

New Vision 2004-05 Journal

Date: 9/30/2004

Submitted by: Jason Gorski

Journal Entry:

We've had three programs now and I'm astonished at how often my feelings of confidence, like we've been doing this forever, occur simultaneously with feelings of ingenuousness. I think this is a pretty natural feeling as there are things we all will innately do well based on the talents God has given us and areas where we need to learn new habits and skills or perhaps unlearn things in order to have an effective ministry.

I find the balances on team to be very interesting and challenging. Balances like looking out for my needs as far as rest, stress, etc. and focusing my attention on those we minister to. It has been enlightening for me because the selflessness that life on team demands has made me hyperaware of selfish instincts and tendencies in me. I'm amazed at the work that God has done in me through these revelations in my character.

People we've met have been awesome. It is so cool to be a part of people's lives even if only for a short while. I especially enjoy host-family relationships. All the people we've met beckon to be known more extensively than they or I can manage in the short time I am there. It is unfortunately paired and inseparable from the nature of our visits. All we can do is use the time we have. I am already becoming more efficient doing that.

I intently await each day of this journey.

In Christ,
Jason
2 Cor. 7:10



Jason Gorski

Date: 10/3/2004

Submitted by: Paige Shoemaker

Journal Entry:

So we are finally on the road. It hasn't even been a week, but it feels like months and just moments, all at the same time. It's strange to think that for the next year we'll be sleeping in beds that aren't our own...ever! I really don't know how to process this all, or even if there is a right way to do so. It's crazy to step back from what we are doing and actually look at this journey we are on, and to see how far we have already come, but also how far we have to go. There have been times when I think that there is no reason for me to be on this 7 person team, but then God does something amazing to show me that I am indeed wanted and needed here, and my gifts are important. God has called each of us together to be on this team and to do his ministry. I'm overwhelmed and scared, but I have an intense sense of Peace, if that makes sense at all? My rational mind is very confused but my heart is constantly singing with joy. The people we have met so far have been amazing and it makes me all the more excited about meeting more host families and people in different faith communities.

The journey had just begun and I'm not sure if it will ever end, but I'm excited about where it will lead all of us.

In Christ's Peace,
Paige



Paige Shoemaker

Date: 10/5/2004

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock

Journal Entry:

Hey there to whoever might be reading this! I'm quite excited to write my first journal of the year. New Vision has officially had our first week traveling together. I'm pumped

to be out on the road. I was on Captive Free Northeast last year, and have been looking forward to being a part of team ministry again this year. New Vision has been traveling out towards the western United States which is wonderful to me because I'm closer to home. Our team is actually going to Montana (my home state) this coming week.

This year has already been a time of new faces, places, and experiences. During our five weeks of training during the months of August and September I learned so much more about God, what I believe to be true about Him, and how to talk about that with other people. I'm not really sure how to start sharing with you all what's on my heart to say, so here I go. During the last...oh I would say fifteen months of my life the Lord has most certainly been seizing the Provider role in my life and showing me time and again how much He cares about every aspect of my life.



Natalija Pollock

At times I can get too wrapped up in what's going on around me and lose sight of how big God's hands are to be able to hold every part of this world in them. It's right then that He does something to open my eyes again. It blows me away every time! Our first day traveling in the van (we were headed to Marshall, Minnesota) I was trying to sleep in my seat, but I was really cold. I asked my teammate Sarah if I could use one of her sweaters as a blanket and that helped, but I was still pretty chilly. As I was sitting there, I started to regret my decision to not bring a blanket along this year.

We arrived at the church, and the pastor there said he had something to show us. He took us into his office and presented us with seven quilts, one hand-made for each of us by women in the congregation there. I was so amazed, not even hours after I was whining in my head about being uncomfortable in the van a solution to the problem was totally given! How amazing is that? Also, the day before that I had mentioned to more than one of the other girls in the group that I have been using a prayer journal, and that has made me desire another journal just to put thoughts down in.

I got to my host home that night in Marshall, and right there waiting for me on my bed was a beautifully hand-made journal/memory book made just for my year on team ministry. The lady of the house that was hosting me enjoyed making memory books and scrapbooks and had put it together for me. Now some of you reading this might feel like a quilt and journal might seem like trivial things to be thankful for, but for me the significance is drawn from more than just the items themselves.

I think that this passage found in Matthew 6:25-34 really clarifies what I'm trying to express, and it says: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more important than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown away into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

It is so great to be reminded that: "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Matthew 10:30. God is bigger than the box I feel my very human mind puts Him in sometimes. He's not just taking care of huge things going on around the world. He also loves me in a very personal way and wants to take care of me. He desires that I trust Him enough not to worry about things that I need. How incredible He is! God is good, and He's showing me so much on a daily basis. I'm so thankful that He's called me to another year of this awesome ministry to serve Him, and to learn more about how He is in control of my life. Thank you so much for taking the time to read this and I look forward to updating everyone again sometime in the near future. Guess what?? Our group is gifted with the chance to serve the Lord in Australia!!!!!! Just thought I'd throw that out there in case anyone reading this didn't know where our group is going overseas. I know I'm thrilled about it. Take care and remember: fun is free; you just have to make it.

In Him,

Natalija Pollock <>< Phil 2:14&15

"You can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish." –REO Speedwagon

Date: 10/5/2004

Submitted by: Sarah Robinson

Journal Entry:

October 5, 2004

Grace and peace to you from God our Father-

Here I am writing journals again after a year off. Wow. It's been so fantastic to experience a whole new area of the country. We've been in Montana the past few days and it's been so beautiful. Natalija did a devotion the other day that really spoke to me. She was reading about how we should keep our child-like view of the world around us and how exciting that can be. This is so how I feel every time I step outside. Each little crow's cry and rustling of the leaves seems to shout thankful praises to God, as I shout out with all of creation.

Though it has been frustrating not having many programs, it has been a great opportunity for our team to truly be able to focus on the relational aspect of our ministry. One of my host moms totally took a few of us to this great little hole-in-the-wall Mexican restaurant and it was fantastic. It was great sitting there watching her interact with the many people she knew that kept popping in from the community. I feel blessed to be a part of peoples lives this way, even if it is in such a small way. We get to try out so many different lifestyles in the course of a year, and many of them are so fascinating. I will enjoy seeking out the uniqueness in each place we visit, because God knows how diverse and beautiful a country we live in.

I just wanted to let everyone know that I'm going to attempt to keep an online journal of my own that any may go and check out found at www.xanga.com/snshineSRR. Thanks to all that are continuing to pray for me and New Vision and the ministry that we are doing. Through trials we persevere due much in part to all the prayer warriors out there praying for us. God bless all of you.

Sarah



Sarah Robinson

Date: 10/8/2004

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

Journal entry 8 Oct 2004

I'm in the United States of America! Funny, to think of how God's call can lead you to strange places. Until now His call has led me, a little Danish girl, through the great states of Minnesota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana – it's pretty amazing when you think about it!

It's fun with all these new impressions. I'm not just taking in this new lifestyle of being on the road all the time, but also this whole new country and culture – and believe me: there are quite a few things to take in! I'm constantly amazed at people's generosity and openness! We've only been on the road for about two weeks now, and already I've met so many wonderful people! Today we had a restful day in Laurel. Since we didn't have a program, we got to hang out with our host families a lot and play Uno with Danish rules – yeah! Days like these are cool, but I have to admit that it's also been frustrating, that we haven't had that busy a schedule until now. We're so eager to do programs for people – this is why we're on the road, and yet we don't get to do that many... But as I've been thinking about this the last couple of days, I've also realized something: as much as we're yearning to get to do ministry, this is not our first and foremost purpose this year.



Maria Sorensen

Our main purpose is to walk with God, and each day is a great possibility to get to know Him more. That we're able to share and encourage people along this walk is great and important, but a day without a program does not make it a less meaningful day! It's another opportunity to give encouragement and care to the people we meet, so as to make this a special day for others and ourselves! Every moment is precious, and we've got to start living each one out to its fullest! This is stuff I've heard before, but sometimes there's just a difference between hearing and actually acting upon what you hear. I'm going to work on acting upon this huge gift life is!

Date: 10/9/2004

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

10-9

So I've never been to the Northwest before, and boy oh boy is it a treat. Driving into the Rockies in Montana is an experience everybody from the Midwest should have at some point in their lives. The drive from Billings to Anaconda (the basic content of this Saturday) is one of those treats. So are the people we met in both places. I would love to be a more profound person who can find deep cryptic spiritual lessons in all of this, but I'm not. I'm the kind of person that looks at the scenery and the people. And observes. But usually that's about it. I'm trying to be more aware of all of that in my life. God's bringing along situations that call me to search for more and I like that. Hooray for the Northwest and hooray for God.



Deron Vaupel

Date: 10/21/2004

Submitted by: Jason Gorski

Journal Entry:

Greetings journal reading world,

We are in the beautiful state of Washington. I could live here guys. I really could. It is so gorgeous...no wait fantastic...no wait there is no word to describe its splendor so I am forced to make one up...scrumtralescent (I hope some of you caught that reference out there in online land). But seriously, I would consider moving out here after team. The music scene in Seattle is amazing! The coffee shops, the mountains, the lakes...just gorgeous.

We've had a surprising lack of programs lately. On the one hand it's been nice to just hang out as a team, hang out with host families, etc. On the other hand it can be frustrating to not be doing what you feel you are out here to do. We just have to trust that God is using us even now. Perhaps he is giving us our rest now since I've heard Australia will be a nonstop marathon of programs. Or perhaps our extra time to gel as a team is sharpening us into a better ministry tool. I don't and can't know. God is demanding faith from us, go figure J.

I read an interesting article today in Time. It was about how some scientist has found what he believes to be one of many genes that contribute to spirituality or faith. It's been talked about in the past in scientific and non-scientific fields; the notion that we are somehow designed to seek a higher power. I really liked the article. It balanced many perspectives with interestingly poignant questions. I thought I would include the link here but you have to be a subscriber to Time. So if you are interested you'll have to go find it yourselves. But I don't understand why people get bent up about science in the Christian world. Science and Religion address entirely different questions. They can almost never conflict in my opinion. Saying that the chemical X is what causes that elated feeling we get while worshipping does not negate our notion that this is the Holy Spirit moving in us. Observing the physical world does not explain away spiritual explanations for those physical changes. Okay, so I learned that when the Spirit moves



Jason Gorski

in my heart he does so by using chemical X in my blood stream. See my point. Why do Christians feel so threatened by scientific opinion? I just don't get it.

Anyway, there's a lot of cool stuff in this area. But that's it from me for now, talk to you soon.

In Christ,

Jason

Date: 10/23/2004

Submitted by: Corey Harp

Journal Entry:

Hey, what's up world, its me Corey. So.... I found out life is not so easy after all. I am dealing with a lot of issues right now on team that I should not be dealing with. I broke up with my girl friend the other night and my friend died in a car wreck, that same day. I got the news of his death right after I got done with my girl friend, it was like kicking me while I was down, and then I also have this other huge burden on my heart as well, so like I said, I have a lot on my mind right now, but I know the lord will help me through my struggles. Other than that I am peachy. I am really enjoying being on team, there are so many cool people out here, and my team mates are great people. I wish we had more programs, but I will take what the lord provides. Well, that is it for me this time, catch you next time. PEACE



Corey Harp

Date: 10/23/2004

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

10-23

Hey all. It is time once again for me to briefly expound on some profound observations from life on the road. Or at least tell stories. Like about the sweet brown leather jacket I got at Goodwill. Or about driving over the

Tacoma Narrows Bridge. That's not quite as fun since the new one doesn't fall victim to the harmonic vibrations caused by the wind in the area. (If you're looking for more information on that, search Google for it. Awesome stuff) (Can I use the name of a website in my journal?)

Anyways, on to the more profound. It's hard to describe our schedule. We are not always sure what the day ahead will look like and we have not had a great deal of Family Night Programs, but we have had many things to do. Many opportunities have come up to move past the programatic aspect of our ministry and that's been very exciting. We were able to meet with a small group of youth who have started a worship team in their church. During our time with them we got to play some songs, teach some stuff, and get to know each other a little bit. When we see them again in a month it will be very exciting to see how they've been working in their church. We've also been able to do a lot with preschoolers. 4 year olds are some of the most random people on earth. Some of the craziest and most confusing conversations I've had all year have happened with 4 year olds. So much fun. We've also gotten to spend time sharing a lot with youth groups at churches where we happen to be staying. Leading Bible studies, answering questions about life in general and our lives in specific, and just being able to join them in their usual activities has been great.

What I'm getting at is this: we are so much more than musicians. We are



Deron Vaupel

called to a lot more than just being a band for this year. Our time with Youth Encounter is about more than just us touring around. It's about experiencing many different aspects of the body of believers, whether that's chatting with a 4 year old or cranking up a guitar in front of a crazy group of teens or doing a puppet show for group of 30 senior citizens. If we let it be just about the music, we will be disappointed. I know that God works through more than just my guitar.

So to all you teamers out there, especially those who feel like things are going slow. Look for more. God will always bring about new opportunities to minister. And who knows, you might grow through it as well.
deron

Date: 10/27/2004

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

It's been quite an intense day today. We had a time to sit down and talk about our focus as a team and this brought quite a lot of thoughts to the table. It got me questioning myself too. I've been struggling with wanting to do more prayer and devotional type of stuff with the team and not feeling like we "cover" our need for time with God. Today, by talking with my teammates, I realized that spending more time with God wasn't as much a team-need as it was a personal need for myself. I've been slacking on my personal time with God and have been trying to replace it with teamtime with God.



Maria Sorensen

I guess it's because I wasn't with a lot of Christians last year, so I was just looking so much forward to being back with the body of believers, that I forgot that nothing can replace personal time with God. That intentional team-time with God is always something we should strive for, but that taking time for just myself and Him will always be my own "headache" (and His, for thank God, He helps me keep my focus!)

I am daily being challenged by the ministry and my teammates to grow as a person and a Christian - it truly is a challenge for I have a lot of work to do. I am so thankful that it actually isn't me who is doing the work, but that it is He, who allows me to fail and helps me up and does not let all this diminish His love for me at all!

Date: 10/28/2004

Submitted by: Sarah Robinson

Journal Entry:

Oct. 28, 2004

God's blessings from Washington!

We've been on the road now for 5 weeks this Saturday. It's hard to believe all the things we've had the opportunity to do in that short of a time. We've shared so many experiences together we are beginning to truly act as a team. As program coordinator I have the difficult job of helping us find new music to start putting in our programs. Youth Encounter sends us out with a program, but for our sanity (so we don't play the same songs the entire year) we're starting to replace some. This is a trying but exciting process. Our team has especially focused on secular songs we can turn into songs about God. If anyone out there has any good suggestions we'd be up for it. Just send them to NV0405@youthencounter.org.



Sarah Robinson

We are also extremely pumped that we are beginning to get more information about what we will be doing in Australia. It sounds like we will be blessed to spend much of our time in the Outback with different Aboriginal tribes. This is a very unique opportunity that past New Vision teams have not had. This gives us a renewed drive and sense of focus for our time and purpose while we are there. We will be able to minister to an often forgotten segment of Australian society. While I am so excited for this, I

am also very apprehensive. We will be going into a culture that is not only a little different from our own like the populated coastal areas, but possibly very different than our own. I ask that you would pray for us in this. We will need to stay as flexible as possible and open to what the Holy Spirit is calling us to do.

I pray that this journal finds you well. If any of you have anything that you would like prayed for, send requests and praises to the above email address. We would love to pray for you. May God bless you and keep you.

Peace and Love from God above,
Sarah

Date: 11/11/2004

Submitted by: Paige Shoemaker

Journal Entry:

North western United States rocks out. It is absolutely amazing out here, both the scenery and the people. We are in Oregon right now heading back to Washington and then the trip back to St. Paul. It's amazing to see what we have accomplished in less than two months and then crazy to realize we have nine more months to go. So team isn't exactly what I thought it was going to be. Not that it's bad, just different. More struggles, externally with people as well as a lot of struggles internally, than I had thought I was going to have. People say it's like being married to six other people and the kicker is you didn't even pick them! It is a struggle at times, but a blessing too. Lately we have been doing mostly housing at churches. I'm very glad I bought the better sleeping bag before team. It's cool to be with my team mates a lot, but I really look forward to spending more time with host families. I just love the family atmosphere and am constantly craving it. It's amazing to see what God is doing in our lives and the lives of the people at the different churches we go to. I don't know if I can really explain it. The generosity and love that people give to us, strangers, is wonderful.

Tonight we had a program/service. I think these are my favorite to do. Although we do it electric, it just has a more community feel to it than normal programs do. Then this upcoming weekend we are booked solid. .

Well if anyone has any prayer requests, please let us know!! We would love to pray for you. Our team email is nv0405@youthencounter.org Or if you would just like to send us a note, that's cool too!

In Christ's Peace,
Paige



Paige Shoemaker

Date: 11/16/2004

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock

Journal Entry:

Hi there everyone. This is Natalija, writing you from the great state of Oregon. We've been bouncing around the northwestern coastal area for a while now, and this is beautiful territory. Being from Montana I've seen some of these areas before, but the travel we're doing has opened my eyes up so much more to the power of God's creation, I've been blown away! I'm seeing so many amazing things, waterfalls, sea lions, etc. Very cool stuff. Gosh, I'm sitting here trying to sort out my thoughts and decide on what to say to whatever person might end up reading this. Normally when I sit down to write a journal, or a letter of some sort, I have at least a vague idea of what I'd like to express. Right now that's not really so much the case. I guess team life for me this year so far has been crazy, to say the least. This is my second year of being on a Youth Encounter team, and I'm so thankful for the call I've received into this ministry again. Things are just very different and yet not all at the same time and sometimes that's rather strange. Last year I was on the east coast of the U.S. and this year I'm on the west coast. That's a big change right there. Even just geographically, I'm on the complete opposite end of the country! Certainly a big change, and I'm really starting to



Natalija Pollock

notice it the more we're on the road. People are so diverse and fascinating! I'm also learning a lot about myself lately, maturing in my walk with the Lord and learning things about myself that I possibly need to improve on, and change. I feel like my thought life is going nuts right now! So there you go, a little insight into what team life is like for me right now. I'm meeting awesome people, getting to know my teammates and who they are even more, learning more about what it means to be a part of this ministry for two years in a row. There's a glimpse into what I'm thinking about lately. Thank you for reading this if you did. Take care and remember that sometimes it is possible to be reading too many books at once!

In Him,

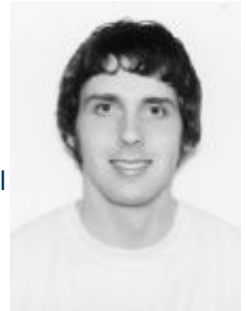
Natalija ><>

Date: 11/16/2004

Submitted by: Jason Gorski

Journal Entry:

Hello all. We're in Washington again. We have had some cool experiences as a team lately. We got to stay with some people that we met about month ago. It was really cool to stay in a home we had already been in. I was with Deron and Corey. And we really just connected with our host family. We played cards and video games and just had a great time with them. We got to spend a day up at a camp with a ton of youth from the church too!



Jason Gorski

Then last night we had the privelage of playing a program for inner city kids! K-5th graders. It was a really cool program called Potter's Clay based out of Wilsonville, OR. The kids learn through discipleship lessons and homework. And they seem to genuinely want to be there. They had a really fun time worshipping God with us and the adults there said that the kids really listened to us even more so than they listen to the leaders of Potter's Clay. One of our team members, Corey, grew up in the inner city and was in gangs and things. So he had a sharing that really spoke to the kids.

God has also been teaching me a lot about prayer lately. How powerful it is! I've always struggled with it because I've thought, "If God is works for the best of those who believe in Him, why do I need to put my desires before him? He knows what is best for me." But the Bible tells us to do exactly that, and it does make a difference. I mean, we see in the Old Testament stories where God appears to even change his mind based on prayer (Sodom & Gomorah). So that's a cool lesson to be learning. That's it. Keep it real.

Date: 11/23/2004

Submitted by: Corey Harp

Journal Entry:

Ok..ok.....I'm back....Corey is in the house.....so we are going to Kalispell for Thanksgiving...I am so happy, because this is Nat's home. I am really happy that she gets to be home and see her family for Thanksgiving.....plus I get to hang at her crib for Thanksgiving.....way cool, other than that, things are rocking.....I still am very happy to be where I am, and I feel things are going great....I would like to give a shout out to J dog.....thanks to all my peeps....tune in again soon to hear more from the man with the master plan....word up.....peace out.



Corey Harp

God bless,

Corey

Date: 12/29/2004

Submitted by: Corey Harp
Journal Entry:

Hey everyone, I'm back. Gosh, it's great to be back from break. I have been hanging out with my Captive Free peeps the last couple of days; I'm really going to miss them when I go overseas. Captive Free rocks my socks. Anyways, but for real, I'm getting nervous; we leave in like two weeks to go overseas, but I know God will provide for us over there. Well, that's all I got for this time. I would like to give a shout out to my West Lakes peeps and to my East Lakes peeps--Bri, if you are reading this, you have an awesome voice, keep on singing--and as always a big shout to my dog J.....peace out.



Corey Harp

Date: 12/30/2004
Submitted by: Maria Sorensen
Journal Entry:

Yay for Christmas break! It feels so good to be back on the road with renewed energy and motivation. Having had a break from team life has definitely made me able to refocus - and now I'm ready to take on the ministry full force! Which is probably a good thing, for I sense that the next many months are going to take all that I can give. A little intimidating at times, but hey, we've got God on our side, so why be afraid? Today we went to a child care center of about 65 children from infants up to 6th grade. It was weird to get back into the groove of sing-a-longs, and my arm hurt when we did our puppet show (!), but the children were really fun and definitely needed and enjoyed the extra attention we were able to give them by hanging out with them before and after our program! Yay for kids! I love their spontaneity and that they feel secure enough to express their feelings and needs so openly. We "adults" could definitely learn from that! God be with you all in the New Year--He's so loving and great that He knows our deepest needs even before we know how to express them! Yay for God!



Maria Sorensen

Date: 1/7/2005
Submitted by: Jason Gorski
Journal Entry:

Well I just had a great last couple of days. Our team got snowed in! And Corey and I were staying with some very cool hosts. Our host brother Dane and his friend Mitch took us out sledding. We also jammed a lot. Dane plays guitar and drums and has both in his basement. It was very cool.

And just today we arrived at the Marriot hotel in Cedar Rapids, IA. We are doing a youth convention with a couple hundred kids. We played a concert for them tonight to get them revved up for the weekend. Typically at these sorts of events, there is a Youth Encounter band and then some more well known Christian artist. Since there was just us, we decided to give ourselves an alter ego for the second half of our musical set. We were the Screaming Pancakes--my name was Max Madron. We thought it was funny. I hope the kids did too. I look forward to seeing where God takes the weekend.

That's it for now. I'm so excited for Australia, that's all I have to say! J.



Jason Gorski

Date: 1/10/2005
Submitted by: Corey Harp
Journal Entry:

Hey everyone, I'm back. Well, we just got done doing a youth gathering, and man, was it great. The kids there were so awesome; I made some really cool friends. We got to really rock out too; the place was really banging. It was overall amazing; I could feel the

Lord's presence through the whole thing. It was a very powerful experience. And now it is sleep time, because man, I am tired. Lucky for me it is our day off. Well, I guess that is about it for now. Big shout out to North West--you guys rock--and as always, a big shout out to my dog J.....word up.....peace.



Corey Harp

Date: 1/12/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

Wow. It's weird to be writing a journal again. Sorry about that. I just kept forgetting to write. My bad. So it's Wednesday, January 12. What a sweet day to be on team. Can I just say that I love working with college students? Even if I don't get to spend too much time with them, there's a certain novelty and excitement that always accompanies my trips to college campuses while on team. No different as we went to Wartburg in Iowa. Our mission was to meet up with the members of Kindred, plan out a 45 minute joint program and an hour worship service, practice, then do it. The 13 of us quickly set out on this mission and about seven hours later were definitely ready to call it a night. That seven hours included the worship service and the program. And dinner in the dining hall. The program was fun, the worship service was refreshing, and the students were awesome. The best part, however, was by far the conversation a few of us had afterwards (around 1 a.m.) with my host dad/brother/whatever.....the guy whose room I was staying in. For me it was refreshing and encouraging to hear about ways that God is calling him to serve and step out. Hearing stories about new things that God is doing in this world to strengthen the church body and those within the church is always a blessing. So I guess all I can say is thanks to all of you who boldly follow God's calling and are striving to see things change in this world. It's a blessing even if you don't realize it.



Deron Vaupel

Date: 1/20/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

Thursday, January 20

I awoke this morning to a flight attendant asking if I wanted the continental breakfast. It was somewhere between 3 and 7 AM, depending on which time zone we are using as a reference. Somehow I was able to place my order and fold down my tray table thingy without even opening my eyes. Five minutes later, I was finally alert and got to eat breakfast (brekkie) at 35000 feet (10,500ish meters) while watching the sun rise over the outback. Two hours (120 minutes) later, we were on the ground in Sydney, almost at the end of our gloriously long journey. The first thing that was said to us as we got off the plane (literally 1/2 a second after stepping off the plane) was "Here comes the band." Pretty sweet. We make our way through customs, and Maria and I are sure to declare the small amounts of snacks we have in our bags because we don't want to get in trouble. Then begins the waiting. Our flight to Adelaide doesn't leave until 4PM, and it's 10AM right now. Catch a bus over to the other terminal. Lunch at McDonald's (I know, it doesn't seem right, but it was the cheapest airport food), nap at the gate, get on the plane, two hour flight, and our journey is complete (or just begun depending on how you look at it). Peter, our main contact, is waiting with a couple luggage carts, a special care package of Australian delicacies, and our friend Josh from Ignaté. Pretty cool. We go and pile in our new home on wheels, the lovely white bus (complete with trailer), and hit the road for Peter's place. Meet the fam, have a quick meal, then off to host homes. Feels like I've done this before, just on a different continent or two. Isn't it great how hospitality and love and all those other good things can be found pretty much anywhere? Psalm 139:7-10



Deron Vaupel

Date: 1/21/2005

Submitted by: Jason Gorski
Journal Entry:



Jason Gorski

Yeah, we got in Australia yesterday. That's way cool, huh? So tonight we went to our first Aussie church service. Similar in some ways, primarily because it still contained all of the traditional Lutheran elements, and different in other ways. They didn't really have printed an order of worship. I don't think things like that are as important here. If you are attending church...well...there you are. You don't need to know the order of worship. Instead they just print up the parts of the service you are going to need to know (like words for the prayer, some lyrics, etc.) in some kind of order and off you go. It was nice. In some ways I couldn't help but feel the church services over here in Australia should be even more different than what I'm used to. It was weird to see the same liturgical elements as in the States, but cool at the same time to be able to recognize the common Lutheran threads. I'm excited to go to some other places in Australia where services are even more different, where the cultural differences are more apparent. I hope this will be true in the Aboriginal lands we visit because I don't like the idea of people just imposing their culture and exact way of doing things on other people. Yes, as Christians we should spread the love and knowledge we have in Jesus to all nations as is commanded, but does that mean that every new church needs to have a Kyrie? I think not.

Anyways, we did a puppet show at the service and it went over extraordinarily well. It is amazing how well received we have been. I think our foreignness is a great blessing for our ministry. People are more interested in hearing what we have to say; we have their attention before we even start speaking. A great blessing and a great responsibility.

Our hosts are all great. Peter, our main contact, is fantastic. I get to stay with his family and I've very excited. His wife Angie and his children, Jacob (10), Kelum (spelling?) (8), Phoebe (5), and Isaac (almost 2) seem fantastic. So cheers from down under.

peace out

Date: 1/22/2005
Submitted by: Maria Sorensen
Journal Entry:



Maria Sorensen

What a day! I wish I could put everything that's in my head right now into writing, but I think it's safer to stick with just a couple of things. So much has already happened since we stepped out of the plane in Adelaide two days ago. So many impressions, so many thoughts, so many feelings. It's overwhelming, but that's also what I love about going to new places. The upstir of everything you know and are, the frames and borders that are taken away to bring you to new realizations about who you really are and what you're capable of, and the feeling of losing complete control, so that your only support is God's promise that He's always in charge.

Tonight we had our first real program here in Australia in Salisbury Lutheran Church, and it went really well, except that my new keyboard has a damper pedal, meaning I have to let it go to sustain and step on it to cut the tone short, if that makes sense to anyone. Anyway, the point being that that's the exact opposite of what I'm used to, so I had to really concentrate to coordinate my feet and hands--I don't know how drummers do it! Or marching bands for that matter!

But I did get to meet some very warm and cool people--the youth that I got to talk to were just wonderful, and it's very inspiring to see and hear about the initiative and motivation they have for bringing more of God into the lives of the church youth.

In the middle of all this we just had a time of quiet this evening, and it was just really soothing to me, for although I enjoy all this excitement and all, I do need and appreciate peace more than anything else, and just five minutes of that tonight was definitely God's gift to me - among the many others He just continuously pours out on me every day. He's so good!

Date: 1/23/2005
Submitted by: Natalija Pollock
Journal Entry:

Hey everybody!

We're in Australia! I'm really excited about being here. We're in Adelaide, and I'm still getting used to the idea that I'm not flying in an airplane anymore. Tonight we were involved with a worship service that had a ton of University aged people in attendance. It's so encouraging to meet people my own age who're in love with the Lord. Alright, it's been a long day and I'd better get to bed. Thanks for reading this, and God Bless.

In Him,

Natalija ><>



Natalija Pollock

Date: 1/24/2005
Submitted by: Paige Shoemaker
Journal Entry:

Woo we are in Australia!! What?? I can't believe it. We left a week ago today, and with a total of 3 days traveling, and lots of layovers and visits to other countries, we are finally in Oz. Right now I'm still feeling some jet-lag, but nothing too bad.

We pretty much jumped in feet first and had a very busy weekend. It was nice to meet people that are a part of some of the churches we will be going to during our time here.

Today was our first day off. I got to sleep in a bit and then my host mum, Deron and I went shopping. I needed sunglasses and a hat and Deron needed some things as well. I was very happy to get all that I needed for under \$50! Then we went down to a boardwalk of sorts and looked around. Adelaide is such a beautiful town!! One day is definitely not enough to actually get a feel for it. I can't wait for more time to look around.

Well that's all for now. We have a very busy week ahead with recording tomorrow and then our very first Cricket game on Wednesday at the Adelaide Oval for Australia Day!

I hope you all are doing well back at home!

In Him,

Paige



Paige Shoemaker

Date: 1/25/2005
Submitted by: Sarah Robinson
Journal Entry:

Greetings from Australia!

I am experiencing almost no jet lag, which is fantastic. Today is very exciting because we're recording. I'm a little nervous because I've never done anything quite like this before. Andy, the guy that is producing it, is great. All the Australians have been so welcoming and friendly. I've already made fast friends with a few.

I have a couple of goals while I'm here. One is to read through The Message version of the Bible. The other is to keep a real journal. We'll see how that goes. Right now I'm reading through a book on prayer as well. There is a boldness of prayer that it speaks of that I wish I had. I guess that's part of me not trusting God as fully as I should.



Sarah Robinson

Date: 1/26/2005
Submitted by: Corey Harp
Journal Entry:

Hey everyone. I'm back, and I'm in Australia. It is so amazing here. The people here are so awesome, and it's nice and warm. Speaking of warm, we went to a cricket game today...it was the longest I have ever watched a sports event, but I still had a blast, and the Aussie team won. GO AUSSIES! So anyways, last night I was at the beach swimming, and some dolphins decided to swim with me too. It was so cool; I'm having one great experience after another. We have had a few programs so far, and it's been great to see people our age there, just rocking out for God. Well, I better go, time for some tea, a.k.a. dinner. Big shout out to my Watermark peeps, and as always to my dog J.....peace out



Corey Harp

Date: 1/27/2005
Submitted by: Deron Vaupel
Journal Entry:

Thursday, 27-1-05

So this morning we met Scott. Scott was a pretty cool guy. Not because of his appearance or attitude or anything like that, but because he has an awesome calling from God and he got to share with us how we can be a part of that. Scott is the director of Christian Outreach in the public schools in South Australia (the state we're traveling in most during our time down under). That means that he's the guy who coordinates chaplains in the public schools (yes....public schools) and oversees involvement of groups from outside the school system in times of religious education. Essentially, us. We had the privilege of talking to Scott for about an hour in preparation for what will be many amazing opportunities over these next couple months. See, the school system in Australia is set up so that groups can come in and talk to students within a certain context and those groups have the freedom to share about their faith experiences and beliefs. The context is such that, as Scott put it, "we can not recruit." We can only educate. But we can do so with personal stories about the difference that God has made in our lives. We can tell about how Christians believe that Jesus died to pay the price for our sins, a price which we could never pay ourselves. We can say that we believe that Jesus' death is the only acceptable sacrifice. We can say that the struggles Jesus went through and how he handled life give us confidence and strength when it seems there is nowhere to turn. We can talk about the promise of the Holy Spirit as a guide and comforter when difficult times come up. We can talk about Jesus' resurrection and how his overcoming death is an example of how we too, by God's grace and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can also overcome those things in life which seem to keep us from being who we want to be as Christians.



Deron Vaupel

We are, of course, limited in what all we can say and do. We are asked to do our absolute best to represent the Christian church, not a specific denomination. We can not ask students to make a decision regarding their faith. Small limitations, but it means that we have a very fine line to walk. And it is an extreme privilege to have the opportunity to walk that line. It's a little intimidating to know that we can be so bold about our beliefs, but hey, it's not the first time I've been in that situation. I guess it's a little different knowing that at times we will be surrounded by a couple hundred teenagers who are only there because they were forced to and they are looking for the slightest mistake in what we say or do to make us look stupid. But oh well. I can't think of a better way to make a fool of myself. Mark 13:11

Date: 1/28/2005
Submitted by: Jason Gorski
Journal Entry:

So we arrived in Wyalla today; a small town near the coast. We put on a program for a

small local Lutheran church for about 35 people or so. They danced and stood up and were good sports and all that. We met some really cool guys named Shannon and Damien. They were around our age and were in a band together. It was really fun to listen to Shannon play and just hang out with both of them. I wish we would have had more time to hang. We were invited over to one of the host houses after the program. Some of us went and it was just a blast. The people are so welcoming and willing to share what they have with us. They were appreciative of what we shared with them at the program. It is amazing what happens when God's people just make the choice to love each other. God is teaching me a lot about loving people. People I don't know, people who it is difficult to even like them, people who are very different than me with different customs different ways of speaking, people who are awkward in getting to know, etc. Deron and I stayed with a man named Paul. He was Hungarian and had a thick accent. We had a hard time understanding him and he had a hard time understanding us at times, but we *did* communicate. We worked at it and had some good conversations. I think sometimes in normal life it is easy to only gravitate toward those who are easy to communicate and relate with, it is a great lesson I am learning.



Jason Gorski

That's it for now. Keep on keeping on.

Date: 1/29/2005

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

Well, today's been quite the rollercoaster ride for me. It's not that a whole bunch of stuff has happened - it's just that I've had a lot of different feelings about it all.

We traveled from the little town of Whyalla to the slightly larger town of Ceduna - a 5 1/2 hour drive, today. The landscape is very interesting; large vast sites with yellow-green trees and plants. Sometimes it reminds me of Botswana where I grew up in Africa, and I expect my village to pop up from the horizon at any time - it's a weird sensation. By the way I've become a driver now, so there's good reason for praying for New Vision the next four months!!! :)



Maria Sorensen

Arriving in Ceduna everyone on the team just seemed tired and unexcited, and as I'm still learning how to go about setting up the schedule and all that while we're overseas, I sometimes get stressed out, and it doesn't take much to bring down my spirit. This afternoon was one of those days, so as I had five minutes alone at my host home, I got on my knees and told God that it really wasn't fair that team life just sometimes seems so hard and that I never felt that God gave me a surplus of strength, only just enough to get by and that it was getting weary. I then peeked in my Bible and the very first Psalm I came across was Psalm 84 that contains these verses:

"Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage ... they go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion."

I understood that this is what God wants. That I have just enough strength to get by this moment, but I need to trust that God will get me by the next. It's hard, I find, but I do know that God got me by this day too - in a blessed way as well! Coming back for the program this evening, everyone on team seemed really happy and focused on the ministry - the program went really well, and afterwards I played games with about 10 kids outside the church for a while! Lots of fun! And Paige and my host family are just wonderful! When will I learn? God still has it all under control! I came across a poster at the church that said, "God loves me just the way I am, and too much to let me stay that way!"

Yep - He's still got a lot of teaching to do before I really learn that both hard times and good times are God's way of reminding and teaching me more about how much He cares about me and the people I meet every day!

Date: 1/30/2005

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock
Journal Entry:

Hi there,

Okay, so we've officially been here in another hemisphere (for those of you just tuning in, we're in Australia!) for a whole week. It's so great to be basking in warm sun, to be getting a slight tan when I sit outside. It's really beautiful here, and we're still hanging out in Adelaide. This morning we were involved in the worship service at the Lutheran church here in Ceduna, and that was a lot of fun. We got to attend a community luncheon. Also, this evening all the girls went out with Maria and Paige's hosts to an area of land that they own and had dinner out there, and swam at the beach. It was lots of fun. The landscape has an amazing beauty out here. It's hard to describe, but it shows me even more how incredible God is, how creative He is as the master artist. Thanks to everyone back home for your prayers and support, I wouldn't be able to be here if it weren't for you!! Talk to you all again soon.

In Him,

Natalija ><>



Natalija Pollock

Date: 2/1/2005
Submitted by: Paige Shoemaker
Journal Entry:

So today was our first real experience in an aboriginal community. All this past week, people kept saying it'll be an eye opener and all these things. There was this undertone that the community would be horrible with cars burning on the streets and broken glass everywhere. I was in some ways imagining the worst. But it wasn't the worst. We had a program to start off the school year tonight at Yalata. Yalata is an aboriginal community that is in some ways a refugee camp. The people who live there have been displaced from their lands and have been given this land to live on. It's not manicured lawns by any means, but it wasn't as bad as people made it out to be.

So we arrived and looked around the school. They decided it would be best to do our program outside so that people could come and go as they pleased. We started setting up and right away some curious kids started hanging out and wanted to know what we were doing. They were a little shy at first but after the first few questions they weren't shy anymore.

At about 6 we had a barbie with the community. We were obviously outsiders with our white skin and funny accents. Some of my teammates, like Nat, were able to just walk up and start talking to people, usually kids or the animals around were her ways of first talking. I was really having troubles. I just couldn't talk. I felt silly and out of place. Finally the program started, and we talked the kids into coming up close and tried to get the adults to as well. No such luck. For the first few songs everyone just stared. No real expression on anyone's faces, just blank stares. Then, about the third song along the kids just sorta broke and started doing some of the motions and singing a little. Afterwards Sarah was talking to the principal, and he said this was the first time that a team like us came in and did music for them. It was completely new, and they were in some ways a little awestruck.

Then after we finished packing up, people started going inside for tea and some dessert type of things. I ended up with two little girls in my lap and they were just refusing to leave me, so instead I played outside for an hour or so. We just played ball and clapping games and running around. It really made me think of home; as kids we would play outside till it started getting really dark.

Ok, that's enough for tonight. I hope everything is going well wherever you are.

Blessings!!

Paige



Paige Shoemaker

Date: 2/2/2005
Submitted by: Sarah Robinson
Journal Entry:

Greetings from South Australia! Today started bright and early with a great brekkie (breakfast) of Wheatbix in milk with a little sugar on top. Everybody seems to eat Wheatbix here. It is a little like a big unfrosted version of frosted Miniwheats...but not

really. Actually, it's more like compressed blocks of Raisin Bran flakes. Actually, I don't really know how to describe it! Goodness, maybe. Last night at Yalata was interesting. Today we went to another Aboriginal school. It had a very different feel to Yalata. There people seemed a little reluctant to get involved with us, but the kids were super excited in Koonibba, just an hour and a half down the road. They were so responsive and rhythmic! It's an interesting experience being in public schools. We have to be very careful about how we say things, but we're still pretty free to share what we believe. It seems a bit odd, but people have told us that kids ask lots of questions about God once we're gone. At night we went to Wudinna for an evening concert. It is a sleepy little town, but we were excited to find out that Ben Folds' (a popular recording artist, both here and in the U.S.) wife is from here. Her parents even still live here. Even if we didn't get to meet them or anything, we still feel like we've had a slight brush with fame. Long day, and there will be many long ones ahead of us I feel. God has been blessing us with very encouraging people along the way. I thank Him for that.

In Christ's love, Sarah



Sarah Robinson

Date: 2/4/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

So today was unlike any other day I've had this year. With it being the first week of school, the local schools were still trying to get some things in order, so our programs today did not happen as planned. Instead, our contact gave Mark a ring. Mark is a farmer here in Port Lincoln, one of hundreds affected by a very destructive bush fire last month. Our assignment for the day involved no music, but rather helping out in whatever ways we could for him to get his farm back in some sort of order. This entailed building all new fences, doing whatever possible to keep his fields from eroding away (see, the crops that burned would generally keep that from happening), and many other clean-up and maintenance projects. I had a chance to talk to Mark some about the community's response and his response to all that's happened. It was really encouraging to hear how the community has come together to help those in need and how he has continued to trust in God despite any confusion over why these things have happened. It's nothing really profound or new to me, but it's just refreshing to again see people trusting in the bigger plan, people living for more than just what they can see. I like that and hope to learn more about that as the year goes on. Also as my life goes on.



Deron Vaupel

Date: 2/5/2005

Submitted by: Jason Gorski

Journal Entry:

Apparently we were in some famous South Australian valley called the Barossa Valley. They are world renowned for their vineyards. Look at a wine bottle from South Australia next time you're at the store and see if it is made in the Barossa Valley. So that was a pretty area. Much more lush than we have been seeing.

We played at a bunch of aboriginal schools. That was really interesting. I felt kinda wierd about it. Our team watched this film about how the aboriginies were treated when the settlers came here. They had these camps where they would put aboriginal children who had some Caucasian blood in them and force them to sing Christian hymns, learn to read, and basically learn to "be white." I couldn't help but think about the scene from the movie where they are forcing the aboriginies to sing Christian hymns as we were "encouraging" them to sing Christian sing-a-longs. I am a Christian, so I believe that sharing Christ's love is the most important thing we do here on earth, but it was still in my head. And I think it's important to keep that kind of stuff in perspective. We are called to share Christ with others, but that doesn't mean that we have to attach Western culture to the message of Christ, does it? This is something I've been thinking about lately. It's weird to me that when missionaries brought Christian teachings to other lands, they also brought the Western structure of church. So these remote Christians are using the same liturgy as Western churches halfway around the world. I don't think it's fair to alter people's religious culture that drastically to make them Westernized Christians. Okay, so that was a bit of a



Jason Gorski

rant, but it's what I've been thinking about lately. The aboriginies seemed to like us, though; mostly they loved playing games with us afterward. There were difficulties with understanding each other both verbally and culturally, but with both sides trying to give the benefit of the doubt to the other, we ended up playing a fun game of baseball which they called "run around" or something. The adults were small and looked not much older than teenagers although they were like thirty. It made for some awkward moments of, "So are you her sister?" [pause] "I'm her mother." They are very community-based and family-based, so they all sit on the ground in little groups at barbeques and things. The parents pretty much let the kids run around and do whatever because I get the sense that the community takes a much larger part in the raising of the children than just the individual parents. The kids know where to go if they need anything. Anyways, it has been an experience.

In Christ,

Jason

Date: 2/6/2005

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

I am soooo tired! But it's a good kind of tired - the kind of tired one should feel after having led a worship service, two afternoon workshops and a children's group! It really is a privilege to be used so much by the schools and churches we go to - so I guess I can deal with being a little tired!

This is the first time we've done workshops - they were on music, and puppets and other things that could possibly bring interesting twists to otherwise normal worship services. It was a weird feeling that people were actually listening to what I had to say - that in a church setting, my voice actually counted for something. As a young person, that's not always the feeling I get in the church. But to be able to encourage the youth to involve themselves more directly in the church service was huge for me!

I'm starting to get really excited about bringing the many things I'm learning this year, back to the Danish church with me! I don't expect to be listened to as much as when I have a whole team with me, to prove that I actually do know a little of what I'm talking about, but I believe I could still be of some encouragement to the youth in my home country - and that's really exciting to me!

A big hello to my family and friends back in Europe! I miss you guys - and even though the e-mails are few, I still think about you lots.

Here's my challenge to anyone reading this journal entry: listen to the youth at your church - chances are you'll find some who are more than willing to bring fresh air into the worship, if only they are given the opportunity. And what a blessing that will be for everyone involved!



Maria Sorensen

Date: 2/8/2005

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock

Journal Entry:

Hey there all,

Wow, what a whirlwind day!! Today we started out at a school in Maitland. Then we traveled to Clare, and had a really cool pancake dinner there followed by a family night program, where our contact Peter Eckermann and another cool gal named Viv from Adelaide surprised us! It was really good to see some familiar faces. We'll get to be here in Clare for a few days, which I'm looking forward to. It seems like a really nice area, I took a short walk when we first got here and had a moment to stretch my legs. It was a good chance to look around and take in my surroundings. It was also a nice time to clear my head and just speak with God. Sometimes things can get a little hectic in life no matter what you're doing, and I think it's important for me to grab a moment of quiet time when I can. I feel like little ten minute walks here and there are God's gift to me for a chance to just say hello to Him. If any of



Natalija Pollock

you get a chance like that, I encourage you to take it, and use it for all it's worth. Anyway, I've gotta go, but thanks again for reading one of my journals. God Bless!

In Him,

Natalija ><>

Date: 2/9/2005

Submitted by: Paige Shoemaker

Journal Entry:

Happy Ash Wednesday...right. I guess it isn't the happiest of days, but still a good day regardless. This has been the busiest day we've had yet. I'm dead tired, but I think we all feel good that we've been able to get through it. We had two school presentations before lunch, then lunch with a ladies fellowship group and then four school programs after lunch including a chapel. After school we rehearsed for the evening Ash Wednesday service, we had the service, and finally we ended the day with a team meeting. I am thoroughly beat right now, but really glad that we made it through the day in one piece. I pray that your Ash Wednesday found you in a less hectic state of mind and ready to start this Lenten season.

Paige



Paige Shoemaker

Date: 2/10/2005

Submitted by: Sarah Robinson

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone! This has been a great time so far here. For this journal I thought I would give you all a little lesson in Aussie Slang and other Aussie words. For example:

Jette: pier
Chook: Chicken "We've got some chooks out back."
University: College
College: private high school/school at all; could be year Kindergarten (which they call Reception) to year 12
Chewey: gum
Tomato sauce: ketchup
Lollys: Candy
Fair-dinkum: no...really?
Ex. Person 1: "My house burned down!" Person 2: "Fair-dinkum!"
Crook: sick "I'm feeling a bit crook today."



Sarah Robinson

Well, here was just a few examples to whet your whistle. As you can see, most of the words are not unfamiliar, but just have different meanings. We'll probably have an update at some point of more words.

In Christ's love, Sarah

Date: 2/12/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

Saturday, February 12

Today was a little lighter than the past several, which was very welcome. We got to drive back to Adelaide after a couple weeks out west. Went back to our old stomping grounds of Mawson Lakes and after an hour or so at Peter's house (our main contact), we headed to downtown Adelaide for a Sudanese Peace Celebration. See, last month a peace treaty was signed to end a 20+ year civil war in the country of Sudan. Adelaide just happens to be home to several hundred refugees from that war. The local churches and government have been very supportive towards those who have been displaced, and the



Deron Vaupel

celebration was partially for thanking those who helped out. It was a privilege just to be there for a couple hours and hear some of the singing, see some of the dancing, and listen to some of the speakers as they described all that is now happening in the Sudan as a new government is formed. Words escape me when it comes to describing all that I want to say about it. I guess it's just best to say that I will go to Africa at some point in my life. (don't worry mom and dad, no callings to a long-term stay yet...maybe just a couple months) Well, we're almost at our church for a service, so I guess I'll wrap things up for this week. Back at ya next Sunday.

Date: 2/13/2005

Submitted by: Jason Gorski

Journal Entry:

If anyone asks "So, what is New Vision doing in Australia?" the correct response is "Schoooooools." Got it. It's been great, though.

We've been in Adelaide, specifically a suburb called Golden Grove, for a couple of days now, and it is so nice. Adelaide feels like home to me. We spent our first week in Adelaide and Peter Eckerman, our main contact, lives here. It especially feels like home to me because I stayed with Peter and his family. So when we do business stuff and go over to Peter's house it's like stopping at the closest thing to home I've had in a long while.

We played some concerts at some local churches, and I found some people who played decent hacky sack, which was cool because it was a first since I've been over here. I played with them for a long time. I don't know if you guys care, but I'm pretty decent at hacky. I'm down right good over here because it's not as common. LOL, so anyway it's fun to be active.

Sarah and I are staying with these awesome people, Nathan and Amanda. They have to be, like, late twenties; I don't think I ever actually caught their age. But they are just very cool. They've been married a couple of years and they are just fun. Closer to our age, so it's more relaxing conversationally.

I've been growing closer to a lot of my team members lately...that's been nice. It's nice to get to know all my team members well. Team life's been pretty decent. We are communicating more, and I think on a personal level I'm just becoming more okay with some people being pissed and not letting it bring me down. Because people are not always going to be happy about doing this at every moment, and I need to allow for that attitude. I'm not always happy about doing it. Sometimes I think, "I can't believe I'm doing this till August." But stuff happens that keeps me going. God provides...Amen! God is teaching me a ton, and I'm growing slowly but surely. And every once in a while, worship will still hit me in an entirely new and refreshing way, even though I do worship for a living right now. God sustains, that's the bottom line.

In Christ,

Jason



Jason Gorski

Date: 2/15/2005

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

This evening we had a workshop on worship with a group of different people connected to worship teams. As I listened to my teammates stress the importance of focus on God and the right mind-set and proper preparation when leading worship, I came to realize that I myself have lost that focus and prayerful way of worshiping. The music and programs just sort of become routine after having done so many, and although I definitely connect with people in wonderful ways every day, I don't take advantage of the opportunities I get to reconnect with God. I don't doubt that He's with us, guiding us every minute of this crazy year, but I can't help wonder right now, whether I couldn't maybe get



Maria Sorensen

closer to Him - sort of have Him be an even greater part of my everyday life.

Prayer and Bible reading are definitely not going as well as they could. When will I learn? I know that it's so important to staying in - and trusting - God's guiding hand, yet my discipline just drops so fast, especially when I'm tired and when team brings so many other things to think of. But my teammates are right; I need God-focus back in my worship!

So I'm going to end this journal entry and grab my Bible instead, thanking God that He gives many second chances to slow learners like me!

Date: 2/16/2005

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock

Journal Entry:

What's up everyone?

Whew, today was a long day...we were in Adelaide and went to St. Paul Lutheran school. We lead school chapel there and then visited classrooms. It was so much fun! Everyone there was really enthusiastic and I really enjoy the questions we get to answer when we spend time in classrooms like, "So Nat, if you really could have your favorite dog, what would it be?" and also more serious ones like, "Why would you guys do this for a whole year?" Crazy thing happened today, Sarah had a girl walk up to her and say hello that knew her from this most recent summer when Sarah worked at a camp in Canada. So here we are in Australia, and someone knows Sarah! Whoa!!! Very cool stuff. Then this evening we went downtown in Adelaide and went to St. Stephens Lutheran Church. We did a family night program there. They had an air hockey table! I had some fun conversations with the people there. I love the sense of humor that I've encountered so far here in Australia. I have the impression that everyone likes to have fun and joke around when it's possible. So yeah, I learned today that there are outdoors supply stores here like we have back home in Montana, and it was comforting. I'm starting to feel the lack of sleep because of our busy (but super-fun) schedule. Anyway, I hope that gives you an idea of a typical day in our team life right now! Thanks for reading this journal of mine. God Bless!

In Him,

Natalija ><>



Natalija Pollock

Date: 2/18/2005

Submitted by: Sarah Robinson

Journal Entry:

Wow, so how crazy was that that I met one of my campers from this past summer in Canada yesterday?! This week has been so great. Jason and I have been staying with a young couple named Nathan and Amanda. They have spent the last 9 months living and traveling in Europe, so it's been cool hearing about all their experiences. Jason even got to go play tennis with Nathan, who is a gym teacher at one of the Lutheran Schools here. We also had the opportunity to set him straight about a few Football rules that he didn't understand because they don't play it here. They call our football "gridiron" because they have Australian Rules Football or "Aussie Footie" which is totally different. We played at a regular church service tonight called "The Salt Factory." It's a sort of a youth or contemporary service they have every other Friday at Golden Grove Lutheran Church in Adelaide. We had an opportunity to do a workshop with the worship band on Wednesday, which was really cool. God is really calling their ministry to expand and they are feeling very passionate about reaching out to people that aren't connected to a church. It was really neat to be a part of a ministry on the edge of going amazing life-changing places. I could really envision the possibilities if they stay passionate and focused. It was inspiring for me to talk with them about. I feel like I am getting a lot more passionate about reaching out to those that are usually marginalized by the church as an institution. It will be interesting to see where that will take me in life. I really feel like



Sarah Robinson

it's all about meeting people where they are. Because, less and less of them are in church on Sunday mornings. I would love it if all of you who are reading this right now would pray for the ministry of the Salt Factory. I'll leave you with a couple of verses out of "The Message" version of the bible which first caught me when I picked one up and got me really pumped about reading the Bible through again.

Somewhere in Matthew 5: "Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage. Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand- Shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven."

God's blessings on your day!
Sarah

Date: 2/20/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

Today was a normal Sunday. Two morning services, afternoon program, evening program. It's been a relatively long week with little rest, but even on the longest days, God provides strength that is definitely not within us. He brings about time where we can get away from whatever is going on so that we are refreshed in some way, even if it's only a couple minutes in a church office to check e-mail. God provides laughter to lighten the mood, and he provides welcoming hosts when it turns out we're staying a day longer than anyone expected. I think those are my only reflections for now. Take a minute or two to recognize some of the truly sustaining gifts that God gives you.



Deron Vaupel

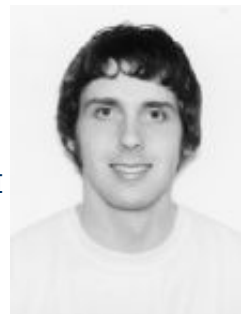
Deron

Date: 2/22/2005

Submitted by: Jason Gorski

Journal Entry:

Oh my goodness Mt. Gambier is so great! I love my host family. My day off yesterday was glorious...gloriously packed. I couldn't call all of my family members, but I had some fun. My day off filled up. I went golfing, which I haven't done since August. Shot a 49...meh, I have some excuses. Went site-seeing for most of the day. My host-dad Spencer took me all over. Down to the coast, across the stateline, back into some logging roads where he drove like a mad man looking for some kangaroos (I have some pics), to a beautiful river forest, etc. It took most of the day till dinner (tea time). Hung out with the kids, Marika and Liarna, some. Ate dinner, and went and saw *Spanglish*. Pretty decent. I really need to see it again to say how I felt about it.



Jason Gorski

Sunday was pretty eventful as well. I gave a sermon in church. Both morning services and a night time service. I used all three of the Scripture readings. The first reading was the passage in Exodus dealing with the thirsty Israelites crying out to God saying, "Did you free us from Egypt only to die of thirst in the desert? Are you among us or not?" They were almost ready to stone Moses. The gospel reading was the passage where Jesus talks to the Samaritan women by the well and tells her about worshiping in spirit and truth. She mentions that someday the Christ will come and explain all things to the people. Jesus says, "I am he" (basically) and she gets so excited, she leaves her water jug and goes to tell people that someone claiming to be the Christ is in the town. I contrasted those two stories by talking about how the difference in attitude was hope. The Israelites had no hope. After all God had done for them they had no hope that he was watching out for them. The Samaritan women had hope that the Christ would come someday. So much so, that when the

possibility came she was so excited she dropped her water jug to go tell people. Who are we more like? Who am I more like? Am I like the Israelites, focusing on what I feel God isn't doing for me right now? Or am I like the Samaritan woman, anxiously awaiting God's next big thing? And how different would life look if we could have her attitude? Then I wrapped it up with the other NT reading in Romans 5:1-5 (check it out). That was it in a nutshell. People really dug it, though. My teammates told me I should be a pastor...I said, "heck no." :).

Well that's it for now,

In Christ,

Jason

Date: 2/23/2005

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

Today from morning till mid-afternoon, we were at Tenison Woods Catholic School here in Mt. Gambier. It's not very different to the other Christian schools we've been to so far. We started out with a chapel time for grades 6 to 9 (it still amazes me how a fun sing-a-long or two can defrost "cool", young teenagers and allow them to forget about their image and just be kids and have fun!) The rest of the day we split up in two groups and had half hour sessions with the younger classes, where we mostly sang and answered questions. Especially in the youngest classes, question/answer time is always interesting:



Maria Sorensen

New Vision Teamer: "Does anyone have any questions about who we are what we do, or about God perhaps?"

1st kid: "My dad has a guitar at home!"

New Vision Teamer: "That's nice -any other questions?"

2nd kid: "Did you travel far to get here? 'Cause I've gone to Sydney!"

3rd kid: "And my sister is learning Japanese!"

4th kid: "My mum says we're getting a puppy!"

New Vision Teamer: "Okay, last *question*!"

5th kid: "Uh...why do the puppets voices sound like yours?"

New Vision Teamer: "Alright - let's do another song!"

The highlight of the day was definitely lunch where the Home Economics students had prepared a long table full of delicious food they had made themselves. And it wasn't just unsuccessful pancakes like the one's I remember from *my* H.E. classes, but food worthy of a 7 star hotel buffet (in my opinion at least!).

This evening we also had our first team outing in two months. We had dinner at a restaurant, and it as just great to be together with the team

outside the ministry frames. Plus, we were al so tired that the humour level was *really* delirious - lots of fun!

I really like Mt. Gambier. Especially because of the people here. Our contact, Taya Joppich has just organised everything perfectly, so I've hardly needed to do anything! And my host family, the Hamiltons, are the most kind and caring family! God is really taking good care of me, through all these people!

Date: 2/24/2005

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock

Journal Entry:

Hello hello hello,

How are you all? Wow, things have been nutso, we've been really busy, which is awesome, (and mentioning that seems to be a recurring theme in my journals, sorry) but I've been genuinely run down lately. I think the last eighteen months have been catching up to me. So today was a really refreshing time for me. We hung out at a Kindie (to clarify for those of you in the States, this is what we would call a pre-school, or nursery school) and did little mini-chapels and played around with the kids. Oh man, they do the coolest thing there! They combine washable paints in bright colors with shaving cream and make this amazing paint foam that is soooooo much fun to play around with. That was really my main activity most of the day. It was just great to spend time with them. Sometimes it's really great to be three years old again. Also, I've really been enjoying the area we're in. Mount Gambier is a really beautiful place, and my hosts are lots of fun. Alright, thanks to all of you for taking time to read up, and God Bless!

In Him,

Natalija ><>



Natalija Pollock

Date: 2/25/2005

Submitted by: Paige Shoemaker

Journal Entry:

Ok so tonight my host mom made Play Dough for her reception (kindergarten) class and I just wanted to pass on the recipe!

Mix:

- ½ cup salt
- 1 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar

Then add:

- 1 cup of water
- 1 tablespoon oil
- food colouring

Stir, cook on medium heat 3-5 min. until dough is pliable. Store in ice-cream container or plastic bag. (She often doubles the recipe!!)

Blessings,
Paige



Paige Shoemaker

Date: 2/26/2005

Submitted by: Sarah Robinson

Journal Entry:

I love Mt. Gambier!!! The whole time here in Mt. Gambier has been so refreshing. I was really overwhelmed when I first saw our schedule here because it was going to be so jam packed, and I came here feeling just plain worn out. I was placed with the fantastic Beams family. They were so good to me. Their three girls were so fun to be with. We sang and played and read and danced together. It seems like everyone had hosts who fit them just perfect. The mom Liz and I got along like fish and chips. Also our contacts Taya and Craig were so wonderful. They really looked out for our well-being the entire time we were here. I felt like I could relax for the first time in a while. It's amazing that just when I feel like I'm at the bottom of my barrel, God provides people and places that refresh and inspire me to continue. It was really cool because we were on the local news last night, and there were people that came from an hour and a half into Victoria, the state next to South Australia who drove over to see our program tonight. It was just an overall great time. I'm also nervous, but excited about the workshops that we are going to do on Tuesday night here. We have to split up into 3 groups, which means 2 groups of 2 and one group of three. Maria and I will be doing a Spiritual Gifts workshop, and Jason and I will be leading one on Youth Ministry. In the Spiritual Gifts one I think we are going to go through a Spiritual Gifts inventory with the people that attend. It's one off the ELCA website that I have taken before and it's been pretty accurate from what I have seen. We'll see how it all goes down. Thank all of you for your prayers. It's been incredible to see the direct results of prayer lately where I hadn't before. Continuing to depend on God and turning to Him in prayer has been the faith lessons I've had of late. It's quite a journey He's been taking us on.

In Christ's love, Sarah



Sarah Robinson

Date: 3/1/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

Tuesday, March 1, 2005

We got to sleep in today. Very nice. No music today, either, so my guitar just sat at my host home. Instead, it was an evening full of workshops. It is at times humorous, shocking, and humbling to be asked to lead workshops on a variety of things. As a team we have many experiences we can draw from while preparing and leading workshops. There are sometimes, though, when we struggle to see how we are in any way considered suitable teachers for certain subjects. Natalija and I had been asked to prepare an hour session on sharing your faith story, and although we both have personal experience in this area, it was very difficult to plan or understand how we could provide what we felt would be sufficient instruction. Then comes the lesson of God equipping the called instead of the other way around. It's constantly a struggle to understand how we can impact people, but at times we get small glimpses of what God is doing through us. That workshop was one of those opportunities. We got to discuss evangelism for about an hour, share experiences, discuss fears and apprehensions, and be an encouragement and resource for those we worked with. It's refreshing to get those small glimpses. Off to a new town tomorrow, new faces, new challenges, new experiences.



Deron Vaupel

Date: 3/2/2005

Submitted by: Jason Gorski

Journal Entry:

We've been doing a fair amount of workshops lately, and it's been really great! I was involved in a workshop about worship and one about youth ministry (youth ministry will now be abbreviated YM). The worship one was old hat. Nat, Corey, and I have done it on numerous occasions now. We share our philosophies behind leading worship, practical advice on contemporary worship, etc. But the YM workshop was new and exciting. We

decided to frame the whole workshop in a youthful context. So as people walked in they heard good youthful music playing (I think I used Armor for Sleep, actually) and saw some media on the screen we had (via our projector and laptop). We then had them introduce themselves and played a short name game that involved hitting and fun youthful things like that. We then had some discussion and watched a movie clip from *Back to the Future* to entertain the question, why does YM have to be different then other kinds of ministry? Well, I'm not gonna give the YM workshop here. It would be way too long. But we used two more movie clips throughout. One from *Empire Records* and one from *Donnie Darko* to illustrate various points about how to do effective YM. It just went so gosh darn well. I feel I've developed a passion, through doing this workshop several times now, for getting churches to realize the importance of YM and how to go about it. God's really stirred it up in my heart right now. Three or four active youth stayed after to just pick our brains for awhile about various stuff and we ended up talking to them forever. It's been good.



Jason Gorski

In Christ,

Jason

Date: 3/3/2005

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

We left the small town of Millicent this morning after a program with a women's group (a couple of families came along too!). I really wish we could have stayed there longer, both because I would have loved to spend more time with my cool hostparents, Helen and Trevor, but also because it was so clear that this church was looking to change to bring more youth into the congregation and I would really have liked to help out. I feel like that with a lot of places we go to - there's so much potential, so much will to get things burning, but often the resources are limited. I just hope and pray that we might be of some encouragement and inspiration to the real church builders: the people who remain faithful to their congregation and share the love of Jesus by building relationships and committing their everyday life to the gospel.



Maria Sorensen

This afternoon we had a program at a primary school. Nat and I told the story of Jesus rising from the dead through an interactive Bible story. But preparing the message around it was a real challenge to me. How do you explain the "simple" Easter message to children who have never heard much about God and the Bible before? Jesus died as atonement for our sin - what's atonement? Why was it necessary to die for our sin? How could dying even help get rid of sin? Why would a loving God want to punish in the first place? Not being able to hide behind fancy, churchy phrases suddenly makes things complicated. I guess I boiled it down to Jesus, loving us so much, that He could not let anything stand in between God and us and He would even die to take away the sin that made it hard for us to come to God, so that now, God is always there for us, loving us greatly and always hearing our prayers and helping us out. Pretty amazing, now that I think about it...

Maria

Date: 3/4/2005

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock

Journal Entry:

Hey there everyone,

So, today we went to two different places. We started out in Kingston, and then went to Naracoorte, and we'll be here for a few days. Tomorrow we'll be singing in caves!! I'm really excited about that. It wasn't a very eventful day. We did two school programs and traveled in the mini-bus. It was one of those days that wasn't bad, and it wasn't spectacular, it just was. I think that sometimes it's okay to have a day like that. Lately I've been reading the book of Job. It's interesting to read it in the Message version of the bible. For me, it really puts the story in perspective. I'm finding it amazing the trust Job put in God. Job never doubted that God had the best in mind for him initially in the story, after he'd lost everything. I think if I'd been in his place, it's possible that I would've lost it right away, and doubted God's plan. Job didn't. I desire that kind of faith, and I hope some day I get to that place in my faith life where no matter what is happening in my life, I can know deep within my heart of hearts that God has good things in store for me. I'm finding that something to pray about and work for. Anyway, I think that's all I've got for today, just thought I'd share with you a little bit of what's on my mind. Take care of yourselves everyone! Thanks for reading my journal, and God Bless.

In Him,

Natalija ><>



Natalija Pollock

Date: 3/6/2005

Submitted by: Sarah Robinson

Journal Entry:

Ahh...here we are in little Naracoorte. I'm actually staying with the parents of Craig from Mt. Gambier. They own a sheep and cattle farm. Paige and I got to feed 3 lambs whose mothers had died, and pet some Clydesdales that they owned. It's the first time I have actually been shown around a farm that I'm staying at here in Australia. We learned all about Center Pivots (big irrigation systems) and how they get so little, rain they measure it in points (a sub system of inches!) It's been a learning experience. Yesterday singing in the caves was really cool. We just kept on saying "Hey, we're in a cave doing a concert!" And who should show up but Viv and Kirby, our two friends from Adelaide. They came up for the weekend. It is so great seeing them again. I had a great time talking to them. The very first weekend we were in Australia we connected with them, and we've been hanging out with them. I think they are even going to come to my home for Christmas this next year.

The people here have been so encouraging. They are really excited about everything we're doing, and I wish we could spend longer getting to know them and helping them with different ways to expand their ministry. But we have to be off again so fast to the Riverland. It's going to be a crazy week, and we're a man down because Corey is still sick. I pray that he continues to heal. We're all a little worn out bodily, but I feel like we're in a really good place spiritually. I hope we can continue to be unified and strengthened to continue our ministry to others as well as to each other. It's all too easy to treat teammates carelessly in the face of being so busy and focused on others. May God bless all of you in your relationships as well. May Jesus bless you and keep you on your journeys, Sarah



Sarah Robinson

Date: 3/9/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

Today, as normal, was a normal day. We went to a primary school in the morning and got to do a chapel service focusing on the Easter message. We've successfully modified (read "stolen") one of Kindred's puppet shows which is very suitable for talking about Easter. It gets used a lot at this time of year. After that chapel and a quick 'cuppa' (coffee break) we headed over to the high school to set up for a lunchtime concert. It was a unique opportunity because students were not required to attend, but maybe 150ish stopped by at some point or another to see what was going on. Several stayed for all of it. We did mostly music, but we were able to talk some between songs and share our message. There's always a lot less pressure when students are not required to be there for some reason. Anyways, we had a lot of fun, and several of the students we met at recess came by to see what the music was all about. At night we had a short program which was pretty normal. A good afternoon devo, a good one-on-one spent listening to my new Jack Johnson CD, things pretty laid back. All in all, a good day.



Deron Vaupel

Date: 3/10/2005

Submitted by: Jason Gorski

Journal Entry:

Almond Surfing & Star Trek: Voyager

What do these two things have in common? They are things that totally rock that I've been able to experience in the last couple of days. Let me share my experiences with you now.



Jason Gorski

First off, my last host home just ruled. I stayed on an almond farm. Yes, almonds. I could walk outside not 20 meters (we are in the metric system now, mind you) from the back door and have my belly full of almonds before you could say, "Fresh almonds taste better than your momma's coffee." But it gets even better. We had a "day off" this past Saturday. I say "day off" because it started at 9:00 a.m. after attending a morning community breakfast. It was good though 'cause I had heaps of time to call a heap of people (that would be an Aussie sentence, perhaps). So among the activities on my Saturday off was almond surfing/sledding. My host family had a giant mound of picked almonds in a shed. One of the things they like to do is sled down it. It works...sorta. It took a while of going down it before we created a track of matted down almonds that would be conducive to fast sledding, but we did just that. Once it was matted down I was also able to board down it (like a snow-board). I wish I could post the video I took on my camera. I had two thoughts while going down the mountain of almonds: 1) This is pretty interesting 2) These people are in desperate need of snow. Then that night we watched the series premiere of Star Trek: Voyager projected on the wall and blasted through some surround sound speakers with my host family. I have the first season on DVD. It was a beaut (beewt). It was so glorious. We watched the next two episodes the following night. You caught me, I'm a Trekkie. But my hosts were so gracious and fun. I could razz my host sister Tiff, and she would just dish it back at me; it felt like normal sibling interaction.

Why are these experiences even relevant? Because it proves that God has his eye on me. I can't even explain how hectic life on the road can be. And any time I come across some strange activity

that just makes me want to fall down laughing, like sledding down an almond hill, or an experience that reminds me of home, like watching Star Trek: Voyager, I can't help but feel that God is taking care of me, keeping me sane and pleasant. Thank you Lord, for almond farms and Gene Roddenberry.

Date: 3/11/2005

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

When is busy too busy? When is little rest too little rest? How do I best balance between the needs of the team and the needs of the people we are serving? All these questions turned in my head today, as we had a pretty busy day with lots of school programs at two different primary schools in Loxton and Browns Well and an evening program in another town (Paringa). This is not an inhuman schedule - by no means - but when it comes on top of 12 days that have been full on, without real time to rest, I start to worry that the team is heading for a burnout, without anyone reacting.

Everyone was really exhausted today, and are few are pretty ill. Corey's still recovering from bronchitis, Jason and Sarah are battling the flu, Deron's not in perfect shape either, etc. Is this because the team is being run too hard - is there something I, as teamleader, could do differently? My teammates tell me they'll be fine - they're all ready to work hard for the ministry (it's so cool!), but where's the line between giving your all for the ministry and being good stewards of the bodies and gifts God has given us? I suppose all we can do is seek the kingdom of God, and all the other things will be added unto us!

A thought occurred to me the other day (yes, it does happen!) This fall, it was clear to me, that Satan was trying to hinder our ministry by getting into relationships between teammates. It took a lot of work to create a sense of unity in New Vision because Satan knew how strong we'd be if we were able to lean on each other. And now that this unity is strong and relationships are blossoming, Satan has given up ruining God's work in this way and is instead attacking our physical health. I take comfort in remembering that Satan is merely a dog on a leash, and that God is strong enough to transform Satan's attacks into lessons of growth and encouragement.

With that said, I need to mention that I, myself, am doing well. Except for occasional loss of voice, I don't have any health issues to complain about and energy-wise I always seem to be getting renewed strength, just when I'm convinced that I can't lift my hands for another "To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul" sing-along line! But I don't understand - of all my teammates, why should I be the one blessed with energy from above?

Just a small sigh of frustration: if one more person comes up to me and starts talking about Princess Mary, I'm going to scream! I mean, it's nice of them and all, and I can understand that it's exciting that an Australian girl has married the crown prince of Denmark - I was fascinated by the connection in the beginning too, I'm just sort of tired of hearing about it every day for the past two months! I mean, Denmark has so many other cool things about it: the little mermaid, lots of windmills and Legos, just to mention a few...!

While we're jumping around in all different kinds of subjects in this journal entry anyway, I might as well tell you about the cool gift we got this evening after our program. We needed petrol, and a guy from the congregation told us to follow him, so he took us on a dirt road right into the middle of a fruit orchard (we were discussing the possibility of him actually being an axe murderer or something!) but it turns out that he has his own petrol supply for his machines there, and we got to fill up our tank in the middle of an orchard, under a beautiful starry sky - free of charge! How cool is that!



Maria Sorensen

I think that was all for now. God's blessings to you all!

Maria

Date: 3/17/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

Well, it's that time again. Happy St Patrick's Day, by the way. We're now in the Adelaide Hills, a nice region of South Australia where all the towns are fairly small and the longest drive we have is about 30 minutes. While getting ready for our school chapel this morning, our contact Peter made a surprise visit. It's always a joy to see Peter, not only because he's cool, but also because he usually has mail for us.

So I think one of the lessons I'm learning right now is about choosing to be ready for ministry. It's been a long and wearing week with some concerns and visits to medical professionals (everything's ok, though). That's all piled up and has led to some times of just wanting to be somewhere else, usually involving a good book and time away from people and being "on." There is not always a good heap of time to process all the thoughts that can occur in a day, and it's been a challenge to be mentally and emotionally prepared for all we've done in this past week. I have the ability to choose what head space I will be in for the programmatic things we do. Eventually, the time will be found to process what's going on. It's not always ideal, but God will provide strength to endure. Doesn't mean I always want to make that choice. But I can. God provides.



Deron Vaupel

Date: 3/18/2005

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

Ever had one of those mornings where you get up, say good morning to your hosts, get your stuff together, meet half the team by the van, say goodbye to your hosts, get in the front seat to navigate, pull out the map, try to figure out where you are (as the van is moving!), realize after maybe 15 minutes that you've taken the highway the completely opposite direction of what you were supposed to, turn around, feeling incredibly stupid as you realize that half the team's going to be late and will hardly have time to set up for the school's morning chapel??



Maria Sorensen

I didn't until this morning - but thanks be to God, we had just enough time to set up our instruments, before the 250 kids from Mount Barker's primary school came pouring in from all sides, and we had a fun time with them all! After that, we tore down our stuff again, only to drive about 20 minutes to Hahndorf where we set it all up again at the Lutheran church! (I'm going to look like Arnold Schwarzenegger before I'm done on team - well, maybe by God's grace, I won't!)

We also had a quick visit to the Cornerstone Lutheran College during their lunch break. (College in Australia is the same as private high school in America. They call post high school work "uni" for "university!") Cool kids! This afternoon we had another chapel with kids from Hahndorf's Lutheran school, and in the evening we had a family night program, but there were mainly kids we'd already met at the schools or other places before, so it was really nice and relaxed! The kids really got into the singing- that's always heart warming!

Tonight I had a really cool talk with my host sister, Sonja! She's really on fire for God and strives to truly follow His will in her life. I wish I had that same passion and trust that God knows what's best in all situations. I know He does, but when I'm in the situations, I don't always react that way, I know. But God's teaching me a lot about trust in Him this year - it's really cool! I hope everyone's well wherever you are when you read this and that you're learning all about putting your trust in God too!

Date: 3/19/2005
Submitted by: Jason Gorski
Journal Entry:



Jason Gorski

Okay, my last journal dealt with two things that totally rocked. Why break a good trend? I'm going to talk to you today about Dr. Pepper & Cherry Coke. So we played in this town this week called Birdwood. We played a FNP (Family Night Program) for them. It was cool. So afterward, our contact Josephine said, "We have a special gift we'd like to give you. Now earlier during your tour I asked you, 'What do you miss most from the States?'...Well I got it for you" and she gave us two twenty-four packs of Cherry Coke and two twenty-four packs of Dr. Pepper! You guys should have seen our reaction. I had no idea how much I missed the States until I saw those 24 packs. I hugged them for a long while :). I think it very well might be impossible for those who haven't been in another culture for a long while to understand just how great it felt. The people in the audience were almost weirded-out by our strong reaction to these two common American drinks. It was the fact that they were familiar things from home. You can't find them in Australia anywhere, despite what the locals may tell you :). These 24 packs were actually brought by someone from the States specifically for us! I thanked God for that moment. I had really been craving something from home.

Later we were in this other little town called Hahndorf; a small German town. It was so quaint. We set up to play a night time service on Saturday. We prayed that God would just make the worship new for us. We've been doing all these songs for so long now. But he did make it new for me. I don't know about everyone else, but God really refreshed my worship experience that night! We made some funny mistakes as a team too, and instead of having those mistakes distract from worship, they just made me light-hearted and jovial. The congregation wasn't judging us for them, they laughed with us and the atmosphere just remained so filled with the Holy Spirit. Coolness huh?

Date: 3/27/2005
Submitted by: Maria Sorensen
Journal Entry:



Maria Sorensen

Happy Easter! Or God Paaske as we'd say in Denmark. Jesus, the son of God, left His heavenly wonderful paradise to live a human life that ended in torture and death, so that I can go free! It's hard to wrap my mind around such love. And death couldn't hold Him down, so He rose again after three days! It's hard to wrap my mind around such power!

I've been trying to make the Easter days special to me, but I think you can sometimes put too much effort into it too, if that makes sense, so that you have to be sad all the through Good Friday and super joyful on Easter day. This year I think I just settled on quiet reflection that led me to thankfulness that the maker of the universe should care so abundantly for a little Danish girl like me!!

It was a good day today! We led the celebration service in Victor Harbor, SA and got to worship through fun songs. Especially the "Happy Song" is one I really like--it's so...well...happy!! And happy is good! I mean looking around, especially on Easter day, there's so much to be happy about. Victor Harbor has a beautiful beach and is surrounded by wondrous nature. My hosts Sally and Mark are so cool--we have great conversations, and they've introduced me to a whole bunch of Australian films! And after the service today, the whole team go together, and we painted and dyed eggs (more or less successfully), ate chocolate and Paige's fantastic "sticky buns"...Yum! It was nice to get together as a team like that and talk about different Easter traditions and learn new things (for example, that an egg turns black if it's dipped in five different dyes in turn!).

My wish for you all is that the wonder of the so-often-heard message of Christ dying to set us free from our sins will become real to you once more. That we will all stand in amazement in front of the empty tomb and praise God for this incredible, unconditional love. He is risen indeed, halleluyah!

Date: 4/2/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

Today is Saturday. But it's not a normal Saturday. See, we're at Tatichilla Lutheran Camp helping out a little with a weekend family retreat. The very unique thing about this retreat is that most of the people here are people we've run into or stayed with while traveling. Actually, every one of us has a chance this weekend to catch up with somebody we've stayed with for at least a night. It's way cool to see familiar faces when traveling in new places all the time. It gives us a chance to move beyond the typical "So, what's your name?" questions and actually build something that is more like my kind of friendship. So today was really just a day of doing that, playing cards, leading sing-alongs, and a little bit of rest. A day different enough that it is a welcome change from the norm.



Deron Vaupel

Date: 4/6/2005

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock

Journal Entry:

Hello from Australia everyone! So the last few days we've been staying in a beach house at Henley Beach near Adelaide. We've been having a great time enjoying the area and being able to see our contact, Peter Eckermann and his family. Also, Kirby and Viv, some friends of ours from Adelaide, have been hanging out with us. Today we went to Concordia College (here in Australia, a "college" is private high school) and recorded a DVD of some of our sing-a-longs in their school TV studio! How cool is it that they have a whole television setup?! Everyone there was great, really encouraging. I think my time overall at Concordia was one of my most positive high school visits yet here in Australia. I just really enjoyed the positive atmosphere created by and for the students there. It was good stuff...as far as what we've been involved in ministry-wise, I think it's been awesome. I love just singing, doing puppets and hanging out in schools. God be praised that we're being used by Him! Thanks for reading another journal from me.



Natalija Pollock

In Him,

Natalija

Date: 4/10/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

Sunday before the outback. Yep, this is our last journal before driving more than 800

miles north for a couple weeks in central Australia. Sometimes, what we do can be a little unnerving. We go into churches and do something different, and sometimes that's extremely different. When we were getting ready for church this morning, it seemed it was going to be one of those days where it was going to be extremely different, and I'm always a little concerned for how people will respond to that. No, we didn't get any frustrated members coming up to us afterwards. Instead, this small congregation was super thankful and excited to return that evening for our program. And return they did, with friends. It was a great night to share and take a little time to refocus as we start off on this very different aspect of our tour.



Deron Vaupel

I'm not super excited about driving all that way over the next two days. It can be a very exhausting process. And considering that I'm already a little worn out and we're about to enter into cultures that are very different from what we've experienced so far, these next couple weeks have potential to be very difficult. I'm excited to finally be heading to an ethnically different part of the country. I'm excited to see the many different things God has called us to do to serve those around us. I know it will be stretching, but it's just another opportunity to continue learning those lessons about relying on God and making a more focused effort in that reliance. That's basically a summary of how I've been growing the most during our time here. So, until Alice Springs.

Date: 4/13/2005

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

Wow, we met some truly awesome people today! This morning we spent a couple of hours with Paul Eckert, who works as a Bible translator within aboriginal communities. He came to Alice Springs about 30 years ago as a school teacher and has worked with aboriginals ever since. It was very clear to us that he was a very wise man, so we shot questions at him from every side trying to learn as much as possible about this community of which we are taking part the next three weeks.



Maria Sorensen

There is so much information I would like to share with you. The aboriginal people used to spend their time hunting and gathering to live and moved around depending on water resources. Then the government started supplying the different tribes with food, which completely changed their lifestyle. Suddenly they had much more time on their hands, as they didn't need to spend it hunting and gathering. And instead of moving around, they stayed close to where the food was available. Before 1967, aboriginals were not considered citizens of Australia. That is, they were not counted in the census, and did not have the same rights as citizens. When that changed, only 40 years ago, they were suddenly allowed to drink alcohol, which was abused by a lot of aboriginal people, and the aboriginal men, who had been working on cattle stations for very little money, were now fired, because they had the right to higher salaries.

Pastor Basil, who works within the aboriginal community in Alice Springs, joined us as well, and told us some sad facts about aboriginal people today. The death rate is much, much higher than that of the "whitefellas," which is how we are referred to. Fifty years is old for an aboriginal man, and a lot of young people commit suicide. They just don't see a future or happiness...that was hard to hear. There used to be 200 languages in Australia. Now only 30-40 remain. One of them is Pitjatjantjerra, which Paul speaks. He has translated a great deal of both the Old and the New Testament into this language. He told us about the complications of translating to make the Bible both understood and just. For example, in Pitjatjantjerra, there is no word for "betray" or "forgiveness". So you would have to figure out what that word actually means and then find a word or explanation in the language that means the same. So instead of Jesus saying: "Your sins are forgiven," he says: "God, with the desire to make peace, will not repay you for the wrong things that you have done!"

Despite all the sad things that are happening in the aboriginal community, Paul had a lot of things to say when I asked him if there were some things we could learn from the aboriginal people. To them, he said, relationships were more important than anything else. Whereas we, as westerners, are much more time oriented, these people are more event oriented. It's not so important when the event starts, it is being there with other people. Where we are more focused on reaching goals, they

are more focused on the persons they encounter. "You don't ever see an old aboriginal man in an old people's home, wondering why his family doesn't come to see him. Or an aboriginal single mother feeling lost and alone," said Paul. He continued to talk about how so much of what we do, as westerners, is geared towards preventing bad things happening to us. Aboriginals are not so concerned about having bad things happen to them. If it happens, it happens, and the people around them will help them out. They are a lot less self-reliant. Not like us, who strive to not have to depend on anyone – sometimes not even God. We paint God out of the picture, trying to do it all by ourselves. (Is this man wise or what?!) Pastor Basil interrupted with a thought. He had once heard an aboriginal guy say about the whitefella: "They think they have everything, but white people have nothing." True, aboriginal people have never built airplanes and stuff like that, but they care about each other. And their view on community is very inspiring too: a person by himself is not a person, seems to be their mentality. A good thing to think about for us on the other side of the world, who seem to do all we can to not need anyone else, yet not feel alone.

Keep moving, thinking and praying in your daily lives!
God's blessings to you all!
Maria

Date: 4/19/2005

Submitted by: Deron Vaupel

Journal Entry:

So, as one drives down Highway 3 across the outback of Australia, a strange thing comes into view. About 350 meters (1100 feet) high and 10 kilometers around (6.2 miles roughly), you can see it from a long ways away. And it's red. Yeah, Uluru, a.k.a. Ayer's Rock. We got a chance to be tourists for a little bit. The rock is about a five-hour drive from Alice Springs (where we're spending a couple weeks), so we drove out yesterday and stayed the night at a campground that's part of the neighboring town/resort place. There's an entire town with the main purpose of accommodating the tourists who come to visit. There are services for the few small aboriginal communities in the area as well, but the population of those is very small in comparison to the average occupation of the resort.



Deron Vaupel

So, Uluru is a very important religious site to some indigenous Australians, and that is made very clear to all who visit. It used to be a common thing for tourists to climb to the top of the rock, but there are now posted requests that tourists refrain from climbing out of respect. There are many places in the park where people are asked to not take pictures or videos as these are sites of cultural and religious importance. There is an extensive cultural center which provides some information on the area, which also includes a former large rock that has broken into several smaller (but still rather large) rocks. Tourists can find much to explore and ponder throughout their few days at the park.

This all left me feeling a little empty, though. More than just physically, too, even though walking around the rock is quite an undertaking. Most indigenous Australians come from a culture where it takes a great amount of time to open up to others so that we could understand who they really are. Because of this, there is much that is not explained to the ordinary tourist about the cultural and religious significance of much of what was in the park. The cultural center provided a foundation for that all, but because I wanted to know so much more, I felt somewhat empty. Visiting the park and seeing something of extraordinary size and significance was quite an experience, but it's frustrating to know that I could have experienced so much more. But, I was just a tourist.

Next time you travel, think of where you're going. Think of what you're going to see, who you're going to meet, and how what you'll see shapes the history of who you're going to meet.

Date: 4/21/2005

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

Hooray for teammates' birthdays and having time to celebrate! Today Paige turned 24! (I've told her it's time to grow up--but will she listen?) We had the morning off, so my great hosts Ron and Judy let me take over their kitchen, so we were able to surprise Paige with lasagna (with sparklers in it!) and a birthday cake (also with sparklers in it -- they were on sale!). We dressed up as her whole family (dressing up meaning we all wore wigs made of red yarn--for those who haven't seen our lovely pictures, Paige is a redhead!) so she got a little taste of home, and just had a blast.



Maria Sorensen

The afternoon and evening we spent at Yirara College (Australian high school), which is a school here in Alice Springs that boards around 180 kids ages 12-18. They are all aboriginal children from all different areas of Australia. The teaching level is lower primary school level--most of the kids are used to living in the bush and have a completely different worldview than what we Westerners do. We'll be staying and helping out at the school this whole week, which will be challenging, educational and cool all at the same time, I can tell.

After having led chapel this evening, we went back to our rooms and made a plan of attack, so that when Paige, unknowing of her awaiting fate, walked down the dim corridor of the dorm we were staying in, a pillowcase came flying over her head, she was wrapped in a pink sheet and thrown into the back seat of the van and was taken downtown, where we all ran away and left her to get out of the sheet and duct tape mess. We did return, however, and had a great evening celebrating Paige! Hooray for our God who gives us those times to just have fun together!!

Date: 6/2/2005

Submitted by: Corey Harp

Journal Entry:

Yo yo yo...wazzzzzzup. Well, we are chillin in Montana. It's cool to be back from Australia...it was so cool there. I kind of miss it...oh well. I know I will be back pretty soon, though. Anyways, it is VBS time...lol...good times, lots of cool kids. Any who, time for me to go get my hair cut...that's right. I give a big shout out to my East and West Lakes peeps, and as always, to my home slice J. Word up....peace out.



Corey Harp

Date: 6/7/2005

Submitted by: Jason Gorski

Journal Entry:

I've had a really cool week at VBS (Vacation Bible School) here in Glendive, MT. Doing VBS is very different than our normal team activities. We are in one place for just over a week. This means a lot of things. We get to know the people better, we don't have to answer the same questions all the time, etc. And the people here in Glendive are pretty rocking. VBSes, so far, seem to be a bit more laid back than our typical traveling around playing shows. This is because we don't have to worry about tearing down and setting up a bunch of times and meeting new people every five seconds. This doesn't mean we are doing less work--no no--but it feels like less because we don't have the added social strains of yet another introduction. I make it sound bad...it's not like that. It's just you want to put your best foot forward when you meet new people, and sometimes that best foot gets so dang tired of going first all the time, it hooks itself right onto your other foot in order to trip you up. Anyways, I digress...I'm really enjoying VBS so far. I get to play drums and bass on a couple of songs because they are pretty simple songs, and playing a different instrument keeps me engaged in the music, which is a good thing. We are here for the kids, and if we are barely conscious while playing our typical instruments, we do them a disservice. The kids are cool, it is really funny to be a part of getting them excited for the week, and the food is good. Glendive is such a small town that the businesses around here, including the franchises, have each agreed to pay for our lunch one day of the week. Isn't



Jason Gorski

that rad? Subway, Pizza Hut, McDonalds, Dairy Queen; it's great!

Well, tata for now,
Much love,
Jason

Date: 6/9/2005

Submitted by: Maria Sorensen

Journal Entry:

Hello all faithful journal readers! Wow--long time no posted journals! I think time has run away with me some this past month, but now I'm back; back from Australia and back to being a more regular journal writer! We're in Glendive, Montana right now, and busy with our first Vacation Bible School this year (and my first VBS ever!). I'm definitely enjoying the concept: invite kids to church every day for a whole week, show them how to have fun while learning about God, and by noon when you've reached that point where jumping up and down just doesn't seem that appealing any more, you send the kids home! We have 62 kids at this VBS, and being crazy about kids, I'm just enjoying getting to lead games and having small group discussions about following and trusting Jesus and loving each other. The preschoolers are just the cutest--yesterday, while talking about things that we get scared of, little Michael put up his hand and told me he was really scared of tomatoes! "Why would you be scared of tomatoes?" I thought... and it took me a while to realize that he was actually talking about tornados!!! Yay for the English language--I can definitely relate to those hard pronunciations sometimes!!

Montana in the summer is just beautiful; very green and amazing mountains--it's good to be here! And I'm trying to learn from the things that we're teaching the kids. Sometimes simple is really good, and having a whole day to think about what it means to follow Jesus or to love each other is really nice.

It's weird to be back in a different routine than the one in Australia though--more restful, which made me restless for a while (odd isn't it?). But things are falling into place now by the grace of God and I'm ready to take on this summer with everything it'll bring!

Take care!

Guds fred (God's peace)

Maria



Maria Sorensen

Date: 7/29/2005

Submitted by: Corey Harp

Journal Entry:

Well, my last journal. It's been such a cool time this year. I had so much fun; I will miss a lot of peeps. We are done in about two weeks--man, time flies. Oh well, on to the next thing. I don't have to much to say other than a big thank you to Youth Encounter--thanks for the great times. Well, much love to all my peeps...word...oh, and a big shout out to my dog J. Peace.



Corey Harp
