that God has already led me and I'm excited to see what He is preparing for me. My prayer is that as August approaches, I will continue to wait, continue to rely, and continue to trust in God's faithfulness!



Sarah Liggett

Date: 11/23/2002

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

In one of life's little quirks, the wordiest among us (that would be me) ends up with the journal covering what may end up being our busiest time in Montana. Last night we had our first lock-in of the year, which was exciting for me because lock-ins produced some of my favorite moments from my team experience last year. My first experiences with being a leader in youth ministry came during my college days when I was a part of Gustavus Youth Outreach, and our specialty was lock-ins, which is perhaps why I started to look at them as one of my favorite things to do in youth ministry. After college I became a youth director, and after that I started life on team. Being a youth director is all about long-term ministry – being in a place or a situation for an extended period of time, building relationships, investing in people and being responsible for and bringing continuity to a program. Family night programs, the "typical" thing that teams do, are all about short-term ministry – being in a place or a situation usually for one night (technically a few hours), building relationships, planting seeds and bringing encouragement and assistance to an existing program. Both of them are great and necessary, but lock-ins, I think, combine some of the best qualities of both. We are able to give support to an existing youth program and plant seeds, but we are able to do it more directly. As much as I love doing them, one of the unfortunate aspects of family night programs is that if we are not careful, a sense of separation between team and congregation can develop simply because of who is on which side of the speakers; we have to always be on guard to make the congregation a part of what we are doing rather than simply "performing." Lock-ins give us more of a chance to hang out, talk in more casual settings and be in direct contact with the people to whom we are ministering for more than a brief conversation over supper or before or after a program. (I don't know if any of that made sense to you, but it does in my head – if you don't understand, write and I can try to explain it more clearly.) Anyway, this was shaping up to be a typical lock-in despite the smaller-than-usual turnout of eight – some games, some Bible study, a snack break – until the end. One of my favorite things to do at lock-ins is to close the evening with a time of devotions and worship – put the lights down low, sing a few songs, give a brief message and have some prayer time – and it usually goes well, but the Spirit must have been with us in a particularly powerful way last night. I would rate it as one of the best times of community singing, prayer and worship I have been a part of since training, and in a time of frustration and wondering what impact we can have with our light schedule it was exactly what I needed to remind me why I have devoted two years of my life to doing this.



Steve Ellwein

God enjoys showering small blessings on us, I think...after the lock-in experience, today we drove to Billings in our continuing loops of eastern Montana. As we arrived at the church, a woman was walking from the parking lot to the church. I only got a quick glimpse as we drove by, but I immediately thought "hmmm, she kind of looks like someone I went to college with." We eventually get in to meet our contact, and lo and behold, it was indeed someone I went to college with and had not seen in a few years. It was great to be able to spend a little bit of time with her and to help lead worship at her church, and to be reminded of a time in my life (outside of team) when I had a large, caring, supportive Christian community surrounding me. We all have times in our lives when we feel dry. My prayer for all of you is that God would pour out the life-giving water of his Spirit on you in whatever way you need – through an experience, through a person, through the support of a community. I thank God that he did that for me this week. – Isaiah 44:3

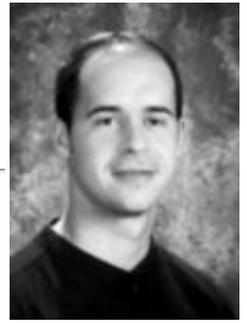
Date: 11/28/2002

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

Happy Thanksgiving! Psalm 136 says, Thanks to the lord... Being away from families during holidays is always difficult, but lucky us, we have each other on this team to be our family this year. Although most of us were separated at different host homes, we did all have host families who took us in and opened their homes to us on this Thanksgiving Day. God does provide. I had a good dinner of turkey,

ham, mashed potatoes, and all the usual other turkey day foods. So to all our families, we did miss you, but we were taken care of and not in any small hotel room by ourselves. (for example)



Ryan Legler

Date: 12/3/2002

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

An early morning for a long day of driving.....but well worth it, as we are visiting Steve's family. We were warmly welcome and were greeted with a sign on their front door. It was a joy to arrive here, and has been very pleasant to spend time with Steve's parents. It's always neat to be with teammates' families! We were treated to a wonderful meal out, played Jumbo Sequence, and even watched The Grinch with Steve's Mom. It's just been so cozy and comforting to be here. God is good. Times like this I need to remember to be humble, as I feel so spoiled!



Tiffany Schmader

Being that it's now the Christmas season, it's also very much a time of family for me. Thus, being with Steve's family is great. And, it makes me excited for Christmas break and to know that I'll get to spend some time with my family, as well. I wish my team could meet my family, but seeing as how they're in the Eastern US, and New Vision is traveling the Western US, I don't think it's quite possible to be booked at my home. Bummer. But, I am blessed with the experiences I've had, and it's been amazing to see parts of the States that I've never been to before.

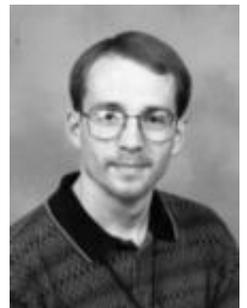
Thank you, God, for being present everywhere. Even when I'm not "home," there is always a sense of home with you.

Date: 12/7/2002

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

This blistering pace is a somewhat new experience for us...after 13 days without a "family night" program, we had one on Thursday in Sioux Falls and actually remembered most of the words to our songs. We have now made our way to the Twin Cities as we continue at this frenetic rate of activity. Last night took us to Columbia Heights for a program and an informal hangout time afterwards that was long but fun. Tonight we are in Roseville for a program, and tomorrow we have one in White Bear Lake – four programs in a row for the first time since late October. On Monday all the teams converge on Covenant Pines Bible Camp for a week of mid-winter training before our Christmas break begins, and it's probably a good thing we have these four programs because at our mid-winter program we will be recorded – live – for a CD to be sold in Australia. Needless to say, we've determined which songs we want on the CD and have been doing those songs each night to make all four programs identical from a music standpoint – it's all the rehearsal we get before getting one shot while being recorded, so we're making it count. □



Steve Ellwein

Two things about this stretch of time stand out for me. First, it's good to be back in familiar territory. Not that we didn't enjoy Montana, but simply crossing into South Dakota on Tuesday lifted my spirits a bit, especially when we hit Sioux Falls to begin three days at home for me. Even though we had not been doing a lot program-wise, the last week or two had been somewhat draining, so it was good to be able to relax amongst familiar faces. Having family and friends at our Sioux Falls program was a huge help and blessing (even though it made me the most nervous I've been to sing my lead since the first time), which everyone has been enjoying here in the Cities – each night we have had visits from various friends, Youth Encounter office staff, team alumni, etc. The support networks we have outside of team are one of the most important things we bring with us, and we can't do enough to thank them; I hope that even as our pace quickens in Australia I can get better

at staying in touch with mine.

Second, this is our last journal for this part of the tour. In two days we will be at mid-winter and our fall tour will be over. I think it's safe to say that we are all a little anxious to get there, mostly to see the other teams – it's amazing how 4-5 weeks of training forms such a tight community. It's also amazing how 3 ½ months can pass so quickly and so slowly at the same time – slowly (sometimes) when you're in it, but looking back it's hard to believe that it was that long ago that training began. We have been to 14 states in 3 time zones, seen some great places and met some amazing people. It has not always been easy, but it has definitely been worth it. Our Christmas break will be good and much-anticipated, but so will our reunion, when we make our way from the Twin Cities to Los Angeles and then Australia. It's been a great fall; bring on the break, get us rested and then get us back to the business of ministry. Merry Christmas to all! – Isaiah 9:2-7

Date: 1/1/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

HAPPY NEW YEAR from Leavenworth, Kansas!!! We brought the new year in with our puppets counting down during our worship service! It was so nice to ring in 2003 praising the Lord with a bunch of wonderful people! We had the opportunity to participate in a "family fun night" at First Baptist Church. It was so much fun just to hang out with everyone, play games, do a puppet workshop and share in worship together!

After a very busy, but very restful Christmas break its nice to be back on the road and back with my "other, other" family! I think this little stretch of time before we depart for Australia is going to be a bit of a struggle for me. After spending quite a bit of time over break deliberating over what to bring, how to pack, and what to take along to leave with my host families in Australia, I have to admit, I'm ready to go. I'm enjoying the time to prepare and to travel West at a somewhat relaxed pace with my teammates, but there is still a part of me that just wishes we were boarding the plane today. I know, I know, its coming VERY fast...I'm just sayin'. Over all, I think this next few months will be a huge test and a huge stretching experience for my teammates and I. I'm very excited to see what God has in store...I know its far more amazing than anything than I could possibly think up. And trust me, I have some pretty wonderful ideas of Australia and the people there in my head. Lord, guide and guard us as we do our best to be YOUR instruments and YOUR ambassadors. AMEN!



Rachel Bolte

Date: 1/4/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Hello all of my friends and loved ones. We now have a week or so under our belts and are feeling like we are back in the swing of things. We are trying to prepare ourselves for our overseas adventure that is about a week ahead of us. There is quite a range of reactions, from becoming very stressed out to being quite relaxed and then there is everything in between and the reactions switch often between teammates. But the excitement is building so much we don't know what to do sometimes. It is quite a strange bunch of feelings that are flying around and when we are actually in Australia, there will be a whole new swirl of emotions that will come into play. So I'm not sure what exactly is going to happen with that either, and I think that adds to the looming excitement which is mixed with a fear of the unknown. Perhaps this doesn't make any sense to anyone else, but I thought that I would just let what I'm feeling and what is going on in our team be shared. Personally I am doing well, a bit scared about what is ahead, but that is expected. At least I hope. One other thing that is hard, is the thought of not being able to see any of the other teamers for 8 months. And from this viewpoint, it seems like such a long time, but I know when I look back, it isn't going to seem like it was that long, so it is just one of those things that has to be dealt with in the here and now, and in the future it will be shown how everything works out. Well, I'm not even



Ryan McLuen

sure if this rambling is making any sense, but let me leave you with a bible verse that a friend of mine emailed me about being trusted with a little, and when one is faithful with that, God will trust that person with so much more, and at times I feel like I am in that boat. "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness." Always remember that the little things, aren't always as little as they might seem to us, because it is just the beginning of God trusting you with so much more. Peace and God's blessings to each and every one of you.

In Christ,
Ryan McLuen

Date: 1/7/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Travels to Sedona, AZ, and visiting with Rachel's family. It is so nice to be back here again and to have a sense of home. We were here earlier in the fall and had a wonderful visit and met some great people at the church we visited. This time, we get to visit yet another church, which I'm really looking forward to. And, just a blessings to be back with Rachel's family.

In the midst of our enjoyment here and our last bookings before we head to Australia, we have learned that our flight out is two days earlier than expected!!! Thus, in planning our schedule, I have a bit of anxiety and concern with getting everything done that we need to do. But, I know that God's got a hold on us and that everything is going to get done; it'll be a few long days and a busy week of planning. Overall, I'm really excited to head "Down Under" and can't wait for our team to move to the next level. I feel that we have more potential and a deeper ministry that's going to develop when we head internationally. I pray that the Lord will just use us, in our strengths and weaknesses and that we are fully open to him.

Peace of Christ,
Tiffany



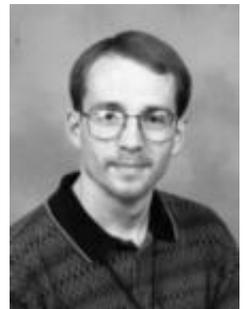
Ryan McLuen

Date: 1/11/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

The time is drawing near...a little nearer than expected, actually. We have made it to our prep church in Agoura Hills, CA, where we will see to all the final details for our upcoming "big trip." First, though, we had a swing through Arizona. Our program in Sedona was highlighted by the attendance of Tim, one of my wonderful teammates from last year, whom we had surprised the day before as we drove through Flagstaff. Next it was off to Lake Havasu City for a very fun joint program with our fellow international teamers on New Dawn. We basically divided up the songs and singalongs, used their sharing and our puppet show, had two shortened slide shows, and joined forces for the first and last songs. We were a bit curious about how our electric and their acoustic sound would combine on the first song (we're acoustic on the last one anyway), but it turned out great. With a little creativity, we figured out housing to have one New Vision member and one New Dawn member together in a host home – Lucy and I spent the evening talking with our host family, then swapping vehicle news (we're both our team's Vehicle Managers and New Dawn has the van used last year by my then-team) and plotting the best route to enable us to caravan most of the way to our respective prep churches. It's amazing to me how quickly Youth Encounter teams become a community – four weeks of training (five for international teams, which seems to make us more than a week closer) and one more in December, but the joy we take in hearing from each other and especially seeing each other and the support we provide for each other make it seem as though we have known each other much longer. In the morning we had a joint worship time, then headed out. We divided by gender for the first leg, so I got to drive my old van one more time. After making it through the desert, the mountains and the greater northern Los Angeles area (including a brief



Steve Ellwein

glimpse of the Rose Bowl in Pasadena), we eventually made it to Agoura Hills.

So, why has a little stress crept into the New Vision camp? For most of the fall we have been going on the theory that we would get to our prep church on the 10th and depart for Australia on the 15th. Then the news came that we would not get to Agoura Hills until the 11th. Well, no big deal, one less prep day isn't a huge loss. Then came the news last week that we were departing not on the 15th but the 13th, next Monday. Slightly bigger deal, since we now essentially have two days (one of them a Sunday when fewer things are open) to do what took Watermark four last year. It's looking like we can pull it together, but it will be a long two days and we will be pretty tired by the time we get to the airport, although that's probably a good thing since we'll be better able to sleep on the plane. Yes, it's that close. We've gone from counting down months to weeks to days and soon hours. We leave on the 13th, then with time changes and a long layover in China get to Australia on the 16th, in less than a week's time. We've always been excited, but it's starting to sink in a little more now. The next time you hear from us we will be out of the U.S. until May. Your prayers for our travels (as well as those of the other international teams), our soon-to-be increased schedule and our ministry in Australia are greatly appreciated. This is what we've been looking forward to, this is what we are now preparing for – it's go time! – Romans 15:5-6

Date: 1/15/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Today has proven to be one of the longest feeling days that I've had so far, and basically all that it included was a hugely long plane flight, and then a layover that was long, and then another not quite as long plane ride as the other but still long. To put a little more detail to that probably very confusing statement. We flew out of LA at 2:30am and had a 15 hour flight to Guangzhou, China. And once we arrived there, which was morning there, we had a 10 hour layover, and then we flew out that night with a 9 hour flight into Melbourne, Australia. So in total we were in the air for 24 hours and in layover and delay time for another 12 hours, so it turned out to be quite a long day, or at least it felt like a day, but basically it was 2 days with a missed one in between, I'm not exactly sure how that works, but it had to do something with crossing an imaginary line over the ocean. So that has been the first part of our adventure to and starting in Australia. Personally I'm doing well except for the uncomfortable flight, which I (being 6'5") don't tend to fit in airplanes in the first place, that we had. Spiritually I came back from break a little drained and it took me to be back on team to start back in on some of the things that I was missing out on, so now that we were a couple weeks in, I am feeling quite well and ready to depend on God for all that I need for the next 4 months. But I'm not exactly sure what to expect now, but I know that God has some awesome things in store for me and my team and we are going to be stretched and go through hard times as well as good times, but all of it will be for the greater good and for teaching each of us the things that we need and to help us to be more like Christ in all that we are. I hope that each of you that are supporting us in this ministry that we are in are keeping us in your prayers often, because we truly need it but we thank you so much for the love you share with us in that. You are each so important to us and are a key part of this ministry. Peace and God's blessings on each of you.

In Christ,

Ryan McLuen



Ryan McLuen

Date: 1/16/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Hello Australia!!!

We were greeted at a bit after 7am in Melbourne by Tricia and Tim, our contacts here overseas. They picked us right out of the crowd right away...said they'd been studying our picture for months. That's pretty incredible. After spending so much time in planes and airports we were on a pretty wacky schedule. Tim and Tricia brought us to our mini-bus and trailer...home for the next few months. It was very nice...good times ahead. We



wanted to try and get ourselves on somewhat of a normal schedule so Tim and Tricia took us out for the day. We started with breakfast at a café in Melbourne and after a long trip to the bank to get our finances figured out, had a tour of the city in our new bus. It was nice to have a chance to look around a little. Melbourne has a little bit of a European feel to it...it was very nice.

Rachel Bolte

From there we went to the main office for the Lutheran church in Victoria and Tasmania to meet Pastor Stoltz, the president of the district and Pastor Bryce who is the head of the missions department. They briefed us on the history of the Lutheran church of Australia and gave us an idea of what we'll be doing for the next few months. They were fabulous people and they said they'd try and catch up with us sometime on our tour. Fun!

From there it was off to a fish and chips lunch on the beach. YUM! It was awesome and very relaxing!

Then it was time to head to Geelong to meet our host families. We had a nice ride and were dropped off at our host homes just in time for tea. Unfortunately neither Tiff or I lasted too long...we were pretty exhausted. So it was off to bed.

My first impression of Australia: Its BEAUTIFUL! We have been blessed with amazing contacts who have already begun to bless us in many ways and I'm excited to see what God has in store for us in the next four months. To be continued...

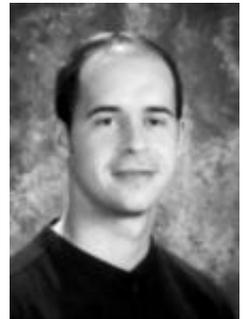
Date: 1/17/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

G'day all you back in the States! We arrived yesterday and have been going, going, going since then. It's been good though. Last night I took a shower at about 9 pm, which was the first shower in about 72 hours. I was happy to get that done. I then found my bed, laid down, and turned the telly(tv) on. That was the last thing I remembered before waking up at 3 am with the tv still on. Today we picked up our hired(rented) equipment, most of which is wonderful. The drum set is BLUE. I guess having a RED drum set is not the most important thing so – I'll get over it.

Australia is really nice. It's a bit different than the States, but being able to speak English helps a lot with understanding this new culture. Our contacts, Tim and Trish, have been nothing but great, and giving us heaps of help. We have our first program tomorrow night, so we'll see how that goes. I'm still trying to get over this jet lag, so off to bed I go. God's Peace to you all – Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 1/18/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

We have now been in Australia for about two days and I am very much in the stage of having to remind myself every ten minutes or so of where I actually am. I feel like I'm in a dream. The weather has been warm (definitely not what I'm used to for mid-January!) and the air smells clean, like the smell of spring. When we arrived on Thursday our contacts, Tim and Tricia, took us to breakfast at a small coffee shop in Melbourne. I ordered a bowl of fresh fruit and a latte, and as we sat outside in the warm sunshine I thought that I was in the best place in the world. I am in awe of how at home I feel in a place so far from everything I've ever known, and I know I have only God to thank for that peaceful feeling.

Today we had our first family night program at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Geelong, Victoria followed by our first Aussie barbecue! The program went well considering that it was our first time using an entirely different sound system. The barbecue was much like what we have in the U.S., except sliced bread was used instead of hamburger and hotdog buns which is apparently quite common. Also, ketchup (or Tomato Sauce as the Aussies call it) tastes different – less sweet I think. The highlight of the evening for me was talking to two Australian brothers, near the ages of 12 and 16. There was never a dull moment in the conversation as they kept asking me and Steve questions about our culture. They couldn't get over the fact that they were talking to Americans,



Sarah Liggett

and of course they both loved our accents!

Please keep praying for us, especially that we will continue to open ourselves to God and let Him work through us in unimaginable ways!

In Christ,
Sarah

Date: 1/19/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

We've had a wonderful introduction to Australia thus far, and after a few days for us to settle in, learn about our tour and get to know our new equipment, the time has come to really get to work. I love our equipment, by the way – I hope they don't mind if we take the sound board and a few other things back with us. (If anyone from Music Workshop is reading, I'm just kidding.) Last night was our first program (and our first late-night hang-out time with several of the youth leaders of Victoria), and we followed it up with worship this morning. During the post-service fellowship time Rachel and I got into a quite serious discussion with a few of the kids in attendance on the topic of candy bars. They were appalled that a few of their favorites were not available in the U.S. and made us promise to try them while we are here – a promise, I think, which needs to be kept.



Steve Ellwein

After running a few last errands while still in a city of some size, we left Geelong and headed west. At about three hours, this was one of the longest drives we will make as Victoria is physically the smallest of Australia's mainland states (Tasmania is smaller, but is a separate island), but we rolled into Tandara Lutheran Camp in Halls Gap (small in size, big in tourism) just in time for tea (supper, dinner, the third meal of the day) at the home of the leader of this week's Kids' Camp, which kicks off tomorrow as the kids (ages 8-12) converge on the camp to become "Secret Agents," our lovely theme for the week. We did some planning for the week with our fellow leaders, although it seems like this will be a bit more of an ad hoc affair than we previously thought – fewer leaders, fewer kids, looser schedule – so we're preparing ourselves to be ready for anything.

I'm not sure if it's because this was a long day or a hot day or a combination of both, but we were all fairly tired by the time we got back to camp. Still, I had to go out for a little while. Tonight I finally saw the Southern Cross for the first time (the constellation itself, not the depiction on the Australian flag), and we also had our first kangaroo encounter. After watching 3-4 of them in the field behind the dorms, we turned around to see another 3-4 watching us. Walking along the road (a residential street, by the way) that leads into camp, dozens more were lining the road, occasionally jumping across, and we got to within a few feet. God is truly amazing – the stars are totally different here since we are in a different hemisphere and many animals are unique as well, but the same God that made "our" stars and "our" animals made these in Australia too. I look forward to all that God has to reveal to us this week through this place, the people and our ministry here. Let the camp begin! – Genesis 1:16-18, 25

Date: 1/20/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

KIDS CAMP.....A week of interaction with 17 nine-twelve year olds begins. We're at a beautiful location in Halls Gap, Victoria, which is located in the Grampian Mountains. Very lovely. What a morning – not only did we see a bunch of kangaroos last night as we arrived, but there were a dozen or so around the campsite this morning. It's so crazy to see so many, and to get as close as a yard or two away from them. I'm amazed! We've been itching to see some roos, and now they're surrounding us. Although, I must admit I pictured them much larger!! Yet, I've learned these are gray kangaroos and there are larger red kangaroos.



Tiffany Schmader

Our first full week is the KIDS CAMP at Tandara Lutheran Camp. It's looking to be a nice time, full of activities, songs, lessons, small group, warm weather, swimming, hiking, etc. The kids arrived this afternoon and are a wonderful group. I'm looking forward to getting to know them throughout the week and interact with them all day long. It'll be quite different to have an entire week with a group of kids, rather than just a day or so, as we experienced on our stateside tour.

I'm loving Australia and am enjoying noticing the differences and the similarities between here and the USA. God's creation continues to amaze me as I see more of it!

Date: 1/21/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Hello all of my friends and family, we are here in Australia as most of you know by now. It is all that I expected and of course more, it is so beautiful and the most amazing thing so far has been the people. They astound me at every turn, their generosity and love that they share with strangers, and it is incredible. I wish I could explain more of my feelings, but I don't even know how to explain them to myself. There is so much happening and there is not enough time for it all to register and I feel that it will only take time for that to happen and for me to see all of the ways that God is working, in the schools we go to, in the churches we see, in my team, and even within myself. Even already I have seen so much and have been told that we are working wonders, those which I do not see, all I know is that God is using my team to do His work and that is such an encouragement to me to know that He would use a person such as me to do such wonderful work. I thank each of you for supporting us in the many ways in which you are. I would ask you to keep the Australian people, my team and myself in your prayers over the next few months, well actually for more than that, but you know what I mean. Peace and God Bless.

In Christ,

Ryan McLuen



Ryan McLuen

Date: 1/22/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Its day 3 of kids camp at Tandara Lutheran Camp in Halls Gap, Victoria. We took the kids on a hike today. Some went to the Venus baths and the rest of us did the third most common hike in Australia. It was up to one of the highest spots in the Grampians...the pinnacle. I have to admit it was a much harder climb than I had anticipated, but once we got to the top it was BEAUTIFUL! Its amazing to see God's creation in different parts of the world. It was a fun time to chat with the kids too. I'm having a blast being back into camping ministry for a week! I didn't realize how much I missed it. We only have 17 kids so its nice to have a small group that we can get to know fairly well. There have been lots of questions to answer about America and all the things that we do or don't have and its been fun to compare and learn. I feel very blessed to be here in this spot and will really miss these kids when we have to say goodbye on Friday. Fortunately, we'll have the opportunity to visit some of their schools later on in our tour.

Praise the Lord for new experiences, camp, and amazing people who love on strangers.

Oh, and for tons of kangaroos! They're everywhere...Fun!

God's Peace,

Rachel<><



Rachel Bolte

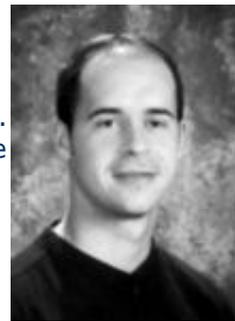
Date: 1/23/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

We have been at Kids' Camp all week. Tomorrow the kids all go home. We've played cricket, climbed some pretty impressive hills, and taught some pretty silly and action filled American sing-a-longs. The kids have been a lot of fun to be with. They have helped us to start understanding aussie lingo, and laughed at our silly American accents. I have been able to see God at work here this week. Some of these kids know their Bible pretty darn well. It's rather impressive to see 10 year olds with this much Bible knowledge.

I think I am getting pretty comfortable with the driving situation here. The first few days I kept turning on the windshield wipers every time I wanted to make a turn. Driving on the left side of the road seems almost second nature after only a week of being here. Ok not really, but I'm getting used to it. That's all for now. God's Peace – Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 1/24/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

There's just something about camp that always draws me closer to God, mostly I think because I'm surrounded by nature and am constantly reminded of God's beautiful creation. The mornings here are calm and clean. I can't even begin to describe the feeling of sitting outside on a picnic bench in the coolness of the morning, listening to the sounds of unfamiliar birds like kookaburras and watching the kangaroos feed on grass.

This has been a hard week for me because we've been so busy with camp duties that we haven't had time to care for each other as teammates. God, however, is faithful as always and today he answered our need. After saying goodbye to the 17 kids we had at camp all week, we were able to take some much needed down time. Tiffany, Rachel and I headed to town for a swim in the pool and we had a chance to just sit together and talk about the week. Then this evening we all came together for a team huddle in which we shared highs and lows from the week and we also shared how we were doing overall – mentally, physically and spiritually. We followed our huddle with a Bible study on the book of John. It was so wonderful for me to end a hard week together as a team, focused not on music or games or on getting meals prepared, but instead focused on the Gospel message, the very reason that we're all together in the first place.

God's peace to all of you back in the States. Know that we love and miss you heaps!

Sarah



Sarah Liggett

Date: 1/25/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

With a last wrapup of the lessons of the week, a photo session with the entire camp, the leaders and the Private Eyes (Sarah's and my small group for this "Secret Agent" week) and one last long wait for lunch (no fault to Jamie and Ryan M., who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in the kitchen), Kids' Camp ended yesterday and we have survived, not to mention enjoyed it greatly, mostly because of a terrific bunch of kids, some of whom we will have the chance to see again as we visit their schools later in the tour. (That was quite the run-on sentence, I think I should avoid that.) We have come through a week of singalongs, caption reviews, swimming pools, spy movies (namely Spy Kids and Inspector Gadget), games, drama (including my Nicodemus monologue Thursday – no Oscars in my future, but better than I feared it might be) and so much more. There were times when it was more than we bargained for, but that tends to be the nature of international ministry in general. At any rate, it was good for us to have some "just-us" team time yesterday, which had been lacking in the week so far. We definitely needed to reconnect – the ministry we do with the people we meet is obviously the most important thing we do here, but we have to be careful not to neglect the ministry and support that happens within our team as well.



Steve Ellwein

Once we got through Kids' Camp, our attention turned to getting through this day. Thankfully, the temperature stayed moderate for most of the week after a warm first couple of days, but as the end of the week drew near the climb began again and today was the culmination as the mercury made its way to 47 degrees. That's Celsius, by the way. For those of you on the Fahrenheit scale, that's just over 115 degrees. In layman's terms, that's hot. Of course, Tiffany and I had to go for a walk for our one-on-one today, but fortunately it was before noon so it was probably only about 40 (104F) then. Yikes. Water, sunscreen and hats are our friends.

Outside conditions being what they were, despite our sadness to leave Tandara and the Grampian Mountains we were glad to get into the air-conditioned environs of our lovely minibus to head for our next weeklong location of Hamilton. We had already been pleasantly surprised to find that one of our Kids' Camp co-leaders would be our host brother for the week, and the fun continued upon our arrival in Hamilton as we were welcomed with a wonderful Aussie BBQ. (If you ever get a chance to try chicken kebabs, do it.) Our host family for the week was there, as well as many of our contacts and youth ministry leaders in the area. The first couple of days will be light, with tomorrow being Australia Day (a national holiday commemorating Capt. James Cook's "discovery" of what would become Sydney) and Monday being our day off (which is great since that means we will be able to watch the Super Bowl – Sunday night in the U.S. is Monday morning here), but the schedule kicks in later as summer holidays end and the new school term begins. The days will be long, but also rewarding, and we have some excellent people to work with along the way. Praise God for the opportunity we have to be in ministry together and in ministry to each other. Help us to be strong in both. – Hebrews 10:23-25

Date: 1/26/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

GOOD SHEPHERD --- Hamilton, Victoria. I'm excited to be at another place for a week. It's nice to get to be somewhere for more than a day...relax, get to know people more, interact with host families, get to know the layout of the town, etc. We were happily greeted by our contact Tim, as well as various contacts here last night and again this morning at church. I love these people!



Tiffany Schmader

Today is AUSTRALIA DAY. It is like our 4th of July, but without the large amount of celebration. We went to a BBQ for lunch, where they cooked up steaks, sausages, ribs and chicken on sticks ---- and we even got to try kangaroo meat (which really isn't all that common to eat here). And, as sweet as they are, our new friends picked up some Pepsi Twist and M&M's for us. How darling! I'm beginning to feel spoiled and am reminded at how much we receive in this ministry, verses how much we give.

Date: 1/27/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Hello once again, it is a new week in a new place. This week we have been in Hamilton, Victoria and it has again been such an amazing time with some amazing people. I am still so amazed at how people go out of there way to serve us, it is very humbling especially since we are here to serve others, but in turn they want to serve us. I see Jesus in so many ways here, and the love that people have for Him is so evident by the lives that they live.



Ryan McLuen

There is so much to say and so little time, and I wish that I just could show each of you what it is I'm seeing and tell every little thing that I'm feeling, but I can't. I just want you all to know that God is working wonders through and in this team, and they are each so wonderful and such an encouragement to me. I hope that they know how much they mean to me, and how much I love them all. I have watched how they each interact with the people that they meet, and it is so wonderful to see how much love they can give, and just when you think they can give no more, they surprise you and give double what they have. Please keep us in your prayers, and help us to be

rejuvenated and energized when we need it, because so much of the time we give everything that we have. Thank you all for your love and support. Peace and God Bless.

In Christ,
Ryan McLuen

Date: 1/28/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Hamilton, Victoria!!! I'm really enjoying this town. Its not too big, not really tiny, just a nice place to be. Once again I feel so blessed by the people we meet! I just can't believe it. Today Pastor Adam, Rochelle and Johnny took us for a tour of some



Rachel Bolte

Date: 1/30/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

School days, school days. This is one of our largest ministry settings this week, and looks to be throughout our time here: particularly Lutheran schools. Today we went around to different classrooms at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Hamilton. We were like traveling troubadours as we went from classroom to classroom. It was really quite fun. The kids were receptive and seemed to enjoy our time with them. I don't think I've ever heard a smaller group of kids yell "wake up puppets" as loudly as I did today! Wow! I didn't know what to expect with classroom ministry, but after a day of it, I'm excited.



Tiffany Schmader

Also, we saw a few kids that were at the KIDS CAMP last week. Great to see them – amazing the joy a familiar face can bring.

And dinner tonight – what a riot. We must have sat at the table for a few hours. There were several guests invited to hang out, and a few of us sat there laughing and exchanging the way Americans say words versus how the Aussies say words. Quite funny. One of the fellas couldn't get enough of me saying "bananas!" The accent cracked him up! Who'd suppose such a word would 'cause a smile?

Yes, I'm enjoying Australia and our cross-cultural experience.

Date: 1/31/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

I feel like I've had this experience before...when international teams tour the U.S., our programs are normally accompanied by a slide show with images of the countries we visit. From September to January, when our tours are just beginning and we obviously have not been to said countries yet, the images are those of previous teams' visits. Since I am the operator of our slide projector, I have become quite familiar with our slide show, and one image that always catches my eye is from the last team to visit the state of Victoria nine years ago (hi, Jeff!). The team and a few primary school students are standing in front of the entrance to the Tarrington Lutheran School; the entrance bears the school's name and the logo of the Lutheran Church of Australia (which I must say I love). Well, today we stepped into a slide.



Steve Ellwein

Last year it was the Indre Missions Bibelskole in Boerkop, Denmark (bearing the name of Youth Encounter's partner organization in that nation); this year it was the Tarrington Lutheran School

(bearing the logo of our partner church). For each of my team years, there has been one image that sears itself into my brain so much that in some strange way I start to identify with it. (Each of them includes something that represents our tour as a whole in addition to the particular place, which I think is a part of it.) Then, when we arrive at the actual place, it feels like a part of the experience that had been missing is restored. IMB was a very special place for my Watermark team, the Tarrington school was special for us in the way all things are although there was not much to distinguish it from other primary school chapels we have done, but the reaction was the same. The places we are visiting have previously been known to us only in pictures, but now those pictures are coming to life. Instead of being only images, they also now represent people and the ministry we are doing here. Naturally, before we left Tarrington we took a picture of our own at the entrance (which still looks the same); perhaps a future New Vision team will see it and have the same reaction I did when the time for their Australian tour comes.

Following Tarrington and a second kindergarten (preschool for American readers) at Good Shepherd in Hamilton, it was time to prepare for our program at the Good Shepherd church. Today was our last full day in Hamilton, so the program was a culmination of our week in ministry here, meaning we had a good turnout and a lot of excitement, which of course was a great boost for us. With a special guest star in our skit and two honorary partners, it was quite a night, continuing on through our first attempt at improvisational comedy as a team at the youth meeting following the program. I think it's safe to say that we have all enjoyed this group of people greatly and hope our paths will cross again, and we're sure they will for several of them. We are being blessed beyond our imaginations and our deservedness daily; praise God for giving us glimpses of Himself by bringing people together. May we come to ever fuller knowledge of Him as He brings our pictures to life. – 1 Corinthians 13:12

Date: 2/1/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

To have to say goodbye – so sad to have to leave. Spending a week with a host home (aka billet) and a week with wonderful contacts – having to say goodbye is hard. We continue to be blessed with amazing people to work with. It's such a blessing. And our host mom, who took us all in for the week, is an amazing woman. While serving with foster-type care, she took in 6 others, cooked for us, helped with our laundry, provided so much, and even left us with a care package – I'm humbled. She has such a servant heart.



Tiffany Schmader

One excitement to be found despite having to leave Hamilton - - - returning to our wonderful host city and main contacts in Geelong. Yay! Was lovely to connect with them once and again and to know we'll have a full week with them. We started the time here with some outdoor games, a BBQ, and an acoustic concert. And – bless our fabulous contact Tim, he brought buns (as they often use bread slices) and Pepsi Twist!! Blessed blessed blessed are we. God just rocks.

What timing for extra care from the Geelong peeps. Not only were we leaving other great people, I was feeling rather worn from the busy week, and such simple kind things brought much joy to my heart. A smile to my evening.

A prayer: Lord Jesus, I thank Thee for showering us with wonderful people. Give us strength to continue on into another busy week. Work through us and let us be beacons of light shining your love.

Date: 2/2/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Wow, I didn't realize how busy we would be, but now I feel like I have a little bit of a clue. We have been non stop this week, and I feel that we are kind of suffering as a

team because of it. There is no one to blame, because this is just the nature of this ministry, but there has been no time for much. Please pray for the relationships in the team as we are only in the beginning stages of this ministry, and help us to cope with all of the stress and anxiety and tension and everything else that is coming our way. I personally feel drained because I have not had time to fill myself up because I have not had enough time to spend with God. The combination of late nights and early mornings mixed with days that are full, have been tough to deal with. In the midst of all of these feelings, there has been much joy as well. Still the people continue to amaze me at every chance they get. That you all for your prayers, my love as well as my teams goes out to each of you. Peace and God Bless.

In Christ,
Ryan McLuen



Ryan McLuen

Date: 2/3/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Its our day off! I have to admit that I did absolutely nothing productive today! Well, I guess I did write a few letters, but that's it! Anyway, it was wonderful! I did get the chance to call and talk to my brother and his family. It was nice to catch up on what's going on at home and just to hear familiar voices. (Hi Darrin, Michelle, Hallie, & Cole!) To be completely honest, I spent the bulk of the day at the beach! It was a beautiful day and Legler, Tiff and I decided to make the most of it. So we headed to one of the famous beaches here in Geelong. I sure can't complain after finding out that its snowing at home. It is strange to be this hot in February though, I feel like it should be August! And I have to admit that I do miss the snow...we even had a brown Christmas in Minnesota. I'll tell you about the beach we went to. Its called Torquay (I think that's how you spell it!) and its beautiful! The water is blue and clear and the sand is nice and fine.

I didn't swim because the water is pretty cold, but we waded in when the tide was down and it was really shallow for a long time. We probably waded out about 50 feet or so without it getting past our knees. Not quite like the lakes at home.

We wrote New Vision in the sand and took a picture of it...that was fun. Honestly, it was a fairly uneventful but wonderful day off. I still feel very blessed to be here.

Hello to everyone at home! I love and miss you and hope all is well!

God's Peace,
Rachel

P.S. Hi MOM!!!



Rachel Bolte

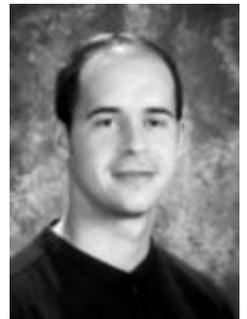
Date: 2/4/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

Today we were at St. John's school in Geelong. We had a chapel service and several classrooms to be with today. This evening, we were invited to a Lutheran Student Fellowship gathering. We were talking about university campus ministry in the States. It was good to hear of the opportunities that are here in Australia for uni students. The LSF group asked us to talk about campus ministry to give them some new ideas for things they could do. This particular group seems to want to branch out into areas of missions and outreach to the unchurched while building and strengthening their own community of faith.

The 20's -30's age group that I have seen here so far seems to be seems to be low in numbers as part of the church, which is similar to my experience of that age group in the U.S. Let me tell you though, low numbers does not stop this age group from being one of the most active groups in this area. Not only are they active, but all of the members of L.Y.V. are volunteers, who happen to fit in this age group. Those that we have met so far give heaps to this organization and are definitely blessings to us as we are here in Victoria.



Ryan Legler

Date: 2/5/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

As I write this journal I'm looking out into a cool, cloudy morning in Geelong, Victoria. I'm guessing the temperature is around 20 degrees Celsius, which would be 68 Fahrenheit. The last time I talked to my mom she said they were expecting a cold front to come in that would possibly bring snow. I realize it's only the beginning of February, but snow seems so unreal to me now, especially after having a couple mid-80 to 90 degree days! That's one way I'm starting to feel disconnected from home.

Another source of disconnection for me is the recent explosion of space shuttle Columbia. We heard about the accident right away here, but it was strange to hear such news in a place so far from home. It almost feels like a dream. I'm much more connected with the local Australian news, especially the bush fires that are burning around Canberra. I guess it just goes to show how wrapped up we usually get in what's



Sarah Liggett

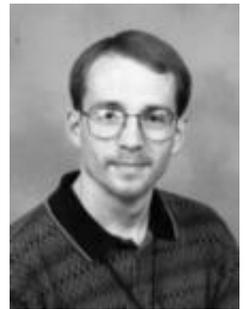
happening immediately around us. Aside from feeling slightly disconnected from home, I am still very much in love with Australia and amazed at the warm welcome we are getting here. Yesterday we met at Tim's house (he's one of our main overseas contacts) for our team devotion. Tim had already left for work, but the night before as we were all snug in our beds he went out to wash our van and fill it with petrol. He also left us an encouraging note, and a fridge full of fruit, chocolate biscuits (cookies), and a big supply of Vanilla Coke and Pepsi Twist which he quickly learned are a couple of our favorite soft drinks! It's amazing how God works through people and constantly reveals Himself to us, even if it's as simple as a bottle of Coke. Just think of all the work God can accomplish through us if we simply ask Him daily to use us according to His purpose. That thought alone is so awesome to me, and I pray that today God will use me and my teammates in ways that we cannot even begin to imagine.

Date: 2/6/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Our week in Geelong continues with our second of two days being "subcontracted" to Werribee, about halfway between Geelong and Melbourne. We're still staying in Geelong and it takes us about 45 minutes to get to Werribee (more when we have to pick up people), so the mornings are early. Last night was also late since we had the same 45-minute drive back after tearing down after our program at St. Philip's (our base church for these two days), which itself followed a combined skits & puppets workshop. It was all worth it, though, as it appears those are things the people at the workshop want to incorporate into their church and they had a lot of good questions. The response to the program was good as well; it's always good to hear that your sharing reaches people.



Steve Ellwein

Much of our morning and some of the afternoon was spent at the Good News Christian School (a primary school in the Lutheran school system), where we got into what I think may be our usual school routine – chapel straight away, then around to the various classes. We visited every class except the 5-6 group, which we had already seen yesterday. Today (and yesterday) we had in our arsenal a book which I would recommend for reading or for ministry to all ages: You Are Special by Max Lucado. We got a special surprise in the 3-4 class – the students had formed themselves into a choir for a recent production doing their songs both sung and in Auslan, or Australian sign language. They sang and signed "Lord I Lift Your Name on High" for us, and it was a great lift to our day.

As the afternoon continued we headed to Glen Devon Primary School, our first state (public) school. The school has a religious instruction class but it is on an opt-out system, meaning they are in the class by default but parents can sign a form to remove them from it if they choose. But, since we are only in the first few weeks of the school year here, the forms had not gone out yet and we had an incredible opportunity to share with the entire school. What we did was not all that different

(except for taking out the prayer) – songs, puppets, question & answer time (which gave us a rather amusing moment as a student asked Ryan M. if he was a hippie, though he didn't seem to have a clear understanding of what that was) – but the feel of it was a little different. I've noticed this in other countries as well, but the difference between public and private schools is noticeable. There's nothing wrong with public schools – they worked for me for 13 years – but we were happy for the chance to be used to bring the light of Christ into a place where that is not often discussed.

So, after an already-long day we needed a chance to unwind, right? Wrong. We had a workshop back at St. Philip's in the evening, and it was time for planning. The topic was spiritual gifts, Ryan M., Rachel and Tiffany planned for the kids while Ryan L., Sarah and I worked on the program for the adults, and the planning went right up to dinner time. Fortunately, materials on hand and our creative juices came through and we were ready when we needed to be, so now we are prepared if we ever again need to lead a workshop on identifying our gifts, helping others identify theirs and using our gifts in service to God and the church (it helps that it went over well here). Even when it feels like we are at our least organized (and sometimes especially then), by the miracle of grace God is able to work through us. Workshops are one of my favorite things that we do, so it was great to have this opportunity again. We are thankful for the chances we have to reflect God to the people we meet, and we pray that we will remain strong for the work we have been sent here to do. – 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Date: 2/7/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

From one end of the primary age to the other...We had both kindergarten (which is pre-school here) and seniors (5th & 6th grade). Both groups were a lot of fun. Nice that we were able to meet with all the classes here at St. John's in Geelong throughout the week. Lots of fun kids and nice teachers. The Lutheran school system seems pretty nice here in Victoria, Australia.

We finished up our week with a Family Night Program in North Geelong at Our Redeemer's. It was another fun crowd and some familiar faces. We had a nice "supper" (evening snack) afterwards and engaged in lots of nice conversations. A few gals had fun drawing pictures for us – so cute.

A quick dinner out at my favorite Take Away (fast food) - McDonald's! Or, as they call it for short: Macers (comparable to our "McyD's").



Tiffany Schmader

Date: 2/7/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

To have to say goodbye – so sad to have to leave. Spending a week with a host home (aka billet) and a week with wonderful contacts – having to say goodbye is hard. We continue to be blessed with amazing people to work with. It's such a blessing. And our host mom, who took us all in for the week, is an amazing woman. While serving with foster-type care, she took in 6 others, cooked for us, helped with our laundry, provided so much, and even left us with a care package – I'm humbled. She has such a servant heart.

One excitement to be found despite having to leave Hamilton - - - returning to our wonderful host city and main contacts in Geelong. Yay! Was lovely to connect with them once and again and to know we'll have a full week with them. We started the time here with some outdoor games, a BBQ, and an acoustic concert. And – bless our fabulous contact Tim, he brought buns (as they often use bread slices) and Pepsi Twist!! Blessed blessed blessed are we. God just rocks.

What timing for extra care from the Geelong peeps. Not only were we leaving other great people, I



Tiffany Schmader

was feeling rather worn from the busy week, and such simple kind things brought much joy to my heart. A smile to my evening.

A prayer: Lord Jesus, I thank Thee for showering us with wonderful people. Give us strength to continue on into another busy week. Work through us and let us be beacons of light shining your love.

Date: 2/8/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

We are in a new place today and it is hard to say goodbye to the places that we've been and there is always a slightly awkward transition when we must say hello to our billets and the place where we shall be for the next week. We are in Ringwood, which is a suburb of Melbourne, and even though we have only been here for a short time, I know already that I am going to love it, as if I could not.

There is still tension on our team, but I think that it is getting better. I know that through this it will be a learning experience and we will all grow closer through this, but at times it is hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel. But God is good and through everything He is by our side, so I just need to trust in what He has planned. I continue to thank Him for the team that He has blessed me with and for all the supportive people that He has placed around me. And He is so good, and in times where something is needed, He does provide. This week He has placed me in an amazing billet (host home) and they are so loving and they are amazing in so many ways. Michelle has such a servant heart and enjoys every minute of it. Jack is an amazing man of God and we have had a few conversations that have blessed me so much. Their children Lazarus, Mia, and Isaac have so much love to give and just love being around me and it makes me feel so happy. They are so funny.

Well I should stop writing but I love each of you so much and I pray that Christ is moving in your lives as well. Peace and God Bless.

In Christ,
Ryan McLuen



Ryan McLuen

Date: 2/9/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Today was a long day! We did a worship service, an acoustic program, and then headed to LUTHER COLLEGE for a pizza dinner and a full set-up acoustic program! It was a full, but fun day. At the service this morning we played a few songs on our own, did a puppet show and did a few songs with the band from the church. It was kinda fun to have extra voices to sing with! Hooray for Hillsongs! Then we had a bit of lunch with the congregation and had some team time. We had some things to work through as a team and I think that we ended up getting to a starting point for making things better.

Sometimes it can be hard to focus on making sure you're taking care of each other when you're expected to take care of so many other things and so many other people. So, today I think we'll be starting to bring a bit more focus to caring for each other as well as serving those around us! It's a good place to be and I'm excited to see how the Lord will work in us!

Then it was time to head for Greensborough for our acoustic program. It was a small crowd, but we talked to one young gentleman who may be interested in team in the future! Its good to know that God is using us to reach others and encourage them to step out in faith as well! Its been awhile since we've done a full acoustic program, and I really enjoy them so it was fun for me!

And then...off to LUTHER!!! Being that I graduated from Luther in Decorah, IA I was very excited to meet the people who share my school's name. The chapel is absolutely BEAUTIFUL! It was so much fun to play there and we had a great crowd! I think Steve said there were about 160 people there and the seating was almost stadium style. We plugged into their sound system and I kinda felt like a rock star. It was crazy and fun! One of the kids that was in my small group at kids' camp our first full week in Australia was there as well. It was fun to see Alicia and have her come up to help us out



Rachel Bolte

with actions for Psalm 25. Its amazing how many people we've already seen more than once...what a blessing!

I know that God is growing and stretching me and I also know that I can't tell exactly what that is going to look like for me by the time we leave this amazing place, but it sure is cool to see the bits that I can and to know that more is to come. I pray that he continues to shape us and mold us both individually and as a team and that we grow closer to each other and to him every minute of every day! Team is an amazing thing that baffles my mind in so many ways! I only wish I could explain it to all of you! Just know, whoever and wherever you are that God is doing mighty things all over the world!!! We serve a very big God and I can't wait to see the ways that he is going to continue to reveal himself to me and to us in the next 3 months!!!

God keep each of you!

Rachel<><

Date: 2/10/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

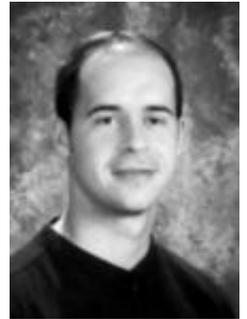
Journal Entry:

Today's day off is well needed. This past week has been go, go, go. We are being used for every ministry opportunity that exists here. I can tell you one thing, we did not make it through this week on our own. It is by God's strength that we were able to get everything accomplished. Most of what we have been doing is school chapels and classroom visits. High on my priority list as program director is learning some new songs. The songs we have are great, but a wider variety of songs to choose from would be much appreciated by all.

Today I thank God for Tim, one of our contacts here, who has greatly supported us as this week has been more stressful than most. With getting little rest this week, today is for sleeping and allowing God to recharge us. Sometimes we need to be emptied of ourselves to allow God to fill us with himself. I have definitely been emptied of myself this week.

Today New Vision could use prayers for rest and a renewed strength from God's Spirit.

Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 2/11/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

I don't think I have the words to describe what the last few days have been like for our team. They have been fun because we've had many program responsibilities at several different schools and churches so we've had the opportunity to meet and interact with many wonderful people. Our jam-packed schedule has also meant that our days have been long and tiring. I think we have all felt drained, not only physically but also emotionally and spiritually. We've spent so much time doing various programs and planning for different workshops that we haven't really had time to just have fun together. We have spent most hours of every day together, yet in our busyness we have neglected to care for and encourage each other like we need to and as a result we have started to feel disconnected from each other.

Thank goodness for days like today – days to reconnect as a team and to remember that we not only do a good job of working together, but we also do a good job of playing together. We spent most of the afternoon and evening simply enjoying each other's company. First we went to a wildlife sanctuary near Melbourne where we saw many fun Aussie animals including wombats, koalas, kangaroos, wallabies and dingoes. From there we traveled to a roadside park and enjoyed some cheese and crackers, chips and dip, fresh vegetables and grapes, and some lemonade, all provided by Tiffany's host family. After talking together and playing some games, we drove back to town in search of a place to eat dinner. We ended up at Red Rooster, which is an Australian fast food chain that serves, as you can probably guess, chicken. We ate more food, played more games, laughed more together, and also found out that Red Rooster chicken is nothing to get too excited about!



Sarah Liggett

Today was a great reminder that my teammates are a lot of fun to be with and that they are a great source of love and encouragement to me!

Date: 2/12/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

The theme of the day is "Good Shepherd." Our day began at Luther College in Croydon (in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne), as it does for most days this week, but our chapel this morning was not for the college but for the students of Good Shepherd Primary School, on the same campus. Fortunately, the students were able to come up to the college and we did not have to move all our equipment. This is my third day with the school's MK III, which is one step earlier than the beast of a sound board we carried around last year (which has since been decommissioned), and it has survived a program (Sunday night), a college chapel (yesterday) and now a primary chapel. It works fine, but I do wish the space permitted us to use our own system. On the bright side, I'm getting better at the run required to get from my perch in the balcony to the front in a decent amount of time. Not only that, but we had a good crowd to work with – 450 primary school students who sang and danced and jumped along and generally seemed to have a great time, which helped us do the same. Hopefully we can borrow some of their energy to give to the college students in the two chapels we have left with them – or at least the willingness to use it without fear of how they will look.



Steve Ellwein

After finishing with the Good Shepherd students, it was off to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Ringwood (about 15 minutes from Luther) for their weekly Bible study. Oddly enough, we did much the same thing we would do in a primary school classroom – a few songs, question and answer time – except that it was with a slightly older crowd. It's a good format, though, and we got a break from some of the "usual" questions and some very positive comments and prayers. I'm always happy when we can be in situations where we can be encouraged as well as encourage, and that happened here. Fortunately, we also had a decent chunk of time for our huddle/check-in time, devotions and some other team business in the afternoon. The day always seems to go better when we have time to let each other know how we are doing, come before God together, and not have to feel rushed about it. Our internal ministry to each other is just as important a part of this year for us as our external ministry, and the two actually have a profound impact on each other.

In keeping with the theme of the day, the evening took us back to the Good Shepherd Primary School, specifically the staff room, for a workshop. Strange how I always get the days we do workshops...did I mention I love doing them? This one was more of a forum on youth ministry, open to the three-point parish that includes Good Shepherd-Ringwood, Outer Eastern (the congregation that meets at Luther) and Knox and has recently started a collaborative youth ministry. Whenever we do workshops, something in the back of my mind always worries that those in attendance expect us to have "the answers" relating to whatever the topic is; though I'm sure that isn't the case, it's still a bit strange to be looked upon as an expert. Still, the reason it works (to me, at least) is that we do not try to provide answers or unload a lot of information beyond sharing of our own experiences. Instead, in classic Youth Encounter-Tentmakers style, we simply try to get them thinking and talking. Our goal is not to solve the problem in one night but to start (or continue) a conversation that we hope goes on after we leave. We can offer another perspective and help lay groundwork, but the real work must be done by those who stay behind. All in all, it was a good night of sharing stories and ideas, and I foresee great things ahead for this ministry.

Okay, this didn't happen today, but I have to share it anyway. At the program we did at Good Shepherd-Ringwood upon our arrival last Saturday, a man walked into the pre-program dinner that I was convinced I knew from somewhere. But, that can't happen since I'm all the way over in Australia, right? Not so fast. When I was in training last year, one of the people helping out at Lee Valley Ranch in South Dakota was an Australian named Paul. Well, Paul is a member of the Good Shepherd congregation, and I had dinner with him and his wife last Saturday. Every once in a while God throws these great surprises our way, and I'm glad I was around for this one. I'm also glad for the guidance and love that God gives us to bring us through every day – just like any Good Shepherd would. – John 10:14-15

Date: 2/13/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

A good full day of activities. We started the day with a "college" (secondary school) chapel; our second chapel at Luther College. We have one more morning with them. We're hoping to get the 900+ students at least standing and clapping along a bit tomorrow! I wish we had a few more days of chapel in hopes of getting them more involved and to meet more students. It's been neat to be in such a large school venue.



Tiffany Schmader

The afternoon – we hopped next door to Good Shepherd Primary School. We maxed our classroom visit per day today to 7! Wow! I think I'm ok with that being our max. The kids were great. I really am enjoying the primary schools. The kids get involved right away and really enjoy it. In fact, a few girls came up and gave us hugs, after being with them for just a half hour. It was so sweet. Moments like this are worth remembering and are so encouraging in this ministry.

Evening – we topped the evening off with a Band Workshop at Ringwood. It was our first of such workshops, and seemed encouraging to the band as we shared ideas, listened to their experiences, hope for more, and joy of music. As a lover of Christian music myself, I love meeting others who are involved in music ministry. It's almost like an instant bond.

BED TIME – After the long day, I was quite happy to hop in bed!! Wow! Yes, a long day of ministry. Exhausting, but good to be used.

Date: 2/14/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Happy Valentines Day everyone, or Happy Singles Awareness Day as we call it on New Vision. We have been in Ringwood this week and it has been so great. We have done some chapels at Luther College and we have been in classes at Good Shepherd Primary School as well, we have set a record that we hope not to have to break by having 7 classes in one day. Aside from being a tiring day, it was so much fun to see the excitement of all of the kids. As a team I feel that our relationships with each other are getting better, but still because of all the stress that we go through on a daily basis, we still have much further to go. As a person I feel very drained and I think that its due to the fact that I give and give and give so much and I don't have any time to be refilled. So emotionally, physically and most importantly spiritually I am drained, and at times I am quite frustrated with it, so please keep that in your prayers if you would. I know that Christ fills me up, but I don't get much spare time to spend alone with him, and that is hard for me because I am an introvert and I need alone time to process and to function my best, but when I am weak He is strong, and boy have I seen that in action here. There is so much love that has been shown to us by so many people. Thank you all for your support and prayers. My love goes out to you, God's Blessings on your lives.

In Christ,
Ryan McLuen



Ryan McLuen

Date: 2/15/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Today was a pseudo day off for us. We didn't have any programming but we switched host families. I had to leave the Maschmann's but got the chance to stay with Tiffany at the Krelle's. We met this afternoon and went to a Christian bookstore called Koorong. It

was nice just to spend a few hours looking around and seeing what Christian music has made it here and what hasn't yet. I have to admit that I was impressed. A lot of people have said that they don't have much over here...and there isn't as much, but more than I expected. I bought a CD of "Australia's favorite praise songs". Most of them I know already, but it's a great compilation of a bunch of good songs. I also bought a beautiful card that has a photo taken here in Victoria on it...its some cool trees. And it has part of Psalm 63 on it...which is where the words for one of the songs we do in our program came from. In fact, it was written by none other than Brian West from the last New Vision team. I thought it was quite appropriate and I'll most likely frame it when I get home.



Rachel Bolte

My favorite part of today was when Tiff and I had some time to spend chatting. You know how it is when you get a couple of gals into a room and they're supposed to go to sleep. Yes, we had some good girl time. Its so nice to be able to support one another. We tend to do lots of talking because we both process out loud...so it's a good match. Today, I am thankful for the support of my teammates! They are truly great people and I am blessed. I get to spend this year with people who are passionate about Jesus Christ and who love to share their faith with people. They have given up a whole year just to tell people that they love the Lord! And what a privilege it is to be a part of such a group of people! Lord, you have blessed me and I don't deserve to be here or to be bearing your name! Yikes!

I pray that God continues to use us in more ways than we can realize! We may get tired but there is so much more we could be doing. Lord, bring your rest, but also bring a passion and a fire to strive to do more for you!

Praise the Lord for days off!

Seek HIM today!

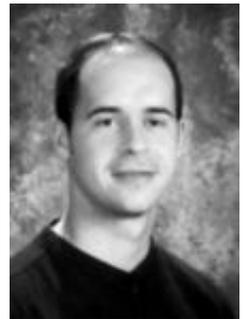
Rachel<><

Date: 2/16/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

So we have been here in Australia for one month now. Things are good here. I am thinking that 3 more months of being here, seems like a long time, however when it is time to leave I know that the 4 months will not have been enough time. Tim, our contact here, has told us that he will have a job lined up for each of us by the time we leave. With none of us having any set plans for next year yet, we may just get a reunion in Australia sooner that we would have anticipated. Other than the long plane ride back here, I'm not sure any one of us would object to coming back, considering the welcome we have had here. Don't worry Mom, I haven't been offered any specific job yet.



Ryan Legler

As a team, I feel that lately we have learned to appreciate the time we have alone as a group. We don't get very much time with just the 6 of us, but the time we do get is enjoyed and in fact needed. We have grown closer as a team in the last month. We've been broken down and built back up to be a stronger team. I am excited to see how God will continue to work on us this year.

Ryan Legler

Date: 2/17/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Today we traveled to a camp on the Mornington Peninsula to spend a week with year 8 students from Luther College in Croydon, a suburb of Melbourne. The week is divided into two sessions, each with about 80 students, and the students are further divided into six groups once they arrive at camp so each of us are helping with a group of about 13 students. The camp is focused on developing friendships, treating each other with respect, and learning to reach out equally to all people just as Christ reaches out to us equally. What a challenge this is with year 8 students! From the surface it seems that they are all indifferent to what their teachers have to say, and though we don't spend as much time



Sarah Liggett

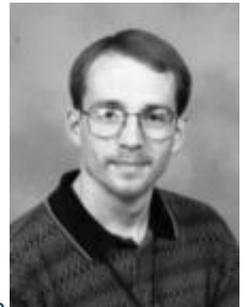
with them, indifferent to what we have to say as well. It's hard to judge whether anything is sinking in because the majority of them seem to focus more on what their friends are doing than on anything else. Oh I remember that stage of life well, where fitting in and doing as the others do is so important! It's a frustrating pattern of behavior, yet I know that underneath the surface, beneath the cover of popularity and conformity, God is working through us and His words spoken through us are not falling on deaf ears. When I am able to make eye contact with students, share quick smiles, or see heads nodding, then I am reminded that they understand the importance of what we are sharing and the importance of Christ in their lives.

Date: 2/18/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

We've had quite a change in venues over the last few days. On Sunday we had two worship services in Glen Waverley and Box Hill, both suburbs of Melbourne. I've enjoyed being in the city and getting to know it a bit, and we have been to St. Paul's in Box Hill before, but this was our first programming opportunity there. Still, while all the programming has been good, it was very nice to come back to my host family and sit and watch "The Patriot" with them with a five-week-old kitten in my lap for much of the time. Ah, the simple pleasures. (Not to mention the slight oddity of watching two Australian actors play British colonists turned American revolutionaries.) The transition began yesterday as we headed south out of the city and onto the Mornington Peninsula. Standing at our lunch stop at Arthur's Seat with a view of much of the coastal area surrounding that part of the Port Phillip Bay, I was reminded again of the beauty of God's creation...and then I saw The Rip. About a half hour's drive from Arthur's Seat is The Rip, which (sorry, I love this story) was the place where in 1967 then-Prime Minister Harold Holt went for a swim and was never seen again. This is like the Australian political version of Elvis or 2Pac in that some conspiracy buffs in these parts are convinced that Holt is still alive. Anyway, it was a great view. The reason for the drive, of course, was Luther College's Year 8 camp, the first of two. Met the small groups, did some ropes course-team building type stuff, led a devotion, played a game, all good stuff.



Steve Ellwein

So today the transition was completed – our first full day at Golden Valleys Lodge near Flinders. We are each co-leading a small (about 13) group with one of the college staff, and this was our lesson day, talking about Jonathan and Barnabas in keeping with the theme of "Friends: Putting the Pieces Together." Also in keeping with the "Friends" theme, each group was named for a character from the TV show – my group was Phoebe, which I can't quite decide how to take. Our workshop flurry continued with a friendship session, then our afternoon was mostly off as it was "rec time." Tea (dinner, supper) was followed by the longest bush walk EVER – we turned onto the long trail when we wanted the short trail and ended up back well after dark, which made keeping 80 students in order quite a challenge. It tired us out, actually – we were a little too beat to be around for much of the "game show" challenge that happened after the walk. Camp life means full days, and today was no exception, and we were glad to be in our beds – though in the guys' case we were wishing that our beds weren't in the same room as the students – but satisfied with the day as a whole. That's probably a good thing since Thursday will be almost exactly the same thing with a different group of students.

When we were leading chapels at Luther last week, the response we got was at times less than spectacular, particularly in comparison to the primary schools which have constituted the bulk of our school visits. Something about camp seems to loosen people up, though. A lot of the peer pressure and worrying about how they would look in front of others has been removed, and who people are in this camp environment is sometimes quite different from who they are in a school environment. While extremely active, the students are warming to us (and us to them). We also haven't done any music since we have been here, which may seem unexpected but makes sense in its way. Music is (with reason) very closely identified with Youth Encounter's ministry, but it is far from the main thing. The main thing is relationships – getting to know the people we meet and encouraging them to get to know each other better. That is what has happened today, and that makes today a very satisfying day indeed. Praise God for camp, for bringing people together, and for all the ways he uses to accomplish his work through us and through others. – 1 Corinthians 15:58

Date: 2/19/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Day 3 – the switch over. Today, the first group of 80 8th graders left, and the second group of 80 8th graders arrived. It was sad to have to say goodbye to some, especially with only having a few days with them. I wonder what it would be like if they had the camp for a full week. Would it be beneficial – open up more room for vulnerability and new friendships, or would it turn into mass chaos being away from the school setting with 80 school kids!!!?



Highlights:

1. Morning Worship with the kids. We did the sheep song, per request, and practically everyone got out their sheep ears and had fun with the song. About 8 or so kids even came up and helped lead the motions. It was great fun!

2. The beach! We had a few hours away from the camp for a break, and a few of us **Tiffany Schmader** walked to the beach! The water was a beautiful mix of greens and blues! Reminded me of the lovely waters I saw at the Caribbean! Wow! And – much to my delight, there were lots of seashells, which reminded me of my family!! Each summer, we vacation at the beach and always collect seashells. What was extra special about the Aussie shells I found...many of them had both halves still together. On vacation, we always hoped to find ones like that, but they're always apart. So, quite fun to collect some of these! Props to the fam – love you guys!

3. The Medicine Man game. We played a fun simulation game with the kids both Monday night and tonight. I was more active in tonight's game as a "Pygmie," and had lots of fun interacting with the kids, capturing them, scaring them, and just plain having fun. Also, cool to learn a new game – one to keep with us in our bag of tools.

Date: 2/20/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

It is another beautiful day at camp, beautiful but hot and I have absolutely no energy to do anything, or at least it feels that way. This is the 2nd group of campers this week, and more specifically they are in grade 8 from Luther College. It has been great to get to know all of these kids, even though we haven't had that much time to get to know them all or at least get to know them that well, but still it has been a great experience. I do have to say that it has been exhausting trying to keep up with them since they seem to have an abundance in energy and our energy has been sapped, but of course there is renewing but it never seems like it is enough for us to keep up.



Ryan McLuen

Another thing that has been great about this camp is that I have been able to get up early and do some morning devotions, and I say that because since we have been here in Australia we have been so busy and are always go go go, I haven't been able to get up early to do morning devos. Sometimes I am able to squeeze them in, but I like to start my day in the presence of Christ and meditate on that. So it is good to have gotten some of that here, but I know that when we leave I most likely won't be able to get it, which is hard on me personally and it takes more effort for me to function properly, and I don't feel fulfilled all of the time. So please keep that in your prayers. Thank you everyone, peace and God bless.

In Christ,
Ryan McLuen

Date: 2/21/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

We said goodbye to our new friends from Luther College year 8 camp today! It was a busy week, but we sure have had a lot of fun things to do and people to hang out with! Pastor Spike, the faculty from Luther, and the crazy kids that kept us hopping all week long! We led worship this morning and it was really fun to get the kids up, jumping, and praising the Lord! We did "Trading my Sorrows" which we had done during a couple of the chapels that we led last week at Luther. So, we knew that they knew it and they were singing loud and clear! It was a highlight of my day! Its amazing what God does in even a short time...lots of kids were wanting hugs and email addresses as we were leaving. One girl even gave me here Eminem stickers from her "Dolly" magazine last night. Watch your letters friends!!! Ha! I love camping ministry!!! Even in the trying moments when you're struggling to understand the mindset of an 8th grader God is moving mountains. They just want to be loved on...that's all! Then again, isn't that what we all want!?!)



Rachel Bolte

We stopped to see some amazing sand sculptures on our way back to Croydon. They were pretty impressive. Mom, there was one with a manatee in it, so I took a picture for you. The good news from Victoria today is that its RAINING!!! They've been in a drought here for a long time and its finally over! It rained for the majority of the night last night and the day today and everyone is very thankful. I guess it goes well with my sharing this morning at worship...God answers prayer! In this case, exactly how people have asked...but not always! I'll challenge you just the way I challenged the kids...look for God's answers to your prayers in places you'd least expect them and in ways you'd never think of! He's crazy that way!

Hmmm...what I've been thinking about lately. Sorry this is a bit jumbled...but I guess that's how I thinking today so you'll just have to bear with me. God has been giving me a greater desire to spend time with Him lately. I've always struggled with that...mainly because if there is anything else going on I have to be where the action is. I had a couple great mornings with God at camp this week. It was nice to just sit outside and listen to the birds and smell the gum trees and soak in some of the Word. Sigh...yes, very nice just to be still for awhile. Especially today when I sat on the veranda with the sound and the smell of the rain all around me! What a blessing! Its been a good week for me in the area of quiet time...and that makes me feel peaceful. I reckon that I like feeling peaceful.

I pray that all is going well with you crazy Captive Free kids as you're in the middle of event season! Live it up and live it loud!!! God keep you strong and healthy through your busy schedules! You're in my prayers! And to all of the other International teams...take joy in every moment and soak it all in...as hard as that is sometimes! There's just so much to soak up! And stay as healthy as you can! You're all blessing so many people, I just can't stand it! I praise the Lord for every one of you and I'm so proud to be a part of this ministry this year. Isn't God amazing! We're all over the WORLD!!! He's just SO BIG!!! Wherever you are, know that you are in the hands of the creator of it all and that he will not give you more than you can handle. Funny how he knows us better than we know ourselves. Press on and know that I'm praying for you! God keep you!

Love and Peace,
Rachel<><

Date: 2/22/2003

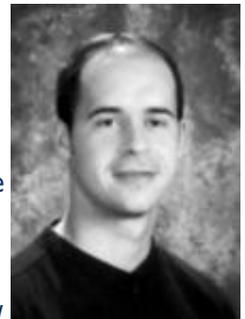
Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

Today has been full of interesting things, strange sayings, and beautiful views of God's creation. We started our journey along the Great Ocean Road this morning at 9 am. The road is along the southern coast of Australia. We started in Melbourne and headed west toward Portland.

The first stop was at a petrol station. I tried to get out of our bus and Sarah hit me in the head with the door. After successfully exiting the vehicle, we browsed through a few magazines inside while we waited for the fuel to finish. We were then informed that these magazines were not for reading. We did not have much to say in response to that, so we quietly left wondering just what the magazines were to be used for. Oh well, some things are better left as mysteries.

The next 10 hours was spent driving on one of the most curvy roads in the world, however it is also one of the most beautiful stretch of roads in the world. The clouds cleared up as we arrived at The Twelve Apostles. They are giant rock formations just off shore of the southern coast. We were also able to see the London Bridge, Thunder Cave, and The Blow Hole. It is difficult to understand, after



Ryan Legler

seeing this beautiful area, how people can see parts of creation and think that it all happened by chance.

It was around 9 pm that we arrived in Portland. The girls went to a pizza fellowship for women and the guys went to "Blokes and Sheds". We had a barbecue and fellowship with men from the area, and yes it was in a shed. The men of the church use this function as a time to get to know other men in the area they live in. They described it as a time of pre-evangelism.

God is moving here, and it is good to see how others are using different ways to reach out to their community. It is good also for us to see how God is using others to reach out to us. Thanks to all who have kept us in your prayers.

God's Peace – Ryan Legler

Date: 2/23/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Wow! What a fun couple of days we've had! Last night we arrived in Portland, Victoria after a LONG but beautiful trip along the Great Ocean Road. The ladies had a relaxing evening with some of the women from St. John's Lutheran Church, chatting over pizza and a cuppa. We arrived several hours later than expected so we didn't get to sit down and chat with them until close to 10pm, yet they were still all smiles when we finally arrived. This morning we attended two worship services, helping at the first with some special music, and then taking full leadership at the second. After worship, our host families and church contacts treated us to fish 'n chips which we ate at a park right next to the ocean. It was beautiful! Blue sky, a cool breeze, and green grass! It's nice to see green again as most of Victoria is suffering from severe drought!

Today was also our first opportunity to do some busking, which is basically just street side music ministry. We grabbed our acoustic instruments and stood at the entrance to Safeway, trying to promote our evening program at the church. It was fun to do a different sort of ministry. For me it was a little reminder that God uses people in many different situations and that we need to continue to be bold in our faith and not limit the ways in which God can work through us. Who knows...maybe some people today thought they were just running in for a gallon of milk when all of a sudden they were sidetracked by a random group of singing Americans. Just maybe, at a time and place least expected, they heard the message of Christ.

My encouragement to you is to keep your eyes open for all those different ways God can use you as His vessel! Peace to you today and always!

Sarah



Sarah Liggett

Date: 2/24/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Familiar faces and unfamiliar places...last night at our program in Portland we were happy to see Pastor Adam and Jamie from Hamilton. Even though we are enjoying meeting new people every day, there is something comforting about seeing familiar people, watching them sing along to most of the songs, and the like. It was a great ending to a day that took us from the church to a beachside park to Safeway and back to the church again. This morning, a mist settled over Portland, leaving us unable to see the nearby port from the church as we gathered to continue our westward march. We left Victoria for the first time to venture to Mt. Gambier in South Australia. South Australia and the Northern Territory are in the second of Australia's three time zones, half an hour earlier than the eastern states (including Victoria) and 1.5 hours later than Western Australia. If anyone knows why this half-hour thing started, please let me know because I am still trying to figure it out.



Steve Ellwein

We hit the ground running at St. Martin's Primary School, visiting with approximately a lot of classes

before doing two chapels (one for the younger students, one for the older). During the recess and lunch times I made use of the school library, which had recently acquired a few short books on the Australian governmental system. It may be a while before I fully understand preferential voting, the process by which Australians do not simply check the box of their chosen Parliament candidate(s) but instead rank all of the candidates for each office in preference order. If a candidate gets a majority of first-preference votes, wonderful. If not, that is where the fun begins. The candidate with the lowest number of first-preference votes is eliminated and the votes cast for him/her are redistributed according to the second-preference votes on those ballots. Confused yet? Here is a little of John Gunther's description (in his book "Inside Australia" as quoted in Bill Bryson's outstanding book "In a Sunburned Country") of what happens if that, too, fails: "If, after the second-preference votes are added to the first, there is still no candidate with a majority of the total ballots cast, the process is repeated: the ballots of the candidate trailing at this stage of the computation are divided up on the basis of second preference. If he inherited some second-preference votes from the first man eliminated, these are now redistributed on the basis of third preference. And so on." Bryson goes on to say, and I agree: "I particularly liked that casual concluding 'and so on.' It's a deft piece of work because it seems to say 'I understand all this perfectly, but I see no need to tax you with the details,' whereas of course what he is really saying is 'I haven't the faintest idea what any of this means.'" I'm starting to get a handle on it, but all I know for sure is that the Australian Electoral Commission must have some pretty good computers. Call me crazy, but I love this stuff, and learning about how the government works is giving me a more complete picture of the culture of Australia as a whole, which after all is one of the reasons we're all here.

We're also here, of course, to spread God's love through music (and everything else that goes on in our programs), and we had the chance to do that again with an evening program at the school. A lot of students convinced their parents to come, with the result being that about the same number of people packed into the relatively small school chapel as spread out nicely in St. John's sanctuary in Portland last night. Despite (or perhaps partially owing to) the close quarters it was a great atmosphere – everyone seemed excited and enjoying themselves, and participation abounded, with many people surprising me by singing along with our Paul Colman song as well as our Hillsongs. It's not often that I end a day so energized that I need to wind down before bedtime, but this was one of those nights. Fortunately, I had another great surprise waiting for me – the Grammys actually aired here, and after getting to my host home I was able to watch the second half. (To make things even better, I had a cat in my lap for a lot of it.) Amazing performances, and big congratulations to Nickel Creek and Third Day for their (untelevised, sadly) wins. A great day overall, and now we have a chance to rest as well. Tomorrow is our first actual day off in 10 days (although we will travel back to Portland), and while the last few days have been good the rest is greatly needed. We get right back into the game Wednesday with (surprise, surprise) a visit to St. John's Primary School, then some unexpected light days as a glitch in our schedule means we have an extra day to take our time getting back to Luther College in the Melbourne area for the Lutheran Youth of Victoria retreat, which promises to bring more good times ahead. God is watching out for us – and for you too! – Romans 10:12

Date: 2/25/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

24 hours in Mt. Gambier – our first trip out of the state of Victoria, as we spent this time in South Australia. But I tell you what – we were welcomed with such warmth. I was so happy that our contacts were able to squeeze us in here, as the people in Mt. G were so thrilled to have us there, and very gracious hosts. When we arrived, we each received little packets with a schedule, host lists, thank you's, and a lolly! During class visits, one group wrote us letters, and after the evening program, we received a lovely basket of goodies to munch on. Furthermore, all the hosts came together today and treated us to a nice lunch before we left town. I'm humbled and blessed by the amount of love and kindness they gave.



Tiffany Schmader

This was a Rest Day for us, and my host Mom was sweet enough to take me sight-seeing and to treat me to some post cards, note paper, stickers, and stamps before lunch. Again, these people just

don't stop giving! How precious! In the brief sight-seeing adventure, we stopped at the Cave Garden (quite cool w/ lots of pretty roses) and the Blue Lake (amazing blue lake – it really is very blue, and is the water supply for the city)!

After lunch, we traveled back to Portland, and were welcomed back into our host homes that we had been with on Saturday and Sunday. Ryan McLuen and I were housed together and went looking for more koalas, but found none this time around (Our hosts have several acres of wildlife-type land, and we saw 3 koalas over the weekend)! We then had a pleasant dinner with our hosts, and I topped off the evening by enjoying playing some praise songs on their piano. It was so nice to sit back and play – and not for anyone (as much as I enjoy worshiping with others) it was just me and Jesus.

Date: 2/26/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Good morning, afternoon or evening, I'm not sure what time it is wherever you are reading this, but I think that covers all of my bases. We are in Portland at the moment which is down the Great Ocean Road quite a ways, and past Warnambool (I hope I spelled that right) about 40 minutes or so, depending on whatever vehicle you are traveling in. Anyways it has been great here and today we spent the majority of the morning and afternoon at a school going to different classes and doing chapel and things of that nature. One thing that stuck out in particular was that during tea time me and Ryan went out with the kids and played some Footy and they were talking mad trash to us, so we challenged them to a game, me, Ryan, and we took proly 4 or 5 other kids, to take on like 20-30 other kids. It was crazy, but we won despite it being very tiring running up and down the field with only 4 or so people to pass or kick the ball to. Hehe, it was really fun though. The energy and love that all of these kids show is so outstanding, they don't even know us but they accept us and want us to sign autographs (as if we're famous) and they ask us to play with them and it is so much fun to see the energy and love that they have for people they don't even know in the least. Again, I thank you all who have and continue to support me and my team both through prayers as well as financially. You are helping us with our ministry in many more ways than you know. Continue to hold our team in your prayers as we are hard pressed on every side as Satan tries hard to tear us apart from within so we will stop the ministry that God is doing through us. Peace and God Bless.
In Christ,
Ryan McLuen



Ryan McLuen

Date: 2/27/2003

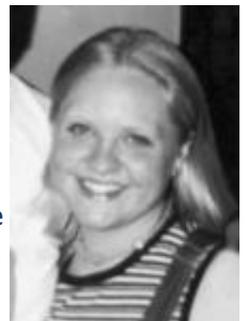
Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

A sad day for me today...I had to say goodbye to my host "mom" Leila who was a year younger than me. We've had so much fun together here in Portland and I'm sad to be leaving. She's a year 4 teacher and it was just the two of us in her flat for the week. We hit it off quite well and had a ton of fun chatting, watching movies, and eating ice cream. Talk about a good time! I got up early to make sure that I had time to talk a bit before she had to go to work and then it was off to the church.

We drove from Portland back to Melbourne today and met up with our contact Tim and another member of the LYV, Leah. We had the chance to have a bit of a night on the town and it felt SO GREAT to be "normal" for an evening. We went to the All Star Grill for dinner and it was very similar to many of the sports bar type restaurants in the States. The food was wonderful and afterwards we headed to the theatre to catch a movie. We saw "Catch Me If You Can" and I really enjoyed it. I laughed out loud...not that it takes a whole lot to make me laugh out loud...but I still really liked it.

Today was a great chance to just relax and unwind and be with each other and with friends for awhile. I was so energized by the end of the night that I really wanted to go dancing...but I didn't. I'll save that for when I get home.



Rachel Bolte

Tomorrow we start the LYV retreat that's being held at Luther College in Croydon so we're staying at the boarding houses there. Its time for bed and I'm going to go to sleep feeling very content and refreshed. Praise the Lord for a great day!!!

I pray all is well with all who are reading this! You are loved and missed!

God's Peace,
Rachel<><

Date: 3/1/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

I can't even describe to you what an amazing day this has been. Not because I'm extremely happy or because this day has been free of distractions and frustrations, but because I've seen God work so much today. Last night we kicked off the LYV (Lutheran Youth of Victoria) weekend retreat with some games and some worship music, and today we have been busy with LYV workshops as well as some "behind the scenes" work like creating a new puppet show, rehearsing new songs, and brainstorming ways to improve our programs. Team time can often be stressful because there are six of us who are usually feeling/needing/experiencing six different things. By dinner time I was tired, overwhelmed, and my mind was just cluttered with junk. I was about ready to shut down, but the day was far from over!

Tonight Rachel, Ryan L, Steve, Tiffany and I, along with a handful of LYV people, went to a Rebecca St. James concert! I had a hard time holding back my tears all the way to the concert because at that moment, even though I was excited and knew that I needed to worship, I just wanted a way out. I wanted a way to escape from my teammates for a while, a way to escape from my own thoughts and frustrations, basically a way to forget about everything but God. In the past few weeks I've felt so tired, drained, behind on work and confused about how to care for and nurture relationships that I've sort of lost my focus on God and the relationship that He desires to have with me. I've needed time to worship – time for everything in my life to disappear but God – and that's what I got when I listened to Rebecca St. James tonight.

Tonight I was reminded of the commitments that I've made to God, not just with this year of ministry, but with my entire life. I was reminded not to worry about my future, not to rely solely on others for strength and comfort, and to not let my mind be occupied by earthly things. I was reminded of God's amazing love and His ability to break us down - to constantly prune and refine us. If only I could describe the joy of the Lord that becomes so visible during times of brokenness! One particular Bible passage is jumping out at me now - may it comfort you as it has comforted me!

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence, or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." Psalm 51:10-12.

God's peace to you,
Sarah



Sarah Liggett

Date: 3/2/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

The third and final day of the Lutheran Youth of Victoria retreat...we have come through day 1 with the debut of SFL (Silent Football League, our semi-official Aussie name for the wondrous game of silent football) and a brief worship time. We have come through day 2, which saw us getting some team tasks accomplished and getting even more excited for Easter Camp as we sat in with the planning group. And, of course, the day ended with some praise and worship time led by Rebecca St. James and company in the final concert of her Australian tour. It was a great time of worship and renewal for all of



Steve Ellwein

us who were there – renewal in the sense of being refreshed, but also in the sense of being reminded of why we are doing this ministry in the first place and what our lives in Christ are all about. Plus, we have been doing a great deal of giving lately, musically and otherwise. As rewarding as that can be, it was great to receive and let someone else perform and lead us in worship. On another fun note...well, I guess a little setup is needed for this one. John Farnham is winding down a 35-year singing career (new album called "The Last Time," TV specials, a big tour, etc.) that has been quite successful – in Australia. His 1989 song "You're the Voice" is one of his signature songs and, sadly, the only one to make even a dent in the U.S. charts, peaking at #82. For some reason, though, one of the radio stations in Sioux Falls picked up on it, and I grew to really love this song. Rebecca St. James put a cover of it on her second album, and when she performed it last night she "Farnhamized" her version a bit through crowd participation (she didn't have to tell the crowd what to do, she just held out the microphone) – a small touch that wouldn't happen in the U.S. because most likely no one would know what to do, but it made a good song even more fun for the Australians and for me.

So, on to day 3 and another welcome rarity – the day began with us simply attending church with Outer Eastern, the congregation that meets in the Luther College chapel. No special music, no children's message, just going and sitting in the pews like a "normal" person. I even sat alone, which might seem sad but wasn't because it was exactly what I wanted to do this morning, and a good service was made even better by the singing of one of my favorite hymns. Our one piece of programming for the day followed the service as we led our still relatively new spiritual gifts workshop for the second time. I think my favorite part of the workshop is listening as the participants describe their dreams of what their congregation (in this case, LYV as a whole) would be like and how it would work if everyone were to recognize and fully use the gifts God gives them. Some great ideas are floating around out there, and we can only hope to get people talking about them, writing them down, and continuing the conversation after the workshop ends so that they can stick with those dreams and work to make them reality. In the afternoon we did just that on a smaller scale as a team as we worked on ways to give our program more of a flow and a Scripture base. Since we have a long drive tomorrow, this evening was ours as a partial day off. Many of us went to a great pizza & pasta restaurant (through the never-ending generosity of Tim, LYV president and one of our main contacts here), then watched a British movie by the name of "Bend it Like Beckham." On the surface it seems like a teen movie with some soccer thrown in, but it also has a lot to say about culture – how it affects our lives, how we react to differences, etc.

Some of us started a second movie, but I was getting tired so I headed from the school to the boarding cottages to head for bed. As I crossed the oval (the school's cricket ground) I scanned the night sky as I usually do, but much of it was clouded over. About halfway across I turned back again and the clouds had parted to reveal a fantastic starfield and the object of my search – the Southern Cross. As it happened, it was right above the unique cross that stands in front of Luther's chapel. Off and on this year I have been feeling a little disconnected and unsure of exactly where I fit on this team. I don't normally go for this sort of thing and I can't really explain it, but as those clouds parted and the stars came out it seemed to be God's way of reassuring me, of telling me that there is a purpose for my being here (which I never really doubted) and a place for me to fit. There will still be up days and down days, of course. However, between last night's concert and tonight's "oval experience," in the last couple of days I have come through a time of knowing and feeling God's presence more in my life, of being connected to something much bigger than myself. I pray that this continues, for me and for all of us. – 1 Timothy 4:12, 2 Timothy 1:7 (You're the Voice); Job 9:9-10

Date: 3/3/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

A day of travel! Actually, we don't have near the amount of travel days that we had in the US, so it is a nice change. But, today's trip took a while, and man was I ready to be out of the bus!

We traveled to Walla Walla today, where we began our few days in the state of New South Wales. Cool to get to be in another state of Australia, even though Victoria is



quite lovely! We're being housed at St. Paul's College, where we're staying in one of their boarding houses. We'll be working with the college later this week, and going to a few other towns while we're in the state. **Tiffany Schmader**

This morning, I finally got a hold of a number of our contacts for the week. It can be quite the task at times. It made me really appreciate those schedule coordinators! Wow! I'm continuing to try to improve my "let go and let God" as I work on all the Team Leader items while in Australia. I strive to do my best, but to also know that everything will work itself out – God is in control!

Date: 3/4/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Exhaustion, that is one word that I can use to tell you how I am feeling as of late. We just don't ever stop, and when we do, I feel like I want to collapse, but of course we never stop for that long so we can't really collapse until its bedtime. But I say that not as a bad thing, because all of the time that we are doing stuff I don't feel the tiredness, its just when we stop that I feel it. We are going to some incredible places and seeing many incredible sites. At the moment we are staying at a boarding house in Walla Walla which is in New South Wales, and we were at a public primary school in Henty and then at a Lutheran Primary school in Henty and at the end of the say we did some music at an Ash Wednesday service. A full day to my recollection, but would I replace it with a day of sleeping? Nope, not at all, which should be enough to speak for itself because I love to sleep. Hehe. There have been a lot of mixed feelings that have been running around lately, and I am about ready for a break of some sorts, to rest and to process much of which has been happening here. When we are non stop for so long, we don't really have much of a chance to actually reflect on all that is and has happened around us. So please pray for strength and for times of rest within our schedule. Thank you all so much, I love all of you. Peace and God Bless.

In Christ,
Ryan McLuen



Ryan McLuen

Date: 3/5/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Happy Birthday to my niece Hallie!!! She's 4 years old today! Happy Birthday Peanut!!! Today we played for two scripture classes at a public high school in Culcairn, New South Wales. The school was called Billabong High School and it was a huge blessing to be able to share the Gospel with them! We played some songs, did a puppet show (I'm always amazed at the response those little guys get from every age group!), and did a skit as well. It was a great opportunity and we had a pretty good response. A bunch of kids came up to us and talked through their physics class. It was really nice just to make some connections and hang out for awhile. But my favorite part of the day had to do with a girl whose name I don't even know. While we were playing our last song a few girls came up and started dancing in front of the stage. There were two at first and then a third joined them. The two didn't even acknowledge the third and it seemed that they were ignoring her. In that position, I would have felt left out and turned around and headed to my seat, but this girl smiled all the bigger and danced even harder! I couldn't help but get a huge smile on my own face as I watched her. She was a huge inspiration to me that day and I only wish that I could have her confidence. There are many times when I wish I had the courage to get up and dance when no one else is dancing or when the people who are dancing don't give me the time of day...but more often than not I don't. So, the girl from Billabong High School will be an encouragement to me, and hopefully to you, to live my life to the fullest and to take every opportunity that I can to DANCE!

Have a brilliant day!

Rachel<><



Rachel Bolte

Date: 3/6/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

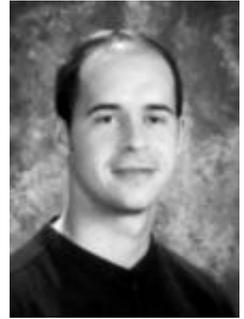
Journal Entry:

Our program this morning was in a public high school. Billabong College asked us to come and play for the year 7-12 students, so we did. The reaction was a bit different from the Christian schools we visit. We were playing for a time called "Religious Education" so the students expected us to talk about God, but I don't think they were expecting us. The music we played definitely got their attention, and I think some of them enjoyed it. I also think that some of them didn't, and that's just fine.

Our program for them was actually pretty normal to what usually happens. Our time after the program is what really caught my attention. There was some time for the students to talk to us as there usually is, but today's discussions were different, at least for me. Usually we hear that our music was good and we talk about where we are from. Today I was approached by 5 male students, and they asked me if I had grown up in the church. I said, "Yes" and told them why I was still involved in the church. They just had question after question. It was great! They were not Christians, but God had worked through us to get their minds going. They were genuinely curious about why we were doing this, and about why we were Christians.

I don't know that these guys will become Christians. Changing their hearts is the job of the Holy Spirit. I am merely called to be a witness to what I know as truth. I do know however, that these students heard about the Love of Jesus Christ today, and they wanted to get a better picture of what God has to offer them. – God is good!

Ryan Legler -Matthew 9:37,38



Ryan Legler

Date: 3/7/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Today was our longest day in terms of ministry and outreach that we have experienced since we've been in Australia. We are all exhausted, mostly from setting up and tearing down our equipment three times in one day!!! This morning we led a chapel service at St. Paul's College in Walla Walla, New South Wales. (By the way, college in Australia typically means grades 7 through 12!) Following chapel we moved our equipment outside and played for the students during their lunch break, then we tore everything down once again and moved it to Zion Lutheran church for an evening program.

Despite the busyness of the day, I'm glad that we could be utilized that much in such a short amount of time. One thing that really had an impact on me today was the chapel service this morning. Typically our efforts to get senior high students involved by clapping along or singing are futile, and today we were even warned beforehand that we probably wouldn't get much of a response. To our surprise, by the end of our time we had several students on their feet, clapping and singing with us. One of the students even came up to Rachel afterward and said that this was the first time anyone has ever stood up in chapel. Wow! Sure, there were still many people who showed little if any response to us, but it was good to see that some students had enough courage to stand up and break the mold.

Blessings to you,
Sarah



Sarah Liggett

Date: 3/8/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Some of my highlights from our time in New South Wales...Tuesday: A wonderful, clear

night with virtually no other lights around. I took the digital camera out for a bit of night star photography with better results than I would have expected. Wednesday: Billabong High School, with more interest in why we are doing this (as opposed to who we are, where we're from, etc.) than normal, particularly surprising for a public school. Plus, it was refreshing to be with a slightly older school audience amongst all the primary schools we visit. We also had a little time to walk around Culcairn, a nice little town. Thursday: Back to primary schools at St. John's in Jindera, but we were surprised at the chapel to find that the students knew our last song (one of our Hillsongs) and sang it enthusiastically the whole way through with us. Then, signing everything from paper to book bags to hats over lunch – still a strange experience, and I hope that we are sufficiently able to "duck" so the students can see God and not just us. Yesterday: A long day, and though the closing program was great my "God-spotting" moment came early in the morning at our chapel for St. Paul's College. Toward the end we had some of the students standing, which I guess was more response than anyone was expecting, but I noticed one girl in particular. It was good that she stood up and tried to get her friend sitting next to her to stand with her. What really impressed me, though, is that even after her friend wouldn't stand she kept standing and clapping along even though no one else was standing for a couple of rows around her. Were I in that situation, would I be able to see past the "group-think" attitude and not worry about how I would be viewed, or would I be able to stand and clap and enjoy myself as I wanted even if no one would join me? I'm not sure.



Steve Ellwein

Our time in Australia's First State ended today and we headed back to Victoria – a short trip, barely across the border to Wodonga. (Albury, NSW and Wodonga, Vic. appear to be the Duluth-Superior of this part of Australia, though the accompanying lake is a bit smaller.) Wodonga is the home of Rev. Mark and Anne Hansen, former teamers both (and Mark was on Watermark, so I have someone to share Denmark & Germany stories with!) and our contacts for the next five days. They came to Henty, NSW to see us last Tuesday, and based on their enthusiasm and care for us there it already looks like it's going to be a great time here. Today's only activity was an evening worship service in the chapel of Victory Primary School – interesting from a sound perspective as it's one of those rooms that's wide but not deep, but we made it work (mostly through muting instruments and letting the amps do the work – sorry, Karl). My host family is incredible – about 90 years old and they are still nonstop moving and giving and full of life. In fact, everyone's host families seem great; our arrival here has definitely been anticipated, so we seem to be in for more great blessings. Tomorrow brings two more services in this multi-point parish, one in Yackandandah (yep, you read it right) and the other at the church in Wodonga, and then an informal evening barbecue. With Monday being a day off, we'll have some good down time in store as well. As much as we focus on giving, this ministry really is a two-way thing. Especially here where our schedule can be a lot more packed and a lot less predictable than in the U.S., we learn to appreciate the lighter moments and are incredibly thankful for everything – housing, meals, conversations, encouragement and much more – that the people we meet are willing to give. – Romans 12:11-13

Date: 3/9/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

This morning we traveled to a town called Yackandandah! I've been told it's an aboriginal word that is translated to something like: Where two rivers meet and where there are stones. Our time in Yack was brief, but it seemed a quaint town. We, along with our wonderful contact, former teamer – Mark Hansen, lead the service. This is probably the tiniest church we've played in, but it certainly was filled with the joy of the Lord.



Tiffany Schmader

From Yack, we traveled back to Wodonga (sorry, I'm not sure of its translation) with Pastor Mark, and lead another worship service. As we mingled afterwards, I had some nice conversations, as it appeared we all did. I much enjoy all these times for tea in Australia, as we are invited to join in for a "cuppa." Good time to socialize and mingle.

We then headed to our respective hosts for lunch and some afternoon relax time. As usual, I managed to keep busy, and before I knew it, it was time for Jesus Jam (aka rehearsal). That was

followed up with a lovely BBQ evening at the Manse (pastor's home). It was a relaxing evening with more good conversation. I had a couple nice chats with two different fellas. It's encouraging to be greeted with a smile and to converse with folks who are sincere and interested in what we're doing, and excited to share a little of themselves. Seems we've met a lot of lovely people like this in our time here, as well as in the US. Thanks God, for the people you allow us to

Date: 3/10/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Hello my friends and family, I never really know exactly how to start these journals so I apologize if they are all the same. Well at the moment we are in Wodonga and today is actually our day off, which has been much needed. My family here has been so much fun, and I look forward to the next few days of getting to know them. The one thing that I'm not looking forward to is when I have to say goodbye. That is my least favorite part about staying with host homes. But I have to say the rewards far outweigh the costs.

Team is going good, there are still stressors around, but I feel that we are working through some things and they are getting better. Personally I'm doing a little better, but still trying to work through a lot that I'm dealing with at the moment. I wish I could say more, but I can't. Please keep me and my team in your prayers. God is working some amazing things, but it seems when He works the most, it hurts the most. Thank you all so much.

In Christ,
Ryan M



Ryan McLuen

Date: 3/11/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

We spent today at Victory Primary School here in Wodonga. It was fun to be with kids...I always enjoy the little ones. We signed LOTS of autographs today...its pretty funny when you have to ask them to make a line in front of you. STRANGE!

We had a fun surprise too...the Australian Football League cup was brought to Victory today just to let the kids have a look. It was the actual cup (equivalent to the Super Bowl trophy) and we got to have our picture taken with it! Very cool!

We also did a program in Yackandandah...fun name, huh? It was a fun program with a fun crowd!

But my favorite part of today was my host family! Mark and Anne Hansen are amazing! They're both team alumni and it was such a blessing to be able to spend some time chatting with familiar people about familiar things and familiar places. They lived in Minneapolis and worked at the Youth Encounter office when I worked there in high school so we know a lot of the same people and it was just great to talk to them. We sat up chatting for a long time and it was just very refreshing to be around them and to be on the receiving end of their servant hearts. Between them and their children, I feel so loved and so encouraged, its such a blessing! God knows exactly what we need and He loves us enough to give it to us at just the right time. Praise the Lord for that!

I pray that all of you are feeling the same love and encouragement wherever you are!
God bless you,
Rachel<><



Rachel Bolte

Date: 3/12/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

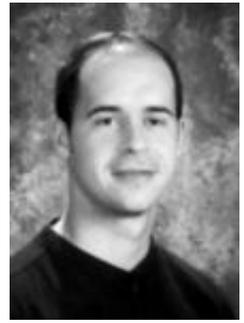
Encouragement! Tonight was our last concert in the Wodonga area. We have been here for about 4 days, and they have been 4 good days. It seems that we have been used

here as an encouragement to the local parish. We have also been encouraged by the congregations, but especially from 2 Youth Encounter alumni that Rachel and I have been staying with while we are here. It is very nice to spend some time with people who have been on team and understand, first hand, why we feel and act the way we do.

Tonight I gave my second sharing for this year. Yes it is only number two. I didn't like the first one I did, and so I took 5 months to write a new one. I like the new one and think that I'll keep it. We as a team have been trying to put more scripture into our program and we have seen a dramatic difference in how the gospel message comes across. God presents his own message of love and salvation much better than we can, so we decided to stop using our own words and use the words that God has already given us. It works pretty well. Go figure.

We have been able to get a little more rest this week than usual. Rest is always a good thing. It has been a good week here, and with another 2 months in Australia to go, I look forward to many more good weeks before we head for home. God is good and keeps watch over his own.

God's Peace, Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 3/13/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Welcome to Bendigo, a boomtown that sprang up during Australia's gold rush in the 1850s! There are some fabulous things to see in this town from museums to Chinese gardens to a huge Catholic cathedral, so I am excited to do a little sight-seeing tomorrow.

A good portion of the day was actually spent in the bus, driving from Wodonga to Bendigo. It was a little hard to leave our friends in Wodonga. The Hansen family took such good care of us (Mark and Anne are both Youth Encounter alumni), as did David, the wonderful man Tiffany and I stayed with while his wife vacationed in Fiji! This morning before we left Pastor Mark led us in a devotion and we also got to enjoy the sacrament of Communion together as a team. It was wonderful to just sit and reflect on God's amazing gift to us and to not feel like we had to rush back to our instruments like we normally do during church services. It sort of reminds me of a song we teach to little kids called "Be Still and Know that I am God" which is taken from Psalm 46:10. During the song the kids run around and do funny actions, then shout "Be still and know that I am God!" as loud as they can while they freeze in the midst of whatever action they're doing. It's a little funny that I can learn so much from a children's song, but I do. How often do we cease from all activity at some point throughout the day and just absorb the things that are around us, remembering all the intricate details of God's creation. I know that my team rarely has the opportunity to be still, but this morning we did and it was a true blessing to me.

The bus ride to Bendigo was long and tiring, but we were met by a host of amazing people whose one immediate goal was to have us rest. So we did! We had a few hours before tea (dinner) to relax or catch up on work or do anything else that we felt the need to do. I am continually amazed at the people we are meeting in Australia and the love they so readily extend to us!

I will leave you with Psalm 46:10 with the hope that at some time today you can take a timeout from your normal routine and enjoy a little personal time with God, reflecting especially on all the ways in which He continues to bless your life!

God's peace to you all,
Sarah

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."



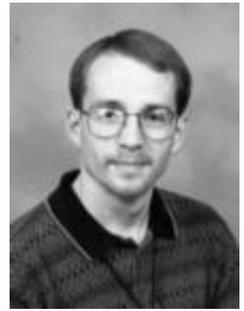
Sarah Liggett

Date: 3/14/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Every once in a while (fairly often, actually), something happens that reaffirms for me the tried but true adage that in this ministry we are blessed far more than the blessings we give. As things originally stood, our schedule here in Bendigo looked packed, and with the pace we have been at some of us were not looking forward to more of the same. Our time here, however, has proven to be just the opposite. We arrived yesterday to a few hours off at our host families, enabling me to feel caught up on emails for the first time in a couple of weeks, followed by a dinner with our hosts. Today's schedule was altered from what we originally thought – it is unfortunate that what had been planned fell through, but the day did end up being a bit less draining for us than it could have been. Our morning consisted of some time at Strath Haven Nursing Home. The afternoon was essentially off, with some of our hosts bringing us around the historic city of Bendigo to play tourists for a while. In the evening we led a worship service and discovered a link of sorts – one of our songs, "And Can It Be," is a contemporary version of a hymn written by Charles Wesley. The original version appears in the Australian Lutheran hymn book, and it was interesting to watch people follow along (or try to, given the differences between the version in the hymnal and the way we do it).



Steve Ellwein

The service coincided with the Harvest Festival, as we start looking toward autumn and the coming harvest. That harvest will be much smaller than it should be this year due to the extreme drought which has gripped Victoria and other parts of Australia for the last several months, but we are still thankful for all that we receive. Sometimes that's what it takes, I guess. A season of drought makes us more thankful for the little we receive than a season of plenty makes us thankful for a bumper crop. In those times we turn to God more completely and rely on him more fully, because without him the harvest would be meager regardless of whatever happens outside of ourselves. When we do that, we are blessed – not always in the way or time that we expect or even want, but we are blessed nonetheless. We came to Bendigo expecting to give for a solid two days and rest later, but instead in the midst of our giving we found some rest and were able to receive from some wonderful people who loved us and cared for us at least as much as we should be loving and caring for all the people that we meet in our travels – a bumper crop in the middle of a drought. In our seasons of drought the Lord of the Harvest still provides showers of blessing.

This weekend we have a bit of time away as we head to Araluen Camp at Anglesea for Commencement Camp, where we will see many of our old friends from Lutheran Youth of Victoria and Lutheran Student Fellowship (LYV & LSF). Not much is on the schedule (thanks again to the cancellation of a planned craft workshop tomorrow morning) – something called "theatre sports" and a campfire tomorrow, helping with worship and leading our increasingly popular spiritual gifts workshop Sunday morning. Now, if we can just finish these postcards we'll really have something (one more thing, actually) to be thankful for. The postcards – hundreds of them between the six of us – are for our sponsors, host homes, partners and others who have become a part of our ministry during the first part of the year, and we are near the end of this project that is only a token of our appreciation. We are truly thankful for all of you who support this ministry – we can't do it without you. – Ezekiel 34:26-27a

Date: 3/15/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Aaaaaawe – The morning I got lost in the bush (woods).....

Once upon a time, there was a girl that was about to go for a jog. Her host Dad pointed out a trail behind the house that led to the top of a hill and a look out tower – a nice little destination. He then suggested taking the curvy road at the top back down the hill. It sounded like a pleasant trek. Thus, the girl set out on her 20-30 min journey.

Finding herself on the first path that had been pointed out to her, she soon came upon many other paths. There was uncertainty of which ones to continue on!

Fortunately, she recalled that her host Dad said when in doubt, just head towards the direction of the sun at the top of the hill. After many turns and hopeful guesses, the girl made it to the top of



Tiffany Schmader

the hill. A sense of relief and accomplishment came upon her. She took some time to pray and enjoy the Lord's creation.

Then, it was time to head back. The girl quickly realized that she was uncertain of how to go while on the curvy road. She knew to turn right, but where would it let out?? After some debate, she decided to try going back through the trails in the bush. But, once heading down the hill, there were, again, the many trails, but this time, no sun to follow. So, the girl reconsidered her decision and headed back towards the road, with hope that she'd magically discover where to go once on the road.

Thus, around the curves she ran, wondering where it would end. Soon enough, the road came to a T intersection. At this point, she truly did not know which road would lead to the home. She knew the general direction, but that was all. Upon observation, she noticed a gravity water stream (a unique water system) crossing under the road. The girl quickly remembered that one of these streams was behind her host home. Thus, she opted to follow the stream back home.

A nice little walk began, and there was an encounter with an Australian bird, the Ibis. A lovely time in nature.....until the stream went to an underground tunnel – and not yet at the point of the home. What now?

The girl began to worry. How was she going to find her way back? Clearly, she'd been out way past the 20-30 min. She decided the best thing to do at this point was to go back up the curvy road, and try going back down the original trailed area again. The girl was rather distraught, trying to hold back tears. She began to walk up the road, collecting herself – when a beautiful thing happened. A car approached, as they often do on roads. But this was not just any car...this was her host Dad!!! He stopped and gave her a ride back to the home.

Much thanks to God for getting us out of situations, especially when we're lost and uncertain of how to get back on the path. Thanks for sending your angels to help us!

Date: 3/16/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Good morning/afternoon/night all of my loved ones. This morning we left an LYV/LSF retreat in Angelsea. We got to see many people that we have met and known since we've been in Australia and it was so fun to be able to hang out with them. But of course our time there was short and we had to depart for Nhill, which was a normal drive, which was long and boring and there wasn't that much to do. But we got to Nhill just fine, and were rushed to set up, but our program was very fun and a long lost friend was there. Chris, who was the camp manager at Tandara Lutheran Camp in Halls Gap, which was our first full week here in Australia. So it was great to catch up with him and laugh about old stories and memories that were made.

Things are still going alright with me, and I'm still working through the stuff that has been on my mind lately. But I thank you for your prayers, God is still showing himself in many ways and is amazing in that. God's love to all of you out there, you are in my prayers as well. Peace and God Bless.

In Christ,
Ryan M



Ryan McLuen

Date: 3/17/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

The key word for today is RELAXATION!!! Tiffany and I are housed together with a wonderful family who have a pool in the backyard. I took advantage of that, along with the beautiful weather, this afternoon and sat out letting the sun burn me for awhile. I tell ya what, getting ready to be in weddings is torture! Hee hee! It was quite an enjoyable way to spend a bit of time. Tiffany joined me and we had a dip in the pool... involving some synchronized swimming of course! Oh, the fun! And we're really good at it too...I think we might start our own Olympic team once we're off the road!!! Yes, it was a lovely afternoon! I also got to talk to my wonderful friend Jessica this afternoon...



Rachel Bolte

who is one of the people responsible for making me spend time in the sun preparing for weddings! Can I just tell all of you wonderful friends and family out there just what a breath of fresh air it is to talk to you! Thank you for the blessings that you are to us and for your constant prayers and support...God shines through you!!!

We also had a barbeque with all of the host families tonight. It was a very nice and informal time. We ended up watching "Remember the Titans" to end the evening. It was a lovely day off and I am thankful today for friends, synchronized swimming, movies, and over-the-phone hugs. Praise the Lord for today!!!

Date: 3/18/2003

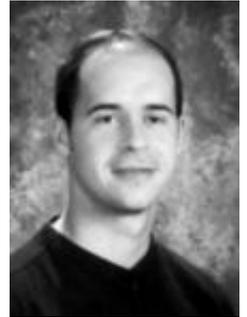
Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

We are in a town called Nhill today. We had a meeting tonight with local youth workers, a pastor, and teachers from the Lutheran primary school. It is wonderful to see the passion that some people have for Christ, for youth, and for sharing God's love. We shared some ideas for possible future ministry opportunities for them, and they started processing and thinking through where they wanted to go, and how they could get there. It is great to see God working in so many ways.

I am excited for this next week. We will be in Adelaide, and I will get to see some friends that I haven't seen in about 6 years. One of them is a past teammate and the other is someone I met on a team from Australia. I didn't think I was going to get to see either of them ever again, but this is good luck for me. Yea God!

God Bless – Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 3/19/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Today has been a day of mixed emotions for me. Lately I feel like I've been on one giant roller coaster, one moment feeling like I'm on cloud nine and the next feeling like I can't muster up even a bit of happiness. I don't think I'll ever understand what causes this swing in emotions, but one thing I do know is that when Satan finds a weakness in me he sinks his teeth in and if I give him a foothold he drags me down fast. This morning as we got ready to leave Nhill and head to Adelaide, I was more than ready to go home and to take a break from team. I don't know that I've ever missed home quite as much as I did this morning, and I don't really know how to explain it or even that I fully understand it. I guess my best attempt is to say that I've been thinking about so many things like life on team, ministry, relationships, etc, and I've been processing so much information internally that I've been needing a safe place to share all I've been thinking about. And lately the only safe place I can think of is home with my family. I've been traveling on a ministry team for almost 20 months now, and the back-to-back team experience has been taking its toll on me. I'm feeling more and more disconnected from home, not really even because I'm in Australia but because I haven't had any real quality time with my family for the last year and a half - except for holidays which are rushed anyway! Sometimes it's hard to realize that the lives of my family and friends at home are changing just as fast as mine is, and it's sad sometimes to realize that I'm not a part of that change. So Mom, Dad, Jenny and Derek, if and when you read this know that I love you and am missing you!

I don't usually know what to do when feelings of sadness and disconnection set in, and I know my teammates don't know quite how to handle it either, but I do know that God always has a way of revealing Himself through pain. Today I was given just another bit of evidence to confirm God's role as my Comforter and Sustainer. Today we drove to Adelaide and spent the evening with Dean and Ruth Semler, two Youth Encounter alumni who now reside in Adelaide. Ruth was actually a back-to-backer as well, serving on the New Vision team two years ago after spending a year on Captive Free. Although I didn't get to talk to her much tonight, we did have a chance to talk a little and she brought to light a couple of things that I hadn't really thought of before concerning the adjustments



Sarah Liggett

from one team to the next. I have a feeling that she understood all my thoughts, my frustrations, my weariness and disconnectedness without me even having to explain much to her. Having the chance tonight to be around Ruth was truly a gift from God and I believe the first step in my healing process.

I know this is turning into a long journal, but I really want to share a Bible passage that has been on my heart the last few days. With this roller coaster I've been on, often it seems I get so caught up in myself and my emotions that I forget about the big picture which is my salvation through my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I constantly want God to draw me closer to Him, so Psalm 51 has been my focus and my prayer. "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (v 10-12). A pure heart...a steadfast spirit...the joy of salvation...God's sustaining grace...when my thoughts settle on these things all my momentary troubles fade away. May Psalm 51 be your prayer as well, and may God's love and peace be evident to you today and always!

Sarah

Date: 3/20/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Today is the first full day of our time in the Adelaide area, and like the three that will follow it it began early. We have lost count of the number of primary school classrooms we have visited and the number of chapels we have led. Sometimes they seem to run together, but they are all special in their own way. The original plan at Our Saviour's in Aberfoyle Park this morning was to lead their chapel time and see what happened from there. We ended up on the playground at recess being very much the center of attention in some circles – not as much with the autograph signing this time so much as conversations and activities. I made use of the marvel of technology that is our digital camera to take some photos and show off the results, the Ryans got into a soccer game and Rachel had a cluster of tour guides as she was shown all around the schoolyard. It always amazes me how students at the schools we visit see us as something special – it's a kind of status we automatically have as visitors from another country, but we somehow manage to keep that interest. More proof that it's God working through us instead of our own efforts, I guess. Anyway, lunchtime eventually rolled around and we were off to the Flagstaff Hotel. Peter, the head of Lutheran Youth of South Australia, has been very good to us and is also very interested in expanding Youth Encounter's ministry in Australia. We were deep into a great discussion on that topic when the words that changed the world today came into view.



Steve Ellwein

"The beginning stages of the disarmament of the Iraqi regime have begun." The words from White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer scrolled across the screen and the expected became the present. Being a news addict I think this interested me more than the others; I was the only one who went over to the TV for President Bush's address, which aired live as our lunch was ending. As events have been heading in this direction in the last few weeks it has been a bit strange to be so far removed from the U.S., but I think some of it is simply due to the team syndrome of having few opportunities to check on the news, which happens in the U.S. as well as here. It is a topic of conversation, of course, and it is tough for me to bite my tongue rather than share my views and risk them being interpreted as those of the team or of Youth Encounter. Even though polls indicate that the people seem to be less supportive of events as a whole compared to people in the U.S., I am glad that we are at least in a country where the government is an ally and partner. My prayers are with the teams who are in less supportive nations, for the U.S., British and Australian troops (and others who may join them), for all civilians and for a swift conclusion that will prevent greater atrocities and lead to a lasting peace.

Life goes on despite world events, and our day continued with some time to look around Adelaide, followed by tea with the Semlers and our other hosts. We have a great group of people looking after us while we are here. The last team I hosted before going on team myself was Ruth's New Vision team and she was part of the training staff my first year, so it has been good to catch up with her

and meet Dean. On the way back to my host home we drove up to the lookout at Mt. Lofty to get a look at Adelaide at night, but fog had come to the mountain so we didn't really see anything. I did manage to get a look at a different point on our way down, so it was still worth the trip. Pray for us and our schedule in the next few days...tomorrow, the first day of autumn, we have a college chapel in Novar Gardens, a primary school chapel in Highgate and a program in Unley; Saturday we have music and electives at the Parenting with Purpose conference in Mawson Lakes and another program in Salisbury; Sunday, in addition to celebrating Ryan L.'s birthday we have two worship services in Golden Grove, a luncheon in Para Vista at which we will present Youth Encounter's Alumni Service Award, and a program/worship service in the historic German town of Hahndorf. Lots of traveling, lots to do, not a lot of sleep. Thank God that He is in control of this team as well as this world. – Psalm 121:7-8

Date: 3/21/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Yay for young adults enjoying a program, and yay for familiar faces within the Youth Encounter family!!! We had an evening program in Adelaide at Ruth & Dean Semler's church (former teamers). It was really enjoyable. Not only were we introduced by Ruth and warmly welcomed to the church by other members, but the young adult crowd was so encouraging. To look out during the program and see people smiling, to see people with their eyes closed - praising the Lord, to see people stand up even before we asked...just a great way to end the day! God is so good, and how beautiful is the spirit of the Lord!



Tiffany Schmader

At this point in the year, I can tell I'm a bit weary and worn. I hate to admit the weakness within myself, but my tanks are low: Emotional, physical, and spiritual. Tonight was a blessing to my spiritual tank – a bit of refueling. God is truly our sustainer and I love seeing how He works. I'm still not feeling 100% myself, but HE will get me through. In times of weakness, it's so good to turn to the Lord and lean on Him. He is the only one who can give us full comfort. There are days I strive for comfort from my teammates, but I just don't receive what I need. We are busy with programming and relational ministry, that we often aren't able to be the support to each other that is ideal. Thus, it's so important to be in tune with the Lord, and to remember that Jesus is our best friend and comfort. My prayer for the day: May I continue to be refueled, seeking the Lord with everything within me, getting back to a more consistent happy nature soon!

Date: 3/22/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone, it is another lovely day in Australia and we are still surviving the busy schedule that we seem to constantly have. I'm not really complaining because it keeps us going and the time when we get tired is when we stop going non-stop. But rest is always a good thing and replenishment is good as well, which we as a team seem to need in plenty, at least some of the time. But God is good even when we are unsure of how He is working in a situation, and even when that situation is a hard one. I know that in my last few journals I have been working through some stuff in my life and it has been hard on me, but God has been a provider in the midst of this. Well some more news has come my way and it hits me quite hard as well. There was a girl who was in my youth group in Maple Grove who has been struggling with cancer as of late and she has done well at times and not so well at other times. The doctors have given her a short time to live a few different times and shocked the doctors at how well she has done. But I have just found out that about a week ago she passed away. And at that news I was crushed because she was so amazing and such a blessing to everyone that she met. But I was told that her funeral was incredible and that there were so many people there, because her life, even though it was short, touched so many people in so many ways. And as I'm writing this I am almost in tears because this is still so new for me, but it needs to be



Ryan McLuen

said because it is something that I'm going through. But I would ask to keep her family and the Maple Ridge family in your prayers as this is dealt with and pray that her memory doesn't fade and we remember Anna for who she was, a dedicated child of Christ who even in her most painful and trying times, was a bright light for Jesus. I love you Anna.

In Christ,
Ryan M

Date: 3/23/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Happy Birthday Legler!!! We're very glad that you were born and that God allowed us to spend this year with you! Its been a very busy day today! We led two worship services at Golden Grove Lutheran Church this morning for a lot of wonderful people who were very excited to be there. Steve led interactive Bible stories at both services and the congregation got into it at both services. Ryan M and I even got to be horses...it was pretty entertaining.



From there we went to Para Vista to present the Alumni Service Award to Lynn Benger. **Rachel Bolte** It was an honor to be able to give it to her in person and to be a part of the service. She is a wonderful woman who has touched many lives for Jesus. It was there that we had to say goodbye to Ruth and Dean Semler who had been hosting the girls for the past few nights and who are friends of a few of us from their days on YE teams. It was such a blessing to be able to see them and to be the first American guests in their home. It was hard to say goodbye, but hopefully it won't be too long before we see them again. Ruth and Dean, you're always welcome at my house...its my turn again!!!

It was also in Para Vista that I met Paul. Paul saw a New Vision team in the 80's and had quite a story to tell. And I asked him if I could tell it to you. So, here it is!!! Paul was working at a petrol station in New Zealand and he was a pretty rough guy. He was into drugs, was not into God and loved riding motorcycles. He was pumping petrol one day when a woman came in as a customer and invited him to a concert. He decided he'd rock up and see what it was all about, so that evening he went to the place they were holding the concert and snuck in to sit up against the back wall. He sat there looking around for the girl who had invited him and looking at the cheesy people on stage, wondering what on earth he was doing there. Well he didn't see the woman anywhere and he decided he would leave as soon as the last note was played. But God had other plans for Paul. One of the older members of the church had come in and noticed Paul and as soon as Paul stood up to leave, the man approached him and started chatting. Paul thought that was strange since he was in his leathers and older people usually didn't pick him out to chat with. As they talked the woman who had invited Paul stood up from her seat on the floor up front and one of the guys from the band came with her to talk to Paul. It turns out that one member of New Vision was also very into biking and was excited to chat with Paul since he had noticed he was wearing his leathers. The woman was the youth worker at the church and her name was Jen. Jen, Paul and the member of New Vision talked until 12:30am and Paul ended up becoming a Christian because of how God was working in his life that night. He married Jen and they now have four little boys and God has been using Paul full time in the Lutheran Church of Australia for 10 years now. He has touched thousands of people for Jesus and it all started because someone asked him to come to a concert while he was pumping petrol.

When Paul was done telling me his story, I told him what an encouragement he had been to me. Then he said that he felt like he really needed to share his story with me and he asked if he could pray with me. I can't remember exactly what Paul prayed, but I know it was exactly what I needed at the time and that God richly blessed me through that conversation and that perfect prayer.

The moral of the story is that we never know who is going to be at our programs...or watching us at work, play, school, wherever. God is working all the time, even though we can't see it all the time.

Thank you Jesus for showing me just how powerful you are!!! What a blessing to meet Paul today

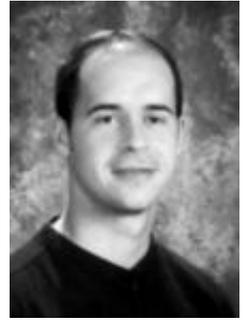
and to hear how you've used past New Vision teams for your work and your glory. May I be used in the same way.

Date: 3/24/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

Happy Birthday to me in the U.S.!! Its still the 23rd there. This morning we walked through Hahndorf. It is a beautiful old German town in Australia. Even though today is our day off, my teammates were willing to make a drive to a different town se I could see Tim. Tim was one of my teammates from my Captive Free N.C. team 6 years ago. I haven't seen Timmer in 5 years and I don't think either of us has changed a whole lot. Yes, I have lost some hair and Tim has increased his belly size, but we had a good time talking about what we have been doing lately. It was great to reunite with an old friend. (Not that Tim's old, but . . . you know what I mean.) God has blessed me today and this whole past week with my getting to see long lost friends.
God's Peace – Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 3/25/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

The past few days have been lots of fun for me! Yesterday we had the morning off in Hahndorf, a fun little German town in South Australia, and I got to do some souvenir shopping with Rachel. We had such a good time walking through all the shops, and we even got suckered into buying lunch at a cute little German restaurant. Hooray for fun and unexpected dates with teammates!!! In the afternoon we drove to Waikerie and spent some time with Tim, one of Ryan's Captive Free teammates. This morning he took us to Banrock Station, a vineyard near Waikerie, and we had the opportunity to walk around the property as well as just sit and soak up the sun. That was the end of our fun in South Australia and now we're back in Victoria, spending a few days in Mildura.



Sarah Liggett

I'm excited for the next few days and the opportunity to spend time with Bec, my host "mom". Bec is actually my age and she's a teacher at Holy Trinity Lutheran School. She lives in a cute little apartment, so staying with her reminds me of my college days and my wonderful roommates. It's a nice change from the typical host family that I usually stay with! I am continually amazed at how people like Bec desire to serve me and my teammates so much. Tonight she really wanted me to have a quiet evening at home and do whatever I wanted – read, watch TV, talk, sleep – whatever I most needed to do. What a wonderful thing to think that Bec is a true vessel of God and that through her and other people God Himself actually serves us. A God that serves His people... amazing!!!

Peace to you all!
Sarah

Date: 3/26/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Sometimes finding inspiration can be a difficult process. This entry is a good example of that – I sat in front of the computer for quite a while trying to think of something to say. It seemed at first like nothing really distinguished this day from any other, and I'm having trouble finding something profound to say to give everyone an idea of what

happened and/or how we are doing today. I also tend to write these fairly late at night, so given the length of our days even a night person like me finds it a challenge to stay alert and focused. It appears that there is nothing in particular to write about.



Steve Ellwein

Of course, that's not true, as I remembered upon further review. The classrooms went as they usually do, but it was a little different. In our time here at Holy Trinity in Mildura, our classroom visits are actually not with primary school students, but rather those in years 6-10 of this prep-year 10 school – one yesterday, two today, two tomorrow. (Tomorrow we also get to spend some time with the year 6 & year 10 Peer Mediators, which seems to be a special program made up of some special students. Two of the year 6s were at Kids' Camp in our first week here, so we get more of those reunion moments.) The downside is that this age range is a bit harder to get to open up, but the upside is that it is much easier (for me, at least) to converse and start that process of forming relationships. As a former junior & senior high youth director, being here is a welcome change for me, especially since basically everything we do for our time in Mildura is associated with this school. We did have a concert for the junior school (prep-year 5), which like everything else for which we are set up was outside in the school's courtyard. As far as outdoor spaces go this isn't too bad – it's mostly enclosed, making the sound a little more normal, and some large "sails" which cover the yard give a very nice look and some protection from the heat. That's right, even at this time of year we are still flirting with the 30 degree (86 Fahrenheit) mark; Mildura is in extreme northwestern Victoria (on the New South Wales border, in fact) and thus far enough inland that heat is still an issue. In two weeks we will be in Tasmania and the temperature will probably be about half of what it is here (15 Celsius = 59 Fahrenheit), which itself isn't that bad for April.

Just like that, our programming for the day was over. A few of us went on a tour of Mildura – Lock 11 of the Murray River, which forms the Vic-NSW border, and a gem factory/shop. We then all headed to the "beach" for fish and chips with our hosts and some others – even though we are not on the coast, the Murray has a small beach of sorts at one point (appropriately enough, the River Beach) and Mildura is home to Victoria's only non-coastal lifesaving club. It had been a while since our last team outing, so the next stop was the local mini-golf course. I probably should have gone to bed right after that, but for better or for worse I have rediscovered the joy of TV – last night "The West Wing," tonight "Star Trek: Voyager." Aah, a taste of home...

So, obviously it wasn't an ordinary day at all; in fact, it was ordinary in its unordinariness (the spell check says that's not a word, so I think I just invented a new one). We came through a good but long week last week, and when that happens we sometimes get caught up in the routine and lose our focus, whether it's on writing a journal or just on getting through the day and appreciating everything in it. Thank God that he pulls us away from that way of thinking, and may he continue to show us how each day, each moment, is unique and special and inspiring. – Psalm 19:1-2

Date: 3/27/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

More time at Holy Trinity Lutheran School in Mildura. It's been neat to be working with one school for multiple days. We've had a few other bookings like this, and it is really nice. You get to know a place a little better and begin to get a feel for the atmosphere of the school, as well as interact with kids a few different times, getting to know them a little better.



Tiffany Schmader

I was really impressed and encouraged by the Year 10 kids at this school, which is the oldest grade at the school. We had a fun time in their classroom, and were later treated to a community BBQ, with everything prepared by the Year 10 class. They cooked our food, moved a picnic table for us to sit on, and one gal even crushed some ice to fit in my warm pop can.....I mean "soft drink" can. Great youth! These are the type of kids you meet and get excited about where they're at in their faith and maturity, and get even more excited for the potential within them! I see them as good leaders and encouragers to the other students in the school. Next year, they switch to a much larger school with just year 11 and 12. I pray they remain strong in their faiths, continuing in leadership and being confident in what the Lord is doing in their lives!

Fun things for the day:

AUSSIE Cricket Jersey purchases – with 2003 World Cup included on them! (exciting that Australia won the World Cup this year, rivaling against India, where another Youth Encounter team is traveling)

Outdoor evening Program under the "Sails" (canopied area at the school)

Date: 3/28/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Happy Birthday Steve. Today is Steve's 27th birthday and we have done our best to try and help him to have a happy birthday even though we have a busy schedule. Today we started in Mildura and it was a travel day to Echuca. I feel bad for Steve having to have a birthday on a day when we travel for a big part of the day.

For tea (dinner) we ate a barbeque with some confirmation students and our host homes. It has been so great getting to know our host homes

Thank you all for your prayers and support, it has helped so much and been an encouragement knowing that we are being cared for. Peace and God's Blessings to all of you.

In Christ,
Ryan M



Ryan McLuen

Date: 3/29/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

The verse for today is 2 Cor.7:1 which reads:

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."

I read that verse after a long day of driving and discussion. Sometimes its good to sit down and just talk for a long time. That's what Sarah and I did today and it was a big blessing to me. Just to mull over things that are on your mind or nagging at your heart. It was good to just be real and share and pray together. I felt like it was a good time for me to purify myself of some things...just because I generally have to talk things through to figure them out...and to just let things go. So, when I opened my Bible to that verse tonight it was refreshing for me. God is so faithful and knows exactly what we need, and he always gives it to us at just the right time. The part of the verse that really struck me today was "perfecting holiness out of reverence for God". That seems like a lot of words put together that are hard to put together...if that made any sense. So, I looked them up and translated it to help myself out a bit. Here's what I came up with. We should perfect being set apart for God out of a feeling of respect and honor for him. Pretty amazing when you think about it! God wants us to be set apart just for him...solely because we love him and we honor him. Its also very hard to do. So, my prayer today for myself and for all of you is that you will see the things in your life that are keeping you from being holy or set apart for God alone and purify yourselves from them. That we will serve the Lord with all that we have simply because God is God and we are his children who he loves more than life. Amen!!!



Rachel Bolte

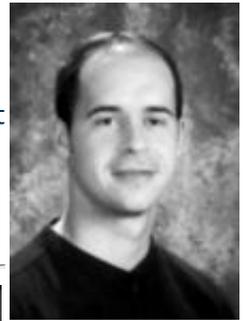
Date: 3/30/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

Today we arrived in Horsham. We will be here for 9 whole days! We are going to visit several surrounding towns while we are here. It will be nice to stay with one host family

for over a week. Well March is almost over and our tour in Australia is more than half over. As April approaches as our last full month over-seas, I notice that we still have over a month, but time here is coming to a close. Rather than to sit here and write sentences for you to read, I am going to go spend time with my host family so that next time I write I can tell you all about them. God Bless!
Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 3/31/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

My team is now in Horsham, Victoria (we'll be here for 10 days and then we're off to Tasmania!) and today has been a day off! I try to treat days off like true Sabbath days – I try to lay aside work and team obligations and focus on being filled and renewed by God. Today I think I was mostly successful with this goal. I woke up, had some personal devotion time, called my family, and spent part of the afternoon walking through downtown Horsham with Rachel. It was nice to feel "normal", even if only for a day!



Sarah Liggett

Rachel and I are housed with Steve, Rosemary, Rachel and Andrew Cramer during our stay in Horsham. What a wonderful, God-centered family that I get to be a part of for the next week! Tonight after tea (dinner) we had a devotion together around the table and then we ended our meal together in prayer. What an excellent way for families to grow and be renewed together, and what an excellent example of how I would someday like to raise a family! I am truly touched by all of them, but am particularly amazed by Rachel who is now in year 12. She has such a kind and gentle spirit; the kind of person who calms you and fills you with peace just by being in her presence. One of my favorite Bible verses is Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." When I look at Rachel I see all of these things. Thank you, Rachel, for filling me with peace and for letting God work so wonderfully through you!

In Christ's love and joy,
Sarah

Date: 4/1/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

We are now in the most stable and unstable time of our tour. This is the Wimmera – essentially northwest Victoria, a place of wide open spaces and country towns bounded by the Murray wine country to the north and the Grampian Mountains to the south. Our base is Horsham, at 25,000 people the Wimmera's largest town, and we are at our Horsham host families for 10 days. This is the longest I will have spent in any one place since training last September and the longest at any one place aside from camps since Christmas 2001. Our arrival was last Saturday, driving from Echuca (ironically one of our shortest stays at a day) to Horsham. Sunday services were in Murtoa, where we were greeted by a large sign made by members of the Sunday school classes, with an evening program in Horsham itself. Day off yesterday, giving me a good chance to explore downtown Horsham, and today resumed business as usual (whatever that is for us). In the morning we attended a communion service and presented a program at Sunnyside Rest Home, then drove to the Horsham church for lunch and a program with the Ladies' Guild, took some team time, then a brief program at the church's all-committees meeting. Tomorrow brings schools in Dimboola and Murtoa (when we go to Horsham's later in the week we will complete our total sweep of Victorian Lutheran schools; in Murtoa we will "meet the press" once more) and a Lenten service in Minyip. Later in the week we also travel to Warracknabeal (home of our vehicle), Ararat and Natimuk, so our 10 days in one place



Steve Ellwein

is actually spent in a lot of places. The farthest from Horsham is Ararat at over 90 kilometres (over 55 miles), so a fair bit of travel relative to what we are used to is involved as well.

It seems that we are very busy, and we have been wrapped up in being busy for a while. In some ways we are still recovering from our packed South Australia schedule, and Mildura was a little lighter but we were still quite active. None of it was bad – we enjoyed it all, and it's why we are here – but I think that in the midst of all the programming something else slipped by for a while. When we have programs at rest homes, guild meetings, etc. we normally have two of us give a "short sharing" – talk about a Bible verse or something quick like that – and I often get tapped to do one of them. I typically stick fairly close to my standard script, but at the guild meeting words started coming out of my mouth that I had not planned or expected to say. My sharing/autograph/everything verse is Zephaniah 3:17 – "The Lord your God is with you; he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." Usually I focus on our response to that – since God is celebrating us and has redeemed us, we should use the gifts he gives us in service to him. Today, however, the full force of what the verse says at a more basic level came over me again. Coupled with a renewed (as in at that program) focus on listening to the words of the songs we do that have become so routine for us, words of encouragement shot out of me that only God could have provided. We (me, our team, Christians in general) do a lot of work in service to God, which is good and in keeping with God's desire for us. Unfortunately, too frequently we fixate ourselves on that and lose sight of sentiments like those expressed in Zephaniah 3:17. God is always delighting in us, loving us, singing over us, but we sometimes make too much noise for that song to be heard. God wants us to work for him, but he also wants us to take time to stop working, to know God's presence with us, to hear God's song of love for us. In the midst of our busy-ness, we must keep our focus on a God who loves us immeasurably and is longing for us to see that. My prayer for myself, my team and all of you is that we can find those opportunities, to slow ourselves down, so that as we work for God we would also know God more fully – to keep our heads and our hearts attuned to God's song. – Zephaniah 3:17

Date: 4/2/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

What a day! Wow!!! I love this ministry and am still excited for what we're doing, and seeing all the work God is doing, but weariness is evident. God is amazing, as we received a phone call from our contact here and he suggested we take the morning off tomorrow. Hallelujahs rang out amongst the team. The time to sleep in and have personal time will benefit us personally and our abilities with the overall ministry. It's hard to know when to take personal time and how much we need to take in order to do the ministry. I know that we're being well looked after by the Big Guy upstairs, and moments like these capture that.



Tiffany Schmader

Our day was very "full on" with music and relational ministry, as we were "flat out," and now we're "stuffed." Wows! We drove to 2 different schools, worked with classes and had all school programs, then onto a school community "tea," topping off the evening with a Lenten Service. We've been in 4 different towns today amidst our travels, and had morning tea, afternoon tea, "tea," and "supper" all at different locations. Wild! We're certainly getting to know the Horsham area and are meeting many people here. It is definitely enjoyable to be in one place for a week. Not only do we get to know people better, we get to see more of the area, as well as spend more time with one host family.

I'm spent – good night all! God bless.

Date: 4/3/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

This has been a great week in Horsham and luckily we still have a few more days. Today

we went to Warracknabeal and had an outdoor concert at the public school there during their lunch period. It was a lot of fun and from the looks of it and talk afterwards by some of the kids, they had fun as well. After the school concert we went back to Horsham and did some classroom visits at the Lutheran school there.

Things are going good and it is nice to be in one place for an extended period of time, and in this ministry 10 days is an extended period of time. The billet that I am staying at is so great. My host dad owns a bakery and it is delicious, on our last day off I went into town and ate lunch with him and it was a lot of fun. I know that when I come back to Australia, Horsham will be one of the many places that I will come back to, but of course I hope to have the time to make it back soon, and of course have the money to do so as well.

Well thank you all for your support and prayers that you each have given us. Continue to pray as we are busy and stressed because of our schedule but for us to keep ministry minded through it all. Peace and God Bless.

In Christ,
Ryan M



Ryan McLuen

Date: 4/4/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Today we have officially played at every Lutheran school in the entire state of Victoria!!! Go New Vision!!! God has blessed us so richly through all of the students at these schools...its amazing! The sizes of the student bodies have ranged from 22 to 900 with every number in between. Just in schools, we've seen thousands of people and God has been doing amazing things. We signed many autographs today and had a good time singing and playing silly songs with the kids. We did 6 classrooms and a chapel today and the kids were hilarious. We had some of the most fun question and answer time yet. The preps (kindergarteners in the USA) were telling us what each of our states looked like. Pennsylvania is a fish, Minnesota is a moon, Kansas and South Dakota are both boxes/rectangles, and Illinois is a rocket. Yes, we were having a good time!



Rachel Bolte

We also did a program in Ararat this evening. I had a lovely chat with Pastor Darryl over tea. We had a great time discussing team life and pastoral life. It was nice just to have an easy conversation and share in God's presence. I'm continually amazed by the fantastic people God puts in our path and blessed every day by them. Yes, I'm still very glad to be here and to be doing this ministry. On the flip side, I've been missing family and friends much more in the past week. I know that its going to be very hard for me to leave Australia and all that it means to me now. But, I also know that I am looking forward to the familiar things of home. Even though the food isn't too different, there are things that I'll be excited to eat/drink again. I miss ranch dressing on fries...and just about everything else for that matter. I miss American pizza, hot dishes at potlucks, peanut butter M&M's, Reese's peanut butter cups, & cherry Pepsi. Nothing too tragic, but its true...I miss them. Most of all, I miss people who know me well without me explaining myself. I love my teammates heaps, but I'm looking forward to spending some time with my family over break.

For now, God has amazing things planned for the next few weeks and I'm very excited to see what all of it is! Bring it on, Lord! I'm ready to see what your plans are! I love Australia!!!

Date: 4/5/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

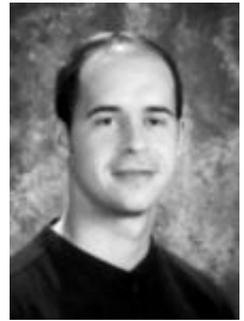
Well today has been a busy day. We had a Chapel service and classroom visits in the morning and a candle-lit lunch. Then we were busking in the middle of town (that is where we play out on the sidewalks) before heading out of town for our family night program. We met so many wonderful people today. We met the students and teachers, the woman who prepared our lunch, the people who listened to us busking, and an

exchange student from Switzerland, who had more energy and joy from God than anyone I have seen in a long while.

Sometimes meeting so many wonderful people in such a short time is difficult. Meeting these people is definitely a highlight of this ministry, but it can be frustrating when I meet so many all at once. O.k. that might sound dumb, but I want to remember these people and my memory sometimes blurs things, people, and places together. Really, I wish I could remember every person I meet and every place I go, but my brain just can't do that.

Maybe the people I meet don't all need to stick out as individuals for me. Maybe I can see them as Christ, serving me through them. Many people have given so much to me this year. That makes it hard to not see how God gives gifts to his children. I thank God for all the people I have met this year. I apologize to those who I may forget. To all of you; know that I have seen Christ in you and I thank you for your service.

In Christ's Love,
Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 4/6/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Wow, what a long day! The day began with two worship services at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Horsham, ended with a family program in Natimuk, and was filled with Aussie-rules football in between!!! The highlight of my day was having a chance to phone my brother and hear that the Kansas men's basketball team advanced to the NCAA championship game after beating Marquette on Saturday evening. It's nice to see that my Jayhawks are still having a wonderful season with me so far away from home! Now if I can only find a way to watch the final game on Monday and cheer my boys on to a national title!



Sarah Liggett

I know I have stated it time and time again in my journals, but I really can't get over all the kindness and warmth we have received from the Aussies. Today was just another example to add to the list as the Kuhnes opened their home to us this afternoon so that we would have a place to relax in between our programs. They weren't even home the entire time we were there! And then there's Tim Weibusch. Tim, Tim, Tim, how can we thank you enough for all that you have done for us? Thanks for your constant love and encouragement!

These past few days have been good, but I have needed a little more distance from my teammates than has been possible with our busy schedule. Sometimes it's funny for me to think that I want separation from the only people in Australia who truly know me, but I also think you need space from those around you to really appreciate them and to understand just how much they mean to you. I spend so much time with Rachel, Tiffany, Ryan, Ryan and Steve that I start to take for granted all that they provide for me and all the ways that they support me. They are my family and they alone know and understand all that I have experienced during my time in Australia. I thank God that I love and trust them enough to sometimes take them for granted!

Peace to you all!
Sarah

Date: 4/7/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Today was our last full day in the Wimmera, tonight being the tenth and final night at James and Di's house for Ryan M. and me. This was a day off and I made full use of that, spending most of the afternoon walking around downtown Horsham, which I have actually gotten to know fairly well given the amount of time we have spent here. In the U.S. we barely get time to experience a place – one day, maybe two – and even here it

is difficult with some of our shorter stays. Horsham has become familiar, as much as that is possible with this kind of lifestyle. I've spent a fair amount of time at the Oven Door (James's shop) enjoying some great lunches and reading National Geographic (stop laughing), which actually provided a little taste of home with features on Pickstown, SD and Chicago. Having had opportunities almost every night to watch late-night news (from a mostly Australian perspective and sometimes British when it's been really late), I'm actually close to feeling informed about what's going on in the outside world, though it's been a while since I have been able to check email, another vital connection to something other than what normally consumes our days. James and Di, and their daughter Imogen, have been incredible; if I had to pick a host family to spend 10 days with they would be an excellent choice. They have true servant hearts, as shown in their kindness to us and in the investment James has made in the life of a young man we have met and talked with on a few occasions in our time here. This place seems quite familiar, and yet the nature of this ministry continues to remind us that it is not. When I got my haircut today (a remarkable achievement considering how long it's been) I found out that I was the hairdresser's second American of the day, and the other was not one of us. It still strikes me as odd that that is something noteworthy.



Steve Ellwein

Looking back, it really has been quite a week. We have visited multiple schools and multiple classes. We have sung on the street for no one in particular. We have done programs across the Wimmera for hundreds of Aussies (and one Swiss girl in Ararat) and seen our main contact Tim for the first time in three weeks (our longest stretch without him) as he made the drive to Ararat after our travels relatively far from his home. "Silent football" has made its second Australian appearance. We have survived (yesterday) another round of setting up through someone else's system, always a stressful affair for me, and Ryan would probably want me to tell you that we sat in front of the TV and watched as Hawthorn narrowly defeated West Coast in the Australian Football League. We have sung for everyone from preps (kindergarteners, that is) to senior citizens, and the amazing part is that despite all we have done there is still a lot of the Wimmera that we did not visit, though I think we covered most of the Lutheran corners. It has been a great 10 days, but tomorrow they are over and we must say another round of goodbyes, the only difference being the amount of time that has passed since the last round. We will drive to Melbourne (hopefully stopping at the Giant Koala, just to say we did), join Tim at the Hard Rock Café for a little taste of the U.S., then drive to the harbor and straight onto the Spirit of Tasmania II, which will sail through the night through the Bass Strait until Wednesday morning finds us in Tasmania. It's a full-on schedule whether we stay in one place or not, and it is only through God's strength and work in our lives that we are able to continue. The amazing part is that we continue to have these wonderful experiences, to get to know these wonderful people and see all these wonderful places along the way, and thanks be to God for it all. Horsham was great, but more great things await us. For us the unfamiliar is familiar, but praise God for the times such as those we have had in the last 10 days when we can feel a little more at home away from home. – Jeremiah 9:23-24

Date: 4/8/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream....to Tasmania!!! Today we departed from Melbourne to destination: Tasmania. We traveled via ferry on a cruise liner called the Spirit of Tasmania. We drove our van right onto the ship, and off we went - a 9 hour overnight boat ride to Tassie.



Tiffany Schmader

Leaving Melbourne at night was quite lovely. The city skyline was all a glow. We stood on one of the decks and watched the city as it floated off into the distance. As the air grew cooler and the wind stronger, we went inside for some night life!

Our overnight activities consisted of Phase 10, watching the news (Steve), checking out the gift store, popping outside every now and then, and attempting to sleep. Now, the latter of these was the most difficult. Wow! We were in airline style seating and it was just plain hard to sleep! We all managed to get in a few zzzz's throughout the night. Blessings for a mild first day in Tassie, so we can rest up.

Also, we have a special addition for our time in Tasmania. Tim Wiebusch, our fabulous contact, is traveling with us! What fun!! Not only is he a great contact with his organization and support, he's a fun fellow and we enjoy having him around! We introduced him to Phase 10 and had a great time with him this evening. Prior to loading onto the boat, he treated us to dinner at Melbourne's Hard Rock Café...and, much to Steve's delight, we also got a quick tour of the parliament building. Thanks Tim!! Thank you, Lord, for fabulous overseas contacts!

Date: 4/9/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone, today was a long day and quite exhausting. It started when we spent all night on the boat to Tasmania in uncomfortable seats attempting to sleep with snoring people all around. It actually wasn't really that bad, I just like to pretend like it was. Hehe. But we got off the boat at about 7:00 am and had an early breakfast at a church in Deavenport. It was so great because the people that fixed breakfast for us were so loving and I wish that we could have been a bit more awake for that, but we definitely appreciated it a lot. Another fun thing about this day, was that Tim, our incredible contact, came with us to Tassie. He took his vacation time to spend with us and to kinda do a different kind of work, so he definitely showed his love for Christ and for us as well in that action. We did a bit of sightseeing to keep us awake and it was gorgeous. If anyone goes to Tasmania I would suggest taking a look at the Cradle Mountains. Wow, talk about seeing some of God's amazing creation. We were there for a bit, having a bit of lunch and chatting about the previous events of that day. Which brings me to what happened on the way to the Cradle Mountains. It is quite hilly in Tasmania and we had to drive downhill the majority of the way to get to the mountains and on the way, we started to smell a nasty smell. It smelled like a burning clutch or burning rubber but we couldn't pick it out, until I realized that perhaps it was our brakes, since we had recently had them changed and this was their first real work out. Well we pulled over our mini-bus and had a look under the wheels where smoke was pouring out and the smell permeated the nice clean air around us. We thought that it would be best to perhaps give the brakes a rest and do our devotions and team huddle on the side of the road in the middle of the woods.

Thank you all of you out there who continually pray for us and for everyone that we are meeting. God's blessings to you all.

In Christ,
Ryan M



Ryan McLuen

Date: 4/10/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Yes, we're in Tasmania...and what we've been told is true...its BEAUTIFUL!!! Launceston reminds me of Duluth, MN in some ways. There are hills everywhere, its on the water, and with all the houses on the hills lit up at night it reminds me of spending time "up North" when I was little. Its been fun to adjust to the relaxed way of life here in Australia and Tassy is no different. As a matter of fact, I think that its even more relaxed down here. We've had some time to spend just hanging out with new friends here in Launceston and I've really been enjoying myself.

Actually Sarah and I walked around town for awhile this morning. It was really nice just to spend some time shopping around and drinking coffee! Hooray for shops who sell BIG cups of coffee.

I've been struggling a bit lately just feeling lonely. Its hard to understand yourself when you feel lonely when you're constantly surrounded by people. What I've discovered is that God is everywhere and in everyone and when we do feel lonely, if we just let him work through the people around us... he'll make sure that we're taken care of. Its been a hard thing to realize and to just let him do it... why is it that we sometimes try to keep God from loving us the way he wants to. I know that occasionally...more often than I'd like to admit...I let myself feel sad, lonely, and any number of



Rachel Bolte

other negative emotions when God is there trying to get through to me in many ways and through many people. I'm not sure why I do that, but it sure is silly. So now, I'm working on seeing God in everything and letting him do his thing even when I don't understand what he's up to. I'm sure even Jesus felt lonely sometimes. He was a long way from home too.

Lord, help me see you in everything today and to not take the people you've placed in my life for granted. I pray that when I need to feel your love you'll help me to reach out to others with it instead. Thank you for all that you are and for the ways that you care for me. I love you and I need you. Amen.

Date: 4/11/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

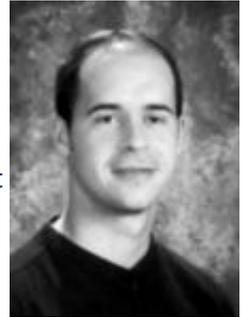
Journal Entry:

Have you ever done something, and an hour later forget that you had done it? If you try to remember what you did at that particular time, the one specific hour doesn't exist in your memory. I think that happened to me today with our morning chapel service. Life on the road does funny things to your head. (My head anyway)

Tonight we went to Lowhead (a town) and saw the fairy penguins. We went on a tour down to the beach and had a guide tell us about them as they all came into the shore. Then we followed the penguins into the bush to get a closer look. They are neat to see and listen to. They make some strange noises. If I were to ask you what noise a penguin makes, how many of you would have an answer? Well now if someone asks me, I will have an answer and I can show a video of them as well.

Being in a different culture, in a different part of the world opens my eyes to how much God has created. If a small penguin from Australia can show me something new to my senses, it makes me think of how much more I haven't experienced yet. People are different, plants and animals are different, languages are different, even ways of understanding are different. We do however have one thing in common keeping all things connected. That one thing is the love of God in Jesus Christ. It is amazing to think that with so much difference and confusion that happens here on Earth on our lives, everything makes sense to you, God. Thank you for everything you have created and how you have set everything in its place.

Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 4/12/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Today is our third full day in Tasmania and I still have trouble believing that we are actually here! We are in Launceston and tomorrow we are off to Hobart, the capitol city. Launceston is beautiful and has a wonderful downtown area with the BEST coffee shop I have found in Australia so far. For all the coffee-lovers that are reading this, in Australia the typical cup of coffee that you buy in a café, coffee shop or convenience store is much smaller than the big 20-ouncers you can easily buy in the United States. Plus there's really no such thing as a bottomless cup of coffee here (or free refills on soft drinks for that matter)! Not true for Coffee Republic in Launceston! Today I walked in and purchased a LARGE café latte – it was a true taste of home!

This morning after some team Praise & Worship time we headed to a fabulous fish 'n chips shop for lunch and then did a little site-seeing at the Launceston gorge. I wish we had more time to spend there because there are some beautiful trails alongside the gorge and autumn is starting to set in so the trees are displaying brilliant shades of red, yellow and orange! I am such a lover of the outdoors and can most easily see the magnificence of God when I am surrounded by nature. Autumn is an incredible time and I am always in awe of all the colors that God uses for our aesthetic pleasure. And to top it all off, God uses these brilliant colors as the leaves are dying! My best friend Sonja once said to me about autumn, "Only God can make death so beautiful." How true that is, especially for me



Sarah Liggett

now as I am about to celebrate Easter in the season of autumn rather than in the springtime as I am used to in the United States. This year I can see the beauty of death not only in the changing of the seasons, but also in the mystery of Easter. Only God can turn the death of His son Jesus into something magnificent and ultimately use death for His glory and for our salvation.

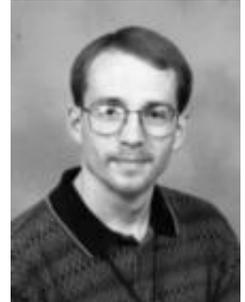
Happy autumn to you all!
Sarah

Date: 4/13/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Today is the official midpoint of our time in Tasmania. Let's see, so far we have...visited Dove Lake in the Cradle Mountains (after an early breakfast in Devonport following a long boat ride), driven to Launceston, been interviewed for one of Tasmania's main newspapers, had a jam session and workshop with the Launceston church's praise band, visited a public primary school in Punchbowl (a Launceston suburb), taken a night tour to see fairy penguins (or blue penguins as they are sometimes called), received some culture along with a movie as we saw "Ned Kelly," visited Launceston's Cataract Gorge and played a program at the Punchbowl Christian Centre. Not bad for four days. You will notice, however, that we have been able to do a great deal more sightseeing than in recent weeks. This is thanks to our lighter schedule and to Tim, who has in spirit and in essence become the seventh member of our team. He even had a rather significant role in our puppet show last night, the full story of which would likely take far too long for this journal.



Steve Ellwein

And so we arrive at Day 5, which also happens to be Palm Sunday. As we led worship at Bethlehem Lutheran in Launceston, the original plan was to do an interactive Bible story for the sermon – take a passage of Scripture and narrate it and act it out with congregational help at the same time. It seemed a little repetitive to do one for the Palm Sunday story right after reading it as the Gospel lesson, however, so I decided to do a more conventional sermon instead. This, of course, was about 15 minutes before the service started. It's a good thing God sees fit to work through me, otherwise whatever came out of my mouth this morning would not even have been coherent, much less something that people would appreciate. Follow that up with yet another appearance of our ever-popular spiritual gifts workshop, and then New Vision hit the bottom. That's right, we drove to Hobart – as far south (just shy of 43 degrees south latitude, comparable to the north latitudes of Pocatello, ID, Grand Rapids, MI, Buffalo, NY and Yankton, SD) as we will go on this tour and as far south as any Youth Encounter team has been in years. It definitely has the only newspaper I've ever seen to give a weather report for Antarctica. (Highs 10-16 below zero, or 3-14 above zero Fahrenheit, if anyone was wondering.) On the way we got a bit of history with a quick drive through Ross, one of Tassie's oldest towns and home to one of its oldest bridges. Hobart itself is one of the first settlements in Australia, dating back to when Tasmania was still called Van Diemen's Land. St. Peter's Lutheran is about two minutes' drive from downtown, and it was our first stop as we joined their band for the evening service. Rehearsal consisted of playing each song once, which was a bit harrowing, but fortunately we were able to at least keep our heads above water if not keep up. A highlight after the service was the children from Kenya by way of Sudan who were in attendance and watching Sarah interact with them. Sarah had a teammate from Uganda (near Kenya) last year and it brought back a lot of memories for her – so much so that just before we headed off to our host homes I helped her dig up the country code for Uganda so she can call Alex tomorrow. Our God is God of the entire world, and witnessing that experience reminded us of that in a powerful way tonight.

Tomorrow we have a day off to explore Hobart, and Tuesday we get back into the swing of things with a visit to Eastside Christian, Tasmania's only Lutheran school and thus our last, and a program in Hobart, with trips to Mt. Wellington and (hopefully) the Cadbury factory between. For now, though, a few thoughts from the last few days. Friday: The real Ned Kelly was an outlaw, one of the bushrangers of 19th-century Victoria, the leader of a gang of four that robbed banks and killed three policemen (one as he begged to be kept alive for the sake of his family). The movie "Ned Kelly" is pretty faithful to the story but manages to generate a fair bit of sympathy for Kelly, giving the

impression that the whole affair was a matter of family honor that spun out of control – not surprising since in some areas Kelly is still seen as a legend, a man (relatively speaking – he was executed at age 25) of the people who fought for the little guy. It's a good movie, but one of those where you leave not quite knowing what to think. Australians are divided as well – many a news column has explored the different aspects of Kelly as hero or villain in the runup to the movie's release last month. In this and elsewhere, who or what do we glorify? What is the whole story?

Yesterday: Any time we start learning a new song is an event, but rehearsals themselves are not that eventful. We are learning a couple of songs in preparation for Easter Camp, and we worked on them today. One will take a lot more time, but one we basically got down after a few run-throughs. It's "Hungry," a fairly simple worship song, but it had quite an impact on me. To work on vocals one of the runs was with just guitar, and it sounded so good that we decided to take an approach where the song begins and ends with just one guitar and voices. It wasn't anything fancy, but maybe the simplicity was what did it – it brought me out of the routine of our songs and the boredom that sometimes comes over me back at the board during rehearsals and reminded me that there are times that I love listening to the music that we make. I'd like to thank the rest of my team for reminding me of that yesterday and for providing me with another opportunity to see God in this journey we're on.

Today: In my sermon I talked about Holy Week being the fastest-moving time of the church year, with events progressing at a pace not seen in the 874 Sundays after Pentecost. Ironically, it takes slowing down to have the perspective to see and contemplate those events. Palm Sunday, which we remember today, seems from a human standpoint like the high point of Jesus's ministry on Earth. Crowds cheering, hailing him as their King – as the world measures success this seems like it. In a few short days, however, the same crowd that spread palms for Jesus would demand that he spread his palms on a cross – an event that from a human standpoint seems like a low but was in fact the real high point, the culmination of why Jesus came to Earth, the removal of our sins and the granting of access to God and eternal life. My encouragement for the day is that we remember that with thankfulness and to spread your palms before God – lifting up our hands in praise and reaching out our hands to a world that still needs to hear of God's love for us all. – Matthew 21:1-9; 20:17-19

Date: 4/14/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Day off in Hobart – a wonderful sleep in!! Once we got around and wakened and cleaned up, Rachel and I walked to the beach and treated ourselves to lunch at "At the Beach." We were accompanied by our groovy contact, Tim W, and had a nice lunch together. It was beautiful to walk along the beach and see the blue water. I had a brief smile as the blue water reminded me of my dear friend, Andrea, and the Caribbean waters we enjoyed while on a cruise last year. Memories of friends and family are so encouraging to me....knowing there are people back home praying for me. Thank you all - I miss you.



Tiffany Schmader

After our relaxing afternoon, we had a nice dinner with our host and Sarah's, and then got together at yet another host home for movies. Was good to kick back and laugh together, and in a sense escape. No thinking of what we have to do tomorrow, or if there's anyone I need to call, or if all my teammates know what they need to know for the next few days, etc.... It's so good and healthy to be able to quiet one's mind, and I'm just no good at that! Cool how the Lord uses others to help us.

Date: 4/15/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Today was a disappointing day, well perhaps disappointing was not the right word, but it had a bit of disappointments and injuries. Today was our day that we were going to the Cadbury Chocolate factory in Hobart, Tasmania but what we found out when we got there is that it is closed the week before Easter for cleaning. Now normally it wouldn't be that big of a deal because its just chocolate. But this isn't just regular chocolate, it is quite possible the best chocolate in the world, and if it ain't on top, its dang close. But that was our disappointing time, so actually it isn't really disappointing unless you fully understand that on the tour we would have been able to eat our fill of the most delicious chocolate in the world.



Ryan McLuen

After the Cadbury factory we went to Mount Wellington in Hobart, which was gorgeous. And the best thing was that when we got up there it started to snow. It was like I was back in Minnesota, it made many of us happy, and it made all of us very cold. And this brings me to the next major event that happened. Well on top of Mount Wellington, it is very windy and with the snow it made it very hard to see. We were running to get back to the bus because we were ready to be warm again. Tim (our contact) and Steve were in the lead to open up the van and that's when it happened. Tim caught a chain that was stretched across the path (to keep cars out) and flipped right over it and proceeded to land on his head and shoulder. Well, to make a long story short, we brought him to the hospital and found out that he had dislocated and fractured his shoulder, which put him out of commission in some ways, but of course Tim being Tim, he wouldn't let it hold him down and he still had his same love and servant's heart that he has always had. What was funny is that he wouldn't really tell anyone the real story and he would tell everyone that he was chasing a Tasmanian Devil to show us and in the process tripped over the chain. Anyways, that was an injury that definitely didn't end as bad as it could have, and God still worked through Tim in the many ways that he does. I love you Tim.

In Christ,
Ryan M

Date: 4/16/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Hello from the far South everyone! We're making our way through Tasmania...actually getting ready to leave soon! Tonight is our last night in Tassie and it will be a bit sad to leave. We've met many fabulous people who are sure to be missed! I'm seriously amazed constantly at the kindness, generosity, and the amazing faith of the people God puts in our path every day. I know that it will be years before I really can get anywhere processing all that's happening to me. Hmmm...things to think about. Anyway, we had a wonderful program at a retirement home this morning and had a fantastic response from the residents. There were a couple of women in the front row raising their hands in worship and singing along! And we found out later that some of the people who were singing along to "Jesus Loves Me" with our puppets couldn't even tell you where their room was at the home...or that they had a room. God surely is amazing!



Rachel Bolte

This evening we had a program at a church here in Devonport...this morning we were in Hobart... and we had a great turn-out. Our friends Brett and Bec even showed up from Launceston since they couldn't see our program there. It was a good night and a good program, but to be honest...my heart wasn't in it at all. Tonight I was a perfect example of how God works through broken vessels. I've been struggling with feeling lonely lately and the drive today just gave me too much time to think. Its sad how one can get so caught up in the negative thoughts and forget to see the positive all around, but that was me today. I sat in the bus and felt very far away from my friends and family and from people who know and love me for who I am. I realize that its true...I am far away from a lot of those people, and some days seem farther than others. But the reality is that I have 5 other people around me all the time...and still somehow I feel lonely. My teammates probably know me better than most - the good and the bad, but its easy to take people for granted when you spend such a long and intense time together. I know that I take my teammates for granted, and I know that I need to look at that in myself, but today I felt taken for granted...and I didn't like it. So...getting up in front of people and being happy about singing and sharing wasn't really what I wanted to do, but God turned it (and me) around and I ended up really enjoying myself and praising the Lord. I know that I'll still have lonely days and that I won't always feel like singing...but the

reality is that God uses us most in those times. The times when we truly realize that we can't do it ourselves and completely rely on God for everything are the times when God works the best. Even on my worst days, it's a blessing to be here and to be serving such an amazing God. I only pray that I can recognize that in the midst of the lonely times...and that I can see those lonely times in my teammates and make sure they know that I'm trying my best NOT to take them for granted.
Peace to you,
Rachel<><

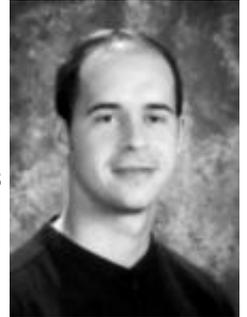
Date: 4/17/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

We are back in Devonport for final concert in Tasmania. Tomorrow we get back on the boat. Ugh. It's not a bad boat. In fact it is really a very nice boat. It's just that last I was on it I was sick for a few days. As we go back to Victoria it's almost like going home. Three and a half months is a long time to spend in one state. With all the incredible people we have met there, Victoria has become our home while we are here. Tasmania is a beautiful place and being here has been a good experience for us. We got to see snow the other day!!! We were actually caught in a snow/hail storm on top of a mountain. Since we leave soon, I am looking to what is coming next, and that would be Easter Camp. I am excited for this, and looking forward to us having a small break there. It will be a good time for us to re-focus and rest in worship. I'll let you know how it goes.

Ryan Legler



Date: 4/18/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Today is the start of a tremendous weekend for us as a team!!! Not only is it Easter weekend, not only are we at Easter Camp with 130 other people our age (many of whom we have already met since the start of our tour in Australia), but we are also here as campers – not leaders! Today was the first full day of camp and I have had a wonderful time catching up with old friends, meeting new people, taking part in small group discussions, and taking some solitude time as well.



Sarah Liggett

Ryan Legler

Today I have had so many emotions and have experienced feelings of both great happiness and great sadness. Being a camper means that today I have had time to truly listen and learn from other people and that I have been free from the stress of having to plan the next group session or discussion. I have had the chance to truly think about my relationship with God as well as my relationships with other people, and during my time of solitude and prayer I realized just how weak I really am. There are so many things I wish I was better at – patience, trust, love, contentment, selflessness. There are so many things I wish I had more of – hope, genuine kindness, inner peace, and most of all faith in God's faithfulness.

Today I have been exposed to the reality of my humanness but I have also been reminded of the promise that God restores all things, including my own broken spirit and my own broken relationships. Today I have been reminded that I believe in a God that serves, and I have seen his servant hood first-hand through people like Jo, Amanda, Ben, Johnny, Tricia, Rowan, Tim and Rochelle.

A few days ago I started reading Reaching for the Invisible God by Philip Yancey which seems to be exactly what I need to read right now, especially the chapters that have been focused on faith. It is giving me much to think about, and I would like to share one passage in particular with you. Yancey writes, "Here is what ambidextrous, or 'two-handed' faith means to me, in theory if not always in

practice. I take 'everything without exception' as God's action in the sense of asking what I can learn from it and praying for God to redeem it by improving me. I take nothing as God's action in the sense of judging God's character, for I have learned to accept my puny status as a creature – which includes a limited point of view that obscures unseen forces in the present as well as a future known only to God. The skeptic may insist this unfairly lets God off the hook, but perhaps that's what faith is: trusting God's goodness despite any apparent evidence against it."

As I have struggled with present circumstances and the general stresses of team, it is good to be reminded that God redeems even the most uncomfortable and seemingly unbearable situations by improving me.

May you claim God's peace and faithfulness today and always!
Sarah

Date: 4/19/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Our time in Healesville continues...as you have seen from prior journals, it's Easter Camp. We have been hearing about this weekend basically since we got to Australia, and it's probably a good thing that it is here. It's funny – our time in Tasmania was relatively calm compared to the time before it, but we (I, at least) still came into Easter Camp feeling worn out and wondering how much we were capable of giving. Probably a consequence of coming to camp straight from the boat on Thursday, and that itself was an early morning following a comparatively full day Wednesday with a rest home, a fair amount of driving and our Devonport program. Fortunately, we knew that not much giving will be required, and it's a great thing to receive for a while. We did have to set up Thursday night, which was longer than usual for me since I had to sound check two bands – us and Ignate, the band which has been leading most of the worship. Friday's highlight, of course, was the Good Friday service, and we also got to know our small groups a bit.



Steve Ellwein

Now, of course, we are at Saturday. Following an optional breakfast, we have been fasting today. This isn't a common thing for me – the only other times I've fasted in recent memory are the times my youth group did the 30-Hour Famine. I don't even make a practice of giving up things for Lent. Usually the time of missing the first meal is the toughest and then it gets easier, and this time was no different. It's a good reminder of Christ's sufferings for us, and it also brought out how tightly connected the structure and rhythm of our days are to meal times. It was on this day that we had our only major involvement in leading things at Easter Camp in the form of the evening worship service. Appropriately enough, it started with "Hungry." We also debuted a new song which has been giving me fits since we started rehearsing it two weeks ago since it represents my second honest-to-goodness solo of the year. I know, one was unbelievable enough. We have been working on it with Easter Camp in mind, but it was still probably one of the more nerve-wracking programs it could have been done at – in front of 120-130 people around our age (with a few exceptions, the campers are roughly ages 16-30), many of whom we already know. It's also a more difficult song than "my" other one and my singing didn't quite match up with how I think the song should sound, but it seemed to go all right – I even heard a few compliments on it. It always amazes me that God still uses us when we feel like we don't measure up. Anyway, the evening ended with some fun newspaper games (it would take far too long to explain) – my group came in second, but I should point out that we would have won if not for the ending "bonus question." I'm trying to get to bed early since tomorrow, Easter Sunday, begins before dawn with a quick service of our own before we invade the Knoxfield congregation for worship and head to the Maroondah Dam/Reservoir area for the afternoon. Monday brings the end of Easter Camp, but our camping days are not over as we drive straight to MAP (Ministry to Adolescent People – basically confirmation) Camp.

The theme of Easter Camp is "How Can We Serve You?" We're exploring God's service to us, our service to God and our service to each other. They have all already played a part for me this weekend. The second of them, of course, was in our worship service tonight, not to mention watching others serve – Ignate as they lead worship, Jo as she keeps us on schedule even as her voice disappears, Tim as he helps with computers and generally continues to dazzle even with one

arm following his chain incident on Mt. Wellington earlier this week, our incredible volunteer cooks, all the behind-the-scenes work of others on the Easter Camp committee, and many more. All of those are connected to service to each other, which has been highlighted in other ways as well. Our team sometimes has difficulty showing love to each other in the ways we each need to receive it, but camp has been wonderful as we all seem to have been getting some of what we need. Personally, I have received more hugs in the last three days than the previous three months, which is a wonderful way to make me feel loved and appreciated. When we got to camp we were asked how many hugs we thought we needed per day, and our answer went onto a little white circle on our nametag; I think that's probably the best thing the camp organizers could have done. (Well, maybe not the best, but it's something I didn't realize I needed as much as I did.) All of these forms of service, while valuable and very much needed, pale in comparison to the first – God's service to us. This camp is bringing into sharp focus what Christ did for us – for me, for you, for everyone. May we always be reminded of that sacrifice – the ultimate act of service – and that love – going beyond physical and emotional needs to give us what we truly need including forgiveness, salvation and a restored relationship with God – and may our thankfulness motivate us to serve and love just as Christ did. – Matthew 20:26b-28

"I will sing for my King / He came and rescued me." – "Rescued" (with love to everyone at Easter Camp)

Date: 4/20/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

"HE IS RISEN!," shouted one camper. "HE IS RISEN INDEED!," replied the other campers. This declaration happened throughout the day and was a grand way to celebrate and recognize our Savior's resurrection. Happy Easter! Jesus Christ is risen today, alleluia!

The morning began with a wake up knock on all the campers' doors, to gather us around the campfire, PJ's and all. We had a sleepy but joyful sunrise service, followed by a celebration banquet breakfast, and onward to worship with a congregation in the Melbourne area. Christian rock music was shared by the Easter Camp band, acoustic music by the New Vision folks, and traditional hymns by the organist. 140 young adults joining a congregation to celebrate and worship together, what a fun and praise-filled worship! I say again, Jesus Christ is risen today, alleluia!

The afternoon brought us to a lovely park with a magnificent dam. A lovely view of the water and the fall leaves while walking across the dam. Beautiful to enjoy God's creation! And what better day than Easter?! The group as a whole enjoyed walks on the dam, ultimate Frisbee (introduced by the Americans), soccer, kicking around a footie, Ligretto, and more. When returning to the camp, we had a fun-filled evening worship time. Lots of jumping, clapping, dancing - more continued celebration.

Another awesome part of the Easter Camp experience was fasting on Saturday. It helped me focus on the pain and grieving that I truly can't comprehend. The fast ended Easter morning with the celebration banquet breakfast. What a feast after a fast: platters of fresh fruit, hot crossed buns, croissants, homemade fruit bread, muffins, and more scrumptious stuff! The whole weekend brought me to a more real sense of how it all happened in Jesus' time. We experienced bits of the bible story and all that led to the resurrection. Today we celebrated with words, music, hugs, chocolates, brekky, fellowship, and more....just beautiful!

Our time at Easter Camp will be one of my most precious memories of our Australian experience. It was so very unique and very focused on the true meaning...Jesus. It was more than just chocolates and Easter eggs. Of course, chocolates and eggs were not discluded from our Easter!! In fact, that was another special part of the weekend. Everyone brought chocolates, and gave them to others throughout the day. It was so neat to exchange candies with everyone and to give and receive that gift freely. Pretty sweet! Neat concept and great symbolism – just as Jesus gave freely for us.



Tiffany Schmader

To my own joy and celebration, after 40 days of fasting from chocolate during lent, I could dig in!!!! Sarah, having given up the same, rejoiced with me and we enjoyed lots of chocolates!! Steve surprised us with Easter colored Peanut Butter M&M's sent from his mom, which he saved just for us.

There is so much more I wish I could say, but I simply lack the words to fully capture the day, thus, I'll close with this brief prayer:

Thank You, Jesus, for what you did for us. Thank You for this opportunity and the spiritual refilling that this time has been for me and my teammates. Continue to fill us up as we leave this place. May it not end here. Thank You for a special way to spend our Easter as we were away from our families. All praise and glory to You! Amen!

"HE IS RISEN!" "HE IS RISEN INDEED!"

Date: 4/21/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Wow, these past few days have been incredible. As others have proly shared in the other journals, we were at Easter Camp with lots of other people our own age and it was a time for us to take in and not have to give. Today has been a sad day because we had to leave, and kinda step back into reality and head right to another camp in Anglesea. I say that it is a step back into reality because it didn't really feel like we were still on team and a lot of stress was lifted. The MAP Camp as its called, stands for Ministry to Adolescents Program, is already so fun and I'm excited for the rest of the week. A high point, and something that I have been looking forward to for many weeks now is that Lazaros, my host brother from Ringwood, was going to be at MAP camp. I am very excited to be here at camp, and I'm ready to get to know these kids better and see how God is gonna work in them. Thank you all for your prayers. Peace and God Bless.

In Christ,
Ryan M



Ryan McLuen

Date: 4/22/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Today's highlight: The High Ropes Course!!! Yes, I took my old-lady self up on the high-ropes today! I realize I'm not really old, but I felt like it this afternoon! I used to fly through those things...no fear, no hands when I could get away with it. And today, I was scared pretty much the whole time and very nervous at the end. You see, at the end was a platform and there was a trapeze a few feet away from it that I had to jump and try to grab onto. That was by far the scariest part for me! I stood there for a few moments after all of my gear was hooked up correctly and as my belayer counted down 3...2...1...I JUMPED!!! I grabbed the bar, but my hands were sweaty because I was nervous and I slipped off! Of course, I was well taken care of and it was a nice safe trip to the ground...but I was really bummed! I was the ONLY New Vision member who didn't nail it...grrrr. However, I am glad that I jumped, that was a big deal for me and I did it!

The real fun today was watching the kids that we're with at camp this week help each other through the course. We're leading at a confirmation camp with 21 kids between the ages of 11 and 15. They were paired up to be spotters for each other as their partner went through the ropes course and they did a fantastic job of encouraging and guiding their peers. Some of them were more like I was when I was younger and just ran through with no problems what-so-ever. And then there were others like me now who had a bit of a hard time and struggled through some parts. The great part was watching these youth work together and take care of one another...it made me smile.



Rachel Bolte

Tim left us today...he's been traveling with us since we left for Tasmania and it was sad to see him go. He talked about our farewell service that the Lutheran Youth of Victoria are putting on for us just before we leave in a few weeks. It seems far away in some ways, but I know that its going to be so hard to leave. It sounds like they're inviting lots of people who've met throughout our tour here and I know its going to be rough to say good-bye...especially to so many people at once. Tim said that they want it to be a celebration...and I'm sure that they will succeed in that, I just know that its going to be a difficult night full of many fantastic people and memories that I won't even begin to see the real worth of until I've gone home.

Tomorrow is a new day with a bunch of great kids who are very fun to be around! I hope I can be as encouraging to them in their faith as they were to each other on the ropes course today...and as all of my new friends in Australia have been to me over the course of our journey here.

God's Peace,
Rachel<><

Date: 4/23/2003

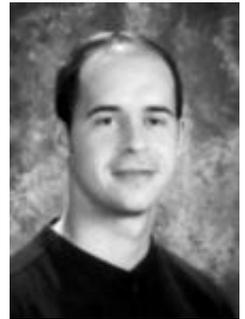
Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

We are at MAP camp, and I am not felling well. I have a cold. Cold's happen, it's not a new thing. The not so great thing is that stuff doesn't stop just because I'm sick. I have been getting extra rest when I can, and God has been giving me energy when I need it. Thanks God. Now I'm going to bed to get more rest.

Good night and God bless!

Ryan Legler



Date: 4/25/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

This is our eighth consecutive full day at a camp, but something feels a little different. We have completed Easter Camp at Fern Gully Lodge in Healesville, and we have completed MAP Camp at Araluen Lutheran Camp in Anglesea. The campers went home yesterday, so today we have a day off at Araluen with the camp basically to ourselves. Days off are a little different with no actual host home to consider, and this one was a surprise a week ago, but it's a good thing we had it. Easter Camp was energizing in the spiritual and emotional senses, but not so much in the physical sense seeing as how we got very little sleep. Coming straight to a camp with year 6-8 students complete with early mornings didn't help that, so sleeping in today was a wonderful thing. The time off gave us time to organize ourselves, to reflect on the week we just had – the high ropes Tuesday, low ropes and canoeing Wednesday, games and goodbyes on Thursday, sessions and small group time throughout – and otherwise do as little as possible. MAP Camp was good – the sometimes-fluid situation reminded me a bit of our first full week here at Tandara, and my small group started out quiet but eventually got talking, even getting into our "rap devotion" yesterday morning – but this day is appreciated. I got up late, walked around Anglesea for most of the day and ended up spending a fair amount of time at the beach (Anglesea is one of the towns along the Great Ocean Road) for the first time in quite a while (probably since our early days in Australia). Autumn is in full swing so it was a little cool to swim (that didn't deter a lot of people, but it did for me), but I walked along the shore for a while and caught the start of the sunset. I had to hurry back, though (which didn't really work since I got turned around in the campground I entered when I exited the beach), because while I was walking Sarah was indulging in one of her hobbies that she has little time or opportunity to do on the road, and we were the beneficiaries. She prepared tea (or supper, or dinner, depending on where you come from) for all of us, not to mention Tim and Charlie & Cheryl, the camp managers, and it was delicious. I knew that she enjoys cooking and is good at it, but I hadn't gotten to experience it for myself until tonight. I'm sure that all of my



Steve Ellwein

Ryan Legler

teammates have things like that – interests and talents that because of the nature of this ministry we rarely, if ever, get the chance to experience. God help us not to take those things (or each other) for granted and give us opportunities to show each other those sides of ourselves.

Here in Australia, today is a holiday by the name of ANZAC Day. Originally created to honor the first ANZACs (Australia-New Zealand Army Corps) who landed at Galipoli, Turkey on this date in 1915, it now serves as a day to remember all servicepeople killed in action and honor surviving veterans – sort of a Memorial Day and a Veterans' Day in one. Many cities have services and parades during which veterans and sometimes their families march. This year's celebration was especially meaningful – the last of the original ANZACs died within the last year, making this the first ANZAC Day without any of them, and it is also the first in about 30 years during which Australian troops have been involved in active combat (last time Vietnam, this time Iraq). Trust me, this is related – yesterday for our team devotion, Rachel surprised us by giving us letters that our parents had written to us without us knowing. Mine was a great encouragement and actually did leave me a little misty-eyed. So, given those events, this journal is dedicated to my parents and to my favorite veteran (see, there's the connection), my Grandpa.

Our time here is rapidly coming to a close – tomorrow we leave Anglesea for Ballarat, where nothing is scheduled for the evening (perhaps some footy on TV?). We do have part of Sunday's service there, then it's off to Frankston in the eastern Melbourne suburbs for a program at a Lutheran church that shares a building and pastor with a Uniting congregation (an Australian denomination formed by a merger of the Methodist, Congregational and most but not all Presbyterian churches), the only arrangement of its kind in Victoria if not all of Australia. Tuesday takes us to Footscray in the western suburbs, which is our last stop before our overseas tour is finished in just 10 days. I have only one journal left in Australia; see you then! – 2 Corinthians 9:12-15

Date: 4/26/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Ballarat....that's where we traveled to today. We're only here for one night, which is a shorter stay than most of our visits in Australia, but a reminding taste of what our schedule is like back in the US. It has been so nice to spend more time, often 5-7 days, in one place and one host home. We've gotten to know people on a deeper level and a feel for the towns we've visited...a groovy way to experience another country and culture.



Tiffany Schmader

I must mention the roses in Australia! Wow – I have never seen so many beautiful roses as we've seen here! Incredible! One of our host homes here in Ballarat has an amazing backyard, trimmed in roses! Sarah and I were inspired to get some pictures, with hopes of capturing a little of the beauty to take back with us!

This evening was spent with just our hosts, as we had no evening program. Legler and I sat down to a lovely dinner! I tell ya what, all hopes of losing a little weight while in Australia have been shot! It'll have to be a new goal for our return tour this summer in the US.

The host home fun continued as I spent some time coloring a picture for my "Mum" for Mother's Day, with great input on colors from my hosts! Also, my host brother taught me a fun new card game. I was nice and let him win every game! Er, well, OK – in all honesty, he smoked me! He beat me every time, no matter how close I thought I was getting to victory. *sigh* No worries though. It was all good fun!

Date: 4/27/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Today, well actually tonight we did a Sunday night program in Frankston, VIC. It was a

fun program and we had a little eating time after when we got to hang out with the congregation and hear some stories from them as well as share some of our own. And my billet was so much fun, and right away it felt as if I was a part of the family. We stayed up for a bit just chatting and it was great. Tomorrow me, Steve, and Sarah are going to go to a movie theatre nearby and watch WWE Backlash, which is a Pay Per View Wrestling event, and we are pretty excited and it should be a fun time. Team is going well, it feels strange to think that in just over a week, we won't be in Australia anymore and what's worse is that we will have to say goodbye to all of our friends that we have met on the road here. I hope that it won't be too sad, but more of a celebration on what we have made. Thank you everyone for your continued prayers and support.

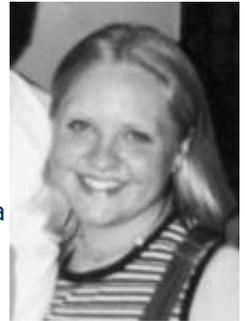
In Christ,
Ryan M



Ryan McLuen

Date: 4/28/2003
Submitted by: Rachel Bolte
Journal Entry:

Ahhh...a day off! And all three girls are housed together for the first time...I think since we've been in Australia! Its nice to have some girl time every once in awhile. One of my favorite times today was during a trip we took to the local shopping center. It was only a few blocks away from our house so we took a walk together and spent a few hours looking around the mall. The best part was when we saw the Gloria Jean's Coffee shop!!! We were pretty excited to have a good coffee! Not that there isn't good coffee in Oz...just that we don't often have time to stop at the shops and leisurely enjoy them in that atmosphere. So, now was our chance and we took it! We got our drinks and sat down to chat with each other about what was on our hearts, where we were thinking of being next year, and the people we're missing right now. It was really nice to just sit and talk and not have any time restrictions.



I'm really in a state of mixed emotions lately. I'm excited to go home and see my family and friends, to be in a familiar place and to eat some of my favorite foods that I've been missing, but I'm also dreading saying farewell to Australia and all the wonderful things and people that I've been blessed with since we've been here. So, I'll tell you what some of them are. **Rachel Bolte**

* I know...at least I think that I talked about half flush toilets in one of my earlier journals. If not, they're what they sound like. The toilets have two buttons...one for a half flush and one for a whole flush. Its to save water...and I think some places have them in the States...but they're everywhere here and I just think they're such a good idea.

* Cadbury chocolate...MMMMMM!!!

* Doonas – they're down comforters, but even MORE comfortable than any I've slept in at home.

* Magnum bars – ice cream...we may have them, but I've never seen them

* Tea times built into the day

* Kangaroos, Kookaburras, Cockatoos, Wombats (even though I only saw live ones at the zoo... they're really cute!)

* Aussie Rules Football!!!

* Roundabouts

* Gum trees and they way they smell

* The Aussie accent

* Tasty cheese

* Port fellowship

* Laid-back culture

* Biscuits

* MANY amazing people!!!

Yes, there are many things that I'll be sad to leave...AND many things that I'll be happy to see again! Like family, friends, fountain drinks at gas stations, free refills, peanut butter and chocolate combination, krispy kreme doughnuts, American pizza, cherry colas, and familiar faces on our return tour. I'm very excited to see how God is going to use us through the end of our tour here and then for our return tour. I only hope that we can bring home a good representation of the amazing

culture that we've been blessed to be a part of for the past four months! Thanks for all of your prayers and support as we've been travelling. And the aforementioned things are not at all a clear representation of either Australian or U.S. culture...just what happens to be on my mind right now! There are so many stories to tell!!!

In HIS grip,
Rachel<><

Date: 4/29/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

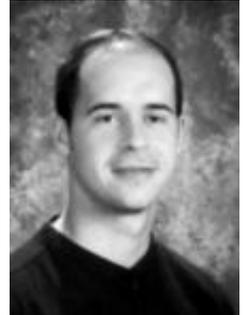
Well this is it my last journal from Australia. I am not quite sure what to say, because there is so much to say. I have been blessed beyond belief by God. The people here that I have met are just great. It has been great to see the country of Australia, but it's the people that I'm going to miss. I didn't just come here and meet new people, I came here and made new friends.

Although I am ready for a break, it is going to be very difficult to leave Australia. One reason is because I have heaps of stuff to squeeze into my suitcase. A larger reason is

because when I visit other cultures, they become part of me. My experience there has changed me. I know that the new me makes sense here because I am a visitor and I am allowed to be different and confused about simple things. When I go home, I wonder how the new me will slide back into America and all that is there. I wonder how we, as a team, will function differently when we meet back for our return tour.

I wonder about a lot of things. I guess that's o.k. I don't need to know everything, because I know that what ever happens, God is there watching over me. That has been very evident in the past four months. Christ is present is the people I have met, and I have been given everything from food and housing, to gifts, smiles, and hugs. I do wonder, but I don't worry. God is good.

In Christ,
Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

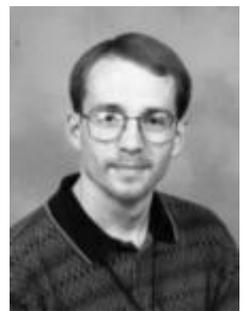
Date: 5/1/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

No more country for us...we're city kids this week. It's somewhat unbelievable that this is our final week in Australia, and we're spending it in the Melbourne area. Time is doing funny things for us – it seems like a long time ago, but only yesterday that we were fresh (okay, not so fresh, we hadn't showered in over two days) off the plane and being whisked around the city by Tim and Tricia. Now, we are getting ready to leave, which means it's probably a good thing that our schedule is relatively light compared to some other of our stops. We've been to Frankston with a program and a day off, which took care of a number of longings I've been experiencing. In reverse time order...Ryan M., Sarah and I went to the one-night-only cinematic marvel of Backlash. The moment I've been waiting for since about 1997 came to pass as I purchased the brand-new CD by Fleetwood Mac (which I would recommend – it's a little edgier than their regular stuff but there are still a lot of good tracks). Finally, my host home had Foxtel, the Australian equivalent of cable/satellite TV that gets about 30-40 channels, but the important part is that one of them is Fox News Channel. Ah, a little taste of home...

We have now moved from eastern Melbourne (Frankston) to western Melbourne (Footscray), crossing our beloved West Gate Bridge once more. We haven't done much so far – my host family took us to the Williamstown pier for ice cream Tuesday night, and yesterday was a day off. That did give us the opportunity, however, to accept an invitation by the Organtzoglou family for tea at their home. This is the family that hosted Ryan M. during our week in Ringwood (eastern Melbourne, the fourth week of our tour) and has popped up on occasion since then (for instance, the eldest child Lazaros was at MAP Camp last week). They're an awesome, fun, welcoming, loving, joyful family,



Steve Ellwein

and it was a huge lift to our spirits simply to spend some time with them again. (Plus, Michelle is a great cook.) We were there quite late, eating, talking, watching Lilo & Stitch, playing Uno and eating & talking some more, but it was definitely worth it.

With all of that, today was the first day we've done something somewhat program related, but even that wasn't really. We were invited to the Lutheran campus ministry at Melbourne Uni for lunch, and it was there that we met Michael, a member of the Footscray congregation with which we are working who came to Australia as a refugee from Sudan less than a year ago. He had quite a story to tell, and it was a good reminder for us about what many people go through because of their faith and the power of faith to get them through those times. Something to think about next time we feel like complaining about the comparatively minor inconveniences of this ministry, anyway. On the way back Ryan L. and I got some good pictures at a bridge near the church that overlooks the city and the West Gate Bridge, then came dinner. We and our host families (and a few others) went to Lalibela, an Ethiopian restaurant in Footscray. This was my second experience with Ethiopian food, but the last one was nine years ago so I don't remember it too well. The food was good, but the distinguishing feature of the evening was the length. We arrived at the restaurant just after 6:30. The next group was just after 7:00, granted, but we didn't leave until around 10:15. Given that by around 9:00 I was ready to leave and get back to packing it was a slight test of patience and an exercise in sitting back, enjoying the company and being grateful for the meal, which I was. All in all, though, it was a good day.

On our whirlwind first day we had breakfast at a café somewhere in the city. We had been thinking of it recently and that we should try to find it. Then, as we attempted to find parking near the university, I looked down a side street and there it was. So, tomorrow we will go to Thresherman's Bakehouse in Carlton and one of our last meals will be a reprise of our first breakfast. We will close our Commonwealth Bank account at the same branch we opened it at and sat inside for easily well over an hour as we exchanged money for the first time. We'll have our program in Footscray, then on Saturday our long-awaited wish to go to a footy match will be granted at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) as Rachel's West Coast Eagles take on the Melbourne Demons, followed by our big two-hour blowout of a final program in the heart of Melbourne at St. John's Southgate. Sunday worship in Footscray, a farewell service at Box Hill – our last event will be at one of the places we visited on our very first day – and that's it. Months of anticipating, months of being here, and it's just about over. It will be hard to leave Australia and good to get back to the U.S. all at the same time (a little later for Tiffany and me than for the others following our six-day vacation stop in Sydney). Soon we will begin three months of sharing our time in Australia with congregations in the U.S., explaining what our experience meant to us – but first we have to figure that out ourselves. For now, it's mostly a huge jumble of beginnings and endings, of places visited and people who have touched our lives more than any place and more than we were even expecting. We'll face the dreaded question – "So, how was Australia?" – and struggle to answer it in 30 seconds or less, knowing that there is no way that short of an answer can do this experience justice. Most of the words I could come up with at this point, whatever the length, wouldn't do it justice. So, look for more thoughts in a future journal. For now – God is big, God is worldwide, God is good. I'm incredibly thankful for the last four months, and I look forward to telling you more about it as time goes on. Until then, join with me and your Christian brothers and sisters in Australia, Denmark, Germany, the United States and all over the world in praise to God for his many indescribable gifts. – Psalm 96:1-3, Revelation 7:9-12

Date: 5/2/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Today brought our experience in Australia full circle, as we had lunch at the same café that Tim and Tricia treated us to after they picked us up from the airport. It was both a smile and a tear to be there. Part of me is feeling exhausted and ready to go home, while another part of me is seeing our tour flash before our eyes and I can't believe our time here is coming to an end. We also closed our bank account at the same location that we opened it. I even recognized one of the Customer Service Representatives that had helped us when we opened the account. Aaaaawe....*sigh*..... a bit of nostalgia. Hard to imagine it's really been 4 months and



Tiffany Schmader

that we have just a few days left. I looked forward to this part of our year for so long and now it's come to a close. This will be a part of my life I will treasure and be so glad that I got to experience, no matter how tired and worn out I may feel right now. I'm so blessed to be a part of this ministry.

In addition to our nostalgia activities, we spent some fun time in the afternoon at an oval (Australian Rules Football field) on the Melbourne University. We had some "fun time" playing Catch Phrase and kicking around the footy (an Australian Rules football). It's been fun to get into this Aussie sport. Several of us have picked teams to barrack (cheer) for. In fact, we get to go to a professional footy game tomorrow! Quite exciting! I've never even been to a professional American football game.

Our cross-cultural international experience was topped off tonight, as we had dinner and a program with a very diverse congregation in Footscray (suburb of Melbourne). A beautiful melting pot of people! We had fun chatting with various folks during tea (dinner), and then had some program time with just the kids. They were fun and got right into sing-a-longs with us.

Thanks, Australia, for 4 months I will never forget.

Date: 5/3/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Hooray for Footy. Today we went to the MCG (Melbourne Cricket Grounds) to see the West Coast Eagles play the Melbourne Demons. In the end the Eagles came out on top and it was a great game to watch. What also made it fun, was that my team, the Hawthorn Hawks, were play the Carlton Blues at the same time, so I brought in a radio and listened to the game and I also wore all of my Hawks stuff (shirt, hat, scarf, flag, etc.) and the best part was that the Hawks beat Carlton. CARN THE HAWKS.

Tonight we had our last concert and it was very hard. Basically it was a 2 hour worship service, and a bunch of people that we had met along the way came. It was a lot of fun, but the main thing that sticks out in my mind was at the very end of the program when we closed with Now That You're Near and everyone came up front and was dancing and singing. I had tears in my eyes and couldn't even sing, but it was good. Thank you everyone that came, and even those that couldn't make it. You mean the world to me. I love you.

In Christ,
Ryan M



Ryan McLuen

Date: 5/4/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

So, I have to admit, I have let far too long slip between the actual date and this journal. I think it may be in my favor however, as I have had more time to process an incredible evening full of memories, good-byes, and people who have made more of an impact on my life than I will ever be able to fully recognize.

The LYV put on a farewell service for us and invited every single congregation that we visited during our entire tour of Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales, and South Australia. We knew obviously that not everyone would be able to make it, but we were excited to see a conglomeration of all of these people who had been so instrumental in making our tour a success and who had given us so much to be thankful for throughout our ministry in Oz. We were not disappointed! God blessed us SO VERY MUCH that evening! We had gotten our equipment ready to bring back to the place we'd hired it from so we were acoustic for the couple of songs that they asked us to do. "Amazing Love" had become a favorite and commonly requested song on our tour so we sang that one and we also did "Now That You're Near" because we rarely do much programming without it. It was so much fun to look out and see a church full of familiar faces and hear them singing along with the songs they'd become familiar with through our tour. I know I had



Rachel Bolte

a HUGE smile on my face...at times it made it hard to sing. I just remember feeling incredibly blessed to be where I was with the people God had brought into my life and singing for His GLORY!

We were presented with gifts from the LYV. A photo book of Victoria...with a few add-in photos of our team in various places throughout the state..., the standard Pepsi and M&M's, and some stuffed autograph bears that we carried around and had people sign for the rest of the evening. We also presented our contacts with some random "remembrances" of our tour. We signed our puppet pole for LYV, gave them some puppets that had been donated that we couldn't fit in our bags, and framed & autographed pictures of our team. We couldn't leave Tim without something to remember his little "tumble" with us in Tasmania...so we got him a stuffed Tasmanian Devil. And we had to continue to feed Tricia's addiction to peanut butter M&M's...which are not so common in Australia. It was a lovely service full of memories, a slide-show of pictures, kind words that proved that God can work through broken vessels, and more love than I would ever have imagined!

We had a meal with everyone after the service and had some good laughs and cries as we said good-bye to friends that God had placed into our lives for a short but life-changing time. Emotions ran high and it was hard to know how to feel. How do you say good-bye to people you feel like you've known forever but you may never see again? How can you feel closure to a work you know God is just beginning? It was a very good, but very hard time. A time to celebrate the amazing things that God had used us for and the relationships that He'd given us in the process, but also a time to grieve leaving those relationships and a place that we'd fallen in love with and had changed our lives forever. I don't really know what else to say. God blessed and changed me in more ways than I'll ever recognize during those four short months in Australia. I don't think we could have had a better way to celebrate the end of our tour there. Thank you to all of you who made our ministry possible and so much fun at the same time. Please know that I will never be the same!

Good-bye and thank you Australia...I'll miss you...I already do

Date: 5/5/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

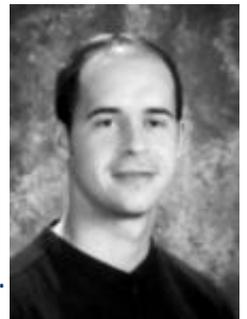
Journal Entry:

This is going to be the longest day of my life. Last night/morning I slept from 5am until 6am. Then we drove to the airport because TODAY WE LEAVE AUSTRALIA. It is a very sad day. The last few days have been filled with emotions, as we are excited to get home but don't enjoy having to say good bye to all of our friends here. There is no way for me to fully express how much we have enjoyed the people we have met in Australia. I would like to thank them for all the smiles, friendship, and love that we have received from them.

At the moment I am in Auckland, New Zealand! It is exciting because it's a new country for me (bringing my country count to 15). It is also not so exciting because there is nothing near the airport to go visit in the amount of time we have to sit here. So I get to sit here and think about all the wonderful people that we left in Australia. Speaking of which, we did actually leave Steve and Tiffany in Australia. They are going to Sydney for their break and I am going home to Chicago. I have one flight down and two to go today. Today has been going on for 15 hours so far, with only 25 hours left. Three hours from now we start our trip to L.A. Then I will get on another plane and finish today on my way home to Illinois. We do get to see several good movies today so that's a plus.

I am excited to get home, but I will be more excited about it when I actually get there. Right now my thoughts are with all the Aussies who mean so much to all of us on New Vision. You will all be in our prayers for quite a while with thanks to God for all you are to us. See you in the States.

God's Peace,
Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 5/20/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

I guess this means we're officially "on the road again" in the U.S.... Our return prep week is over and we are getting reacquainted with our closest companions for the year, also known as our van and trailer. The minibus and trailer we had in Australia were great, but something about #46 and #47 (the Youth Encounter designations for the van and trailer, respectively) feels a little more like home. Before getting into all of that, let me back up a little – prep week was good, if busy, and I finally got to see the results of the 17 rolls of my own film and 14 of the 15 rolls of slide film I have taken in the last four months. (That, of course, is in addition to well over 1,300 digital photos.) Now if I can narrow 400-450 print photos to an album of 144 I'll be getting someplace – it took a few days and a few very long nights to narrow about 450 slides to a slide show of 75. The slide show and our first sort-of programs in the form of two worship services at our prep church in Agoura Hills went fine – still a few bugs to work out, but that's to be expected.



Steve Ellwein

Oh yeah, the van. So, Sunday we said goodbye to Agoura Hills and made the longer-than-it-sounds journey from just north of L.A. to the eastern L.A. suburb of Rancho Cucamonga for a Sunday evening service, and thus our odyssey of driving begins anew. It is true that we logged about 14,000 kilometers (8,500-9,000 miles) in the minibus in four months in Australia, but good old #46 and #47 saw something like 13,000 miles in just over three months in our fall four and leading up to departing for Australia – most of them in Montana, but that's another story. At any rate, we are no strangers to the road, and after four months of not driving in Australia I'm just happy to be taking my turns behind the wheel again. Yesterday, however, we did not move – our first day off since our regrouping last week. Many of us opted for a trip to the theater (or theatre, as it would be in Australia) to catch "The Matrix: Reloaded" – if not opening night, at least in the first week. Today our L.A. adventure continues as we have come now to the southern suburb of Orange for a chapel at Salem Lutheran Elementary (almost said "Primary") School tomorrow morning. My former teammate Kelly works at this school and is our contact, and it is great to see her again for the first time since training. This is the next in a series of joyful reunions this week as we put the "return" in "return tour" with a six-day swing through Arizona starting tomorrow, with three stops at three wonderful places we have visited before, including visits to Rachel's family and my former teammate Tim, not to mention our first full, non-worship-service program since our return.

It's strange how readily we are readjusting to our U.S. routine, which beyond the increased travel and different ways our jobs work is difficult to explain. However, it's also interesting how God throws off that routine and puts people in our path that keep this ministry fresh for us. Our trip to the movies yesterday had a second purpose as well – on the flight back we forgot to de-tune our acoustic guitars, so they were acting up quite a bit – not staying in tune for more than a few minutes, that sort of thing. So, off to the music store we went, and it was there that we met Jerome. We were able to talk with him some and shared a bit about what we are doing for the year. Apparently Jerome was inspired; by the end of the evening the guitars were fixed and we had new strings and polish – they hadn't looked better in a long time. What Jerome didn't know is that he inspired us at least as much as we inspired him. Since Ryan M. stayed behind to wait for the guitars he had more of a chance to talk with him, so he would be a better person to talk about Jerome's story. What impressed us all was his generosity, especially toward people he had met only hours before – all the work Jerome put in and the strings and things he gave us were donated. We were reminded anew of just how special the people we encounter are. We go out trying to expect nothing but are always provided for, and often for more than just the necessities. Praise God that people like Jerome come into our lives, and help us to always be thankful for the people and events that break our routine as we continue down this road that we travel. – Proverbs 11:25, Philippians 4:18-19

Date: 5/22/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

THE BIG CLIMB – Bell Rock – Sedona, AZ. Today we tackled the red rock of Bell Rock. It's one of the large red rocks in Sedona, with a bell like shape. We climbed to various heights, with McLuen claiming King of the Rock! Me, myself, and Rachel, went just midway, and enjoyed watching some of the others hike away, as well as just bask in the amazement of this unique geography.



Sedona has been a home away from home for us. We were through here twice in the **Tiffany Schmader** fall, and were welcomed very warmly. And – it's where Rachel's Mom lives! She and Bill have been fantastic to us and it's lovely to be back. Our region doesn't take us to my home in PA, so it's extra nice to be somewhere that has taken on that homey feeling.

In addition to just plain enjoying being here, we were treated to a lovely dinner by Kat Goglin, who has signed a letter of call to the 2003-04 Watermark team to Germany! We met her in the fall and encouraged her to consider team – and low and behold, she did just that! She's great and we're very excited for her. It was a joy to talk with her, for Steve to get to share pictures from his Watermark tour, and to be back with this warm and welcoming congregation. How convenient/ironic that this place is where we had our first full return tour program!

Date: 5/24/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Today, not a whole lot happened, it was a shorter drive day but we didn't have a program. We went from Sedona, AZ to Prescott, AZ and stayed with Louise Bankhead. She was the one who took care of me and Ryan in the fall when we had food poisoning, so it was good to be there and actually talk to her and to feel normal. We had a beauty of a dinner and just got to relax that night.

God is a tough guy sometimes. But it is just what I need, because sometimes I can be so stubborn and then I want God to do what I think is right, but what I keep learning is that isn't how He works. I can see how I have changed in some ways since I have been on team, and I'm wondering how much I actually have changed and how long it will take after team to see it. Please keep us in your prayers, thank you so much.

In Christ,
Ryan M



Ryan McLuen

Date: 5/27/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Its REALLY hot here!!! We drove for eight and a half hours to get here and went right through the Mojave desert. It was a very warm drive and we were praising the Lord for air conditioning all the way!

So, honestly, not much happened during the beginning of the day. We did say good-bye to our friend Tim Orłowski who will be married next time any of us see him. It was sad to leave, but exciting that he's getting married!!!

Oh, and we got to stop at an A&W on Rte 66 for root beer floats courtesy of my parents! That was fun! Thanks Mom & Billiam!!!

The rest of the drive was fairly uneventful, which is not always a bad thing, and we ended up in Bakersfield! We were greeted very warmly by Pastor Sean who happens to know my teammate Angie's fiancé Justin Rimbo! That was fun!

We met our hosts at a local pizza place that was similar to Chuck E. Cheese. It was called Pizza Market and the owners went to the church we were playing at. They gave us free tokens and Tiff, Sarah and I got to try a fun dancing game called Dance Dance Revolution. We may not have looked so great or done super well, but we had a good time! The kids that were there were loving that we were trying their game. They were amazing! It was clear that they'd had lots of practice!!! Fun times!

It was a great evening of laughing, talking, and good pizza. It was just what we needed after a long drive through the desert. God's so good like that! He knows exactly what's up and provides what we need. I like that...and I like God.

Have a happy day!

Rachel<><



Rachel Bolte

Date: 5/29/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

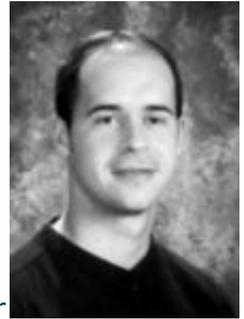
Going back to churches that we were at during our fall tour is a little weird. It's weird because we are adjusted to meeting new people every day. Although there are new people we will meet this time, we also have a chance to reunite with people we met last time. We were here, in King City, in the fall and there are many memories of this place for us.

Being back at a church we have been to, brings much excitement to the night. I wonder about things as we arrive. . . .Hmmmmm. Will I remember the names of the people I met last time? Will I have the same host family? Are we going to have a potato bar for dinner again, just like last time? I think the most exciting thing about revisiting a church is that the people there get to see a glimpse of our over-seas tour. They get to see and hear about the people we met and some of the experiences we had. They get to see how we have grown as a team. That's something that is probably easier for the congregations to see than it is for us to see. It is also great to see smiles on their familiar faces and to see how they have grown since our last visit.

When I think about it, it is wonderful to think how much God has worked through us six (much) less than perfect people. God has worked through us to show his love to people all over the world. He has also used my teammates to show me his love. I am thankful that though we are broken vessels and cracked jars of clay, God can fill us up and use us for his Glory.

God's Peace

Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 5/31/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Welcome to Monterey, CA! I'm not exactly sure what to write about this day – it has definitely been a long, emotional one!!! My mind has been on Alex, one of my teammates from last year, and on his family as well as they are struggling with the loss of Alex's grandmother. I think I have been sharing in his sorrow today, in fact this morning when my team sat down for our daily activities I couldn't keep it together. My poor teammates! I don't think any of them knew exactly what to say or do, but the truth is I think I just needed to cry.

Before we arrived at Bethlehem Lutheran in Monterey this afternoon we stopped at the beach and had our team devotion together. Since today is Saturday we had a time of praise and worship. Rachel found us a nice, quiet spot along the shoreline and there we sat singing songs and reading scripture. Today our focus was on servanthood so we followed Jesus' example of washing feet. We each took a turn washing another's feet which for me was quite a humbling experience, especially when I really thought about Jesus, our Master and King, doing the task of a servant. How awesome to think about a God that desires to serve us because He loves us so much! I'm now thinking a lot about how I can be a better servant, particularly with Alex. It is hard to know what to do since he lives so far away (in Uganda, Africa!) and since I don't entirely understand the situation. For now my prayer is that God will continue to guide me in service, so after you read this please take a moment to say a prayer for Alex and his family – for peace, strength and comfort

Our program tonight was small, but I definitely felt the presence of Christ. Claire, our contact at the church, fixed us a wonderful meal and we had a good chance to talk with her as well as with our host family. I think that after such a sad, confusing, frustrating, and humbling day, a small and intimate evening was just what I needed. Thanks God!!!

Peace to you all,
Sarah



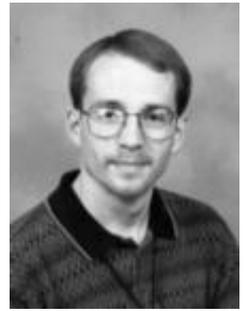
Sarah Liggett

Date: 6/3/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

It's kind of funny – for most people, your mind is never really crossed by a thought along the lines of "hey, one day I'm going to be in Monterey, California." And then, one day, you are – or at least, I was this weekend. It's always been one of those places that I've heard about, and it sounds nice, but I never really envisioned myself going there. Kind of like Australia on a smaller scale, I guess, except that it was never really a life goal of mine to go to Monterey. I'm glad I did get there, though (both Australia and Monterey, but Monterey for the purposes of this journal), and it is indeed a nice place. We had no responsibilities for worship Sunday morning, and somehow the five (yep) people at our Saturday night program managed between them to get us six passes to the Monterey Aquarium, so that was our morning activity. I never knew there were so many kinds of jellies (can't call them "jellyfish" because they're not fish – it's sort of the aquatic equivalent of "koala bear"), and imagine my joy when I found that several scenes of "Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home" (also known as "the one with the whales") were shot there.



Steve Ellwein

Our drives have been a little strange as of late, and Sunday was no exception. We keep crossing the mountains, basically on a daily basis, which aside from being great for the van is weird from a weather standpoint. To the west it's breezy and cool, like in Monterey. To the east it's nearly windless and well into the 90s, like in Stockton. We were glad to be there, though – it was great for us on the first visit in October and this time was no exception. From the dinner before the program (I was at the "loud table") to the program itself, we enjoyed our time with the youth group and others who had come to see us. My hosts were great too, setting up fans to help me brave the non-air conditioned house, asking if I needed anything every time they saw me, taking me to Outback Steakhouse (sorry to shatter anyone's illusions, but it's not exactly authentically Australian), and shuttling me between their house and Pep Boys as I dealt with the van on our day off. Ah, the van. It's been having brake trouble lately (remember that part about crossing the mountains?) and I took it in in the morning to get it looked at. By around mid-afternoon they had found nothing wrong, which would have been great news except that something is wrong. By late afternoon they had diagnosed a problem, and by 5:30 (in other words, too late to do anything more about it) they had made that repair and discovered that it didn't solve the problem. At least the oil change got done...

Thankfully today's drive to Lodi took all of about 20 minutes. The program went fine, and Ryan M. and I learned a fun card game from our host family. Tomorrow's mountain crossing is a mild one as we head to Walnut Creek for a return visit, then it's off to South San Francisco for two nights with Rachel's brother and family – and hopefully some time in San Francisco itself. I keep coming back to the van, though. The problem we have isn't one that I would call life threatening – we're not in any imminent danger of the brakes failing. What happens is that the van pulls when the brakes are applied, meaning that if you don't know it's coming and you're not careful in compensating for it you can find yourself drifting. Our team is a little bit like our van. We don't have any problems that are threatening to tear us apart. The issues we have are smaller, which means we have to be just as careful – if we ignore them, don't deal with them as they occur or don't adjust for them, a small situation can get more serious. I would imagine it's like that for any team or any group of people. Keep on your guard, don't forget to get your maintenance done and, like I'll be doing with the van within the next week, if one solution doesn't work keep looking for another. – Genesis 3:1a, 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Date: 6/5/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

How my humanness gets the best of me sometimes! Grrr! Let me preface though - In general, I'm doing well!! Just had a bum day - you know how sometimes, you just have one of those days. Low and behold, the past day and a half has gotten the best of me. It all came clear this morning as we started our weekly Bible Study. I found myself choked up with tears as we started reading in John. I was quickly reminded

that I just need to remain in the Lord and let him be my comforter. He's what I need! He's my sustainer. Why do I let that slip from time to time and get caught up in my woes? I've been thinking a lot lately about my future and financial situation, wondering how everything will come together, and letting myself get a little overcome with thoughts. And, I've also found myself wishing I had a special someone to just hug me and comfort me and let me know that everything will be ok. Someone to care for me and shower me with love. *sigh* Why can't I just be patient and content today!?! I usually am...but it's just been one of those days.



Tiffany Schmader

My prayer today: Lord, thank you for showing yourself to me this morning and reminding me that you're all that I need! Help me to recapture my peace and contentment, knowing my life is led by you. I love you Lord, and pray that I remain in you, seeking you more daily. When I continue to fully seek you, things are better!

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." – John 15: 4.

Date: 6/7/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Today we are in Fortuna, CA and we came from San Fran today, where we got to stay with some of Rachel's family, Rose and Deryl. It was so much fun, we got to see their kids, and they are so cute. But Fortuna has been so amazing, and such a showing of God's love through his people. Sometimes I just can't believe how quickly people open up and just love on you, and it is a lesson that I continually have had to learn as I have grown older. But the people that we have met are incredible, and we have been having some brake problems with our van, so we mentioned it in our program, even though we were only there for one night. Well there were so many people who wanted to help, and some people donated money, others called around to shops to see if it was a possibility, and when it was found out that we couldn't do anything about it due to our schedule, we found out that the church had called ahead to our next stop to tell them to check about brake stuff. They totally went out of their way for 6 strangers who came to their church, played music and talked with them for a while. What an act of love they have shown, and just thinking about it makes me miss them. I just want to say thank you for all of you out there who show love to those who you may not know that well, or even to those who you do know well because you don't really know the impact that you are making in peoples lives. God is so good at times, even when you are so blind that you can't see Him.



Ryan McLuen

Please allow God to work in your lives, and to let his love shine through all of you to touch the hearts of everyone around you. I will leave you with that.

In Christ,

Ryan McLuen

Date: 6/10/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Hello Friends!!!

Today was a lovely day on New Vision. I really have had a good day and I feel very happy. Its nice. I've been fairly up and down emotionally lately and today I just feel like God has really been blessing me with JOY!!! Its wonderful!

We drove by Mt. Shasta today and it was gorgeous! As much as I don't enjoy windy mountain roads for the sake of my tummy...they sure are pretty! I put in some worship tunes and marveled at the wonderful creation that God has given us! It was a nice way to spend an afternoon!

We played a program here in Yreka tonight at a congregation that hosted us but didn't have a program on the first leg of our tour. So, it was nice to be able to share with them and they seemed



Rachel Bolte

to enjoy themselves.

Today, I am thankful for Joy, the Joy that only Jesus can bring. I've been back and forth with which direction God is calling me in next year and feel that I have finally come to a decision to move back to Minneapolis. I decided last night and all of a sudden felt relief. I know that God will use me anywhere, but I feel very at peace with moving back to my home and being challenged to find new ministry opportunities while being able to be a part of a community that I love. So, the Joy of the Lord has touched my heart today and I hope its touched yours as well. Praise the Lord for His faithfulness!!!

Have a wonderful day full of the Joy of Jesus!

Love,

Rachel<><

Date: 6/12/2003

Submitted by: Ryan Legler

Journal Entry:

We have been away from Australia for one month now and last night we were able to spend some time with one of our friends that we met in Australia. Our friend Leah came to the States to work at a camp in Oregon. We were close to that camp and so Leah came and met us for dinner. We went to 'The Olive Garden' and had a great time talking and remembering our time over seas.

The tables were turned here. We were able to ask Leah about how she sees our country. We were no longer the visitors in another country but the hosts. It was interesting since Leah had been there as we were beginning to experience her country, and now we got to watch her as she experienced our country.

To sit and talk with someone from another culture is usually an interesting conversation. To get to experience each other's home land is definitely an opportunity not to be missed. Hopefully we will have other chances to reunite with other friends from Australia in the future. It would be great to see all of our Aussie mates again.

God's Peace

Ryan Legler



Ryan Legler

Date: 6/14/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Liggett

Journal Entry:

Yikes! We're down to a team of four as both Tiffany and Steve are away this weekend to attend weddings! It really does feel strange to have a third of the team gone, but thankfully our schedule is light for the next few days so we won't have to worry about doing all the work that they usually do. Whew!!! Today has been fairly uneventful: Ryan and Rachel took Tiffany to the airport, and I stayed behind at the church to get some work done. Tonight we are being housed in Astoria, Oregon and we arrived at the church just in time to see the remains of a rummage sale! My host family has two little kids (Honest is 3 and Sonova is 10 months) so it has been fun to play with them. I don't think anything else can make me smile quite like little kids can!

It is hard for me to believe that we only have two months left on team and that I and the other back-to-backers have been on the road for 22 months. Overall I am doing well, but probably what bothers me the most is that I have trouble keeping my focus on the ministry. I too easily let myself get wrapped up in the smallness of team life and the daily business that we have to do. Sometimes I lose sight of the big picture: God working through six individuals as they share their faith and trust in His provisions. Right now I think I'm slacking a bit when it comes to trusting in God's provisions - I still don't have a clue where I'll be when team ends or what I'll be doing and that makes me very nervous! I feel like I'm constantly questioning and constantly searching, which wouldn't be such a bad thing if I didn't enjoy contentment so much! Yes, I definitely think God is teaching me something here!

For now I'm trusting in Jeremiah 29:11. God has a plan for me, a plan that will allow me to prosper



Sarah Liggett

and that will never bring me harm. I rejoice in that promise!

May God bless you today and always!
Sarah

Date: 6/19/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Sleeping at churches.....it's not something we do on a regular basis, as we're typically in host homes, but this week our housing is mainly in church buildings. I will graciously welcome the hospitality of my next host home, but I will embrace the change of pace and fun while staying together in the churches.

Last night was fun indeed. First, we had a good time worshiping with the youth group from Coal Creek Chapel in Bellevue, WA. We did a normal Family Night Program for their Youth Group time, and had a blast with their involvement. Encouraging to see them singing along as they knew songs, or as they caught on. Just a fun group of peeps!

That created a fun atmosphere and happy moods for the New Vision gang. Rachel had a friend visit, and they then went out for pizza. The rest of us hung out at the church. Sarah and I had some fun "girl" time as we painted our toenails. Ooh la la! The fellas were having some fun kicking around the footy, and the evening topped off with Veggie Tales!

Tonight we are housed at a church we stayed at in the fall in Woodburn, OR. Very cool here – as they have showers and a big screen TV (which of course, was tuned into Smackdown! I chose to e-mail and read during that time.). Even though we're sleeping on the church floor, what luxuries we have! Showers, internet access, Big Screen TV, phone access, kitchen! God is good and amazing! Yay for the fun of sleeping in churches.



Tiffany Schmader

Date: 6/21/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Here we are, back in Sequim, Washington and it is nice to be back. We are helping out with the VBS (Vacation Bible School) that is going on this week, and I am excited to be here again. We came from Salem, OR today, so I am a little wiped after that drive, but the host family that I have has been super fun already, so this week is looking up, even though I am not doing very well as of late. It has felt like I have had more lows than highs, so that's never a good feeling. I would ask for your continued prayers as I struggle with a lot of stuff. I am still hopeful, but things are just hard. I'm not sure what else to say, except please keep God first in your life, because then everything just seems to fit, even when hard times come. I don't think that I've been doing a good job at doing that.

I also want to thank all of you out there who continually support us as a team, by your prayers and also financially. You mean so much to us. Thank you.

In Christ,
Ryan M



Ryan McLuen

Date: 6/24/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Praise the Lord for Vacation Bible School! I have to admit that this is one of the things that I miss about Captive Free and I'm very glad that we have the chance to do a VBS this summer!!! Its time for Rancho Roundup! I missed the first day because I was at a

wedding this weekend, but when I came back there was a bandana and a cowboy hat of my very own all set up on my microphone stand! I felt so very loved and excited for a great week of sheep, Southern drawls, and do-si-do's!!!

This age group has always been a favorite of mine...thus the elementary education degree...and it's a joy to spend some time working with them and singing with them. I just get so much joy from watching them get into the actions...and they pick up on songs so very quickly!!! Good times! I've been very impressed with the décor of this congregation! They went all out for this VBS and I truly believe that the decorations really make a huge difference! The kids are eating it up and it's fun to be a part of!



Rachel Bolte

So, as I have taken off my purple bandana and my cowboy hat for the day, and I reflect on the good times, I have to say that God continues to be good and faithful and I am a very happy cowgirl for this evening!
Good night!!!

Date: 7/1/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

It's the busy time for New Vision...we have now completed our one and only Vacation Bible School of the summer. I have to admit that part of me is glad we only have one; this is not really the age group I work best with and being chipper early in the morning (okay, 9:00) is not really a strength of mine. Their enthusiasm was good, though, and the people of Sequim are wonderful and generous and I'm glad we were able to go back. Over the weekend we stopped in Port Hadlock, WA for another return visit. This was one of my favorite places from the fall tour (even if it was one of the more challenging rooms to run sound in) and it was great to see my host family again, catching up on the last eight months and (with Ryan's help) introducing them to Australian rules football via the Web. The visit was all too short, and after church on Sunday we were on our way to the northernmost stop of our tour.



Steve Ellwein

With Hobart, Tasmania at about 43 degrees south latitude and Bellingham, WA at nearly 49 degrees north, I think we win the award for most degrees of latitude covered this year – literally over half the world. To get from Port Hadlock to Bellingham, the most direct road goes south on the Olympic Peninsula to swing north and go through Tacoma and Seattle. The time-saving option (and money-saving considering the gasoline that would have been used) was to go to Port Townsend and hop on a ferry – van, trailer and all – to Whidbey Island. At 55 miles north to south, Whidbey is the longest island in the continental U.S., and the northern part is quite scenic. Leaving Whidbey from the north is a quick drive to Bellingham, where we set up shop for the week at Camp Lutherwood just south of town. Some of our current teamers (on other teams) have spent time working at Lutherwood, so it's fun to see what they have told us about, and three team alumni are currently here (one of whom we didn't expect to see), which makes it even more fun for us.

This is Day 2 at Lutherwood and our responsibilities are really rather limited. In the morning we drive to Mt. Vernon for the opening of an off-site day camp, in the afternoon we do the closing for an on-site day camp (filled with some very active kids – getting through things like interactives and puppet shows is a challenge), and that's about it. Tomorrow we have an evening program for all the on-site campers, Thursday we say goodbye to the campers and lead worship for the staff, and Friday we have a day off, on which Rachel and I are planning to celebrate the 4th of July by going to Canada (Vancouver, specifically – only a little more than an hour from here). This plan was finalized during the longest one-on-one ever, in which Rachel and I explored most of Bellingham in an effort to find things like a post office, the library (for Internet access) and a few other key places that we might need to visit this week, all of which ended up becoming a 2-3 hour adventure. Another fun fact about Lutherwood is that it is right down the road from the home of Ryan Stiles ("The Drew Carey Show," "Whose Line Is It Anyway"), who apparently usually puts on a pretty good 4th of July fireworks display. Overall it looks like this will be a much more relaxing week than we had first imagined; hopefully we can use this time to recover from the business of the last week and recharge ourselves for the next few as we begin to measure our remaining time on team in weeks

instead of months. May we remain strong and steadfast to the end. – Isaiah 57:10

Date: 7/3/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

What a beautiful place we're at this week! Camp Lutherwood, WA is located on a gorgeous lake! Wow!!! I'm partial to my home in PA and the beauty of the rolling hills and beautiful leaves in the fall, but this place certainly has a beauty of its own! Mountains lined with pine trees, and a lovely lake at the base! Wonderful! And...cool to be amongst some familiar faces, as Nichol Ellis (New Dawn 2000-01) and Jonathen Brubaker (New Vision 2000-01) are both leaders at the camp. Awesome to work with them and have that YE connection.



Tiffany Schmader

It has been a blessing to be here and to be in one place for a week. We are staying in the retreat lodge, where we have our own little place to "retreat." Plus, we've been graced with a lot of down time, which has been very nice. God's taking care of us! And so nice to be able to relax and refresh in the beauty of creation.

The counselors and staff have been a lot of fun. I can just picture the lovely Heidi from SW working here and being awesome!! And what fun to receive mail from her at the camp! Thanks girlie! ☐ A smile from across the miles is a sweet thing.

A highlight from last night was our program. We set up in the dining hall and had a grand ol' time singing and dancing. I was especially encouraged by the energy and enthusiasm of the counselors. What a blast! They were up and dancing and joining in singing with us. They are a great encouragement and example to their campers.

Today ended this week of camp, as tomorrow is the 4th of July. And, we also said bye bye to Ryan Legler for the weekend, as he's off to a wedding. Fortunately, we have no programs while he's away. ☐ Just some traveling. Yay for the timing that God has blessed us with. I'm often amazed at the little ways we're provided for. Thank you Lord for the wondrous ways in which you take care of your children.

Date: 7/5/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Happy late 4th of July and Hooray for Captive Free North West. What a great past few days, we got to see fireworks at Camp Lutherwood in Bellingham, WA and meet up with another team on the road when we were both in Spokane, WA with nothing to do on a Saturday night. Besides New Dawn, this was the only other team that we've been able to see while we've been on the road. But it turned out that we were both in the Spokane area, so we met at a Coldstone and sat and had some ice cream and told some stories of the road. It was a good refresher and a much needed one at that, things have been hard on me as of late and I'm not exactly sure why, but seeing some familiar faces was a good thing.



Ryan McLuen

I'm not exactly sure what is going on with me lately, but something just doesn't seem right and I don't feel like myself and I don't like it, but I'm not sure what to do about it. It seems like it is around that time of year, or perhaps past it where we see the end is near and we start preparing for that. I have noticed myself doing it, but I don't like it because it isn't trying to finish strong. The apostle Paul tells us that we need to fight the good fight and finish the race strong and to run to win, not just to finish. Although I can read his words and I know what he is trying to say, it won't get past my think skull and whatever else I am holding onto. I know that God is still with me during all of this and He is still working within me, and He is speaking to me, I think I have become hard of hearing in regards to God. I just pray that God will clean out my ears, and kick me in the pants so I will realize that this year wasn't and isn't about me in the least, but its about my Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ and that I didn't accept this call to team so that I could be rested and be content and be at home, but to be the opposite of all that and to step outside of myself and what I am used to so I can serve Him in the ways that He has called me. And as I am writing this I am reading it and it is dawning on me that I need to really reread what I've just written and apply it because this is what I have been trying to figure out for the past few weeks.

Thank you all for all that you do, you are truly loved.

In Christ,
Ryan McLuen

Date: 7/8/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Hello Everyone,

I just want to tell you that we had a concert tonight with all of the high school campers here at camp and it was fantastic! It was the most energy that I've gotten from a crowd in a long time and it was fun just to let loose and have a good 'ol crazy time!

We've only been here for a couple of days and its been a trip. Its fun to hear that some of the campers are still keeping in touch with past team members who made an impact on their lives. And we're even blessed to be able to spend the week with a great gal who

will be joining the Youth Encounter family in August! Hooray!!! Its been fun so far.

It is strange being around a lot of people who aren't my teammates for an extended period of time. Its good to have new people around, but sometimes it makes me feel disconnected. Especially when we're busy and not always very good at reaching out to our teammates when its not convenient. I'm a guilty as the next guy...its easy to get into having some time with different people. However, I know that I still need to be needed and supported by the people who are my family and this week I feel like all of us (including me) have been a bit on the slacking end of taking care of that for one another.

That is one part of how I'm feeling. I'm also feeling very excited that these kids are so very gung-ho for Youth Encounter and have been seeing teams forever and love it. There are a number here who have wanted to go on team forever and one who's only a Jr. in high school who has already filled out the application. God is amazing and its fun to hear people be so excited about serving Him!!!

And I'm also feeling tired! I forgot how full on camp counseling is! But I sure do love it! My small group has gotten into some amazing conversations and discussions about all kinds of amazing things. I'm encouraged hearing the questions these kids are asking and knowing that they're seeking! Praise the Lord!

I'm still pumped after our program tonight! Those kids were fantastic! We sure had a great time! Yee-haw!!!



Rachel Bolte

Date: 7/15/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

On the road again...the strangeness of our schedule comes into sharp focus this week. Just three days ago we left Trinity Lutheran Camp near Bigfork in the northwest part of Montana, spending about 7-8 hours to get to Laurel, MT in the Billings area. This was our third visit to Laurel, counting the time last fall when we drove six hours for housing to drive six hours the next day. Laurel is, I think, a highlight for many of us on our tour and it's good to reconnect with familiar people – especially when we have time to do that given that the worship service consisted of us and 12 other people. From Laurel to Casper, WY, bringing New Vision's state count to 16. We had a bit of a refreshing time here being in a house by ourselves for two days, and many of us used our day off to see "Finding Nemo." I think I would have enjoyed it even had I not been to Australia, but the setting, slang and references made it all the more enjoyable – and they even did a decent job with the Sydney skyline.



Steve Ellwein

From Casper to Lakewood, CO in the Denver area – and it's not over yet. We began the week in Montana and will end it in New Mexico; we begin next week in New Mexico and end it in South Dakota – looks like our van will reach the 100,000 mile mark (only about 25,000 from us) by year's end after all. Anyway, Lakewood is yet another return visit, and I am particularly glad to be back here. Our program is tomorrow, so for tonight I am relaxing at 9,000 feet with my aunt and uncle who live about 45 minutes (depending on traffic) from the church. This is my second opportunity this month to stay with family, following a trip to Spokane about 10 days ago. It is also a very meaningful time for me to be with family. Less than two weeks ago another of my uncles died suddenly, and I was unable to make it back for the funeral. That was two days before we were in Spokane, which is where I found out. Tomorrow will be the fourth anniversary of my grandmother's death, and I will have family with me for that as well. Being away from family is something that we tend to accept as the norm in team life, so the chances we have to be with them are that much more special, especially in circumstances of experiencing or remembering loss when contact with those who know us best takes on added importance. I hope that once I am off team I will continue to cherish those times and not take them for granted. May the bonds of family and our bonds to each other in Christ continue to grow. – 2 Timothy 4:1-8 (for Grandma F. & Maury)

Date: 7/17/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Drive...Drive...Drive...Drive...Drive...Drive...Drive...Drive...Drive...Drive.

Yes, that's 10 "drives" for the 10 hour trip we had today! I think this was our longest trip to date. We traveled from lovely Lakewood, CO to Bloomfield, NM. Woweeee! Twas one of those days that I strived to find happiness in the day, despite the long hike!

Here are some happies I found in the day:

An air conditioned van

Electronic Yahtzee

Random chats

A TV/VCR in the van

Rest stops and gas stations

Coloring books and crayons

A CD player in the van

A good atlas

Dairy Queen on a hot day

Pizza at our church upon arrival

Return tour visits

Familiar faces

Good long walks

Homemade cookies



Tiffany Schmader

On a more serious note, I'm at a point that I hate to admit to myself, but I have realized that I'm emotionally weak and worn. I love this ministry, but it is incredible the impact it can have on one's emotions and stability after 11 months. God has been revealing to me that I need to grasp my strength through Him, and that He's putting people in my path to support me. Most of the time, I tend to seek that support from my teammates, but they're worn too. It's hard for me to remember that and to put expectations at an unrealistic level. I continue to pray for focus, stability, joy, and strength as the Lord provides. He knows what I need and what I can handle.

Date: 7/19/2003

Submitted by: Ryan McLuen

Journal Entry:

Hello my dear friends,

Well, we are in the fabulous state of New Mexico and boy is it hot, we have been told that normally it isn't too hot where we are, but of course when we are there, they have

days in the mid 90's and perhaps even hundreds. But that of course, isn't a big deal at all. We came from Bloomfield today and arrived in Cedar Crest, which is outside of Albuquerque for those of you who may not know the layout of New Mexico.

These days have been strange, not because of the places that we as a team have gone, but because of the places that I have gone, and I mean that metaphorically of course. But I have been going into myself as of late, because at times I can get so stressed out and I don't know what else to do. But I have found that things on the inside of me, sometimes are no better and I am in a constant battle against the things that I know I shouldn't do and be, but yet, because of my humanity, its almost inevitable that I become that which I despise. And this turns into an endless cycle and I'm sure that it ends up not becoming just an internal thing anymore, especially when I am surrounded by my friends that I have spent the past 11 ½ months with. And I'm sure that I take out some of my frustrations with myself upon other, although I try to keep it to myself.

I'm not exactly sure where I'm going with this or why exactly I chose to share this in this journal, but I want you all to know, as well as myself, that Christ does not give up hope on us, even though we may. And Satan works in many ways to try and tear us apart, but we must be strong in the Lord and not give him any footholds. Keep Christ as your focus, and although troubles may come, they will be nothing compared to the awesomeness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Sometimes I have to remind myself of certain things as I am writing to others, so this was also for a little bit of self reflection as well, I hope that it wasn't just meaningless dribble.

In Christ,
Ryan McLuen



Ryan McLuen

Date: 7/22/2003

Submitted by: Rachel Bolte

Journal Entry:

Its Australia Day!!! Ok, not really, but it was the closest thing we've had to our Australian schedule! We left Las Vegas, NM at ten this morning and headed for Pueblo, CO. We arrived at about two and set up for our first program at a boys and girls ranch. It was so much fun to see the kids warm up through the program. I never got the chance to go to a facility such as this when I was on Captive Free and it was quite the treat. We played in the gym and it wasn't air conditioned. So, it was pretty hot, but we sure had a great time anyway. They were so much fun. Even the ones who were standing on the back wall and looking very disinterested were fun to smile at and try to get involved!

Then we were off for another booking at a higher security facility in Pueblo. As our contact at the first place said, "Oh, that's the really bad kids!". I have to admit that I was a bit intimidated. The first one had gone well so I wasn't too concerned, but after that comment I was a bit disheartened. Its true that Captive Free Southwest has been there a few times this year and loved it, but I was a tiny bit leery. We were walked through security where we opened all of our instrument cases after putting everything through a metal detector. When it had been inspected and okayed we put it into "the trap" which is a small room with a metal door on either end. They only open one door at a time so they know exactly what/who is going in or out and its high security. When we couldn't fit any more stuff in the room, they locked the inside door and a few of us loaded what was in the trap onto a golf cart outside and one of the guards brought to the gym for us. Then we loaded the rest out and they called some of the "residents" over to help us carry the rest of our equipment. With the residents and the golf cart we only had to make one trip! It was amazing! We were SO thankful for the help!

This was one of my favorite programs all year. The guys who came were there solely by choice and they were having a great time! We had them up and moving around, clapping and singing along. It was such a joy to watch them just open up and be silly around us! I had such a good time! I was a bit nervous to share, but God took over and I think all went well. They seemed attentive and they clapped, so I guess it couldn't have been too horrible. Then we had some question and answer time and they had some great questions about how long we'd been Christians, how we learned about Youth Encounter, what we've learned on our tour this year, and of course how old we are. They were sad when it was time to go. Legler tried to make the parting easier by giving the drum solo



Rachel Bolte

they'd been cheering for...he was in his glory! It was a fantastic evening and I feel so very blessed to have been able to share with these men who have obviously had some rough times. The best part is the realization that they're just like me...I make mistakes too. And God continues to love me anyway and give me as many chances as it takes. Some of these guys even wanted to know more about team ministry.

I have no idea what God has in store for the many people who we met today who are serving time for whatever crimes they have committed, but I do know that they are only a bad decision or two away from me and that I learned a lot today about grace, humility, and the boundless love of the amazing God that I serve! May all of us see Him so clearly in our every day as I have been able to today!

God's Peace,
Rachel<><

Date: 7/29/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

So, after two years this is (barring extremely unforeseen circumstances) my last journal for a Youth Encounter team. Since I don't really know yet how to summarize two years in a few paragraphs, I think I will just stick to the last few days. Following our haul from Colorado to eastern Nebraska (the last of our really long drives, fortunately) and last team outing, Sunday morning saw us leading music during worship for 200 or more at each of two services. Naturally we needed some kind of amplification, fortunately we were able mostly to use their equipment since tearing down after the second service would have made it virtually impossible to be on time for our Sunday evening destination. This was of particular importance to me given that our Sunday evening destination was my church in Sioux Falls. When we came through in December our program was at another Methodist church in town, but this time things worked out for us to be with my congregation. Lots of familiar faces, and I got to surprise my parents (I think) with my second lead vocal. Yes, my mom cried (in a good way, I hope), and I suppose that's a good way to make her do it. My teammates had a lot of fun with the dome acoustics, and we were surprised by Cross Fire! They had a program in town that started earlier than ours, so they were able to come for the end of our program, which was a lot of fun even now when we will see them at debriefing in a week. It was good to be at home, and also to share my home, my church, my family and other things that are a significant part of my life with my teammates. Even at this late stage in the year we are still learning about each other, and seeing bits of each others' pasts is a great way to accomplish that goal.



Steve Ellwein

Today we moved from one of our homes to another. On the drive from Sioux Falls to Maple Grove, MN we of course (given that I was driving at that stage) had to stop in St. Peter. Well, if your teammates are in need of a restroom stop and you're in St. Peter, you might as well go to the Gustavus campus, right? Seriously, the only reason was that I thought they would have better bathrooms than a gas station. Okay, that's not quite true. It was good to see campus again, if only briefly; I'll have to make a longer visit once I'm off the road. The end of our journey for the day was Maple Ridge, the church Ryan M. grew up in and worked at before coming on team. Naturally, he knew a lot of people there, and we were also joined by his parents, members of Rachel's family and some former teammates of Tiffany and Rachel. Something about having family and alumni at programs really adds to them – they (especially alumni) understand what we are doing for this year in a way that is not possible for others, and they are able to bring a level of enthusiasm to programs that we sometimes really need. It will be happening again – tomorrow we go to Ryan's parents' church, where the youth director is one of the people who trained me for youth ministry when he was with Tentmakers, and for the final program of our tour on Sunday we will be at Rachel's church. We will probably see many more familiar faces, and then it will be time for seeing all of the teams and office staff at debriefing. The end is truly near...

What has two years of team ministry done for me? There are some of the more statistical answers, like that it has taken me to 33 U.S. states (9 of them previously unvisited), Denmark, Germany &

Australia (with brief stops in 6 other countries). I have covered well over 50,000 miles in the U.S. alone, stayed in hundreds of host homes and done even more hundreds of programs in four countries. There are the standard answers that are true for most teamers – I have learned more about flexibility and living in community, about teamwork and conflict resolution, about stretching and doing things you would never have imagined yourself doing, that it is possible (although not preferable) to live through a 7:45 a.m. worship service, that big deals usually aren't, that some places may be different from what you know but people are great wherever you go. For me personally, though, I can't fully say just yet. It has been two years (with a week off between them), but they are still going on. Some time will be needed, I think, to process and think through and get to a point where I can give a full and satisfactory answer to the "what did you learn" and "how did you grow" type questions. (Some of that time will also be spent trying to figure out where I should be living and what I should be doing jobwise – if you have any leads, please let me know.) For now, I can say without hesitation that it has been fun and I am glad I have done it, and that the many joys have outweighed the many struggles. This is a truly unique ministry, and I am honored to have been a part of it for two-plus years (soon to include helping with training for next year's teams, which starts a week after we finish). My prayers will be with all of this year's and next year's teamers. Thanks for reading – here's to the next step. – Revelation 22:21

Date: 7/31/2003

Submitted by: Tiffany Schmader

Journal Entry:

Awe – the fun of the return tour and coming back to familiar places. Today we returned to Cleveland, MN and it was swell to arrive in town and to refamiliarize. I kept trying to picture the church, and I thought I finally had it. Upon arrival, I discovered, nope – I had been picturing a different church. It was fun to come inside and have it all come flooding back. I definitely have enjoyed revisiting places, seeing familiar faces, and reconnecting. It's also exciting to know these people have been praying for us and were happy to have us back to hear about our experience in Australia.



We gals were blessed with staying with the same host family, and it was especially nice for me to chat with our host mom after the program. One thing she shared with me was how much she could see a difference in us. She could see a real joy. This is one of the first bookings we had in the fall, so we certainly have grown and changed as a team since then. We know we're worn and I sometimes feel almost guilty going into places to minister, feeling like we don't have a lot to give, but God comes through. He's the joy shining through us that our host mom saw. This is the kind of thing that the Lord has continued to remind me of this year – He is so in control and will provide what we need. He'll come through in the program – it's not up to us – He's got it all. Thank you, Lord, for being in control of this ministry. Thank you for providing for us through others. Thank you for familiar faces and places. Thank you for your joy. **Tiffany Schmader**

PS.....I have to include visiting Ryan McLuen's home church! We were blessed two nights ago by going to McLuen's church! ☐ I love going to teammates churches and visiting with their families. It's so homey and neat – gives you an inside look into their lives and is just plain heartwarming! We had a fun youth night after the program – playing games, having snacks, fun chats, and closing with worship. Mmm – how I love doing praise and worship with youth. I could have sung with them for another half an hour!

It was also special to have Rachel's family, as well as McLuen's, at the program. Thank you for your support to us this year. It was been so amazing. We have seen McLuen's. Steve's, and Rachel's families multiple times, and it was been nice to have the feeling of home away from home! Thank you all! You are so very appreciated!
