

Kindred 2004-05 Journal

Date: 9/29/2004

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

And we're off! After a great week at Camp Wapo, we are finally on the road! However, after living at camps for the last month, leaving camp didn't come very naturally to us. We desperately tried to follow the directions to our first stop in Sheldon, IA. Unfortunately, the directions from "Streets and Trips" had it out for us. We "toured" the cities surrounding the camp for the next hour. This did not seem like a good start to our year. To top it all off...I was definitely starting to question my navigation skills. After that first hour, the team officially made its first big on-the-road decision: from now on, we rely solely on our atlas to help us reach our destinations. After an hour of wandering, we were still five minutes away from camp, but we were now headed in the right direction (thanks to our ever-faithful atlas and God's grace)! Surprisingly, we arrived in Sheldon, IA on time, safe and sound! Despite our rough start, our time in Sheldon was so wonderful. We were shown amazing hospitality, and the people of Sheldon will always hold a special place in my heart, as our first on-the-road church. I've now learned that when something doesn't go the way I expected, I should think of it more as an opportunity to be flexible, instead of as a bad sign! This first week has provided our team plenty of opportunities to practice our ability to be flexible. From what we hear, flexibility will be very important when we are in South America. Maybe God is using these situations now to prepare our hearts and minds for the situations we will encounter in our ministry there. Whatever the reason, He is definitely present in our ministry and will continue to be from Day 1 until the end!



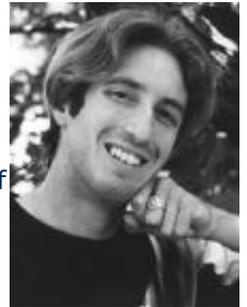
Emily Heine

Date: 10/2/2004

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Ok, so here we are in Oklahoma, and man, has this tour been amazing so far. This is my sixth new state in two weeks, and I already have a journal with twenty-five pages of memories. I have already fallen in love with a few host families and had more great Midwestern cooking than I ever thought I would. So yeah, that has been amazing, and I must say that the singing, hanging out with kids, and just talking to people about God and life and really anything has blown everything else out of the water in terms of amazingness. Still with me?



Jim Pfrogner

So, at one of my first host homes, I met this awesome girl who was really cool and stayed up and talked to me almost every night. We talked about life and the future, and my teammate Josh and I would just chill and talk to her about anything. The last night there, she and I got into a conversation about religion, and it turned out she really didn't have faith in anything at all but she was interested in finding out what mine was all about and why I felt the way I did about God. I didn't think about it or anything; I just said everything that came to me, and we talked for about an hour. Finally she went to bed and said she now had a lot to think about...

I went back to lay down and noticed that my teammate Josh, who I had thought was asleep the whole time, was lying on his spot on the floor eyes wide staring at me. I asked him what he was doing awake, and he replied that he had been awake the whole time and was praying that God would give me the right words to say. I think I was called to this ministry for times just like that. I don't know if she will become a Christian or have a revelation or anything, but I know that I learned something that night. God doesn't sleep; he is always there helping us out even when we have no idea. I also learned that host homes can give you everything from new friends to great food and that teammates totally rock.

God bless,

Date: 10/5/2004
Submitted by: Emily Twidell
Journal Entry:



Emily Twidell

I'm writing this journal a few days late, which ends up working out because I'm going to actually write about October 6th, 2004: The Great Karaoke Expedition!!!! Our team had a work day at Camp Lonestar after our program the night before. It was a very productive day, but afterwards, we were kind of wiped out. That happens when you're working for 12 hours straight . . . so Stephanie, who was feeling exceptionally wiped out, went back to her room and slept, but the rest of us decided to paint the town of LaGrange, TX. We had seen a sign that said "Karaoke Wed. Night" and we knew our destiny. We had to live out our dreams to actually sing into a microphone once on this tour. So, we headed to the place we had seen. The only identifying characteristic was a neon sign that said "CLUB." We walked in and instantly doubled the population. We found a table near the back by the pool tables and proceeded to flip through the notebook for something to sing. The rest of the evening went quickly – playing pool with the locals, dancing the two-step, tango, hip-hop, line dances, and salsa, and singing our little rock-star-want-to-be hearts out. The playlist included "Waterfalls" by TLC, "Ramblin' Man" by the Allman Brothers, "Summer Lovin'" from Grease, "Kryptonite" by Three Doors Down, "Gema," a Spanish love ballad, "Killing Me Softly" by the Fugees, "Wide Open Spaces" by the Dixie Chicks, and "Respect" Aretha-style. We were encouraged by comments like "Sounds like the soundtrack," and several comments from the owner about how happy he was that we showed up and that we were welcome back any time. Somehow one of the guys we were playing pool with got the idea that we were a rock band and I had to sheepishly straighten him out on that fact. "Actually, we're an acoustic group." To which he replied, "Unplugged, cool!" And so, Kindred is a Karaoke sensation, unplugged rock band, and pool hustlers (Jenny and Jim won every game they played). And so, we leave LaGrange, TX with a little more joy and some fond memories of the day we went to the "CLUB."

Date: 10/10/2004
Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton
Journal Entry:



Joshua McNaughton

Hello everyone. We are finishing our second week on the road. I must admit that team life is not quite what I expected. It is a great learning experience. We came to El Paso, Texas yesterday afternoon. I was rather nostalgic because I worked there as a missionary 2003-2004. We did a Family Night Program that went very well, and this morning we did special music at three different churches. After lunch we went to the mission and crossed the border to do special music at a mission church just outside of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México.

I am very encouraged and excited after today. El Paso is an area where most of the people are able to speak Spanish. The team was able to listen, interact and worship with people in Spanish. We did well; a lot of fears were assuaged. Language acquisition is going well. Please pray for continued blessing in that area. Here's hoping that all is well and continues to be so. Take good care!

God's Peace,
Joshua McNaughton

Date: 10/12/2004
Submitted by: Jenny Muth
Journal Entry:

So today we traveled to Silver City, New Mexico to hang out and drink coffee with the

students at Western New Mexico University. After such a heavy experience in Ciudad Juarez, I know at least I was pretty drained and looking forward to a more low key booking. While we were in El Paso, we had a real rock 'em sock 'em weekend. Four different churches plus five bookings divided by two days equals six pooped teamers. But it was a very fulfilled tired, not in the least unhappy. We arrived in El Paso Friday afternoon and did a one on one in Franklin Mountain State park. Both Emily H and I were lucky enough to encounter a snake on two separate occasions. Fortunately, I was just as concerned with getting far away from us as we were with it. In Em's and my defense, neither of us screamed. Then we made our way to our church, this cute church on the top of a hill over looking El Paso and into Juarez, Mexico. There is a huge window behind the altar facing west, and we were all treated to a spectacular sunset.



Jenny Muth

After a family night program, I went home with my host family, a very kind couple with two hysterical dogs. They were the kind of pups that were wider than they were long because they had so much fur. We chatted for a long while and then it was well past bed time. I had great aspirations of waking up early and running before early service, and I actually did wake up...only to realize I had left my shoes in the trailer. Two weeks on the road, you'd think I'd have this whole process down a little better. Sunday was a straight up nuts day. We did some music at the early service, left and made our way over to another church for some more special music, left there and booked over to our first bilingual service which had already started by the time we had gotten there. By bilingual, I mean that that English was the alternate language spoken. We kinda stormed in and did a whirlwind set up and started playing. The congregation was so gracious, even with our terrible Spanish (exception = Josh) and all. For example, I usually tell a joke, my favorite joke no less, before we play "Show You Love." It goes, "What did the 0 say to the 8?" "Nice belt." HAHAHAHA, it gets 'em every time. I had forgotten that we do this, so when it came up I had to translate on the fly. It came out something like this – "Qué dice el cero al ocho?" "Qué buena cintura!" The congregation immediately burst out laughing...but not at my joke. "Cintura" means hips, "cinturón" is belt. I'm sure there will be many more stories like this to come.

After service, the congregation had a nice lunch for us then we headed over to Ysleta Mission. Josh used to work there so it was extra nice for him because it was somewhat of a going home for him. Once we arrived there we immediately headed across the border to Ciudad Juarez to a section called Anapra. Anapra is built on a landfill. You know how you always hear about poverty, and some of the conditions you hear about can really give you goose-bumps. It is so different to be standing in it. Houses built of wooden pallets, mattress springs, and cardboard; roads of loose dust and garbage just coming out of the ground everywhere. Nothing like I had ever seen. We walked into a little cinder block church that could hold about 30 people but was actually holding closer to 50. People practically jumped out of their seats to give us places to sit. Immediately, my fears of how were people going to view the rich Americans were dissolved. So many smiles and such sincere praising. After we finished playing, we were swarmed by a gazillion kids all speaking in Spanish about 1.6 kilometers a minute (it's a conversion thing) and all wanting to get a picture with us and give us stickers and play soccer and tell us about their latest adventure all at once. It was just a hoot! Emily H, Emily T, Jim, myself, and about 8 other kids played a rocking game of fútbol. Then we left to go bless a new house. It was really a day that left you thinking. I struggled a lot with trying not to define the people we met by their poverty. They certainly don't. And it's not like they can't see a mile north across the border and see neon lights and sky scrapers so they know that not everyone's life is like theirs. It made me really take a hard look on what exactly my faith is rooted in. Would I still be as happy and as thankful if I were living like the people of Anapra? It is easy to quickly answer yes, however, just imagining how I would feel if the van were to drive off without me makes me wonder.

Monday was a glorious day off. Emily H, Stephanie, and Josh all went back to Juarez to do some shopping at the market while Jim, Emily T, and I set out in search of some rock climbing. We found some prime rocks just begging to be climbed at Hueco Tanks State Park. "Hueco" means hollow in Spanish and the park is aptly named because the rocks are full of little hollow places that fill up with water. There is actually a swamp in the middle of the desert. It was pretty cool to see little amoeba and fishy things swimming around in pools on the rocks. After a display of über rock climbing/sketchy bouldering/scrambling prowess, we had conquered the mountain. Jim and I even invented ninja rock climbing. This involves bracing yourself off the ground between two rocks using only your legs, saying in a sneaky voice "I'm a *ninja*!" then pouncing to the ground, ready for action. It was definitely a great time, going up sheer faces over a 20 foot crevice, the 40+ mile

view at the top. Really makes you appreciate the complexity and the beauty of God's creation. By the time we got back, our stomachs had reached implosion level of hungry and Jim, the Emilies, and I went over to a lady we had met at the bilingual church's house for some authentic enchiladas. I ate five of them and two huge servings of beans without really stopping to chew. Not quite that bad, but I did put away a lot of food very quickly. Not to mention that this was some HOT food! Even the pastor, who had come with us, kept commenting on the spiciness of the enchiladas. I can already tell that I will never have a stuffy nose in South America! After dinner, we talked for about an hour, all in Spanish. Not only did the language difference prove to be fairly uninhibiting, but we all had a really good time chatting and trading stories. Quite a lovely day.

Tuesday, today, we continued west and got to see lots of beautiful mountains and desert land. I really dig the southwest landscape. We arrived at WNMU and spent the rest of the evening hanging out with the students there. The took us to downtown Silver City, a regular hustle-bustle place of about 2 stoplights, one gelato shop (delish!), a biker bar, an oddities shop, and a cooler-than-thou coffee shop. All in all, a very fun evening. All the girls ended up at the same host home which just so happened to contain a 70 inch flat-screen TV. Our gracious host showed us how to operate that monster and then went to bed soon after leaving us with specific instructions to kick back and enjoy ourselves. So we all watched the new Peter Pan movie. I love the story of Peter Pan in general and am a huge fan of "Hook," (Rufio! Rufio! Ru-fi-oooooooooo!") so it was great fun. It's been a really great couple of days. It's really cool to step back and see how nicely everything has been falling into place.

Date: 10/14/2004

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

I feel SO guilty! I came into this year expecting to give of myself, my time, and my energy. I expected this to be a hard year because I was never going to be thinking of myself and my needs and wants. Well it turns out, everyone we meet seems to be concerned with what I need and want. So far this year has been nothing even remotely close to hard. I have been so blessed by all the people we have met while on the road in these first few weeks. Their generosity absolutely astounds me! Everyone we have met has been so giving of their time and resources.



Emily Heine

In these last few weeks... I've never eaten better (I've already collected a dozen recipes for after team life). I've slept in some of the most comfortable beds (Yay for down-comforters!) I've seen such a variety of the U.S. (from the cornfields of Iowa to the cactus in Arizona). And most recently, I went horse-back riding! When else would I get these opportunities?

I must say, these last few weeks have not been what I expected at all! But, I am so thankful for how wrong my expectations were! I am so blessed to have been called to this ministry this year. Every day, I get to travel to a new church and see what amazing things God is doing there. And in a few months, I will get to travel to Ecuador, Columbia, and Venezuela and see how God is working in the Christians there too! I continue to pray that our team is a blessing to the people we meet while on the road. But I thank God every day for all of the people He has put in my path this year that has been a blessing to my life.

Date: 10/19/2004

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

We spent this morning as half of our day off, since we haven't really had a full day off yet. It is getting wearing to never have a full day to just be . . . but, I remind myself that I should be thankful for the time I have and spend it in a good way. I took a walk and ended up in a Starbucks and watched people while reading my Bible and journaling. How great it is to see all the people going in and out of Starbucks. I saw a father and his son come in and get breakfast. Quite a change from the days of bringing your kids



to McDonald's and letting them play on the playground – or even back in my childhood, when breakfast was sitting down at the kitchen table with your family running around getting ready for school and a bowl of cereal in front of you. I started thinking about how separated we are getting from what I would consider a normal family routine, but yet, family is still involved. One of the blessings of being on the road is seeing how people are still people wherever you go. There are certain things that remain the same – families who spend time together, people working at what is in front of them, basic emotions, the search for belonging, and also glimpses of the power of God in everyday life. I love the fact that we have already been to many churches, 9 states, and quite a few host families and yet we always find God wherever we find ourselves. I am looking forward to finding myself in South America and seeing God there, as well. This is what has been going through my head as we head off to a new place again tomorrow. Praise God for a chance to hang out with Kelly, a past Watermark teamer, and see South West, but I'm ready to continue on. Thanks, God, for continued beginnings.

Emily Twidell

Date: 10/20/2004

Submitted by: Stephanie Stiles

Journal Entry:

Wow. Life sure is crazy living in a van with five other people, going who-knows-where next, and worshiping God with a different part of his family each day! I love it! I'll tell ya, I always thought people who joined Youth Encounter teams had to be crazy. Well, I still do, but now I'm one of them, so I completely understand... sometimes you've just got to jump in head-first and know that God will be there with you!

This past weekend was a total blast! It wasn't even really a weekend... it was Sunday night and Monday! But hey, who can keep track of the days around here? Anyway, we got into Mesa, Arizona at about 3pm and started setting up our stuff for the program we were supposed to do with the South West Captive Free team. Now, as much fun as we'd already been having in the past month, we were pretty psyched to step it up one more notch by getting to worship with some good friends that we hadn't seen in a bit! And boy, was it great. Our host church and the people who came to the program that night were so wonderful and encouraging! It truly was a blessing to be there!

Then Monday, we had a morning chapel at the high school, which rocked! High school kids are seriously great! I was totally excited about the enthusiasm in that room and the will to worship God! Makes me miss high school just a bit.

We had Monday afternoon off, so when we were done, we packed up our stuff and headed back to have lunch and spend the rest of the day with our dear friends from Captive Free. Now mind you, their van was having a bit of trouble and had to be in the shop all day, so we got to fit 12 people into our 15 passenger van (thank goodness they're so big!!) and stick together all afternoon! How wonderful it is to see old friends... yeah!? We are so blessed to have them in our lives.

And as wonderful as the time off was, it somehow did not seem sad to see them go. We'd all been on the road for a month, and you know what? We know that bigger and better things come to those who follow God's plan for them. And that's what we are going to continue doing! We said our goodbyes, eager to hear from them again, and to see what God is doing in and through their team. And as we drove back to our wonderful host homes for the evening, we couldn't wait to spend time visiting with our hosts and then to move on in the next few days to the next step in our journey.

This past month has been such a blessing to us already, in so many ways. We are continually excited to see what God will do next and what he's already doing in the places we're visiting. You know, it's funny. We were sent on the road to serve for a year, but it's never been really hard yet. We're feeling as blessed as ever by the people we meet and the churches we visit. I suppose that's all part of being in the family of God. We have family everywhere we go! Praise the Lord!



Stephanie Stiles

Date: 10/23/2004

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

Good evening folks. This entry comes to you from Agoura Hills, California. We arrived this afternoon at about 3 o'clock. The folks at St. Paul Lutheran Church were busy preparing for a Fall Harvest Celebration, as an evangelism outreach to the community. We were set to play some sing-along songs and to do a puppet show at six. Our objectives until then were to mill around and make people feel welcome. There was a host of fun things to see and do such as hoop shoot, dunk tank, family photo booth, Kindred merchandise, and a pie eating contest.



Joshua McNaughton

At about a quarter of five, as I was walking around, I happened upon Jim talking with one of the girls from the church youth group. Evidently they had been talking about the pie-eating contest that was to take place at 5:30. She was in the contest, and Jim told me he was talking me up, or rather my eating prowess. I thought, "Hmm, I've never been in a pie-eating contest before." Just after that the pastor announced that they needed one more person to enter the contest.

I entered and found out that Jenny had entered as well. There was still about thirty minutes before the contest, so I went back and was relational. Jim was seated eating some supper. I had not eaten since breakfast and had not planned on eating before the contest. I could not resist, however, and I ate a bratwurst and some potato salad. The time came to begin. There were eight people at a table. Eight pumpkin pies were then brought out. These were the biggest pies I'd ever seen. They could easily feed 12-14 people. I was not aware before all this that hands could not be used. Fun fun fun. My glasses came off and I started eating. Jim got all the little kids riled and excited so they were all I could hear. Three minutes later it was all over.

My face was covered in pie. Once judging was complete, I was declared the winner, something I never expected going in. As the winner, I was presented with the Star Wars trilogy DVD boxed set. After a good washing, we were ready to perform. All went well there. Jim and I got to stay with one of the pastors. He and his wife were on team a number of years ago. They are wonderful people. It's nice to have a relaxed atmosphere. Boston and St. Louis are tied in the 6th inning of Game 1 of the World Series. We are slated to lead worship tomorrow morning. All in all, today was a great success. I don't think I'll be eating pumpkin pie for a while. Notwithstanding, God is blessing us continually. I trust that He's doing the same for you all. Take good care!

God's Peace,
Joshua McNaughton

Date: 10/25/2004
Submitted by: Jenny Muth
Journal Entry:

Since Tuesday will be our day off this week, this journal gets to be an entire DAY early!! Holy cow! Santa vaca! Keep your socks on ;o) Well, it has been quite a rollercoaster past couple of days. Everything from moon bounces at a sort of carnival to razor wire fences and 3 locks on our door. Saturday, we went to Agoura Hills, California, to the home church of none other than the fearless leader of East Lakes Captive Free, ANTHONY CELIA!!! After meeting his wonderful family and church, it is very easy to understand how he has grown to be such a strong man of God. When we arrived, the church was gearing up for their fall family festival. Our enormous van was greeted by an even more enormous balloon arch, a dunk tank, basketball hoops, balloon darts, popcorn, funnel cakes, cup cake walks, and my personal favorite, the moon bounce. You know those air-filled bouncy thingys you see at fairs and amusement parks? Yea, moon bounces. I've heard about 17 different names for them, so I figured I'd clarify. Our instructions were to talk to people and have fun. Sweet! Two of my favorite things to do! So Kindred proceeded to do exactly that. Somewhere in all that talking and having of fun, Josh and I signed up to participate in a pie eating contest. Pumpkin pie. Big pumpkin pie. These things looked like wagon wheels. The prize? The collector's edition, super wonderful, any sort of extra you can imagine, complete set of Star War's DVDs. Free pie *and* Star Wars? Can life get any better? I submit that it cannot. So Josh and I prepared to engage in this battle of the gastrointestinal systems. Josh went the traditional route of regretting the two bratwursts he had just eaten where as I tried the ancient Chinese method of



Jenny Muth

harnessing my pumpkin pie chi. This required intense meditation and concentration for a minimum of 14 seconds. Difficult, but I endured. Suddenly, Josh and I found ourselves hovering over the largest pumpkin pies I'd ever seen along with 6 others. We figured with 1 out of 4 contestants being members of Kindred, we had this thing on lock down. On your mark...get set...GORGE! Did I mention that we couldn't use our hands? It was pretty rockin'. After 4 minutes of pure inhalation of pumpkin mash (via mouth and nose, unfortunately) and listening to Jim and about 30 kids screaming "EAT EAT EAT! IS THAT ALL YOU GOT?!" I was done. Although I did not win, I was far from last place. Josh however proved to have the pumpkin eating pie skills of a Hoover vacuum. His nearly licked clean pie pan earned him the jealousy of Star Wars fans everywhere. However, Josh did owe a lot of his victory to his goatee and moustache which were saturated with pumpkin goo. After, we did a mini-program and then headed to host homes. The pie eating was by far the highlight of the evening. Rock on Josh!

Emily T and I were fortunate enough to stay with Anthony's family. I hope everyone has the pleasure of meeting them at some point and I really hope we get to go back. Sunday, we had complete reigns on the worship services. We did a few songs and sing-a-longs, but each of us got a chance to speak to the congregation for a few minutes. It was a nice change of pace to have them get to really meet the whole team. We each shared something about where we were coming from, something we'd seen so far that had really impacted us, why we were doing this ministry, what we liked about it, etc. I spoke a bit about my recent favorite verse from Proverbs 20:24, "A man's steps are lead by the Lord, who then can understand his own way?" This was a verse that really struck me for a number of reasons. One, being a military brat, my whole childhood was spent moving from place to place, never really knowing where I'd be. Two, when you go to college to study chemistry and math, the logical next step would be to pick up a bass guitar and jump in a van for a year. More than that though, I think you hear pretty often "I don't know where I'm going in life. I don't know what I'm doing. Why am I at this place?" It is such a comfort to me to just be reminded that not only am I not expected to fully understand my path, there are times when I *won't* be able to understand. But in either case, God is directing my steps according to His plans for me. And it just so happens that His plan is perfect! Wahoo!

It was pretty difficult to leave Agoura Hills, which I wasn't entirely anticipating. This is probably because I felt so completely at home. Even though we weren't there long, it was definitely a home feeling. From a pretty lovely, suburban, affluent Agoura Hills, we headed into downtown Los Angeles, *downtown* downtown. The sort of place that had razor wire around the church. What could have easily been a stressful situation was handled like a champ by our team. I am continually pleasantly surprised at how God is able to give us peace in some very trying situations. We did our second fully Spanish program and again the congregation was so gracious. There was one part during our skit that I kept stumbling over a certain conjugation of a verb. I looked up to see no less than three people in the congregation mouthing the verb to me. When I finally got it out, I think I even saw two people high-five out of happiness! It was great! Not only were they enjoying it, but they were really pulling for us. Quite a nice realization. Maybe four months won't be as taxing as I thought...

That night all six of us stayed in a studio apartment that was so small that we barely had room between the six sleeping bags and overnight bags on the floor. It was fun though. We tried to have the inaugural viewing of the super duper Star Wars DVDs, but alas, the projector was having none of it that night. So we called it an early night which was probably a good thing because it had been quite a weekend. Overall, I think when I take a step back I'm always quietly surprised at how much God can teach me, even when I think I've learned so much already. That is a great comfort to me and I'm sure I'll cling to that a lot this year.

Date: 10/27/2004

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

God has the funniest way of teaching lessons...He is a very creative guy, and this morning was no exception! I didn't have too much time this morning, but I wanted to make sure and get in a quick run before we started our work day. It was a beautiful California morning. The sun was shining, it was still a little cool outside...perfect running weather! Before I left for the run I had breakfast with my host family. They tried to tell me about a few routes to take, but they all sounded very confusing. I was thinking I'd stick with my normal plan and run 15 minutes and then turn around and run back. As



Emily Heine

I headed out the door they asked me if I knew the address, and I said I'd look on my way out the door. Then they offered to write down their phone number in case I got lost, to which I kindly declined claiming, "No worries. I'm one of our team's navigators...I'm great with direction." I'm sure everyone can see where this story is heading...

I was so eager to head out the door I completely forgot to catch the address of the house, but it was at the top of a HUGE hill, so I figured I'd remember the hill. Plus, I made sure to catch the name of the street, which had a Spanish ring to it! There was no way I could miss this house. Well, the plan of heading in one direction didn't so much work out, considering all of the streets were very short and ended rather abruptly. However, I was very conscious of the turns I was making. I had made three lefts by the time I turned to head back, but I hadn't realized which streets I had made these turns on. Being a neighborhood with numerous little streets...I had LOTS of options to choose from! At this point, most runners would look around at their surroundings and turn at places that looked familiar. This would be a brilliant plan if I was a runner that didn't focus on the ground. So I had to rely on instinct and street signs...ALL of which had a Spanish ring to it. Instinct worked great for the first turn, but it was the second one that I got a little stuck on. I found the street that I thought looked familiar, and after 5 minutes of running up hill, I came across a street sign with a familiar Spanish ring. But after about two minutes of that street...I realized I had made a wrong turn. So, I sprinted down the hill that I spent 5 minutes running up! Once at the bottom, I saw that I had two other options for my next turn. And then the memories started flooding back! I recognized my surroundings!

I easily found my way back after an extra 10 minutes of what I like to call a "Mini-Adventure Run." The whole time I was lost, I kept thinking to myself that it would have been so easy to keep track of my surroundings as I ran, or to have gotten help from my host family, as to what route to take, or to have grabbed a phone number in the fluke event that I would get lost J

A lot of times I find myself doing things the hard way because I don't want to stop and ask for help, especially from God. I will try and figure things out for myself before taking it to God in prayer. It's so much easier when I slow down, have patience, and ask God for help instead of relying on myself for everything. This is a lesson that God continues to teach me, and I'm sure He will remain faithful and continue to remind me to ask for help! As always, life tends to go a little smoother when I rely on Him instead of myself!

Date: 10/30/2004

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Wow, I can't believe it is only the end of October. So far this month I have had a birthday, been in 10 states, two countries and three time-zones and honestly it feels like we have been on the road for about three years. Yet I feel like the time has flown by, I can't remember where I was four days ago, heck I forget where I am now, but I know I am where I am supposed to be. Does that make sense? Probably not but making sense has never been a strong point of mine. All I know, is I can't believe how much I have changed and learned and seen in just one month.

I have seen extreme poverty and extreme faith at the same time in Anopera, Mexico. I have seen great excitement and great joy and love from the kids we have ministered to all over this great nation. I have seen unbelievable support from both friends and family. I have seen prayers fulfilled and the power of God shown in the stories of drug addicts and ex-cons in a few places we have performed and it has opened my eyes. I have seen the love of Christ and felt his comforting hand on my shoulder. I have also seen incredible love, kindness, endurance and humility from my amazing teammates.

I know that already my faith has grown and my relationship with God has been intensified greatly thanks both to this ministry and to our daily devotions with each other and with church's that we have programs in. I don't really know how to explain all the things you see on team and all the ways that people reach out to you. How can I put into words how I feel when someone opens up their house to me and then cooks me dinner at ten at night even though they need to wake up at five just because I am a bit hungry and asked for a pop-tart? How can I explain the feeling of getting a cold Coca-Cola from a child in Mexico who doesn't have plumbing or electricity but can give me a soda because I looked thirsty after singing for them? We as a team are served so much greater than we are able to serve. We are given far more than we give, and not for lack of trying, just the amazing kindness and Christ-like love of the people we meet blows me away.



Jim Pfrogner

I am learning about true humility, and I am learning that sometimes listening is far more important than speaking. I have learned that no matter how scary a situation looks from the outside, if you put it in God's hands things will not only turn out alright but can be life changing. I have learned that I am not going to be perfect...ever...and that in my weakness and failure am I truly able to meet people and touch people and be touched. It is in opening up and being vulnerable that we connect most with each other. And I have learned that when you just stop talking, and begin listening to God and attempt to follow his plan for you, life becomes a lot easier and a lot more enjoyable. Lastly I have learned that Kindred means family and that a family rooted in the Word and strengthened by their love for each other as children of God and amazing individuals has the power to overcome any obstacle thru faith in Christ and trust in one another.

So to sum up, I have learned to be open, to trust, and to love. I wonder what I will have learned by next month.

Date: 11/2/2004

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Mmmmm! Garlic! Yes, we are in the garlic capital of the world, Gilroy, CA. We are all staying with Claudia (the Spanish teacher at Anchor Point Christian High School), her husband and her sister who is visiting. We had a delightful evening filled with soft taco goodness, conversation with some of the teachers who came to visit us before our school chapel tomorrow, and anxious TV coverage of the election playing on the screen. It was interesting spending time with teachers again after having been a substitute teacher last year. It's a thin line they have to ride between loving their students the way they are and wanting better for them. I do not envy them their position, but we see small glimpses of this every day on the road. Many students who have so much energy and life and excitement in their faith and futures have so much to learn about what it means to truly live as a Christian. I remember when I first started realizing that being a Christian was a process of growth and that I would always have something new to learn. So, I sat and listened to these teachers who wanted more for their students and was encouraged that they would continue growing. Meanwhile, in the life of our country, we were deciding the growth of our nation for the next year. I must admit that this was the hardest voting year I've ever had. I honestly just wanted this election to be over with so I could start getting my mind set for supporting our Commander in Chief – whoever he might be. I have received several emails from a friend of mine who is spending a college semester in Ecuador, and she has mentioned several times how interested those people are in what happens in the politics of our country. I don't know enough about politics (Em Heine should probably be writing this journal because we decided tonight was her SuperBowl – poli-sci major that she is). I tend to relate to people easier than ideas, and this makes me thankful for the opportunity to go to South America. To bring a face to this mass of economy called "The United States of America" and to let people know I'm more interested in the people they are than the resources they have.



Emily Twidell

Date: 11/11/2004

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

Crazy story for you...

So about a month ago I left my Nalgene water bottle in a rest stop bathroom somewhere in between Silver City, NM and Tucson, AZ. I was pretty disappointed, but I had hopes that the team would make it to an outdoor store sooner than later. Well,

after about three weeks of going without a water bottle I found a Nalgene look-a-like at a coffee shop. I bought it instantly! Problem solved without an REI! Unfortunately, the water bottle only lasted about a week. Warning to all readers: Nalgene look-a-likes don't survive a single drop. They crack instantly. So there I was, yet again, without a water bottle.

The next morning I got up early to go for a walk outside. Northern California is pretty chilly in the morning so I had been avoiding my morning walk because I didn't have any warm pants to walk in. However, I decided to brave the brisk morning in my pajama pants. I had forgotten to bring my headphones, so I thought I'd try praying as I walked. I'm not very good at focusing on my prayers while doing other things, and this morning was no different. But, I managed to sneak in a few prayers and a lot of thinking! I thought a lot about team life...and I realized that as much as I love team life, it is frustrating to not be able to get in a car and go buy whatever I need, when I need it. It was then that I realized this had been bugging me a lot. So, I prayed that God would give me patience. In all reality, I could just recycle old water bottles; I didn't NEED a Nalgene. I could continue to walk in my pajama pants; I didn't NEED running pants. When I got back from my walk, I was content and ready to be patient in waiting for a trip to an REI.

After breakfast, I mentioned my broken water bottle to my host mom, and she immediately offered to take me to REI! I couldn't believe it! She took me to REI and we found a water bottle, and then she asked if I needed anything else. We looked at running pants, but they were fairly expensive, so I told her I'd wait and buy some at Target. Then she offered to drive me over to Target! How crazy! I had just told God I was willing to be patient and wait for those two things, and instead, I got them instantly! I think God just wanted me to be willing to be patient! I don't mean to say that whenever I want something, I'm going to tell God I'll be patient and expect He'll automatically give it to me. But on this day, I think God was trying to teach me a lesson in being patient for the things I want! God has truly blessed me in so many ways already this year, and on this day, He really blessed me with an amazing host mom!



Emily Heine

Date: 11/13/2004

Submitted by: Stephanie Stiles

Journal Entry:

It's snowing!! I can't believe it! November 13th, and it's snowing!! It's beautiful. Ok, ok, so this is completely normal for Flagstaff, AZ at this time of year... but weird for me!

Anyways, it's been a crazy, awesome week in the life of Kindred! We spent last Sunday evening doing a second program with the South West Captive Free team... how cool is that, to meet up with teams on the road!?! And Monday, the pastor of the church we were at invited us all for morning devotions and sharing time, which was a real blessing. Yay for devotions!!

Then we got to go to the Monterey Bay Aquarium... how much fun, I mean, seriously!?! It's funny, some weeks you really need a day off, some weeks you don't. Some weeks the day off feels like you kept way too busy for it to have been a day off, some weeks every day is so relaxing and calm that you feel like the entire week was a big long day off! I think that's what this past couple of weeks has been for me. We continue to keep busy doing ministry in different areas, but they are such relaxed environments that have blessed us so much that it's all just completely refreshing. But anyway... it was so neat to go to the aquarium and hang out with friends and then get back into the van at the end of the day excited to be back on the road doing ministry!!

Tuesday and Thursday we got to be in West Hills, CA hanging out with one of the girls who was on Watermark last year. It was fun to hear what her experiences were and how every team and journey is so different. Plus, it's always good to see last year's team members and how they've transitioned... sooner than we think we'll be doing that. Wow! I can't believe it's been almost 3 months already since we left home and first met in St. Paul, MN for training!

Wednesday we were blessed to hang out with college students at UCLA... Go Bruins!! That was good times. I absolutely love going to college campuses.... I miss mine! We got to lead worship there for an amazing group of students who were totally encouraging to us. I can't even explain the amazing feelings of being so blessed this past week.



Stephanie Stiles

Last night we were privileged to spend time in Barstow, CA, where we enjoyed worshipping with, and hearing the testimonies of, some of the church community there.

Wow, those snowflakes are huge! And coming down like crazy! Seriously, it's like it was totally clear one minute and then we drove into this wall of snow coming down! You know, like Eeyore's rain cloud on Winnie The Pooh... where it's only there in that one area above Eeyore's head. The snow's like that... we just drove into its bubble or something! Except, I think it's a lot bigger than Eeyore's cloud.

Anyway, we've had a great week. I'm totally watching God work, seeing our team grow, and driving through a snow-covered, beautiful Arizona. And we get to see Jenny's parents tonight! So rockin'! Praise God!

Date: 11/16/2004

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

"The Big Ditch" I've heard it called, but I can't exactly live with that description of one of the singularly most beautiful sights I've ever seen. The Grand Canyon was our destination for our team outing today, and I was astounded as I walked out to the edge and had to admit that the pictures I've seen don't do it justice. I'm amazed that a little river like that could have carved its way through that much rock. God really can use small things in big ways. We split up--some took the low road and some took the high road--and went hiking for a while. I kept running out to the edge of the cliffs any chance I got, and once the high road group saw the low road group way below us in the canyon. I only could tell it was them because I have their clothes memorized. Em H. and I started singing "Tengo Paz Como un Rio" ("I've Got Peace Like a River" for the less bilingual). All of a sudden our teammates looked up at us and started singing back as other hikers started to turn and see who the crazy people were. We sure had fun with it, though. Every time I looked out over those cliffs I had to say 'Good job, God' because I was baffled that so much beauty could fit in one place. Then we hiked out to another overlook and got to watch the sunset over the cliffs. On the way back to our van, we met a guy from Germany riding the same shuttle we were. It was pretty funny because the van was so full I was sitting behind my teammates and just got to watch them invest themselves in a conversation with this person. Most other people weren't trying to chat with those next to them or strike up conversations with strangers, but my teammates were. I was so proud to get to sit back and see what my new family was good at. I'm very blessed to have a team that wants to reach out even in the strangest of settings. Yes, I'm blessed.



Emily Twidell

Date: 11/30/2004

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

So since this journal is what one might call "late," I'm not going to write about what went on when I *should* have written this, but what is going on now. I can do this because I am the one writing this...ahhh the power! So on Thanksgiving Day, being that Kindred was in Denver, I chose to celebrate by going skiing. Yes, the time honored fight against gravity and various forms of frozen water with two pieces of Plexiglas anchored onto your feet. I'm a snowboarder by trade, so put two boards on my feet and I'm lost. But let me tell you, never having skied before, I was VERY thankful for coming to a stop at the bottom of the hill without the help of a tree my



Jenny Muth

first time down. So skiing as a form of celebrating Thanksgiving might not be too big a stretch. My first couple of times down the bunny slope was fairly frustrating because every natural inclination I had from snowboarding was wrong. Soon, though, I learned how to turn sharper, stop more effectively, and not freak out when I started going a bit fast. The rest of the day passed fairly quickly, and I have to admit now that I was really enjoying skiing. I think I could even turn better on skis than I can on a snowboard. Shhh, don't tell anyone though; snowboarding is still cooler even though I can't turn left on a snowboard (not an ambi-turner, I guess). Before I knew it, it was nearly 4:00 and the lifts were about to close. This was to be the last run of the day, and I was just going to take it all the way into the rental place. So I'm going down the hill doing that zig zag thing that skiers do to keep from barreling down the hill at the speed of light. All is going well when suddenly my left ski stops and I twist around and take a spill down hill. My right ski popped off, but the left one stayed on causing my left knee to wrench around pretty good. As I was falling I was praying, "Please, God, don't let my ACL tear!" Sure enough, I never heard the telltale POP and hit the ground with all ligaments intact. God is **good**. I had always been afraid that I would hurt my knees snowboarding; oh the irony! Long story short, I got a fun mummy-being-dragged-by-a-snowmobile ride to the infirmary and my knee was pronounced sprained. So I've been burning through the ibuprofen and on crutches ever since. The process of getting and being on crutches has been an interesting one. More on this to come; there are several funny stories in there. At first I felt really guilty, now instead of being a help to the team, I was more of a burden. I can't get into the van on my own; I can't carry any instruments or even my own pack. I was determined to make my bum knee as minor a glitch as possible. I would only accept help after I had tried several times on my own. No, thank you, I can do this on my own. It was almost a matter of pride. Actually, yes, a lot of it was pride. I didn't want to feel needy or a incapable. See? I don't need any help. It didn't take me long to realize that my stubbornness was holding up the team even more than my knee was. Even though I can open a door, it takes me a long time to do so and means everyone has to wait even longer for me. I can get out of the van on my own, but it's pretty risky. If I slip and hurt my knee even more, that just would be irresponsible of me.

Everyone ready for the “this is like Jesus because...” moment? Here it comes.

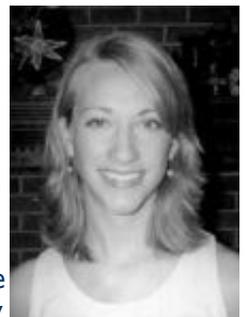
Right now I my path and ability to move is completely dependent on things outside of me. Whether it be my team getting me in and out of buildings/the van, or the crutches which make mobility even possible, I can't get anywhere on my own. See where I'm going? Next point, stubbornness and pride will only impede. It may appear that you can do something on your own, but when you step back, you have to ask yourself if you can really do something better on your own. Being in a helpless position has made very concrete in my mind the idea that I can really do nothing without God. Anything that I try to keep to myself is not nearly as good as if I turn it completely over to God. We are all helpless creatures on our own, but mighty in the Lord. And all God really wants is for us to lean solely on Him. He is the only way I'm going to be able to move through this life. So this ordeal has been a keen reminder that being dependent is not something to be fighting against; it is not the bad ideal that our independent-minded society makes it out to be. That, and that God is much easier on the armpits than crutches.

Date: 12/6/2004

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

Since I attempted a “profound” journal of sorts, this one is simply going to be a story. I had mentioned a funny story in the previous entry, so here 'tis. Being smart enough to get hurt on a national holiday when not even Wal-Marts are open, I could not get crutches on Thanksgiving. That next morning, we had a booking at a hospice center, and we didn't have time beforehand to do any crutch hunting. So we get to the Hospice Center of Denver, which turns out to be on the second floor of the building. I absolutely cannot walk or even move my left leg at all. The only form of transportation I have is the van and being piggy-backed. Since driving the van into the elevator got voted as a bad idea, Jim got volunteered to piggy-back me around. We are getting into an elevator, me on Jim's back and an icepack on my rather large knee, when a lady gets into the elevator as well. She gives us a funny look and says, “The hospital is in the other section of the building.” “Oh, no worries,” replies Jim. “We are musicians.” Classic! So we get upstairs, and I hobble over to the front desk and tell the gentleman behind the counter that we are Kindred, here for the 11:00 program. He kindly shows us where to set up. “I have a funny question for you, sir,” I ask. I tell him my ordeal with my bum knee and not being able to locate any crutches on a national holiday. “I was wondering if you have any crutches that I could borrow while we are here.” He says he'll see what he can find and disappears. He returned shortly with...a *walker!!* But not just *any* walker, the Cadillac of walkers! This bad boy was metallic purple, had wheels, a seat, and hand breaks. Oh, I was styling and profiling, let me tell you. I had a great time zipping around like a one-legged NASCAR.



Jenny Muth

Date: 12/28/2004

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

On the road again, I just can't wait to get...whew. Wonder how many times that song has been overused when teamers get back from Christmas break. ;o) On Monday December 27th, all the teams regrouped in Minneapolis after a nice two-week vacation. I, personally, had a fab time at home. Steve Seybold (from Captive Free Southwest and all around phenomenal person) and I got to play a song together at our church which was quite fun. I also made another trip out to Colorado....sans skiing, ha! I was fortunate enough to get in touch with some high school friends and my college roommate whom I hadn't seen in a long time. But I'd have to say that the most amazing part of being home was celebrating Christ's birth with my family. On the morning we left Midwinter training to go home, Jim Matthias (from the YE staff) gave a devotion about how awesome it would be if the thing we were most excited about was the birth of our Savior. Not that it isn't exciting to be home with family and friends, but how much more wonderful it is that God would send Himself to us. And in the form of a baby! That really stuck with me. There were several instances while I was home where I would start feeling homesick already about leaving and check myself against that thought. The bigger part of the break was so that we could completely focus on celebrating Christmas, not being able to sleep in and hang out with friends and do laundry when we want and wear clothes other than the same five shirts you'd been wearing the past four months. Although those were nice extras. I have to admit that this was the first Christmas where I truly and honestly appreciated being able to go to church and be with my family. Maybe because this time there was an active focus on family being second. Perhaps that allowed me the freedom to not be burdened with gift-buying stress, or cleaning-the-house stress, or any of the intricate distractions of the holiday season. By clearly defining my priorities, the normalcy of being with family and going to church at Christmas seemed so much more precious. Emily T's dad has always prayed that she would love Christ more than anyone, family included. I think that is such a beautiful thought. My family is one of the biggest blessings I have. Their love for me and my love for them is a reflection of God's perfect love. Just think how much greater the real image is.



Jenny Muth

Date: 12/28/2004

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

And we're back on the road! After an amazing week of Mid-winter training and two weeks off for Christmas break, we are back at it! It's been a crazy first week. After many flight delays and some confusion as to where we were supposed to go on our re-grouping day, the team was finally back together by midnight on Monday night. Well, the whole team except for me. I wasn't sure where I was supposed to meet the team until late Monday night, and since I live in the Twin Cities, that gave me an excuse to sleep in my bed one more night. The team met at my house the next morning, and we started our day like we do every day, with devotions and check-ins. Then, we thought it was time for some much needed rehearsal before we recorded our team CD that afternoon. We hadn't played together as a team for an entire month! We were surprised how easily the songs came. Playing together again felt great....Kindred was back!



Emily Heine

Next it was off to pick up Steph's luggage that didn't quite make it onto her flight that night. After grabbing a quick bite to eat, it was off to recording. The whole process went quite smoothly, except for one small glitch...the heater turned on half-way through recording. After some amazing ingenuity by all present, we managed to cover the 10-foot tall vent with a piano, a long table, a microphone stand, and two winter coats. Twenty minutes later, all was solved!

The rest of the night was full of time to re-connect and share stories with each other of our two weeks apart. We laughed lots, and after our crazy day, we had many new quotes for our quote book. God really blessed us with an amazing two weeks of rest to re-charge and prepare for our next few weeks on the road before we head to South America. We are so thankful to be back together again and can't wait to see what God has in store for us in these next few months!

Date: 1/1/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Well, it is the New Year and the end of a crazy week, make that a crazy month....ok fine make that a crazy year. I honestly have to say that it has been the best few months of my life, being on team. I continue to have amazing experiences and have the incredible pleasure of watching the Lord move in others, in my teammates and within me. Still, it is crazy sometimes.



Jim Pfrogner

This week started out with all of Kindred finally being reunited after a month without Emily Twidell--whom, from now on, I will refer to as Milly. Milly was at home for a while taking care of her sister (who, praise the Lord, looks like she will make a full recovery) but the absence of her whom we all love greatly stressed our team. When you are an acoustic team and you lose your only guitar player and a true role model of selflessness as well, it takes a toll.

Yet it was something we needed. The team pulled together and even without Milly we managed to have a few good programs and then a rocking program at Mid-winter. We needed to see that we could do it without her and that we should have confidence in ourselves as a team and confidence in God that He will see us through. It still strikes me as funny every time I wonder what He is thinking and then look back and notice that He may have had a plan. J

So getting back together, having not played any of our songs with Milly for a month and being fresh off a refreshing two week break, I was looking forward to some easy days to get back into the rhythm of team life. What we got was a two-hour all Spanish program the first day back!!! OK--normal programs, in all English, are supposed to last an hour and fifteen minutes, so two hours of English would be a bit extra. Two hours of Spanish songs you haven't practiced in a month, some of which you have never even played together...that's a bit harder. So I did the one thing I could...I prayed...a lot. You know what happened next right....yup, God stepped in, we pulled together and it went great. We sang for at least two hours and had the whole place rockin. God sure is awesome.

Then the next night we had a two hour English program, so that took care of almost every song we knew in two days J And the next day? You guessed it--another family night program for the same people we did the last two-hour program for! So after three days we know all of our songs again and have learned about nine new ones (all Spanish). How cool is that? How amazing is God? How tired is my voice? J

So that's been my week so far, just amazing. Even one of my biggest fears--how will I do speaking and communicating with kids overseas--was put to rest. I learned that "tag" is universal and that all kids love to play and act like kids; also, if you run around and act like a monster, most kids will chase you!! So it has been a fun few days, I feel back in the swing of things now, and I feel that the Lord is taking care of our team. I am so happy to be here and part of this ministry. I know

it can be hard and trying at times, but you know, that's how you are pushed and shaped and molded in the Refiner's fire. I love being here and being molded, and hopefully I am able to spread the fire along the way.

So until next week, blessings and peace be upon you,

Jim Pfrogner

Date: 1/4/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Yes, the world is all beautiful today with oodles and oodles of snow on the ground. I have a hint of 'not-going-to-school-tomorrow' fever even though I know full well that I am no longer in school. Still, my memory returns to all the great times I had growing up watching the snow fall hard as I fell asleep thinking about the marvelous hours of wintry fun I would have the following day. Tonight we are in Independence, IA at the home of the Kilgards. We left the pastor's house in Clinton this morning with some bags of gourmet tea from our tea connoisseur host dad. Jenny and I are looking to many evenings of delicious oolong and green tea. We drove through a little snow to get here, but it wasn't bad. When we got here, however, it started coming down pretty good. We did a preschool chapel and then prepared to meet our host families. Jenny and I were again housed together and we got into the car with a very sweet host-mom and drove to a house on the edge of town where there was no electricity. What another blast from the past! I remember as a kid getting to sit around in the house with candles lit everywhere and listen to the battery-powered radio and play board games or card games with my family. I also remember hoping that the electricity wouldn't come back on until I had to go to sleep because then Mom let me bring a candle up the stairs to bed like they did back in the 'old days'. I loved getting to the house and seeing candles everywhere and blazing fire in the fireplace and thinking – this is going to be a good night! Our host parents sat down with us, and we chatted for a while as we tried to decide if we should go out to eat or wait until the electricity came back on and eat at home. It was a true blessing to be able to sit in front of the toasty fire and just relax with our family. It reminded me that we really don't do that often enough. We spend so much time with a TV or radio on that we don't just sit and pay each other undivided attention anymore. I can't remember the last time I was in a house where the living room furniture faced people towards each other rather than the TV. I need to remember this for if and when I ever settle down. People should be the focus of our time and attention – not things. And so, with this bit of epiphany, we went for Chinese food back in town where the electricity was still on, and when we got back to the house, we sat down and made cookies and I proceeded to watch the National Championship Football game with my host dad. The epiphany didn't last long. Even so, I was thankful for the lesson and for the chance to spend some time with my hosts. Now, I can lay my head down on the pillow and look out my bedroom window at the snow and wish that I was still a little kid – staying home from school tomorrow . . .



Emily Twidell

Date: 1/8/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone! I hope you all are doing well. This journal comes to you from Algona, Iowa.

A lesson that I've been learning lately is that of gratitude. During our stint here in Iowa a big snowstorm came through. During this week we have had fourteen inches of snow on top of one half of an inch of ice. I am not fond of this kind of weather, as it usually makes me stiff.



Joshua McNaughton

With the weather as it was, our plans were destined for change. During two days, nearly all that we had originally planned was cancelled due to inclement weather. I was as a result a bit cranky and I didn't feel like doing too much. God knows what he is doing. Instead of our previously planned activities we spent time at an assisted living complex and spent the afternoon with the high school youth group at the church. Both of those experiences turned out to be very valuable to me. When I stopped and thought about it, I never would have done those things if it were not for the weather.

I'm glad that God doesn't give up on any of us and that I can still learn and take instruction. May God bless you all as you live out lives of service in the Church and in the World.

La Paz de Cristo sea con ustedes, (The Peace of Christ be with you,)

Josué

Date: 1/11/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

In my entry on 11/30, I wrote about my adventures skiing on Thanksgiving Day. Recent knowledge now proves some of the information in that entry incorrect. While I was home over Christmas break, I went to the doctor to get my knee checked out because even after three weeks, it was still hurting and I could not walk. This had made getting around at Midwinter training quite interesting. We arrived at the camp to see the ground completely covered with ice and about six inches of snow. Well, it was December in Minnesota...go figure. Sunitha, our ever-so-wise director, took one look at me on crutches and declared that there was no way I could make it around outside. See, I told you she was wise. As a result, I was carried--piggy-backed, sack-of-potatoes-carried, fireman-carried, and even stretchered (using a real army stretcher no less!) from building to building the entire week. But I digress. So after a full day of doctor's appointments and an MRI, I found out that not only had I completely torn my ACL, I also had "extensive bone bruising," and a "compound compression contusion" (which, other than a nice alliteration, I have no idea what that is). Wow. Talk about a complete stop in my tracks. Especially since I was so convinced that God had protected me and my ACL hadn't torn. I spent the better part of that night and the next day in a royal funk. Would this keep me from being able to go to South America? Would I be able to go at the risk of this turning into a permanent injury? How do I make that decision? Why did this happen? Lots of questions, few answers. Long story short, I will need surgery, but my injury is such that surgery can be postponed for quite some time. I found that I was actually quite fortunate that, considering the way I fell, I didn't tear my MCL which would have been an injury that required surgery right away. So God was protecting me after all. I'm finding more and more that I can see God working in my life when I define the word "blessing" less and less by my own narrow, take-it-for-granted point of view. Every day I am learning something new as a direct result of this injury. I used to do TKD or run as a way to deal with stress, now I am learning how to just sit and be still and listen. I am a person who hates saying, "I used to be able to do that." Now I am understanding a little bit more the huge sacrifice that an all-powerful God of the universe made when He became an infant who couldn't even sit up. I used to just assume that I would be able to do whatever activity the next day would require without much thought; now I am so grateful to simply be able to walk without crutches. There are still a lot of questions in my mind as to how will I be able to handle all the walking and standing we will be doing in South America in just a few days. Especially with the weight of everything I am taking on my back. But, hey, more incentive to bring less. More education in how to live without all sorts of "stuff." More insight into what it means to lean wholly on Jesus. A song that I really enjoy is a story about a woman who understands what it means to say "Jesus is all I need." Not His blessings or His gifts, but just Him. Isn't it cool how God can work in anything? El Señor es siempre bueno. The Lord is always **good**.



Jenny Muth

Date: 1/13/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

God answers prayer. We have been blessed to have so many bookings these last few weeks. However, it has been stressful trying to figure out when we were going to have time to learn more Spanish songs, puppet shows, and skits. It was definitely a fear of mine that we would not be prepared for our time in South America.

After our weekend in Algona, IA, the office called to let us know that we would be spending Tuesday night at a nearby camp – Covenant Pines. When we arrived at the camp they greeted us and showed us where we would be staying. They let us know how to get a hold of them if we needed anything, but basically we were on our own! It was such a blessing to have that time to work on music and puppet shows. The team worked hard all night, and by 9:30 p.m. we had four Spanish puppet shows and a few more songs learned in Spanish.

We are still short on Spanish skits, and there is still plenty more to do. Despite all of that, I have a peace that I did not have before our night at Covenant Pines. God gave us much needed time and calmed our "to-do list" fears. We are confident that all will get done, and if it doesn't, it will be okay. Thank God it's in His hands!



Emily Heine

Date: 1/15/2005
Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner
Journal Entry:

Well here we are again, journal time. I can't believe how far we have come and that in four--yep, that's right--four days we are going to be leaving for Quito, Ecuador. This entire time that I have been on team, I have thought a bit here and there about going overseas and all the amazing things that I would see and experience there. Yet to me it was a lot like a dream; it didn't seem like it would actually happen. I was excited to go see new places and meet new people and speak Spanish, but we do that all the time, so I guess it never really hit me that I would really be leaving for a new country.

To be honest I am nervous, which is good because whenever I am nervous I rely more on God and less on myself, and things turn out better. Still it is scary that I will have to be using all Spanish all the time. My Spanish is OK, not great, but using it all the time frightens me mainly because I don't want to let my team down, and I don't like being this far outside of my comfort zone. This is why I am here, to stretch myself in new ways and to let God stretch me when I don't think I can give anymore.

Right now is pretty stressful; we are getting a lot done but it doesn't feel like enough. We have about 23 Spanish songs ready to go and five puppet shows, so that much is really good. However we only have one Spanish skit and no workshops worked up yet, so that is very frightening since I have no ability to think on my feet in Spanish. English, yes. Spanish, I need, like, an hour on my own to think up a good comeback. J

Still I am thrilled to be going; it is funny, but this is what I love best. Not knowing how we will get stuff done but knowing that we will, not knowing how God will use us but knowing that He will. He says His power is made perfect in weakness, and He has a history of being right about these things. So what do I have to fear?

Also there is the great fact that I am surrounded by the best team a guy could ask for, and we are in it together. So no matter what comes up, there will be six heads working on it together. Good thing, too, because I could not do this alone.



Jim Pfrogner

I hope everyone reading this is doing well and will keep us in their prayers. It might seem like a small thing, but I keep learning how powerful prayers are. Also we keep finding out new exciting things that we will be doing in Ecuador, including working on a job site painting and plastering a clinic. So not only will our voices be used, but our bodies as well, which is really exciting. And did you know that it is summer there right now? Yeah, we'll go from -20 to 90 in a day. I am so excited to get out of this blasted cold. I think it is God's way of telling us to go. J

Well, I guess I should call it a day. God bless and have a good week. The next time I write to you....I can't believe I am saying this....I will be in Ecuador.

Santiago Pfrogner

Date: 1/19/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

Bienvenido a Ecuador! Today we arrived safely in Quito, Ecuador, after a day of uneventful travel. We left the house around 5:25 a.m.—only ten minutes behind schedule! On our way to the Youth Encounter office to meet our chauffeur, we realized we didn't have our actual plane tickets, only receipts. After twenty minutes of frantic—that is, calm searching, we headed to the airport with the confidence that we at least had the receipts for our tickets. I wasn't worried. Soon after arriving, we realized we had e-tickets (which means we never got paper tickets in the first place), so all was well with the world again. An hour later, we boarded our flight with ease. Our plane made a quick stop in Chicago before heading to Miami International. We all hopped off the plane and grabbed a quick lunch, and then we were off to Miami. Somehow in the walk from our arriving gate in Miami to our departing gate to Quito, we completely lost Josh. I mean, he disappeared. I had just looked to make sure he was with us, and the next minute he had disappeared. ABSOLUTELY disappeared. Literally. After ten minutes of searching, Jim found him at our arriving gate. He had left his next boarding pass on the old plane and had run back to get it without telling anyone. We suggested he tell someone next time!

But other than that, we had a great day of flying. No layovers were more than thirty minutes, and we each had our own row on the flight to Quito. We were only in the air for about seven hours, and we only moved one time zone! We're feeling great! After a short prayer on the plane, we prepared to brave Customs. Surprisingly, we went through them so fast, half the group didn't even realize it was Customs! And now we are here! We're staying in Quito for a few days at a Christian guest house, with towels, beds and hot water. We can even flush our toilet paper! It's not quite what we expected, but we're sure to be "roughing it" sooner or later, so we will be thankful for the "luxuries" while we can.



Emily Heine

Date: 1/20/2005

Submitted by: Stephanie Stiles

Journal Entry:

Our first day in Ecuador! We flew into Quito last night and were graciously met at the airport by our missionary contact who took us to the guest house where we are staying. All's smooth thus far. This morning we got up bright and early to have breakfast and devotions before heading out to explore Quito. Our missionary contact took us into town to see a museum before going to Old Quito where we got to see some old churches. We walked through the parks and through town and took the trolleys around town. I was surprised at how "Americanized" Quito seemed, but I was assured that Quito is much different from the rest of the country.



Stephanie Stiles

We headed back toward the guest house around six to meet a woman who had been on Cross Fire a few years ago. She and her husband were in Ecuador for a short-term mission and had contacted us hoping to meet before they go back to the States tomorrow. Funny story time? It turns out that both of them had not only worked at Camp Lutherhaven, where I've spent my last two summers as a camp counselor, but she had been my camp nurse when I was a camper in middle school! I still have pictures at home of the two of us from eight years ago! Of all places to reunite—Ecuador? God does work in mysterious ways!

Anyway, it was extremely encouraging to get to talk to both of them and hear a bit of what's been going on their lives since camp and team. What a wonderful opportunity for us to share and encourage one another!

Remember: God is good. All the time.

Date: 1/21/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

After a full day of seeing sights in Quito, we went to bed early. This morning we got up at 4:00 to be at the airport at 5:00. We took off at 5:45 on a 45-minute flight for Catamayo. Upon arrival, we piled our instruments and our luggage into the pick-up truck and rode an hour and fifteen minutes to Cariamanga.

After breakfast, we met our host families. Jim and I are staying with our Lutheran Cariamanga contacts, a family with two young children and lots of love. After lunch, **Joshua McNaughton** we rode to Quilanga, where we sang three songs for Club Viernes (Club Friday). Club Viernes is an outreach ministry to children in the Quilanga area. There are two groups of children—one for ages 4-7 and one for age 8 and above. They meet separately for about an hour and experience music, learn a lesson based on a Bible story, and work on memory verses. Then they get a snack and play a few games. There were probably almost sixty kids between the two groups. They enjoyed games like Raton Raton (Rat, Rat), El Lobo (The Wolf), and Rojo y Verde (Red Light, Green Light). It's exciting to partake in the ministry here and serve in this way. I look forward to many different experiences!

Peace,
Joshua



Date: 1/22/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Welcome to Ecuador! Well, here we are, and man, what an amazing and different place it is. I am sure that my teammates will talk about how different it is here, so I won't dwell on it. However, here are a few little fun facts for you.

- 1) Cows on the highway are normal and might not move until you bump them; then they saunter away.
- 2) Sunglasses and cell phones are fashion statements and are not necessarily for real use. For instance, people will pretend to talk on fake cell phones just to look cool. Interesting, huh?

Anyway, today was our first real program in a small church in the town of Cariamanga. The spiritual warfare here is powerful. Many people believe in a pagan form of Catholicism centered on Mary in which she is worshipped like God. The Catholic church here also sells indulgences. People don't know that once they are saved by grace, they need not follow any idol or try to buy their way into heaven. So, being a believer in Christ here, you need to deal with actual persecution from neighbors who listen to priests rail against the "evangelicals" and ask people to persecute other Christians. It is different than what I have experienced.



Jim Pfrogner

However, the people packed into the church today were as incredible as you could imagine—people who really believe and love their Savior despite persecution. We had a full house at our program, and the entire congregation was full of praise. They sang, danced, clapped and praised God until we all (six Americans and a church full of Ecuadorians) were tired and I personally felt the Holy Spirit about as close as I ever have. It is just incredible to meet true brothers and sisters in Christ, actually being here and speaking Spanish face to face and really feeling the people's love for God. I can't say I have ever experienced this and, man, I love it. It is tough, draining, a little dangerous, and probably the greatest thing I have ever done. I feel so safe and held tightly in God's embrace. I love it here. Send prayers for the people of Cariamanga, and may God bless you all.

Santiago Pfrogner

Date: 1/23/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

Welcome to "Let's Make a Deal"—Ecuadorian style! A.K.A., going to the market. Our first Sunday in Cariamanga began with a bit of mystery as the McWeenys (our contacts) had us all meet over at their apartment for a "market assignment." We all met not knowing any more information than that. Turns out Mr. and Mrs. McWeeny had divided us into two teams and had a list of fruits/vegetables for us to purchase as a team and a list of things we had to buy individually. Here are the items on the list: maracuya, tumbo, verde, maduro, tuna, maranjilla, tomate de árbol, tomate de riñon, granadilla, soya, yucca, zarandilla, and several other things that I'm probably forgetting. So, with \$1 for the individual list (six items) and \$2 for the team list (seven items), Jim, Em H, and I set out to the Mercado Chileno, while Em T, Steph and Josh headed to the downtown market. On the way there, Jim, Em H and I (Team Barterers of Doom!) reviewed verbs and other market-type words. *Buscar* means to look for, *compar* means to buy, *caro* means expensive. Finally, after a ten-minute walk, we arrived on a very colorful scene. Three sides of a city block were lined on each side with stands and tents and boxes. There were piles of vegetables, beans, fruits and meat amid a blockade of people who were somehow maintaining conversations and movement. We took a deep breath and dove in. The first hurdle was that we really had no idea what any of these items looked like. We knew they were all fruits or vegetables, but nothing outside of that. However, everyone was very friendly and moderately amused by our attempts to locate and buy these foods. We noticed that a semi-circle very quickly formed around us wherever we went. It was all in good fun, though. A funny moment came at the second stand we stopped at. Jim and I were pretty firm at ten cents for the item, while the vendor was not budging from twenty cents. After a bit of this "veinte, diez, veinte, diez" conversation, Em H jumped in with a compromise. "Cincuenta," she declared. All eyes went to Em. Jim and I kind of had this flabbergasted look, but the vendor had a big smile. Unfortunately, while Em meant really well with a fifteen cent compromise, she had actually said fifty. After a good laugh, we did get the item for fifteen cents. The rest of the market adventure went quite well. We were even given two items for free and bought one item for ten cents less than Mrs. McWeeny can usually buy it. I chalk it up to our entertainment value. All in all, both teams did very well, and we all had a great educational/cultural experience.



Jenny Muth

Date: 1/25/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Chatting in the McWeeny's kitchen over cookies and soup-making, one could almost have forgotten she was in Ecuador. Until Kristen asked us, "Who would like the special piece of chicken?" I looked over tentatively and saw she was holding up a chicken foot (not the leg, the claw). Then I knew that today was going to be filled with experiencing our new culture.



Emily Twidell

We ate chicken soup for lunch—a very common lunch here. After that, we watched two

movies. The first was an explanation of the apparitions of Mary that many Latin Americans believe in. After that, we watched one on the Reina del Cisne, which is the local apparition that is worshipped in the area we are in now. It was deeply troubling to watch these movies and try to understand the truth behind this worship. Having known some strong Catholic Christians, it saddens me to see people following what seem to be idols in the name of Christianity. I am praying for insight, sensitivity and wisdom as I encounter a culture where many are absorbed in something that I'm pretty sure is not Christian. Please pray for Ecuador and that people will know that Jesus, not Mary, is the way to salvation.

Date: 1/26/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

Today was our first HUGE day! After a quick 8 a.m. devo, we piled into the cars and headed to a school out in the *campo* (country). The program was for about thirty kids. We started with some fun sing-a-longs, but all we got from the first two songs were blank stares. It was pretty frustrating, and my natural instinct was to just grit my teeth and plow through the program so that it could be over. And then I looked at the faces of these kids, and I was reminded of the privilege I had to share Christ with them. These kids didn't go to a Christian school and don't hear about Christ's love and grace on a daily basis. And here I was about to waste an opportunity to show Christ's love. It was at that moment that my smile was no longer fake. I was able to muster up the will to go out to where the kids were sitting and encourage them to participate. That was all it took! They loved us from then on and clung to every word and action. They were amazing kids. Many of them gave us their cookies as a thank-you for coming! After the program, we were able to paint their classroom before heading an hour and a half back to where we were staying to get ready for church that night. The church service took place an hour and a half in the other direction. So after a quick shower, we were off! The people of the church were amazing, and we were able to talk and pray with many of them after the service. It was quite a long night, and we didn't get back until midnight! It's only been one week so far, but I see God answering the prayer we prayed on the plane before stepping onto Ecuadorian soil. "Dios, danos paz, danos fuerza, danos amor." (God, give us peace, give us strength, give us love.) He continues to shower us with blessings and provide our daily bread as we serve Him in Ecuador!



Emily Heine

Date: 1/27/2005

Submitted by: Stephanie Stiles

Journal Entry:

Whoa! The days sure are busy when you're not spending every other day in the 15-passenger van we used to call home! But it's exciting to get to experience so many different kinds of ministry than we're used to.

This morning, we traveled from Cariamanga to a small town in the country called Santa Rosa where we did an hour program for about twelve elementary students. We then got to share a real Ecuadorian two-course lunch (soup always comes before the main course) with the school teacher before dressing down to repaint two of the classrooms. Then we drove back to Cariamanga for dessert with the Baptist missionary family before the youth night and dinner at another pastor's house. That was fun! This pastor is also the host that Em and I have been staying with for the last week. His family only speaks Spanish, so it's been a learning experience for us both, and we've enjoyed it immensely.



Stephanie Stiles

Date: 1/28/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

I don't remember much of today. I was sick for all of it! I woke up with a bad cold; it's been going around the family. I was surprised at how sudden it came, though. After breakfast, I slept for an hour. The next hour was spent in devotion and team huddle. The rest of the team went to Quilanga where our program was. I stayed home and rested at the advice of my team. Speaking of rest, it's 8:30 now, so I should probably go to sleep. I am feeling a little better now, though. Please pray for team health, that we might resist illnesses as we are here.

Peace,
Joshua



Joshua McNaughton

Date: 1/29/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Man, this day was so much fun. We had one of our last programs in Cariamanga for the schoolchildren, with whom we had played a few times already. We got to the school in which we were to play and went out half an hour before "show time." We walked the streets of Cariamanga with a guitar and a djembe, playing and singing lots of fun Spanish songs. Pretty soon we saw the children of the neighborhood come out, and after about fifteen minutes of walking and playing (which is tough with a djembe), we had about twenty children following us smiling and singing. Really, I felt like the Pied Piper. It was really cool.

Next we started the program, which started with about forty kids but by the end we had about eighty, not including kids outside looking through the windows. It was such a great time doing sing-a-longs and playing.

We ended the day with a long stretch of games with the kids, and I have been giving away bracelets like crazy. The children are wonderful and seem to really love us. I greatly enjoy talking to them, and I am finally getting over my fear of speaking Spanish. I ask them questions or ask what the names of things are in Spanish, and they love to teach me and laugh at the funny sounds of English words. Also, now I am far more used to Santi than Jim; how quickly we can change.

God is hard at work and truly protecting and keeping us. Please pray for our continued good health as two of our teamers have no voices; pray also for the people of Cariamanga and Loja that they may be able to accept Jesus. Dios le bendigas—God bless you!

Santiago Pfrogner



Jim Pfrogner

Date: 1/30/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

Another first today—our first bus ride! All of us took a bus from Cariamanga to Loja, a city of about 150,000 about three hours away from Cariamanga. All went well, and it was a fairly uneventful trip—flat tire, military check, and two water balloons in the bus windows aside. After a quick lunch upon arrival, we dropped our packs off at the place we would be staying for the night and then headed over to Parque Jipiro. We had been told that Parque Jipiro was a nice park in the city where people enjoyed spending a Sunday afternoon. So we figured that we would have a kind of casual crowd for our program in the park. First, Parque Jipiro is HUGE. Second, it was jam packed with families, groups of teenagers, soccer teams (excuse me, fútbol teams), ice cream vendors, people on stilts carrying banners for Carnival (I'll explain Carnival—and the water balloons—in a second), and kids dashing all over chasing one another with spray cans of foamy white powder. Carnival is similar to Mardi Gras, but nearly all of South America gets in on the party. It is celebrated differently from country to country; for instance, Brazil has a huge parade. Ecuador prepares for Carnival by having



Jenny Muth

a country-wide water fight. I'm sure my teammates have related accounts of narrowly escaping a water balloon from a balcony or squirt guns in the street. So, that's Carnival prep. Quite fun. I feel like some sort of spy walking down the road, scanning the rooftops for snipers armed with buckets of water.

So, back to the park. We did an hour of music, a puppet show, and two skits for a very lovely crowd. People sang along, and one guy even held up his cell phone for a while so his friend (relative? third grade teacher?) could hear. Afterwards, we hung out with some people in the park for a while. I have to say, I was super impressed by the sense of family and community in Loja. Sundays appear to be a day of rest with your family and neighbors outside, enjoying God's beautiful creation. Not a day of staring at the TV or worrying about the impending work week. I really enjoy and admire that. This evening, we helped the people we are staying with (volunteers from England, Ireland and Australia) teach English. This was an interesting reversal for us! Usually, we are the ones in the "Uh, could you please repeat that?" position. It was oodles of fun and a great opportunity. An all around great day.

Date: 2/1/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

The Kindred team is now officially also a construction team. Not only did we paint three rooms at the SIM mission in Loja, we also got to sand down concrete and plaster the walls. I must say that there is something extremely satisfying about finishing a day of hard work--being covered with paint, concrete dust and plaster--your muscles sore from holding rollers and spackles over your head, and knowing that it was a great day. As a music ministry group, people may get the idea that we wouldn't be willing to do any sort of manual labor, but I've been so thankful that during our time with the McWeeny family we've been used in this way. God works in some strange ways. For instance, today our contact's car died, and so we are staying an extra day in Loja and get to do some moving for the mission and probably some more plastering. I'm thankful God worked it out so we would be here for another day, and I'm excited to be dirty, sweaty and tired again. And so I leave you all, excited about tomorrow and seeking to serve in every way.



Emily Twidell

Date: 2/2/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

We are nearing the end of our stay in Cariamanga, and it is very bittersweet. It's exciting to know that we're going to meet more people in Cuenca, but it is sad to say goodbye to our families in Cariamanga. Steph and I have had the opportunity to stay with Armando and Jenny, the only Spanish-speaking hosts. (The rest of the team stayed with U.S. missionaries.) They were amazing people! Communication was very difficult the first few days, but we've really had the opportunity to bond over these last couple of weeks. It is much harder to leave places overseas because we are with our families for weeks at a time! They truly become family! I love that our name Kindred means family. We are meeting our family in Christ everywhere we go, and I take comfort in the fact that as we leave our family in Cariamanga behind, we will find new family in each place we visit!



Emily Heine

Date: 2/4/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

Cariamanga, Ecuador

Hello everyone! I hope all is well with you. This morning I went to the doctor. I

had been dealing with what I thought was a cold for a week, and it hadn't gotten better. The doctor said I have pharyngitis on the verge of bronchitis. I'm glad I went when I did. I have medicine now, so I think that should clear up within a few days.

Today is our last day in Cariamanga. We went to Quilanga for Club Viernes for the last time this afternoon. It will be difficult to leave here. It is the only place that we really know. It is much different here than in the U.S. There we stay at a host home for perhaps a day or two, and we have the consolation of the return tour when we may see them again. Early tomorrow morning we head up north to Cuenca. I am sure that God has plenty in store for us there. I should be off for now. I want to thank everyone for their prayers and support. They are invaluable to us.

God's Peace,

Joshua

Eph. 2:8-10



Joshua McNaughton

Date: 2/5/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Let me use this time to tell everyone out there a little bit about the great Ecuadorian holiday called "Carnival." For the three weeks leading up to Ash Wednesday, the entire country has a gigantic water fight. Basically, you can't pass by a corner without seeing a child with a water balloon or squirt gun. Now include the fact that you look totally different, have different color skin, different color hair (long blond hair rather than black), and a strange accent. All this equals TARGET. So now the scene is set as Jenny, Emily T, Emily H and I all rode in the back of an open pick-up through the city of Cariamanga and on dirt roads for over an hour to our destination, our last meeting with our favorite children in Quilanga. Jenny, Emi, Milly and I all geared up, wearing raincoats and ponchos, I carried a bucket (for no real reason), and we attempted to protect the instruments. We worked out a way to hold onto the pick-up and poncho at the same time, and off we went. My job was to look for potential water throwers and shout out advice, such as, "Kid with a water gun coming up on the right--take cover!" or "Water balloons on the roof! I repeat, prepare for attack!" Needless to say, it was a great time, a true bonding experience, and though we had a few close calls, especially Jenny, no one fell out. Not even once! Yes, we got wet, but only on the way back, and it was totally cool. Our last program with the kids (we had been with them four times for about two hours each), was wonderful. We let them pick the songs we played, let them choose the games and gave lots of hugs and my last bracelets. Heck, I even gave away a few hair ties. The image that lasts the longest for me is of Sergio, a twelve-year-old boy with short black hair, bright brown eyes, and freckles, not letting go of my hand. He was my favorite youth. He sang along with all the songs, held my hand in most games, and wanted to keep hold of it most other times as well. (This is normal for kids in Ecuador.) But what killed me was shaking his hand that last time. A strong rough hand, tougher than any twelve-year-old's hand I've ever shaken, and having him not let go as I climbed in the truck. The last I saw him, he was smiling as he looked at the bracelet I had given him--neon green, the last one I had, too big for his little arm. Then he waved and was gone when I turned around; as the truck pulled away, he had already left. Maybe so the goodbye would not feel as final. I pray we touched him. I pray God found him. I pray we made a difference to him and all the others, all sixty or so. This is why we are here, so that amid a rough week, a rough day, a rough life, these kids can have time to be kids. To have time to laugh and maybe find hope and, Christ willing, find their Savior. I will not forget Sergio, ever--that handshake, that grip I can feel still as I write this. God continues to change and shape me, but I pray that maybe through something we do, He will take hold of these children and lead them home. May God bless all of you. Please pray for the children of Quilanga, the McWeenys (who are amazing missionaries there), and for God's love to reach them all in the midst of their troubles. In Jesus' Name, Santi



Jim Pfrogner

Date: 2/5/2005

Submitted by: Stephanie Stiles

Journal Entry:

Well, being away from everything and most everyone who is familiar and comfortable tends to bring with it new ways of thinking and new things to think about. For me, as I hoped He would, God's using these changes to challenge me and to teach me.

We had the privilege to spend some time in Loja this week working with some short-term and long-term missionaries from all over the globe. Now, my growing interest in missions has sparked conversations with quite a few of the missionaries we've met, and this past few days was no exception.

I had the opportunity to talk a bit with a missionary from Australia, who told me that in the next few months she would be studying health, which would then become her mission focus. Upon hearing this, I asked her if she would be staying in the area, or move someplace else with the new mission focus. Her reply: "The province is my home." I was so blessed by her words! She's only been here three months, and yet feels so at home, just the way we have since coming to Ecuador.

In Cariamanga, where we've had the amazing experience to be "stationed" (if you will) for the past few weeks, I asked some similar questions of the missionaries who hosted a few of us. I asked one woman to share a bit of the different places they've worked and lived in and compare how she and her family felt about each place. She said, "You know, I don't think I can say I'd rather be one place than another that we've been. I've learned to be happy wherever God puts me." What an amazing gift to have learned that attitude of servanthood to our Lord! And it's so true that if we really give ourselves up to him, we will be happy wherever He puts us. We are continually blessed by the faith of the amazing people around us, and the way they share their hearts and allow God to truly be in control of their lives!

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms." Ephesians 1:18-20



Stephanie Stiles

Date: 2/7/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

Usually, Mondays are our day off. But here in Ecuador, you need to factor in the exchange rate, so therefore our day off is Wednesday this week. Okay, bad joke, but I have never been one to let that stop me. Today is our first full day at El Campamentero Luterano Pauto, a camp in a small town about an hour's bus ride from Cuenca (our home base for the next three weeks). We arrived yesterday, Sunday, and had about a twenty minute walk to the camp. This doesn't sound like much, but when you take into account that Sunday was the first day of Carnival and a herd of luggage-toting, instrument-carrying, slow-moving people are basically bullseyes, it gets a little more interesting. Josh had to duck a long-range water balloon, but we made it to the camp without much difficulty. After a warm welcome and tour of the camp, we had dinner and did a program in the evening for everyone. There were about fifty people or so at this camp, all from the Iglesia Paz de Dios (Peace of God Church) in Cuenca. One of the ladies from the church, Isabel, who was kind enough to escort us from Cuenca to the camp, was on Kindred in '88-'89! How fun! After the program, we had a chance to talk to some of the people and have an impromptu jam session with Isabel and some of the other people there. Kindred was divided among all the people in the cabins, so it was fun to hang out. The other girls in the cabin I was staying in were quite nice. Now onto Monday. The schedule looked something like this: 7:30 cabin devotion, 8:00 breakfast, 9:00 worship with Kindred, 9:30 conference ("The Currents of the World"), 10:30 snack, 11:00 conference ("The Truth is Important"), 1:00 lunch, 2:30 organized games of Carnival, 4:30 movie ("A Complete Wish"), 6:30 dinner, 7:30 worship with Kindred, 10:00 bed. Organized games of Carnival? This sounded suspiciously like we weren't remaining dry today. At 1:45, Kindred met in another room while everyone finished up dinner so that we could do a team devotion and check in with each other. Right as we were ending our closing prayer, we heard not-so-quiet whispering outside. Suddenly, a bunch of kids began chanting, "Los Kiiiiindred, los Kiiiiindred!" We knew our time had come. We each shook hands good luck and bolted outside in a crazed Alamo charge.



Jenny Muth

Immediately, we were overtaken by six-year-olds with an infinite supply of water. Two girls with two buckets of water later, I had found out that running around in soaked pants and shirt really isn't too bad, and I began to fight back. There was a huge container of water, nearly the size of a small above-ground pool, with three or four little girls in it who were only too happy to fill your bucket if you splashed other people. Occasionally, an overachieving splasher would find himself or herself carried by several others and thrown into it. It was not possible for people to get any more wet. Anyone who was hiding was hunted down and soaked by everyone. I quickly learned several new and very pertinent Spanish words. "Mojado(a)" means wet, "la ducha" is a shower, and "Cuidado Jenny!" means "Look out, there is a person with a 5-gallon bucket and their friend with a super-soaker right behind you!" Later that night, when the trees were filled with clothes hanging out to dry, God joined in the Carnival fun with a little rain. I had to laugh. God definitely is a funny guy and can play a mean game of Carnival. The Carnival craziness ended with huge smiles. Even the free-range llamas at the camp (They have free-range llamas! Coolest camp EVER!!) tried to get in on the Carnival fun by threatening to spit on anyone who came close. The day ended much like yesterday did. However, I think everyone fell asleep a little more quickly after the biggest and most fun water fight of my life.

Date: 2/8/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Incoming! And again, we find that there is no escape from the torrents of water that are Carnival. Only Ash Wednesday can save us now! We had a closing program today at the camp before lunchtime and just assumed that then all of the families would head back to Cuenca; we were planning on staying there for one more night and relaxing agua-free with a few of the teachers and young adults from Paz de Dios. Not so, Kindred! Instead, we were sitting in the conference room having an impromptu jam session--something that happened very frequently at camp--when we realized there was a war going on outside, and they were calling for us. We had decided to do team pictures today, and some of us only had one set of dry clothes left, but we knew they wouldn't let us be until we were as drenched as everyone else, and so we had a "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" moment, as Jenny called it. I found a long-sleeved t-shirt I had discarded earlier, put it on, and got ready. Jenny and Jim (both in nice clothes) stood at the door, agreed to run for it, and bolted. Jim dashed through the camp for clean, dry clothes, but Jenny got it--mercilessly. After this, I stepped outside and announced that it wasn't fair to drench an unarmed woman, and so I was immediately seized by the arms and dragged to the faucet so I could fill up a water pitcher. I would like to point out that I was surrounded by five or six people with pails full. The rest of the story, you can guess. Everyone was wet, and we ran around and had a marvelous time. The moral of the story: when in Ecuador during Carnival, get wet and enjoy it!



Emily Twidell

Date: 2/9/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

I definitely have found family in Cuenca. I am staying with a wonderful couple, Mariana and Enrique. They are so kind. One of the first questions they asked me was what I liked to eat. I sheepishly replied that I didn't like mote. I'm not quite sure how to describe it, but it's like exploded corn without flavor. However, if you ask my teammates who happen to love mote, I'm sure they would describe it quite differently. Nonetheless, my host parents eat it all the time themselves but never pass it to me. And when we eat with other people, Enrique explains to them that I don't like mote and that is okay! Apparently, in Cuenca, mote is eaten with every meal, so I am fortunate to have host parents that understand. I'm usually able to eat whatever is served to me, but for some reason, I just can't eat mote. Okay, enough of that. In general, I am very spoiled at my host home. I have the entire third level of the house to myself. I have a cute room with very low ceilings. There are only about two spots in the room that I can stand up straight in. And for those of you who don't know, I'm only 5'1"! I love it, though; it's like a fort! I have my own shower with hot water--quite a



Emily Heine

treat. I also have a sun porch where I can read before the day officially starts! God has truly blessed me with an amazing host family in Cuenca.

Date: 2/10/2005

Submitted by: Stephanie Stiles

Journal Entry:

"We are commanded to recognize his glory, honor his glory, declare his glory, praise his glory, reflect his glory, and live for his glory." -Rick Warren, [The Purpose Driven Life](#)

Well, I don't know about all of you, but I know I sure don't do all this all the time. I wish I could say I do, but it's a continual learning process in this life. But praise the Lord, for he gives us grace. He knows that I can't do it on my own. That's the point—I need Him! And another thing, He hasn't just commanded us to do these things (which ultimately lead to the inner peace and joy that He wants for us), but He's chosen us!

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." 1 Peter 2:9-10

As a dear friend recently reminded me, "You're not just [there] to serve Him, but you're there to be His partner." How cool is that!? No, God doesn't NEED us. He's all powerful and could do it all on his own if he wanted to, but he doesn't want to. He's chosen us because he wants us to be a part of what he's doing! He even gives responsibility and relies on us to do the tasks that He's given us.

"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14

WOW! What a privilege!



Stephanie Stiles

Date: 2/11/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

Greetings to all from Machala. Machala is a coastal city, so the weather here is hot and humid. We spent most of the day today walking around the area, inviting people to our program. This was tiring, but effective. This evening there were about thirty-five people in church. We are scheduled to play again tomorrow and on Sunday for worship. I am really beginning to see how God is working to sustain us as we get busy. And this is still early on in our tour. It is very comforting to know that however busy we become, God will see us through.

May God be with you all!

Peace,
Joshua
Psalm 55:22



Joshua McNaughton

Date: 2/12/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

My mom used to tell me, "Some days are diamonds and some days are stones." Well, this day was a diamond. We are now in Machala, Ecuador, probably the poorest community yet. We have no glass in the windows of our host home, no running water, no shower unless you use a bucket, and the toilet is in the backyard. However, this place is as full of love as any we have been to. Our host family is incredible, and despite



poor circumstances continues to provide incredible meals and wonderful companionship for four of us. So anyway, today a member of the congregation we are performing at asked to take us to the beach! Now how can you turn that down? So off we went, the entire team ready to go. We hitched a few buses, then hopped on a boat which took us to the beach (it was an island). Anyway, the boat played old American 70s music. I can't quite explain the feeling of looking into the sky, seeing huge Ecuadorian seabirds, staring at trees and plants often found in National Geographic, and listening to Jenny, Milly and myself belt out the lyrics to "Funkytown." You really had to be there. We also entertained the Ecuadorians onboard with excellent renditions of "Take On Me," "Stayin' Alive," and of course, "You're the One That I Want" from Grease. Needless to say, we advanced the ministry. Anyway, the beach was fun; everyone except for Josh swam in the ocean, and everyone except for Josh got wicked sunburns. So there you go. But it was worth it! Anyway, we returned, ate a big almuerzo (lunch) and then headed to church for our record two-hour program for the same group of people. It went great, lots of singing, puppets and skits, and I got to find out just how much it hurts to wear a djembe with a sunburned back. The parishioners thought we looked funny and dubbed us the "North American Tomatoes," which I think is a great name for a rock band. So, yes, we are red, but we are also healthy, everyone is over being sick, the mood is up and Machala rocks. We leave tomorrow for Cuenca. Please pray for Machala, Bill Fachez, the people of Cariamanga and all Ecuador, and for our continual safety. God bless you all, Santi

Jim Pfrogner

Date: 2/14/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

Happy Valentine's Day! Or, if you are feeling a little Ecuadorian, ¡Feliz Día de Amor y Amistad! Today is the start of a crazy week for us. This morning, we had six programs. Tomorrow looks the say way. However, God is blessing us richly with endurance and the ability to not go crazy playing the same sing-a-long twelve times in two days. The morning began when we all met at 7:00 a.m. at the Colegio Interamericano Bilingüe.

This is basically a bilingual K-12, split up into two schools. Here, "escuela" is K-6th grade, "colegio" is 7-12, and "bilingual" means the students taken an English class. At 7:20 a.m., we did a small program for all the students of the escuela. Once a week, I think it is every Monday, all the students begin the school day a little earlier with everyone lining up by class, listening to announcements, and singing the national hymn. After all this—and I was very impressed by the demeanor of the students; this was serious business to them—we did two sing-a-longs and a puppet show for all 750 students. It was pretty fun to watch 750 kids (and some teachers, too!) make a wave motion with their hands and sing "Whoop whoop, ¡vámanos vámanos!, whoop whoop, una vez más, whoop whoop, ¡sí!" during "Blessed Be the Lord," or "Bendito Sea El Señor" here. At 8:00 a.m., we did three songs and a skit for 750 students at the colegio. Their morning formation was a little more complicated—girls in the front of the line, boys in back, parts where they stood at attention and parts where they relaxed. Again, hearing 750 "whoop whoop's" was very fun. After that, we did two songs in English (Whoa! Haven't done those in a while!) as part of a poetry contest for the colegio English classes. Then three 40 minute chapel services for the seventh, eighth and ninth graders. All during the day, whenever any of us were outside to walk from one building to another, we were greeted by various students singing, "Whoop whoop!" To which we'd send a "whoop whoop" in reply. I have no doubt this was highly amusing to any bystander.

The chapel services went well. Typical middle school crowd, I thought, with a little bit of "I'm too cool to do sing-a-longs...don't even think about actions." However, they did open up to us after a bit. A few girls even came back and thanked us for coming! When I saw one girl had tears in her eyes, I nearly cried myself. Just another reminder that God is moving in people whether we see it or not. I have to keep reminding myself that God can work through anything from the most serious skit to the silliest sing-a-long. I can't gauge success by facial expressions. God is bigger than that. Also, I have to keep telling myself that no person can ever make another person change; that is God's work. "Just like a farmer cannot physically make a seed grow, all he can do is make the conditions most favorable for growth." (Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster—excellent book). So I know God is doing great things here. And definitely not just through us. We have met so many wonderful people with their eyes fully focused on God. We were told that about 5% of the students at the Bilingüe are Christian, but the majority of the teachers and administrators are Christian. I know when we leave this wonderful place that God will continue to move and change hearts. Those



Jenny Muth

students are in good hands. And so are we.

Date: 2/15/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

The day of six programs before lunch...at the Bilingüe, we had six chapel services this morning for grades K-5. Singing the same 40 minutes over and over was surprisingly fun. Especially when we had kids moshing and break-dancing to "Dance Like David"—well, maybe not moshing, but at least jumping up and down for the whole song. Besides this, during a mime dealing with sharing God's love, we had a whole class full of kids trying to figure out what we were sharing and yelling out guesses from "happiness" to "chocolate"—synonymous to some.



Emily Twidell

Another phenomenon is that we are close to rock stars with these kids—about 700 of them wanted our autographs. It's a hard thing when you have to walk through a group of kids and refuse autographs to go to the bathroom or a meeting, or to get something to eat and drink. What a hard thing to figure out...how do you handle that situation? Do you stand there, patiently signing notebooks to be nice while encouraging the idea that we're important, or do you say no for sanity's sake and because you know the kids won't keep the papers for even a few months, but risk hurting their feelings? If I could, I would sit down with every single one of them and tell them that I'm not the important one—Jesus is. I guess that's the challenge, how to get that across.

And so we leave the Bilingüe to speak of other ministry today—a trip into the mountains with Bill Lackey and his daughters. They have a great old Toyota SUV with a large roof rack; we put a mattress and some cushions up there and rode up a mountain on top of the truck with Jim manning the lookout and letting us know which side needed to duck for branches and when large bumps were coming. We had a very exciting trip up amid squeals and laughter, shouts of "Starboard," slowdowns for sheep, and snacks of bananas and mandarines. There are no words to describe the ride or the view, but I will try a few: rocky, muddy, rutted, narrow, steep, green, rain forested, cloudy, foggy, spectacular, breathtaking, airborne (only for a few fractions of a second), and all-in-all blessed. You can imagine our amazement when we learned that the Lackey girls have taken this trip strapped to the roof in their car seats. What a different view of life than in the States...safety and lawsuits in exchange for common sense and an experience. We arrived and didn't see a trail, but there was one—more or less—and we scrambled down it to a beautiful green valley overlooking a rushing river. We ate lunch, and then most of us scrambled on the large rocks and waded a bit to explore. By the time we got back, we were wet, muddy, bruised, tired, and thoroughly happy. It was getting late, and as we packed up, it started to sprinkle, so we did the adventurous thing and rode back down the mountain on top of the truck in the rain. This was an even more exciting ride with our caps and hoods pulled down to shield our eyes from the rain, a few ponchos thrown on our laps collecting veritable lakes, and much more laughing and shouts of "Port," or "All hands down."

And as we ended our day around the Lackey's fireplace, roasting hot dogs, making s'mores and waiting for our clothes to dry, I could only smile and think, "Just another day of ministry in Ecuador."

Date: 2/16/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

I'm afraid I have nothing too exciting to write about today, so I figure I will take the time to tell you some random things about Ecuador that might be helpful to know if you plan on visiting, or if you would like a more detailed grasp of our daily lives. Enjoy!

First of all, let's talk about greetings. When someone enters a room for the first time, everyone stops what they are doing and stands up to greet the person. Often, groups are sitting in a circle, so the newcomer makes their way around the circle and does a



Emily Heine

slight embrace with a kiss to the side of the cheek—sometimes on the cheek, depending on the mood! And it's also important to ask how they are doing, to which the person says, "Bien (good)." Very similar to the U.S., with the whole, "How are you?/Fine" greeting.

As for food, breakfast is usually bread with coffee or fried bananas with coffee. Almuerzo is the biggest meal of the day, usually eaten around 1:30 p.m. It starts with soup, which is followed by a huge plate of rice with either chicken or beef, and a lovely onion/tomato salad on the side. Merienda is served in the evening and is the same meal as almuerzo, but without the soup! The portions are huge, but Ecuadorians (at least, the ones I've met thus far) don't snack too much, so their meals need to sustain them through the day. Recently, we have found a restaurant that serves banana chips as an appetizer—they're quite good. I wouldn't mind if the States ever decided to switch from the traditional chips and salsa appetizer to banana chips!

Most Ecuadorians wear the same clothes the average person in the States wears. Lots of jeans, and even shirts with English writing. However, if you are ever needing to buy a pair of shoes here, it is best you have small feet. Jim is a size 12, and all of the shoe stores consistently laugh at him when he asks if they have his size. If you're lucky, they go up to a size 10 ½.

And finally, our team has gathered that Ecuadorians are much more laid-back than us United Statesians. A story to illustrate this point...the other day Em, Jim, Jenny and I went to a food court in a mall for lunch. About halfway through the meal, Jim said, "What's on fire?" The three of us turned around and saw the other half of the mall filled with smoke! There was no commotion, people were going about their business, and no alarms were sounding. So we, of course, kept eating. About five minutes later, a kid walked by with two fire extinguishers, and five minutes after that, the smoke began to clear. Apparently, one of the restaurants in the food court had caught on fire! The four of us were amazed. We figured that, in the States, the mall would have been shut down for at least an hour and four fire trucks would have come! Quite a different culture here, but luckily for us, we like it! So, I think we'll stay for a few more weeks.

Date: 2/18/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

After a busy week at the Escuela Bilingüe (Bilingual School), we have a day off of sorts. At 11:00, I went to the school and saw a presentation by the high school students. The theme for the week was love. The presentation included works of music, poetry and drama. In addition, the choir and orchestra from a high school in Quito presented for an hour. Afterward, I went home. I spent the next few hours there relaxing and spending time with my host family. It was a very relaxing time.



Joshua McNaughton

We had a program scheduled for 7:30 at a church across town. We agreed to meet at 6:30. Five of us met then—everyone but Jenny. This was odd. Eventually, she showed up and the program went well. We found out later that there was an unexpected family visit at her host home. Another bit of Hispanic culture is that relationships are more important than timelines.

God is good!

Peace,
Joshua
Eph. 2:8-10

Date: 2/19/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Ok, so this journal will be a mishmash of a few things that have happened to me this week and the team in general, and man, the things we have experienced. First of all, today we were asked to do a talk on homosexuality. This is interesting since, number one, it is barely recognized as existing

here in Ecuador and, number two, this is a hard topic to do in English, let alone in Spanish for half an hour right after a program! Hey we are Kin "Flexible" Dred, (flexible is our middle name) so we do whatever is asked. The Ecuadorian Church that we are with seemed worried because homosexuality is a huge issue in the States, and since what happens in the States often becomes a trend in Ecuador...you get the picture. So we sat down as a team, found Bible verses, enlisted the help of Isabel a former member of Kindred (89-90) and native Ecuadorian to translate for us as well as the help of the Holy Spirit, and away we went. The plan was program for one hour, talk for thirty minutes and then play again for thirty minutes to end on a high note. Well, the Holy Spirit stepped in and helped us out and we ended up playing for an hour and then talking for an hour. The talk went really well and the questions raised were huge. The entire thing turned out to be a great experience. I know I learned something. So another incredible experience I had was after a morning chapel service. We did six one day, and after the second one we had a thirty minute break...YAY!! Well, one young girl (we will call her "Debby") didn't leave. She sat in the front row and sobbed. I noticed this quickly as our contact, who is the chaplain at this public school, went and comforted and talked to her. The rest of the team was about to grab some food, and our contact came over to me. I asked him what was up, and he told me there was nothing he could do for her...her mother beats her. Now, just so you all know, Ecuador has no child abuse laws. The government will not stand in the way of you treating your child well or harming her. So that is why there was nothing he could do. So Debby got up, and Jenny gave her a hug as did Milly, and when she walked by me, I hugged her as well, but as she started to let go I held on. I knew without a doubt that she needed something more and so I just held on. The second she noticed I was not letting go, she fell into my arms and sobbed deeply. I held her and let her cry for about ten minutes, and then she talked through a broken heart as I replied in broken Spanish. My vocabulary is not huge but I understood her perfectly. She is 17 and lives at home, and her mom beats her and calls her nothing. It ripped me apart. Here is a sweet, smart, beautiful girl who is only told that she is nothing. I told her to remember that it wasn't true. I told her to listen to the people who would tell her the truth and always keep the truth in mind. People were there for her and loved her, she was smart and beautiful and not nothing. She had people who would tell her the truth, like the chaplain and her friends at school. I told her never to forget that Jesus loves her and is in fact the Truth. It was tough and beautiful, touching and moving, and I was shaken when she finally stopped the last of her tears, brokenly said "gracias" and returned to class. It had lasted about twenty minutes, and as I walked over to grab a small snack I was in a state of mild shock. That was all I could do...could I help her more? If I had had more words, would they have been better? I think not. I think what she needed was love and hope—what she needed was Christ. Please pray for "Debby" and take comfort in the fact that she is around some amazing people at her school.



Jim Pfrogner

So it has been quite a week. Incredible amounts of work for us to do—five and six program days, which is more programs in a week than many teams do in a month. Yet through it all, God is shining. I am loving every moment of it. We have been asked to go on TV in a few days for a program that is seen in almost every country in South America and also shown in the U.S., so that will be cool to be able to use a medium like TV to spread His Word. But even cooler, we have been invited to a wedding! Not to play or be the band but as guests, friends of the bride and groom who we met at a retreat we did music for. How amazing is that!! I am incredibly excited and this brings up possibly the most important question of all....what do I have to wear?

God's peace be with you all,

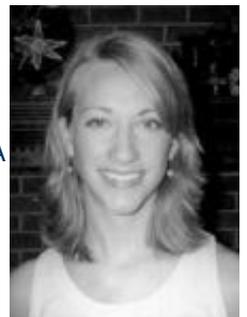
Santi

Date: 2/21/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

Oh man, schizophrenic journal entry today. I'm going to start with yesterday, Sunday. A few days earlier, my host family had asked me if I knew how to make pizza. Having made pizza from scratch all of one time in my life, I enthusiastically said yes, I knew how to make pizza and yes, I'd love to make pizza on Sunday. So, Sunday rolls around and we do some songs and a skit and a puppet show for Sunday worship at Paz de Dios, the church we've been at a LOT. It was very nice because it was like doing a program for old friends. No introductions, just worship. After, my host parents pick me up and take me to the store to get the pizza ingredients. The bell is tolling—my hour to prove my pizza prowess has arrived. Before I know it, I'm trying my best to guess the amount of flour I need and throw it all together without measuring cups. The prayer of "Dear God, please let this taste good" was a popular one for me that day, with my host mom and three host sisters eagerly



Jenny Muth

watching and writing down my every move. ("Was that half a bag of flour she used or 2/3?" "More like 3/5." How much oil did she put in?" "A little bit.") Keep in mind this is all in Spanish, which somehow made it easier for me to act like I knew what I was doing. By the grace of God and miracle of dry yeast, we had pizza dough. While we were waiting for the pizza to cook (oh yeah, covert 375° to Celsius on the fly—I knew physical chemistry was good for something!), my host family and I watched *Spiderman 2*. They rented it because it was in English with Spanish subtitles! How sweet! A few times, the TV screen went black, but there was still audio. So I tried to translate the scenes. God showed me very clearly that I have no calling as a Latin actress. In the end, the pizza turned out well and everyone (thankfully) enjoyed it.

Monday was a surprise day off. We were supposed to go to a TV station and be on a live show, but, alas, it was moved to Wednesday and thus no longer my journal day. But that's okay. I had a great day off. I hung out with Isabel Moscoso (Kindred 89-90!) nearly the whole day. We spent the entire day in an older and very beautiful part of Cuenca. We spent a lot of time in the old home/antique shop of a very friendly husband and wife. They had photos of Cuenca dating back to 1908. Being a huge fan of antiques, this was such a hoot! After the fun antique home, Isabel and I spent the rest of the day walking around markets, looking at some of her old Kindred photos, cooking dinner and chatting. I even got to have a real Cuencana soda! I really enjoyed my day of getting to know Isabel and Cuenca better. I love that I can walk down a sidewalk with a cobblestone street and huge, old cathedrals with Chola ladies (a local tribe) in traditional dress (knee length, brightly colored skirt with tons of pleats and embroidery on the bottom, white blouse, tons of necklaces, braided pigtailed, and a white Panama-type hat). It is nice to see a city where "modern" hasn't crushed "tradition." Cuenca is a city I feel like I could live in.

Date: 2/22/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Though my journal day is today, I'm going to start with yesterday because, well, it was eventful and definitely a growing experience. We had a day off, and so Jim and I decided on a six-hour hike in El Cajas, a national park close to Cuenca. Bill Lackey drove us there, gave us rain gear, and left us with maps, a GPS unit, extra food, and a bit of prophecy, saying, "Every time I go to El Cajas, there is a point in the day when I wish I hadn't gone." So, Jim and I set out wondering how we could ever regret a day of hiking in the mountains. We chose a trail that started going up over a ridge for a half hour and then wound into a valley with rivers, lakes and waterfalls. We saw hawks and llamas, drank from the mountain stream, and were having a fabulous time. We realized the trail was getting smaller and smaller, and soon we were in some dense woods following a very muddy trail over roots and branches. We were getting really tired when we finally emerged from the forest and were looking at a ridge. There were several options, so we picked the one that looked widest and headed up. We got to the top of the hill and soon realized that the trail ended and that we were surrounded by cliffs on three sides. We could see the trail way below us but had no way to get there except to backtrack, we didn't know where we would find the real trail, and we knew that we might have to bushwhack through the thick forest, following a stream, in order to get out. As all this set in and mixed with my body's exhaustion and my wish not to scare my team and our host families, I had a good cry. After that, we prayed that God would show us the way out and give us the strength to get out. We started backtracking, found a path that headed towards the stream, and soon came to a very wide trail through the forest and out into the valley. We looked back to see the ginormous cliff we had been on, thanked God, and walked safely out of the park to catch a ride home. I must say, I learned a lot about how God can quickly and completely answer a prayer. Praise to Him for getting us out of our stupidity.

Today we had a program cancelled, so we did a team outing—eating lunch, getting dessert, and buying each other presents at a nearby market. I'm feeling blessed that our team still gets along well and that we can have fun together. God is good here in Ecuador, and we pray He is blessing you all in your lives as well.

Grace and peace,
Emily



Emily Twidell

Date: 2/23/2005
Submitted by: Emily Heine
Journal Entry:

Lights, camera, action! That's my fun way of saying we were on TV today. Did you all watch? Well, if you missed it, we taped it for you, so no worries! This morning, we headed to a TV studio in Cuenca to be interviewed for a live television program. We got there about five minutes before we were about to go on—just enough time to find out how many songs they wanted and what kind of questions they would be asking. We survived the live interview—in Spanish! The guy who interviewed us kept saying he loved our style, which he referred to as "hippie" several times. We were all wearing traditional Ecuadorian clothes because it was the most dressed up we could look. But, no one in Ecuador actually wears these clothes, so he kept referring to us as hippies. The whole experience was quite fast and we never knew quite what was coming next and which microphone to speak into. But, we're assuming they liked us because they asked us to record another song for a different TV show that would be aired later in the week. This is one of the first Christian channels in South America, and it's only a few years old. It is broadcast in many countries and even makes its way to part of Florida. This is an awesome ministry tool for Christians in South America. We pray it continues to grow and is able to spread the love of Christ in these countries that desperately need it.



Emily Heine

Date: 2/25/2005
Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton
Journal Entry:

Hello everyone. We are still in Cuenca. Today was a day off of sorts. During the early afternoon the team met with some church members to go fishing. I was excited. The last time I can really remember going fishing, I was 9 or 10 years old.

We had to drive about an hour to get to where we were going. We went to El Cajas, a national park close by. It was decided that we would do a bit of climbing before we went fishing. There were 10 of us in the group. After climbing a bit I think that the altitude and my being out of shape got the better of me. It seems the oxygen gets thinner the higher you go!

After coming back down, it was time to fish. The place we were at had poles that we used. It was not what I expected. They were big yellow sticks with a length of line and hook and sinker. With those to cast, you just fling the pole. Instead of worms, we had a mass of bread dough. By the end of the day we had a good amount of fish.

After driving back to Cuenca, we went to the house of one of the church members. There we cooked the fish. We had a feast. It was a great time of food and fellowship. We will have stayed the longest of any place outside of training here in Cuenca. I realize that I'm really going to miss these people. I'll have some lifelong friends! I pray that all continues to go well wherever you are

Peace,

Joshua



Joshua McNaughton

Date: 2/26/2005
Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner
Journal Entry:

Once again Ecuador amazes me. Today was one of the craziest and most rewarding days of our time here. First of all, we got to go to an Ecuadorian wedding!! How amazing is that! And we weren't there to play—we had been invited by the bride and groom as guests. It was so cool!! The wedding was held outdoors on a beautiful day in a Christian camp in the city of Paute.

It was scheduled for 11:30 a.m., so we got there at 11:00 a.m. The groom arrived at 12:00 p.m., and the bride, as per Ecuadorian custom, arrived at 1:30 p.m. In Ecuador the bride is supposed to hide and not be seen until she walks down the aisle. Also she usually waits a good hour or two before arriving. If that had been my bride at my wedding, I would have been sobbing in a corner somewhere after an hour, let alone two! But Javier (the groom) was cool; he said he was nervous but cool.



Jim Pfrogner

So finally the beautiful bride came down the aisle. We stood in the sun and got burned while watching a ceremony that I won't forget, and then I was the second person to hit the happy couple with rice.....yay!!! So after the wedding we were supposed to sing for the reception, which would have been fine had the wedding not started two hours late. We had a program at another church at 3:00 p.m.!! So we had to run, leave the wedding and carry our instruments while in our best clothes for a good mile walk to the church...except we got bad directions and fortunately were rescued by a churchgoer before we got too lost. "Hmm....six white people with instruments wandering near my church...wait a second, we are supposed to have six white people sing at our church today....HEY!!" I think their thought process went something like that. Anyway we went and hung out for a bit with the congregation, which was fun because there were only eight of them and we got to really talk to everyone. The church was pretty small, and they didn't expect many people for the youth program, but hey, we came to spread God's love, not choose to whom we spread it. So we started our program with about eight people. Then a dog walked in. Apparently this happens a lot and no one seemed to mind, he went and laid down under a pew and quietly listened the entire time.

So eight people and a dog became fifteen, then twenty, then thirty, and by the end we had a good group of about forty people, mainly youth who just happened to wander by the open doors and hear us—either that, or the dog had a huge group of friends. It was fantastic, watching people come in to hear the music and then stay and hear a message. I loved it. By the end of our two hours, we were all tired and everyone was happy, including the dog. So back we went to the camp to see our friends in the wedding party one last time and have dinner.

Then back to the church for service at 7:00. Now we had used most of our twenty-seven Spanish song repertoire, but hey, we still had a few left to fill the two-hour service. We pulled out all the stops and once again had a great experience starting with about twenty-five people and ending with about fifty. Hopefully more people got to really take in the message and feel the power of the Spirit which carried us through the night. The only downside was that the dog did not come back for the service; I guess he had a bus to catch....ha.

So what does a really tired group of itinerant ministers do after finishing a full day of ministry in Ecuador? You guessed it—they go out and buy bread for breakfast! In Ecuador the normal breakfast is called "pan de hoy" meaning bread of the day. You go to a bakery and buy little single person pieces of bread, not slices but like mini loaves or muffin shaped things. It is really tasty, really fresh, they make a bunch of different kinds, and it costs anywhere from 5-15 cents each depending on the type of bread you want. I am a good eater, and I normally eat two pieces with jam for breakfast...talk about value.

Anyway we went and bought bread for the next day to eat on the bus in the morning since we would spend the night at the camp and then head to Cuenca again very early. Finally we arrived back at the camp, I interviewed a prospective teamer (good luck Esteban!—I will be praying for you) and then talked with a wonderful Bible translator named Chris for the remainder of the night.

At last I hit the sack at 11:30 p.m. or 12:00 a.m., a full day in Ecuador. This is an amazing experience that just keeps stretching and teaching me. God is amazing and is working everywhere. May his hand be powerful in your life as well.

God's peace be with you all,

Santi

Date: 2/28/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

While we were at cross cultural training (which seems like a different lifetime), we had a

talk about culture shock. A very lovely woman who had been on New Vision several years back explained how there are four basic stages to culture shock. (1) Excitement! As in, "Wow! My first Ecuadorian bus ride! How cool! Wow! The chickens crowing woke me up this morning! How cool!" (2) The crash. As in, "This stupid bus is packed just like the last one! I can't believe this guy keeps stopping every five minutes to pick up more people! And if one more person gets on this bus with a crowing chicken...." (3) Acceptance. As in, "You know, a crowded bus isn't so bad, the scenery is amazing, and the movie they are showing is so terrible that it is hilarious. (Isn't that the big German guy from Rocky IV?) I just hope this chicken the guy next to me in the aisle is holding above my head doesn't poop on me." (4) Assimilation. As in, "Even though we stop every five minutes to pick up more passengers, and we are on a highway, it is pretty cool that people out in the country can still depend on these buses. The chickens under the house I stayed in last night didn't wake me up either. Now if I could only get my chicken to stop crowing on this bus."



Jenny Muth

All those things have happened to me, except the chicken-over-the-head thing. That was Em H, but I was sitting next to her. And none of us have actually brought a live fowl on a bus with us...yet. I figure it is only a matter of time. But my point to all this is that I think they missed a stage, which I am calling Stage ½. It is Stage ½ because it is the opposite of Stage 2, Stage 2 being the homesick stage. While I have not had any real bouts of homesickness (although I did realize last week that we haven't seen carpet since we left, and I thought, "Huh, carpet. I guess I don't really miss it."), I have had bouts of sickness of home. Hence, Stage ½. This all kind of came rushing upon me at once. I am going to be attending the University of Pennsylvania in the fall. It just so happens that Philadelphia is world-famous for making it ridiculously hard to get an apartment. I'm talking ludicrous levels of red tape. Oh sure, there are plenty of apartments, but you better be prepared to provide DNA evidence you are who you say you are and have Alan Greenspan make sure the President gets it into the State of the Union address that you have the financial ability to get this apartment. Not quite that bad, but close. So it has been one thing after another with the Philly apartment people. Then, when I get to thinking about being in graduate school, I start thinking about how much chemistry I have forgotten and how hard it will be to jump directly from team to chem. But mostly, to be very honest, the biggest instigator of Stage ½ has been what to do as soon as I return to the U.S. We, being all the International Teams, have a week's vacation when we return stateside. I am blessed by having many people who want to see me. However, the downside to that is that I will have to choose people to disappoint because there is not time to do everything. The thought of having no choice except to disappoint someone I love very much no matter what has really been eating at me. When I step back, I think, "This is so silly! It is only a week, and I've surely disappointed people many times in my life!" So I know it is not the surface issue that is getting to me. It has gotten so bad that there are points where I want to not even go back to the U.S. at all that week. So, I've spent a lot of time and prayer over why this issue of Stage ½ has hit me so hard.

Here is what I've been thinking about. Guilt-trip-free love...love without strings attached...free will in love...see where I'm going? Let me give an example. My dad. When I graduated from high school, my dad told me that, as an adult, I get to make my own adult decisions and stand by my own adult consequences. As I went through college and had to make some pretty big decisions, my dad would always say, "You are your own person; you can make your own decisions. If you want, I'll give advice if it is appropriate to do so. But it is your decision. I love you." When it came to me asking my parents what they thought of sending their 22-year-old daughter to South America for four months, I pretty much got that answer immediately. That made me able to follow my call with a much clearer heart. So now, with the vacation issue, I know I have the same sentiments. My dad told me back while I was home for Christmas, "Honey, this is your life. Any time we get to spend with you is wonderful. But you do what you need to do. I love you." My dad has always had this keen understanding of how not to manipulate love. This is one of the many ways I see God through him. God doesn't use His love in a sort of guilt trip manner either. God's love is never a prize to be won by making all the right choices or used like a carrot in front of a horse. God's love is not in front of us or behind us or left or right. It is simply there. The New Testament is filled with examples of Jesus loving first, then presenting the option of leaving that path of sin. The woman at the well. The prostitute about to be stoned. The list continues. None of them met a Jesus who said, "Change, do this, then I'll love you." No, He said, "I love you. You don't have to continue on this path. You have another option." For God so loved the world...not God changed the world, made them love Him, then He loved them. So lately, I've just been really overwhelmed at how powerful and awesome free will

love is. If you give someone free will love, you run the risk of getting hurt. There is your risk. You have the option of getting hurt or the option of never knowing if the other person's decision was truly sincere. A scary line to walk. But God loves us so much that not only is He willing to risk option 1, but it is as if option 2 never existed to Him. Now, this is not a license to just do whatever because God loves us and sent His Son to die for us while we were still sinners. A wise, wise person said, "What has cost God much cannot be cheap for us." Bonhoeffer, Cost of Discipleship, excellent. I am so blessed to have a great example of this kind of love in my dad. And I love him very much as well. So much that I am moved to quote song lyrics. Whoa.

It is a song by a group called Yellowcard. Unfortunately, since this group does not fall under the category of "sounds like Grateful Dead," or "has guitar solos like the Allman Brothers," or even "contains at least one member in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame," my dad will probably never listen to this song on his own accord, but here are the words anyway.

What's a dad for, Dad?
Tell me why I'm here, Dad
Whisper in my ear that I'm growing up to be a better man, Dad
Everything is fine, Dad
Proud that you are mine, Dad
I know I'm growing up to be a better man
What's a dad for, Dad?
Tell me how to stand, Dad
Take me by the hand, Dad
And show me how to be a bigger man, Dad
Listened when you talked, Dad
Followed where you walked
And you know that I will always do the best I can
I can
Father, I will always be
That same boy that stood by the sea
And watched you tower over me
Now I'm older, I want to be like you.

So, I guess my overall point in this mammoth journal is that God's love is so incredible, and He has some pretty neat ways of showing it that we can easily take for granted. Someone near and dear once told me, "I know how much I love you, then I know how much Jesus loves you, and whoa—that's a lot of love." God loves you a lot; one might even say "heaps." Loved child of God. Has a nice ring to it, eh?

Date: 3/1/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

We woke this morning in air conditioning—it's weird, the things that seem like a huge blessing. We knew we were going with a man named Gonzalo to do some programs today (one for kids and one for youth), and about an hour after we were supposed to meet, he was here and surprising us with an invitation to spend the night at families of Arcede Noe—the church we were at. He said to wait to get there to decide if we wanted to stay overnight, but we, of course, decided to stay there before we left. We rode a bus into the neighborhood and then walked a few blocks to the church. There are lots of houses of bamboo or cinderblock or a combination, and many on stilts in case of flooding. There doesn't seem to be running water in this area, and something the water is slow in being delivered. The hearts of the people, however, were BIG! We started our day doing some visits to various houses. At some houses, we just chatted, and at others we prayed with or for the family. It was wonderful to just get to spend time with the families and let them know that we cared about them and were interested in their lives. Some families borrowed furniture from neighbors so we would have someplace to sit down. That night we had our youth night on a back patio of the church that will be the sanctuary when they have money to finish it. It was great to be outside (swatting mosquitoes) and praising God with the youth and also some young kids and adults who showed up... a great community event. Tonight Jenny, Steph and I are staying with Emma and her family in an



Emily Twidell

upstairs, bamboo addition to their house. We have mosquito netting and a breeze blowing through the slats in the bamboo, so it's really very nice. My stomach is also full of chicken, rice and flan because Emma had me eat with their family after the program, even though we had already eaten at the pastor's house earlier. The generosity continues to astound me.

Date: 3/2/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

I really like my team. I know that these journal entries should probably be about the people we are meeting and the places we are seeing, but I am doing this all with my team. These five people on this South American adventure with me are some of the only consistency I have. We meet different people every day, we eat different foods every day (sometimes stranger than on other days), we speak a different language every day, and we're in an unfamiliar city every day! God gives us the strength and energy for this ministry, and for me personally, the strength comes in the form of my team. I truly enjoy the people I do ministry with every day. Their constant presence gives me the energy to do this ministry. They look out for me, and I hope they feel I am doing the same. God has blessed me with a glimpse of Christ in my teammates.

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 2:4-5)



Emily Heine

Date: 3/3/2005

Submitted by: Stephanie Stiles

Journal Entry:

Ah, so many stories, and where to start? Well, today I got locked in the bedroom at our contact's house! We were helping with VBS in Daule, Ecuador, and the boys have been staying at our contact's house, which also happens to be on the church premises. Now, Jim's bedroom is actually on ground level, but under and separate from the main house. With this placement, it quickly become the Kindred storage room for instruments and purses and such. Well, I wasn't feeling real great during VBS this afternoon, so I went to lay down and get some rest. Unfortunately, what I'd forgotten to take into consideration was the lock on the outside of the door.

I slept well enough, but when I finally got up to go use the restroom the door was locked. I shook and knocked on the door for a while before looking around for another way out. (I actually did find a screwdriver and thought I might take the door off the hinges, but they were on backwards anyway!) Unsuccessful. Thankfully, it was probably only about ten minutes or so before I heard the sound of bike tires being pumped up outside the room, and I started banging on the door again. Yay! It was my host dad who came to my rescue, and having opened the door looking very confused, he immediately asked, "Who locked you in?" Ha ha. Wish I'd had an answer for that one! I gotta admit, though, the whole thing was pretty funny.

In other news, 19 bug bites on one hand has got to be some sort of record, especially for someone with hands as small as mine! Do I get a lollipop or something?



Stephanie Stiles

Date: 3/4/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

Greetings to all. Today we had the morning free and this afternoon we traveled from Guayaquil to Daule. We traveled for about an hour in the back of a truck. Once we arrived we rested for a while. At 5 o'clock we went to the church and met with congregation members and elaborated the plan as to how exactly we were to

be utilized. I was glad to see that the congregation came together to discuss ideas.

From what I can gather we will be busy from now until Wednesday. We have evangelistic programs during the evenings of Friday through Sunday, morning worship on Sunday, various outreaches Monday through Wednesday mornings with Vacation Bible School in the afternoon.

After the meeting the team ate together, and then we presented a program to a full church. This was nice, as rain was threatening. All went well despite heat, humidity, and mosquitoes. From talking with the pastor afterward, there were people there that had never been before. I pray that our ministry here is effective. Take care until next time.



Joshua McNaughton

Peace,

Joshua

Psalm 37:4

Date: 3/5/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

So today my host mom shot me in the butt. Tomorrow, she will do it again. I probably need to explain that, no, I don't have authorities after Maria Luisa. A few days ago, I got my first amoeba, and I know I definitely need to explain what that is. Basically, you can get these evil little things from drinking faucet water here, from incorrectly prepared foods, or really, from not being lucky. We were told we would all get them; so far, only I have gotten one full force.



Jim Pfrogner

Now when you get one, they act kind of like the flu, except they act within 12 hours and are incredibly violent. Think of the worst flu you ever had...now imagine being in a country where you don't flush toilet paper...welcome to my world. I lost eight pounds in three days and was not able to keep much of anything down. Needless to say, the team and I were pretty worried, since I don't have a lot of weight to lose.

So, off to the doctor after the local remedy of Mylanta and scalding hot oregano water didn't quite work. Yes, you read that correctly. It tastes awful, smells like pizza and burns like fire on a raw throat, but it does settle your stomach a bit. Actually, the only thing that worked for me those three days was God. Prayers for my health stopped me from throwing up and comforted me greatly a few times.

But yes, finally we met with the doctor, a very nice and knowledgeable doctor. Only problem was, I couldn't keep anything down and needed to kill the amoeba. So, time for shots! In the butt! Not performed by the doctor, but by my host mom! Yay! After one shot, some medicine and some more prayers, I was finally healed. Or at least, the Pedialyte stayed in my stomach. I must say, being violently sick here was rough, but the people have been amazing. Prayers, ideas, medicine injections, and complete and total understanding and caring are putting me back together piece by piece. God is powerful with us here, and—don't worry—I will be totally better soon.

God bless, keep us in your prayers, and pray for the amazing people of Daule.

In His Peace,
Santi

Date: 3/7/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

On Sunday, we had two "cultos," or worship services, at Iglesia Jesús es el Señor. Right away, I noticed that this church family was a bit different from your typical church. First off, I should give some background info. One, we knew right away that this church was filled with amazing people. Not just nice, friendly people. Amazing ones. Two, this church has no glass in the windows (it has been welded and shaped into images such as a person laying a huge sack at the foot of the cross—very cool) and a roof made of palm tree branches. While this all looks really great and makes for a wonderful place to worship, it is not very efficient for keeping the dust and mud out. Especially when it is nothing but dirt roads around the church. I've found in Daule that I've had to refine my idea of what can and can't be done. I look down a street that is so muddy and swampy and think, "There is no way we can walk down this street in our Sunday shoes." And then we do walk down this street, and it is fine. The house I am staying in has no running water. The bathroom has no doors, a toilet that is not connected to anything, and a shower (really, a bucket and a drain) without a curtain. I looked at it and thought, "There is no way I can use this." And then I do use it, and it is fine. All sorts of things like this. So when we get close to the church, I start thinking, "All this dirt in the pretty church!" But when we arrive, I find that there are at least a dozen people already there, cleaning the church! People came early (which is huge in a society where nothing happens at the time people say it will) to church to clean it! And no one asked them, they just figured "Hey, it poured down rain last night, the church should be cleaned before culto." So they came. I was just blown away by this. Worshipping in God's house I think must mean something a little different here. Of course, God doesn't care if you wear jeans or a dress as long as your heart is right. But here, people walk like acrobats down a muddy road so as to not get dirt on their Sunday best. Then they mop the church so the church can look nice, too. People who live in bamboo and concrete houses on stilts without running water come to church looking better than you could imagine. Now, I'm not advocating 3-piece suits for guys and formals for ladies and everyone shows up 20 minutes early to give the sanctuary a once-over as necessary for all churches everywhere. The message I got from seeing this was that worshipping God in God's house is something revered, holy and cherished. One way they showed this was by showing respect for the church as a temple of God and themselves as temples of God. I was just so impressed by the attitude of knowing it is not mandatory or that it changes God's love for them, but that, for them, this is one way that they are able to express how much they love and fear and honor God. It was so neat to be able to see their hearts a little more. After 8:00 a.m. culto, everyone stayed and had a nice breakfast and chatted. No one bee-lined for the door, relieved for it to be over. They behaved like a loving family. Most even stayed for 10:00 a.m. culto! I love the fact that the words "family," "neighbors," "friends," and "fellow church members" are synonymous here. I really feel like the church in Daule is right on for what God intends a church to be. What a blessing to witness AND get to be a part of it.



Jenny Muth

Date: 3/8/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Today I ate COW STOMACH for Jesus! Yes, and my plate was clean. So were the plates of the rest of the girls. The boys weren't doing so hot—Josh wasn't feeling well and didn't eat anything, and Jim was getting over his violent illness, so he ate rice and sauce. I must say that it was a beautiful meal prepared with much love by people in Maravillas, where we did an evening program in a rice warehouse. We started the program with less than 20 people and by the time we finished, there were more than 50. It was an evangelistic program and one of the young men from the church gave a message. It was awesome to see so many people and get to share that we weren't there to travel and see the sights or to act like we were famous, but just to share the love of Christ. Earlier today we had Bible school again, and I got to help Jenny with the four-year-old-and-under kids. I must say, it is difficult to keep seven kids occupied and not running off when you're on a table and benches outside and there are no walls to help you corral. Toward the end of the day, we closed the kids in the church and played "I'm a Lion," and Jenny and I chased them around and around. We did our job well, because during the closing program we saw two of the kids sleeping. Today I submit that it is possible to show the love of Jesus while pretending to eat children.



Emily Twidell

Tonight is our last night at our host homes in Daule, and I must say, it's very bittersweet. We're all

really wiped out and looking forward to a full day off on Thursday, but I have also been so touched by the faith and generosity of the church and our host family. I stayed up for quite a while chatting with our three host sisters (or host moms, depending where you want to split the generation). I would love to get back here to just visit them. Also, I could maybe get more cooking lessons from Imelda...mmm...tortillas de platano and patacones. Look out, family and friends!

Date: 3/9/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

"But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'" (Luke 18:16)

We have been so blessed to have spent this week in Daule, Ecuador. It has probably been the most miserable climate yet (hot, humid, and lots of mosquitoes), but the community here is amazing! After a crazy weekend of programs at the church and programs in the street, we have spent this last week helping with their Vacation Bible School. It has been so great really getting to know one group of kids. Many of the kids attending do not belong to the church, but they continue to come back every day! It has been an honor to watch this church community rally together to do this VBS for the city. Many of the church members selflessly use their vehicles to pick up trucks full and motorcycles full of kids. Even if these kids aren't grasping the Bible stories and all of the other lessons, they are getting love and acceptance. My prayer is that if they don't come to know Jesus now, later on in life when they might be searching for that love and acceptance, they would remember that they got it at church, where the message of God's love is proclaimed!



Emily Heine

Date: 3/11/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone. I hope that all is going well. After a day off yesterday, we feel better. This morning Jim and I helped make recycled paper. We tore paper into small pieces and mixed it with water in a blender.. After this we sifted the mixture in rectangular forms. After taking a bit of the water out, we set them up to dry. This afternoon we traveled to Daule to participate in the closing of Vacation Bible School. This was a wonderful experience. We were all invited back whenever we are in the area. The congregation here is a good example for us. There are many dedicated servants who are willing to give of whatever they have. I shall miss these friends. I do look forward to meeting and making new ones! God is always faithful. We will find family wherever we go. Take care until next time.

Peace,

Joshua



Joshua McNaughton

Date: 3/12/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Sometimes you have good days, sometimes you don't, and then there are days like today, which defy all reason. We are in Guayaquil, the biggest city in Ecuador, and had two programs both two hours long and one hour between them. Problem number one was that the ride from program one to program two is an hour and a half by car, two hours by bus. I am glad we didn't set that up. Problem two...a little background first. Our normal transportation is pick-up trucks, so our contact picked us up in a pick-up and off we went. The first program went great, then right as we were finishing, it started to



Jim Pfrogner

rain really hard. We are talking torrential downpour. So I guess we didn't really think that we would take a pick-up truck on the hour long ride...wrong. Up pulls the truck, so we threw the instruments in the front, pulled a tarp over ourselves and had one of the funniest and most bizarre rides ever.

We arrived at our next program an hour late, soaked to the bone but in great spirits and with dry instruments. Finally at 10:00 p.m. we ate dinner, and after that, drove back—me, Em T, Jenny and Em H in the back, this time with no tarp, and it started pouring again! So after another one and a half hour ride in the rain, we got back. It rained so hard that streets flooded, and we joked constantly about the fact that the city buses were actually kicking up wakes!

We arrived home to find that all (and we are talking 95%) of the girls' laundry was on the line and now soaked again! This is why I love my team; during the entire time, we just laughed, had fun, joked with our contact, and had two really fun and really well received programs. With God, not only is anything possible, but it's really fun as well.

Stay dry,
Santi

Date: 3/14/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

And we left Guayaquil and went to Quito. Ten hours in a bus! It actually turned out to be a pretty fun trip. We did three one-on-one's and then just relaxed for the ride. I must say the best part of the day was sitting with Jenny and mercilessly making fun of the bus movie, "Assassination Files," which was dubbed over in Spanish. I believe that in any language, it could quite possibly be the worst movie of all time, but never fear. Jenny and I laughed our way through the deeply moving political drama with no trouble at all (starring Oswald from The Drew Carey Show). We arrived in Quito after dark and were greeted by Pastor Gonzalo, his wife Nelly, and a prayer before heading to host homes. What a blessing to know that talking to God was the most important thing to do here. Jenny and I were dropped off at an apartment where we were greeted by a young host mom and dad and his brother. We sat around the dinner table, ate and talked, and felt extremely blessed. The spirit in the house was one of joy and generosity, and we headed to bed tired but excited to serve in this new city.



Emily Twidell

Date: 3/15/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

Santa Ana is a small town about an hour (or an hour and a half if you stop to buy 25 pounds of potatoes on your way there) south of Quito in a different valley. On the way there, we were treated to a great view of Cotopaxi, an enormous volcano. Emily T told me that Cotopaxi is famous for (1) being a big honkin' active volcano, and (2) its summit being the furthest point on earth from the center of the earth. Ah, but what about Everest? you say. I wondered the same thing., but Em T assured me that the earth is un-circle-ish enough that mountain peaks closer to the equator are farther from the center of the earth than other mountain peaks. I'd never heard about Cotopaxi before, but Em T is a real smart girl, so I believe her. I am sure this is a constant source of tension between geologists. Kind of like geologist gangs...the Everest United (motto: we are taller and we have sherpas) vs. the Cotopaxi Crypts (motto: sea level is the way wimps measure distance). But I digress.



Jenny Muth

So we are with the pastor and his lovely wife in their "I can make it down the most ridiculous dirt road" van. We arrive at a small church that has another incomplete concrete building (a larger room, a small kitchen, and another small room) close by. We arrived and were treated to a delicious lunch, had a bit of time to do whatever, then we had a worship service. The service was very lovely; I am really enjoying small country churches more and more. A custom in Ecuador that we have noticed is that often random percussion instruments are passed out to people in the congregation so

that everyone can participate in playing music. Here was no different, but they were way into it. There were two ten-year-old boys wailing on drums half their size. About three tambourines and some egg shakers, and one guitar. Ha ha! The revenge of the rhythm section! We opened worship with them playing two songs and a reading from Scripture. I have to say that those are usually my favorite parts. I really enjoy seeing churches work as teams. And man, they really worship with their music. They take that "joyful noise" verse to heart. Not that I don't enjoy what we do in worship services—that couldn't be farther from the truth—but I really love worship watching. Kind of like people watching, but more hard to find. Maybe that is why I love this ministry so much (one of the reasons). I am finding a lot that I get stopped by random moments of "Hey, this is really cool, never thought I'd get to see this." Great example: during our free time, Jim, Em H and I decided to go on a walk. Immediately, we should have known that this would be no normal walk. We walked a good distance down this very quaint country road, past all sorts of chickens, cows and goats that were just hanging out. I always wonder how people know whose cow/goat/chicken belongs to whom. But it works.

The whole way, there was a very steep, very big slope on our left that is part of a valley between two monstrous hills with a very pretty creek at the bottom. It is about two hours before our worship service and we are in our program clothes, so of COURSE it's a good idea to hike down the hill to the creek! So down we go, getting stuck in various places, having to backtrack, hanging onto random shrubs as we skid down really steep parts. I perfected my "slide on your tush" move, and it proved to not only work very well on steep gravelly areas, but it was highly amusing to the two Ecuadorian kids watching this whole operation. After several battles with gravity (including Em falling and immediately springing back up like a rubber ball while shouting, "I'm OK!"), we made it down and were treated to a nice walk along the creek. The time came to head back up the hill to go back. This was greatly catalyzed by it starting to rain...hard. So we find the first possible place to ascend, and after much scrambling through shin-high grass on all fours, swinging over a fence, and leaping over a random canal, we made it. We had to walk back because the road was basically stones in the dirt—very bumpy and now slippery. The recipe for disaster for a person to run on, especially with loose ankles, sandals, and a torn ACL. Since this described one or all persons in the group, we walked. We arrived completely soaked (fortunately we all had a change of shirt) and were in time for pre-worship coffee and standing in front of the fire dinner was cooking on. I am always so amazed at God's plan for me. So many times during the Great Hill Adventure, I thought, "Wow! I can't believe I'm sliding down a hill in Ecuador!" and several other variations of this thought. It is so amazing the things God has in store for us if we are just willing to go.

Date: 3/16/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

It is such a blessing to be in Quito. So, I am going to take this time and tell you about a few of the blessings I have noticed...

Our contact, Pastor Gonzolo, is incredibly organized! He told us our schedule when we first arrived. Besides when we were with our missionary contacts, it has been rare to know our schedule in advance. Not only was our schedule planned out, but it included times for our team to have devotions and rehearsals.

The people we met were so kind, and everyone wanted to show us around Quito. I think we saw the "centro" at least three times! We didn't have to wander around the city looking for interesting things to see--there was always someone knowing exactly how to get there and could even tell us about what we were seeing!

The church we spent a significant amount of time at, Libertad, was a church full of praying members. It was such a blessing to learn about prayer from them and join them in prayer in our time there.

One of the things I was most excited about when we arrived in Quito was the fact that I could understand EVERYTHING! And of course, that is an exaggeration...but after our time in Guayquil where everyone speaks so fast, it was such a blessing to be in a city where the people talk a little slower. I was understanding so much that it FELT like I understood everything. My Spanish



Emily Heine

confidence came back!

Another blessing was my host family. I had two great host sisters and we stayed up every night talking. It was like a sleepover every night. The last night we were there, they insisted on painting my nails. I didn't really care either way...but it turned out to be an unexpected blessing. A "luxury," if you will...

Our time in every city has been wonderful. However, Quito gave us time to regroup as a team and enjoy each other and the people we were meeting!

Date: 3/20/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Hello again.

I changed my day of writing (usually Saturday) so that I could tell you a bit about Palm Sunday in a Lutheran church in South America. We spent Palm Sunday at Libertad, which means freedom. It is a church in central Quito, the capitol of Ecuador, and it also runs a school for Compassion International. That is an organization that sponsors children and lets people send money to help a specific child, who then writes to you and such. It was amazing meeting and working with those kids. They are wonderful, sweet children and are so full of love and energy. They just wanted to be held and played with. Basically, if you ever wanted to be a part of that, it is a truly great thing and your money is not being wasted.

Anyway, Palm Sunday is a big deal here. First all the kids in the congregation got palms and noisemakers, and two at the front carried a big sign that talks about the church. Next came the musicians (we will call them Kindred) who sang a bunch of songs they learned the night before. Behind them was the rest of the congregation, the pastor up front and leading the way. We then marched through the streets of Quito playing two guitars and djembe. If anyone asks you what it's like to walk for a mile or two in Quito (elevation 9000 ft) with a djembe between your legs, tell them that's the most random question ever and that it hurts the inside of your knees. Anyway.

After that, it was back to church. The parade is the main event, and then the service goes for two hours or more. For our part, we did songs and puppets and such; it was really great. Watching the children swinging palms, blowing whistles and singing "King of Kings" in Spanish while marching through the streets of Quito will always be a favorite memory of mine.

I hope all is going well with you and that God has blessed you with a good Easter and company and friends with which to share His love.

God bless,
Santi



Jim Pfrogner

Date: 3/21/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

I have to tell you a bit about our last day in Ecuador. We had an extra day that we didn't need for travel, so we stayed in Quito and worked with the kids we had been working all week with again in the morning. But this time was a bit different. All our instruments were stored in a locked room and when it came time to get them out to do our program, no one had the key. Despite a valiant breaking and entering effort by Jim (he did manage to get one locked door open), we did our first a capella program, which went quite well. After, we made a trip to the equator...both of them. Yes, there are actually two equators. There is the geographical one with lots of tourist shops, restaurants, a museum, and a huge monument. This was the first place we went. We had been told that there were two places, one touristy and one smaller, so we just figured we were at the



Jenny Muth

touristy one. Then we tried to find the place where they would show you how water spins in a different direction, but it was nowhere to be found. Finally, a very nice information center gentleman told us there was another place outside this park and around the corner. So we left the nice park, walked a bit north down the sidewalk, turned left down a dirt path through a bunch of cactuses and came to the REAL equator (about 100 meters north of the geographic one). This was apparently discovered about nine years ago by GPS and is the actual magnetic equator. Here, a bunch of really nice teenagers will show you how water spins clockwise in the northern hemisphere, counterclockwise in the southern, and goes straight down a drain on the equator. This was infinitely cool to me, and I made them show each one to me twice. You can also balance an egg on the head of a nail on the equator (something about less gravity, but only Em T and our 17 year old guide could do it). Also, you are weaker on the equator and weigh less. Our guide told us to kind of make a ring with our thumb and pointer finger. Like an "Ok" sign but with your thumb a bit inside of your pointer finger. Then he said to hold it tight while he tried to pull the circle open. This proved to be very difficult for him, and then we all tried it on ourselves. I am proud to say that Jim could not get my fingers open in the northern hemisphere. The second test was to make a fist with one hand, cover it with the other, then raise your arms and try not to let the other person pull then down. Again, I was a monster in the northern hemisphere. Then we stood on the equator. My fingers and shoulders didn't last a second!!! Neither did Jim's or Em T's or anyone's!! It was so cool!! I had no idea about THAT equator test! After many fun pictures of us doing various things in two hemispheres at once, our teenaged tour guide showed us around the place. We got to walk in a 120 year old house and 120 year old beer bar, both made out of mud and sticks. Yes, college kids the world over can be impressed. We learned all about the indigenous groups in that area and even saw, among many other things, the skin of a seven meter python (they can grow up to 15 meters, we were told—ugh!!—but don't worry, they don't eat humans, they just strangle them), and a real shrunken head. Apparently it was from a 12 year old boy and is nearly 100 years old. We even got to see diagrams of the head shrinking process. It was a very educational day. You don't get to learn this stuff in, say, Sunday school. In the end we left all feeling very cool at actually finding the REAL equator and Em T even got an official "I balanced an egg on a nail on the equator" certificate that was signed by our guide, a witness, and given two different official stamps. She says it is going up next to her college diploma. I fully agree with this idea. As we were walking away, I said (in a moment that would make my dad proud),"Well guys, it's all down hill from here." Em H groaned, Em T stopped in her tracks, Steph hung her head, Josh grinned, and Jim gave me a huge, proud hug. Ahhh, what a fun day. Take care, God's peace, and if you see anyone with a huge knife and a boiling pot of some type of liquid staring at your head...run!

Date: 3/22/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Today we left Ecuador—sniff. But we came to Colombia—woohoo! So, some highlights from our day of switching countries:

I saw three volcanoes out the window of the plane, all at one time. I have plans to return someday and climb them all.

I drank drip coffee for the first time in almost two months!

We had a meeting with all the leaders we are working with and have a schedule for our three weeks here.

Steph and I are staying with a wonderful host family—some grandparent-like parents and a fun host brother who speaks a lot of English.

We have hot water for showers and cable TV in our room, which I'm kind of bummed about. I haven't missed TV at all.

I have a feeling that there is going to be some culture shock just being in a more affluent location. I have a feeling not all of Colombia is like the area of Bogotá we are in, but for now, it's strange for us seeing carpet and things like that. A little taste of our return tour, maybe...



Emily Twidell

Date: 3/23/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine
Journal Entry:

I always struggle the first few days we are in a new place, and it is always hard for me to put a finger on why exactly it is I struggle. I am sure a huge part of it is just the unknown, but I think there may be more to it. I notice that we are very doted on when we first arrive in places. I am not allowed to lift a finger...I am not allowed to go anywhere alone...I am not given a second alone to take in my new surroundings. Now, this hardly seems like anything to complain about. My every need is pretty much taken care of for me and I don't need to worry about anything. But, it does bother me! I can't help it!



Emily Heine

To make matters worse, I don't feel like I should be bothered by the attention. This year is not about me, it is about serving. And if they want to dote on me, by all means, I should let them. But when I combine the feeling of frustration with the feeling that I don't have the right to be frustrated, I feel even worse!

When I take the time to look at all of the blessings I received since coming to Colombia, I don't see a reason to complain. I have an amazing host family, with two crazy fun sisters! They feed me amazing meals. I have a room to myself with a TV and DVD player (not that I really understand any of the programs). They take me where I need to go and when. Blessings everywhere!

My motto these last few days has been, "Look at the intentions and not the actions." For instance, when every one in the town is helping us set up before a program, and they are actually hurting more than helping, I look at their intentions. They are only trying to help me. And when my host mom won't let me leave the house without a guide, and I feel trapped, I realize that she is only trying to make sure I don't get lost. The people we meet are always trying to serve us in all that they do. So when their actions drive me crazy, it helps me to focus on their intentions, and then I find myself less frustrated.

Coming to a new place is never easy for me. But I take comfort in the fact that God always gives me the strength to handle my new surroundings, and after a few days the struggles pass! Gracias a Dios!

Date: 3/25/2005
Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton
Journal Entry:

Hello all. I do hope that all is well there. Today is Good Friday. Today we traveled for four hours from Bogotá to Ibagué. During Semana Santa (Holy Week), almost everyone has vacation. Outside the church, anyone who works during this week is out to make some money. At the bus terminal in Bogotá, many of the bus lines were closed. According to our national contacts, those that were willing to grant us passage wanted double the actual value of the ticket. With that in mind, we were able to "regotear" (haggle), a most interesting cultural experience. Once we arrived in Ibagué, we met the pastor, had lunch and relaxed for a while. Later in the afternoon, we participated in an evangelistic program in a bamboo house with about 300 people, which went well. We are scheduled for two programs on Saturday and worship on Sunday. I think of my family today as they gather at my sister's house to celebrate the Easter weekend. Although I am not, I am glad to spend Easter with my team and many new friends. May the peace of the Lord be with you all.



Joshua McNaughton

Blessings,
Joshua McNaughton

Date: 3/27/2005
Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner
Journal Entry:

And now the story of the longest Easter ever. I awoke at 5:30 to attend the sunrise prayer service in the small, poor, beautiful town of Ibagué in the Colombian mountains. The service was nice. Jenny, Em T and I attended and prayed in Spanish and in turn were prayed for—beautiful. If you wondered, South Americans think the Easter Bunny is hilarious and don't quite understand the egg hunt concept. Anyway, next came the official Easter Sunday (Pascua, en Español) service in which Kindred did pretty much everything, including five more songs we learned the night before.



Jim Pfrogner

The packed little church let out at ten, and then we went visiting, which is always fun. After meeting new people, we were treated to a great lunch, and then we were supposed to catch a bus back at 3 and arrive home in Bogotá about 7. However, bus lines were three blocks long, so we were told that our contact's cousin would pick us up at 7 p.m. in his van.

Okay, cool. So we hung out with friends, said our goodbyes and got ready. At 7, Em T and I pulled out our instruments since we heard the van was delayed but would be there at 9 p.m. We practiced and enjoyed just guitar and djembe jamming away. We were in a little room at the front of the mission and a few kids from the neighborhood showed up, then a few more, and pretty soon we had about fifteen kids packed around us as we played by candlelight (the power had gone out because of a big storm earlier that day). Another fifteen or so adults stood at the door and watched.

So Em T and I took request after request, sometimes giving our own requests, often doing songs we had never done and often getting the same request and doing it anyway. It was amazing; I was totally exhausted at first, it was dark, I hadn't slept well, and I had been up since five. Then God pushed, Em T and I both got tons of energy, and finally at about 9:30 p.m. all the kids suddenly said thanks, hugged, said their last goodbye and left. It felt like that was the entire reason the van was late; we still had another program to do, it just wasn't on the schedule. (What's funny is the really important things are never on the schedule—or at least, not on mine.)

Anyway, at 10:30 p.m. the van still wasn't there, so we moved from outside waiting in the street to inside the church where we could lay down. Most of the team was sleeping or resting, but Em T, again by candlelight, took out her guitar again and started singing. Jenny chimed in and so did I. Pretty soon the small candlelit church was filled with the sounds of six Americans singing Easter hymns. Finally, at the end of "Beautiful Savior," the van arrived. It was 12:15 a.m. Next was a beautiful night drive that lasted about three and a half hours through the moonlit Colombian countryside. It was so beautiful, I didn't need to pray or thank God for it. Just staring out the window, I was awestruck by the quiet serenity and the beauty of it all.

Finally, we got to our respective homes and at 5:30 a.m. I got to bed. Totally exhausted and thunderstruck by God's power, His way of doing things in His time and not ours, and the amazing beauty in front of us. Not just in the beauty of a full moon on Easter or in the sky here where I could see the Big Dipper, Orion's Belt and the Southern Cross (for the first time in my life), but in the amazing people around us. In their incredible love, kindness and faith. On the first Easter, God made it possible for us all to have eternal life and to be free of sin. This Easter I was able to spend with His people, my family, even though I was 5000 miles from home. May the peace of God which passes all human understanding be with you always.

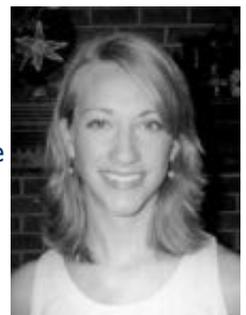
Happy Easter,
Santi

Date: 3/28/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

So, since Jim did a most excellent job describing our Easter (Pascua) to you and since he also had a great message, my journal is going to be utterly frivolous. So here's the scene. To my left is a sea of about 500-700 people in a space for about 400 people, except that you can't actually see the people. All you can see are over 100 huge blue and white flags (and the occasional yellow, blue and red flag of Colombia) frantically waving, a mob of blue and white under the flags in constant motion, and somewhere in



that craziness is an enormous drum and some horns keeping all the movement and singing going to a somewhat regular beat. To my right are several men in full business suits with very official looking ear bud headphones, staring very intently forward and randomly springing to their feet and screaming with huge displays of emotion. In front of me are 22 guts running, jumping and sometimes falling erratically. Am I at an executive meeting gone horribly awry? Watching an interpretive dance? At a Grateful Dead concert? No! I'm at a FÚTBOL GAME!!! That is right, an I-painted-my-face, been-counting-down-the-days-since-January, I-am-now-best-friends-with-the-guy-next-to-me, nothing-else-in-this-world-matters soccer game. For a little over an hour and a half, Kindred was treated to the amazing fútbol prowess of one of the most winningest teams in Colombia versus one of the most winningest teams in Argentina, Millonarios vs. Racing (respectively). Our experience started with an exciting taxi ride (not everyone gets to say that they hit a curb and flew over it at 60 kph and no one was phased), bargaining for tickets outside the stadium (well, actually our Colombian friends did that), Jim's pocketknife being seen as a threat to the Colombian army and thus being confiscated into the young officer's pocket, and finding seats that weren't really ours but it didn't matter anyway. And by seat, I mean a series of concrete steps/platform thingies with enough room to sit/shout/dance on. The game began with the home team, Millos for short, running out onto the field while hundreds of huge white plastic banners were unfurled from the top of the stadium down to the bottom over everyone's heads. You couldn't see and you couldn't hear for the screaming, but *man*, it was fun! The banners soon came down and several kids went through the crowd giving out blue plastic bags that are long and thin which you blow up and wave around. The players all lined up, shook hands (this was a friendly match set up by a company), and then immediately changed cleats. Now, being a soccer player for about 17 years, I did not understand this. In my experience, cleats should last for longer than the walk out onto the field. But, after all, this is my first scream-your-head-off, I-bleed-blue-and-white soccer game, and maybe I have a lot to learn. For example, I quickly found my Spanish soccer vocab to be very poor. Anyone know how to say "offsides" or "If that was a foul, the guy in front of me waving a jersey in one hand and a lollipop in the other is your grandma!" in Spanish? Clearly, I should have brushed up on my soccer lingo staples before I got here. However, it was oodles of fun, and we did our share of cheering and booing (which, we learned, is actually done with a high-pitched whistle sound) with everyone else. And we may even have been on TV. During halftime, there was a really great fireworks show, a really terrible cheerleading performance (think the Ashlee Simpson halftime at the Rose Bowl equivalent, but in Spanish and with poor choreography instead of poor singing; I say this having some good friends from high school who are cheerleaders and could dance circles around these girls while on crutches), and a camera being put right in Em H's face. The camera guy and the "interviewer" peppered Em H and occasionally Jim with rapid fire questions. Em H, whose smile more than makes up for any Spanish error, was in full effect with cuteness, and Jim was (in usual Jim style) bulldozing his way through answers that always ended in "¡Vive Millos!" They loved it. After what really was a friendly match (hometown fans booed their own team if they committed a malicious foul and jerseys were exchanged by the players at the end), the Millos team won 2-1. Everyone got to go nuts to their hearts' content and go home to a great night's sleep.

Date: 3/29/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

What an interesting feeling I had today! We were planning for our return trip program and, being Program Coordinator for our team, it was a bit of a shock to the system. Imagine, if you will, having pressure for two months to come up with a solid program in English, only to begin to try to get together a full program in Spanish. Then for six months, you work like mad to have enough programming material to do everything in Spanish. Then, the minute you think you can enjoy the fruits of your labor, it's back to planning a whole new program that you will use for the last three months of team. And this, my friends, is what hit me today. We are in the midst of doing everything in Spanish and have to start working on English stuff again. I shouldn't complain. I should be thrilled that our team can share Jesus' love through complete programs in two languages, but today it seems like a pretty high mountain to climb. One step at a time, Emily! Remember El Cajas. One step...



Emily Twidell

Date: 3/30/2005
Submitted by: Emily Heine
Journal Entry:

This morning we all met at the TransMillenio station (a bus system that works pretty much like a subway) at 6:30 a.m. Not my favorite time of day; oh well. The team, minus Jenny because her host home is nearby the colegio we were visiting this morning, piled into the TransMillenio and set out for our hour-and-a-half trip to the San Lucas colegio, the only Lutheran school in Bogotá. We soon found out we had three programs from 8 a.m. to noon. The first group was ages seven to twelve. The teachers absolutely *packed* the chapel. By the middle of the program, we had kids sitting on the steps of the stage, and by the end, they were standing right next to us on the stage! It was absolutely crazy, and we got completely mauled afterwards. Our team struggles a lot with signing autographs and being treated like we are famous. We want the kids to see Jesus, not us.

The second program we did was for three- to six-year-olds. So cute! Definitely my favorite age group. And then came the group I absolutely love (yes, you did catch a hint of sarcasm in that last sentence)...the high schoolers! I always start our programs with high schoolers not wanting to be there because they are "too cool" for us. But, by the end, I have a blast because we have won them over, and most are even doing the actions of songs with us. As was the case today!

Overall, the programs were a blast, and we got to meet tons of cool kids today. We spent the rest of the day hanging out with our host homes and playing ping-pong. We ran out of time to have a doubles match: the U.S. vs. Colombia—stay tuned!

P.S.—Em T wants me to tell you that she biffed a kid in the head with her guitar during the first program. Good news—kid is okay.



Emily Heine

Date: 4/1/2005
Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton
Journal Entry:

Hello all. Happy April Fools' Day! Today started out much like any other. At 10:30, Jim came and asked if I'd like to go for a walk. He, my host brother and I set out. Our destination: La Pel Uquería (Hair Salon). It turned out that Jim wanted a haircut, with me along to interpret. It was fun. My host brother and I could not help laughing a bit every once in a while when we thought of how the reactions of other people might be to Jim's hair. It is a big change, but a good one.

This weekend we go to Bucaramanga. We would be on a bus headed there now, except that the decision was made to fly there tomorrow morning. We worked at a school on Wednesday and as a result, we got an invitation to perform at a church this evening. There were about 50 or 60 people there that we had not planned on meeting. God has his reasons for everything. He is good.

Joshua



Joshua McNaughton

Date: 4/2/2005
Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner
Journal Entry:

Some days you never forget, this is one. We flew to Bucaramanga today, so our day started at 3 a.m. as we got up and ready at our respective houses and then headed to the airport. After an hour long flight, we landed and loaded our stuff and myself into the trunk of an SUV and headed to Pastor Israel's house for orientation on Bucaramanga and what we would be doing there for the next two days. Bucaramanga is a decent sized village in Colombia that just a few months ago was absolutely devastated by heavy rains, which caused massive flooding and mudslides. The flooding and mudslides combined took the lives of over 300 people and left thousands homeless



Jim Pfrogner

in a part of the country that the government does not really enter into much because of guerillas in that area. If you didn't know (I didn't), Colombia is in the midst of a war between guerilla warriors from the drug cartels and the Colombian government. It is much better now than it was, but there are still parts of the country ruled by guerillas, and this territory is more or less theirs.

So you have a part of the country where, when people are in need of help, no one can get in to help them. The government is not of much help, and the guerillas don't want to waste their time or money helping the people. So the Lutheran Church of Colombia steps in. I gotta say, I could not have been much happier to be associated with a church than with this one. Pastor Israel explained that the guerillas don't usually let church groups into their section of the country, but since his church offered actual physical help to the people of Bucaramanga by bringing in blankets, water, little stoves for cooking and other greatly needed things, they were allowed to bring in things to spiritually help the people too. So Kindred was allowed to go into the hardest hit regions of Bucaramanga and do programs.

Our first program was an hour drive away, so we all piled into an SUV again which somehow managed to fit us (as a side note, I don't know what I am going to do when I get back to the States and don't have to ride in the trunk anymore). We drove until the pavement ended and then drove some more into the poorest neighborhood I have ever seen. Some people have heard me speak about Anapra (pronounced an-opera), which was incredibly impoverished. This place made it look good. The people here had just had everything they owned wash away and have had no help to replace it except what the church here can do. Remember—the government isn't helping, and they have no insurance, so what's gone is gone. They live in whatever they could construct with tarps from the church draped across it to keep out the rain. They barely had enough food to live on, I could tell the children and some adults were suffering from starvation, and there was no electricity, no phones, no running water.

So here we are, we got out of the truck, found a spot to set up in the middle of the village and went about tuning up our instruments and getting ready. Now Bucaramanga is hot and very humid. My guess is it was about 100 degrees, so it was going to be a rough hour and a half long outdoor program. However, as always, we find ourselves served by the people we came to serve. The wonderful women of the community saw that we might be thirsty, so before we even went out, they handed me a tall glass (keep in mind they have hardly anything—the entire time I was there I saw only 6 glasses, and you can guess how many people are on Kindred) of...something. They said it was Colombia's national drink. So with a smile I started to gulp it down when I suddenly realized, this is alcoholic...very alcoholic...like, homemade alcohol, in fact.

So remembering our team phrase, "Eat it for the glory of God," or if really bad, "Smile for Jesus," I tried to get my team to find anything else to do so they would not have to drink this stuff and smiled as I drank about half the glass. The people seemed pleased with my reaction and left us to prepare, and I tried to get my mind working again. This was strong stuff, and I don't drink much. In fact, this was the first alcohol I had had in about a year...and I had a program to do in 100 degree heat, outside...yay! Well, the program went off without a hitch, except for the fact that I did jump into a tree during a "Fuente!" in the song "Paz Como un Rio." However, I doubt that the alcohol had anything to do with that—I jump into things all the time. The kids of the barrio really seemed to enjoy it. Well, to be accurate, they went nuts, and after the program mobbed us, which was great. I gave djembe lessons, an autograph or two, and lots of hugs.

So finally the program was finished, and after putting away my drum, I helped deliver stoves, piling them in a room with other locals while I talked a bit to the people there. They were so upset when we had to leave to go do our next program, the kids ran after the SUV, and I waved from the trunk and prayed to the Lord to take care of them and thanked Him for this opportunity. I know there were guerillas there watching us, probably one or two at the program, and some of the kids might grow up to be guerillas as well. I love the idea that God shines through our attempts to spread His Word, that we might have made an impact on them, that somebody might change his ways because he saw God work through us. You might wonder at this point if we felt unsafe or in danger at any point during our first program; nope—not at all. We all talked about it later and felt that the entire time we were safe. Pastor Israel has been a pastor at this church for 22 years and knows almost everybody in the area, guerillas too. So yeah, I felt totally safe and really privileged to be there.

So then it was about 12 p.m. and time to go to lunch and then another program. This next program was an hour in the opposite direction, and so we piled all of our stuff and fourteen (yup, fourteen) people in an SUV that comfortably fits five. How, you may ask. Well, simple—three up front, four in the back, three and all the instruments in the trunk, three on the back bumper holding onto the roof rack, and one on the roof rack. I am dead serious. So off we go through amazing country, then off the roads and then through two (yes, two) actual rivers—not over bridges but straight through them. One even had a swinging rope bridge like in the movies!! It

was so cool. So finally we got to a tiny school in a different part of Bucaramanga and did another full program. This one was inside, but there was not air conditioning or anything, so it was pretty brutal as well. Still, we kept the energy up, had a blast with the kids and then headed back. On the trip back, I got to ride standing on the bumper...so cool.

Finally we got to rest; they let us take a nap for an hour before our last program of the day, which also went well. It was an incredible day that I only could have made it through with God's help. We all finally got to bed at about 11 only to have to wake up at 6 for church services in the morning. Still, God continues to bless us with amazing people and amazing opportunities to spread His Word, and He continues to keep us safe and tight as a team. Please keep the people of Bucaramanga in your prayers, as well as all the people here in Colombia.

May His light keep you out of darkness,

Santi

Date: 4/3/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

If a bus that you had to catch leaves the station at 2:30 p.m., and it takes 15 minutes to get to the station, and your stuff is not in the car but is actually five minutes away, what time would you leave? If you said "Before 2:25 p.m.," you are obviously not from Bucaramanga. Here's the story. After two lovely worship services at two different churches, the pastor said he wanted to take us out to lunch. This pastor was also our contact/host in Bucaramanga, so it was very easy to have all our stuff at the place we were going to leave from. Well, it took a lot longer to head out the door to lunch after church, and when we got to the restaurant, the service was phenomenally slow as well. The food ended up arriving at 2:00 p.m. Well, part of the food. At this point, we were still holding out hope of making the bus. We had a beautiful plan all worked out. Eat as quick as you can, a bathroom rotation, two people carry stuff, two pack, and two say goodbye. At 2:15 p.m. when the rest of the food had not arrived and our host mom was insisting we wait for it, we abandoned hope. "No te preocupes, estamos en Colombia!" (Don't worry, we are in Colombia!) was what our allusions to the impending departure of our bus sans Kindred were met with. I learned two very important things during those anxious minutes. (1) When God does not provide you with the strength to muster up one more poker face, He will provide you a restroom in which you can hide and laugh out loud at the situation—or scream. Both happened. (2) You won't be alone. Em H and I both bee-lined to the ladies' room for the same reason at the same time. One of the harder things for me this year, and more so in South America, is really having to completely control my emotions at the point when I want to control them the least. I chalk it up as another lesson in the love of Christ for us and how we should love others as Christ loves us (this list is getting lengthy). However, I am happy to report that Kindred stared down the barrel of possibly missing the only bus that day and having to cancel multiple programs the next day like champs. In the end, the rest of the food finally arrived and was promptly put into a bag, we ran out, implemented the 2x2x2 plan (worked like a dream), raced to the bus station, got there at 2:45 p.m., ran to where our bus should be...and thankfully, it still was. So, six very tired but very grateful Kindredites boarded the bus. We were treated to one of the most beautiful trips through mountains, the movie *Man on Fire* (not Denzel Washington's best, in my opinion—any movie about terrible kidnappings in Mexico City that ends in "And a special thank you to Mexico City, a very special place" is a bit off), the movie *The Wedding Date* (definitely not Debra Messing's best—think achingly predictable *Pretty Woman* in reversed roles), and a night of very good sleep.



Jenny Muth

Date: 4/5/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Andrés—my man! Have you ever looked into a crowd of people and totally connected with one kid? Andrés was that kid for me today. I remember when I was little and the

only way I could sit still was if I only paid attention to sitting still. If I was paying attention to anything else, I was moving; incidentally, that got me in a lot of trouble. So, when I looked out today over the group of kids, Andrés with his wide eyes, short hair, intense expression and complete and utter inability to keep still made me smile. Good thing our children's programs don't require much sit-and-be-quiet time. I had a warm heart watching a kid know he was loved and get to be himself for a while—yeah God!



Emily Twidell

After, we headed with our friends to Juan Valdez. New fun Colombian fact: Juan Valdez is an actual guy, the guy in the commercials is actually him, and he has a huge amount of coffee land and the ritziest coffee joints in Colombia, like Starbucks in the States. It's so ritzy and exclusive that they don't let you take pictures of the place. Seriously, there's a guard that yells at you. We found this out after our friend Claudia tried to get a picture of us having a great time drinking coffee. Oops! We'll ask next time.

Date: 4/5/2005

Submitted by: Stephanie Stiles

Journal Entry:

Weekend trips--I like weekend trips. And I like bus rides, especially long ones where I can sit and stare out the window at the pretty mountains as we drive. Windy, bumpy roads--I don't like windy, bumpy roads... well, you get the idea.

We got on the bus from Bucaramanga at 3 p.m. today to head back to Bogota. Around 3:30 p.m. I excused myself from the seat next to Jim (praise the Lord there was a restroom on the bus!), and at 11:30 p.m. we finally arrived in Bogota. And I'd thought getting up at 4:30 a.m. for a half hour flight to Bucaramanga the day before was bad!

The good news--our time in Bucaramanga was great. We got to do programs for two different communities of mudslide victims just outside of town, as well as three churches in town. And we have also discovered that if we get to the airport early for our flight to Venezuela this week, there's a Juan Valdez coffee stand just waiting for us! Did we tell you about Juan Valdez yet? We're going to miss his coffee when we leave Colombia.



Stephanie Stiles

Date: 4/6/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

Since coming to Colombia, it seems like we haven't had too much time to be together as a team, but today God provided us with a morning to get some team job stuff done and get in some quality time together. We started the morning at IELCO (Iglesia Evangelica Luterano Colombia...in English, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia) with a devotion with its workers. After this, we had time to do a devo as a team and then some one-on-ones, where we hang out with one team member at a time and check in with each other. Then we were off to Em and Steph's host home for lunch... and just so everyone knows, Colombian food—so good! We had the rest of the afternoon to relax a bit before heading to our program that night at Vida Nueva Iglesia. The boys' host home belongs to this church, so their host brother picked most of the songs, and Em T (our Program Coordinator) had a fun time taking those songs and making the program flow well. The program was great; lots of fun, like always!



Emily Heine

Date: 4/7/2005

Submitted by: Stephanie Stiles

Journal Entry:

Yay for birthday parties!! Our Bogota contact turned 31 today, and we all got to

celebrate it with her! We were invited to her home for lunch, along with some of our other friends here, so around noon we got onto the bus and headed that direction. After a large bowl of chili (soup is an entrée here), we spent some time giving sort of a mini-program while our contact and friends shouted out all their favorites (most of which are sing-a-longs with lots of actions). Then the finalè, dc Talk's "Live In the Light" which we don't actually do in programs, but Emily happens to know the chords, and Jim happens to know all the words... while others of us jump in randomly on chorus and harmonies. Toward the end of the afternoon we all piled into the bus for another friend's house. We try to have team worship services in English once a month, and since many of our friends here speak a decent amount of English, we invited them to join us. And it was a party! By the end of the night we had 15 people piled in the little living room in the apartment where the boys are being housed. And that was a true worship setting--a living room filled with friends who just want to come together in God's presence. Cool.



Stephanie Stiles

And of course, we can't forget the boys' wonderful host parents, who at the end of the worship brought out plates filled with fruit and ice cream for everyone. =)

Date: 4/8/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

This morning we rose early and by 5:15 we were on a bus headed to Sogamoso. We arrived at 8:30 and met the pastor. We went to the local Lutheran school, had breakfast and had an outdoor program for about 350 students. That afternoon the pastor took us out so we could get to know the area a little better. After that it was time to go to host homes. I am staying with a widow and her son. I get to speak as much English as I do Spanish in this home as the son loves to practice English. This is something that I am not too used to, but it is ministry. We are scheduled for a meeting with the youth group tomorrow and services at church on Sunday. I'm looking very much forward to it.



Joshua McNaughton

Date: 4/9/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Man, it really isn't fair. I keep having the coolest days to write about! OK, so today we woke up in the city of Sogamosa, a small city tucked away in the mountains of Colombia about three hours out of Bogota. Pastor Jon, an incredibly nice pastor who is our contact here, takes us out to the city of Isa, a tiny little village that looks pretty much the same as it must have when it was founded in 1627. It was phenomenal, just the most beautiful place with a gorgeous old church and a park with a garden that blows your mind. It was so beautiful walking the streets, looking at cows and petting sheep. Just awesome.



Jim Pfrogner

Then we came across a café called Granito de Mostaza (grain of mustard or mustard seed), which is the name of our most popular song!! So in we went to the most beautiful Colombian café, which in reality has now spoiled me to all cafés in the future. Basically it looked like a café you would see in a romantic comedy set in Paris... except without French people. It was small, beautiful, and the inside had a garden with an opening in which you could see the sky. You sit around this garden filled with flowers and drink Colombian coffee while looking at the sky and the church steeple visible through the open space in the tile roof. Did I mention the coffee was a gift from the Senora who owned the café when she learned what we were in Colombia for?

So yeah, talk about a way to start your day! Then we went to the church for a two o'clock youth program. The youth were cool and the program went OK, not incredible or anything. We were excited, but it seemed like something was missing, so right when the program ended we sat down and started a question and answer time. It was unplanned but seemed like the right thing to do. Well, the kids started off really shy; they were all youth (interestingly, in Colombia, youth means age 16-25, sometimes older), so we really wanted to get into some serious issues. Finally Jenny got the ball rolling by asking Em T. what hard moments she had faced in her Christian life. From there we hit lots of topics but centered on what happens when your friends are not

Christian and you are.

It was good and all, but I just was not feeling it; I wanted to speak but had no idea what to say, and the Spanish was going so fast from the Colombians that I was not understanding questions quick enough to answer them. I was feeling so frustrated when I thought, "OK, this isn't fun, this is hard, and I don't want to be here. That means this is exactly where I need to be, so just wait and you will know what to say." About a minute later, one of the Colombian kids just out of nowhere looks at me and says, "Santi...que piensas?" Literally, what do you think? Funny thing was there hadn't been a question. I said "Sabor que?" About what? And he just shrugged his shoulders and said, "About anything." I knew exactly what to say; I basically gave my sharing in Spanish with lots of mistakes, but everyone got it.

It was incredible; God just pushed me and I had to go with it. I love that. So the program ended well and then off to a little barrio to do a program for kids. This program rocked too. I started off playing soccer with a bunch of little guys ages 6-11, and that was a blast. Then it was time to start the program. It was held in a little building with an unfinished roof, which provided the only light since we had no electricity. The audience consisted of about fifty kids ages 3-12, about ten adults, one or two dogs, and an iguana. The Iguana was the pet of one of the kids and was very well behaved. The kids went nuts, and we had a great time in another very poor neighborhood. The program was a blast, especially the last few songs since it was getting late and the light from the sky was fast fading. Try doing all the motions to "Padre Abram" (Father Abraham) when you can't see each other really well. Basically think, little kid mosh pit. The best part was when Jenny almost accidentally punched me in the nose...so fun.

So finally we got to our respective homes and were able to get a bit of rest, which seems to come so rarely here. To be honest, I would not have it any other way. I thank the Lord that we have the privilege of being here; it is really wonderful. Please keep the people of Colombia in your prayers and pray for us as we continue on our journey.

God bless you,

Santi

Date: 4/10/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

Today we should have spent our morning in Sogomoso, but we ended up in Junja instead. And as always, God's plan proved to be best. After an hour and change ride in a bus-ish kind of van (really not sure what you would call those things) where everyone was treated to Jim and me (and sometimes others) belting out the entire "Share the Well" album by Caedmon's Call (excellent, by the way), we arrived at the church. We helped out with the Sunday service, which was a blast. One thing that I have noticed about the churches we have been in here in Colombia is that the services are full church efforts. It is not just the pastor and one person to read Scripture. It is the pastor and about seven others (no exaggeration) who either read Scripture, have their own small sermons, lead a song, etc. I like this a lot. After service, a very nice family took us to a restaurant for lunch. This restaurant was a place where they take massive hunks of meat, put them on huge skewers, and let them be smoked and cook slowly over an open fire. Needless to say, we were pretty pumped for this. Our meat-filled bubble of excitement was soon burst when we found out that we had been ordered for and were getting piping hot bowls of mondongo soup—a.k.a., cow's stomach and tongue. Jim and Josh officially were added to the list of Kindred members who have eaten parts of a cow's digestive system in South America. The happy ending is that after the soup, a plate filled with yummy parts of cow we are more used to eating arrived (along with rice, potatoes, beans and salad). After lunch, we had a program with the youth, which ended up being a group with ages ranging from six to mid-40s and very fun. I love watching parents and teenagers go nuts to our little kid sing-alongs. Our program was in a nearly covered courtyard of the church, and God held the rain off just in time for us to finish our third encore. Afterwards, we had time to hang out with the people some more. I was taught a traditional dance of the area. The region of Colombia we were in is called Boyacá (another fun Colombian word to say quickly over and over) and is known as the heart of the culture, I was told. I was paid a huge compliment in being told that I dance like a Colombiana. My friend Jessica who is actually Colombiana would be so proud! It ended up being a



Jenny Muth

harder goodbye than I thought. What do you say to a six-year-old girl with tears in her eyes asking when she will be able to see you again? While those moments are never easy, I am very grateful that God can work through us to affect people. After a mad dash in the rain and running (yet again) to catch our bus, we had a relaxing ride back to Bogotá. All in all, another very good day.

Date: 4/12/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

I'm going to take this journal to write about the last few days in my life on team—my hardest. I'll start on Friday. We woke up for a super early bus ride to Sogamoso, and I traveled praying most of the way because I knew that my little sister was having brain surgery that day. I never could have imagined when I signed up for this year that I would be out of town (or more, out of the country) for such a crucial time in my sister's life. I have missed many monumental happenings in my sisters' lives (who are also my best friends) because of being on various teams or taking a job in Florida I knew I was supposed to take. I have keenly felt what it is like to pick God's will over my family, but this time was different. This was a brain tumor (benign, but in her brain nonetheless). I couldn't even call. Right as she was going in, I was planning a program for a Christian school chapel. As she was getting out of surgery, I was on a tour of nearby towns. I was trying to serve, but I needed time to cry, to pray, to not think about Colombia. God gave it to me. We got to walk up into the hills past a country church, and I got to wander by myself and cry and pray and sing. When we got back to our host home, I was hoping to hear of an Internet café I could check the following morning. Instead, the pastor offered his computer to me—she made it through surgery! She had a bit of a complication with her right leg (controlled by the place in her brain where the tumor was), but they got the whole tumor and expect full healing for her leg. So, I slept easy. The next thing was getting to talk to her, which I thought would happen on my day off on Monday, but she was going home (praise God!), and I couldn't call that night because we had a program (yep, on our day off—it happens), and we got back too late. So, today was Talk to My Sister Day, and it felt so good to hear her voice telling me she was going to be okay. One amazing truth for all of you: God loves our loved ones more than we do and can get along without our help. They are in good hands—I rest in that fact.



Emily Twidell

Date: 4/13/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

Today: our longest day, my best day, our last day in Colombia.

This morning we all met at IELCO again for a devotion with the workers. This time, it was our turn to lead it. We led the president of the church and all the other high-ups in some fun action songs, which they thoroughly enjoyed! Before we ended, the president handed us gifts from the Colombia church. We received the traditional chocolate/coffee candies, ceramic churches, a Spanish New Testament and bracelets. They were so generous and grateful for our time in Colombia. After lunch at our favorite Colombian restaurant, we headed to play ping-pong with our host homes. They are huge fans of ping-pong! So we took the TransMillenio with all of our instruments and headed for the ping-pong hall. Unfortunately, we did not play the ultimate match of Colombia vs. the U.S., so I guess we are all winners. Yep, cheesy, I know, Anyway, after ping-pong, we grabbed all of our instruments and headed back to the TransMillenio to head to our program. It is at this point that I should probably mention I wasn't so stoked about having a program an hour-and-a-half away from our houses the night before we have an early morning flight that I hadn't packed for. However, my attitude completely changed at the program. The people were so excited to have us and so grateful that we were able to come. They continued to ask when we were coming back. I can't imagine having not done that program! I'm so grateful that we did. By the time we finished greeting all of the members after the program and being treated to cold glasses of Coke, we headed home around 10 p.m. I was thinking I could still make it to bed by 1 a.m. after hanging out with my host family and packing,



Emily Heine

but I soon found out we were headed to the boys' host home to have a pizza party for our last night.

After learning this info, I prepared myself for no sleep and then was able to have a blast! We ate fruit and pizza and hung out. After dinner, they dedicated a song to us. It was a beautiful song, and it talked about how even though we are far away, we will always be friends. Saying goodbye was so sad, and most had tears. But our time in Colombia was so special, and I will not soon forget it. I'm going to close this journal with the words to the song we sang for our Colombian friends on our last night in their country.

May the peace of the Lord be with you, my friends
with you, my friends, forever
May the peace of the Lord be with you, my friends
with you, my friends, forever
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world
you take away the sins of the world
Have mercy, have mercy on us
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world
you take away the sins of the world
Grant us, oh grant us your peace
Grant us, oh grant us your peace.

Date: 4/15/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

After a long tiring day yesterday, today we have much of the day off. We spent a couple of hours planning what we'll do for the next week. We will be fairly busy the way it looks now. Time seems to be going by very quickly. It seems as though we arrived in South America just a short while ago. I am anxious to share some more experiences when we are back in the States. Take care until next time.

Joshua McNaughton



Joshua McNaughton

Date: 4/16/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Hey there,

Well, today has been interesting. We are in San Cristobal, Venezuela and finally had some time to ourselves in the little apartment that we call home. All six of us are housed together in a small apartment with no glass in the windows, one bathroom with no shower and no light, and one bathroom with light and shower but no door!! So needless to say it has been interesting getting used to our surroundings but it is also wonderful to be staying together for once.

It is funny; we live together most of the time, but when we are all separated for a long period of time, I almost feel homesick for my teammates. Sounds crazy, but then again, that is normal for me. After another great program with the Cenfol church in Venezuela, we got home and decided to make lunch. Jenny and I took on the task of making crepes since Jenny realized we had eggs, flour and water. Milly found apples and went to make cinnamon apples, so our plan was crepes with cinnamon apples on them...yum!

Well, Jenny and I quickly realized that we didn't have a) the right kind of flour (we had corn flour which is very coarse, rather than wheat flour which is really fine), b) a working skillet, or c) a spatula. Still, we didn't get this far in life by giving up, so we started attempting to make crepes, which worked great if you like your crepes black and crispy and falling apart. Unfortunately we don't either. Milly noticed that she was only missing one ingredient for her cinnamon apples—namely cinnamon. So her apples became basically apple pie filling-style apple goo.



Jim Pfrogner

So now Jenny and I had to come up with something to go with apple goo, and fortunately Milly had the great idea of dumplings!! Except none of us knew how to make real dumplings, so Jenny and I finally settled on dough balls. Jenny came up with the plan, which was as follows: a) make the dough, b) take some, c) make a ball out of it, d) put it in the water. So after a while, Emi came in and asked us what in the world happened to the crepes. We informed her that we were not having crepes with cinnamon apples but dough balls with apple goo. She left kinda confused and then came back and said, "You know, we were going to have crepes but dough balls are sooo much better!" I think she was kidding. Anyway, we ate the dough balls with apple goo and sugar, and you know what? It was great. I had thirds. So we made an official team holiday. Every April 16, every member of Kindred must make dough balls for at least one meal that day (apple goo is recommended).

So that's just a bit of insight into the world of Kindred at the moment and, honestly, a bit of insight into our ministry—when God gives you dough...you make...dough balls. Yes. So there you go; we are doing well, enjoying the ministry and keeping sane any way we can. God bless you and yours, and if you get a chance, try some dough balls; they might surprise you.

Peace,

Santi

Date: 4/17/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

God is working on teaching me how to be truly grateful for something. Case in point—the apartment we are staying in. I want you guys to read this knowing that we are totally stoked to be all together (especially after three-plus weeks of being one-and-a-half hours away from everyone else). However, there are just some things. For instance, not all the windows have glass in them, and those that do are open because it is hot. This was fine, except that you can hear *everything* outside. The guy with the motorcycle who passes every ten minutes, the car that needed new brake pads in 1976, etc. Two nights ago, I was woken up by an explosion in the street. If you didn't know, the hours of 1:30 a.m. to 2:15 a.m. are prime "Let's set off fireworks in the street" time. Literally right outside our window. Six in the morning is also a great time for blowing stuff up.



Jenny Muth

You have to go down some scary stairs to turn on the water for the (cold) shower and to turn on the gas for the, oh, let's call it a stove. Then you have to go back down to turn them off. The bathroom with the light doesn't have a door, and the bathroom with a door doesn't have a light. The brick shelf by the sink is right at forehead level, and I have the knot to prove it. There are no mirrors, so when I wake up in the morning and walk out into the common room and Josh says, "Whoa...your hair..." I can only imagine. However, God successfully moved me past the "Take me to the nearest Radisson!" stage and into the "This is fun! It's like camping, but in a concrete box" stage. This is partly what made me laugh so hard today. So, I go to use the bathroom (no door, but light) and find the toilet running...and running and running. I lift up the lid and see the part of the toilet that makes the water stop running broken off and kinda just hanging out in the toilet. Uh oh. It was easy to see that there was no reattaching this. This was going to require creative reinforcements. Em T, Josh, Em H and Steph were busy...I guess Jim will have to do. After some head scratching and a few minutes of watching water swirl (including a rather tense minute to see if we were going to flood the bathroom), Jim and I got the toilet working again. Here is currently how to flush this toilet:

1. Remove lid
2. Pull up plug
3. Wait for water to go down
4. Frantically grab at the roll of toilet paper on the ledge behind the toilet to keep it from falling into the open top of the toilet
5. Put the plug back down
6. Pull the piece of cardboard (actually a folded-up empty toilet paper roll—my idea) out from under the part where the missing piece used to be attached
7. Wait for water to fill
8. When the water has reached the line of rust, pry that piece back up and shove the cardboard

- back under
9. Put the lid back on
10. Wash your hands, that was gross

There you go. The Complete Kindred Guide to flushing your toilet in ten easy steps! It makes me smile to know that God also uses humorous lessons. Now, hopefully tomorrow I will remember that you have to put your clothes outside the bathroom and to the left because the shower head goes berserk and the shower itself leaks and the water runs out the door to the right. I think life next year will be a tad boring for me!

Date: 4/19/2005
Submitted by: Emily Heine
Journal Entry:

So, being team treasurer has not been too stressful overseas...at least, not until Venezuela. After everything our team went through to get into this country, we soon realized that there were financial restrictions between the U.S. and Venezuela. We were unable to wire money or use ATM cards, and they definitely weren't interested in our traveler's cheques. Kindred was quickly running out of money. Luckily, we were only an hour away from the Colombian border, where they did accept our traveler's cheques.

So at 6 a.m. our contact Otto, and a member from the church took Jenny and me to Colombia. They were both so generous with their time that morning. After visiting several banks, it appeared as if Colombia might not accept our traveler's cheques. But, all hope was not lost, and after a little bit of wandering, we found a bank that would exchange everything! Such a blessing! Then we were off to find a money exchange company. We needed to change our Colombian pesos to Venezuelan bolivars. We decided to exchange on the Colombian side and hope for a better rate than we would find on the Venezuelan side of the border. We chose right!

Oh man, this money thing could have been so bad. God gave us an amazing contact that helped us in so many ways! The icing on the cake...when we arrived back in San Cristobal at 1 p.m., our lovely teammates had lunch waiting for us!



Emily Heine

Date: 4/23/2005
Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner
Journal Entry:

Hello again,

So now we are in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, and once again all the Kinfolk, as I like to call us, are housed together in an apartment owned by a wonderful young woman named Margaret. Not only is she sweet and a great child of God, but she has opened her home to all six of us and spends most of her time with us and her boyfriend Miguel, who also is part of the youth group here and helps us get from place to place and find amazing things to do.

We have had the awesome privilege to be able to sing and do programs in two public universities here in Barquisimeto. One is the most prestigious university in Venezuela, and the other is also great, so the chance to get to go and do a concert there is awesome. We first went around and talked to the students, handing out fliers and speaking in Spanish or English depending on what was wanted. There were a lot of English-speaking students who could not wait to speak with us, so it was great to speak English again.

After about an hour of doing this, I met a young man whose name I honestly can't pronounce but who had lived in Pennsylvania for a bit and spoke excellent English. He took me under his arm off to the side as we were about to perform and said, "Look, the God thing is fine and all, but people here don't care. If you want to have people come and see you perform, play some rock music and not any of that Jesus junk."

It made me a bit sad and a little nervous, but I said, "Well, it's been working for us so far, and it's the reason we are here, so I think we will stick to the Christian stuff." We did, and as we set up in the middle of the main



Jim Pfrogner

walkway of the main building on campus, a few people stopped to see what in the world the gringos were doing and why we were stopping traffic by the stairs. Then we started to sing—a few songs in English, a few in Spanish—and we had a crowd. After another half hour and a skit or two, the entire stairway was blocked by students and the common area was filled with students on the floor watching or even standing behind us. It was awesome; by the end, we had reached probably 200 students, and we literally had walked in unannounced.

After the program, my friend from before came up, bought each of the team members a water, gave me two CDs (one salsa and one meringue so I could learn new drum beats), and told me what an awesome job we had done and asked if he could come to our next concert. We were even invited to go and see the university's folk band—that was absolutely amazing.

It is interesting to think how powerfully God works in us if we just sit back and trust Him. I know I was nervous about just getting up and singing in front of a bunch of people my age that had already made fun of what we do and were skeptical of why we were here. However, being a Christian is not about being comfortable, and following God's will is not always easy. Some days it is really hot grunt labor, painting a kids' school. Some days it is getting through a tough conversation with a teammate that leaves you both in tears but closer when it is finished. Some days it is being incredibly nervous and feeling uncomfortable as you sing in front of people from another place in a language you don't speak fluently, and sometimes it is painful as you let go of a child's hand knowing that you will never see them again this side of heaven but you have more kids to meet tomorrow. But in every situation, whether painful or wonderful, God is working in you and pushing you to give a little more and touch one more person.

I have learned so much this year watching my teammates push to give a bit more. Emi dancing with one more child, Milly singing an extra song, Josh walking up one more hill, Steph eating the rest of that meat on her plate and looking forward to going home so she can be a vegetarian again, and Jenny giving everything she has to make sure each child feels talked to, wanted, accepted, and loved. It is awesome to watch God work through my teammates and feel Him work through me. Kindred is doing well, working hard, and trying to truly enjoy the last bit of time we have here. May your yoke be easy and your burdens light, and when God asks for more, may you give all you have.

Peace always,

Santi

Date: 4/26/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Today was the first time in my life that I've felt even a bit like a rock star. I would like to remind everyone that we are an acoustic team (two guitars, a djembe and a trumpet—we didn't even have our other hand percussion today). So, when I heard we were doing two programs at two universities (public ones), I was envisioning an auditorium or an outside square with a few people milling in and out and hopefully some that stick around till the end so we could invite them to church. Boy, did I underestimate God! Today we played in two breezeways and blocked traffic both times. People came and stayed and called their friends to come. We played high energy songs and did skits; when I thought that people might leave because they'd be bored with the skits, again I was underestimating God. More came and stayed. I must say that one of my favorite parts of the day was meeting a skeptical student before the program who told us not to get our hopes up because no one would hang out and listen to Christian music unless they were there to make fun of us...then looking up during the program to see him clapping and moving his head along with everyone else. Yep, God is cool, buddy! We got to invite people from both programs to a church youth group we're helping with on Saturday. Now we're just praying that some of them will come and find out more about how cool God is. To add to the rock star feel, a guy from a band in the area asked us to play with them in a concert on Thursday, in a real auditorium. News bulletin: we're moving up from study halls and breezeways! Amazingly enough, our schedule was free at just that time—again, God had it figured out. So, now we get to sing about Jesus in a Latin/rock/pop ballad concert.



Emily Twidell

In other news, we were invited to listen in on a practice of a Venezuelan folklore group. There was a harp! A great-big-as-tall-as-I-am harp! The harpist made me cry, he was so good. And...there was a

guy who pulled maracas from a black leather pouch and proceeded to prove to me that maracas are a professional instrument. Wow! They gave us each a CD, and that was awesome. I love Venezuela!

Date: 4/29/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

Today was a fun day. We have been quite busy since last Saturday afternoon when we arrived, so it was decided that we would go to the beach today. Yay! The day started early, though, as we were all awake by 3:30 a.m. At 4:30 the team and seven others were ready to take the three-hour trip to the beach. We stepped off the boat and onto the island beach at about 8:00. It was the most beautiful beach that I've ever seen. The water from the Caribbean Sea was crystal-clear blue. We had seven hours to spend here. We all had a wonderful time swimming, relaxing, exploring, playing games etc.



Joshua McNaughton

Not long before we left, a vendor happened by our spot on the beach. It is not at all uncommon to see vendors walking the beach. They sell various refreshments, hand-made bracelets and necklaces, and various cooked and chilled seafood. Our contact

suggested that we try a seafood called "cuits," which is rather like snail. Not too bad with a bit of lime juice. We went back to Barquisimeto all quite happy and tired.

If I learned one lesson today it is the utter importance of sun block. Eight hours in strong

equatorial sun with only two applications has left me quite red. I will heal though, no worries. We have two days left in Barquisimeto and just over a week left in the country. It is rather amazing how God works through us. Be well.

Peace,

Joshua

Date: 4/30/2005

Submitted by: Jim Pfrogner

Journal Entry:

Hey everybody,

I am writing this journal a bit late in the U.S. after all of the crazy events that you will soon read about have transpired. Yup, that's right, I am writing from the future!!! Anyway, I wanted to write about a few interesting customs that you find in Venezuela that you would not know about unless you lived there, so here goes. Buses. Now, buses are the main form of transportation, especially from city to city; gas is expensive, as are cars, and a long bus ride is much cheaper than a plane, so there you go. Now these buses have been around for years; some of them were pretty old, and some of them were held together by duct tape. So traveling over rocky hills and streets for thousands of miles causes a lot of wear and tear and destroys tires. Blowing a tire on a bus is a normal occurrence. You tend to blow one once every...oh, five bus rides. But here is the thing; when a tire blows, all the guys on the bus get off to help change the tire...all of them. If there are four guys or 40, they will all get off and stand around and watch one or two guys change a tire. The tires are huge, and using the jack to hike up a bus with people in it is not easy, but still...40 guys? By the end of our time in Venezuela, I had figured this out, and when the bus finally blew a tire, I was able to be culturally accurate and go outside, and since there were only two guys when our bus broke down, I got to help change the tire and earned some respect from the bus driver and bus driver buddy. I must say it was pretty cool. Oh, another thing about the bus system—all buses have a driver and a driver buddy who takes money, counts tickets, stows the luggage, puts in the worst movie ever, turns the music up to 11 at 2 a.m., and makes sure people standing up get down when they drive by police officers because, though commonplace, it is not actually legal. It really seems like an interesting job.



Jim Pfrogner

Other forms of transportation that we got to enjoy were riding in the back of a pick-up truck or standing on the bumper of an SUV holding on to the roof rack. These were my normal riding spots for two reasons: one,

chivalry and two, I absolutely love riding in the back of a truck; the one time on the SUV was the best. I really miss it being back in the States. There is nothing better than sitting in the truck bed watching the world rush by, staring at the mountains that reach towards a baby blue sky as the sun shines down overhead. You can smell the aroma of the trees and plants and occasionally a roasting pig at a stand beside the road and feel the wind whipping through your hair. It is the first time where I was in a car but really felt like I was part of the land.

Looking back, I even miss the transportation in South America; such a little thing, not one you think about, and yet the sight of a small pick-up brings back memories of children running towards us as we pull in, eager for a word or a handshake, and the sight of a bus brings back cramped but happy memories of windows filled with the sights of another world, people next to you giving you the feel and occasionally the smell of another world. It's funny, but now when I look at a bus or pick-up, I see how big this world is, how powerful God is, and how lucky I am.

May God bless you always,

Jim

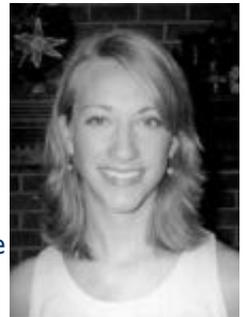
Date: 5/8/2005

Submitted by: Jenny Muth

Journal Entry:

So today is our last day in South America. Maybe forever; maybe God will call some of us back someday. I know I would like it if the latter were true. I have to say, when I step back from it all, I am so amazed at how God was clearly orchestrating this all according to His plan. The timing of our trip still continues to blow me away. The way we started off at a missionary home for the first two weeks, which, in my mind, was crucial in making the effects of culture shock so much smaller than they could have been. Then to Cuenca where we were housed and, for the most part, completely on our own. We were full of energy and ready to dive in head first. Next came Guayaquil which was —not going to lie—hard. Fortunately, there were slices of Daule heaven interspersed in there to make the time in Guayaquil much more bearable. Next was Quito, absolutely amazing, but only for a week. By only spending a short time in an area, it almost made leaving the country easier. There were heartfelt goodbyes, but they were not as difficult as if we had stayed there for three weeks like Cuenca, and no one felt like we had overstayed our welcome. I know that helped me in saying goodbye to a country that had become home over the previous two months. Colombia was much the same way—amazing people, and God provided the right time to leave.

Venezuela was pretty draining even though I loved being there. I think I put too much pressure on myself and did not trust enough in God. Our team director had told me that we could go back to Ecuador, but I asked for more time in Venezuela, making my own contacts and getting bookings myself instead of through Youth Encounter. I was continually worried that I had driven us to get there, and then there would be nothing for us to do. We kind of lived in limbo, day by day and week by week figuring out where we would go and hoping we would have stuff to do when we got there. Of course, if I had really been listening to myself say "I really feel strongly that God is calling us to Venezuela," I would have understood that the implied second half of that statement is that God also has work for us there, so I should not worry about it. And God did provide. The beginning of our time there was great, but the end became pretty rough. We were all run ragged; our guitar got run over by a bus; we were all over the state of constant confusion ("What are we doing? When? Where? For whom? How long? <plan and prepare all that> Never mind, it all just changed into something completely different"), and, I think to some degree, we simply needed a break from a foreign culture. I had a great talk with Em T about how I had found my "readiness point." God had set things up just right so that I finally knew that, while I could stay for longer, I would be ready to go when the time came. This was a huge blessing because for a long time I had felt that I did not want to go home and I would not be ready when May rolled around. But God gave me the clarity and the experiences to see that I had hit my final stretch. I found the point where I knew I was ready to just pour the rest of me out because the finish line was in sight. There was no more need to save anything—energy, sanity, mental vacations—because I knew I had enough left to get me home. The only thing left was to give. For me, the last week in Venezuela was the hardest for many different reasons (not necessarily anyone's fault), and this really tested my "I am ready to give,



Jenny Muth

give, give" theory, but we all did. I felt it really brought us together even more as a team to because everyone was finally getting on the same mental and emotional page again. A page we probably all hadn't seen at the same time since the beginning.

Then we had our last day in Quito. I really felt like that was a direct gift from God. It was like a coming home before coming home. I had forgotten the feeling of seeing familiar faces. It was AMAZING to experience "catching up with old friends" again. We were the biggest chatterboxes with the goofiest grins all night. Our friends kept commenting on how much better our Spanish was. We stayed that night, spent the next day and night, and then left the next morning from the home of a family we had met when we were at the camp in Paute and also spent a lot of time with while we were in Quito. Our last day in Quito, they graciously took us to any last places we wanted to see, to buy any last things we wanted to buy, and to eat any last things we wanted to eat. (Don't worry, I will explain that last part.)

First off, it was Sunday, so we had the opportunity to go back to the church we had worked with before, but this time to attend the worship service, not lead it. As we walked up the steps to the church, I saw one head turn and see us through the window. Immediately, all the rest of the heads turned, and people were out of their seats and at the door with huge smiles and warm greetings before we had even made it to the door. The sense that we had come back home was overwhelming. They invited us to a special Día de la Madred (Mother's Day) lunch after service, and it was great to talk to old friends some more. After, we were taken to a great market in a park and then to a mall. I realized while we were at the market how much I would miss all the colors and looking at all the beautiful, hand-made things. I would even miss the bartering. I had always seen bartering as a challenge of wits, and it really appealed to my thrifty spending side. Everyone was able to find what they were looking for. We even, much to Jim's happiness, were able to find a place that sells cuy. Cuy is a food that the indigenous people of Ecuador used to eat a lot, but now it is more of a cultural thing used at ceremonies or for special occasions. Cuy is guinea pig. Here's the scene. Josh, Jim, Em H, Steph, I (Em T spent an extra day in Caracas, Venezuela and flew in later that night), and our two host brothers, Josué and Mario, were walking to a place that sold cuy. Em H, Jim, and myself were all set and pumped about eating some cuy. Then we found the place and saw ten or so guinea pigs (completely intact, minus the hair) with metal rods running through them being rotated over a spit, much like you see chicken cooking over a fire in some restaurants. Em H kinda paused. I thought to myself, "You can still do this, you've seen worse." Then I saw the blood dripping out of their mouths and their little guinea pig teeth. Em H and I both stopped and looked at each other with the same "Maybe we *aren't* so hardcore about this" feeling. Jim, however, was a man on a mission. "No way you guys can back down," he said. "We HAVE to eat cuy!!" In the end, Jim, Em H, myself, and our two host brothers sat down to a plate of a whole cuy and Cokes while Steph and Josh just had the Cokes. Hang on to your socks for this revelation, guys...it tasted like chicken. Greasy chicken with more bones than meat. I can now die a happy woman because I can say that I ate guinea pig (the legs, ribs and face—ewww!—to be exact).

When Em T got in later that night, it was like we were all home again. It was a great way to wrap up our time in South America. Coming back to my favorite place, seeing faces that I knew, being able to talk without going through the initial chit chat, having the Spanish capability to have that conversation, I really felt like we had come a full circle. The stage was now set and our exit was clearly planned out and marked. Leaving was not easy, but God knew it wouldn't be. So that is why He had a perfect plan this whole time to make us able to say goodbye in the end. I am still blown away by the perfection of it all. The timing of everything and all our experiences, good and bad, worked together to help us learn what we needed to learn and do what we needed to do. Pretty cool how it works like that.

Date: 5/10/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

So you may say, "Emily! It's your week off! What's with the journal?" Well, my friends, it's because I love you all and can't get away—or maybe I love South America and can't get away. I am still here, three days longer than my team, and today I went on an excursion to a volcano—Cotopaxi. Now, I didn't reach the top, but I was over 14,000 feet sitting in the parking lot, wishing I had had room in my backpack for my winter

coat, gloves, hat, ice pick and cramp-ons...the only things keeping me from the 19,000+ foot summit (well, that and time, stamina, and climbing experience). I did get to take two buses by myself—one I hailed from the side of the road. And a really friendly lady sat next to me and talked about working in Spain. When I got to the park, I hired a nice guy in a truck to take me up the mountain, and he gave me a discount when I told him I didn't bring enough money to pay him. The money thing is true—all of you who know me wouldn't be surprised, and I almost started crying thinking I wouldn't get to the volcano I'd been planning to visit since the first time I saw it from the air. Then, even more luck—or blessing. The driver needed to take a friend up to the first refuge, and so I got to go up as far as the road went for free. Now, I got out of the truck, fully expecting to walk the extra half hour or so up to the refuge, but clouds hit me in the face—yep, clouds! Freezing, wet, windy clouds. I am a northern girl and was wearing two layers and wool socks, and I would not classify myself as wimp, but I wimped out. Clouds are pretty looking up at them—or down at them from a car in the mountains or an airplane—but when they are in your face at 14,000 feet, not so fun. I am still feeling extremely blessed today, and I'm looking forward to going home in two days.



Emily Twidell

Date: 5/21/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

Greetings from Minnesota! We have been off break for almost a week, and boy, has it been a busy week. We've gone to and from the office and our return prep church almost an hour north of the Twin Cities a number of times. This church was also our Rally Day booking and departure prep church. We are all staying with the Wright family, a truly servant-hearted group. After four days of going to and from the Cities, we get to stay at the Wright house today. We got some badly needed rehearsal time this afternoon. This evening Jim and I are going to stay with the pastor and his family. They were our hosts the other times we were here. It will be good to be able to share experiences with them. Tomorrow we lead two Sunday services in the morning, after which we head to camp for VBS training. It's shaping up to be a busy summer. May God bless us all.

Peace,

Joshua



Joshua McNaughton

Date: 6/2/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

How much did I luck out today...birthday and journal day!

I could not have asked for a better birthday. I was a bit luckier than my other teammates who have had birthdays this year. My family had an impromptu family reunion in Chicago over Memorial Day Weekend, and my grandparents were able to book our team to lead worship services at their church that weekend. So, I was able to have a pre-birthday party with almost my entire family! They tried to keep it a surprise, but my little cousin Megan could hardly help it—she just had to show me the cake!

By the time my actual birthday rolled around, I was just looking forward to spending time with our host family in Algona, IA (a favorite stop from winter tour), doing a program, and just hanging out with the team. We did some team job stuff, during which my fabulous team leader allowed me to do whatever I wanted instead of boring treasurer stuff!

Our contacts from the church took us out to an amazing lunch and then surprised me with a birthday cake later in the afternoon! Then it was program time. This was the first return tour program on the road where none of us had a familiar face in the congregation. I would say this program was "for reals." It was great to be back on the road, and I even received a special birthday song from our puppets!



Emily Heine

It was such a blessing to be able to share my birthday with so many friends and family this year...very special!

Date: 6/4/2005

Submitted by: Joshua McNaughton

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone. At present, we are in Nebraska. We arrived yesterday afternoon after a nine-hour drive. The church we are working with this weekend is where we had our second booking back in September. We are all excited to be back and share.

We had a relaxing night last night with host homes. This morning we got together and did some team stuff. It was to be a busy day. We had four things scheduled: two nursing home programs and two worship services. The nursing home programs went well. These are things I thrive on. After the programs, we went to the church to prepare for the service. After the first service was finished, we got into the van and went to a country church about 45 minutes away. This made for a hectic day, but God came through as He always does. At the end of the day I was tired and thankful. God be praised. May all be well.

Peace,

Joshua



Joshua McNaughton

Date: 6/7/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

The beauty of the last two days in a cabin (I spent mine as a hermit on the second floor deck, reading and praying and singing) were feeding me today as we found out we were definitely leaving for Wichita, Kansas. Drives are always eventful with news from friends and family shouted around the van to the rest of the team as my teammates and I play cell phone catch-up. We also share music and tolerate differences in musical taste gracefully or not-so-gracefully. Then there are the gas stops with window-washing and six people to make it through the bathroom. Jim is in his vehicle manager prime, filling up and recording everything about the van, which he has named "Gringa" because she's a white van. Besides all this, there is the napping, journal writing, jokes, more napping, Pringles Challenge (we received individual packs of Pringles that have trivia questions written in blue food coloring on every chip—we play that whoever answers the question gets to eat the chip, unless Em and I play and aren't hungry, then no matter who wins, Jim gets to eat), more napping, and then arriving early and lamenting for the umpteenth time that we have no Frisbee. Yep, Kindred will be doing lots of this before August since we are going down to Texas, over to California, and up through Colorado in two months' time—woo hoo! Road trip!

I must admit that I like my time in the van with my team and the time in the van with my headphones on, forgetting that I'm on team. All this down time and process time after South America has been a blessing.



Emily Twidell

Date: 6/22/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

Emily Twidell
Emily Heine
Jenny Muth
May 1-4 Collective Montage Journal of AWESOMENESS

The events of May 1-4 were so outrageous and mind-blowing that it was decided that it



would take the combined efforts of Em T, Em H, and Jenny to give the most accurate picture possible of the events that occurred therein. This Kindred mini-saga unfolded over the journals days (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday) of the three ladies of Kindred, thus was decided that they should take on this massive undertaking and take to the masses. Let us begin...

12:00 p.m. Sunday—Tearful Goodbyes

In the midst of hugs with our Venezuelan friends, we were informed that our travel that day had been delayed. So after a very heartfelt goodbye, we all then sat down to watch a movie and generally hang out for the next 10 hours. Let me tell you, this was not at all awkward.

10:00 p.m. Sunday—A Restful Day

Blissfully unaware of the challenges ahead, it was best that we were able to have some down time. This restful day included, but was not limited to, napping, watching way too many movies, eating, napping again, playing cards, eating, hanging out, going for a walk, and eating. And not all in that order. Little did we know that this evening was to be our last normal evening for the next three days.

2:00 p.m. Monday—Head 'Em Up, Move 'Em Out (and the rest of Kindred too)

So we started to load our stuff (which we had packed up the day before) in two cars waiting for us in front of the apartment. Here is how we were told that we would be traveling from Barquisimeto to Puerto Ordaz: first we needed to take a bus to Valencia (estimated to be a 2 ½ hour trip) and then catch a bus from there to Puerto Ordaz (estimated to be an 11 hour trip). Simple enough! However, they sent a guide with us gringos just to make sure we didn't get lost! Our trusty guide was named Wilfredo, who smiled a lot and liked Jim's cowboy hat!

4:00 p.m. Monday—All Looks Good

We are on the bus and expect to arrive in Valencia at 6:30 p.m., just in time to pick up our tickets to Puerto Ordaz before the office closes for the day.

6:00 p.m. Monday—Not Looking Good

After a few unscheduled stops, we are now sitting in a traffic jam, being treated to the climatic finale of the movie, "Alien vs. Predator." Wilfredo continues to smile and assure us, but the man-o-information sitting next to Jenny continues to claim that we will be there in 15 minutes, to which Jenny replies, "You said that 15 minutes ago!"

7:30 p.m. Monday—Uh Oh

Arrive in Valencia an hour off schedule. The office with our tickets is definitely closed. We were then told the last bus for Puerto Ordaz left at 8 p.m. However, along came a man who seemed to have exactly the information we needed. Saying he could take us to our bus, he told us to follow him, and we did...right out of the bus station! As warning bells and every red flag imaginable went through our minds...we prepared ourselves for a rousing game of "rob the gringos." We were led into a parking lot across the street where one lone bus was waiting. Much to our chagrin, that bus left without us. Fortunately, there was another. We celebrated by using the time to use the restroom and buy dinner. Then we eagerly bought tickets for the 9 p.m. bus.

9:00 p.m. Monday—Out of the Frying Pan...

Our elated feelings were soon squashed to the ground as we saw the size of our bus. If you can imagine two match boxes put together with wheels...it wasn't quite that small. But, you get the picture. We prepared to pile our stuff underneath the bus, but three big screen TV's had beat us there! At this point the bus driver came by and told us we would not be able to fit on this bus. Clearly, this was our fault.

9:02 p.m. Monday—Huh?

9:04 p.m. Monday—The Stage is Set

By this time Jenny, Em H, and Steph had secured seats on the bus, Emily and Jim were on one side of the bus with half of the stuff trying to shove it in, and Josh was guarding the rest of our stuff on the other side. Jenny and Em H soon hopped off to see if they could help and were quickly told to start shoving whatever we could into the bus with us. Visions of an 11-hour bus ride with luggage in our laps danced through our heads.

9:06 p.m. Monday—Disaster strikes.

while ignoring random scoldings from fellow passengers about holding up the bus. Clearly, this was our fault. Meanwhile, outside the bus, Em and Em were contemplating just how good of a mood they were allowed to be in given the plight of their fellow teammates. By this time, a very generous bus attendant told them that all our luggage could be put on a bed in the back of the bus. Note, presence of bed equals absence of bathroom...for an 11 hour bus ride. So Em and Em hung out until an adorable little boy with maracas walked up. Em H, constantly in teamer mode, asked the little boy how long he had been playing maracas and if he would play us a song. In Venezuela, maracas are taken very, VERY seriously and considered a legitimate instrument to practice for hours. Em T shook her head. The little Venezuelan boy proceeded to invite over big brother and father to serenade Em H. Em T covered her face with her hands. As the sweet melodies of Venezuelan folkloric music floated thru the air, Em T informed Em H that these were working minstrels and expecting to be paid.

10:33 p.m. Monday—How Much Do You Pay Bus Station Minstrels?

Oops. As a new problem evolved, the bus attendants then turned on Em and Em and demanded to know if we were going or staying. So Em T went to find the boss (Jenny).

10:45 p.m. Monday—The Dance of the Impatient Bus Driver

A knock on the police station's door. Em T relays the message that the bus wants to leave without us to Jenny. After several attempts to soothe the antsy bus driver, Em T worked her politicking skills like a champ to convince our bus driver to wait while we finished talking to the police. Steph and Josh continue to weather the ever-increasing storm of comments from impatient passengers.

10:50 p.m. Monday—How Do You Say "Patience Is a Virtue" in Spanish?

As soon as our "please just wait five minutes more" is up (the first time in the history of Venezuela that something actually happened on time), the bus driver tells Em and Em that they have to make a decision. As Em T is relaying this message to Jenny, the bus attendants then take matters into their own hands. Jenny and Em T return to find Em H sitting of a pile of all our stuff on the curb. Apparently, one smashed guitar was not enough and the bus attendants had thrown, yes for real *thrown*, all our stuff out the bus and onto the curb. They then had offered Em H a vacation to the same warm place that Jenny was previously offered. Lucky Kindred.

10:53 p.m. Monday—The Bus Pulls Away

10:54 p.m. Monday—A Close Call

A collective sigh of relief was exhaled from Kindred as our bus pulled around and back into the bus station. This whole action appeared to make exactly zero sense.

10:55 p.m. Monday—Is All Lost?

So in the past two hours, Kindred has seen their guitar get run over by a bus, had all their stuff get thrown off their bus, not gotten any help from anyone at the bus station, heard a fun Venezuelan folkloric song, learned many fun new Spanish words such as "aplastada" meaning squashed, and been given the world's longest legal runaround by the police. Is their an end to their plight?

10:56 p.m. Monday—Angel of Mercy...and Diplomatic Authority

It was about at this point when a man who was on our bus decided to take some action. He had seen the whole thing and had asked Jim a few times if there was anything he could do to help. Jim had politely thanked him but told him he wasn't sure what could be done. Well, apparently this guy knew exactly what could be done. So while Jenny and Jim are still exasperatedly standing in the police office watching the officers do exactly nothing to help, the door bursts open the entire doorway is filled with the frame of the tallest, biggest guy we had seen in all of South America. Immediately all eyes are drawn to him as he barks at the police officers, "So what are you doing to help these people?" As the police officers mumble some sort of response, the man cuts them off and gives them the real answer, "Nothing." He then continues by saying that he saw the whole thing and that the bus has to reimburse us and that they, the police, have the legal obligation to enforce that. This still was not enough to roust the police officers out of their chairs. However, what was done next would have made an observer think that their chairs had suddenly become the average temperature of the sun. Lo and behold, this wonderful, large man had pulled out a BADGE!!!! This was soon followed with an explanation that he was a foreign diplomat from the Dominican Republic named Roger who had studied law for years and who had the authority to have all those police officers arrested for not doing their job. Within a nanosecond, those police officers morphed themselves into Tasmanian devils of productivity. Two other police officers materialized out of

nowhere and ran outside to collect evidence. Another led Jenny to a chair and pulled out official looking paper to take her official statement (this time actually writing it down). Another pulled out some architect-looking instruments and began to draw a to-scale picture of the scene of the crime (complete with key). After about five minutes of flurry, everything was finished. We were told that we needed an official appraisal of our guitar then they could get the ball rolling. Done and done. We left the police office after heartily thanking Roger and less heartily thanking the police officers. We made our way back to the bus, preparing ourselves to find a way to get all our stuff back on it.

11:00 p.m. Monday

We run towards the bus as it is preparing to leave and we are informed to lug over all our stuff and put it back on the bus, but our brilliant deductive skills remembered that when we got off the bus, eight people got on...not much room left in our minds. So, Em T got on the bus to scope out the situation...and then got off and said "Are you kidding?" There were four people on the bus where our stuff had been and people in every seat. Guess we're staying in Valencia.

11:02 p.m. Monday

Jenny and Wilfredo go and try to explain math to the bus driver (Jenny was able to put her math minor into action—she had theorems and stuff). And so two angry guys were sent off the bus and the bus peeled away.

11:03 p.m. Monday

Huh?

11:04 p.m. Monday

Wilfredo informs us that he is again an angel of mercy and knows another angel of mercy who lives in Valencia and will keep us at her apartment tonight. Woohoo!!!

11:30 p.m. Monday

We arrive at Erica's house, who just happened to have exactly enough space for seven people to sleep—and a hammock for Em T. Praise the Lord! We settled in, and Steph prepared to call Bri (who was the owner and lender of the guitar) and tell her that her guitar was "aplastada." Steph was crying. Bri laughed. God bless Bri. We love her.

2:00 a.m. Tuesday

Kindred says a prayer of thanksgiving for a bed and a call for justice from the transit company. God is good and we went to sleep quickly.

9:00 a.m. Tuesday

Kindred wakes to the smell of eggs and toast. Wilfredo has graduated to angel of culinary mercy.

10:00 a.m. Tuesday

We ate and were preparing to do job time when we realized that Wilfredo was planning to go out and fight our guitar battles solo. Em T decided to tag along and work the blue eyes.

12:00 p.m. Tuesday

Wilfredo and Em get to the transit company, who informs them that they can't do anything without an appraisal. So they get onto another bus and head to a guitar repair shop.

2:00 p.m. Tuesday

Em T is working the blue eyes to the appraiser as he sits there impressed with the guitar and the case and tells them that it is worth...with a pause to look at Em's distressed face again..."\$489 US." Exactly \$89 more than we asked for from the transit company. This marks the last time that the Venezuelan Bus System asks for an appraisal.

4:00 p.m. Tuesday

The transit company is closed. Boy, isn't that convenient.

5:00 p.m. Tuesday

Kindred packs their bags like mad and heads out the door to two taxis so they can catch a bus to Puerto Ordaz. Yep, they're still going.

7:00 p.m. Tuesday

Arrive at the bus station not so much hopeful as skeptical, and end up at the same bus company

who promises that the bus they are going to put us on will: have enough room for us, have enough room for our stuff, and have a bathroom for the 10 hour duration. Wow, what luxury!

8:00 p.m. Tuesday

To our shock and surprise the bus leaves. Em T looks at Em H and says, "We're on our way! We're going to Puerto Ordaz!" Em H looks at Em T and smirks.

11:00 p.m. Tuesday

Bus pulls over. Blew a tire. Jenny looks out her window to see all the male passengers off the bus with their hands on their hips looking confused. Nothing unusual here. Goes back to sleep.

2:00 a.m. Wednesday

Need more oil. Stopped again. Where did all the other oil go?

0dark:30 a.m. Wednesday

More oil again. And a bathroom break. And some food. And more standing around. Team Kindred still not surprised.

6:00 a.m. Wednesday

We pull into El Tigre, Venezuela, which is, in fact, completely devoid of tigers (tigres). Team Kindred disappointed. Team Kindred not in Puerto Ordaz. More disappointed. Bus still not moving. Team Kindred increasingly disappointed.

6:30 a.m. Wednesday

It really hits the fan when everyone except for Kindred and six people exit the bus. Boy, there are a lot of people getting off at this stop...nope. Bus broke down. Tall Venezuelan gets on and informs the gringos that they'd better get off quick and get their stuff on the other bus if they want to go to Puerto Ordaz before the next millennium. Whaaaaa!!!

6:35 a.m. Wednesday

Kindred flies off the bus in a vain attempt to get their stuff out from underneath it...only to get a face-full of dust and exhaust from the other bus pulling away. Huh?

6:40 a.m. Wednesday

Kindred is informed that in a half an hour they will get on the way, with the same bus. "How?" you may ask. It just needs more oil. Clearly this will fix all the problems just like the two times before.

7:30 a.m. Wednesday

Kindred on the road again.

8:00 a.m. Wednesday

Pulling off—anyone surprised? Another tire is blown, and of course when we were stopped in El Tigre for an hour, there was no time to replace the spare. Because God is gracious, we pulled off at a tire repair shop. And by tire repair shop, we mean shack with tires outside and a barrel with what looked like water and newspapers.

8:15 a.m. Wednesday

Jim decides to be culturally sensitive and says, "I'm going to go be a guy and stand around." Jim gone...traces of man-walk in the air.

8:30 a.m. Wednesday

Girls peering out window to watch Jim be cultural. Em H exclaims, "They're paper mache-ing our tire!" Cultural sensitivity that was down the tubes in Valencia goes out to sea. We burst out laughing. It's true. It was really paper mache. Meanwhile Jim is receiving a book from one of the repair shop guys. [The True Story of an Englishman in the French Foreign Legion](#). Looks riveting.

9:00 a.m. Wednesday

Still waiting. Jim is informing Em T that the bus-shop guy is asking lots of fun questions about us. We'll leave it at that to keep this family friendly.

9:30 a.m. Wednesday

Jim is helping the men put the tire back on the bus, and we'll be on the road again.

10:00 a.m. Wednesday

Back on the road. Kindred team past being upset or frustrated or surprised or sensitive or other random emotions. Just laughing and figuring we'll be stuck in the Venezuelan wilderness for the rest of our lives. Did we mention it was hotter than Lutheran coffee outside?

12:30 p.m. Wednesday

Puerto Ordaz. NO JOKE!!!! We ain't playing! Jenny runs off the bus to call our contact and runs past our contact. They've been waiting there since 11:00. Apologies and forgiveness are exchanged.

1:00 p.m. Wednesday

Kindred is at our host home, and God is a good and loving God.

Date: 6/28/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

We left Agora Hills after praying for our host dad, who's having back surgery today—pray for Perry Celia—and drove into Los Angeles. We were doing a set of music for a "soup kitchen" put on by St. Mark's Lutheran Church. We were reminded of South America as we were met with Spanish-speaking contacts who were hurrying around making last-minute plans and left it up to us to decide what we wanted to do. We set up, ate burgers and hot dogs with some really fun people and then started in with music. So, in Venezuela we were study hall lounge singers, while in L.A. we were soup kitchen lounge singers—yep, we're making the rounds.



Emily Twidell

Parts of our time were really great—Jim got to talk with a recovering alcoholic who was turning his life around, we got to encourage a lot of people and listen to their stories, and the music seemed to lift them up. Still, it was hard to see statistics come to life. I have heard that the vast majority of homeless people have mental illnesses and saw that in percentages of the people we met. There were those that were getting their lives back on track, those who were homeless by choice, and those who should be getting help for mental illness instead of being on the streets. So frustrating how so many fall through the cracks, yet there is hope. This church had some awesome programs going to help people and participate in their community.

After this program, we went to a nursing home to sing. A beautiful woman tapped her toes as she crossed the room in her wheelchair, so after the program, I went to tell her thanks for dancing. As she beamed, another woman in a Laz-E-Boy wheelchair called me over. With anguish showing in her face, she asked me question after question, and it was obvious she had some sort of dementia. She thought she knew me and my parents, and I reassured her time and time again that my parents were married, and they loved her, and I loved her, and Jesus loved her, and her mother loved her and was waiting for her. I eventually had to leave and promised to pray for her for one year at her insistent request. It was a hard day to see so many people hurting and needing Jesus' kingdom to come in their lives and in this world. What an amazing truth: Jesus is coming! There is healing, peace, strength and joy awaiting us when we trust in Him!

Date: 7/5/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Driving...yep, we do that sometimes. Today we drove from southern California to central California. Driving is the name of the game on days like that. Let me give you a picture of a typical drive-all-day driving day.



Emily Twidell

Usually, I start driving because I'm surprisingly awake in the mornings. Em, Josh or Steph navigate, and that is a little less set. Jim and Jenny are the other drivers, and they are very forgiving of my desire to go first—especially when we start out early and it means extra naptime for them. Next to me, I have my coffee, my water, my lunch and my purse—in case I really need my sunglasses. Today

was really sunny, so most of the time, my sunglasses were on my face, unless they were on the top of my head where they get lost sometimes. A CD player and my cell phone are plugged in, and the music selection is always way too big to actually share with you all the options I have...everything from 80s rock to country to mariachi to punk to African to Australian swing punk. Yep, decisions are hard. The rest of the drive goes: drive, chat, listen to music, sleep, eat, crochet an afghan, sleep, read, eat, chat, eat, sleep, etc.

Riveting...but somehow, we make it through and are received by wonderful churches and families who are very understanding and forgiving that we ran into three traffic jams when trying to get out of L.A. So, all the time...God is good! Yeah, making it through another day safely.

Date: 7/19/2005

Submitted by: Emily Twidell

Journal Entry:

Ahh, Bible school—the challenge of all challenges and the joy of all joys. We are in Cupertino, CA and are leading VBS for a bunch of kids and are in charge of about 30-35 preschoolers the whole day. The preschool mind is a beautiful thing, and I'm happy to report that our team has done a pretty good job of reaching them where they're at (faith like a child, you know)! Some of my favorite moments so far in the last few days have been:



Emily Twidell

--Praising and exclaiming over pink or green or rainbow lion masks, along with the more realistic and slightly less interesting yellow and orange and brown ones.

--Watching children go from 9 a.m. scared, unsure, missing Mom and generally bored to 12 noon excited, loving, enthusiastic, don't-take-me-home-Mom kids.

--Singing songs like "This Little Light of Mine," "Who's the King of the Jungle," and "The Hippo Song" with kids who have never heard them. I start to feel like it's my first time singing them too (even though it's more like my 876,453rd).

--Pretending to be elephants, tigers, monkeys, trees, trains, and anything else that will make children move from one place to another without getting lost or hitting each other. Surprising myself with the fact that I still enjoy pretending.

--Inviting children that just met me yesterday to go ahead and sit on my lap if they want. Jesus welcomed the little children; He must have known that it feels pretty amazing to know kids trust you.

--Praying that stories like Daniel and the lions' den, Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego, and Gideon will mean more than fairy tales to them as they continue to grow.

God, bless these children and all children around the world who are participating in Bible schools. Give them a living faith and a relationship with You that won't be shaken. Help us to be faithful servants as we train up the next generation. Amen.

Date: 7/26/2005

Submitted by: Emily Heine

Journal Entry:

Wow, it has been forever and a day since I've written a journal. Lately, it seems like all of us have been saying we aren't sure when we wrote our last journal. Probably not a good sign...my apologies.

We have about two weeks left on the road, and we have all been doing a lot of reflecting on our year and all that we have experienced personally and as a team. I felt like summer tour has been more fun but couldn't exactly figure out why. But as I



Emily Heine

remembered all that we were doing on fall tour...no wonder I like summer tour better! On fall tour, we were newbies. I didn't know my teammates as well as I know them now after 11 months on the road. Musically, we weren't as comfortable as we are now, and our team jobs were definitely not mastered. Plus, we were trying to learn how to speak Spanish and learn Spanish music for our South America tour. While in South America, we were still busy learning how to speak Spanish, learning more Spanish songs, and towards the end, there was a level of urgency to learn English songs for our summer tour. And now, that is all done. No need to learn more Spanish or English songs, team job stuff is winding down, and we are free to hang out with the people we meet on the road. That was a struggle during fall tour and even in South America...if we did have free time, we always needed to balance hanging out with the people and doing team stuff that needed to get done. I am proud of our team for making sure the people we met were our number one priority, and letting team stuff slide when it was more important for the ministry. However, when we let the team stuff slide, there was a level of stress that came along with that decision. I wouldn't say that summer tour has been stress free...but for me, there has been significantly less stress. And we have more time to enjoy the people we meet on the road.

So, that was a long way of saying our team has been busy (a possible cause for the lack of journals) these last couple of months enjoying each other, the people we meet on the road, and pouring ourselves into the ministry. Thank you all for keeping up with our team through these journals. We are so thankful for all of your prayers and encouragement this year.

Date: 7/27/2005

Submitted by: Stephanie Stiles

Journal Entry:

A year--that's right, it's almost been a year. Last Friday marked 11 months exactly since we first arrived in Minneapolis to meet the complete strangers who would become our teams, our friends, and some of the most important people in our lives over the 51 weeks to come...our family.

I could have never imagined, 11 months ago, the ways I would change and grow, love and learn, and see life in new ways because of this year. Most of us will probably never realize the full extent of what God's done in us this year. I know I will never understand, until I meet God face-to-face, the way my world has changed so drastically because of the work He's done in my life through the many brothers and sisters I have met along the way. One thing I do know: I will never be the same. Nothing and no one will ever be the same in my eyes. Life has changed. God doesn't change, and yet He is somehow a hundred times bigger than He was last August when I stepped into a Minnesota room filled with 90-plus people I'd never met and prayed that I would find myself in them.

It's not about me. It's about God. It's about the people we put in that large room we call life, and the many more we are surprised to find along the way. It's about loving Him, loving them, and only then truly finding ourselves. It's not by looking for who we are, it's by looking for who Christ is, that we learn to value ourselves and the world around us.

I don't claim to have accomplished this, or to know exactly who I am at any given moment. But who I am will change. Who He is won't. And I am a child of the living God. I believe in my heart that it (everything) is ALL about Jesus. And I've seen Him Calm the Storm. In some way, I think all of us have.

Thanks for being a part of this ministry with us. Thanks for being ministers to us. Thanks for seeking Christ; don't ever give up. He is the one true thing. He is our God.

<+>< Stephanie



Stephanie Stiles
