

Captive Free North West 2003-04 Journal

Date: 9/13/2003

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Wow, training went by fast. Now we're really out here on the road, living out of our suitcases for a year. The hospitality of host homes and churches is such a blessing. Talk about casting all of your cares on the Lord! While there's a lot of business to take care of out here, our needs are provided for, every time. Team life is so different than I imagined it would be. There's so much variety amongst teammates that adds incredible flavor and character to our community. What a daily reminder that we are the Body of Christ! I am so excited to see how God will use us to bless each other and those we will meet on the road in the next months. I've never experienced this kind of intentional, close Christian community before, and it's amazing.



Angela Joy Nelson

Date: 9/16/2003

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

Well, we did our first family night program on Sunday night, and it was a blast! The team already seems to be becoming more comfortable with being on stage, and we're able to start being ourselves much more now when we're up there. Yesterday was our day off, and we spent it in Faulkton, SD, which is a town of about 800 people. One thing that's nice about being in a smaller town is that you don't need a car to get around, because everything is within walking distance. At the moment we're cruising along Hwy 212, and to my left is a seemingly endless field of hay, and to my right it's either corn, or sunflowers, and it has been like this for several hours. God Bless South Dakota! ;) In all seriousness though, it's been really cool doing this ministry in these smaller towns. The host families and the people at the churches are amazing. It's a very humbling experience to be completely dependent upon other people for both our food and our housing, and having them serve us. Everyone that we've stayed with has been incredibly hospitable, and they treat us like we are a part of their own family.

As for me, I'm very excited about this year. I know that God is going to teach me a lot about leadership and ministry, and even from this first month, God has already taught me some important lessons about calling and trust. I've learned that when God calls us to something or places something upon our hearts, He's not joking around. I found myself being reminded of the verse that says, "For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable." I'm also really excited to improve this year as a musician. It's been fun taking program music and making it our own, and I'm able to really enjoy the music that we do, because I try to challenge myself in what I play. Our team is very solid musically as well, so I'm excited to see what we can do this year, and how we can express our creativity.

I'm not really sure what else to say at this point. We're headed to Montana later this week, and we get to hang out there for a few days. Apparently we have a day next week that we have to drive most of the way across Montana, and so we have an 11 hour drive! Time to watch some DVD's on my laptop!



Mike Guthrie

Date: 9/18/2003

Submitted by: Shellina Dillon

Journal Entry:

Hello all! Well, I must say that this whole experience is so much more amazing than I could have ever imagined. My team is absolutely amazing. They are all so talented, so smart, and all so different. I am learning so much from each of them. (I like the word 'so' today, apparently.) Anyway, we just left Lemmon, South Dakota. I feel so ashamed

at the moment, because my usual talkative and excited self is lying dormant. I find myself not wanting to meet new people, not wanting to be relational at all and just wanting MY OWN room. I love my teammates, and I love slumber parties, but sometimes just want to be in the room by myself. I miss driving myself places. That usual time I have to pray and meditate to the music of my choice and however loud I want it has been stripped from me. Even those 15 minutes on the way to work that I loved so much are gone! I didn't even realize how much I loved being by myself until it was taken from me. And the worst part is, I am doing this to myself. I have made this decision to give a year of my life to the absolute glory of God, and I am complaining about it! I have been praying about these things for the last couple of days, trying to find some peace in the midst of my confusion. It is so frustrating that I find myself judging and arguing with my teammates about stupid things- not all the time- we get along fine- but I am snippy and argumentative and even rude at times. It brings me to the well known verse in Romans, chapter 7. Verse 15 says "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." How frustrating is that? It's in the Bible and everything! Paul had the same problems I had? (I could go on forever about the relevance of the Bible to my life.) Back to the point, however, finding this in the Bible reminds me of how broken we all are, and not just me, but perhaps my entire team is dealing with this as well. That reassurance is helpful as I fight this "battle" within myself.



Shellina Dillon

Date: 9/20/2003

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

Well we have only been on the road for about a week now and we have had some pretty amazing opportunities to share and talk to some awesome people. Our last program was one that we figured there was lots of room for improvement. In talking to my host mom, she gave me some great advice that I felt called to share. She stated how when she was leading worship, before she would go up in front of people she would pray that God would use her to speak to people and that God's message would be the message that was being heard. So that no matter how good or bad she did, the people in the congregation would hear what God wanted them to hear.

That is awesome to think about. Although we were feeling pretty down and out about our program, they thought it was one of the best programs that they had heard, and they felt God moving in them which is basically our job as leaders, to be God's messengers.

Another thing that was quite amazing was this morning when we arrived back at the church I was taking down my drum set while the Piano tuner guy was at work. Talking to him a bit he asked if I played....well my response to that was, I did when I was little, but as of now "Oh When the Saints," is about my expertise. So he asked that when he gets done with tuning he wants me to join him in a duet. Now I was kind of thinking that it would be cool, but he is JUST the piano tuner. Well JUST was definitely an understatement. This guy was an amazing pianist. He started me on the simplest little motif and then took that and went off adding in a beautiful accompaniment. It was simply amazing. Thinking about that this morning makes me think of a song we sing called "Hands of the Potter". We may be next to nothing beside God, and think that we are doing a terrible job in portraying his message, but remembering when we put our faith in God he takes our actions and adds in his beautiful accompaniment.

I have been growing in faith already and am excited to see how else God will use me, and teach me throughout this year. God's Peace!



Mark Kuntz

Date: 9/23/2003

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

Today our team had a road trip to Helena, Montana. As we traveled west across the state, the small hills and valleys turned into mountains and large valleys. This being my first time seeing mountains (other than in an airplane) I was snapping lots of pictures. As the landscape changed and the mountains drew closer, I was reminded of Psalm

97:5. "The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth." Seeing the mountains in front of me helped me to visualize this even more! A God so powerful that the mountains melt like wax in His presence! It makes me excited to know I am serving a God so great, and I am humbled to know that He chose me and has called me to do His great work! Praise God!

The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory. Psalm 97:1-6 (NIV)



Hilary Settle

Date: 9/25/2003

Submitted by: Matt Rowdon

Journal Entry:



Matt Rowdon

Today is September 25, 2003 It's been about a week and a half on the road so far and its been pretty cool. This is my first time in Montana and the scenery is a lot different than Maryland. THE SKY IS HUGE !!!!!!! It is very flat for the most part but we are farther west and there are big rolling hills and mountains. It's a very pretty area here in Kalispell, Montana, I must say, breath taking. God has been working in very cool ways and has kept us all safe and well. One thing I was a little unsure about with being on the road and staying in strangers' homes was how I was going to be able to relate with those people. This was before my bio and any information on me or the rest of the team was out and in one of my first host homes the family was very nice and it turned out that their 13 year old son played the bass, and I kinda have a hard time relating with younger kids and since I play the bass it was really easy to find a common ground with this little guy. Also my third host home in Lemmon, North Dakota I saw how God provided. The guy that lived there was big into car restoration and showed me all his old cars and we talked for a while about his cars and I told him about my old cars I have at home and it was just awesome how God put me with people who I could find common ground with. So, yeah, those are some ways I have been seeing God at work and everyday you don't know what to expect but it's been interesting and a great experience so far.

Date: 9/27/2003

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:



Angela Joy Nelson

Writings from the window seat of the van (but aren't all van seats window seats?...): Montana has left me absolutely speechless. The beauty of these mountains, birds, trees, lakes, streams, clouds, autumn colors, etc., has completely taken both my breath and my words to explain away from me (reminds me of Andrew Peterson's song Nothing to Say). There's also a nasty little cold bug that has taken my voice away from me on the very weekend that we're entirely acoustic for a confirmation retreat and Sunday morning worship. Having spent this weekend sounding like a puppet when I can actually muster the energy to talk, I have been taking in a lot of the surrounding beauty, walking and climbing during free time, sitting with the confirmation campers while the rest of the Team is up front leading fun songs, listening to the birds and the water splashing on the shore. The water was so clear, even out at the end of the docks, and the shades of blue and green stretched on for miles. I never imagined cliffs at a lake, only at the ocean, and it was simply stunning, especially with the sunrise. Some of the campers convinced me to smell a tree, and it smelled like vanilla. Listening to the birds and the surf (can I call it surf if it's not at the ocean?) and the small groups talking about Martin Luther left me with such a sense of peace about being where I am. I've seen a lot of new birds not native to my home state, and I am especially a fan of the Magpies that were flying around Helena. God certainly is creative in coming up with so many species of flora and fauna, putting them where they are, shaping the mountains and hills, valleys and rivers, bringing us together with the gifts we have been created with...

From up on one of the cliffs, I got to watch a speedboat go by. A minute or two after it was gone, the wake reached the docks, softly crashing against the rocky shore. It made me think of how God works through us like that speedboat. Our itinerant ministry on earth doesn't always allow time for us to see the impact, but long after we've gone that love of God that moved us will reach someone else. Praise God that we don't have to be perfect for God's love to shine out of our lives. God's power is truly made perfect in our weakness. So often I find myself wondering if I did a good enough job, but it's all God's love and message, and it's so beautiful by itself, and so true, that not even my imperfections can warp it. In fact, God has been using our brokenness, reaching us and others through our scrapes, bruises and scars. To think about it, why wouldn't God use our scars? After all, God has scars, too.

Date: 9/30/2003

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

We're still in Anaconda, MT for an extra day at the moment, with special thanks to our host parents. When we got here we were actually staying at the local church, but they were gracious enough to open up their home to the entire team, provide us with some of our food, and even host us for an extra day than what we had originally planned. I'm continually amazed at the generosity and graciousness of our host families. It makes me wonder who is doing the ministry half the time.



Mike Guthrie

We're having a serious lack of bookings for the next month, so we're not entirely sure where we're going to go from here. At the moment I'm not minding the slower pace of things simply because I was becoming pretty exhausted by the end of last week. It was a really cool week though. The guys and I got to take a hike into Glacier National Park late last week, and that was absolutely amazing! The fact that we have some space in between our bookings is definitely giving us a chance to take advantage of some cool opportunities in the places that we visit. Yesterday was our day off, and we got to visit a Hot Springs/Swimming pool, which was a lot of fun. I'm definitely becoming a fan of western Montana, especially now that all of the leaves are turning colors and the rolling foothills are covered with many shades of green, yellow, and orange. It's beautiful country, and for someone who loves the outdoors the way that I do, it's a blessing to be touring here.

I couldn't help noticing the schedules online for the other teams; most of the other teams are booked pretty solid, having a booking at least every other day. Meanwhile there's our team, and we're having about 3-4 bookings a week, but sometimes less. I know that God called us out here for a reason, I guess my expectations were a little different as to the kind of ministry that we would do. I was expecting a busier schedule, and to provide an encounter with Christ through music, but we actually haven't done a whole lot of that. We've only actually done 3 bookings where we set up all of our equipment and did an electric set, and everything else has either been acoustic or more relational ministry. I'm certainly not disappointed by this, but I do have to admit that it's different than I expected. Lately I've been rediscovering my love for the acoustic guitar, and because I'm using it so much I've noticed that my playing has become sharper with it.

As for me spiritually, I'm having a hard time saying where I'm at. I really haven't been doing much on a regular basis in terms of personal devotions, with the exception of prayer for the team and for people back home. But I'm finding that I'm still being spiritually fed. I think of something that a friend of mine said this summer, that spending time with God doesn't just have to be sitting alone and reading scripture. I'm finding that I encounter God the most these days when I'm in front of people leading music or worship, and there's something about that that keeps me going spiritually. I am hoping to get back into reading the Word on a regular basis though.

Ok, I feel like I should write more, but I don't really know what else to say, so I'm going to stop here for now. Peace!

Date: 10/5/2003

Submitted by: Shellina Dillon

Journal Entry:

HELLO HELLO! Well, I reread the last entries in our journal, and it appears that I am the depressed of the group. Contrary to popular belief- I am not depressed. No- rather

just a trifle home sick and a lot tired. But now- NOW- I am much better. Things have been going really well.

I have found that my team and I do strange things when deprived of programs and of sleep. (Regarding the lack of programs: we haven't had any for about 2 weeks.) For example, while in Anaconda, MT, we stayed in the youth house on the property of the church. Our meals, however, were served in a home down the street from the church. Breakfast was early, and we were tired, so while walking to the house, it was amazing any of us even saw our new toy. It was beautiful- the perfect thing for three girls walking to breakfast. It was a peach ring- you know, one of those candy o's?- well, anyway, it was frozen solid. So, we did the natural thing. We kicked it all the way to the meal house. We made rules for this new sport, and we continually play it with several different small possible projectiles. What fun. It makes me smile to think that something so juvenile has now become one of my fave things to do. Who'd a think?

We are just leaving Helena, for the second time. I LOVE Helena. The youth there are just like my friends from high school. Oh, yes, choir and drama kids. They are great. Hilarious, loud, hyper- a lot like myself. It was awesome to see them all again.

On a more serious note, I have been reading that new book, "Purpose Driven Life". (maybe it's not new, but it is new to me...) Anyway, I have been reading about my purpose in life. The first page says simply- "It's not about you." This is a hard concept for me. I am constantly worried about my hair, make up, how my voice sounds, what I look like, how I am talking to people, etc. This book is forcing me to step back from that way of thinking, however. I am starting to notice that even if I have the worst singing night of my life, others in the audience or even in my band are affected by the program. It reminds me that the message will get through whether I perform well or not. This is a wake up call for me. But, it also gives me great peace and a different outlook on preparing for performances. I just have to remind myself that hey, it's not about me at all. This reminds me of a time at training when one of the speakers explained to us that our job is to say the message, and then duck. We are to get out of the way, so that instead of looking at us, the congregation or youth group is looking at God. AMEN!

Peace out,

Shellina



Shellina Dillon

Date: 10/7/2003

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

I started out thinking that this wall of slowness that we have hit was going to be a bad thing but I am now realizing how awesome it is. I have had great opportunities to minister in different ways not just through music. Sunday afternoon when we arrived at the church in Missoula, Montana and we were unpacking our sleeping gear a little old lady pulled up in her car. I sat and talked with her for about fifteen minutes about nothing. After she drove away I felt so relaxed. It was like God knew I needed someone outside my team to talk to just to wind down. Although we didn't really talk about any one thing it was just nice to talk without being on edge. The next day, after getting an amazing sleep, I was wandering the halls of the church when I stopped to talk to the janitor. Once again, God's timing was absolutely perfect. Just when my mind wanted to start wandering off putting me in a bad mood, the janitor was the interceptor. We stopped and talked for a while, and again I left the conversation feeling relaxed.

Isn't it funny how God is always there even when we think he has left us. This reminds me of the story "Footprints in the Sand". If you don't know how the poem, or story goes, it talks about a young child's dream of flash backs through his life. This was about how he always saw two sets of footprints throughout the sandy beach of his life, except for the tough times in his life. The Child asked God, why is it that the time in my life when I needed you the most was the time you weren't there? And God replied with, "My dear son... through those tough times, that is when I carried you!" This little poem, or story is just one calming reminder that God is always there for us, even when we think that he has abandoned us. GOD WILL NEVER LEAVE US!!!

This year we will go through struggles and times when we think that God has left, but through the help of our friends and family, the power of prayer will keep us going. Through this down time, is our chance to practice, and to learn to minister in ways other than music. Please keep Captive Free North West in your prayers, as we go through this time of slowness. Pray that we will look at this



Mark Kuntz

time as a way to rest, grow together and minister to people in ways other than music.

God's Peace!

Mark Kuntz

Date: 10/8/2003

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

So far our team has been blessed with the chance to stay at two beautiful camps. The first was Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp in Montana, and we are currently at Camp Lutherhaven in Idaho. Last night, we met someone who told us about a great view of the sunrise, if any of us wanted to be so daring and get up early enough to see it. Angela and I were the only ones bold enough I guess, because at 6:30 Angela came knocking at my door to wake me up. I got up, put on some shoes and a sweatshirt, grabbed my camera and we headed outside. We started out on the trail, half-way running, because the sky was so bright we were afraid we had missed it. The sun had risen, but had not yet made it up over the mountains. We found our way to the top of the hill and stood for a moment in awe of the view before us. I snapped a few pictures as we waited for the sun to show its face, and we both just stood there, not saying anything. It was too beautiful for words. Being up there made me so glad...so glad that we have a God who created this beautiful place for us to live, and that for all the beauty we see here on earth, God is even more beautiful than we can imagine! I am thankful to have seen and experienced glimpses of God's beauty. ~ Looking at the mountains, the water, the trees, and more than that, looking at my own life. Seeing His faithfulness to me when I am not faithful to Him. Experiencing His intense love for me, so great that even when I didn't love myself, He pursued me with His love and showed me how beautiful I am. Because I am part of His creation, and He created me with a purpose, I am beautiful just like those mountains are. And I am loved by a God who doesn't have to love me, but chooses to. That is beauty that I cannot fully comprehend, but I am so thankful for.

Psalm 139



Hilary Settle

Date: 10/14/2003

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

You've got to love Washington State. I've been to a lot of places around the US, but few of them compare with Washington. I find myself continually blown away by the beauty of God's creation. Part of what I'm loving about being on tour like this is that we get to see so many cool things that the average tourist doesn't see, because we're not visiting tourist attractions; but ordinary towns. These ordinary towns, though, all seem to have really cool things to do and see in just about every place that we've gone. Yesterday was our day off, and we hung out in Astoria, OR during the afternoon, and then went to Long Beach, WA to check out the ocean. Even though it was very cold and windy there, it was absolutely beautiful. Ministry-wise, things are still pretty slow right now. We did have a booking last Saturday night at a Juvenile Detention Center, which was actually a really cool experience. The youth that I talked to there were some of the nicest and most down to earth people that I've met since being on tour, and it was a blessing to hang out with them. Aside from that, things can get somewhat frustrating at times right now, because we never really know where we're going more than a day or two in advance, so it's making it tough to do our team jobs well, as well as our ministry at times. We often feel like we're winging it when we finally do get something to do because we have such short notice. I suppose we shouldn't worry about that too much though, God is our strength when we're weak, so God is still going to work whether we feel prepared or not.

One thing that I have seen God doing lately that I think is cool is building our team in terms of friendship. During the first month or so, I felt like the team consisted of coworkers instead of friends, because all we ever did together was "business" kinds of stuff. But now that we've had this downtime, we've had a lot of time to just be together as a team and hang out with each other as real people. To me it feels like the group is becoming like a family now, where we would back each



Mike Guthrie

other up in a tough situation, or totally be there for each other when times get hard. Everyone seems to be starting to let their real personalities show, which is fun to see because we have fun people on our team.

Something else I've been noticing about myself now that we have this much downtime, is how much I miss my old youth group at home that I've been working with the last 3 years. I spent some time one evening this week looking at old pictures from youth retreats and I was totally realizing how much I missed them and would like to see them all again. It's cool to meet new people at each ministry site that we go to, but my first gift in ministry is definitely discipleship. I like being able to work with youth over a long period of time and watch them grow closer to Christ over time. I feel like I'm rambling right now, so I think that's all I'm going to write for now. Peace!

Date: 10/14/2003

Submitted by: Matt Rowdon

Journal Entry:

For the past few weeks it seems we haven't been very busy in the aspect of not really having many bookings or programs at the churches we've been going to. Some thoughts I've been having for the past weeks is that for one God is always working a lot of times in ways we don't necessarily see and usually fail to understand at first. I think that all of this "down" time in the way of no bookings and such is a chance to continue to build team relationships and has been time for growth spiritually as well. I have a feeling things will soon start to pick up and there will be less and less time and opportunity for those types of things. I kinda also think of it as gift from God - all this "down" time and rest - because I know in a few months we probably won't have that and will be really grateful we got it when we did. Also, we are learning to deal with some stuff in the way of team business and I'm glad for this time now to deal with it instead of a busy and a most likely more stressful time down the road. For myself it has given me a chance to really gather my thoughts and get my priorities straight and just time to step back and re-focus on some stuff I may have lost sight of. And I guess another aspect of it all is that it has really been showing me that self-discipline is something I defiantly need to continue to develop. With a lot of free time it is easy to become somewhat lazy and not be productive. But I have been finding things I can do that are important and help me grow and develop spiritually, musically, as a team member, person, and friend. So it's been good so far and God's always got a plan even when I don't see it or understand it.



Matt Rowdon

Date: 10/15/2003

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Today we have found ourselves at a camp that's run by a Team alum. Woo-hoo! More stories to hear, and these stories from Papua, New Guinea. It's so neat to be reminded of the global church. Oftentimes we put ourselves into a bubble when it comes to church. Thinking mainly about the needs of our own congregation and youth group can seem to make things go easier (less to worry about), but also can be more troublesome and take much vibrancy out of the church. That's one of the beautiful things about Team. Traveling in such close community with people from other places, having training with those who will go other places, is such a great reminder of the hugeness of the Call. And the Church is so much more vibrant and colorful than just our own congregations. Even just in the NorthWest we've already seen such diversity of people and places, landscapes and animals. I saw Magpies in Montana and Pelicans along the end of the Lewis and Clark trail! I don't see these birds near my home, but the habitat near my home is different, too. Just like the Church. It grows and changes everywhere we go, because the people and cultures are different. Granted, it's sometimes a lot more comfortable to stay in a bubble with people like you, icons and rituals you have grown up with and are used to. But being aware of the variety going on around you and all around the world is wonderfully mind-boggling, and a great parallel to how much greater God is than we can imagine from our own viewpoint. What does the Church look like in Africa, I wonder? In South America, in Spain, in the Middle East? Certainly a lot different from what we Westerners have made it.



Angela Joy Nelson

I am reminded of that song, "It's a small world", and then also of the Call to "go into all the world, and as you go, make disciples", teach the people about God's Love for all of creation. While I still think the world is huge, to think of how many others there are out there loving the world brings it all a bit closer, especially now that some of those going into the farther corners of the world have faces and names that I know and love dearly. Check out their journals, too, and please remember to pray for them and for the Church around the world. We're only one part of the Body of Christ out here in the West.

Date: 10/15/2003

Submitted by: Shellina Dillon

Journal Entry:

Greetings from Bellingham, WA. We are here at a beautiful camp- Lutherwood, actually- not doing anything. We've gotten tons of liquid sunshine, and we have been dodging it all day. The highest part of being able to do nothing (booking- wise) is that you have plenty of time to do something else. Today, we chose to set up, and have 6 hours (not consecutively of course) of practice. Let me tell you my voice is hurting. Anyway, I have learned in this period of nothing that sometimes getting to know my team has been more beneficial than a program ever could be. We are getting along good, and getting to know the little things about each other. We have now gone grocery shopping together, hung out all day doing nothing together, and seen the sights of Washington together. It's really awesome to have five great friends to hang out with at all times. Not much to say today, other than the fact that any prayers would be appreciated, especially those going towards the booking area of our tour. We are semi-bored. Much love, and God bless.



Shellina Dillon

Date: 10/17/2003

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

God is good! Well it has been 2 months since we have started in August and we have seen some pretty beautiful country. God never ceases to keep amazing us, especially with his amazing creation. Recently we had the privilege of going to the coast of Washington on our day off. It was awesome! Although we were there in the evening, and it was way too cold to go in the water, the surf was awesome. It was kind of funny, I had talked to my family at home the night before and found out they were going to a football game on Monday. I was kind of wishing I could be at home, since I really like watching football. The next day God helped lift me up, with the trip to the OCEAN. It was awesome to go and hang out, watching the surf. I was just amazed at how beautiful the ocean is.

Our little visit reminded me of our theme verse this year, and how we can find God's creation through simplicity wherever we go.



Mark Kuntz

Date: 10/22/2003

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

On Saturday we were at a church in Spokane, Washington. The people that brought us lunch brought their daughter along, and as soon as she walked in the door I squatted down to her level and said hi. I smiled at her, and she looked at me and smiled back. She then started playing with the watch and hair band on my wrist as I smiled back at her. I had to get up and go back to the phone, because I had my mom on hold while I opened the door. As soon as I got back on the phone and started talking to my mom again, this little girl walked over, stood beside me, and put her arms up the way kids do when they want you to pick them up. It was such a precious moment, I told my mom I would call her back, hung up the phone, and turned around and picked her up. I held her for a few



Hilary Settle

minutes as we walked around together. The whole time I could not stop thinking about how my mom calls me a "kid magnet". She always says to me, "Hilary, wherever you go, kids are just attracted to you!" It made me so happy I just couldn't wait to call my mom again and tell her, and tell the rest of my team about it. I am thankful for moments like those, and precious children who bless our lives just by being who they are. I think the simplicity of the moment was why it brought me such joy. It is moments like those that remind me how much God is blessing us everyday, even in ways we might not think of as a blessing. It is not always easy being on team this year.

Communication is sometimes a struggle, living with the same 5 people all year gets difficult at times, and it takes a lot of faith and trust to know that God will provide for us everyday. But it is the small as well as large blessings from God that make it all more than worthwhile.

Date: 10/26/2003

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Thoughts along the way...

So, there's much to consider during this time of transition: transition from October to November, transition from the end of summer to the fullness of fall, transition from one host home to the next, transition from individual amongst a group to a member of a team, transition from feeling outside to knowing the love of a team, and being able to find myself in the midst of all of these differences in perspectives, personalities, backgrounds... what's really central to who I am, and what can I let go of? I came into life on Team with expectations for the year that have since been let go of, then struggled with knowing how to act around my teammates, how to act with my teammates around our contacts and church youth, and I'm finding out the quirks and values that are central to who I am... is this what is meant to die to myself, to be allowing myself to be changed and challenged by my teammates, and at the same time find Christ in our midst by the manifestations of what we collectively hold dear and most certainly true?



Angela Joy Nelson

So, today is Reformation Sunday! Hooray for Martin Luther! We've seen the Luther movie as a team, and it's pretty good, in my humble opinion. I'm finding out that there are so many and various ways to interpret the Reformation, and each of us places different importance on these different readings of what happened and what continues to happen in the Church. Walking around in a cemetery this afternoon, outside of a church that was having a picnic to celebrate its 125th anniversary, I felt very connected to the place, to the kind of simple Lutheran life that is potlucks, sewing circles, children's choirs, life and death and life and hope. Just reading a few of the headstones, and thinking about the upcoming holiday of All Saint's Day, reminiscing about the 'great cloud of witnesses' that surrounds us, in that cemetery under the warm October sun that had shone 125 years ago at the founding of that church, and upon my grandparents and upon the grandparents who had been buried since then, I was swept up in the connectedness of our community of faith. There are so many who have gone before us, who have been where we are, seen where we are going to get to and still found the hope that is Christ Jesus walking along with us in life and in death, and this passing of time is just one part of the journey. "Faith alone, scripture alone, grace alone, Christ alone", was the affirmation and proclamation of the worship service this morning. So simple and strong is this creed, with roots that are deeper than we can see and implications beyond our imaginations.

I'm also rediscovering the beauty of the written Word, and the diversity of understandings within multiple translations. I don't know if I'll ever be the Greek or Hebrew scholar I'd like to be, to be able to read the original text (or a copy of a copy of the original, as the case may be), but just to swim in the LOGOS by immersion in scripture reading has been a real blessing. In these days when we have so much open time to tend to our individual needs and team jobs, I find so much passion in the Word of God. And to see what Jesus got out of the Old Testament aids in my reading of those first books, even though I realize the books are first Jewish, secondly Christian. Reading the prophets to find not wrath and judgment, but a God deeply anguished because of a selfish harlot of a people, puts a new perspective on it. I used to have a hard time imagining that the God of the Old Testament could possibly be the same as the God of the New, and I remember one of the members of Echelon tried to explain it to me at a Congress long ago by way of seeing Jesus as a lens through which God sees us people of the New Testament. Now I think that it is our perspective that must

change, not God's, by way of the vision of Christ. God is surely the same yesterday, today, and forever, as the hope that links the lives of the saints can testify. Thank God for this constant truth in the midst of transition.

Date: 10/29/2003

Submitted by: Shellina Dillon

Journal Entry:

Hello! Greetings from Portland, Oregon. First off, let me say that it is absolutely freezing-wind chill and all- it's about 33 degrees!!! For those of you who know my home climate- you know why I am complaining. For those of you who don't- Clovis only gets to 33 degrees on a really bad winter day, so you can imagine how my poor Californian body has to cope. Anyway, we are actually at a booking!!! WOO HOO! We are busier this weekend than we have been in the last month, even with all of our bookings combined. We had an awesome program in Astoria, Oregon, yesterday, although it was different and difficult because only 6 people showed up. We still had a good time, and although we had many mistakes, (due to the fact that we haven't had an actual program in a month), we were able to move past them easier because it was such an intimate group. It was nice. I think sometimes we are our own worst and toughest critics. We were down about the program because it didn't go as planned, but I found that the pastor and those few people involved were quite satisfied if not actually happy with the program, no matter what our mistakes. Isn't that uplifting???? I think sometimes God is like that. We look at ourselves and think that we are absolutely unworthy of anything, yet God looks at us and sees his children whom he loves. He sees those who he blesses, no matter what they have done or how bad they are. I find that reassuring- because I know that I couldn't do anything without that amazing grace from God, but that's another journal entry altogether. Blessings,

Shellina



Shellina Dillon

Date: 10/29/2003

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

We did a family night program tonight for the first time in about six weeks. We've had other bookings, but not an actual family night program. It was a pretty small crowd tonight, which was fine since we were extremely rusty on the flow of our program, even though the music aspect went fairly well. I had fun though. We have another booking this weekend where we're doing a bunch of stuff for the church. It almost feels weird having actual bookings on our itinerary again. It's going to take some getting used to again.

Last night God totally met me in a super cool way. I've had a lot of stuff on my mind lately and I've been feeling pretty weighed down by a lot of stuff, and last night I found myself feeling really afraid. I know that that kind of fear is not something that comes from God, and I was realizing that I was under a lot of spiritual attack. I took some time to just sit and pray through some scripture (Psalm 17 in particular). I prayed through that Psalm both for myself and for some of the people I love, and it gave me a new motivation to start praying and reading the Word on a regular basis. There was a time where I read the Word every day and prayed for some people close to me every single day, and I've lost that discipline. Last night God really gave me a spiritual charge to start doing that again, and that's also given me a new motivation to keep going with this ministry. That's something that I really needed lately, because the last week or two have been pretty tough for me and pretty frustrating. I feel like I have a new strength to keep going though, which is cool.



Mike Guthrie

Date: 11/1/2003

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

Today I am feeling a whole lot better than yesterday. I really wasn't feeling too good yesterday. I woke up with an extremely bad headache, and didn't really get much sleep Thursday night since I was tossing and turning. So I was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to slow down and rest a bit. My team, and our host mom, hooked me up with my own room in the church, and I got to sleep all day, or at least try to sleep. Besides fighting a head ache all day, I had many opportunities to think, and well spend some GOD time. It ended up being really good. See one thing that I realized was that throughout our lives we are always rushing. Never really have any time to slow down and think. God had time for us and he even gave up his son for us, but we seem to never have time for him. One thing about being sick is that you don't really have a choice, but to slow down and think. I offer this up as a challenge to you to stop, and spend some God time. God's blessing's to all!

PEACE
Mark



Mark Kuntz

Date: 11/2/2003

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:



Angela Joy Nelson

I can't let this Halloween go by without some kind of notice. It's a great fun wonderful day to dress up and eat chocolate candy until you feel sick, and because it is a holiday, being away from home and all is a little bit tougher during this time. At least I know I was thinking much of the day about all of my friends at Valpo decorating the dorms for the professors' kids to come through their spookified hallways, and about hot chocolate at home and handing out butterfinger fun-sized candies from my own front porch in the brisk night air. But I am not at home (Toledo), nor am I at home (Valpo), and so it was another new thing to do with the Team. Families spend their holidays together, and so I guess this Halloween was our first holiday as a family. We didn't all dress up, and Matt was the only one who actually tried to be a character. He was Superman, with the red cape and a long-sleeved t-shirt (it was cold!), and the rest of us sort of just mix-matched various Goodwill clothes until we looked silly enough to pass for being dressed up. Our first adventure of the evening was to circle up a few cars in the parking lot of the church for the preschoolers to trick-or-treat from car to car with their parents. Did I mention how cold it was that night? Not many kids came. But the ones who did come were very well costumed. The 3 foot tall Incredible Hulk, a slightly shorter Spider Man, and an infant Tigger graced our presence and took home the pickings from three cars, our Team van, and a 14 passenger bus from the local nursing home. This was one of the highlights of the evening – three ladies from the home came in that bus, along with their driver, and they were listening to Nat King Cole, a musician from my childhood days. Happily I was able to spend most of an hour with them, listening to that good music and hearing some stories. It was a very very good time to be with them. From there, we joined the Senior High youth on a trip to two haunted houses, and then stopped off at Starbucks and Barnes and Noble for the rest of the night. I had a great time hanging out with those youth, who we also saw last night when we prepared a skit and a puppet show for this morning's worship service, and then we got to hang out with them again tonight and we had a lot of fun. Sometimes in doing ministry it's hard to discern who really is being ministered to, but that's what it's about, isn't it? Thank God for holidays and traditions like dressing up and being goofy together. These unite us and keep us connected even when we are far away from home. I wonder how we'll celebrate Thanksgiving together.

Date: 11/4/2003

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

This past weekend we were at a church in Portland, OR. We almost did more stuff this weekend with youth than our whole time on the road so far! To say the least, we were booked! I had such a fun time. On Friday night we dressed up and passed out candy to the preschool trick-or-treaters, then went to two haunted houses with the high school,

and hung out for the rest of the night. On Saturday, the junior and senior high youth groups came and we helped them make up a puppet show and skit for Sunday morning worship. The kids were so creative we joked about "stealing" their good ideas! Sunday worship was so incredible. The music was uplifting for me, and really ministered to me at the same time I was playing. The team effort with the youth groups to lead the service was incredible. If the youth had half as much fun as I did, then they still had an amazing time! After church we ate lunch, played games, and led a devotion with the 4th through 6th grade group. We later went to hang out with the junior high youth, and then came back to the church to hang with the senior high youth. We played games, led a Bible study, sang songs, and just talked. There are two lessons that were reinforced for me this weekend. The first is that, even though we come to minister, the church we visit will definitely minister to us at the same time. Our contact led an amazing devotion for us on Friday morning, Sunday worship ministered to my spirit, and the Bible study with the high school taught me something new. The second lesson was that we can keep going long after we think we can't go any further. Thanks to the strength that God gives to us in our weakness, we can endure the trials set before us so that His strength and glory can shine through us.



Hilary Settle

Date: 11/8/2003

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Wow, what a weekend! We've got kids jumping up and down like crazy, kids wearing hotel shower caps to celebrations, kids inviting us out for meals with their youth groups, kids inviting us to their family time meetings, kids asking for pictures and autographs, and what a hotel we're staying at! The Double Tree is huge, and they give you a cookie when you check in. The staff here are so friendly, and it's great to see people from the youth encounter home office again. While we're not actually in the downtown of Seattle, it's still a neat section of town to be in. Most of our time, though, is spent in the hotel, and there's so much energy, even in the early morning celebrations (that is, if you consider 9am to be early). I've met some awesome youth, and we already know some of them from having been hosted at their churches before we got here. I was also lucky enough to find another connection to home, way out here. One of the youth leaders at the quake graduated from my college the year before I got there, and we got to spend some quality time talking about people we knew there and organizations we had both been a part of. How random a blessing was that!

Angela Joy Nelson



Our speaker for the weekend had a really great message, challenging the youth to take their role in the church seriously and to make a difference, even encouraging them to shout their parts of the liturgy back to their pastors in church on Sunday (i.e. the Lord be with you... AND ALSO WITH YOU!). Encouragement abounded as he caught us in the act of sarcastic 'humor' and shared how to build up the body of Christ with our words and actions towards one another. Humorous stories and slide shows, Faith Inkubators' quizzes, improv comedy and games, Bible study treks, music, graceful sign language interpreters, all came together to make a wonderful weekend, despite our nervousness about this first event of the year. Good fellowship with many new friends, little sleep, a few challenges, and we are recharged for the road ahead.

Date: 11/11/2003

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

I'm pretty sure that I will never get tired of driving through Snoqualmie Pass in WA. It's a stretch of road that goes through the mountains on interstate 90, and its absolutely gorgeous, especially now since its been snowing here and the mountains all have snow on them. The contrast of white and green is absolutely beautiful. Unfortunately its been too dark both times that we've driven through so it won't really pick up on a camera. Oh well.



Mike Guthrie

This weekend at the Quake was a blast. On Friday we arrived and went to Quiznos with Jeremy the event coordinator (if you've never eaten at Quiznos before you all need to go there because that place is a gold mine for touring people like us; fast and really good). We came back and set up all of our equipment in the ballroom, which was set up to seat 300 Jr. Highers. We did the opening music, and after a song or two we invited the youth to come up front and line the isles, which they happily did, and the energy level pretty much took off from there. We played a set of sing-alongs, and then guest musician/speaker came up and led some worship songs and then spoke a message. Then there was a game time for the youth to get them mingled, and I went with the Jr. Guides (Sr. Highers who came along as leaders), and helped with a leadership "Trek" for them. After that was campfire worship, where we just played acoustic instruments that were plugged in, and we sang worship songs with the lights dimmed. A lot of youth talk about how that's their favorite time of the weekend. After that was over the youth meet with their churches for what is called "family time," and basically the rest of us staff go hit up the hospitality room, which is loaded with munches and stuff and is a place to get away from youth for a little while. Sometimes youth will invite us to their family time, and usually they invite band members or staff members to eat meals with them, which is pretty sweet.

Saturday morning we kicked things off again with some sing-along to get the youth moving, then we led a worship set, and then passed things along to Brian (speaker). Even in the morning the kids get into the music, which is fun. Saturday has 3 Treks during the day, which are smaller group options that youth can choose which one they go to. I'm hoping to create and lead a few of my own at the next couple of events. I led one Trek for the Jr. Guides on Saturday, again on leadership. I didn't realize I was supposed to lead it until it was basically starting, so I didn't have the stuff prepared that I was apparently supposed to, but I used some stuff that I did for my Jr. High leadership teams and that went really well. I'm noticing one of my strengths in leading groups like that may be my easy going nature, the youth seemed to be able to relax and talk more as a group on Saturday than on Friday night. Some of it was because they didn't all know each other, but still, it was fun to have something that wasn't quite so formal with them.

Saturday I had lunch with some really cool guys who were very easy to talk to. Anyway, I talked a lot with one youth in particular about music and guitars and stuff, which was really cool. I got asked by other youth groups for every meal and also the family time to join them, so that made me feel pretty good.

Saturday night we had a bit of a rough set in terms of things going wrong. Basically, for a couple of us, anything that could have gone wrong did. I started the set by sneaking up on stage to try and get tuned real quick before we started, and before I was finished, I didn't notice that the whole band was up there, and Shellina started getting the kids' attention. I had to pretty much start without being fully tuned, and I realized a few songs into the set that my amp wasn't on, so once we played a song with electric guitar I had to walk over to turn it on. That's not a huge problem, except that it was kind of crowded up on stage with all of the equipment, and walking back I knocked over my electric guitar stand, which in itself is not a good thing, but my guitar fell and landed on Brian Spahr's Taylor 500 (acoustic guitar much nicer than mine), and scratched it. At that point my confidence was completely shaken and all I wanted to do was just get off the stage and recompose myself. However, instead of that happening the system started feeding back because the monitors were too loud, so our monitor mix was all screwed up and none of us could really hear each other, especially the electric guitar. Once I switched back to acoustic guitar the mix was better...until I broke a string and had to switch back to electric for the rest of the worship set. Even with all of that though, the guys in the back said that we did a really good job and that we seemed to hold it together really well despite so much going wrong on stage. He said the only thing that was noticeable was the feedback because it was pretty loud. Oh, hehe, I gave my broken string to one of the kids as a souvenir, which was kind of funny I thought. Even though that set was incredibly rough, I still loved being up there and playing, and I would have gone up there and played a bunch more if I would have had the opportunity. Being up there leading the music was one of the coolest experiences I've ever had in my life, and I can't wait to do it again for the other events.

Sunday morning was a little bit tough as well musically, mainly because we were exhausted and both Shellina and I were not singing our best. Shellina was losing her voice and I was just really tired and couldn't hold my notes well. Again though, I still loved playing and being up there, and I would go right back up and do more if I could. After that was the unpleasant task of tearing down as soon as possible, going to lunch, then driving for about 3 hours just for a housing. We were incredibly tired by that point. Almost everyone slept on that drive, except for me because I had to drive for most of it. It would have been a raw deal except for the fact that we drove through the Snoqualmie pass and it was absolutely gorgeous.

Date: 11/15/2003
Submitted by: Mark Kuntz
Journal Entry:

I am a few days late with this, but it ended up working out. See yesterday we were traveling from Kent to Wenatchee and it started out to be a long day right from the get go. It was raining super hard, and it wasn't making driving in a fifteen passenger van with a trailer behind any fun. That was just the beginning, then when we got to the pass, the rain turned into sleet, and then into snow. GREAT! (I am sure those were my exact words) So soon, traffic backed up and we were edging our way up the pass, until everything stopped. See, it wouldn't have been that big of a deal if that snow wasn't turning the roads into ice, meaning we were stuck. Not that we were stuck in deep snow, but we were spinning as we were trying to move. At first we didn't think we had any chains, but after spinning out, and Matt running beside the van telling me to keep driving because I finally got traction, we decided it was time to double check, and guess what....we had chains. That was a relief, well kind of a relief. We were stopped and trying to get started when a semi-truck decided it was going to pass us on the inside. He was going good, for a bit, and then started spinning out, and soon was sliding towards us. He stopped when he got a foot from our van and decided to come help us with our CHAIN problem. See we got our chains on at first and then one of the hooks snapped. So as we were busy repairing and getting creative the truck driver hopped out and decided he would finally help us. After some frustration, and some creative thinking, we were back on the road without a problem. Finally we were out of the pass and took our chains off and everything should have been smooth sailing. We were out of the snow, and it was just raining....but the sun was gone, and it was cold, and...that rain was making some beautiful BLACK ICE. So we were still traveling at slow speeds and still sliding around every turn.

Although I made it sound like it was a terrible trip, I really can't complain too much. See we made it all in one piece. Nothing broke, no accidents and we are all still sane...well to the same extreme as before the trip. Plus whatever doesn't kill us only makes us stronger, right....right! Safe travels.

PEACE Mark



Mark Kuntz

Date: 11/18/2003
Submitted by: Shellina Dillon
Journal Entry:

Hello, everyone! Well, we have been, luckily, busier than ever in the past couple of weeks. Things are going really well. We had our first Youth Quake a week ago, and it was a blast. It is so uplifting to be among so many young Christians in one place. There's something about hearing "Holy, Holy, Holy" ringing through the halls of a hotel in downtown Seattle that makes my heart jump for the excitement and life of Christ's love. I was given so much joy and reassurance in those three days from these people. The amazing thing was that I was supposed to be there to help them, to get them fired up. Wouldn't you know it; I think they helped me more! I was also surprised at how not tired I was. Going off of 3 hours of sleep a night for 4 days straight would usually get me exhausted pretty quick. Surprisingly, I was so excited and wrapped up in the moment that I didn't realize how tired I actually was. I found out when we finally sat down at lunch of Sunday afternoon, and almost fell asleep at the table. It was pretty funny.

In other news, things are going really well. I am, of course, counting the days until I get to go home and see everyone again. I miss so much about home. I can't help but wonder, though, am I going to experience culture shock when I go home? Am I going to miss this lifestyle when I go home for two weeks? I hope it isn't too weird. I have a creepy feeling though that I may not fit into my old life as well as I did. It is crazy to me that my life has changed so dramatically and quickly in such a short time. God works wonders I guess.

I am so happy to have had this experience. Already, I feel that my life has been enhanced and made so much better because of this excursion. Blessing upon blessing has been given to me, and I don't know exactly why I deserve it. But then, whenever I think about my deserving this, I realize that I don't deserve any of it at all. None of it. However, I have been claimed. God knows the number of hairs upon my head, everything. Who else knows that? Not even my mother, who knows me better



Shellina Dillon

than anyone else in the world. All I can do is bow down and worship Him who knows all about me, and knows my prayers before I even ask. Isn't that cool?

I want to thank everyone we've come into contact with so far. Everyone has been so incredibly hospitable and helpful. I love it. Thanks a bunch, guys. God Bless!

Date: 11/22/2003

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

There's so much to be said since my last entry. They tell us to write about where we see God working in our teammates, in our selves, in the people that we meet, and these two weeks past have been full of all of the above. I hardly know where to begin. Let's see... last weekend I turned 21. What fun was that! The host home we stayed with had a cake, and they sang for me at their house, and at church the next morning, and the actual day of my birth-anniversary, we were seven hours getting through the Snoqualmie Pass (but you've already heard about that in Mark's last journal) and then the next day was a day off, and my host sister took me out to Applebee's, and we had ice cream and late movie night. On top of that good stuff, we got two mail packets in the space of four or five days! And let me tell you, we really get excited about hearing from home. Mail packets are like manna from heaven, only better! ;) I got two letters in the first packet, and then this second packet had near a dozen letters, from sponsors and friends at home, and it has been really touching to get so much love from so far away from so many people. On the one hand, I felt sort of embarrassed about getting so much when some others on my team had only office business mail, or no mail at all in this packet, but it was a much-welcomed encouragement that I hope to be able to pass on to the rest of my team. Sometimes it can get discouraging, trying to figure out my teammates, as far as what 'Love Languages' they speak or what sets them off when they're having a bad day, and sometimes I feel like I'm replaceable, or I can't do anything right, but big picture-wise, we've all felt like that at one time or another and have not been alone in it. Plus, God has called us all here, and God is surprising us daily as we grow together. For instance, Matt told us at the beginning of training that he's never before sung in front of people, and not two nights ago he sang a verse of 'Living Water' with Shellina at the nursing home. That's another cool thing – this place we stayed at two nights ago was a housing only, and we were to have time to rehearse in the church sanctuary, but we had a late start and ended up not setting up to rehearse, instead going acoustic and working on a new puppet show, which we ended up using at tonight's Family Night Program. SO, then one of our host mothers tells us how nice it would be if we would play at the hospital/assisted living place in town, and it just so happens that we're expected there at four, which is the same time a local lady will be teaching a piano lesson in the same space we were using for rehearsal – cool timing, God! Next, we get into this assisted living place and there are maybe a dozen residents there to hear us sing. One woman we saw on the way in had said she wasn't coming to see us because she was getting food, but she ended up there with us, and she clapped her hands the whole time. Spending some time talking with the residents was good for us, too, and we got to hear some good stories and meet very wonderful people. We've learned some new songs, put some people on different instruments, rotated our puppet people, and though our schedule has left us a lot of 'down' time, it's starting to pick up a bit and we're having a lot of fun with it. This holiday time is strange, though. It makes me happy to visit those in the homes, or the kids at our programs, but I miss home very much. Strange, I wonder if I'll ever be content where I am again. Oh, I love this ministry, some days more than others, but, wherever I am, there will be people there whom I love very much, and yet I will always be far away from people whom I love just as dearly. Constant homesickness. I guess it's like one of my pastors has said, that homesickness is just a 'temporal manifestation of an eternal desire'. More simply put, we're all homesick for heaven. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.



Angela Joy Nelson

Date: 11/24/2003

Submitted by: Matt Rowdon

Journal Entry:

Today is November 24th and winter training and winter break are coming up really

soon. I can hardly wait this is definitely the longest I've been away from home ever and the farthest. I knew that I would miss all my family and friends a whole lot, and I do, but I never realized how much I would miss little old Eldersburg, Maryland. Things out here in the west are very different than the east. It's kinda weird, even though it's still the same. Country things out here are unfamiliar. It is a totally different culture. The landscape and the weather aren't the same and even the change of seasons is very different. They already have snow out here and we don't usually get snow till the mid to end of December. And it gets dark at about 4:30 now. I don't think that it gets dark till about 5:30-6 on the east. And it's certainly not as cold. The air is a lot dryer too except for of course western Washington. Even the people are different. I think that generally there is more trust between people they don't know and that people rely on each other for things a bit more especially in the rural areas since things are a lot more spread out and some of the weather can be pretty harsh. People have also been very friendly and welcoming. People acknowledge each other even people they don't know. Not to say people in other places aren't this way but these are some things that have stuck out to me. It has been a neat experience for me so far and God has been showing up in ways I never could have dreamed. So yeah I'm learning and growing everyday so I guess that things are going well and I continue to get more excited as the days go by. Thanks for all your prayers and support!

God bless,

Matt Rowdon



Matt Rowdon

Date: 11/25/2003

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

This past week I've found myself being encouraged and recharged by the love and hospitality of our host families. I was reminded just how amazing an experience like this can be, just from the different places we can go and the different people that we get to meet. I'm not exactly the biggest people-person there ever was, but more than once this past week I was wishing I could stay with my host families longer because I wanted to get to know them more, particularly my host parents in Superior, MT. I don't have any grandparents left alive, but if I could choose to adopt any, I would want them to be my grandparents, because they were some of the most loving and hospitable people I've ever met in my life. What really gets me though is that when we leave, they tell us how much they've absolutely loved having us there, and I almost have to wonder why, because I feel like they are the ones blessing us.

What has God been teaching me lately? Well I feel like I can safely say that this is the most amazing experience I've ever done in my life, and at the same time I'm certain it is the hardest thing I've ever done. There are times where there is nothing else in the world I'd rather be doing, and nowhere else I'd rather be, and then there are other times when all I want to do is go home (although there have been less of those lately). However, as many people have probably said in the past, it's been in the really hard and challenging times where I've really seen God reveal himself. I think it's God's way of getting us to focus on him. When everything is going our way, we don't need to look to God as much, other than to say "thank you" and give him praise. But in those times when things are really hard, we look with everything we are to try and find where God is. And it's in those moments where I think God says, "Ok, good. Now that you're actually looking at me; watch this!" And that's when God really shows his power to us. He can take the most difficult situation and turn it into something amazing and beautiful. I guess that's something that I've known in theory for a while, but I don't always believe in it or keep my trust in God when things don't go my way, but I'm slowly learning that God has something awesome in store for us if we can just hang in there long enough to wait for Him.



Mike Guthrie

Date: 11/29/2003

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

So I am writing this a day late, which works out better for me because now I have

something to write about. So this morning after church we were invited to join a Bible study and a few us answered, um....but then of course realizing that my only ride that was left at the church was my host mom who was staying for the Bible study, I gave in. Now, I thought I was in for a long boring Bible study. Soon after the opening prayer the Pastor explained to the few of us partaking that this was a question time, to ask him any questions about the sermon, or lessons that we had. Well, that could make either a really long boring time, or a really short and sweet one. It was my lucky day. We were talking about Matthew 1:18. It was awesome to be talking about the Christmas season. This is where my story starts...

Just before Youth Encounter I went on a mission trip to Kenya, Africa. I had an amazing time there, but that isn't what I am getting into. When we were there we spent a little time up in the northern part of the country in Samburu. There we observed how they lived a very simple life. Similar to us they had a routine lifestyle, and every one of them had a specific role. The neat part of this was that they lived very basic. They wake up, the boys go off and chase the cattle all day, which is similar to the shepherds in Bible times. Then the girls stay at home with their moms who are busy repairing the home, and fixing meals. When I think of the lifestyle of the people in Bible times I think of those in Samburu. Beautifully simple.
God's Peace, throughout this holiday season.

Mark



Mark Kuntz

Date: 12/2/2003

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:



Hilary Settle

One week ago on Saturday I hurt my back. I was carrying in equipment while we were setting up, and about six hours later bent over and felt a sharp pain. I knew something was wrong because I couldn't find a comfortable position to stand in, and my lower back hurt a lot. I couldn't figure out what was wrong at the time, and I somehow made it through the program that night. Immediately afterward I went to the doctor, where I learned that I strained the muscle. I have been doing all the normal things one would do to recuperate: taking pain medication, using ice and heat therapy, and resting a lot. It has been a little over a week since I first strained the muscle, and I have been feeling better and better every day. The hardest part about the whole situation is not the pain, or getting around, but the fact that I cannot lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for about two weeks (one week left). Which means that my teammates have to carry my book bag for me, and my overnight bag, and my guitar, and just about everything else. It makes me feel pretty helpless, and like I am not contributing much when we have to unload and set up. But I guess it has all been a lesson in grace as well. I didn't do anything to earn the help of my teammates, but they carry my stuff anyway. I can't really do anything to make it up to them, but they do it anyway. They help me because they love me, and they know that if the situation were reversed, I would be there to support them. Kind of like what Jesus does for us. We do nothing to deserve His love, and we can never pay Him back, but He loves us regardless, and He died on the cross to take away our sins. Sometimes it is hard to accept this, but it doesn't make it any less true, or any less beautiful.

Date: 12/27/2003

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:



Angela Joy Nelson

On the road again... here we go for another four months away from home, touring in a van, pulling a trailer, playing music and games with some of the most wonderful people we could ever ask to meet. Christmas break was very refreshing, but much too short, as our families and friends back home will attest to. I admit it was really tempting to stay at home instead of coming back to Team, and even on the plane back to the Twin Cities I contemplated the consequences of such a choice. Now that I'm back, it's good to be here with these people again, but yesterday, being at home and knowing I would soon have to leave, was so hard. And the stress of leaving just completely sapped my energy - I usually make eye contact with passers-by and smile at them, but this

morning at airport I just couldn't do it, and all I wanted to do was run into a bathroom and cry or just to give up and go home. Waking up some hours before sunrise may have had something to do with this mood, also, and once I got a good nap during my almost two-hour layover I felt a little bit better. But, still, what happened? I was so excited to start this ministry adventure in August! So excited I couldn't wait to get out here and do this. Now I just feel ready to bring back what I've learned to my home church and school and get on with life as usual with my old friends.

Going home, I realized a little bit of how I have adapted to fit into Team life, becoming a different person for different people, and if there's anything I can not abide, it is inconsistency of character. Have I let go of too much to be here? Have I missed too much of the good thing I had by giving it up for this year on the road? Some days it sure feels like I have. And it is not always easy to look ahead and be focused on where I am when all I want to do is to be somewhere else. Then I tell myself, "what's one year out of the eighty-some that I hope to live?" This one year is not a reflection of how I will spend the rest of my life. I will return home in August, though it will be different there, too, than it was when I last knew it. And even the place I now call home I will only visit for maybe two weeks at a time after I start back at school. How change hurts sometimes. And how change happens when we least expect it, or while we are looking in the other direction and cannot see it until it jumps up in our faces.

Now we are headed to Fargo, North Dakota, for three hours of games and Bible Study with the youth there. I hope and pray I can still serve well while I am so homesick. It was so good to see Mike and Hilary and Matt at the airport. Shellina is flying in to Moorehead tonight, and we will pick up Mark in Canada when we're there for New Year's. Here we go again. God speed us along on our journey.

But on the other hand, I don't want to wish this year along so fast that I miss all of the good in it. I am still convinced that God has called us all here, even myself, even on the days when I want so much to be back home. So please continue to pray for all who are called to leave their homes to serve God, country, or some other purpose, that we may have the stamina to continue our service the best that we are able and that God's Kingdom may be better known throughout the earth.

Pax.

Date: 1/2/2004

Submitted by: Shellina Dillon

Journal Entry:

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

Now that that is out of the way, I would like to say that I hope everyone had an amazing Christmas, and an awesome new year. There is something about this time of the year that makes me very thankful for God. When else do we get to "start over fresh" as much as in a new year? Everyone seems rejuvenated, and ready for another awesome year of work, friends, family, and anything else. I myself am very excited for another 4 months on tour.

Our team, as you may have already read in past entries, has not had many bookings during our time on the road. Well, not anymore. We now have a minimum of three bookings a week, more than we ever had before. Already, during our first week back, we have done one program, a youth night, and a whole lot of driving. (Getting out into the north west region is quite a challenge... WE LOVE MONTANA!) Anyway, the calendar for the North West team is nowhere near as full as some of Youth Encounter's other teams, but it is enough to make me thankful for the chance to do this.

We just came from Estevan, Saskatchewan, Canada, otherwise known as Mark's home. We had an amazing time. We arrived on Monday, December 29, and left on Thursday, January 2. It was a long stay, but not at all long enough. We were able to hang out with his family, and really got to know them over the course of the week. The main thing I will always remember about Canada- I know why they call it "the Great White North". It was freezing. We had many exciting things happen to us because of that snowy weather, too. For instance, when we arrived on Monday, we attempted to pull the van into Mark's driveway. However, our van just couldn't make it. We ended up stuck half in the driveway, half on the street, jack-knifed. We spent the next two hours trying to pull our van out of this whole mess with the neighbor's truck. Eventually, we got it out, but since I brought my video camera along for this next leg of the tour, all 2 hours are successfully documented- much to the irritation of my teammates.

Following that experience, on New Year's Eve we were able to do a program for his church, which



Shellina Dillon

they really enjoyed. It wasn't our best program, but for being the first one in the new tour, it was alright. We then went to a huge youth gathering about 10 minutes from Mark's house. (well, not huge, but 400 kids.) Anyway, it was bitter sweet- the deacon in charge was under the impression that we were a DRAMA troupe from the states. If you know any of us personally, you know that our team is not very good at drama. It is definitely one of our weaknesses. However, we did our best, and decided to chalk the whole thing up to experience. It certainly was not a failure, but we felt it could have gone much better.

We left Estevan at 6:30 AM on Friday, and arrived in Havre, Montana at 6 PM. They were amazing. The whole church just felt so loving- it felt like home. We were able to eat with some of the families in the church, and then we were taken to our respective host homes. It was the best sleep I've had in quite a while. It was also another early morning- we left Havre today at 6:30 AM again for another long van ride. We hope to be in Superior, MT by 4 PM. Please keep us in your prayers, and we will definitely keep you all in ours. God Bless!!!!

Date: 1/3/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

Saturday January 3, 04

Greetings to all this fine Saturday, and Happy New years! Well I had an amazing break at home, and quite frankly I wasn't ready to come back to Team yet. I remember about 2 years ago when I would come back home for Christmas break from college, and be super excited to be home for about two days and then be ready to be back at school with all my friends. But now I think I am getting over the hump of that, and actually enjoying my time at home. I really wasn't ready to come back, even with the few extra days I had until my team got there.



Mark Kuntz

My experience at home this Christmas was kind of unique one compared to the past few years. One reason that made it unique was that my grandpa Mossing wasn't around. He had passed away this summer and this was the first Christmas without him. It was kind of hard for my mom since that was her dad. Another thing that was different was my great aunt Jean joined us this year, while her husband Emil wasn't doing so well, and had to stay back at his the assisted living home. He ended up passing away the next day, Christmas day, at the age 93! He had lived an amazing life, and his family was very proud of him.

New year's was different as well. We had an opportunity to have a program scheduled at my home congregation. It went pretty well, especially since we had a break away from it for quite awhile. The rest of the night wasn't quite what we were looking for. We pulled off some comedy improv that we weren't too pleased with. It was kind of chaotic and really not an ideal situation.

At the end of the night, beginning of the new year we ended on a somewhat better night, or at least I figured we did. We had the opportunity to go out to my friend's farm, and enjoy time in the Hot Tub. It was definitely what I needed. A little 'chillaxing' into the new year.

God's Peace to everyone in this New Year.

Mark Kuntz

Date: 1/6/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

Patience. This word has come to mind quite often over the past few days. During Midwinter training, we took the Myers Briggs personality inventory, and the prayer suggested for my personality type was, "Lord, give me patience. And give it to me NOW!!!" I know that I become emotional very easily, and I don't always take a step back and realize I need to have patience during the situation. But it tells us over and over again in the bible to wait for the Lord, be patient and wait. Psalm 37:7a says, "Be



still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him..." Psalm 40:1 says, "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry." Psalm 46:10a says, "Be still and know that I am God..." and the list goes on. I could type many other verses that say the same thing. It sometimes seems like the hardest lesson to learn, and often it seems like God gives me situations to grow in my patience right when I need the reminder. But He always has mine and our best interests in mind (Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28). It just takes time and patience to realize that I will not acquire tons of patience overnight. But I always know that it is worth it, and that the result in the end is far greater than the time or even pain it took in getting there. Wait patiently for the Lord.

Hilary Settle

1 Corinthians 15:58

Date: 1/11/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

"Teach me to love Your Son the way You do."

This prayer was shared by Peder Eide at this weekend's youth Congress in Seattle. There were also many other stories and prayers which inspired further discussion and ignited a spark of devotion in many gathered there for this retreat. One such story that stayed with me was of two women missionaries in Camaroon whose brakes went out one day while they were driving down the mountain. One of the women had never married, the other was a widow, and both were over 70 years old, having devoted their lives to their missions work. The picture of these two was put side by side with one of a married couple who retired early and now spend their days playing shuffleboard and living on the beach or sailing in their yacht. Upon hearing of these two couples, we were asked which one was really the tragedy. Think about it.



Angela Joy Nelson

Hanging out with the High School youth this weekend was very uplifting, as they had many good things to contribute to our time there. The verse from Timothy about letting no one despise your youth was lived out this weekend in the family times we shared, the small group treks, the mealtime conversations and the wisdom apparent in these young people who came together for a weekend of passionate study and worship (it's okay – if Lutherans have any understanding of Grace Alone, they're allowed to be passionate!). I got to sit in on one family time where the five girls and their youth pastor were discussing which of four lights best describes them – a spotlight, a candle, Christmas lights, or a desk lamp. One girl made her own answer and replied that she would be a glow-in-the-dark star. How cool is that! Remaining in the Light to be able to shine that Light to others, fading when away from the Source for too long... what wisdom in these youth. And make no mistake, the youth are not only the Church of tomorrow, the hope for the future, they are here NOW, ready and willing and able to serve, and to learn, and to teach, now. Youth Encounter's mission is to strengthen the Church through the Christian faith and ministry of her youth, and what an awesome blessing it is to work in today's Church.

Date: 1/12/2004

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

1/12/04 – Seattle, WA (Mike's Journal Entry)

Praise God for a day off. Today was really fun! We went to downtown Seattle and hung out in Pike's Market, which was extremely cool! That whole area has an incredible amount of cool shops and stands to check out. You could spend a week exploring the downtown area and not even scratch the surface of cool things to do and see in Seattle. There are a ton of cool places to see even in this neighborhood (near Seattle University), and this isn't even the downtown. Fun stuff.



Mike Guthrie

This weekend was really cool, even though it was really exhausting. We stayed at a really nice Bed and Breakfast just north of downtown Seattle on Thursday night, and that was probably one of the

nicest places we've stayed in since being on tour. I saved the business card just because that place was so nice that I want to come back there someday if I'm ever in Seattle again (which I hope I will be since I love this city). Oh, and I forgot to mention, its been about 45-50 degrees here every day, and most of the time I walk around outside in either a T-shirt or my fleece. It feels like springtime here! Anyway...

On Friday we showed up at the hotel in the late morning and got set up with a lot more efficiency this time than at the Quake. We had plenty of time to do our sound check, run through our songs, and someone else volunteered to do all of our powerpoint stuff, so we actually had a chance to relax before everyone got there. We found that Sr. Highers can still get into the music, and they definitely have a willingness to dig deeper. I got invited that night to a church's family time, and that group was a really awesome and inviting youth group and they really made me feel comfortable being with them.

Saturday was a bit of an early start for us, since it was our job to get the youth awake and moving. They got into the music more than I would have guessed. In the afternoon we led 2 Treks, one of which was a shortened version of our family night program, and the other was explaining the ministries of Youth Encounter. The other 2 Trek sessions I showered and tried to take a nap. I definitely ate well when I was there. When you're at an event, the youth groups offer to take you out to eat and buy you a meal, so that's a lot of fun.

Sunday was the closing program, and we pretty much got to take it easy for that until the very end, which was a very good thing since most of us were pretty wiped out and tired, and our voices weren't exactly top notch anymore. Afterwards we tore down and the event director bought us lunch at Tony Roama's, which was super good. I had a blast this weekend even though I'm super tired!

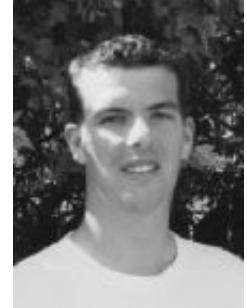
Date: 1/17/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

Well, greetings to all who might be reading this. Do you ever feel like you can't get anything right, and everyone will notice? Well Last night we had a program, and it seemed like i couldn't get anything right. My drumset was eiterh too close, or too far, i couldn't find my harmony parts, let alone the melody. Nothing seemed to be going right, and of course i figured that everyone could tell. Well, I kind of think it is funny how God works. See although you might think that the only thing that the people can hear is the mistakes that you notice, God seems to block most of that out. Yes people could tell that something wasn't right by the confused frustrated look on my face but they thought everything sounded alright. The main thing is that God is going to send the message across whatever way is needed, and although we strive to do our best, we are nothing without God. God's Peace to all, and blessings on the start of your new week.

Mark



Mark Kuntz

Date: 1/17/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

Well, greetings to all who might be reading this. Do you ever feel like you can't get anything right, and everyone will notice? Well last night we had a program, and it seemed like I couldn't get anything right. My drumset was either too close, or too far, I couldn't find my harmony parts, let alone the melody. Nothing seemed to be going right, and of course I figured that everyone could tell. Well, I kind of think it is funny how God works. See although you might think that the only thing that the people can hear is the mistakes that you notice, God seems to block most of that out. Yes people could tell that something wasn't right by the confused frustrated look on my face but they thought everything sounded alright. The main thing is that God is going to send the message across whatever way is needed, and although we strive to do our best, we are nothing without God. God's Peace to all, and blessings on the start of your new week.

Mark



Mark Kuntz

Date: 1/17/2004

Submitted by: Shellina Dillon

Journal Entry:

Well, today we were in Portland, OR, at our home church, Prince of Peace. It was awesome, especially since we got today to do anything we wanted. Mark and Matt went to see Lord of The Rings: The Return of The King, and so the rest of us decided to take advantage of the free tickets to go to the local fitness center that the youth director at POP had given us. IT WAS AWESOME. We got to go in for free, take advantage of all of the exercise equipment, play raquet-ball, and even sit in the hot tub! The neatest thing was raquet-ball. I had never played before, so Angela taught me. It was awesome fun, until she hit the ball especially hard right into my neck. I now have a nice 2 inch circle on my neck- red on the outside, and white on the inside. It's pretty awesome, actually.



Shellina Dillon

Anyway, I'm starting to try and memorize Bible verses, and the first one that I have learned is 2 Timothy 1:7. "For God did not create in us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, love, and self discipline." This was a big help to me when we stayed the night in POP on Thursday night. There are three reasons why I was scared out of my mind: It was dark, cold, and dark. So, while I was panicking, Mike reminded me of that verse, and I realized that I had no reason to fear, because I had God!!!! It was quite an exciting event, and I proceeded to try and learn that verse as quickly as I could. It may sound childish, but Scripture can really make a difference when you're afraid. And if it does sound childish, I'm glad. That means I am one step closer to child like faith.

God Bless.

Date: 1/20/2004

Submitted by: Matt Rowdon

Journal Entry:

We just stayed in Olympia and Dave is the coolest guy ever. He has a nice beard and reminds me of the time when I once had a nice beard. I long for the time when I can also say that that I have a nice beard. Bjorn and all the other guys on Team, keep up the good work. Don't ever shave again. Once you make past the one week point without shaving you're golden. Resist the temptation. Beards are fun for the whole family. Thanks for chillin' Dave, you truly are an inspiration.

Matthew Rowdon cfnw



Matt Rowdon

Date: 1/21/2004

Submitted by: Matt Rowdon

Journal Entry:

Lately team has been really difficult. Things at home are not going so well, with my mom being pretty sick and in and out of the hospital being three thousand miles away just feels wrong. I feel helpless a lot and sometimes I think that I could be of better use at home. But I know that God is using this situation I am in. It is a faith building experience that will strengthen and prepare me for things later in life. God has been placing certain people we have been meeting along the way very strategically and continues to make sure all my needs physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally are met. In tough times it is really interesting to see how God continues to work and is so faithful.

Matthew Rowdon cfnw



Matt Rowdon

Date: 1/25/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Hooray for sunny days in Washington! Today is absolutely gorgeous, even though we've crossed the mountains and are back into 'real' winter weather. Mark was being a monkey again this afternoon, hanging out the van window this time to get a picture of the mountains for Hilary, and his hat flew off of his head! Well, we pulled over as quickly as we could and watched out the side-view mirrors as he dodged vehicles to pick up his tire-smashed cap from the middle of the road. One fellow in a truck stopped and picked him up, even, to drive him back to our van, only yards away. Again, I say, hooray for sunny days in Washington!

**Angela Joy Nelson****Date:** 1/29/2004**Submitted by:** Mike Guthrie**Journal Entry:**

En Route to Salmon, ID

**Mike Guthrie**

Prayer is a powerful thing. Last week was probably the toughest week I've had since being on team. I pretty much wanted to quit and just go home, because I didn't think I could do this anymore. The Body of Christ is also a very powerful thing. When many of my friends and family back home heard about the tough time I was having, they were all praying for me in a major way. I even heard that my youth from my youth group back home were praying for me. What has been amazing to me is how much I've been able to feel that people are praying this week. This week is just about as busy as last week, and even though team dynamics are going much better, my health hasn't been the greatest, and I've still been tired a lot. Yet even though I'm worn out and could use a serious vacation, I wake up each day with the strength I need to keep going. As I was sitting in bed last night, I was thinking about how strange life can be sometimes. This is by far the hardest thing I've ever done in my life, and yet when the thought came into my mind of quitting now and going home, all I could think of was, "no way!" Despite its challenges and its difficulties, somehow I still love doing it, and there's no place on this earth that I'd rather be, and I know with all my heart that this is where I belong. Now...if I could only shake this stupid cold so I can sing again! ;)

Date: 1/31/2004**Submitted by:** Mark Kuntz**Journal Entry:**

Well, we are off down the road and on the way to the big quake. We are now in Idaho Falls, staying with the same people the guys from Watermark Germany stayed with. It is good times, to sit back and relax a little. Idaho is a beautiful area...and there are so many ski hills so close by and my gear needs some fixing. God is awesome and I have definitely been seeing that in the places where we go.

Peace to all!

mark

**Mark Kuntz****Date:** 2/8/2004**Submitted by:** Mike Guthrie**Journal Entry:**

Holy cow, I can't believe it's the 8th already. We just got done with our Quake here in Bozeman, and I'm pretty sure it was my favorite event so far. I had a blast at every single music set, and all of those went really well. But I think my biggest high for the weekend was being able to connect with the Jr. Guides (high school helpers) and hang out with them during the Trek times. They were a pretty amazing group of youth, and they were a ton of fun to hang out with. I received probably the greatest compliment I

**Mike Guthrie**

could have received while being on team this morning. One of the adult leaders from Dillon, MT came up to me and thanked me for hanging out with the Jr. Guides so much, because she said she could see a noticeable impact on them already. She said several of them were talking about my session on leadership that I led with them, and she said that I had made an impact on them. I couldn't ask for more than for that to happen while being on team. Hearing that just made my weekend and has me totally fired up about being here, and reminds me why I'm doing this. I was really glad for the chance to work with the same small group more than once, because otherwise it's so easy for me to fade into the background and not get to connect with any youth the entire weekend. I also have a huge passion for discipling youth and helping them develop their leadership abilities and their gifts. That's about the coolest thing in the world to me, and probably my favorite part of ministry I think.

Date: 2/9/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Oh my goodness, how often we forget the present in our hopes for the future and while we miss the past. We just finished another youth Quake in Bozeman, MT, and it was tons of fun, but I think the most eye-opening part came on our day off, while we had some time for one-on-ones. Sitting by the hotel's pool, Mark and I were talking about how much we miss camp, and the pool games we used to play, and how we're looking forward to VBS this summer. Being stuck in winter weather isn't so bad when you're busy, but I love camp, and when we're not completely occupied with Family Night Programs or Events I am pining after summer weather and the activities that come with it. So Mark mentioned how much fun VBS will be, but what a bummer to have to figure out how to drive people to and from airports when Team members leave for a day or two to attend friends' weddings. This got us talking about how many of our friends our age are getting married in the next year or two or three, and Mark told me I'd better invite him to my own wedding. Wow, that hit me suddenly, that this year of ministry may be only from August to August, but we're still going to keep in touch after Team. What a blessing it is to have such good friends to travel with this year, to laugh and cry with, to learn with and struggle with. And while some of us may be homesick and desperately wanting to leave Team even for a week of respite to be with our families or friends back at school and at home, we're still right here with each other, for each other, despite each other sometimes, and it is a wonderful thing, that we can learn the love of God in this way.



Angela Joy Nelson

Date: 2/12/2004

Submitted by: Shellina Dillon

Journal Entry:

Well, to be quite honest, even though I'd never heard of Meridian, ID, I must say it's awesome. The people here are amazing. All they want to do is be servants to us, and we don't even have to do anything. They are totally cool people. One of the coolest families I have ever met is from here, and they are, like I said, cool. They have a hot tub, and they made us salmon. While we were in the hot tub, Mike, Mark, and I decided that it would be a grand idea to play "polar bear". This game- since there is a lot of snow all over the place- is where you jump out of the hot tub, in your suit, and roll around for an allotted amount of time, and then jump back into the tub. Now, you might think that the snow is the bad part, and it is, but it is so much worse to get into the tub. Your whole body burns. It's awesome. So the next time you're in a hot tub, and it's got snow all around it, try the polar bear game. Like I said, it rocks. God Bless!



Shellina Dillon

Date: 2/14/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

Happy Valentine's Day! Last weekend we had a Quake and once again it was a great experience. Saturday night we had a chance to split off into groups to do games, the dance, pool time, and prayer room. It was one of those times that communication before hand was kind of lacking. So that night I was kind of not in the best of moods, and I walked up to Mike to ask him what was going on. He answered right off the get go, "Oh um, I am going to the dance, and so is Shellina so um, can you take care games?"

So, if you can imagine, that not so good mood just got worse. Now I had to entertain a bunch of youth for an hour and that was the last thing I wanted to do.

God sometimes has other plans in mind, and knows what we can and can't handle. See, there is something different about leading games at a Quake in the option time, and leading games at the Fiesta. At the Fiesta not everyone wants to be there and playing the games, but rather at the option those people want to be there. I ended up having one of the best nights, hanging out with those kids, and playing some pretty basic games. By the end of that night, my mood of bitterness was pretty much all gone, and I was smiling thanks to that one option I didn't want to do.

God's Peace to all, Mark



Mark Kuntz

Date: 2/19/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

Just two days ago we were driving from North Bend, Washington, and as we left town there was an incredible rainbow next to a mountain, green with trees. The sky was pretty overcast with the exception of the horizontal strip of bright light shining on the side of the mountain, creating the rainbow. As I stared at this sight, all the frustrations and things going on in my mind were slowly melting away. I felt God's presence there, and it was as if He was in the rainbow smiling at me, radiating a peace that washed over my heart. I knew that no matter what little things were bothering me, they were nothing compared to the peace, love, and power of God. God is good—All the time!



Hilary Settle

Date: 2/22/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Forgiveness is a funny thing, it hits you from behind sometimes, even when you're not looking for it. Last night I got money from a friend at our program, to buy needs list items for the team, and I bought a phone card and some stamps (both of which we're really low on) and then left them at our host home! I searched and searched my bags once we were at the church, but remembered with dread that I had left them on the table in my bedroom, and our host home was 20 minutes from the church, in the opposite direction from where we needed to go. With chagrin and great sadness, I took all of my stamps and my biggest phone card, plus most of my on-hand cash, to Mark, who's in charge of needs list stuff, to replace the lost items. Alright, so this was hard enough, for me to admit that I'd messed up this simple responsibility, but not only did he say it was alright (our host mom said she's look for it and mail it to us), but we had gotten a phone card in the offering and I was the next one on the list to receive one. So, I let the Team down by forgetting that stuff that is vital for our communication with home, and in return I got this reward? Weird stuff, I tell you what. God just keeps surprising me every day. I'm starting to look for it a lot more now, too. It's funny how Team is helping so many theology concepts click in my head, as far as grace and the theology of the cross and forgiveness and discipline. Maybe not so funny, maybe intentional.



Angela Joy Nelson

Another great happening from today... We were on I-5, driving to our next booking, and the traffic got backed up terribly. OK, so it's not great that the accident happened which backed up traffic, but, the weather was wonderful, we even had the A/C on in the middle of February, and we had a lot of fun with Shellina's camcorder, recording the cars and vans driving backwards up the on-ramp to get

off the highway. Hooray for nice days, I just love this spring-time weather out here.

Oh, yeah, and also, today, or rather this evening, we got to meet some friends we had first met at our first event, and it was so awesome to see them. Having these connections on the road is wonderful, and these girls are such angels. Even though we go out from church to church to strengthen and encourage the ministry of the youth, we need outside encouragement, too, and it is such a wonderful blessing to get together with these new friends and talk about Team and next year and to pray together and have Krispy Kreme doughnuts together.

One last story to share, and then I really need to sleep so that I'm not groggy for my day off: I think it was maybe a week ago, we had a housing in this neat little town, and an impromptu booking at the local church, just sort of to introduce their congregation to our ministry and see if they were interested in actually booking us. The family that hosted us girls was absolutely a wonderful, charismatic, family, and they had stories to tell that would just knock your socks off. Right now they're raising a little boy they adopted after rescuing him from a near abortion. His mother drank and did drugs and didn't want him, so they got him, and he's the brightest beam of joy. Dark, curly hair and a smile to melt your heart. Everywhere they take him, they share his story as a testimony to God's love and the power of prayer. Having only come to their current lifestyle a few years ago, they think they failed as parents with their first set of children who are not living as they had hoped, and this curly-headed cutie has been seen as sort of their second chance. Oh, the wonderful things they are doing in their home, the great ministry through their prayer and praise group, the people they take in off the streets to help them get cleaned up and on their feet again... it was such an amazing experience to stay with these prayer warriors who have taken such a leap of faith in their extreme hospitality and their lifestyle in general. Thank God for all of these people we have met, and continue to meet, on the road, who, just by their lives as an example, provide such strength and encouragement, even if only for a day or an hour, that leaves such a mark upon us all.

Date: 2/24/2004

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

It's tough to stay motivated sometimes when bookings are pretty slow on team. We're down to having bookings mostly on just the weekends, which is good that we have that, but it makes the weeks drag along sometimes. Lately I've really loved it when we've actually gotten to do programs and hang out with youth. This weekend was a really cool one for me. I spent Saturday night hanging out with a host brother who was super cool. We had a lot of stuff in common, particularly playing and listening to music, and we were up until about 1:30 in the morning playing music for each other. That was a very cool night for me because sometimes it's harder for me to make connections with youth or with host families since I tend to be more quiet, or by the time the weekend comes around I'm pretty tired at night. I've been noticing lately, both this weekend and at our last Quake, that I really miss the Discipleship part of ministry. It's really cool being part of a ministry that gives churches and youth a spiritual recharge, but the part I miss sometimes is the working with youth on their daily walk with God, because that's ultimately what is going to be there after we leave.



Mike Guthrie

Something else that some of my teammates and I have been noticing is how much we're becoming acclimatized to this kind of lifestyle. Going to a new place every day and doing programs sometimes becomes the "same old routine" after being on the road for 5-6 months. I can't imagine the culture shock I'm going to have when I finally go home at the end of the year. My team has become my family, and my home has become a 15 passenger van and a duffle bag. I'm sure I've changed more this year than I have in any year of my life, but I don't think I'll totally realize how much I've changed until I'm home at the end of the year and I go back to a "normal" lifestyle and spend time with all of the people that I used to hang out with.

Date: 2/25/2004

Submitted by: Matt Rowdon

Journal Entry:

Wow. Hey to anyone who actually reads my infrequent journals. It takes me a while to write these things sometimes because I try to say something worth while.

So God is crazy huh? The past few months I've been learning so much more about how much God really loves me/us and ways he shows it through his grace and faithfulness especially. I don't think it's anything I'll ever understand or fully grasp. Just try to imagine complete and perfect love that never ceases even under the greatest and worst circumstances. Maybe my examples aren't quite the best but imagine beating someone up continually and they completely love you even though you are seriously hurting them. Now imagine someone always beating you up all of the time, how could you still love them as they are throwing the punches? Recently, with the lent season starting and thinking about Christ's demonstration of his perfect love for us those thoughts come to mind for me. I don't know, it's been something that has really stuck out for me recently. G'day mates!



Matt Rowdon

Date: 2/28/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

Greetings to all, especially those of Kindred. I finally got your message, and it warmed my heart.

Once again we are back in Washington, definitely one of our favorite states, since we spend the most time here. We are heading back to Naselle where we are going to the youth detention camp. We played there once before so it will be neat to be back. Today is a typical west coast day, cloudy and raining off and on. What a beautiful area though, it is awesome to be driving through a tree filled area, with fast moving streams and rivers everywhere. It is weird because we are so close to the ocean but yet cannot see it. It's funny how that works. You know the whole tree thing from before.

Anyways I hope you are all still singing the MOOSE SONG and it continues to make you laugh. God's Peace, and have a wonderful day!



Mark Kuntz

Date: 2/28/2004

Submitted by: Shellina Dillon

Journal Entry:

HOWDY!!! I am so excited! We get to go back to Naselle, which is awesome. The coolest thing about it is the neat-o ministry opportunities there are there. The pastor works as head pastor for two churches in the area, so there are a lot of people to minister to. But on top of that there's also a youth detention center that rocks. We get to set up our stuff, and then we get to eat with the kids in there. The amazing thing is that these kids in this juvenile center are my age, and just made some really bad choices.

However, they are still kids, and still like to do what I like to do- especially listen to and play music. The last time we did a program there, the kids got so excited- not over the music, but over the puppet show! I never thought that they would like us, but they welcomed us with open arms. I guess that was a good lesson in not making prior assumptions, eh? Well, anyway, the kids helped us take down our stuff last time, and it was really great to talk to them and listen to some tunes and such. It was so nice just to be real with them. I bet they don't get many chances to be one on one with other youth. I guess my point of this whole thing is that I am super excited because we are going back- not because it was fun for me, but because it was fun for them. For the new kids in the center, I hope they'll enjoy themselves. For the kids that are still there, I hope that they realize that we care about them and love them very much. Keep us in your prayers this weekend, that we might have the Holy Spirit directing our words and actions with these kids. Thanks!



Shellina Dillon

Date: 2/28/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

It's a quarter after 8 p.m. in Naselle, WA, and we're packing up after a program at the Juvenile Detention Camp. I'm just amazed at the ways God surprises us in the opportunities God opens up for us. About two hours ago we had supper in the cafeteria with the youth, and the girls were to go talk with the girls while the guys talked with the guys. Mike was a little nervous about this, because he often finds it difficult to just walk up to any random person and start a conversation, so he instead hung out with the Team. We finished supper, went back to the gym for a quick sound check (really quick – the program was to start a half hour before we thought it was supposed to) and then we began the music. Like Mark and Shellina said in their journals, we absolutely love playing here for these youth, and we had a lot of fun. Afterward, though, as we were tearing down, some of our new friends stuck around to help pack up and load. As I was unplugging my sound board, I noticed Mike playing guitar with one of the youth and was simply amazed. Not even two hours ago he was afraid to talk to anyone new, and here he was playing with one of the kids and talking with him like they'd been friends for a long time. Way to go, God!

And cool happening number 2! -> Shellina and two young boys that came with the pastor spent the last ten minutes of pack-up time inventing dozens of new things to make with Hilary's keyboard stand. They came up with moon shoes and hammock things and skates and all kinds of stuff, and the ideas just kept coming and coming, all from this one metal folding keyboard stand.

**Angela Joy Nelson****Date:** 2/29/2004**Submitted by:** Hilary Settle**Journal Entry:**

Yesterday we had a family night program at a Youth Camp in Washington. About five minutes before the program started, I realized I left my Bible at the last church! It was the first time I had ever left my Bible anywhere, and I was a little embarrassed, but mostly mad at myself. I started having a really negative attitude, and I didn't even want to be there anymore. But we started playing our first song, and as I scanned the faces before us that night, I realized that I still had a job to do, and that God still had a purpose for me in that place, whether I had my Bible or not. I remembered what Mike had shared with me before the program. He said that the pastor had told him that some of the kids were struggling with feelings of worthlessness, and just feeling like they had messed up beyond repair. Mike said he thought my sharing would be a good one. I agreed and decided to share my story that night. I started feeling really stupid inside, for getting so worked up over a missing Bible, when here these kids were dealing with such deep issues, not knowing that their worth is not based on their actions, but on their relationship to Christ (God is their maker, they are His children). Needless to say, I turned my attitude around right then and there, and thoroughly enjoyed the rest of the program. I shared my story of how God revealed to me the true source of my identity—in Him! I had been basing my self worth off of my outward appearance, my performance, and whether others accepted me. God started teaching me and showing me that what matters most to Him is not what is on the outside, but on the inside. He showed me that I am of infinite value to Him, because I am His child. He created me and He accepts me the way I am. The change that came in me was not to my glory, but all to God's glory! He did all the work! And sharing that story is so exciting for me because it shows what an awesome God we serve. A God who accepts us for who we are and loves us no matter what!

**Hilary Settle****Date:** 2/29/2004**Submitted by:** Hilary Settle**Journal Entry:**

A few days ago, we stayed with a host family who gave up their master bedroom so that we could all have a bed to sleep in. It might seem like such a small thing to do, but I am pretty sure that the "host dad" slept in a recliner all night! As you might imagine I was completely humbled and moved by this at the same time. A simple act of generosity,

and yet I felt so unworthy. All I could think was, I don't know if I deserved that, or why am I so special to receive such kind hospitality. But this whole situation really made me think about God's provision, and how much I have to be thankful for. Everyday the sun comes out (whether we see it or not), and everyday I have food to eat, a warm, dry place to stay, and a nice place to sleep. I am surrounded by people who love me, and I have more clothes than I need. I have the luxury of driving a car (okay, actually a 15 passenger van, but you know what I mean!), having a choice of music to listen to, I have a Bible I can read everyday, and the list goes on. It makes me think of these lyrics by Nicole Nordeman, "never mind moderation, You exceed my expectation." Everyday God exceeds my expectations, by the way He provides for me, and not just material things, but spiritually as well. He provides rest when my soul is weary, comfort when my soul is grieved, and most of all He provides a love that is deeper and wider and longer and bigger than I can even comprehend. And every time He surprises me with His provision, I am amazed by His tremendous love, and His goodness, because I do nothing to deserve any of these things, yet He chooses to bless me with them anyway. What amazing love!



Hilary Settle

Date: 3/10/2004

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

North Bend, WA

It seems like just when things can't get any tougher and more frustrating; God has a funny way of sneaking up on us when we're not looking. Almost two months ago I was having a week much like this last one. I was worn out and frustrated, and I pretty much wanted nothing more than to be done with team. Then we had a really good program, and I stayed in a host home with the two most adorable little host sisters in the world, and they just had so much energy and joy that I couldn't help but feel joy in me again. Ironically, earlier this week I prayed that God would help me with my attitude on team, because I was feeling really frustrated and worn out, and next thing I know I'm back at this same house again with the same host family! Did all of my difficulties of team go away? No. But I have the strength to go on for another day, and for tonight I remembered why I'm here and why I signed up for this. And that's enough for me. Most days now I wake up, and the first thing I pray is; Lord, give me the strength to get through today. And he always has. I miss home more than I can even explain right now, so much in fact that I find it better not to think about it if I can help it. And even though things are really slow right now in terms of ministry, and there isn't much we can do for official ministry, I know that God has us out here for a reason, and even if he isn't using us to touch other people, He's most certainly working on each of us. I can't say that I always enjoy it when God works on me, but I always know that its for the best, and I'm going to be a better man of God because of it. I'm worn out, and I definitely don't have the strength to do this for another half year, but I do have enough to do this for tomorrow.



Mike Guthrie

Date: 3/21/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

<sigh> Our last event has ended. <sigh> Or should I say, "woo-hoo!" So, I'm sad that we're done with events, I really really really enjoy them. But then again, they are such an encouragement, a great recharge for our Team, and I know we'll see some of those youth again this year. Wow, are the youth ever amazing! I got to hang out a lot with a couple of youth groups for multiple meals and family times, which was great, to have the extra time to spend getting to know their groups, and it was like being with family. These kids are so great. And if you're one of them reading this, THANK YOU, YOU ROCK, GOD LOVES YOU!! Well, God loves you no matter who you are, and that's just a reminder for anyone reading this, actually.



Angela Joy Nelson

Besides the fantastic youth and youth leaders whom I met, there were two parts of Kari Lyn's

message that really spoke to me this weekend. Yes, the speakers and musicians encourage and challenge each other, too, and it was clear that God was speaking through all of these people, including the youth, in so many ways. But the part of Kari Lyn's closing talk that was so vivid was the reminder of our call to make the joy complete by sharing the Good News, and what Good News it is, of God's unconditional love, forgiveness, acceptance. She said that she heard one night, when she was in Captive Free years ago looking at a girl who was crying in the congregation, she heard the words "there are so many". And what truth that is. There are so, so many hurting people who do not know how deeply and dearly loved they are by God, and we do know this, we are so incredibly blessed with this truth written on our hearts, this truth that is for all people. "So carry your candle, go light your world". Amen.

OK. So the other part of Kari Lyn's message that sort of woke me up was on the first night, when she was talking about being who God has created us to be. She shared a story about how she changed the music, clothes, and language she used so that the cool guy would keep dating her. It is a message I have heard so often, but this time it sunk in, deep down, with a "thunk" when it hit my core. I had been dating/courting a wonderful man of God for two years up until about a month ago. I was completely in love with, devoted to and in awe of him, and I'm still in awe of how God speaks through him and works through him and loves the whole of creation through him. When we broke up (after much anguished prayer) I was convinced that I'd "get him back" if I did the right things. I mean, this guy is really something special, everything I could ask for, but God has been moving us in different directions and we're just not in a position to be thinking as far ahead as we had been. I tried my best to realize this, and prayed and pray for God to help me let him go. It hurt a lot to think about a future that might not include him as much as I had hoped, a future that is now that much more uncertain. But I realized, listening to Kari Lyn's story, that I had been so impressed with this guy, with the light of Christ shining through him, that I was starting to try to be like him, even to the point of being prepared to study in college what he had studied. That may not seem like a lot, taking the same classes, but God has a different shape for me than for this guy. I may be amazed every time that this fellow preaches and want to be just like him, but that's not who I was created to be, and by trying to be someone I'm not, even though that someone is a very devoted Christian, is not honoring God's creation, is unfair to this guy and to anyone I might work with ever, and is just plain confusing when I'm trying to figure out where my own unique gifts lie and where God might be calling me. It is good to surround yourself with serious Christians (and I don't mean those who have no sense of humor), but thinking that you're not good enough because you're not as "good" as they are is a lie. Being who God created you to be, though it may take a lifetime to discover, is the much greater adventure, the more fulfilling and God-honoring path, I believe. So go in peace, knowing that God has made you unique, loves you to the very core, and will never let you go.

Peace, true and from above, joy, deep and strong,
Angela

Date: 3/22/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

Sometimes I think that God is in the construction business, because he sure is doing a lot of construction on my heart. One of the more recent changes has come through a lesson in forgiveness. It is something I have talked about a lot, and I've learned a whole bunch from Jesus on the subject, but until about two weeks ago had never really known deep in my heart. I mean, I had experienced the deep down forgiveness of Jesus Christ, and the freedom that comes from knowing and believing that He has taken away my sin and forgiven me for it. But I had never completely grasped the concept of fully forgiving others for wrongs and hurts that have been done to me. In some ways I am pretty easy going, and so most of the time when I had been hurt by someone, it would bother me a lot at first, but I would eventually "let it go" and get over it, moving on in my relationship with that person. Well, that was always pretty easy to do, considering that when I went home from school that day, I knew I wouldn't have to see that person until the next day if I didn't want to. But, not so on team. Yes, yes, that is correct; we are with our teammates for a large portion of each day, if not for the whole day sometimes. Sometimes our only break comes when we get split up into different host homes. So "letting go" of little things became difficult to do. Instead of truly forgiving someone for a hurt they had caused me (whether it was knowingly or not), I was just trying to



Hilary Settle

ignore it and move on. But it wasn't working. It got to the point where I knew something wasn't right. So I talked with someone who reminded me about forgiveness, and that forgiveness is the "skin of love". It was that night that I started praying for a change in my own heart. That I would be able to completely forgive this person, just as Christ has forgiven me and still forgives me. And you know what? God answered my prayer and is continuing to answer it. I woke up the next morning, and although things weren't perfect, I knew that something major had begun changing in my heart. And it was that little bit of change I saw right away that for me showed the hope and the glimpse of faithfulness and goodness from God that I needed to know that things were going to get better. And they have been. Every day. It's not always easy to change, but it's always worth it when you are changing to become more in line with God's will. Always.

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 5:32

Date: 3/23/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

This morning Mark and I went running at the high school in Albany, OR, on the outdoor track. After nearly a mile, I told Mark that I was going to keep running until I got my "second wind." I was feeling pretty tired at that point, and I felt like I was breathing so fast, but I knew it would only be a short time until I got a second wind and would be able to keep going. Then Mark said to me, "Isn't it funny how you have to be almost completely worn out and feel like you can't make it any further before you get your second wind?" I agreed. He continued by saying that it's funny how God does the same thing sometimes. He breaks us and wears us down, until we are so broken that we cannot stand on our own. It is at this point we must learn to stand in Christ's strength. God gives us a "second wind" in our spiritual walk just when we feel like we can't make it any further. Mark's comparison of these "second winds" reminded me if we persevere through our struggles we will always come through victorious, because Christ has already won the victory! I have gone through times this year when I have felt like my spiritual cup is running dry. Even though it is hard to keep going during those times, I always know that an overflowing cup is coming, and God is just waiting for the right time. We must go through the valley so we appreciate the mountaintop. I had been thinking about this a couple of days ago, about how I had just come out of a "spiritual valley" and have been making my way up to the mountaintop again. For a while I was frustrated for being in the valley for so long, but now I can see God's plan for that time in my life, and I also know that God is the only one who can lead me out of that valley and onto that mountaintop. "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." -Romans 5:3-5



Hilary Settle

Date: 3/23/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

During our day off yesterday, our host sister Stephanie took Mike, Angela, and I to the Silver Falls State Park. We went on a four mile hike around a beautiful scene in Oregon. The trail walks along the north and south forks of Silver Creek, and the part of the trail we walked along went past seven waterfalls. The whole hike was amazing. It was so nice to get outside and enjoy being in God's creation, and an extremely beautiful part of God's creation at that. Many parts of the trail were so peaceful, and I could have spent hours just sitting and meditating on God's goodness, while staring at the scene in front of me. One thing that always leaves me in wonder is waterfalls. I know that that water comes from a stream or river, but every time I see a waterfall I think, "Where does the water come from? How come it never dries up?" Seeing a waterfall just reminds me that even though I might not be able to understand how the water keeps flowing, it does. Just like God's love for me. Even though I don't understand how God never runs out of love for me, he never does. His love, grace,



Hilary Settle

and mercy keep pouring down on me like the water falls to the surface below. Another thought that came to me while on the trail was, "How can you see scenery like this and not believe in God?" The earth testifies about its maker. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display their knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." -Psalm 19:1-4a. Overall it was an awesome day. I got to hang out with friends, hike a beautiful trail in Oregon, and see countless reminders of the beauty of the Lord and his everlasting love for me.

Date: 3/27/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

Hey all, today I figured I would briefly write about what God was doing in my life before Team, and how that has continued to affect my life.

So the 2 years before Team I was attending a Bible College in Camrose, Alberta. It was so much fun, and I was learning a lot. Being a dry campus I was learning how to disobey rules, and get away with it. So yes, I was drinking a lot, too. My second year there, I had some super close buddies that decided they were going to help me quit drinking....a step which I soon realized was well worth it. At first it was one of the toughest things ever. See, every time I was mad before, I would just pick up some liquor and drink up....which worked, or so it seemed. But now that I was giving it up, what was I going to do. I thought about how I could probably sneak it without anyone knowing and that was when my good buddy Chet said something that has stuck with me ever since.

He said, "Mark, who are you trying to prove this to, us, or to yourself."

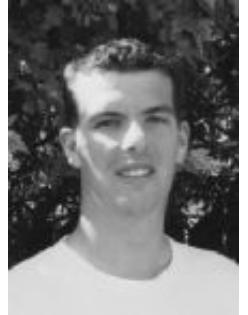
Now I realize some of you reading this might have been waiting for some HUGE line, or amazing quote but this is exactly what I needed to hear. If I was going to officially make it one Year, then I had to do this not for friends but for GOD, and myself. I was all talk before, on how I could quit anytime, and now was my time to prove it.

From there on in it was a whole lot easier, well, in sense that I was the one keeping myself from drinking, and not my friends.

Now here's the question, how does this apply to this year....well, the same QUOTE, (so to speak) works not only for drinking, but the way we act, what we do in our lives. IF we are always trying to live up to other people's expectations, and prove things to others, we will never be good enough. BUT if we do it for ourselves, with God's guidance, then all is well.

Take care, and we will chat next time.....

mark



Mark Kuntz

Date: 4/2/2004

Submitted by: Matt Rowdon

Journal Entry:

Today is April 2, 2004 luckily I wasn't pranked yesterday by anyone or they'd be sorry fo' sho'. The past weekend has been a really uplifting time for me. I visited some people who lived in Kenya, Africa and had the privilege of staying with them and listening to them talk about their home in Africa and the stories they had about their home. One thing I really enjoy is learning about different cultures. It is always interesting to me.

They lived in the neighborhood called Hilltop, an area the media had talked about having serious gang and drug activity. I really liked the diversity there and we played an acoustic program at the church which really went well and I think both parties enjoyed. We also had the opportunity to visit with a YE Team alumni who was very fun, to see again someone who knows about what Team life is like. Very encouraging. It was really cool also to stay with another Teamer's family, which was definitely refreshing and just a fun time to talk about some quality people. The end.



Matt Rowdon

Date: 4/3/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:



Angela Joy Nelson

Pt-pt-pt-ptrrrrRRRRRRRRRRRR...! The great American pastime – mowing the lawn! What a beautiful day it is today in Beaverton, OR. The sun is shining, the grass is green, kids are playing baseball... An absolutely perfect day to do yard work! Call me crazy, but even God said somewhere that physical labor is good for the soul (though that might have been in a movie...), and is it ever! We came back early from rehearsal today to get packed and ready for our journeys home tomorrow, and we arrived at our host home just as our host dad was getting ready to mow the lawn.

Woo-hoo! He let me take the job. It only took me about an hour, but it was such a good feeling to get my hands dirty emptying out the bag, to sweat under the sunshine, to work outside. "Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Praise him with lawn mower and weed-whacker. Praise him, barking dog, soaring bird, cheering baseball fans. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD." Psalm 150 (slightly altered) :-D And with Holy Week beginning tomorrow, I pray that you find as many blessings in your life, as together we reflect upon all that God has so lovingly given to us.

Date: 4/20/2004

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:



Mike Guthrie

Cave Junction, OR

This last week on tour has been a spiritual and emotional rollercoaster for me, and I think also for a lot of the team. I have felt God more at work in our programs in the last week, and I can see that God is affecting people through them in a lot of ways. On the other side of things, I've also felt a very strong sense of spiritual attack. There's a very strong force that does not want us here, and it seems to be affecting us just about every other part of the day. During the days I've been unmotivated, frustrated, apathetic, and I seem to be getting down about the stupidest things. I also have a very difficult time staying in the Word as well. This is a gorgeous state, and I have absolutely loved the people that we have met with, and particularly the host families that I've stayed with, because they've been so amazing and loving. However, I will be glad to be in a different place for a while in hopes that the spiritual attack on myself and the team may lighten a bit.

Lately I've really been enjoying where our team is at musically. Our program has become pretty tight overall and I love the fact that we're all comfortable enough with it that we can relax and have fun with it, and even worship through it. The last program we did, a parent came up and told us that our energy was contagious, and judging by what we saw throughout the program I think he was right. Even though I was really tired and worn out on Sunday night, when it came time to do the program I put everything I had into it, and when it was all over, I felt like I had just gone running or played sports for an hour because I was so tired once my adrenaline wore off. It was worth it though, I wish I could put that much into every program that we do. We have a very busy schedule coming up though, so I'm sure that I'll get more than enough chances.

Date: 4/21/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

"You know, some people would think that this ministry is all about music. And they're right. BUT it is about more than just that. It is also about the relational ministry as well. Amazing." (quotes from Matthew) The other night I had an opportunity to go and hang out with some super cool people in Eagle Point, Oregon. It was a lot of fun. We went to Dairy Queen, and then we went to a random fair in the parking lot at one of their malls.

We paid \$2.50 to go on one ride. The pirate ship was worth it. After the fair, we went to a billiard place, and played a few games. I had so much fun, getting to know the youth who I was hanging out with. I felt like I did more ministry hanging out with them than in the program. Although the program was tons of fun, I was reaching them more at their level, and in a way that wasn't forced. THANKS to those from Eagle point, and surrounding areas.



Date: 4/23/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

During our day off on Monday, Angela and I went to the Redwood National Park in northern California. This was my first time seeing any redwoods, other than in text books. I was amazed at the size of the trees, as redwoods can grow up to 370 feet tall! We had the pastor's husband as our tour guide, and he knew so much stuff. One thing that he said stuck out in my mind, and I really started thinking about it. He had mentioned how humbling it can be to see the redwoods. I totally agree! It is amazing to think about how tiny we are in the whole scheme of things, and how small we are compared to God. "For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). But despite this, God still has a plan for us. He still loves us so much more than we can even comprehend. He has every detail of our lives planned out, more than we think! "All the days ordained for me were written in your book, before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16b). What an awesome God! That I am so small, but he has a plan for me!



Hilary Settle

Date: 4/25/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

What a beautiful weekend we've had here in Sandpoint, Idaho. Friday night we had a program at First Lutheran Church, and there were lots of young kids there dancing in the aisle way throughout the entire program. It was so uplifting to watch them from up front and from the sound board having such a great time. My host brother and sister were especially wonderfully joyful, and so creative! Hilary and I stayed with a great family with two kids, and our friend Sarah drove down all the way from north western Washington to spend the weekend with us, so she got to stay with our family, too. The house we stayed with was so much like the home I used to stay at when I was working at camp in Pennsylvania, they even had 'dippy' eggs for breakfast, and I got to spend much of yesterday afternoon playing hide-and-go-seek with the kids and they made up a play for Hilary and I to show their mom and dad before supper. Yesterday morning was a ton of fun, too, when the youth and our Team got to take care of the mile of highway that they've adopted, and later that night the Team got to play some late night volleyball with some youth from the Catholic church in town. Just imagine the cold sand under bare feet, some good friends with a volleyball, the mountains not so far away, trains driving by the park every half an hour or so as the sun sets and turns the almost entirely clear sky orange, red, purple, and finally dark. I couldn't have asked for a better day.

We've been talking a lot within our Team about Who's really in control and how we can know we can trust this Someone. Lots of times when something tragic or even mildly annoying happens I find myself wondering 'what did I do this time to deserve this? Why me?' But not so often do I ask the same questions when the day is so close to heavenly. We're on our way to Canada now for a ten day tour on that side of the border, and what's in store for us up there, only God knows, just like any other place that we go. Like we always say before singing 'Hands of the Potter', God is in control and holds us always, through good and bad, in Love that will never let us go.



Angela Joy Nelson

Date: 4/29/2004

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

4/29/04 – Outlook, SK/Camrose, AB

I'm trying to decide if we're actually in Canada, or if we're in South Dakota, because they look suspiciously similar. The last two days we were in Outlook, SK at LCBI, which is a residential high school. We had a fair amount of stuff to do there, but it was a really good change of pace from playing at churches all of the time. I still really enjoy doing this ministry, but I'm kind of at that love/hate stage of the tour right now because a lot of the stuff that we do is getting old, and I'm getting ready to be done, but at the same time I still usually enjoy doing the music quite a bit. Last night we led an hour-long contemporary worship service for the high school students. I've missed leading straight-up praise and worship music. I like not having to worry about smiling and making eye-contact, and I can just close my eyes and sing to God. A friend of mine once said that one of the most important parts of leading worship is being a lead worshipper, and not just a worship leader. If we're up front, we of all people should be worshipping with our whole hearts, because if we get into it, so will the audience/congregation.



Mike Guthrie

Date: 4/30/2004

Submitted by: Mike Guthrie

Journal Entry:

4/30/04 – Edmonton, AB (Canada)

Man did God ever make me eat my words tonight. I give this short little explanation between songs called a "glue," and I talk about how team can be really tough at times and we can get burned out, and how God always has a way of sneaking up on us and giving just enough strength to go another day. Well the last few nights I've been saying that and not totally believing in it myself. I had to somewhat convince myself that it was in fact what God does, but God apparently must have caught on to my doubts because he totally made me eat my words tonight. I've been super tired all day today, and I've said to myself several times today and this week that, "this stinks, and I'm ready to be done." I was getting pretty sick of doing this today, but then God managed to sneak up on me today and give me a night of refreshment through talking with my host family. We talked about all kinds of things, and sat around and had nachos and salsa, and for whatever reason, after talking to them I realized that that conversation made this entire day worth it. I realized that even though I get really frustrated and sick of so many things about team these days, that God really does sneak up on me and give me enough strength to keep going, because every once in a while I catch a glimpse of something that reminds me, "Oh...this is why I'm here."



Mike Guthrie

Date: 5/6/2004

Submitted by: Matt Rowdon

Journal Entry:

Journal time! We have recently been in Canada for the past week and a half it was nice to be a little busy for a change in the way of doing programs and leading worship. We had a chance to do two of our own worship services that we put together and the places we were at gave us complete freedom to lead in the way we could do best and I really enjoyed it. Also, there were two churches in particular that architecturally were really cool and the sound and acoustics were really good. I really enjoy playing in buildings that sound good. That's been one thing that has been difficult for me playing in so many types of buildings from really acoustically dead small spaces ranging to huge gyms that reverberate like crazy and you hear things two seconds after you actually play them. We really have to be flexible, but all in all the Canadian tour was a great time. Even though Canada isn't too much different than the U.S. I experienced some more cultural differences than usual and probably got a small feel for some of the difficulties international teamers work with. Much love to the international teams - I hope



Matt Rowdon

things are going well and look forward to hearing about your experiences in the other countries.

Matthew Rowdon CFNW
5/6/04

Date: 5/7/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Friday, May 7, 2004

Great Falls, MT, Beautiful Black Eagle Dam. Wow. We had a bit of extra time heading to Helena from Conrad today, so Hilary took us by the Missouri River and we got a few minutes to soak some of it up. I could have stayed there all day. We didn't get around to hiking the official trail that runs along the river, but I got about 15 minutes to walk a bike trail down from the highway to the river. Before hitting the dam, the Missouri is today as calm and bright as the stillest lake I've seen, with pelicans lazily gliding across the surface on an invisible current, and Canadian geese surrounded by little frizzy yellow fluff-ball goslings peck all along the grass near the main road that runs alongside the river. Pigeons are all along the bridges, and red-winged blackbirds call from the underbrush. Montana is green and yellow-tan this day, and the sky is close to robin's egg blue with wisps and puffs of clouds here and there. It's a perfect day to canoe, and I wish our Team was already at camp. On the other side of the Dam, it looks like a shelf of ragged, irregular slate encourages the falls and rapids, and on the other river bank the terrain steeply rises in greeny-tan hills hardly marked by cars or houses or businesses at all. I only wasted a moment or two to kick myself for not bringing a camera, and then I was distracted by a red-winged blackbird flying below me – how wonderful to see it from above, with its brightly colored wing-patches on an otherwise inky-black body. My dad calls those birds 'black-bodied red birds'. I miss seeing those birds at the zoo in Toledo. There's no question that I've been homesick the last week or so, but two days ago we served in Havre, and I got tons of hugs afterwards and we got to hang out with lots of really neat kids, and having something to do like that is a good reminder of our call. Days like today are a good reminder, too, though, that sometimes we're called to just be for a while, and not do anything. I mean, we need to soak up some Love of God in quiet moments and in music and in devotions and in falling and in fighting and in not being 'perfect', too. Because the day may be beautiful like today, or we may be focused on something else, like something that has gone wrong or something we need to get forgiveness for, but that Love is always there, unchanging, constant, all-enduring, the most sure thing we've got. What wonderful news to share! I pray that you can see that Love today, or, if not, know that it is there, because it always has been and always will be. Love never fails.



Angela Joy Nelson

Date: 5/15/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

Saturday May 15, 2004

So this morning I was standing on the dock at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp, near Kalispell, Montana, and soaking up the view. As I was soaking it all up I was admiring how wonderful God is. I feel that a lot of the time, we ask God to show us a sign, or let us know that he is around us, and this morning, I felt his presence all around me, in the rocks, trees, birds, deer, the glacier-fed lake, mountains that surround the camp. God is great. He has such a powerful presence and it is a matter of opening our eyes and looking around at the creation he has surrounded us with.

Psalm 121, this is one of my favorite verses that fits in to the area that I am in.

PEACE mark



Mark Kuntz

Date: 5/15/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

Last night we were staying at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp for a night of housing. It was nice to have some time to hike, explore, and just sit and "be still" before God. We had taken some solitude time in the afternoon, and I had a great long "quiet time," reading and reflecting on God's word. Later in the evening, something happened that left me with a lot of questions and thinking to do. I found myself alone in the cabin, so I put on my headphones. My plan was to put in a worship CD and sing along and worship, but God surprised me with so much more. I found myself crying after a few minutes, and mostly feeling sad because I hadn't been spending some time on a deeper level with God lately. I had been reading my bible everyday, and praying, but I had not been letting anything sink in deeply. And as I cried and listened to the words on the CD, I started to become aware of God's forgiveness and grace, and it made me even more grateful. That I mess up again and again, and I am so unworthy of God's love, but he chooses to love me and forgive me anyway! I started becoming overwhelmed by this realization, and the words on the CD at this moment were, "Run like the river, dance like the summer, joy is in my heart, You have satisfied my soul!" Joy overcame me, and the freedom that only Christ can bring was so apparent. And those feelings, and realizations, and moments of vulnerability, and forgiveness, and freedom, and love... those were the reasons I was sad I had not gotten to that place with God sooner.

**Hilary Settle****Date:** 5/20/2004**Submitted by:** Matt Rowdon**Journal Entry:**

Well, looks like we're back to a slow couple of weeks until Vacation Bible School starts and we know everywhere we're going to be until the end of the year. Just under three months to go and back to a "normal lifestyle" or so I think. I am really unsure about what I am going to do with myself or what God has in mind for me. I just need to keep remembering God has a plan - it's not necessary for me to stress over coming up with my own plan and freak when it doesn't seem to be working out - God is ultimately in control. For some reason every once and a while I'll get this mentality that I can control certain situations and I put trust in myself or things other than God and it's kinda like trusting passengers on an airplane to fly it rather than the pilot, or maybe something dumber than that. A time of big changes is coming for a lot of us which can be scary. My prayer is that God will continue to give strength and encouragement and maybe not be so silent during these times.

**Matt Rowdon****Date:** 5/22/2004**Submitted by:** Hilary Settle**Journal Entry:**

A few days ago, Angela and I were in a host home that had a dog, cat, and a bunny that escaped from its cage. They had been trying to catch it for a couple of days, but it was always good at getting away before anyone could. So, Angela and I were sleeping on a hide-a-bed in the living room, when here comes this bunny at 2:30am, just hopping all over the bed! He must have thought it was safe to 'investigate' since we were sleeping. So, for the next half-hour, I was in and out of sleep as this bunny hopped all over the bed. I think the funniest part was waking up in the morning and finding a couple small rabbit poops in the bed! He had left us a present overnight!

**Hilary Settle****Date:** 5/22/2004**Submitted by:** Angela Joy Nelson**Journal Entry:**

It's a visually crisp day today – the drive through Wyoming is taking us through some beautiful views of sandy-colored bluffs sharply up against a dazzling blue sky all hung

with tangible clouds. The brush that makes me think of the Lorax is startlingly green, and stripes of darker color throughout the mountains remind us of the history of the land that has been living here for centuries before us. I am suddenly more aware of God, directly before us, behind, and all around, and the recognition is inspired by good times with Teammates, young children staying after a program for ice cream, little boys helping us pack the trailer this morning, the first grade girl who colored a picture for me and brought it with a box full of my favorite snack food... also in Shellina's recent bout with Strep throat, in our tired efforts to communicate better with each other, in thunderstorms, blown fuses, sharing a home for a night with a family who we had never met before – and now we are driving up a hill that allows for a better view of the valley and the red stream of rock that winds its way like ribbon throughout the tan and green below and around us, and the orange patches of 'Indian Clay' spot the landscape like patches of color on a leopard. A far-away thunderstorm shoots lightning from earth to sky near the gray horizon to our left, almost 100 miles in the distance. The rocks beg to be climbed, but we are on our way to other adventures, and the road climbs upward, through forest that lasts only for a mile before we wind our way further up the mountains and the view becomes more and more spectacular. It looks like the ocean on the horizon, though we know it's more mountains. We're driving where we can watch birds fly below us, and deer are grazing two yards off the side of the road. Big Horn Basin, Wyoming. We've stopped awhile to enjoy the view.



Angela Joy Nelson

Date: 5/25/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:



Mark Kuntz

Hey all.

So this spontaneous journal comes from my day off. I spent the day at a friend's house (that I met on the road) doing some yard work. I had the option of spending the day in Billings shopping (a.k.a. spending money), or going out there to help him cut down trees. I figured it has been such a long time since I have done some physical work, besides unpacking and repacking the trailer, that that might be more relaxing. And it was.

We spent the day cutting down trees and dragging them into a pile. Now, how can I tie this into anything...you might be wondering. Well it goes like this...

As we were cutting and dragging, it was beginning to look like we weren't accomplishing anything. But that didn't slow us down, we just kept pushing on and soon we were making a huge dent. Alright, here is the tie. Lots of times in life we work hard at doing things for God especially in this ministry and it is hard to always see the good outcome from it. Sometimes we work so hard, and nothing seems to work out, or it looks like nothing is happening, but God calls us to keep persevering through it, and we will see the outcome eventually.

Hope everyone has a great Memorial Day weekend, and it'll be exciting seeing some of you Teamers at VBS training. Peace out! Mark

Date: 6/5/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:



Angela Joy Nelson

First off, today's date is 6-5-4! (though it's not 3:21 right now, and that would make it even cooler) Less than three months until school starts again for some of us. Nine weeks of VBS before debriefing. One hour until lunch time.

Our Team is off to Baker, MT, for our first VBS of the summer, driving through the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota. We just left the community at Lee Valley Ranch out near the Crazy Horse monument and not too far from Mount Rushmore. After nine months on the road, even with our breaks here and there, the last week was a much-needed refreshment. Four of the Teams met together to learn, prepare, worship together, and share stories from the road. We shared favorite Bible verses, prayed together, sang together, and we found Nemo (it's about an hour and a half away from Custer). Many thanks to God who is so

incredibly faithful to bring our community together for a time to encourage one another.

Date: 6/9/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Tonight on our way to see the North Central Team, God started a conversation in our van. Four of us joined in a discussion about the foibles and inconsistencies of the Church, and the talk, though mildly annoyed, brought to the fore the basic ideas of what Team is all about and how we in our mission work are to reflect the ideal Church. It still amazes me that the six of us, in many ways polar opposites, have survived as long as we have without refusing to work with each other over one issue or another. Think about it: there are some congregations who will not work with one another because they disagree about doctrine, will not engage each other in dialogue, share youth ministries and resources, strengthen each other through prayer and mutual, side-by-side service, because they have different names or just are too busy with their own issues to look outside of themselves for anything other than a jump in numbers. There are also many congregations who work together very well, sharpening each others' gifts by sharing ministry opportunities with each other. We have seen many churches that share youth groups, my own church WELCA invites other churches' women to their gatherings, but there is still much to be done to more fully connect the Body of Christ. To further use that image, there are cities and towns where the feet may work and the hands may work, but they do not recognize each other and are not aware of their connection to each other through the Head. We all are lead by Christ in our ministries in whatever Church Body we belong to, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic, sent to serve God's people, seek out and save the lost, preach the Good News, help the widow and orphan, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, be present to each other by giving our attention to another's needs, 'glorify God and enjoy Him forever'. Imagine how much more we could share if we looked upon each other in our neighboring congregations as brothers and sisters, as one Church reflecting Christ in many forms, as a people united beyond denominational lines to serve side by side and share our time and talents with the world God has given us to take care of. Looking at the big picture, reflected in our Team of only six members, it is amazing to see the life and vibrancy of the Body as a whole, the gifts She has to offer and share and grow, how arguments can be put aside for the sake of the Commission because there is work to be done and love to be shared. This is not to say that our differences need to be passed over, but rather that in them we find out who we are and how we fit in all of this. If I had not come on Team this year, if I had remained at college to hang out and study with people who I thought were pretty much like me, I would not have found out so much about myself or come to test my basic beliefs as much as I have had to this year. And to think that if this Team were instead a congregation I would probably be advised to leave it to find a better 'fit' for me, I wonder how much so many are missing out on by church 'shopping' instead of sticking with it, frustrations and all, because if it does not require some effort, how can there be growth? 'Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies...' Hmm... Some ideas from tonight's conversation. Chewy, crunchy, sometimes gooey, food for thought.



Angela Joy Nelson

....6/22/04 This week at VBS I am eating my words - for the past 15 years the churches here in Dillon, MT, have been gathering together, Methodist, Pentacostal, Baptist, Lutheran, Vineyard, Catholic, etc., for VBS, and it's great! Praise God!

Date: 6/12/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

There was a great big moose.....It's only been the first week and I think I have sung that song 22 times. Don't get me wrong I love that song, and it is awesome to see how much the kids love it, but Sunday morning will be nice and refreshing to be singing different songs. The opening week of Vacation Bible School. It has been an amazing week, meeting many new peoples, learning lots of songs, and growing super close to our host homes. All year I haven't had this many good talks with my host families, and they



feel like we are family. So what I am trying to get at is, it should be an awesome summer and I am looking forward to the rest of VBS season.

Mark Kuntz

God's peace, Mark

P.S. Not only did we get a chance to meet up with the North Central team this week, I also got to drive a 50th anniversary Corvette convertible. SUPER NICE!!!!

Date: 6/25/2004

Submitted by: Shellina Dillon

Journal Entry:

Greetings! I apologize for my lack of journal entries on this site. I understand that there are people who would like to hear what is going on with me, and to them, I am truly sorry. Anyway- we just left Dillon, MT. It was a great week of Vacation Bible School, and the most amazing thing happened. Six churches from the area collaborated to make one big, fun, God-full week. I've never seen acceptance between denominations quite like that before. I stayed with the most amazing host family this week. The parents had two daughters, ages 6 and 9. I had the best of fun playing with them, watching Nickelodeon and the movie 'Willow'. The family was going through a huge transition- moving from Dillon to a town in Idaho for the father's job. It was short notice, so they were rushing to sell their extra clutter at a garage sale scheduled for the end of our week together. Their house was a normal one story house, with a huge basement, complete with internet, television (with cable), and my own room. It was pretty much like my own apartment. I enjoyed the time to vegetate. Anyway, this family had no idea what was waiting for them in their new hometown. They didn't know anyone there, nor did they have a house picked out. They only knew they were being called by God to go there for whatever reason He had in mind. This got me to thinking... had I been in their position- perfectly happy and stable, able to care for my children in an area I loved, and finally settled in, would I be able to pick up and move like that? Would I be able to potentially sacrifice my happiness for a God who did not make his plan clear to me? Do I have enough faith to step out like that in my life? I don't know. God, however, does know. He equips the called, not the other way around. If God only called the equipped, then not much would happen, huh? Are any of us prepared enough on our own without God? I know for sure that without God, I wouldn't even be able to write this letter to ya'll, let alone breathe and live. The family that I stayed with had faith that God would equip them in His time, not theirs. When talking to the mother, she expressed that she was afraid, but that she knew she would be alright, and that God's plan was infinitely better than she could ever imagine. What faith! What childlike and adventurous faith! In Mike Yaconelli's, Dangerous Wonder, he discusses the importance of faith of a child: "Christ is the Dream Giver who wants us to listen to His dream for us so we can run like children in the fields of His grace." When is the last time that I literally "ran like a child"? I can't remember when I last threw up my hands, with a huge smile on my face, and just ran. Not in order to get anywhere, not to gain endurance or strength, not to win a race, but just to simply run. Christ calls us to run like a child, with abandon and excitement, through His wonderful plans for us; to trust that He will always be there to catch us when we fall, and to laugh with us when we laugh. In order to have this childlike faith, to attain this wonderful relationship with a loving and gracious Lord, (the relationship most people desire to have), I believe we must never stop questioning the norm. We must not be satisfied with the stationary, with the trend, or with stagnancy. We must challenge what we have been taught- move outside the walls of our church. We need to move out of the comfort of our homes, and into the wild "Idaho", which for most of us, could be right out our front door. The churches in Dillon accomplished this when they joined together, despite differing opinions on doctrine, to make a better environment for those children attending VBS. (Good job, guys!!!!) In 1 Timothy, chapter 4, verse 12, Paul encourages us: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." This is not a verse only for those young in age; no- this verse is for those who desire a young faith. This childlike faith that I, as well as many others, seek is often seen as rebellious or rude, due to the constant onslaught of questions regarding liturgy, doctrine, and tradition. However, it is so important that we as people of God do not get discouraged. I challenge you, my friends, to search for the Lord, to constantly and without ceasing find where He wants you to be. I urge you to run wild in the dreams He has so knowingly made for you. It is important not to neglect the latter portion of this verse as well. We must set a precedent for these believers. Our questions must not be imposing, must not be filled with anything but love, and must come from a willing spirit. We must be a light for those



Shellina Dillon

wandering. (Matthew 5:16) Thank you for listening to me standing on my soapbox. Please take the time to be in the Word, to pray, and to fellowship with other believers. However, most of all, please continue to be the disciples God has made you. You are doing an awesome job. Thanks again!

Date: 7/3/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

The other night after campfire (we were still at Trinity Lutheran Camp), Angela and I stayed down at the beach a little longer than the campers and other staff. I asked her if she could play guitar a little for me, so I could sing. I just wanted to sing songs to Jesus, but I didn't want to play guitar. I wanted to be able to dance and lift up my hands and whatever else the Spirit "moved" me to do. So, we sang together, and I was completely enjoying the time to totally focus on God and praise Him. After a few songs, we decided to put out the campfire. After that, we both just sat down and prayed to God. We were sitting there, taking turns offering up our prayers, and I was really overcome with a sense of peace and joy. I knew it was from the Holy Spirit, and it was the kind of peace and joy that can only come from God. So, all of a sudden, I couldn't contain myself anymore, I jumped up and started to jump and dance around...what probably would have looked foolish to others, but what seemed the only "logical" thing for me to do at that moment. I was so overcome with praise for the Lord, it was the only thing I could think of to get a little of the spiritual excitement out of me. I kept thinking about King David, and how he "danced before the Lord with all his might" (2 Samuel 6:14). Later in verses 21-22, he told Michal, "...I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes..." David didn't care what others thought of him for his dancing, because he was dancing for the Lord! I felt like my actions that night would have been seen as "undignified" in anyone else's eyes, but I didn't care! I was dancing for Jesus that night, and I didn't care who saw me or what they thought! Because it was all for God! It was so exciting, just like God is! I'll never be able to fully describe what I was feeling, but I know it was put in my heart by God.



Hilary Settle

Date: 7/3/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

This past week we were at Trinity Lutheran Camp, on Flathead Lake near Bigfork, MT. We spent the week with Jr. High campers, leading music and mostly just hanging out with the kids. On the first morning there, I was with my group and we were playing Capture the Flag. I got a little excited and just took off sprinting. Well, when I slowed down, I realized my leg muscles were hurting a little. My quads were feeling a little funny, but I didn't think too much of it, until I ran again. They hurt a little worse this time, and after the game was over, I started thinking that I probably stretched the muscle a little bit. Not exactly a pull or a tear, just a little stretch. So, I decided to take it easy for a few days to give my muscles a chance to heal. For the rest of the week, I sat out during games, even though all the other counselors and Captive Free teammates participated. It was super hard just sitting and watching instead of getting in on the action. But, on the last morning I started to think, and of course...here comes the lesson I learned through the situation. I started thinking about how much I could be helping the team if I were playing, and how I sometimes am so eager to participate, that I even try to take over. It's the "I want to be in control" part of me, trying to get out. And I realized that the best place for me was exactly where I was...the sideline. It was only on the sideline that I could have realized what really needed to happen. My team had to figure out how to work together to win the game. They didn't need the help of someone with more experience. They simply needed a chance to play the game and figure out some strategy on their own. And that is exactly what they did. I watched as they came together and played a good game, helping the "weaker" players, and also each having their moment to shine. Now, these campers had a few moments of negativity, but finally one of the girls yelled at everyone saying, "Hey, the point is not to win but to have fun!" All I could think was, "right on, girl!" And a fun time was had by all. Even from the sidelines!



Hilary Settle

Date: 7/5/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Last night was the Fourth of July, our very first outdoor concert, on the beach at Camp Lutherhaven in Coeur D'Alene, ID, and it was near dark when we started to play. So we're out on the beach, having a great time, when somehow or another the sound got all fuzzy. My first thought was that we got sand in something, then that we had blown a speaker somehow, but after much scrambling, we discovered it was a ground loop, which I still don't understand, but it was fixable by the push of a button, **Angela Joy Nelson** and that was all good. So by the time we got that fixed, I had to go up front to give my sharing, in hopes that I could connect it with the day's theme of freedom. Well, I thought I had it figured out, how I was going to tweak my sharing to emphasize that point, but, it was the 4th of July, and it was dark, and the campsite next to us decided to set off fireworks. It looked really cool, but I didn't know quite what to do with this sudden set of interruptions while I was trying to tell my story, since all attention shifted from us to something else, bigger, brighter, more entertaining. But instead of a big disaster, I found a quiet space of time between fireworks to quickly state my point and move on to the next song. I could have really messed that up by trying to yell the entire story and explain it all with all of this other stuff going on, but instead it worked out that they heard the main idea, and the coolest thing was the big boom-ka-pows from the fireworks actually seemed to be in time with the music we sang. It was kind of like the two kingdoms working together side by side. Church doesn't have to make itself bigger and better than the world in order to be noticed or taken seriously or to grow. Just living in the world is a testimony, we don't have to be super-pious people to praise God and call ourselves Christian.



Date: 7/8/2004

Submitted by: Angela Joy Nelson

Journal Entry:

Today I saw the wisdom and selflessness of children again in another way that was completely a 'God moment'. We were playing 'Hoedown Olympics' at Camp Lutherhaven, and two cabin groups, one girls and the other guys, came to the 'event' that I was helping with. In this event, team members take half pipes of PVC and make an aqueduct for their team to try and get the most water from the starting point down to fill up their bucket. The girls' team had ten members, and the guys had only six or seven, so the guys had a much shorter chute made and couldn't quite reach their bucket. One of the girls, seeing this, just went over to the other team and joined them, without anyone telling her to, and without asking the rest of her cabin. When one of her teammates asked her why she was joining the 'other side', she answered 'they don't have enough people'. Simple. It was more important that the teams both be able to play together than that one team have an advantage over the other. Wow. If we played all of the time this way, even just for one day, think of how much more fun we could have all around. This is what the Kingdom of God is like, faith like a child.



Angela Joy Nelson

Date: 7/23/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

Yesterday, we had a little time off, so Angela, Shellina, Mike and I all went to the Oregon coast to hang out on the beach for the afternoon. Angela and I went over by the water so we could play a little. I took off my flip-flop sandals and walked barefoot in the sand. The sand was so wet I could walk on the surface and barely make any footprints. At first I was keeping my distance, and when a wave would come, I would back up just in time to not get wet. After a few times doing this, I started to think about how silly it was that every time a wave came, I backed away. I immediately started thinking about the



Hilary Settle

ocean being an illustration of God's love. How often in my life does God say, "Hilary, come on in...the water's nice!" And I stand on the shore and watch, making sure not to "get wet." Or God says to me, "Hilary, come on in, I want to take you deeper." And I still stand on the shore...hesitant to take the 'leap of faith' and stick a foot in. Thinking about this as I stood there, I started to get brave. I let the next wave wash over my feet, and it came up just far enough for the foam to tickle my feet as it washed over. And do you know what? It felt pretty good, and it wasn't scary at all! So, I let the next wave come up a little further, and I soon found myself desiring to go deeper. I wanted to have more and more and keep feeling the waves washing over my feet. I continued to think about this idea of the ocean being God's love. I was a little scared at first...hesitant to enter in. Makes me think of my own life at times when I was too scared to let God love me. But, once I got my feet wet, I found out not only was it not scary, but it was awesome! It felt so good I wanted to feel it more and more! Makes me think of my life at times when I did let God's love in...it was so great and such a comfort to my soul...all I wanted was more and more and more! I just can't get enough, God's love is so amazing, and so big, and wide, and long, and DEEP! Even though I didn't get all the way into the water yesterday, I know there have been times in my life where I was, and am swimming around in the ocean of God's love for me. It takes trust and faith to put our feet in that first time, but I know that once we feel just a little of God's love, we can't resist wanting to feel more and more, until we are all the way in, swimming around!

Date: 7/24/2004

Submitted by: Hilary Settle

Journal Entry:

Yesterday, Angela, Shellina, Mike and I were at the beach in Oregon. For a little while I was laying on the beach reading my Bible. I kept finding myself sticking my hands in the sand and letting it sift through my fingers back onto the ground. It felt so smooth in my hands, and it was nice to just sit and "play" in the sand. Then I came to Psalm 139 in my reading. I got to verse 17-18 and stopped. Verse 17-18 says, "**How precious to me are your thoughts O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.**" I had read this verse many times before, but there was something different about sitting in the middle of the beach, surrounded by innumerable grains of sand. I thought about how many grains of sand there must have been in just a small handful. Probably at least a million, and then I thought about how many grains of sand there must be on the whole beach! Way more than I could even comprehend, much less a human being could ever count! And for all that sand, for every tiny grain of sand there, God thinks about us even more! His thoughts are so numerous they outnumber the grains of sand! Wow! Needless to say, I was left in awe.



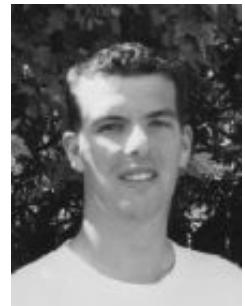
Hilary Settle

Date: 7/24/2004

Submitted by: Mark Kuntz

Journal Entry:

Hey hey, Well, this should be close to the last journal. If I keep up my habits lately of not doing one, then it will be. Life is good! Team has been so much fun, but yet having its difficult times as well. It's kind of crazy to think that 3 weeks, I will be on my way home... At the same time, I am super excited to be starting my next year already. As some of you know I attended the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute in Camrose, Alberta, CANADA for two years prior to this year. This past year they opened up a 4 year program, and the third year is an internship for Youth Ministry. I am going back to my old high school which was a Christian residential high school in Outlook, Saskatchewan. I will be a dorm assistant for the year, meaning I will be telling high school kids when to go to bed, when to get up, and to go to school, three things high school age kids HATE; going to bed, getting up and going to school. Now why do I tell you this, well besides letting some of you know my plans, I am realizing how my year on team will begin to work for the better come 2 days after team is done. I learned many things this year on the road. Some of which will help next year....like how to deal with kids all the time, and how to put up with people who make you mad. Some things like how to get to know people real well, and make a strong connection with them, in short periods of



Mark Kuntz

time. AND how to have fun, even on the days you feel like poo. This year has been quite amazing, and I wouldn't go back and change it if I could. I would definitely recommend it to anyone who is seeking God in different ways, and wants to grow personally, and as a team. Lately God has been showing me how much he provides for us, if we let him. At the beginning of the year I was worried about what I was going to do next year...er this coming year. Finally I let go of me trying to figure it out and let God do the planning, and things just fell into place. Doors will open, and you got to run with them, doors will shut and you got to take a step back, shake it off, and keep going. God's peace to all of you, have a wonderful summer, and may God continue to Bless your SOCKS OFF!!! Mark Kuntz (I am still sticking with my motto though, and that is,"Don't make plans they always get changed" But with that, God is always right with his plans!)
