

Cross Fire 2004-05 Journal

Date: 9/29/2004

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

First of all I would like to thank God for getting Crossfire through the training and learning about different cultures around the world. It was such a neat opportunity to take with us on the road as we will find many different cultures within the United States. it has definitely changed my world view on how to treat people of different backgrounds from my own. I am so excited to be on the road finally and use what we have learned. We have been through Wisconsin, and are still in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.



Josh Black

We stayed at a host home the other night where all of us were together and our host parents were so cool. They made us feel right at home and they were so excited to see us having hosted previous teams in the past decade. I really felt like I was treated with royalty because of how we were treated and how much food we had the privilege in having provided to eat. We talked with each other and laughed with each other

The two and half days we were there. One of the exciting things was when our host mom wanted to show us her artistic talents. Each of the team members was held captive in a plaster mask for about fifteen minutes on the last night we were there.

We could not open our eyes of course and we also could not laugh. It was so much fun and we will have to show you pictures of the whole process. It was neat to capture our faces in such a different way. The last few days on the road have shown me how faithful God really is. Having given up so much material items, I feel so blessed because of having people take the time to give us food and shelter and so many other needs that there is no room for complaining. Even though we may not stay in the same place every night, we can be sure that God is right there with us as we go.

It has made me wonder what the disciples must have felt when Jesus told them to go make fishers of men. Were they worried about their family and friends? Were they worried about what they were facing? Did they have a clue what they were doing and where would stay? All sorts of these things go through my head as I think about this year and I am asking God what is going to happen. In Matthew 28, Jesus says to "Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Surely I am with you always until the very end of the age." I am excited to see where God will take us this coming year spiritually, emotionally and geographically. The most exciting part that I am looking forward to is having the privilege of going to East Africa in January.

Date: 9/30/2004

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hi everyone! Welcome to my journey with Crossfire 04-05! I am so excited to be able to share glimpses of my journey through this medium and technology. Enjoy!

Today began with me waking up from a horrible dream. I dreamt that I was yelled at by people I love dearly because they felt I took for granted the sacrifices they had made to make contributions to my year of ministry this year. I woke up quickly, feeling confused and concerned. I got to thinking about what a great opportunity I have been given this year. What a blessing it is to me that I get to spend a year of my life sharing the love of Jesus through music



Ann Strum

and relationship building. I am very much aware that my presence in this ministry is about something so much bigger than myself. Many people have prayed and carefully considered how they could partner with me and support me this year—from financial support to prayer support to storing my things. I was given a poster when I graduated from high school that says, "Lord, you have given me so much. Please give me one thing more, a grateful heart". I have been given sooo much that has made this year possible for me. I do not ever want anyone to think I am ungrateful—I am more thankful than words can even express. God has truly used many people to provide for me.

The year so far has been excellent. Our team spent the first five weeks learning a lot about each other, our mission and Youth Encounter's vision for our year of ministry. Since we started our tour last Saturday, we have been shown such amazing hospitality! The host families and congregations in Brainerd, Tomahawk, Ewen and Ishpeming were so gracious and generous. I thoroughly enjoyed our stays in each community.

Today is a prime example of the hospitality we have been shown. This morning Luann made chipate for us to eat for breakfast and pillau for lunch. Both of these are East African foods she was served during her two trips to Tanzania. Hearing her stories, in addition to the other stories we've heard from those who have experienced East African culture first hand have really gotten me excited for the experiences we will have this January through May. But, I realize we have many adventures right here in the USA. We left Ishpeming this afternoon and drove to Munising. We did not have a program tonight so we met the pastor at the church. He took us to his home, where we are staying tonight, to unload our belongings before he drove us all around Munising to see the sights. There are so many beautiful sights here—God has definitely done some beautiful artwork. Lake Superior is amazing! After showing us around, we all went out for dinner together and checked out the local coffee shop/book store. We were amazed to see the poster with our picture on it hanging in the front window. Then Pastor Lynn showed us the article in the paper announcing our program tomorrow night. We headed back to the house where we visited and listened to our host play his guitar and sing for us. What a terrific day!

I have been completely amazed by the way God has used people to provide for me in the past several months. Thanks be to God who provides for our every need. I pray that I will learn to trust Him completely every day and be amazed and truly thankful for the ways He meets my needs. I hope I will also always be grateful for the people He uses as well.

Date: 10/3/2004

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:



Jayme Rowoldt

Hi. Last night we had a fun family night program in Munising, MI. We were booked at short notice, so the pastor was unsure if we would get a big crowd. Yet, the people started to come and we were thrilled to sing for an audience of about 25. My favorite moment was when we were singing Nimemwano Bwana, one of our traditional African songs, and we invited the audience to stand and praise God with us. As I scanned the crowd, I saw this cute, little 100-year-old lady dancing to the music we were singing. It was definitely the highlight of the program for me. The crowd was small, but mighty. It was terrific to see all of the young at heart people dancing along with us during our songs. It was great to see that we can continually praise God in all kinds of ways regardless of our age.

Today was a great day! We finally ventured out of the upper peninsula of Michigan to head down state. It was an absolutely beautiful drive surrounded by the reds, oranges, and yellows of the changing leaves as well as Lake Michigan. The real adventure came when we headed onto the Mackinac Bridge to get to lower Michigan. It was a windy day, so the recommended speed limit was 20 mph for those pulling trailers. I was overjoyed that I would get to drive at such a leisurely pace over the five mile bridge. We were almost to the end when all of the traffic came to a stand still. For the next 40 minutes we got to sit on the bridge attempting to call every possible other team to find some entertainment for ourselves. The water of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron could only

entertain us for so long. Much to our joy we eventually got moving again which was a relief to our legs and our bladders. Tip for anyone planning on crossing the Mackinac Bridge: STOP BEFORE YOU CROSS!!! We survived and saw that our hold up was a small trailer home that had tipped over into both lanes of traffic, causing lots of damage. We were thankful it was not our trailer. Now we are continuing on our journey to Sutton's Bay, MI hoping that our delay on the bridge does not cause us to arrive too late to the church.

I have really enjoyed the first week on the road. We have had so many varying experiences, but nothing beats exploring the waterfalls and picture rocks of Munising, MI. It was breathtaking for me to experience God's creation in such a setting. I could have stayed and sat by the waterfall for hours just simply hanging out with God, but we had other things to do. God is continually surprising me with His love and I pray that He will continue to mold and shape me into more of the servant that He desires me to be. I pray that God I blessing all of you who are reading this with new learning experiences that show how great and extravagant God's love is for you.

"Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul." ~Psalm 143:8

Date: 10/5/2004

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Greetings,

Hello from the road!! We've been having so much fun lately. On Saturday we played at a correctional facility, there were about forty young gentlemen housed at the facility. We attended their church service and then had dinner with them and played a program for them later that night. We had a blast. It is amazing to me how the Lord can reveal Himself in so many ways. He has been revealing Himself to me lately through conversations I've been having with people I have met on the road. Also through my teammates, He is constantly showing Himself. Lately I have been seeing Him in nature. We traveled through the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and it was beautiful. The leaves on the trees were changing colors, any color one could imagine. We drove by three of the five Great Lakes. All I can say about that is wow! God is everywhere, whether I choose to see Him or not, He is there. Well I believe that is all for now. In the words of the great Christian rapper Agape (David Scherer) "Keep it keep it, tight tight."



Katie Ernst

Peace,

Katie

Date: 10/9/2004

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

Hey there everyone!

It's been an interesting week. We've had two programs this week and the rest of the time we've been hanging out with hosts and in different churches. The programs that we did were great. We got to hang out with some boys at a correctional facility. We also went to downtown Detroit and did a program at a place for temporary shelter. It was a lot of fun. Afterward we hung out with a bunch of the kids. I very much enjoyed **Alison Ondracek** being there and I feel as though the people there really enjoyed it as well.



The down times have been another story entirely. I think that most of us have been getting frustrated with sitting around and not doing anything. I personally often felt like I'm wasting space when we are not doing a program and not even staying in a host home where we can interact with

people other than ourselves. I kept trying to have an open mind about it, and I know that it's not due to lack of effort on anyone's part. It just has happened that way.

I did realize after a conversation with Ann that we still are doing ministry, even when we aren't around other people. The ministry we do for each other is just as important as the ministry we do for everyone else. We've had some really good conversations lately, getting into some pretty deep issues. I feel like we're making a real effort to dig deeper into our faith and challenge each other. It's really been good for us and if we had been busy with programs, then we wouldn't have had a chance to get into these discussions. I feel like I know my teammates much better now than I did two days ago. God works in such amazing ways. I'm glad He helped us to use this time that seemed like it was wasted and turn it into a great ministry opportunity. Praise God for that!

Date: 10/10/2004

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Gudday! (what's that? you don't speak Aussie? sorry)

Howdy! Hujambo! Hi! (is that better?)

Welcome once again to anyone reading this!! It is really great to be able to share this year with you. (A special hello to anyone reading this from back home in Adelaide, Australia - you guys rock!!)



Craig Schubert

People keep asking me what its like being in the U.S. for the first time and I don't really know what to say. It still feels like I haven't seen much even though I've been here around 7 weeks now. What I have seen, the people I've met, have been amazing! Our team has been showered with so much hospitality that I could have gained around 10 kgs (about 22 lbs for those unfamiliar with the units of measurement used in most of the world) if I wasn't careful. I had an especially good time last week. I stayed with a family and had a great chat with Mike - my host dad, then we went for a ride on his Harley at about 11pm when it was 47 degrees (yes that's farenheit - I'm learning to think in both scales).

While we were staying in Toledo with nothing programmatic to do I had a chat with a guy who organises 'Feed your Neighbour' program at Augsberg Lutheran. Every week they provide food, free of charge, for 40-50 families who might otherwise go hungry. It is always encouraging for me to see people working to make a difference in the world - helping bring hope and joy to people who are doing it tough.

Anyway, til the next time,
Shalom,

Date: 10/12/2004

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

So we have been on the road now for about three weeks and it has been great. We have seen so much of Michigan and about to head to Indiana soon. The weather is so nice here as well as the people. It has been a blessing to be invited into so many different communities, but at the same time I am being challenged in so many areas of my spiritual life.



Josh Black

I have met so many people who love God so much and bring up a lot of interesting comments about the Christian faith. It has made me more aware of why I am doing what I am doing and I have

been asking myself a lot of questions about God. In many ways I have already decided what I thought and answered my own questions. I am still being challenged because there is much more I want to learn and sometimes I am frustrated because I don't always take the time to be still with God.

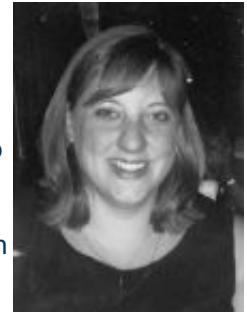
I feel great when I do have that alone time with God but still pondering things in the spiritual realm. I can't exactly explain it clearly but I think it is somewhat a growing time for me to really establish my own faith and to grow and mature. I don't always know the answer but it is ok because I know that God is there with me every step of the way to guide me in my thoughts and lead me in the right direction. It is like I said, challenging, but worth the wait if you give it a chance. I hope to grow so much more this year and see what God is like outside my comfort zone and outside my culture.

Date: 10/14/2004

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hi everyone!! Every day is a new thing it seems! There is so much to say so I'll just go ahead and get started. Today, our tour took us to a brand new area—Indiana!! We started the day in Dundee, Michigan. We got up, had devotions and our team meeting, loaded and headed down the road. I was the driver for today so I did not get to focus on the scenery—I was focusing on the road. BUT, even while focusing on the road, it was impossible to miss the brilliant colors of the leaves showing us the changing seasons. So many trees with greens, reds, pinks, yellows, oranges and browns. At times, it was absolutely breathtaking.



Ann Strum

When we got to our destination, Fort Wayne, Indiana, we prepared for our program at a nursing home. The residents were already listening to a pianist playing beautiful music when we arrived. We got ready so we could start playing music as soon as the pianist was finished. We entered the room to some clapping but as we continued to play, sing and share, the residents got more and more animated. Some were clapping, smiling, singing along and dancing in their wheelchairs. It was amazing! Cool to see all of us worshipping together in our own ways. This year has already been a year of seeing and participating in a wide variety of different styles of worship. It's been great and I am excited for God to continue to provide me with new and different settings in which to experience worship.

After our program at the nursing home, we went to the church where we will be staying until next Tuesday. We haven't been in one place for that amount of time since training!! We met with our contact, Henry, who introduced us to his daughters and the church where we'll be spending the next several days. We had a fun time hearing a couple of his stories from when he was a Teammer. I'm looking forward to hearing more stories as the weekend continues. We're here for a weekend retreat with about 20 Junior High youth—should be really fun!

God continues to bless us with safe travel, health, good conversations, fun times and laughter with our teammates, contacts, and other people we meet on the road. I pray that this will continue! Thanks for your continued support and prayers! Doing this ministry is such a blessing!

"Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! Say to God, 'How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name.' Psalm 66:1-4

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Date: 10/16/2004
Submitted by: Katie Ernst
Journal Entry:

Greetings,

So I am sitting here with nothing to do, so I thought to myself, "Self you should go online and write a journal!" So here I am online, writing a journal. Wow, the weeks sure do go fast! It feels like yesterday was August 20th and it is already October 16th! It is hard to believe! Jayme mentioned in another journal entry that we got the chance to play dodge ball with jr. high kids and let me tell you I had a blast! Man, that game is intense! I can play dodge ball like the professionals! Big props to my fellow dodge ballers out there in Fort Wayne, IN!! You guys rock! Well I know this is a short journal entry but I wanted all you people who read these things, to know that I was thinking about you all tonight! I hope everything is well for all of you. Until next journal entry or if I get a chance to chat with you on the road, the peace of God be with you.



Katie Ernst

peace,

Date: 10/16/2004

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Journal Entry 10/16/04

Hi. We have had a busy week filled with excitement. We have gotten to worship with so many different types of people, from nursing homes to churches to detention centers. It has been truly a different experience each day. Yet, God is faithful and works through each experience that He provides. From the tears of people during some songs to older people dancing with us in their wheelchairs; it was truly a memorable week.



Jayme Rowoldt

Wednesday evening we got to be a part of an evening worship service in Dundee, MI. I was tired and I was not very excited to join in leading all of the worship songs with the church's worship group. Yet, as the service began, I could feel the presence of God. The Spirit was alive in that room and I was going to leave changed. As the pastor began to pray for us and thank us for what we had shared, God began to work in my heart. My eyes were finally opened to the reality of this call that I have accepted. I am going to Africa! For so long it has seemed like this phrase that I say. It was just a distant event, but that night it became real. As the pastor began to pray for us and the blessing that we will be and the opportunity that we have been given to go to places and have experiences that the people in that congregation will never be able to have. It finally hit me how special and unique this opportunity is for me. Most people never get the chance to go to Africa. Most people do not even get blessed to travel outside of the U.S. I am so blessed to have been called to go on this trip. It hit me like a whirlwind. I get the honor of going to East Africa to learn from the experiences that I have with the people I meet there. I get to have life-changing moments that so many people can only imagine. I get to travel to Africa!

This weekend we have been in a retreat with about 15 junior high kids. It has been great. We have gotten to sing praise songs, do devotions, play dodge ball, go go-kart racing, and so much more. It is truly an experience to connect spiritual warfare to dodge ball, but it makes scripture come alive for the kids. The kids have been really amazing and a lot more open about faith things than I expected them to be, which is fantastic. And in honor of us, we get to spend the evening watching The Lion King. Do not worry because this is not just any Lion King movie, no, it is so much more. It is the sing-a-long version. We get to have all of the words provided for us, so that we can sing-a-long with Simba and the rest of the gang. Yes, I know you are all jealous. Do not fret; I am sure you can find it in many of your local stores, so that you too can experience the joy.

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" ~Psalm 42:1-2

Date: 10/21/2004

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Gudday!

Here I am again to open a window for you to have a peek at our time on the road...

This week has held more in store than the last couple, we're staying in a different place each night. That's been great because I've gotten to meet more people and see snippets of their lives. The other night Josh and I stayed with a family with three boys who were



Craig Schubert

5, 7 and 9. They were still up when we got home late-ish and were very excited to say hello, show us their rooms and play around with us past their bed-time. Then we stayed up and chatted with their parents until past my bed-time. Hopefully we'll get to stay with them again when we return in the summer to do VBS and spend some more time together.

Today we drove a few hours to sing in a care centre. We were pushing to be on time, due to construction on the way, but we got there and pretty much set up and played right away. It was hard for me to get into it after getting a head-ache in the van - which is becoming more decorated by the day - but once I did it was great to find people listening and smiles coming across their faces. There was one lady in particular who was calling out questions during our program (which doesn't happen too often). I spoke to her afterwards and she reminded me that the we can change tomorrow, for good or for bad.

Thanks God that you have given us the ability to choose, and for that to impact the world. Help me always to be choosing for love and life.
amen

Date: 10/23/2004

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

Hey all!

What an interesting week. We've been in a different place everyday this week. We've met a lot of amazing people so far. It's such a blessing to be able to have the conversations that we do. I love interacting with people and just finding out about them. It's crazy to think that we've already been on the road for a month. Where did the time go? There have been so many places and all of these faces that we have come to recognize. The craziest thing happened last night, I walked in to the place where we were and I saw some of my Wartburg friends! I was so excited I could hardly contain myself. It was great to see faces that I recognized smiling at me from the crowd. It will probably be my high for the week, so Chris and Erin you rock! I also saw someone from my Wartburg Sem. class that I took, and someone who was in Chapel Choir with me my freshman year. It was invigorating to see them. I didn't realize how much I missed the familiar until I was around people who are familiar to me. So for those of whom may be reading this, I miss you all! Don't get me wrong, I am glad I'm here and I can't imagine doing anything else. I feel blessed for the opportunity that God has given me to be able to do this ministry. I also feel equally blessed for all of the people out there that are praying for me. You could never know how much it means to know that you all are praying for us. I can't speak for everyone, but I know that it gives me the courage and strength I need to go about this ministry. So, thank you for all of your support and prayers.



Alison Ondracek

Peace

Date: 10/29/2004

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hi again! We are resting today at the Legacy Lodge in Randolph, Kansas. The Legacy Lodge is a beautiful cabin that Jim and Pat have been blessed with and they have blessed us with using it for a couple days. But before I tell you too much about our time here, I should back up and tell you about the earlier part of the week!



Ann Strum

We had a wonderful beginning of the week in Lincoln, Nebraska, home town of Jayme.

We had the opportunity to sing for a bunch of residents of Eastmont Towers. It was wonderful to be encouraged by them and to receive such a warm reception from them. Later on Wednesday, we got to be part of a worship/youth night at Sheridan Lutheran. The kids all came dressed in costume for "Trunk-or-Treating". We got to share a little about what we've been doing

and what we're going to do during our travels to East Africa. It was fun to watch Jayme's friends and family in the audience. It was great to meet the people who have known and loved her for such a long time. No wonder she's such a cool gal—her family and friends are amazing! I had a great time staying with her aunt and uncle, Mary and Max. Even though the Cardinals got beat in four games (sorry, George!!), it was fun watching with them and then having a great conversation with Mary in the late night hours.

We left Nebraska yesterday morning and headed to Kansas to meet Pat. The woman working at the gas station where we were waiting let us know Pat was running late. So, Josh, Craig and I got out our team Frisbee and started passing the time. The boys got quite a work out because my Frisbee abilities are lacking—they got to chase a lot!! Actually, I got to run a little, too because I threw it a couple times and the Frisbee dropped and rolled back at me and beyond me quite a ways. I can't throw very well but apparently I have the roll mastered!!! We all had a good laugh! When Pat arrived, she had us follow her to the cabin. If anyone tells you Kansas is all flat, we should have a chat because we were going up and down hills and around tight corners all over the place! But, what beautiful countryside!! When we got to the cabin, the Legacy Lodge, Pat explained how God has blessed them with the cabin and how they hope to use it to bless others. In addition, it will be a place for their family to gather and grow together. It was an amazing story that started with a vision their father had for an A-frame cabin by a lake. How cool to hear Pat talk about how God provides in His time. They remembered the vision and were excited to see God bless them abundantly with an A-frame cabin by the lake! I have already seen God provide for me in ways I could not have dreamed imaginable. I pray that I will continue to watch and be amazed by how God works!

Well, we spent the day doing team stuff: choosing some new music, spending time with one of our teammates, having a team meeting and just enjoying the beautiful surroundings. While it would be nice to be doing daily programs and sharing God's love through our music and sharing our hearts, it was nice to have time to rejuvenate a bit and enjoy God's beautiful handiwork of the landscape around us and the beautiful people on our team.

Thanks for your prayers! Please keep praying for safe travels, that we would continue to enjoy each other and work together well, and that people's lives would be touched by the word God has given us to share. Blessings to you all! Ann J

Date: 10/30/2004

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Hi. I got to go home this week. It was fantastic! There is nothing better than having a whole row of friends mocking you while they sing along to "The Way." It was definitely enjoyable. I got to see so many familiar faces and also a few blasts from the past. My kindergarten teacher came to see us at Eastmont Towers. She is really excited for my upcoming trip to Africa as she spent several years with the Peace Corp in Cameroon. It was great to talk to her again as I have not seen her since Kindergarten. We were so welcomed by everyone in Lincoln and it was great to get to share this ministry with so many people who are supporting me at home.



Jayme Rowoldt

We left Lincoln and headed for Randolph, KS where we got to stay in a cabin on a lake for a couple of days. It was absolutely beautiful. We even got to have a campfire by the lake and roast marshmallows for our smores. They were delicious. Although I had a few technical difficulties getting my chocolate melted on my graham cracker. It was tons of fun though.

We are now leaving Chanute, KS where we were blessed to lead several worships and share a family night program at a coffeehouse that is used for youth ministry. The coffeehouse was so amazing and we were so blessed to get to share our message there. I got the joy of having a friend from Emporia, KS drive down to surprise me. Yay Molly!! There is nothing better than when God blesses you with little surprises to brighten your day. I pray that God might surprise you with joys in your life today, so that you might be reminded of His constant, extravagant love for you.

"The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." ~Zephaniah 3:17

Date: 11/2/2004

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Greetings,

Hey yall!! We are in Oklahoma City, OK!! I am having a blast on the road. Wow has God been blessing us over and over. The other day I ran out of deodorant, 2 in 1 shampoo, and AA batteries! I know, I was having a tough day! Well, a lady gave us a bag full of odds and ends of stuff!! I looked in the bag and to my amazement there was deodorant and not just any old deodorant it was the exact kind I use (degree shower fresh)! And then I kept digging and there was 2 in 1 shampoo!! Man I was so pumped. Then get this, I looked some more and there was 2 packages of AA batteries, not one package but TWO!!!!!! I was so happy. It was like Christmas for me. God really does provide. He has been so great lately.



Katie Ernst

Can I tell you the one thing I love the most about my team?? We laugh! We laugh so hard that I can't breathe and Ann starts to cry and Jayme just does this loud chuckle laugh. The van is always filled with laughter. Random thought I know but I thought you all would like to know!!

So tonight I had a very humbling experience. We went to the Oklahoma City bombing memorial. I was so taken back. I felt many different emotions. I felt three emotions that kept running through my mind. The first was sadness, sadness for the families and friends that lost loved ones. Second was anger, angry at the act that took place. Lastly, I felt frustration, frustration with violence and hatred in this world. I thought of all those that are being oppressed for who they are and the culture in which they live. Everyday groups of people get violently pushed around and hurt everyday for being themselves. I felt this overwhelming feeling of sadness. That is all I can explain it to be. So I left one of my bracelets on the chain link fence in front of the memorial. I don't why I did that; I guess I felt I needed to respond some way. I came away from that experience feeling the power of the gospel, which is love. Love is all we need. I know that sounds like a song!! But boy, did they hit it right on the mark.

Well I should sign off for now. Thanks for reading my mindless chatter!

Peace,

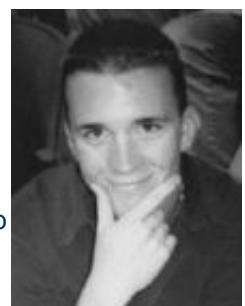
KT

Date: 11/10/2004

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Hey all! I am doing well. I have been a little sick the last week or so, so I have been trying to take care of myself while on the road. I have been getting better as the days go by but it is definitely challenging to sing on a regular basis when you are trying not to cough. But I have great teammates who take care of me and it seems to be working.



Josh Black

I have had fun getting to visit my home in Oklahoma City and seeing a lot of the people who support me in my ministry this year. It made me realize how precious friends are and that they will always be there to support me in any way that they can, whether that is financially or spiritually. I also got to see my mom which was good. I thank God for all that he has blessed me with. I don't have my own house this year but I have a Ford roof over my head and food in my stomach, clothes on my back, and plenty of new places to see all the time. It is nice soaking up God's blessings he has shown thus far. I can't wait for what's to come.

Well I have been having a blast traveling in the southern region lately because it is nice and warm this time of year during the day and a light breeze at night time. I am not sure how ready I am for getting back up towards St. Paul area in the next month. I love the snow and cold weather but this Texas sun is nice. Before I finish this entry I want to give a shout out to my home girls in Mustang, OK. God bless you all and keep us in your prayers and we will do the same. In his grip!

Date: 11/11/2004

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hi again, everyone! Thanks for keeping up with us by reading our journals! We've been having a great time in Texas. It's odd to think that I've been talking with people about how it's kinda chilly here. By that, I mean that I've had to wear my sweatshirt over my jeans and t-shirt. Then I usually chuckle that it's mid-November and I haven't worn a coat yet!! I have truly enjoyed the past couple days. Tuesday, we arrived in Cedar Park, Texas and met Jo and Herman, the couple who hosted all six of us. I had the opportunity to visit with Jo and Herman after we had supper together. They have been married for 57 years!! I am amazed at how they talk about meeting each other, raising their family and enjoying each other's company for that long a time. It was also fun to listen to them talk about the ways God has blessed them and provided for them. What great examples to us! I had a wonderful time staying at their home. Host families are definitely one of my favorite parts of team life. Yesterday we had some time to rehearse and do some other things to help maintain our team. In the evening, we had the opportunity to share our Family Night Program with the 7-12th graders in Cedar Park. I especially enjoyed the time after the program to visit with some of the students about the things that are going on in their lives, their questions about God / Christianity and answering questions about life on team for a couple who are considering whether or not God may be calling them to this ministry. I pray that God will continue to reveal Himself to all of these students. Today, we said good-bye to our friends in Cedar Park and are headed to Temple, where we're staying in the youth house. God continues to bless our team! Thanks for your prayers!



Ann Strum

Ann

Date: 11/16/2004

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Greetings,

Howdy y'all from Houston, TX!! I love it down here! The people are so great and kind. They have taken us to so many BBQ stands and restaurants that I think I will never be able to eat BBQ meat from anywhere else except from Texas. The road has been treating us well. Ministry is great. We were in Cedar Park, TX and we had a chance to sit in on a youth group. Wow!!! I was amazed by these young adults. They lead their own Bible Study and they just recently started their own praise band. They really encouraged me with their sharing and willingness to step up for God. Thanks, Immanuel Lutheran Church, for being the light of Christ.



Katie Ernst

It is almost time for Thanksgiving -- can you believe it? Time has gone by so fast. Before I know it, we will be in Africa! I can hardly wait. Well, I hope you all have a blessed day and enjoy each day for what it is.

Peace,

KT

Date: 11/17/2004

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Today the girls on our team got the joy of staying with two of the most talkative girls I think I have ever met. From the moment I climbed into the car to sit beside them, they talked my ear off. It was great. They were sharing everything they could possibly think of and continuously laughing along the way. It seemed as though they would never run out of things to say to each other or to me. It was a great reminder to me that I should have joy and faith like a child. These two girls were joyful every moment that I was with them. How wonderful it would be for me to have that much joy in my day-to-day life and my walk with God.

"Be joyful always." ~1 Thessalonians 5:16



Jayme Rowoldt

Date: 11/20/2004

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

Today two of my close friends are getting married. I wish with all of my heart that I could be there to support them on this special day. I expected to miss out on being there, but I never expected it would be this difficult. I think that the most difficult part is that fact that we are in St. Louis and the wedding is in St. Paul. I think it would actually be easier to deal with if we were much further away. I also just recently was informed that one of my friends is being deployed, as is my cousin. I pray for their safety, and pray that God will help them through whatever it is that they will face. I've been pondering lately about praying to God for help. Does God suddenly start helping us once we ask for it? Or are our hearts and minds suddenly opened to the help that is already there? I used to believe the former statement, but the more I've thought about it the more I believe the latter. In Joshua 1:5, God says that "I will never leave you nor forsake you." To me, that says that the help is already there for us and that we should pray that our eyes are opened to it rather than that help would suddenly appear. I know that God is already with my friends on their wedding day and I also know that he is with the soldiers who are being sent off to places unknown. Our God is faithful and that gives me great comfort. I hope that this may also comfort all of you.

Peace,
Alison



Alison Ondracek

Date: 11/25/2004

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hi all! Happy Thanksgiving! I hope and pray that you are being blessed and being mindful of all the blessings you have received this past year. I continue to be blessed by the experiences I am having on Cross Fire. Throughout my team experience, I have been amazed by the people I have met on the road. Meeting all these cool people has also made me very aware of the amazing people God has placed in my life all through my life. Today I am extremely thankful to be spending the holiday with my family. We got into Storm Lake (which many of my teammates thought was Strum Lake--they were amazed we had a lake named after us!) on Wednesday evening and were able to be part of the ecumenical worship service at the Methodist Church. What a great time! I got to see lots of people who have been important to me and my family through the years; after worship, we had a time of fellowship together at my grandparents' home. Such a blessing to me--there was much laughter and fun. My teammates learned some new things about me while also enlightening my family and friends to some of my habits that they've noticed since we've been on the road.



Ann Strum

Today, we had turkey dinner with all of my family traditions. It was great!! My family is very important to me, so it was really great to be able to share this day with them. Also special to be able to share it with my team, who have become like family in the past three months. This afternoon, I got to take my teammates to Santa's Castle, a Weatherly/Krohn family tradition since forever. We've gone to see the animated scenes and Santa Claus since I was a very little girl--it was fun to be able to share that with my teammates. Tonight we went to a movie with my friend, Steve--another thing I usually do when I'm in Storm Lake. Good to do things that are like home. I look forward to doing even more of this as we travel to New Hampton (my home town) tomorrow. Saturday, we'll have Thanksgiving with the Strum side of the family, so I'll get to see some more of my family. I won't see everyone over this holiday, but it's a big blessing to see some. I continue to be amazed by the people God places in my path. Blessings to you all this Thanksgiving! Enjoy this time of Advent preparing for the celebration of Jesus' birth!

Date: 11/27/2004

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Hey everyone! We are in New Hampton, Iowa. We have spent the last weekend here with Ann's family, and it has been fun getting to know them. We had dinner at one of their friends' houses the other night, and it was really good. We had spaghetti and meatballs. One of the cool things about that dinner was that they were pretty excited about hearing us sing. They really wanted to hear an African song. So they insisted that we sing right there at the dinner table. It was funny joking about singing some songs, but then I found out pretty soon that they were serious. So it took me a few minutes to stop laughing because I can't remember a time when I just started singing at the dinner table in front of people I have never met. So we were not quite prepared because usually when we sing our cultural songs, we have a djembe, a shaker, and some other cool percussion instruments. Needless to say, that was not a problem. We ended up using the table as a drum and a jar filled with those glass pebbles you see in fish tanks or, like in our case, on a dinner table. So we started singing and brought the newly made instruments into the song. It actually sounded pretty good, and we couldn't stop smiling because it is not something you usually do or see at a dinner table. Then they wanted another African song, so we sang two more songs, and they just loved it. It was cool to be able to serve in that way and it just made their day. It made mine too.



Josh Black

Date: 12/1/2004

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Greetings,

It is December already!!!! Can you believe it?? The road has been great. We just recently left Ann's home where we had a great time. It felt great to be somewhere that was a home to one of us. We led worship on Sunday and did a couple of nursing homes. But the most memorable moment came on Friday night when we were having dinner at Pat and Bill's home, which was Craig's host family. Since they are basically family of the Strums and both Mama and Dad Strum were there also, we got pressured into an impromptu concert. We had no instruments, so we had to bang on the table and tap on glasses to make percussion sounds. It was a great time of fellowship with one another and a memorable time indeed.



Katie Ernst

In less than a week we will be at my home church! I am so excited to see family and friends and to share what I am learning with them. I have realized in the past year or so how family is important to me and how I am grateful to them all. So much of who I am now is a direct effect of their influence on me then. I am truly thankful for my family and friends.

That is it for now. I hope you all have a great day/week!

Peace,

Date: 12/30/2004
Submitted by: Katie Ernst
Journal Entry:

Greetings,

It is the first touring day back from Christmas break and we are in Willow Lake, SD. I am very excited to be back on the road--in a little over 18 days, we will be on an airplane over to East Africa!!!! Right now I don't believe the reality of the situation has hit me yet, but I am sure it will come soon enough. Recently I received a CD in the mail from a former teamer that went to East Africa, and it had many songs on it which he recorded when he was in Africa; that got me really excited about going. I kept thinking to myself, I am going to hear that in person!



Katie Ernst

My Christmas break was great! I got some well needed rest. Even though I got some rest it went by very fast. My days were packed with doctor's appointments, meeting with friends and family, going to basketball games, attending family gatherings, going to church, and playing Pac-Man! I love going home and seeing familiar faces! It means a lot to know you are so loved!

Well I hope you all had a great Christmas!! May you experience God in a new way this year, may you open your hearts to a new day, may you embrace the differences of your neighbors and celebrate your similarities, and may you never forget the love of God in which He is made evident in your own life.

Peace,

KT

Date: 1/1/2005
Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt
Journal Entry:

Happy New Year! We rang in the New Year with style, singing a program to a good-sized crowd in Brandon, MN. Then, back at the host home we promptly began to get sleepy around 11 pm, but we stuck it out until midnight. It was quite festive. It has definitely been fun getting back into the swing of things, except for the frigid weather of MN. I am quite ready to head to the warmer climates of East Africa. Yet, today as I sat watching movies from inside, I looked outside as the snow fell heavily down to the ground. I think it is so amazing when snow falls to blanket the dead of winter and make it beautiful. I love the beauty of the snowfall as it sparkles and dances in the light of the day. It is always reminds me of Isaiah 1:18: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." I think the snowfall of the winter is a beautiful reminder of how God makes our hearts beautiful by forgiving us. He purifies our hearts and makes us clean and new again. I encourage you to look at your window or go outside and enjoy the snow. It is so amazingly beautiful.



Jayme Rowoldt

Date: 1/14/2005
Submitted by: Josh Black
Journal Entry:

Since we have been back on the road, I have not been feeling great physically. I became sick almost right away from coming back from Christmas break. I have been getting better and am almost done with my medicine, and that is something to be thankful for. The problem with medicine is sometimes it makes you sleepy and less energetic. This is not something I like to be while on the road. So in our last few programs, God has been awesome at giving me energy for those programs and making me rely on Him to see me through. It has been cool seeing how God has been working in the church communities we have visited. I see sparks flying in the pastors, members of the church, and in the youth groups too. Seeing young kids being excited about the smallest things like Duck, Duck, Grey Duck (Duck, Duck, Goose where I come from) is a gentle reminder to me that God is at work even in the small things in life. God is at work and present in everyone's life and situations, and not just the big things in life. I know that God is beyond the box I tend to put Him in sometimes, and he shows me that in a variety of ways.



Josh Black

Something that was cool for me was dinner last night. We were invited to eat dinner with some people from the church we are staying at, and they were nice people to get to know. They were genuinely sincere and interested about our lives and what we are going to be doing in East Africa. A cool God thing that I noticed was when we were talking with a former Cross Fire member. When she was on team, she had teammates on her team that my team knows or have talked to about being on a Youth Encounter team. I thought it was cool how my team had talked to someone from Cross Fire then, and now we are all on Cross Fire now. It was nice to see that connection and wonder if I will ever talk to someone in the future about Youth Encounter and then see them go on Cross Fire.

Date: 1/19/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:



Katie Ernst

We left the Youth Encounter office at 2:30 p.m. Central time on the 18th of January. We arrived in Dar Es Salaam at 11:30 p.m., nine hours ahead of Central time in the States. It took us about 24 hours altogether to get here. The flights were good but long-about eight hours each. Which, for me, isn't the funnest thing in the world, but it does amaze me that it only took eight hours to cross the Atlantic Ocean! Well, here is where the fun begins...we arrived in Dar Es Salaam, went through passport check, and met Boni (our contact). We waited for our luggage; all bags came out, and ours were not there! First night in a different place, and we don't have our luggage. So, the next day, we were all in our same outfits--smell, grease, sweat and all. But I am happy to say we got our luggage, and we have changed. But the funny thing is that we still smell, we are still greasy, and we haven't stopped sweating! God is good! Peace, Katie

Date: 1/20/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:



Jayme Rowoldt

The first whole day in Tanzania. We had an early start after a late night to go register at the U.S. Embassy. We took taxis to get there, piling in, but fortunately we had Jane and Isaac as our hosts to guide us. After going to another embassy for our Aussie to register, it was time to change our money. We didn't mind, since the office was air-conditioned and we were all quite hot in the few things that we had on us or with us when we arrived. It seems as though the largest bill is 5,000 shillings, which is about five dollars US. So we had to stuff many of those into our pouches. After a lousy morning of business, we came back to our hostel for some much welcome rest. That evening we got to join a choir rehearsal at Msasani Church. The rehearsal was outside. It was great listening to their fascinating, rich harmonies. We requested a song that we kind of knew, and they attempted to get us to lead, but we did not know it well enough. Then we came back to the hostel where we sat around with several new friends singing some of our songs. It was amazing to watch them catch on to the choruses and add in their own harmonies. We may want to pick up some new

team members before we come home. It was a good beginning to our journeys here in East Africa.

Date: 1/21/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

I've been informed that my name sounds like a man's name. Hmm...well, what can you do? In the end, I didn't choose my name anyway. I discovered today something about Josh that I really hadn't noticed before. I realized that with a bandanna on, he really looks like he's in a boy band. This revelation caused Cross Fire to have quite the laugh. Well, all except Josh. It's day two, and it already feels like we've been here forever. Today, we got to meet Emma's mom and sister. (Emma is the Side By Side director at Youth Encounter.) Then we went for lunch at an Internet cafe. After that, we headed to the radio station, Upenda FM. We were interviewed and we sang some songs. We had some call-in questions, and we got hit with some pretty tough ones. Overall, I'd say it went quite well. After the interview, the people asked us if we'd do a jingle or two that could help them promote the station! On the spot, we came up with two jingles that they recorded. The second one our friends translated into Swahili, so we sang first in English and then they sang in Swahili. It was great fun. We then got to see a cathedral. Finally, we headed to Msasani Church to join the youth choir. We exchanged songs and then got to meet them. It was amazing to hear them sing and to realize that the actions they do along with the songs are just as important as the words they sing. It is a beautiful thing. Overall, I'd say that this was a great day. Peace, Alison



Alison Ondracek

Date: 1/22/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Wow, we're in Africa!

We're in Africa??

We're in Africa.

Today was our third full day on this continent and memorable to me for a number of reasons. Soon after we had gotten up and had our usual breakfast of bread with orange marmalade, hard-boiled eggs, sausages, tea and some fresh fruit, a mobile phone started ringing--to the tune of "Waltzing Matilda"!!! It was strange to hear a reminder of Australia so far from home. (Actually, Tanzania is almost exactly in the middle of Adelaide and Minneapolis.) There are other things here which are fairly familiar to me, either from my time in Papua New Guinea, or back home in Oz. Things like driving on the left side of the road (although there seems to be a bit more order to it in Australia), the hot and humid weather is very similar to Darwin in December (when I visited there for a month) and places in PNG. Also the people and customs remind me of PNG, even if I don't remember too much of it--we left there when I was 11 after living there for four years.



Craig Schubert

The other very memorable thing from today was doing our first program overseas! We did our family night program at Msasani Lutheran Church in Dar Es Salam. The evening started is somewhat usual African fashion--later than scheduled--and then we got to listen to two of Msasani's five choirs before we got up front. During our program we had the assistance of our wonderful translator Yvonne (thank you so much!) to provide the Swahili for our speaking parts. It was great to see the congregation really getting into the songs--especially the ones in Kiswahili. Earlier that morning (about the time of the Aussie folk tune), we learnt a new Kiswahili song with a call and response, and I was to lead it during the program. I got most of the way through, then forgot the words!! Thankfully Issac (who taught us the song) was sitting in the second row, so he could prompt me with the words. Even with the glitch, the song went down well.

Anyway, it is now time for beddy-byes, so til next time,

Shalom,

Date: 1/23/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hello friends!! Bwana Asifiwe! May the Lord be praised!! Greetings from Tanzania! I am having a wonderful experience so far and expect that it will continue! Today, we experienced our first worship service here. I actually got up early so I could write a couple thank-you notes but spent all my extra time trying to get the sticker off my new outfit. Yesterday, we bought traditional clothing which was very fun but I had no idea that it would take so much effort to get the sticker off. I still didn't get it all off but it was time to eat and go, so that was that. The first (of two) services at Msasani (the church that has been hosting us) started at 7 a.m., so our ride came to get us at 6:30—it was an early start!! Each service was two hours long and all in KiSwahili—I didn't follow hardly any of it. Thank goodness language school starts tomorrow!! I was thankful that Isaac translated some for me and he also let me follow along in his hymnal. Hymnals are not just sitting in the seats—each person purchases their own and then brings it every week with them. They have a stand out in the courtyard after service where you can purchase a hymnal or a Bible and lots of stuff. Even with my lack of KiSwahili understanding, I know they said the Apostles Creed. The service was filled with lots of liturgy and formality and lots of singing. This congregation has five or six choirs, and two of them sing at each service. They sing in different styles; for instance, the Tumaini and youth choirs sing with microphones, electric guitars, a bass and a keyboard, while the main choir and women's choir sing a capella with a more choral sound. Also, the "electric" choirs have planned motions that they do throughout their songs. All the styles are really great and very worshipful. I enjoyed the Tumaini choir because we had been with them for their rehearsal, so we were a little familiar with the songs. Each service, each of the choirs sang two songs and we sang three. Plus, congregational hymns. I love lots of music during worship! Funny (kind of) story: So, as Team Leader, I get to address congregations when they ask us to do a greeting. I got up during the first service, wanting to make an effort to greet them in KiSwahili and then tell them about us. I said "Habari za asubuhi" (Good morning) and they all gave the standard reply "Nzuri". Then I looked out and saw ALL the people—the downstairs was full as well as the balcony which was on both sides as well as the back. I completely froze! I nearly forgot my own name! How embarrassing! All I did was thank them for their hospitality and warm welcome and then introduced myself and invited the rest of the team to do the same. I didn't tell them about us as a team, what we do, why we're here or about Youth Encounter. Of course it all came flooding back once I sat down—which was after I got to shake hands with one of the church elders. The sermon was very long—it probably seemed longer because I only understood about five words she said. At the end of the service, during the closing hymn, the pastor goes out the back door into a courtyard and the congregation follows. There, we finished the hymn, received a blessing from the pastor and the visiting preacher, and then there was a time of fellowship in the courtyard. One of the elder women came and welcomed me and informed me that I should address the congregation with "Shikamu", a more respectful greeting used for elders. I thanked her for the correction and apologized as I turned eight shades of red! Not only had I frozen, I had broken one of the easiest rules of engagement—RESPECT the elders!! UGGHHH!!! Oh well—it was much better at the 2nd service. After the 2nd service, we got to see an auction. Someone from the congregation had brought a branch off their banana tree as an offering. Isaac was the auctioneer and started the bidding at hamsini elf (50,000 Tanzanian Shillings ~about \$50 US). When it was all done, the bananas went for 90,000. It's cool that offerings here can be money or can be goods that then are auctioned for people to buy. The money then goes into the offering.

After services, we headed back to our place to have lunch, pack and leave. We shared a prayer with our new friends and headed out. We stopped at a church to see some of our other friends in the youth choir (they had a singing engagement at another church) before we left. It was fun to see them and say good-bye. Isaac, Yvonne, Boni, Johnson and Hermani took us to the bus station and got us all set. They took us onto the bus and then waited until the bus actually left to leave. They spoke with the bus driver and another passenger to make sure we would be dropped off at the right place and that our bags would be returned to us from under the bus. They took such good care of us, and I am so thankful to have gotten to know them a little these past days. I really think of them as friends, my first friends in Tanzania. I cried as we said good-bye (if you know me, that's not such



Ann Strum

a big deal) because I really was grateful for all they did to make our first days in Tanzania comfortable and fun. They taught us language, songs, customs and shared their lives with us for four days! It was wonderful! I look forward to being with them again in May when we return to Dar es Salaam.

One of the songs they taught us was Mambo sawa sawa. Jesu aki wa nzini, Mambo sawa sawa. When Jesus is on His throne, everything will be all right! It's been a great song to have running through my head these past days as I'm filled with apprehension about trying to be a good ambassador for Youth Encounter and the USA and a good leader for Cross Fire. There are so many unknowns, and I sometimes get overwhelmed by it all. Then I remember this catchy tune and know that God is on the throne, so I don't have to worry so much!! Thanks friends!!

The bus ride was an adventure! The bus was full and hot! I slept a little but not before seeing street vendors wanting to sell us nuts, fruit, pants and condoms! Sometimes I think I've seen everything! I was glad when we arrived at Lutheran Junior Seminary and our contact was there to greet us! Our accommodations here are very nice and, again, the people have been so gracious to us. We will meet with the Bishop of the Morogoro Synod tomorrow morning and figure out more of our schedule for the week then. I will sleep well tonight!

We think of you all often and are thankful for your prayers!

Much love,

Ann J

Date: 1/24/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Hey everybody!

We're in Africa! It's good to finally be in Tanzania and experience a lot of new things. When we arrived last Wednesday, we were greeted by a big group of people from the church we visited. They were so nice and offering their hands to carry our bags. They were so happy to see us. It was fun. Well, we arrived in Morogoro on Sunday afternoon. On Tuesday we sang for the morning devotion at the school where we are taking Kiswahili lessons. The lessons are going by fast, and we only are going to be taking lessons for one week. It is a little bit challenging in some areas and sometimes it can be discouraging. It is going a little bit better now even though it's a short amount of time. So pray that our team becomes more fluent in the language so that we can have longer conversations in Kiswahili, other than just , "How are you doing? – I am doing good, thank you!"



Josh Black

The weather is cooler here in Morogoro than in Dar Es Salaam, but it can still make you sweat, haha. Im praying for rain so that it will cool down a little. I also was able to do my laundry today. It was hanging outside drying and when it were done drying, they smelled good because they were in the nice African air. I also was glad to have two of my three outfits cleaned. We have been treated very well so far and the people are very nice. I can't wait to see what is in store for the next few months.

Date: 1/25/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Greetings,

We are in Morogor, Tanzania! As Craig mentioned before, we're in Africa! We're in Africa! We are in Africa, it is true, and what is also true is that is hot. A former teamer once told me, "You start sweating as soon as you step off the plane, and you don't stop sweating tell you get back on the plane." For right now that statement is true. I think



Katie Ernst

I haven't stopped sweating since getting off the plane! Ah, you got to love the heat.

Right now we are at a language school trying to learn as much Kiswahili as is humanly possible to do in a week. So far it is going well, but it is only day two of classes. I think we have all ready learned about 25 verbs and the ways to conjugate them and some 60+ vocabulary. We have also learned four new Kiswahili songs! So our brains are sure getting a workout!

So, the other day, after a long day of learning Kiswahili, I went back to my room to drop some books off. As I walk into the room I saw a large "thing" run across my room. I cannot describe to you the pure shock and horror I experienced when I discovered what it was....it was a large gecko!!! OK, I wasn't shocked or horrified. Actually, I was quite pleasantly surprised. He is neutral green with a darker green stripe running down his back. He has black eyes and a dark red (almost black) tongue. I have really gotten to know him well (I call him a him even though I am not really sure). I decided to give him a name--Paco. Paco has been a good friend. He comes around at least two times a day. Everytime I go into my room I call out, "Gecko friend Paco, are you here?" I usually don't get an answer, but once in awhile he'll show his face. I have a picture of him; maybe I will be able to post it someday so all of you can see my new friend! :) I love Africa.

Well I should sign off and go study some more. You all are in my prayers.

Katie

Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fartherless, plead for the widow.
Isaiah 1:17

Date: 1/27/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

I sit here in my room, writing by the light of my headlight. The rainy season has definitely begun here. For the past two days, we've had a downpour around 5 p.m. It smells so good. It is beautiful to watch. Today's downpour came with thunder and lightning, knocking out our power for the evening. It has been a long time since I've been in absolute darkness. It makes me so thankful for light, so that I can continue to study and find other things to do. The rain is so cleansing. Sometimes I feel like I should run outside to wash my hair in the rain: a shower from God. The rain brings fun puddles and streams to walk around. It cools the air, bringing a quick relief from the afternoon heat. I think I'll enjoy the rainy season, but my opinion could change when I've been living in wet clothes all day. However, I have always been one who loves to go dance in the rain. The rain is clean and fresh. It helps to remind me of how God makes me clean of my sins. God provides me an enormous shower to run around in as I get cleansed and rejuvenated by the falling rain. Maybe next time it rains, you can go out and dance with God in the rain.



Jayme Rowoldt

Date: 1/28/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

Today was our last day of Kiswahili lessons. Somehow, I don't feel as though I know very much, even though Jayme, Katie, and I flew through thirteen and a half lessons with our ever so patient teacher Paschal. We've learned many words and ways to put sentences together, but I have trouble remembering my vocabulary. Of course, the three of us, in our earnest effort to learn, have made many verbal blunders, which in turn cause Paschal to laugh and then not tell us what we actually said. He only corrected us and made sure our mouths made the correct sounds at the appropriate times in order to get us to say what we actually meant to say. Then as we are sent off on our own to try to use the language which we have been taught, words get mixed up in my brain and only nonsensical syllables escape my mouth. I've even gotten so mixed up at times that I've found it difficult to tell when someone is speaking to me in English. This evening we got ready to do a full



Alison Ondracek

program. We were brought to the assembly hall and as we all walked in, I'm sure the same thought went through all our minds. This place was huge, and there's no way by our own power we would be able to project enough to fill even half the room. God was going to have to take care of that one, and I hope and pray that he did. We did our best and sang our hearts out. Afterward, some of the students sang for us. The sounds they made were beautiful. They sang with such little effort, and yet the sound was huge. I love it! Now, this evening as I sit in my room, I look at my feet and the concept of foot-washing comes into a whole new light. My feet have become orange, and my black sandals look brown. I think of how Jesus told Peter that he only needed to wash his feet since that was the only part that needed to be cleaned. How true it is. Only my feet and ankles have been turned into an orange mob of dirt. The rest of me is still relatively clean. And how much of a servant one would have to be to get down on your knees and take someone's smelly, dirty, sweaty feet and wash them with the love and care that I imagine our Savior washed the disciples' feet. How humble you have to be to even think about touching them. It has truly been a lesson to me and a reminder of what kind of servant we have all been called to be. Peace, Alison John 13:1-17

Date: 1/29/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Righty-o. Today was our first day at the Junior Seminary with no lessons--the lessons have ended, let the learning begin! Pastor Herb Hefferman--who's been serving in Tanzania for about fifty years--organized for us to attend a wedding in the village of Chalinze. We were not invited nor announced but were assured it would be okay. The wedding was planned for 11 a.m., so we set off around 8:30 a.m. for our two-hour trip. When we finally found the church, there was no one there. We found the local pastor who told us plans had been changed; the service was now at 2 p.m. That gave us a good four hours for Pastor Hefferman to show us some of the local sights, including a few new churches under construction. After our sight-seeing, we headed to a local restaurant for a nice lunch of chicken and rice. We also ran into the bishop of the diocese who was also attending the wedding, but he thought it started at 3. Oh well, we were told 2, so we headed back to the church in time for a 2 p.m. start, and sure enough, the bishop was right--3 was the agreed starting time. So again, we had time to kill, but this time we stayed at the church. We found various ways to keep ourselves occupied, including climbing trees (well, I did, anyway) and attempting to use our recently found basic Kiswahili conversational skill on the young boys hanging round the church. This brought only limited success with Ann at one point startling a boy so much that he jumped backwards, tripped over his friend, then ran off and hid behind a termite mound! Hopefully these skills improve soon. The wedding eventually started at 3:30 with a traditional Lutheran liturgy, which I could vaguely follow with my bit of Swahili. Although they didn't know we were coming as guests, we were given places of honour to the side of the bridal party, along with the organised choir. We ended up singing a couple of songs during the ceremony to add a nice international flavour. A strange thing was that I didn't see the bride or groom smile at all during the service. We were told later that there is still a fear of witch-craft, and so if you show too much joy, it is almost inviting a curse on yourself. Hmm. After dinner, we played cards with some of the language teachers, then I jumped on-line to check my e-mail and write this journal. For those curious, while overseas we have two options for submitting our journals: if we have Net access, we can log on and enter it directly, or we can handwrite it and send it to the Youth Encounter office in our mail packet. Hence some entries appear that day, while others take quite a bit longer. Since we could get on-line, I was writing on the computer, then just as I had finished typing and was moving the mouse over the "send" button, the power flicked off for a second, rebooting the computer and losing my hour's work. So, this entry enjoyed Africa's snail-mail system instead. I did get the chance to check my e-mail, though, and get some news from my brother. Our pastor and another member of his church were on a trip in India, and around midnight on the 27th, the taxi they were in hit a truck head-on. Dan and the taxi driver both died instantly, while Pastor Dave is in hospital in a serious condition with many broken bones. At times like this, it's hard to be away from home. Please continue to pray for safe travel for all the teams, especially those in developing countries. Shalom, Craig



Craig Schubert

Date: 1/30/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum
Journal Entry:

Hello friends! I can't believe our time at Lutheran Junior Seminary went by so quickly! Haban za leo? (How is your news today? How are you today?) I'm thankful for our week of Kiswahili learning, but a little nervous at how much I still don't know! We'll keep practicing and praying for ability to communicate!



Ann Strum

Sunday was a great day! We met for breakfast about 7:30 so we could gather to leave for service at 8. At breakfast, Pastor Hefferman (head of the Mission District) said we didn't have to leave until 8:30 because it hadn't rained. We found out later what he meant. We traveled with Pastor Hefferman, Olias (our friend and head man at the language school), Robert and Linda (missionaries who sometimes work with Pastor Hefferman) on the main road—yeah pavement!—for a while and then took a left onto a dirt road. The word road is used pretty loosely here! Sometimes they're no wider than a footpath, and often there are more potholes than flat areas. We drove on the dirt road for about fifteen minutes and arrived at a church. There was a large group of people outside, so we got out and were ready for worship. That, however, was not the plan. This was a church that usually gathers together here but today, we were going to another village, Mavulu, where a new congregation was forming and gathering. The group was gathered there to welcome us, but also to join us in our travel. The vehicle I was in had 11 people and our djembe, and the other van had 17 people and a guitar! Tight squeeze! When we arrived around 9:45, they were re-building the altar under a canopy made of sticks. People continued to gather, Pastor was registering people for baptism, the women were busy preparing the meal we would share after the service, and the choir, who had ridden with us, sang many songs. We also sang a bunch of songs—they kept saying "Tena"—"Again!" Pastor Hefferman looked at us and said we might as well sing every song we knew! So, we nearly did! Service finally started about 1 p.m. after much singing and shuffling around of the seating arrangements. We ended up sitting behind the altar with another choir—yep, we were one of three choirs! Thankfully, we were in the shade. The service was really nice, from what I could follow of the Kiswahili. There were several baptisms, the installation of a new evangelist, Holy Communion and lots of singing. There were several hymns, as well as three or four songs from each choir. Following the service, there was another auction—two chickens, some mangos, beans, some sort of grain, and two watermelons. I tried to bid on the fruit, but my skills with "hundreds" and "thousands" in Kiswahili were not quick enough. Service ended around 3:30, and our team ate the watermelons Pastor Hefferman had bought for us in the auction. We really enjoyed the sweet taste after the long time since breakfast. Then the meal was ready. We ate rice and chicken and beans with our hands—it was good. After some visiting and my first official choo (bathroom) experience—a hole in a hut!—we were ready to depart. All 28 of us piled back into our vehicles. The girls riding in our car sang most of the way back to their church. Josh and I sang with them as we caught on to their songs, and they had remembered one that we sang, so we all sang together—fun! Once back at the church, we got out to say good-bye and to sign their guest register. It seems that everywhere we go, we need to sign in: our name, address, nationality, etc.

We left the church and headed back to the seminary. We arrived just in time for supper, just before 6 p.m. When we got to dinner, I heard (I think) an angel choir singing. What did I see that made them sing? That's right, after a week of various rice meals, there was PIZZA waiting to be eaten!! I was SO happy! It was a variety of toppings, ones that I probably would not have chosen (sausages like Li'l Smokies, onions, mushrooms and fresh pineapple), but it tasted like heaven! For dessert, my newest favorite—mango! I left exhausted, sunburned from the day, but fully satisfied that it had been a good day. I headed to the common room where many of my teammates, as well as two of our teachers, Kokeli and Chao, were getting ready to play Phase 10. We have had so much fun this week teaching them the game and playing many hands. After the last Phase had been played and I checked my e-mail for what may be the last time for a while, I headed to my room to pack. We had originally planned to travel today, but the Secretary General from the Ulanga-Kilombero Diocese agreed to meet us at Morogoro today and travel with us to Ifakara tomorrow.

Date: 1/31/2005
Submitted by: Ann Strum
Journal Entry:

Today we got up early because the bus picked us up at 7:15 a.m. We loaded all our things and got to pick whatever seat we wanted, as we were the very first passengers. Our journey to Ifakara had begun! Buses are an interesting mode of transportation here. When the seats are full, the bus is only about half full. It started out pretty good in the morning, with most of the passengers sitting, but there were several stops along the way where we picked up a few people. Several times, I was touching another person because they were being smashed standing in the aisle—no personal space! One time, I looked up and there was a chicken by my ear. The man holding it was taking it somewhere! The bus ride was long, but we made it. My teammates all saw some cool wildlife—elephants, giraffes, and elk. I saw the elk but somehow missed the others. I must have dozed off. SHOCKING—me asleep in a moving vehicle. Or, not so shocking. Anyway, when we arrived in Ifakara, we were greeted by the Bishop, Assistant to the Bishop, and the Treasurer for the Ulanga-Kilombero Diocese. We visited and had lunch together. After lunch, we went to the place where we would spend the night to rest for about an hour. It felt good to shower and clean up after traveling. We met with the Parapanda choir—singing for each other and teaching each other drum and guitar techniques. They welcomed us so warmly, even giving us each a handkerchief with our names embroidered on it. How kind! I am amazed by how happy people are that we have come—I am so happy to be able to be here! God is good. After the choir, we had dinner at the Bishop's house and ate by lantern as a thunderstorm stopped the electricity.

Bye for now!

Love to you,
Ann



Ann Strum

Date: 2/1/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:



Josh Black

Dear roosters of the world! Do you have any idea how loud you are at six in the morning? Could you be a little more considerate of those humans who would like to sleep until eight in the morning? If you could do that, that would be great...yeah.

That's how my last two mornings have been. I have woken up to various noises, including the sounds of the roosters having competitions to see who can be the loudest. I think they all win, but maybe they're actually trying to see who can wake up the most people. Anyway, I am really enjoying myself; we do tons of waiting and tons of singing. The waiting is not so bad because then we just get to hang out together and be goofy for a while—not that being around other people has stopped us from being goofy anyway. Today while we were in Ifakara, I had enough time to read some journals from last year's Cross Fire. It made me laugh and also gave me some excitement and encouragement for what's ahead.

Finally, our ride came to take us to Mirinyi, which is a very remote area. There is only one road in and the same road out. So we started this bumpy adventure around twelve noon. Wilson (our contact this week) informed us that the road was not so good. I think he was putting it lightly. On a paved road, this trip would usually take about an hour and a half. Because of the many bumps, potholes and slants, it took a little over four hours. It was kind of like an amusement park ride. We discussed starting an amusement park ride that would include interesting roads from all over the world. It would be kind of fun.

When we arrived, we met some Danish volunteers who are teaching English. What a concept. Their names were Simon and Morton. They were nice and were glad to see us. Everyone else we met at the seminary was also very nice and welcoming. I'm amazed at how the people here have so little but yet are very willing to give it away. I'm reminded of Galatians 6:9-10, which says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Sometimes as a team, we are asked to do more than what was planned, and sometimes in my life outside of Cross Fire I am asked to do extra work. I see the people of this area of Tanzania who work and work and work and yet have very little clothing and food. There's not

much of an economy here because no one outside this town will come here to buy things when the roads are bad. I see these people who don't have much at all but yet give and give. I know that they do have a lot of love. So it's a nice reminder to me that when I have so much, I should be able to give more of myself each moment. For in doing so, I am serving the Lord, and that is my offering. I hope that I can continue to give my time and energy to the people I meet these next four months and after.

Something that has been one of our main courses during meals is chicken. There isn't much meat on each bird, but they taste good. Hopefully, I won't get tired of it because it looks as though we'll be having it a lot. I think one of the reasons the chickens here are not as plump as American chickens is because they are constantly running around (with their heads on). Either from a dog, a cat, another chicken, or a little kid. It's like they are getting a workout. This reminds me of the movie *Chicken Run*...at least people here are not trying to make chicken pies...just fried chicken. It tastes quite nice. Overall, I'm just thankful for food in my stomach. Thank you, God, for providing all of my needs and more!

Date: 2/2/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Do you know what it is like waking up to a rooster crowing at 6:00 a.m. when you so badly wanted to sleep until 8:00 a.m.? Maybe some of you country folk know what it is like—well, I hate it! For about three mornings now (and I fear about four more mornings to come), I have been woken up at the crack of dawn, all because of a foot-tall, ten-pound bird. And what is worse is that I don't have to get up that early. I'm tired, and I want to sleep. So, if any rooster with Internet access read this, I beg of you to please be quiet until, let's say, 8:00 a.m.!



Katie Ernst

Today we have a rest day, sort of. What I have found is that "rest day" doesn't really mean "rest." It means you won't do as much, but you will still do a lot. Today we got up and had chicken soup for breakfast, went into town to find a post office, then we waited. (We are getting good at waiting.) After waiting, we went to an old man's house—he is very sick, so we sang some songs and prayed for him. To show their gratitude, his wife gave us a bag of rice. I'm not sure, but I believe they more than likely couldn't afford to give away the rice to us. How amazing it is to see people give.

Well, the rest of the day looks pretty light. At 1:00 p.m., we go to lunch where we get the oh-so-familiar meal of rice and chicken. Then we have rest time afterwards. At 5:00 p.m., we go to a reception, which means a choir will sing, then we will sing, and it goes back and forth like that for a couple of hours. Afterwards dinner, and then back to our home.

As Ann likes to say, Jesus is still Lord, even when chickens come in our house—or when good or bad things happen! No, really, a chicken just came in the house. She stared at us for awhile before Craig chased her off.

Well, that was a fun journal entry!

Peace,
Katie
Isaiah 1:17

Date: 2/3/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Today began with what we fondly refer to as the "Waiting Club." After being picked up on time, we arrived at the Kipinga Parish to sit on benches and wait for the day to begin. After a breakfast of potatoes, brought from Ifakara for us, we headed off to see where the first church in Kipinga had been. After a bumpy ride, it was time to walk. The

walk wasn't too bad. There were some mud puddles to avoid, and banana leaves to push aside. The real adventure came in crossing the river. We had two options: a canoe, with water in it, or two logs. We all braved the logs and made it safely across. We arrived at the location where a memorial was placed. We heard of how a flood in the 1950s wiped out the church, hospital and school. With the start of bee attacks, we quickly ended our visit. Then it was time to visit the primary school. There were around 500 students attending the school. The school originated in the church, but the government has since taken it over. The children were going crazy with the six wazungus (white people) that had stopped at their school. We were in the office visiting when the period ended. Soon all of the children were standing in lines waiting for us to come out. I was shocked at how quiet the children were. We sang two of our Swahili songs and were joined by the choir members from the Kipinga parish who had joined us. The children asked if we would teach them a song before we left, so we dug out the crazy actions of "The Way." It was so amazing to watch all of those children doing the actions with us. As we pulled away, the children ran after us shouting, "Bye!" I was amazed by the children who just kept following us. When we arrived back at the church, we had some rest time. As we waited for lunch, Ann thought we should teach the children crowding around us a game. So went out to begin teaching Banana, Banana, Pineapple (a.k.a., Duck, Duck, Goose). She had to be creative with limited Swahili vocabulary. It was so fun to watch the children catch on and laugh as each pineapple was chosen. The children here never cease to amaze me. I love the beauty of their smiles, their ability to learn from us and teach us, and their joy for life. The adults often push them back, away from us. I just think of Jesus saying, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)



Jayne Rowoldt

Date: 2/4/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:



Alison Ondracek

I'm not sure why, but we are always asked if we are tired. We often sit and wait, and when we are along, we often don't constantly talk. Don't get me wrong—we do talk to each other, but we as a group don't often feel the need to fill silence with chatter. I've decided that subconsciously we are all attempting to save every ounce of energy we have to sing over the noise of hundreds of frogs, the roosters that constantly feel the need to crow at any time during daylight hours, and the tractor that conveniently starts up in the middle of a song and then drives back and forth at various intervals during the program. Or maybe we are conserving our energy to do the sing-a-longs that Katie insists on, during which, of course, any jumping parts are automatically extended to three times their normal length. Of course, it also takes a lot of energy to just simply be in this sweltering heat and move around. We are often asked to sing one song, but what they really mean is that they want us to sing about six or seven. So the answer is that, no, we're not really tired. We are simply saving our energy for the moments that we need it most.

Peace,
Alison

Date: 2/5/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:



Craig Schubert

Gudday everyone, and welcome again to Craig's ramblings from the road. Today was fairly uneventful, being a travel and rest day. We departed Mirinyi around 10 a.m., and despite some rain over the week, the 150 km journey only took us five hours (therefore averaging about 30 kmph, or 18 mph).

After arriving in Ifakara, we had lunch a local "fast food and take away" restaurant just down the road from the guest house where we are staying. After another nice meal of rice and fried chicken, we headed back to our rooms for a couple hours rest before heading to a

school to check our e-mail. After about an hour using the World Wide Wait, I had managed to read a few e-mails—much better news this week. I found out a school friend of mine has just had a baby boy, and a couple from my choir are expecting. Congrats!!

We then walked back to the same restaurant for dinner—our first real outing on our own, without a contact or anyone who actually speaks Swahili. This became pertinent when trying to order—we wanted to just get three plates of rice to share, then some meat each. Apparently, our attempt to communicate this was unsuccessful. Also when the waitress returned to tell me something about the kuku (chicken), I had no idea what she was saying. I think the message was "we're out of chicken," but who knows? It could have been "I think you look like a chicken," for the minimal Swahili I know. Anyway, after a short time of confusion, she went away satisfied and I got the fish. I'm so thankful for all the people who are willing to help out with the language! When we left to walk back, who should show up but our contact and trusty driver, stopping off to pick up something, so they gave us a much appreciated lift, as the walk back in the dark was not so appealing.

Oh yeah, after lunch while getting back in our truck, a local attempted a conversation with me. I understood enough to answer where I'm from, but then he lost me with his monologue. I picked up a few things, like France, Europe, George Bush, Canada, welcome and hospital, while hearing the occasional chuckle from the driver who was listening in. I was told afterwards that the gentleman was claiming to be from France, then that he was David Beckham's brother, then that he studied with George W., then that he was a doctor at the local hospital! Sometimes it's easier not understanding. 'Til next time.

Shalom,
Craig

Date: 2/6/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hi everyone! A special hello to Corrie, whose birthday was yesterday (Saturday)—hope it was great! Another special welcome to my niece who has maybe been born. I haven't had Internet access for over a week, so I don't know! Hopefully, I'll be able to get online and see some pictures soon!



Ann Strum

Sunday was a good day. We got up early so we'd be ready for worship at 8. We tried to get some bread for a quick breakfast before our ride came at 7:30, but the restaurant hadn't made any yet. So we settled for some juice and decided milky pineapple juice is not our favorite. Oh well! Worship was very nice, although it gets a bit frustrating not understand the sermon. Maybe my Kiswahili will keep improving and I'll get the main idea one of these times. After the second service, there was another auction of items brought for offering. I was determined to participate this week! I didn't especially want the chicken or the pig, but I was able to bid on a bunch of bananas. Twenty-seven hundred shillings later (about \$2.70 US), I was the proud owner of a big bunch! It was really fun! I gave them to Pastor Wilson who has been our friend, tour guide, caretaker and translator this week. He is quite a man! He's the Secretary-General for the Ulanga-Kilomboro Diocese, has four kids and is the pastor for this parish. His wife is in Mirinyi with one of their kids attending secondary school so she can learn English, so he takes care of the other children with his sister. It's so neat to see how he wants her to have her education so she can have more opportunities and the sacrifices he is willing to make. The bunch of bananas was just a small token of the immense gratitude I have for being able to meet him and spend the week with him. (It was also fun to meet his wife when we were at the secondary school!)

Anyway, we loaded our things, got some lunch and got in the Ulanga-Kilomboro Diocese Land Cruiser for the last time. We traveled to Mikumi where we would spend the night in preparation for our travels to Njombe Monday. Pastor Wilson called his friend, Pastor Peter, to make arrangements for us to stay at a hotel. Pastor Peter met us at the hotel—the Internet Hotel and Bar. A very misleading name, as the closest thing we saw to a computer was a television blaring a Tanzanian soap opera/drama. We went to Pastor Peter's house and met his family and sang a couple songs. We said goodbye to Pastor Wilson and our driver, David. I teared up a bit when they left. I got very attached and was sad to see them leave. Maybe our paths will cross again—I hope so!

After visiting a while longer with Pastor Peter, we headed back to the Internet Hotel. We were excited to see chipsies on the menu board. Chipsies are fried potatoes, like French fries, kind of. We only ordered chipsies and bananas and soda—so good! We eat a lot of rice, so potatoes were a nice change! We visited, played some cards and headed for bed.

Date: 2/7/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Monday we got up and walked the "ten minute walk" that took us 30 minutes to the bus stop. We had a soda and a muffin (yum—soda for breakfast at 9 a.m.!) while waiting for our bus. We were told to be there at 8:30, but the bus didn't arrive until around 10. So the Waiting Club was in session. We had a devotion, played guitar, did a little window shopping at a shop nearby and read our books. When the bus came, I was very relieved to see it was a big bus with extra seats—our luggage went under the bus in a luggage compartment and no one had to stand! There was plenty of leg room—I felt like I was in the Rolls Royce of African buses! The Southern Diocese in Njombe had made the arrangements for us. When we got situated in our seats, we were given some cookies and a soda. How nice! FYI, Sprite is not meant to be stored near the engine. Hot Sprite is not my favorite, but it was a very nice gesture. Our travels to Njombe were very nice. I was prepared for a very crowded, extremely long journey with no bathroom stops and was pleasantly surprised when we arrived in Njombe after having had a chance to get out of the bus, get some Pringles!!, and take a bathroom break. The time went very quickly, and I finished my book! Yeah! When we arrived in Njombe, our new friends were there to greet us. We headed back to Njombe Lutheran House, where we met the Youth Choir and had tea. It was great. I am always amazed at how warmly we are greeted! It's always very nice, and we are well cared for. Tanzanian hospitality can't be beat!



Ann Strum

We are tired and wonder when we will get a day off. The traveling is far from restful, but we are thankful that we have had safe journeys. Thanks for your continued prayers for health, safe travels, strong voices, stamina, and that we would keep experiencing God in new ways each day! Love you and miss you, but having a great time!

Peace,
Ann

Date: 2/8/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Have you ever been somewhere that has a warm climate—let's say Africa, for example—and you wake up in the morning cold? This morning I woke up feeling cold and had to wear my jacket. Getting up for a 7 a.m. devotion is not too thrilling for me, and things didn't get any better. During the devotion inside the church, all of a sudden I started shaking uncontrollably because I was that cold. I think I was shaking so much that I almost knocked Ann off the bench we were sitting on. Finally we had some breakfast, and I couldn't eat much. This saddened me because I like to eat.



Josh Black

So, after breakfast, we visited the office of Isaiah Mengele, who is the assistant to the bishop in the southern diocese. He, along with some other people, was telling us about their diocese and some things that are happening with them. It was a nice long chat. During this meeting, I was starting to feel very warm, which is how you should feel in a warm place. But, given my situation earlier in the morning, I was wondering why I was cold then, all of a sudden, hot. That was going on for about two hours—cold, warm, cold, warm. Thankfully, there was a nurse at the church named Mama Atu. She is also the head of women's activities around the community that the church is involved in. She and Alison joined me on the journey to the hospital. Everything ended up okay—I didn't have malaria. I did have the virus in my body, but it was not affecting me. It was only in my white blood cells, and it didn't get to my liver in time to build up and attack my red blood cells. The doctor said that I probably ate something that made me feel so bad. He did give me medication to wipe out the

malaria completely, along with some painkillers for my back.

Going to the hospital made Alison and me miss singing for a few of the church choirs, but I think the team was okay with just four people. We got back in the early afternoon, and I just slept for a few hours. Actually, I slept until dinner time. It was nice to be able to rest, and I was starting to feel better already. I still didn't eat much, but I had a nice chat with Mama Atu before everyone else arrived for dinner. It was interesting talking with her about the culture in Africa and how it affects different people. She asked me about American culture and also about my family. It was a great opportunity to be one-on-one in the relational ministry. I learned a little more about Tanzanian culture, and I feel I understand some struggles that people have here. Compared to this culture, I even feel as though I have a lot of material wealth. It makes me ask God if I deserve the things I have after seeing what I have seen here. If anything, it makes me even more thankful for the things I do have and learn to want what I have instead of complaining about what I don't have.

Date: 2/9/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Greetings from Kidugala, Tanzania

We have now driven in many vehicles. We have traveled on the most beautiful roads in Africa and some of the worst roads I have ever seen in my life which I hope I will never see again. Chances are, we will see them again. We have traveled at night, we have traveled bright and early in the morning, and we have traveled during the hottest part of the day. We have experienced all types of driving conditions: rain, fog, wind, heat, and dryness. We have driven in vehicles with only the six of us in it plus the driver. We also have driven in vehicles that have been packed with more bodies than I thought humanly possible. There is one thing that remains a constant in all of our travels. That would be the horn! The drivers here love their horn. Every second it feels like they are blowing their horn. Sometimes it is very needed. Like when people are walking along the road or riding their bike are too far out into the road, the driver honks until they move. Other times I think they honk just to honk, to see if it works. Sometimes they honk at people for no reason. Maybe some day I will figure it out. The one major thing that isn't fun about the horn use is that I can never sleep. I want to sleep so badly but I can't!



Katie Ernst

Anyways, we've been having a fun time. Very busy, but fun. Our days sort of look like this: We wake up at about 6:30 a.m. for morning devotions at 7:00 a.m., then we eat breakfast. After breakfast we travel to a place to sing. We do things our group likes to call "Choir Sing-Offs." I call them "Battle of the Choirs." It is where we sing two songs then another choir sings two songs and we go back and forth like that for about two hours. After the choir sing-offs, we usually have warm (or, if we are lucky, cold) sodas and wait. After that we travel some where to have lunch then wait. We then do another choir sing-off. After that, another soda; wait again. Next we travel again have dinner, sing again, wait some more and travel one last time to the place we are staying for the night. Very busy, but we are enjoying our time. Time. What's time? Oh what a funny thing that is here in Africa. My time is running out on the computer (measured much more closely when you have to pay for it!). May you experience the love of God today.

Peace,

KT

Isaiah 1:17

Date: 2/10/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Today we went to Illembula hospital. It was huge compared to the hospital in Malinyi. They have beds for 317 but usually admit 350-400, and there are only five doctors for

the whole hospital.

At Ilembula, they have a nursing school. Now, after living with a nursing student, I thought their scrubs were bad, but the bubble gum pink dresses with the conventional white nursing hat were quite lovely. Despite the outfits, the nursing students were a lot of fun. There were about 100 girls and five guys, yet their sound was still amazing when they sang for us. We sang several action songs. Their smiles and laughter were contagious as they tried to do our crazy actions. The fun came at the end when we joined them in singing a common song and they broke out into dance. No matter how much I try to imitate them, I fail at being able to dance like they do. As we were preparing to leave, the students sang one more song. They pulled all of us away from the sides to dance with them. It was quite humorous.



Jayne Rowoldt

The people here are teaching me a lot about having a joy for life. They always seem to be joyful to have us as guests. They welcome us into their community and rejoice in whatever time they have to be with us. I pray that God will continue to teach me about their joy, so that I might live that out in my life in the future. I pray that today you might see God's joy and be filled with it.

Date: 2/11/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

Today we had two cups of rice and a chicken leg, and we fed 5,000 people with it. Yup. It was pretty cool. Well...okay...so maybe that wasn't us. Maybe it was Jesus and the disciples. And, well, I guess it was really two loaves of bread and a fish. But it's still a pretty cool story, no matter who the main characters are. I wish I could make that miracle happen every day. Then maybe it would solve the world's hunger problem. I've realized in my not-so-distant past that this problem runs a lot deeper than the surface issue of people who have no food to put on their tables.



Alison Ondracek

Yet, in spite of these problems, I'm always amazed by the generosity of these people. We visited an orphanage. It was for very young children who had lost their mothers. Their remaining family would bring them there, then, to my amazement, the family would find a girl between 16 and 20 who was willing to care for this child. The girls all got training in how to care for the children. I'm amazing that at 16, someone would willingly take on the responsibility of raising a child. So, I guess there are small miracles that happen around us every day, like someone willingly taking on a burden that they don't have to. There are other miracles that happen that most people don't even notice, like a flower blooming or rain falling. These are all miracles we can see, and it may not feed 5,000 people, but it's still a wonder. Praise God for it!

Peace,
Alison
Phil. 4:4

Date: 2/12/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Ask not for whom the bell tolls...



Craig Schubert

Today started off in an unusual fashion for me—I had a dream. I dreamt of a bell-choir playing an elaborate tune, and me running around my old school with bells on my feet. This dream came drifting back to me at 7:15 when the bell summoned us for morning prayers.

Following breakfast, we visited an orphanage for babies under two whose mothers had died. Also at this institution were young girls (around 14-18 years old) related to the babies being taught to care for them. It was great to see the church so directly caring for people in need.

After lunch and most of a game of Hearts, we were taken to the nearby vocational training centre to be shown around and sing some songs for the students. It is cool that renewable energy is one of the areas offered at the centre. Our songs were enjoyed enough by the students that they insisted we stay for a few more songs until we were late for our session at the church. When we finally got up to leave, we were ushered into the principal's office for soda and biscuits. Since it is rude to refuse, and "Simon (our trusty guide for the week) says," we settled in for a snack and few questions. We were having another lesson in "Africa time."

When we finally arrived at the church, it was well over an hour since we were meant to start. Still, the choir and some others were there waiting and singing. Despite all being pretty tired, the enthusiasm of the growing crowd lifted our spirits.

Driving back to our evening meal and beds, I again see a number of eucalyptus trees, similar to those back home in Australia, and I'm reminded that we worship the same God the whole world over, the God who created hippos and hairy-nosed wombats.

No man is an island—we are all part of God's creation, part of the Body of Christ. —Thomas Merton

Shalom.

Date: 2/13/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Kamwene! That means "hello" in KiBene, the local language in the Southern Diocese. Our friend and guide for the week, Simon, has taught us a handful of words. People are always surprised when we greet them in their mother tongue. Tuhangitze (thank you), Simon!



Ann Strum

Our day started with 7 a.m. worship. During the two hour, forty-five minute service, several choirs (including us) sang, there were four offerings, a sermon, some liturgy, some hymns and Holy Communion. We learned that this community celebrates Holy Communion just once every two months! It truly is a celebration! After worship, we ate breakfast, loaded our things, and headed over to the Internet café. I was very thankful that I had a working computer that was relatively quick and that let me check our Youth Encounter e-mail. I had several e-mails from upcoming contacts that needed to be read and responded to. After spending an entire hour doing team stuff, it was nearly time to go, but I wanted to check my personal e-mail, hoping to hear news of my new niece. I had 19 new messages—a few from friends, but mostly junk, and no niece news. Bummer! My trips to Internet cafes have been frustrating here. Not able to do everything in the time allotted. Oh well. It is nice to have some way of communicating, even if it is sporadic. After finishing up on the World Wide Web, we headed out of Njombe to Chimala to tour a facility the Diocese is planning to renovate as a secondary school for girls. It is exciting to hear the Diocese leadership talking about making higher education for girls a priority. When we arrived, we were greeted by the pastor and several children. We joined a worship service already in progress, interrupted it, introduced ourselves and sang a song. After singing, we were ushered out the back door to the pastor's home for lunch. From there, we headed to the site of the future school. We toured the buildings that had been part of a camp for a rice-growing project. They hope to have the school open next year—they have a lot of work to do! There were several kids who went with us—my friend was Jaclyn. They were all fascinated with my long blonde hair. I would often feel them touching it as we were walking.

After our tour, we said goodbye and headed to Mbeya, where we would meet our hosts from the Konde Diocese. When we arrived, we found out there had been a miscommunication. They were not ready for us in Mbeya but were expecting us in Tukuyu. We continue to learn to expect the unexpected here. After much phone calling, it was arranged that a pick-up would take us the 50 km to Tukuyu where we would meet the Konde Diocese leadership. We said good-bye to our good friends Simon and Leonard after taking many pictures and exchanging addresses. We will miss them a lot. The good-byes don't get easier for me as the weeks go on. I just have more fond memories of people. Yeah, God, for good friends around the globe! We arrived in Tukuyu and met all the Diocese leaders. We all went to dinner together at a very fancy restaurant. The floor was tile and there were cloth napkins on the table. We had "the usual," chicken, rice, chipsies and greens. It was a nice

time to get to know each other and discuss the upcoming week. When we saw the itinerary, our hearts sank a bit. Another week with no day of rest. We are so tired. We haven't had a day off since we arrived. We were able to reach a compromise and move our 10 a.m. program to 2 p.m. so we could sleep late. I was thankful for their willingness to be flexible for us. Went to our hotel and headed for bed!

Date: 2/14/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Happy Valentine's Day!

Today, I stayed in bed until almost 11—until my body could lay on the foam mattress no more! It was heavenly! Took possibly the coldest shower of my life and got ready for the day. We were ready to go at noon but didn't leave the hotel until around 1 p.m.

There were some car problems so we took a small van. Words can't really describe it.

Anyway, we got going and headed to the Tumaini Congregation. We stopped by the side of the road where there was a group of people gathered. My first thought was, "Please, no more passengers. We're already late!" When I realized these were people from the congregation who had come to the road to greet us, I was humbled again. We were greeted with singing and flower necklaces. We walked up the path to the church, singing all the way. It wasn't until we reached the office and were signing the Visitor's Book (another East African tradition) that we realized they were alternating between KiSwahili and English. Once we realized this, we could figure out the words and sing along! We ate a wonderful lunch with the parish and church leadership and then headed to the church, again, singing while we walked. We were formally introduced to the parish, church, and youth choir leadership as well as the church elders. They shared a few songs with us, and then we introduced ourselves and sang a few songs. We sang back and forth a few times and then had a question and answer time. They asked us about our ministry, the structure of leadership for youth in the States, and a few personal questions. Everyone here is curious about whether or not we're married. (For those wondering, I haven't met Bob yet, but I keep looking!) We answered their questions and asked about some of the instruments they were using. They gave us a chekeche as a gift—I am amazed by their generosity! Then, as the program came to a close, they brought out shirts they had made for us. They gave one each to a choir member and had them put the shirts on us. A woman named Anna gave me mine. What a kind gesture! Katie and I were a bit bigger than they had expected, but we got them on—a small miracle! They said the shirts were a sign of unity between our two cultures as well as between Cross Fire and the Tumaini Congregation. How cool! Humbling, as we had nothing to give them, but very cool! After the shirts were given, the program ended. We walked out singing, shaking hands, and having pictures taken. We had some coffee and tea and then headed to our vehicle, walking and singing and taking pictures. It was a wonderful day, spending time worshipping with our brothers and sisters here! Plus, I think it's the first Valentine's Day when I got flowers and a gift! God is good!! We returned to our hotel, got some dinner, and headed for bed to get ready for another good day tomorrow. Hope your Valentine's Day was as good as ours, and that you were shown the love of God as clearly as we were! I pray I am as generous as the people here and show as much hospitality when we return home!

Blessings and love to you all!

Ann

P.S.—Katie wants you to know she looked hot, hot, hot in her "fitted" shirt! She really did! They're going to fix Katie's and my shirts so they're not so form-fitting.



Ann Strum

Date: 2/15/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Today was an interesting day. We had a late start to the day because we had extra time to sleep in. It was great! So around 10 a.m., the assistant to the bishop picked us up where we were staying. We were finally able to go to the post office also to send our

first mail packet from Africa to the Youth Encounter office. Around 11, we loaded into a Land Cruiser and headed to Mbeya from Tukuyu so we could visit the congregation there. About 10 or 15 minutes into the trip, our vehicle broke down. So we waited about 20 minutes for someone to come help us and then another hour for them to replace the radiator.

Hurray! We were off again, and about 15 minutes into the trip, our vehicle broke down once more. Can't we get a break—I mean, a fix? Anyway, we waited a while, so Craig went to climb a tree and I went for a short walk to find a good climbing tree of my own before some help arrived. Our driver transferred the diesel from our vehicle to another one and we ended up in a truck with some roll bars on the back. So Cross Fire had quite a windy ride from that point, but at least we had a working vehicle. It was quite fun.

When we eventually arrived in Mbeya, we visited the pastor's house and had tea, of course. During that time, the youth pastor said we had to have our uniforms. We were like, "What?" because we don't have uniforms. Then the youth pastor gave us all matching shirts the members of the youth choir had made for us to wear at the program. It was very nice of them, and we had been receiving gifts from other parishes, so we felt bad we couldn't give something back. We listened to about four other choirs share their talents while we sang in between each choir. It was a fun time, plus we got cold sodas. Yay!

On our way back to Tukuyu, I was taking in the beautiful scenery of Africa. It was amazing. It gave me a sense of calm after a long day. It is really green down in this area of Tanzania, and I want it to be like this in the north. I've been told it's much more dry, but we'll see. Something I look forward to is seeing some big animals, like elephants, giraffes, cheetahs, and hopefully some lions. Well, God willing, I will see those sometime on this journey. Peace out!

Josh



Josh Black

Date: 2/16/2005
Submitted by: Katie Ernst
Journal Entry:

It has been one of those weeks so far. You know those weeks when you ask yourself, what next could happen? I have not been feeling well at all. Every time we eat, I get a bad stomachache. So it isn't fun. Then we arrived in a new diocese this week, and everything was fine until we got to our vehicle for the week. First of all, we didn't have a vehicle to start out with, so they rented a dala dala for us, a public transport vehicle which was in very rough shape. The next vehicle we got was a Landcruiser that didn't work, so we drove in the back of a truck. The next vehicle, which was today's vehicle, was a very nice vehicle, the best-looking vehicle we have driven in yet. But this vehicle is meant to hold five people. We fit eight people in it and ALL of our luggage. So it wasn't the most pleasant ride, especially since we drove down a not-so-nice road to get to our destination. Alison and Craig rode in the back with all of our luggage. Ann, Jayme, and myself sat in the back seat with two guitars across our laps and our backpacks in between our legs. Josh was the lucky one who got to sit in front with our contact and the driver. It looked very comfortable.



Katie Ernst

We have all been tired lately, so it is hard to keep our energy up. It is especially difficult when we get fed at irregular hours. Like today, we had breakfast at 8:00 a.m. and lunch at 5:00 p.m. with a three-and-a-half hour program in between. BUT God is good. He is our provider. The people here are such a blessing, and the witness they have been to us is much greater than a limo with cold sodas and a TV inside could ever be. I am constantly humbled here, day after day, person after person.

Peace,
KT
Isaiah 1:17

Date: 2/17/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt
Journal Entry:

So I've concluded that Thursdays are just boring. Every week I hope for some exciting story to share from the day, and I am left with another typical day. Today was one of those typical days. We got up and ate breakfast. We traveled to Lwangwa to the church there. We waited for the youth to come. We shared in a choir sing-off, along with some question time. We ended our time together and had tons of pictures taken of us. We ate lunch. We traveled to Manow Lutheran Junior Seminary. We met the teachers. We shared songs with the students as they did with us, despite the pouring rain on the metal roof. We had tea and snacks. We traveled to Matema, where we will be visiting tomorrow. We ate dinner. Now we are enjoying the coolness of the lakefront. Just another typical day where we eat often, sing some, and travel lots. The most exciting thing was Ann eating what we think was goat brain. Nothing too exciting, but God was still at work. We still got to meet amazing people. We got stared at by many children, who burst into laughter after shaking our hands. We were shown unending hospitality and love. Even on the boring days, God still moves in my heart as I see Him in every person who welcomes me here. I guess I'll have to hope for my exciting story on another Thursday. Until then, I'll keep sharing the typical days and the grace God gives.



Jayme Rowoldt

Date: 2/18/2005
Submitted by: Alison Ondracek
Journal Entry:

Today could be classified as a normal day in Africa for Cross Fire. We got up, packed the car, and waited. We ate, we waited. We sang, drove, sang, and waited. This is how our days often go. This morning was a bit different, for me at least. We were housed at a Lutheran Center that just happens to be on the shore of Lake Nyasa, which is a large lake on Tanzania's southwestern border. I couldn't sleep anymore because I had been thinking too much. So, I got up early, took a freezing cold shower, then headed to the beach to sit and think. I was lost in my thoughts when all of a sudden my silence was shattered by the sound of a puppy barking at me. He wagged his tail and barked every time I looked away from him, so I watched him for a while. I realized that I had become so consumed by worries of this world that I had forgotten to look around me. I'd been concerned with making the right impressions, attempting a language that seems so difficult to me, worries at home, future planning...I could go on forever. God reminded me in that moment to take a fresh look at the beauty He'd placed before me. My eyes were once again opened to His glory, and somehow all of the things I'd been worrying about didn't seem quite so significant anymore. I was able to be joyful once again as I watched the sun rise over the lake and the distant mountains.



Alison Ondracek

Peace,
Alison
Psalm 37:3-7

Date: 2/19/2005
Submitted by: Craig Schubert
Journal Entry:

Well, today we departed the Konde diocese on the southern border of Tanzania to start our journey to the Pare diocese on the northern border, the Mount Kilimanjaro district. However, we only did an hour of the trip today—we'll do about 1,000 km tomorrow—but we still had some things to do before we left.



Craig Schubert

First, we got to check our e-mail for an hour—thanks to all the people who keep in touch. Unfortunately, the computer I was on wasn't working properly, so I couldn't reply. Sorry. After that, we had lunch and a meeting with the leaders of the diocese about our week. Then they planned to take us to a waterfall for some pictures, but there was an issue with petrol, and neither budget had that much stretch. So, we said our goodbyes at the office as Ali and I

jumped in the back for our last ride in the cargo space of this Landcruiser.

One of the highlights of my week was getting up before dawn on Thursday to try and climb a mountain before breakfast. I didn't quite get to where I was aiming—my fitness, the altitude, and time getting the better of me—but it was great to get some exercise and see some great views!

Shalom,
Craig

Date: 2/20/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Sunday | |
| 4:00 a.m. | Alarm goes off |
| 4:30 a.m. | Taxis arrive to take us to the bus stop |
| 5:30 a.m. | Bus departs Mbeya for Same with six tired Cross Fire members |
| 6:00ish | Sun rises over Tanzania—very pretty |
| 7:00ish | Sleeping on the bus |
| 8:00ish | Lights come back on in the bush—eating the bread we bought yesterday for breakfast (I bought orange juice, too! Yum!) |
| 10:00ish | Still riding on the bus. Good thing I've got a good book! |
| 11:00ish | Stop for a bathroom break. Supposed to be lunch too, but we're not hungry. |
| 12:30ish | Josh and I give the guitar that's been riding on our laps the entire day to Jayme and Katie. We have so much more room now! |
| 1:30 p.m. | Getting sleepy but trying to stay awake as we're getting near to Mikumi National Park. Everyone else saw animals last time we drove through. Somehow I missed them—an error I don't plan to make today. |
| 2:30 p.m. | Yeah! I saw monkeys, gazelles, elephants and giraffes! How cool! |
| 3:30 p.m. | More reading! |
| 3:45 p.m. | Stop for a bathroom break. Josh and I got ice cream from a vendor outside—nice to have something cold. |
| 4:30 p.m. | Josh and I get a guitar from Ali and Craig—guess it's our turn again! |
| 6:00ish | Sun setting over Tanzania. The sky is beautiful! The air blows warm on my face as I gaze at the amazing landscape. I think to myself, "Hey, pay attention! You're in Africa!" |
| 6:45 p.m. | The sun drifts below the horizon—reading has ended for the day. |
| 7:45 p.m. | Arrival in Same! Brief meeting with our newest friends. Glad to be done with a long bus ride. Thankful for a safe journey! |
| 8:00 p.m. | Settling in at Anani Lutheran Guest House, our home for four days this week. Dinner and discussion about the week's schedule. Really disappointed to see that the schedule starts tomorrow morning, despite our request to have our Sabbath day granted on Monday. After much discussion, a day of rest is agreed upon. Yeah! |



Ann Strum

Date: 2/21/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Happy birthday, Jayme!

We got up for a late breakfast and decided on a plan for the day. Got dressed and headed out to explore the town of Same. Our contact, Frank, understood our need to have a day with no programming—what a blessing! He also encouraged us to "be free" to explore by ourselves. I think he knew we just needed some freedom and independence. We found the post office because we wanted to buy phone cards. When they didn't have any, one of the postal workers walked with us to show us where to go. We bought cards and Jayme called home. The rest of us will try later in the day when it's not 2 a.m. at home. We shopped like crazy! Ali, Josh, Jayme and I all bought material and hired tailors to make



Ann Strum

clothing for us. We will pick it up when we return to Same later in the week. Can't wait to see the finished products! We also found the Buffalo Restaurant, a beautiful place because it has ice cold soda. I have a new appreciation for cold beverages because they are rather scarce! After a long day on the town, we headed back home for dinner. We had chicken and chipsies with bananas and pineapple for dessert—special requests for Jayme's birthday. The woman who made our dinner got a card for Jayme and put candies on the table to celebrate. We sang and had fun with it. After dinner, we went to Josh and Craig's room for our own celebration. We had decorated the room earlier. It was a regular party with balloons, gifts, and a cake of pineapple with candles to blow out. When the pineapple "cake" and gifts were done, we played Phase 10—Jayme won. We headed to bed, thankful for our first day off since arriving in Africa and looking forward to the adventures ahead in the Pare Diocese!

With love,
Ann

Date: 2/22/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

So today was a good day. The morning opened with breakfast and a meeting with the Waiting Club. The meeting adjourned around 9:30 a.m. and Frank, our contact, said it was "a good time to go." We agreed, but before we could leave, we had to pack our luggage on top of our transportation. The driver motioned for me to get on top and load the bags. I was okay with this because I like to help and also like to pack things efficiently. After I loaded the top of the vehicle, the Waiting Club was once again in session until Frank could get some rope for us to tie the luggage down. About forty minutes later, we headed off from Same (Saw-may), or as Cross Fire likes to call it, Same.



Josh Black

We were on a nice paved road for about thirty minutes, and we could see a mountaintop with snow on it. Some people we asked said it was Mount Kilimanjaro, but others said they weren't sure. Now I'm not quite sure myself. We will get to see it eventually anyway, God willing. From the paved road, we made a turn onto a nice typical African road, although most of the dirt road was not very bumpy. We headed into the mountains in our 4-wheel drive vehicle and made our way through a few small communities. I very much enjoyed the scenery because of all the trees, the mountains, and even the dry weather. It reminds me of Albuquerque, NM where I grew up. We then arrived in Mruma, which is a small town in the mountains, and we visited the secondary school and the parish there. We looked around the campus a bit, had a few chats with some of the staff, and started our program around 4 p.m. This program was interesting for a few reasons. First, we were accompanied by about six chickens who must have heard that Cross Fire was coming because of our poster. Second, after we had a choir sing-off, the students that we met briefly during our tour of the campus prepared some questions for us on paper, and the event coordinator read them to us. There were some good questions—Jayme received most of them. Since we arrived in Tanzania, Jayme has received an engagement proposal and also been told she is very nice and pretty. So when she was asked more questions than the rest of us, it wasn't surprising. It gives the team a good laugh. Frank wouldn't tell her one of the questions because he thought it wasn't proper. It came down to someone wanting to be penpals with Jayme, and I think he thought it meant dating her.

After dinner, Katie, Craig and I got the chance to throw the Frisbee around before it got dark, and that was fun because I've been missing throwing a Frisbee or a ball for a while. (Note: I'm writing my journal outside, and some dogs are getting into a fight about 10 feet from me.) Anyway, we ended up staying at the headmaster's house, and that was cool because it was the first time we stayed at someone's home in Tanzania. They warmly welcomed us and fed us some rice and chicken, and I had a couple of different conversations with some people of the staff, and we shared different things about each other's culture. The day ended on a good note, except for having a bed with a very thin mattress, a box spring that sank in the middle when I sat on it, and no pillow.

Lately, my prayer life has been pretty simple. I ask God for things like a bed with good foam on it so I don't hurt my back, restrooms with European toilets and not a hole in the ground, water and soap to clean my hands, running water, cold water and even cold soda. Hot tea and coffee aren't very refreshing on a 110° day. These things may not sound like much, but they are rare in Tanzania.

Sometimes I get what I ask for and sometimes not at all. It's another reminder to be thankful for cold beverages, varieties of food apart from chicken, rice and fries, and yes, even for public restrooms that at least have running water with some soap to wash my hands and a toilet I can sit on occasionally and not have to squat down to the floor. This also brings me to say how thankful I am for quiet times by myself. The restroom seems to be the only quiet time I get besides right before bed. Thank you, God, for alone time with You, no matter where it takes place!

I'm fairly used to all these things now. Please keep Cross Fire in your prayers for things like quiet, alone time, times for team devotions and for spiritual and physical health. We are busy singing and listening to choirs and also feeling like we are on display constantly. These things become draining at times, and we pray for continued strength to be effective ambassadors for Christ. I challenge you, as well as myself, to be giving of yourselves freely, even when circumstances seem unbearable. Keep us in your prayers, and may God bless you wherever you are, physically and spiritually!

In His Grip,
Joshi (when I'm in Africa)

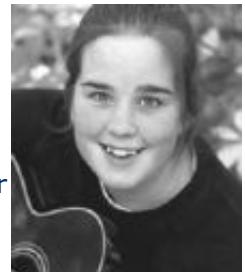
Date: 2/23/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Where to start? We are now in Pare Diocese, which is the northeast part of Tanzania. We have been busy here and especially today. We got up, had breakfast, packed the car and were on our way to Shighatini Secondary School. We arrived and began our program. It was great! So many wonderful choirs from the school sang. Now let me tell you a story about how Ann and Craig and Alison danced with the girls/boys of Shighatini Secondary School. First thing a person needs to know is that in East Africa traditional dance looks more like the dancing a person would find in the "night clubs" than you would find in the church. Second thing a person should know is that this particular dance was a "couple" dance, women danced with men and men danced with women. And let me tell you, the women do most of the work. So first it was Craig's turn. He got up there and did his best to dance with the girl. He basically had to stand there (remember the girl does most of the work). We all got a good laugh out of it. Next it was Ann's turn. She started to dance and then quickly stopped and sat down. Then they came to Jayme, and she quickly pointed to me, and then I quickly pointed to Alison! They grabbed Alison, and she did her thing. What an experience and story! If only I could learn some of those dance moves! My mom would be so proud! I even think Sunitha (our International Team director) would be proud too! Well, today was a day full of memories and a lot of those "remember when" stories.

Peace,
KT



Katie Ernst

Date: 2/24/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

So this week has been filled with excitement. A 14-hour bus ride, my birthday celebration, our first host home stay, and a dinner with amazing spaghetti (and no rice)! So many great things. Then today, Thursday, my journaling day, nothing too spectacular.

We had a great day in Usangi. We did our usual choir sing-off program. The Bible school, girls secondary school and parish all had their choirs there to sing for us. A group of Masai students from both schools joined together to sing several songs for us. It was three hours filled with songs of praise and dramas from the school choirs.

Although there is still no exciting story from Thursday for me to share, our constant amusement is our guide, Pastor Frank. He knows English well enough to joke around with us. However, we find the most enjoyment in the moments when he attempts to express himself or his opinion and his



Jayme Rowoldt

word choice comes out humorously. For example, Pastor Frank attempted to tell Katie that when she plays the djembe, she is very focused on it. However, he said that she is like a crazy person when she plays the drum. We were all cracking up as he tried to explain himself and redeem himself when he realized it came out wrong. There have been many moments when Frank's words have filled us with laughter.

Date: 2/25/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

I played the guitar today! Jayme wasn't feeling well, so I played on a song. I discovered that I have far too much trouble trying to cheat and play C2, so I had to play a regular C. I know for all you guitar players out there this seems a bit backwards, but I'm actually much more comfortable playing a real C. I learned the cheater way much after I learned the regular chord, so I'm sure that's what it is. Anyway, to make a short story long, I played guitar today for a program.



Alison Ondracek

At the moment, a couple of my teammates are singing "Lean On Me." It brings a lot of thoughts swirling through my brain. Fond memories of my college friends are the first of many thoughts. Then my brain settles on the way people live here. I'm constantly amazed at the generosity and the sense of responsibility toward their communities and their extended families. We've learned that even the people who are paid well in this country still often have trouble making ends meet because they most likely end up supporting many of their relatives. They don't think anything of situations like this. It seems to them that this is the way it is supposed to be. One is supposed to feel obligated to help others who are in need. And maybe they're right. How much better would our world be if we all felt that same kind of responsibility? Would it be better? What if we all sang the words of "Lean On Me" and truly meant them? I can only imagine what the world would be like.

Peace,
Alison
Luke 10:27

Date: 2/26/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Horns are an integral part of transport here in Tanzania. They have a variety of uses, such as alerting people you are approaching, so perhaps they should think of standing somewhere other than the middle of the road. Or, for buses to alert their passengers to board since they will be leaving sometime in the next hour. A lot of the buses have their horn play a short, fast tune, which is comical the first time, tolerable when honked regularly on the bus ride, but seriously annoying when blasted irregularly just down from your window at, say, 4 a.m. when you are trying to sleep—such as today.



Craig Schubert

Thankfully, that wasn't the tune for the whole day. Our main program was an open-air concert with some local choirs in the village of Bombo up a mountain. We saw a cool traditional dance where someone dances up to someone else and stomps and then it is their turn. We saw a two-year-old girl dancing along to the songs. I saw a flock of butterflies fluttering pas in front of the mountain view and was reminded of what a privilege it is to be here in East Africa, sharing the love of our God and encouraging the church here.

May the love of our God touch you today.

Shalom,
Craig

Date: 2/27/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

This is the second week we didn't attend a Sunday worship service because of transportation issues. We had planned to take a bus in the afternoon only to find out the only buses that start in Same leave before 8 a.m. The diocese offered to transport us in their vehicle, but it was going to cost at least twice as much, even if we only paid for fuel. It just didn't work out for us to stay. Sometimes I wish we had unlimited energy and unlimited funds because then we would be able to do all the things they (the diocese here) want us to do. Unfortunately, we need some time off, and we can't afford to pay twice as much for a ride at a more convenient time. These decisions are the most difficult things for me because everyone looks to me to make them. It seems, though, that no matter what is decided, someone is unhappy—either the team or the diocese. I've learned to dislike Sundays and Mondays because that's when these issues seem to arise most often.



Ann Strum

We boarded our bus at 7:30 a.m. and then drove around the bus stop until 8:30 when finally every seat was filled! And I mean every seat, even the fold-outs into the aisles. Just because every seat is filled, they still stop and pick people up on the way. They just squeeze two people into the aisle seats (a very uncomfortable arrangement) and have people stand by the door. It's pretty close quarters, and you hope people remembered to use deodorant! After about three hours on the bus, we were glad to be dropped off at Makumira University College, our home this week. We are excited to stay in one place the entire week! Got to the gate and there was an envelope waiting for us with a key to a house and a note to make ourselves at home. Laurie has a refrigerator that was stocked with cold water, a toilet that flushes, white toilet paper, and a garbage can in the bathroom. It's sometimes difficult to find waste baskets here. We set out to find our friend, Boni, who is a student here. He is a past teamer and was the first person we met in Tanzania because he picked us up at the airport. We found him when the worship service on campus ended. He took us to a place nearby to get some lunch. When we returned to Laurie's house, she told us she had the water heater on and we could all take a hot shower. I think she's an angel!! We all got cleaned up, and I went to meet Pastor Judy, our official contact for the week. By the time we finished all that, it was too late to go into town, so we ate on campus and headed for bed, excited for a day off tomorrow.

Date: 2/28/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Day off #2! We got up and had breakfast and headed into town, using the public transportation—dola dola. They are like vans with sliding doors and rows of seats. Don't be confused by the number of seats; they'll fit twice that many people in—always an adventure!! When we got to Arusha, we had someone direct us to the post office. Once there, we met several vendors (Jonah, Brian, Matthew and others) wanting us to buy the items they were selling, promising us good prices so they could start their business. We all bought some things and realized later we paid too much. Oh well, live and learn. I was an experience. We looked in several shops and bought some things. We had to learn how to barter because the prices are negotiable—they don't expect you to pay full price. We had done some shopping and needed some food. We first went to Steer's because we heard they had ice cream. We were sad when we got there and they had no electricity and thus no ice cream. So, we shopped a bit more with our following of street vendors, still promising us good prices on the same goods we had already bought! We ate lunch at McMoody's, Africa's version of McDonald's. We all had burgers and fries and most had shakes—it was heaven! We also took time to show our purchases so far. The afternoon held more shopping at a souvenir market (much purchasing!), lots of walking, a soda to avoid the downpour of rain, and a dola dola ride home. We had 25 people in the dola dola at one time! Back at home, we rested, had "show and tell" with our purchases, and laughed about our experiences of the day. Katie bought a guy out of bracelets, Jayme got offered 20 cows for her hand in marriage, I got a free coffee bean bracelet from Brian (my vendor friend who spent lots of time with us), and all our shopping adventures. It was a terrific day! Hope your day has been as fun and exciting as ours today!



Ann Strum

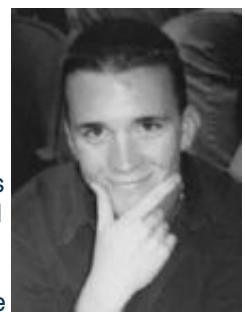
Blessings,

Date: 3/1/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Hello everybody! Well, today was a great day! We got up pretty early and had a light breakfast. We met up with Laurie, who is an American working for Makumira University in USA. She drove us to Arusha National Park. It was really nice seeing Mount Kilimanjaro so clear. Laurie was amazed how much snow was on it. She said she hadn't seen that much snow on top for about five or six years. We took some good pictures of the mountain, along with some good shots of water buffalo, water bucks, baboons and other interesting monkeys I don't know the name of. We also saw some flamingoes and warthogs. (We started humming a familiar tune from The Lion King. Maybe you can guess what it was!) The baby warthogs are so ugly that they are cute. One of the most memorable parts of the tour was getting less than 10 feet from a giraffe who was in the middle of his lunch. Katie told it to stick its tongue out, and it did. It was funny, but maybe one of those "you had to be there" moments. Around noon, we stopped by a new lodge to try and eat lunch. We were stopped by a couple of Maasai men who were guarding the driveway of this new lodge. Unfortunately, you had to have reservations and it probably was a little on the pricey side anyway. So we went down the road to a known lodge and resort and had a really good lunch. For me, an interesting fact about this resort was that a John Wayne film named "Hatari" was filmed there and they had pictures of the actors around. In fact, we ate in the John Wayne Dining Hall. So after a good hearty lunch, we drove around the park some more so we could get to a program at a school right outside the park gate. I was disappointed not seeing any lions or cheetahs. I like big cats! The one park we went to didn't have them in the park. Oh well. It was fun anyway.



Josh Black

The school program was scheduled for 2:30 p.m., and we arrived a bit early at 2:15 p.m. When we arrived, the person in charge said they weren't expecting us until around 5 because the students were in class and going to eat lunch at 2:30. Hmm...but the person in charge was mistaken about the time, and we were there when we were supposed to be. The students ate a quick lunch, and then we started a program that was originally supposed to be an hour, but because of a time conflict, we only sang for 20 minutes. That's how it goes sometimes, I guess. Even though it was a short program, the kids got really excited and we loved their reactions to our songs.

After having a nice safari and a short program, later on in the evening Ann, Craig and I joined an American student named Ian to eat dinner at the new lodge across the street from the university. Eggs, fries and green peppers were all cooked together, and it was good. It was a change from the usual chicken and rice. Ian and two other Tanzanian students were talking with us about differences in the church in America and Tanzania. We had some good discussion about other church things as well, and it was interesting getting their perspective on the United States and their feelings on their own country. All in all, today was a great day despite not seeing any lions or cheetahs.

Date: 3/3/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Today was exciting. We began our morning by singing at the primary school in Makunira. Unfortunately, the teachers planned for us to sing for levels 6 and 7 only. There were a bunch of children trying to catch a glimpse of us as we sang in a classroom. At one point, I looked out the window to see many children climbing a tree to see us. It was a fun time.



Jayme Rowoldt

We finished our day of programs by singing at the Maasae Lutheran Girls Secondary School. We had so much fun singing for them. As we began to sing the one song we know in the Masai language, their faces lit up. Soon the whole room was singing along with us. They sang for us, too. Their choir is amazing, and they're coming to Roseville Lutheran Church in Roseville, MN at the end of April or beginning of May, so all you in the Twin Cities area should go to see our friends.

The day truly became grand when we got to dinner. The missionaries that work at the school took us to eat at the snake farm. Yeah...it sounds great! Well, it was the MOST AMAZING meal. It totally

broke the monotony of rice. We enjoyed cold sodas WITH ICE! Our meal included a tossed salad, garlic bread, grilled chicken and pork chops. It was like heaven on earth. We definitely savored every bite, since we might not get another meal like that until May. It was an amazing end to a fantastic day. Life doesn't get much better than real ice cubes in Africa.

Date: 3/4/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

Today started off early, as we attended morning devotions at the university. Then we attended an English class where we sat in groups and helped with the discussion portion of the class. I enjoyed this part of the day especially because it gave us a chance to get to know people on a very personal level. Later we attended a service for the World Day of Prayer. I didn't even know such a day existed, but I really like the idea of a day set aside so that all people will remember to pray, if only for a little bit. We headed into Arusha on an overstuffed "daladala" to get some American type food and to go to the post office. Upon returning to the university, a workshop was scheduled and its topic was youth leadership. I happened to be the lucky person my team elected to be in charge of it. This was definitely a test of faith and my self-confidence. It was definitely an intimidating experience to lead a workshop for a large group of university students, most of whom are much older than me. But somehow through my unsteady words and being unsure of the actual direction of the workshop, God worked in the minds and hearts of those in attendance. I was even told by several people that they thought it was a success. How amazing a God we have that can use me to teach people even though I wasn't quite sure beforehand what I was supposed to say. I'm not sure who said it, but a quote my roommate used to tell me is that "God does not call the equipped, but He equips the called." I am very grateful for this, and it has often been proven to be true in my life. Bwana Yesu asifiwe! Praise the Lord Jesus!

Peace,

Alison



Alison Ondracek

Date: 3/5/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Today was our second last day in Tanzania before we head to Kenya. It started off with Josh and I joining our good friend Boni (ROP alum 02-03) in search of our mail packet, which we were expecting this week. Our best theory was that it was at the Usa River post office, so that's where we headed. When we got into the post office--via tea at the pastor's house, a daladala ride and a wait for it to open--we found our mail packet wasn't there. Hopefully, it catches up with us soon. Since our morning program was cancelled, we could leisurely make our way into town for cold sodas, lunch and some final Arusha shopping before our afternoon engagements.

We helped with a confirmation class and had a program at the Arusha Community Church for a crowd fairly different than what we've been used to here in East Africa--there were lots of wazunga (white people)! Arusha Community Church has English services that attract lots of missionary families in the area. There were people from Finland, Ireland, Holland, Britain, Germany, the U.S., Canada, N.Z. and Sweden, as well as Tanzanians. Between our programs, the family from Canada took us out for sundaes--ice cream tastes extra good after being hot for six weeks. It was great to chat with Doug, Noah and Abbey about their experiences in Tanzania and what they're doing.

During the Q & A time in our program, we got another offer to visit a compound to hang out and have cold drinks (with ice!), fruit salad, a swim in their pool and use of the Internet! What an offer! Max and Devanah have lived in Africa for quite a while now--in Burundi, Malawi, and now Tanzania, where they run an orphanage out of their house for 12 children between two days and two years old.

Max talked of practicology--a theology from James of faith and love in action, caring for the orphans, feeding the hungry, providing water for the thirsty. Thank you so much for your generosity, your hospitality and your example of faith in action.

Shalom,



Craig Schubert

Craig

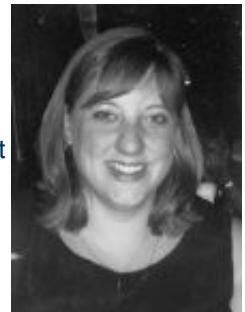
James 1:27

Date: 3/6/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hi everyone! This past week has been so wonderful! While in Arusha, we have enjoyed some rest time, a safari at Arusha National Park, some shopping, eating American food, meeting some amazing people, and doing some cool programs. I'm sure my teammates have written all about it, so I don't need to. I will say, however, that it was a week I desperately needed. A week with a full day off, plenty of free time, and no difficult discussions about money.



Ann Strum

This morning we started our day with breakfast together and then headed to the chapel to do Sunday School for the youth. They really seemed to enjoy the singing and the two puppet shows.

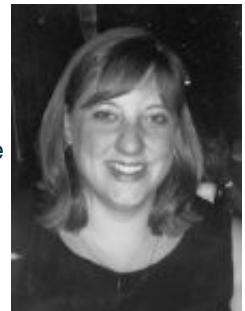
It was very interesting because the children can say English, but they don't understand it--kinda like us with Kiswahili! So, we would teach them a sing-a-long or do a puppet show and then Lusungu would explain in Kiswahili--it was fun! After Sunday School, there was an hour before the worship service. We rehearsed a little with the choirs (two vocal, one trumpet and a recorder) the song "Shine, Jesus, Shine" that we would sing during the service. I also took a little time to look over my notes as I was going to give the sermon. That hour went by very quickly! The service was nice, a combination of English and Kiswahili, so we actually followed along! They had a special section of the service when they welcomed up to the front the group of students who are just starting their Confirmation classes. I thought it was really cool to recognize formally, in front of the congregation, the students and teachers about to start this important journey together. After worship, we ate lunch and prepared to leave. I checked our team e-mail one last time to get the cell phone number for our contact in Nairobi. It turned out not to be the smartest thing I did all week! We loaded our things into our daladala and headed to the bus station. It was sad to say goodbye to our good friends Lusungu and Boni, but we look forward to seeing Boni again before we leave Dar Es Salaam in May. Thankfully, our friends Laurie and Barb had some business to do in Nairobi, so they took the same bus as we took. We rode comfortably to the Kenyan border and made it through Customs without incident. It was when we got to Nairobi that things got a bit more interesting. Our bus stopped at the Parkside Hotel in what seemed like downtown Nairobi. It was about 6 p.m. and the sun was beginning to set. We unloaded all our luggage and didn't see anyone who looked like they were looking for us. So, Laurie let me use her phone to call our contact--a woman answered and said our contact would not be home for an hour. I explained who I was and that we had arrived, and she agreed to call Mark and ask him to come. Laurie and Barb's taxi arrived to take them to their friend's house, and the Waiting Club was back in session. I think I was the most nervous during this WC meeting. All week, we had been told to beware of con-people in Nairobi and to watch our things very closely. So, the idea of being one of six white people with all of our belongings, with no phone and no Kenyan shillings, sitting outside a hotel while the sun sets, waiting for an unknown contact to arrive at an unknown time, was a bit unnerving. I know I wasn't the only one saying a few prayers! God protected us, and within a short while, a man came to be with us. His name is Sylvester and he is an evangelist at a nearby church. Mark, our contact, had called him to come keep us company and keep us safe until he arrived. Sylvester arranged for the bus to take us and all our luggage to the YMCA, where we would be staying the next couple days. When we arrived at the Y, Mark and his wife met us there. They lent us some Kenyan shillings so we could buy supper at the diner at the Y. After dinner and some conversation, we settled in to start exploring Kenya tomorrow!

Date: 3/7/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

This morning we got up, ate breakfast and went to the church where the ELCK headquarters have their office. We met the secretary, and the Waiting Club was again in session while Mark made phone calls to arrange transportation for us to go to the U.S. Embassy to register. We finally got half of us into a taxi and half of us into Mark's car. We got to the embassy at 10:15, 45 minutes before Mark thought they closed but actually 15 minutes after they closed. Jayme, Katie and I went with Mark to see his son at a secondary school just out of the city while Ali, Craig and Josh went with the taxi to register Craig at the Australian Embassy. When we returned to the YMCA, none of us had registered (Australians are supposed to register online), but we had seen a lot of Nairobi. We ate lunch and explored a little. Changing money proved to be interesting because two places we went would not exchange traveler's cheques. Once the money was changed, we found an Internet cafe--only a



Ann Strum

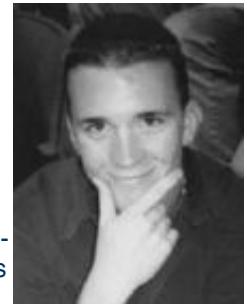
shilling a minute, or \$1.00 US for 75 minutes! We were also excited to find out we could make international calls for 20 shillings a minute! The rest of the afternoon was spent meeting with Mark and relaxing. The YMCA has a beautiful pool that the boys enjoyed. It's nice staying at the Y--there are many people from many places and races staying here. And, most people speak English! A good first day in Kenya--we'll try the embassy again tomorrow!

Date: 3/8/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Well, usually Tuesdays are pretty interesting, but today was a bit laid back. Our contact, Mark, gave us the day off, and so there was much relaxation in store. We are staying at the YMCA in Nairobi, and it's just a few minutes walk from the downtown area. All of us decided to go to the Internet cafe and catch up on some e-mails. I also got to call home because the rates were cheap--the cheapest we've seen yet. It was good to do a little catching up because one of the hard things about being in another country, especially where there isn't much in the way of long-distance communication, is not being able to talk with family or friends and miss out on their daily lives. I keep telling myself that God sent me here and is taking care of me, and that is helpful for getting through each day.



Josh Black

Early in the afternoon, Craig and I went for a swim in the nice pool at the YMCA. It's not very often I can say I went swimming in March, especially swimming in Africa. I got to start a few letters to friends back home, but we'll see when I finish. I also went shopping for a notebook and a map of East Africa so I could keep track of the towns we visited and were going to visit. I enjoy seeing where we've been and the distance we've traveled. That's about it for today. Just a nice day to do personal things and be quiet with God. Maybe next week will be more eventful.

Date: 3/9/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

So it has been one of those days. Those days when you miss your normal life. There have been many factors that led me to the state of mind I am in right now. I believe a lot of it has to do with cultural things that I cannot control, and also things I can control. For example, we woke up and had the same breakfast we have had for the last three days...fried eggs, sausage and two pieces of toast. Soon after breakfast, our favorite club came together--the Waiting Club. We worked for about an hour. Rushed to the bus stop and began our seven hour bus ride. We arrived in a new place with new faces. We did a lot of relational work tonight. We sat with the choir, walked around town, waited with people and ate dinner at 8:30 p.m. Now I sit on a two-inch thick mattress, writing my journal. I am hot, sticky and tired. Right now, I guess I want things to be normal for me again. I want a European toilet that works. I want running water that is safe for me to drink. I want to wear something other than dresses all the time. I want to eat food that I like. All these wants I have, and for right now, they are valid wants for the state of mind I am in, but I do know how even in the midst of my frustrations and wants, I can see how they are affecting me for the better. They are humbling me and are showing me how easy I have it. Life isn't always a bed of roses, and that is okay because we know that we are learning through those hard times, whether we realize it now or later. My frustrations and wants will come and go, but there are many things that stay constant...God's love and His truth are always there. Those are the things I hang onto...God is love and God is truth. And that's all I need to be able to make it through to another day.



Katie Ernst

Peace,

KT

Date: 3/10/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Today we had our first open-air program. We sang in the city center of Kisumu. Our goal was to

minister to the street boys, but we drew quite a crowd as people walking by stopped to listen. We sang for about 45 minutes. It broke my heart as the street boys gathered around with bottles of glue that they were continuously sniffing. The church in Kisumu provides a meal and teaching for them on Sundays. Most days, they fend for themselves. It seems like our songs are nothing compared to what they need. Yet, we hope and pray that the work of the church will help to change their lives. It was really overwhelming and powerful. We haven't had the opportunity to see some of the poverty and homelessness here. It was tough to finally see it. Yet all we can do is pray that God works in their lives to help turn them around.

P.S.--Ann met a nice man named "Bob."



Jayne Rowoldt

Date: 3/11/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

Today we went to a school for the mentally handicapped. There was a feeling of hesitancy about going throughout my team, since we had not gone to a place like this before today. As we walked into the room, we were greeted by a crowd of smiling faces and a song that was off-beat and off-key. It was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen and heard. They were so excited to see us that they could hardly contain themselves. Often it's our first reaction to walk into such a room and only feel pity for the crowd, but God made each and every one of these children exactly as they are, and he knows them by name. No matter what each one of us is born with, no matter what troubles us, God knew what he was doing, and God doesn't make mistakes. To quote a dear friend of mine, "It's a good thing God is so much smarter than us." Indeed it is. Bwana asifiwe!

Peace,

Alison

Isaiah 43:1



Alison Ondracek

Date: 3/12/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Another day, another dollar...

...and for a lot of the people we sang for this morning, a dollar a day is probably about what they live on. The Lutheran Church in Kisumu runs a program for street boys, including a meal and classes on Saturday mornings, and today we got to sing for them. It's so great to hear how their work is changing people's lives, giving them a more hopeful future.



Craig Schubert

The rest of the day was pretty laid back. I think we were supposed to do some sort of program thing, but circumstances changed, so it didn't eventuate. So instead, Josh (teammate) and Joshua (our contact) and I did some sightseeing in town. We got to see some of the markets, sampled some of the local beverages and went down to the shore of the world's second largest lake, Lake Victoria. (How amazing is it that this year I have been able to see the world's two biggest freshwater lakes!?) The girls also had a blast spending most of the afternoon learning to cook traditional African food with Mamma Dorothy--what a legend. Till next time!

Shalom,

Craig

Date: 3/13/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Today our day started with a gathering of street boys in the church compound. A large group of young boys who live on the streets of Kisumu meet here each Sunday to learn

about God and have a good meal. We had seen many of these boys throughout the week—at the bus stop when we arrived, in town when we did some street outreach, at the "crusade" we did one evening, and when we saw them doing some schooling at the church. This church has a great ministry and a big heart for these boys. They love them and teach them the word of God and try to meet some of their basic needs (feeding them when they gather and educating them so they can be in school—if they can get into school, the church pays their school fees). Momma Sella and Julius really care for the boys and this ministry. After meeting with the street boys, we headed to church for a service with both English and Kiswahili. It's nice when there's a combination so we can understand at least part of what is going on. After the service, we had lunch and an hour to rest before meeting with tyou of the congregation. We sang together with them for a while and then sang a couple of songs for them. It's always fun to exchange music like this. After singing, we spent a while sitting in a circle getting to know each other by asking each other questions. We took a large group photo, and then everyone mingled before dispersing. The Q & A times are always good but sometimes a bit unsettling because some of the questions are difficult to answer. We often get asked about youth in the church, homosexuality, HIV/AIDS, and governmental corruption. We also get lots of questions about how we can support the ministries that are happening here financially and how they can come to the U.S.A. to visit our country like we are visiting here. The group are difficult because they are very broad and are sometimes the topic of heated debates even at home. The second group are harder for me because they are hard on my heart. I wish I had a huge checking account so I could personally support some of the wonderful projects and some of the needy families I have met. But, all I can do is pray that God will put it on someone's heart to help with their resources. Maybe God can use me to bring these people together—that would be great! I trust that God will continue to provide for His beloved children—I just have to keep reminding myself that He is in control and His ways are not my ways!

After most had dispersed, I had a good chat with my friends Gordon and Fred. We talked about the challenges they face in youth ministry—one of the biggest being that the "youth" they serve range in age from 12-35! We also chatted about the similarities and differences between the U.S. and Kenya and gender roles in our cultures. It was a very interesting conversation that was interrupted by supper. Our guide, Joshua, asked me what we were talking about—I jokingly said we were in negotiations, that they both wanted my hand in marriage and I was trying to get the most cows possible! He laughed and I did too! We talked about many things, but my bride price was NOT one of them! As we talked, I could hear the rest of my team singing some more with some of the youth who were still gathered. I was torn because I was enjoying the visit but also really wanting to be singing praises. It's cool when we get time like this to really do both music and relational ministry!

Date: 3/14/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Today the Waiting Club met for most of the day. We were scheduled to go to the fish market on Lake Victoria to see how business works there. We were to go between 8:30 and 9 so we wouldn't miss all the action and we could sing some for the people there. But after breakfast, the people who were supposed to go with us weren't there. We ended up leaving around 10-10:30. When we got there, the boats were in and all but about six fish had been bought and sold. So, we saw the place and sang a few songs for the small group who were still there and gave them a word of encouragement. In the afternoon, we were supposed to go to the Bishop's office to sign his visitors' book, but he was in a meeting with his staff all afternoon. We ended up signing it at dinner. So, we spent the afternoon waiting. We did devos and share some quality team time. Later, Josh, Joshua and I went into town. We walked there and then used the most used form of public transportation in Kisumu, the bicycle!! There are young men who drive the bike and there's a cushion on the back for a passenger to sit on. For the boys, no big deal, they just straddle the cushion and hang on. It's a bit more challenging in a skirt. I rode back "sidesaddle" and, amazingly, did not fall or cause any accidents! It was really fun and a cultural experience I won't forget!



Ann Strum



Ann Strum

Date: 3/15/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

So another Tuesday goes by and still not very eventful compared with past days. Today we left our good friends in Kisumu, and our traveling guide who has been staying with us this past week joined us on to Kisii. Joshua (our guide) is very nice and feels responsible for us. He is from the Kisii area and works at the recording studio with the Southern Diocese Headquarters. An interesting fact about Joshua is that he is the son of the head bishop of the whole ELCK (who is now retired). Many people seem to know him wherever we go. He is a very likable person and others seem to see that as well.



Josh Black

At about 10 a.m., we headed for the bus station and found a matatu that was traveling to Kisii. It ended up being about two hours long, and we arrived in town only to load into another vehicle to take us to the diocese headquarters about 10 minutes away. Once we got settled in, we waited for our lunch to be prepared. It was a little frustrating that they were aware of us coming and had planned to prepare a lunch for us, but much to our surprise, lunch was not ready. As we have learned that time is elastic here, the Waiting Club met for another time. Joshua was not happy that we were waiting and felt more responsible for us since we were in his home area and workplace. He arranged for some sodas, crackers and brown bread to be brought for us to get us through till the actual lunch. We had that combination twice before our real lunch was ready. Finally, some real food to feed our hungry stomachs. Three hours later, we walked into the lunch room and prayed. The food was brought out, and we started with rice...and ended with rice. I don't know why it took three hours to make rice, but it's a good thing we had the snacks to get us by until dinner at 8:30 p.m. Between our lunch and dinner, Craig and I played some Frisbee, and soon other locals joined in, and we threw the Frisbee around until it got dark. What a busy day! I pray that we get a little more than just rice for our meals this week, but I'm thankful for food at all. Another Tuesday, another interesting day.

Date: 3/16/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

"Oh, how I love Africa!" My day was full of that statement. It all started when I awoke at 8:00 a.m. to get ready for an 8:30 a.m. breakfast. Well, the breakfast didn't start until about 9:30ish, but we had our best breakfast yet in Africa...Coca Cola, cookies, and doughnuts! That was my first "Oh, how I love Africa!" The next thing our day entailed was a trp into town to check e-mail. We walked to the bottom of the hill to board a matatu, the Kenyan version of the "daladala" that we grew to love in Tanzania, which is the public transport system. We managed to squeeze all six of us plus a contact into an already full matatu. As we drove for a half an hour, I lost full circulation in my legs...as I got out of the vehicle, that was when I said, "Oh, how I love Africa" for the second time. So we checked e-mail, and that was fun, and then it was back on a matatu to go back to where we were staying. The ride back was much better than the ride there.



Katie Ernst

Our next adventure in the day was to travel to Botoro Secondary School for a program! Our program began as any normal East African program begins. It first starts with many introductions...the order goes like this...are you ready for this? Here we go...take a deep breath...a teacher introduces the teacher on duty, the teacher on duty introduces the principal, the principal introduces the pastor, the pastor introduces our contact, our contact introduces Ann, and finally Ann introduces us! Sometimes it's even longer. At that point, I said for the third time, "Oh, how I love Africa!" Once we finally started to sing, everything was normal and fine until the rains came. Now, when the rains come, they really show up. And the sound of a massive downpour on a tin roof complements our song "No One Like You" very well. It got so loud I couldn't even hear Ann, who stands directly in front of me! So, needless to say, we stopped because it was so loud and because the wind was blowing rain through the windows. Ann explained it very well. "It is like we are in a water amusement ride!" At that point, "Oh, how I love Africa" made its fourth appearance! Then the teachers moved us into another room so that we wouldn't get wet, but little did they know what Cross Fire loves to do when it is raining cats and dogs. We love to play Frisbee with the cover to a ten-gallon bucket. We got soaked, to say the least. And the kids loved it. They all watched the

crazy white people play in the rain. After we got our fill of Frisbee, we went back inside to talk with kids. They were so funny! Human curiosity is great. All the girls wanted to feel the Cross Fire ladies' hair. They had never felt a white person's hair before, so we let them. Each one of us had about 15-20 girls surrounding us trying to touch us. Yup, that's right. "Oh, how I love Africa" made its way out of my mouth for the fifth time. At this point, I didn't think the day could become any more interesting.

Here is a helpful hint to anyone who is going to travel in East Africa...if that thought comes into your mind, get ready, because your day is going to become much more interesting than you could think. When it rains in Africa, two things happen. Farmers get well-needed rain, and roads get wiped out—so much so that they can't be traveled on by vehicle. That's right, our vehicle could not make it to us. What do you do when you have no ride? You walk. So we walked, and according to a teacher, the place we were staying for the night was "just across the way." Yeah right! About three km later, we arrived back at the place we were staying. At that point...that's right... "Oh, how I love Africa" showed itself for the fifteenth time. The reason it was the fifteenth time was because I kept saying, "Oh, how I love Africa" the whole time during the three km walk! The day was very interesting, and it was a great experience!

Oh, how I love Africa!

Katie Ernst
Isaiah 1:17

Date: 3/17/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

What a day! I've been wanting an exciting Thursday, and God definitely provided. My team, or some of them, told me I should just stick to boring Thursdays.

Our day began with the usual Waiting Club meeting. A "taxi," a small pick-up with a cab for passengers on the back, came to take us to Gakero Secondary School 18 km away. We arrived to partake in one of our favorite activities, drinking sugar-saturated tea while—what else? Waiting. The schools are having end of the term exams, so we were waiting for those to finish before our program could begin. Why we were told to arrive at 10 when we didn't sing until 12:30 is one of those mysteries of the phenomenon Africa time.



Jayme Rowoldt

We sang for the students, and after every song, they requested one more. They were a fun crowd, but who wouldn't be after taking exams all week? After a soda, we went for a walk. You may wonder to where, but we're still trying to figure that one out. We ended in a big field with a few cows and many primary school children staring at us. The walk was just a new form of waiting since lunch was not ready yet. It was fun to talk to the children. Some teammates pulled out the Frisbee. The children gathered around to try to catch it as it floated down.

We went to lunch and saw the rains coming in the distance. We were told that if it rained, we'd be stuck because the car wouldn't be able to get through the roads. We hurried over to Nyagesa Primary School just across the street. They took a break from exams, so we only had 20 minutes. As the introductions began, we saw the dark clouds rapidly rolling in. Our 20 minutes was cut to two songs in hopes that we might beat the rain home.

No rain at the school, but we still had one more stop. We quickly walked to Nyagesa Church. A small group had gathered there to meet us. As the usual introductions began, the rains came. The choir sang one song for us, but when they finished, there was no chance we'd be heard over the rain, so we waited. We watched out the windows as the rain poured down and, with it, hail. Who knew there was hail in Africa? Each moment, our chances of making it back to Itierio seemed to be come less and less. After about 20 minutes, the rain slowed down. We only sang two songs before we headed away.

Since it rained a lot, we had to walk to a better road where we could pick up a ride to Itierio. So we began our journey down the incredibly muddy roads in our Chacos. As we walked, our shoes got heavier and heavier as the mud collected on our soles. It was kind of like we all had platform shoes.

The combo of platform Chacos and slippery roads proved to be too much for Ann as she fell down, acquiring some beautiful mud spots on her skirt. We kept walking and eventually came to a river. They didn't want us to walk across. Their plan was to walk down to the narrow part and jump over it. Right. So we just walked through the river, which helped to clean off the Chacos for a moment. We continued up a huge hill. Several of us removed the platforms for a while to walk easier. An hour and two-and-a-half km later, we arrived at another dirt road, but one flat enough to get a car.

I thought the excitement was done, but not quite. We all piled into another taxi after waiting 30 minutes for an empty one to come. The cab would comfortably hold the six of us and our instruments. We managed to fit the six of us, our instruments, and five other people. As we bumped along the road, we came to a stop. Of course, there was room for one more woman and her child! After about 15 minutes, we came to another stop where Kenyans were all shouting at us. We thought we'd have a simple ride back to our homes, but that was not the case. There had been a bad accident on the road we needed to take, so we would have to walk past it and get another car on the other side. So we all began to walk. Yay, more walking! As we walked, everyone who passed us would inform us that there was an accident ahead. Really! So we arrived upon the accident site to see a turned over Coke truck that had crashed into another semi and a matatu. There was hardly any way to pass. We had to walk across a muddy, slippery slope with a ravine nearby. We all made it safely, although a push caused Alison to almost fall down the ravine. As I passed through the crowds, crunching on the broken glass bottles below my feet, I was tempted to grab one of the few Fantas that had not been broken. I was getting very thirsty after so much walking. I didn't, for fear I would be trampled if I stopped and bent over. As we looked at the car and the matatu that had gone over the ravine, some man came to talk to some of us and inform us there was an accident. We were all shocked! Soon we drew a whole crowd of spectators. The white people were more exciting than the accident. So we began to walk again. We walked past several matatus going nowhere fast, but eventually found one that would take us to Itierio. So we added 45 more minutes of walking to our day.

We finally arrived at our house in Itierio, three hours after we were supposed to, all so excited to wash our feet and rest...only to find our house locked and the key taken home with the manager. So, as it began to rain again, we went into a nearby house. We finally got into our house and cleaned up for dinner. Craig topped off the excitement by eating a chicken foot—lots of meat on those! So our St. Patrick's Day was definitely exciting. Now I'm left wondering if Thursdays will continue to be boring, or if they will be exciting from now on. Only God knows.

Date: 3/18/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

There are times when I forget that we are in Africa. I know it sounds strange, but the things that seemed so foreign to me two months ago have now become quite ordinary. The words "Habari" and "nzuri" roll off my tongue as easily as saying "How are you" and "fine." Waking up on a foam mattress and hearing the sounds of roosters crowing and people yelling seem to be a common thing. In fact, it has happened every day since we got here. Smashing six of us into a space where before I would have only attempted three has become something I do without a second thought. A meal doesn't seem complete without rice, just as a visit doesn't seem complete without signing a guest book. These are things have become part of a normal day for us. But then things happen that help to remind us of where we are. For example, today we came to the gate of the school we were visiting, and when it was opened, the only thing visible was a field with cattle in it. Or, walking into a room of women at the deaconess college to find them watching WWE professional wrestling on the television. These are times that I just have to laugh and shake my head. Oh, how I love Africa.



Alison Ondracek

Peace,
Alison
Philippians 4:4

Date: 3/19/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Well, today was another day that was funny in an African way, but for a lot of us, it was mostly just frustrating. We understood that our program with the Itierio primary school kids would start at 9 but discovered that, even though we had known the program since we arrived early in the week, the school had no idea we were coming.

The Waiting Club was back in session...at least that gave us the opportunity to do team devotions and check-ins. We were told we would now be meeting at 11, and when that time came, we were led over to the church's outdoor gathering area to find no one gathered. The students were taking their tea.

The Waiting Club met again until 11:45 when nearly 300 upper-primary girls drifted over and took their seats. Once we had started, we did our regular song exchange (and heard some good songs from the standard 7 and 8 choirs) followed by a Q & A time. We got the normal kind of questions from the students, like about the climate and geography in the U.S. Then a friend of the school asked us questions about homosexuality, corruption, youth in the church in the U.S., missionaries from Kenya to the U.S., and AIDS! And this for a group of primary school girls. As with all questions, we tried to answer them the best we could for the given audience, but it gets frustrating answering seemingly loaded questions in front of a young group, when we have little knowledge in the fields! Oh well, we do our best.

Then in the evening, there was some miscommunication in the team about the plans for Sunday morning. We eventually got it sorted out, but it was a good reminder that as a team, we have to keep working at things to keep our team healthy. It also reminds us that despite our difficulties and frustrations, Jesus is still Lord and will take the offering of our efforts and use them to further his kingdom.

Shalom,
Craig



Craig Schubert

Date: 3/20/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

This morning we attended worship from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.! The first service was for the 800+ secondary school students and was totally in English. The service for all the congregants started around 10:30. This congregation meets outside and uses a PA system so all 800 congregants can hear. The service was in Kiswahili, but the sermon was in both English and Kiswahili. We shared two songs and introduced ourselves and then sat down to enjoy the rest of the service. Three hours is a LONG service. It rained during the service, so we quickly took our instruments back to the house that was very nearby. We were thankful that there were shelters over us to keep the rain out!

After the service, we had lunch and then we were supposed to go to the market. Well, we had walked through the Itierio market several times this week, so we decided to go into Kisii to do some Internet work and get our bus tickets to Nairobi. When we got into town, we found there was no power—BUMMER! Thankfully, the Internet café has some battery back-up, so some were able to get online for some communication. I went with Joshua to the bus office to purchase our tickets to Nairobi for tomorrow. It's still kind of surprising how much attention one white person walking down the street can draw. When we got back to the Internet café, I was able to get on a computer. The power went on and off a couple times, which was a little frustrating—all just part of the experience. I got an e-mail with pictures of my niece—what a blessing!! I am so thankful for the Internet! I can't imagine being here without it—even though access is limited and slow and that is sometimes frustrating.

We headed back to Itierio to meet the Bishop of the Southwest Diocese. We had a nice visit with him and he warmly welcomed us to come and visit again. After visiting with the Bishop, we were



Ann Strum

free to spend time as we wished. Many played cards with a couple of our friends, some just spent time visiting with our friends. After supper, there were more cards, more visiting, and some packing in preparation for traveling tomorrow. I spent a lot of time visiting with my friend Joshua. We have become good friends these past two weeks, and I will be very sad to say good-bye tomorrow.

Date: 3/21/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Today I got up very early to write a couple thank you notes and to finish packing. We had breakfast and went to get our things while Joshua went to the main road to get a matatu to take us into Kisii. I kept looking at my watch as the time slipped away. We were supposed to be at the bus at 8:30 to leave at 9. It was about 8:20 when the matatu arrived, and it was already half full. Somehow, we squeezed all of us and all our things into the vehicle. When we got into town, the matatu went right to our bus but then turned around and started taking us to another bus company. All these guys were yelling different bus companies at us, wanting us to travel with them. I got frustrated and started telling them sternly that we already had our tickets and needed to go to the Akanabaka bus. It was about 8:45, and we didn't have time to be messing around! We got to the correct bus, unloaded our things, and got everything loaded into the bus. It was time to go—I have to admit I shed a couple tears saying goodbye to Joshua. I always have a hard time saying goodbye to contacts, but this was worse because we were together for two weeks and Joshua has become a good friend. We are the same age and have fun things in common. I will really miss him and pray that God coordinates our lives so that we meet again.



Ann Strum

I slept a lot on the bus trip, so it was pretty uneventful. When I was awake, I saw zebras and camels along the road. At one point, we all had to get off the bus for a security check. Some people were "wanded" with a handheld metal detector. None of us were wanded, so we just waited and ate pineapple that Craig bought from a vendor. The bus trip was about seven hours. When we returned to Nairobi, I was glad to see Mark there waiting for us. We got all of our things (minus the guitars and the boys) loaded up and headed to the church. Mark went back to get the boys, and we girls waited. When we were all back at the church, we coordinated rides for all of us to get to our places. We are staying in host homes this week—FUN! Alison and I are staying with Mark and his wife Grace, Grace's sister Modesta, and Mark and Grace's four sons, Anariko, Steve, Joshua and Caleb. It was fun to meet all of them and start to get to know them. This week should be very exciting! I'm glad to get to live in a home and also experience Holy Week in another culture!

Love to all of you!

Ann

Date: 3/22/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Have you ever given someone the shirt off your back in exchange for something you would like to have? Well, I don't know what that's like, but I almost did that exact thing. Today, we were given a day off to relax in Nairobi after arriving from Kisii on Monday. Craig and I stayed at the YMCA last night while the girls got to stay with host families. Since the YMCA has a pool, Craig and I decided to take a dip in the morning. We then headed to our favorite place in Nairobi, the cybercafé. There at the café, we ran into the rest of the team and made our way over to the market for some shopping. I didn't plan on buying anything, but sometimes you get a deal you just can't refuse. As we made our way through each little shop, I was getting a few different comments about my attire. One vendor wanted my earrings for a beaded necklace and a soapstone sculpture. Another man really liked my Old Navy t-shirt and would trade me a 10-inch diameter soapstone bowl with a really cool painting on it. It was an awesome deal, but for some reason, the idea of walking through central Nairobi with no shirt on and being a white person didn't appeal to me very much. Also, when we visited the



Josh Black

same market two weeks prior, a man wanted my REI pants in exchange for a Maasai outfit. How cool would it be to own a Maasai outfit? Even though that was a crazy deal, I like my pants and wasn't fond of the idea of wearing a Maasai outfit for the rest of our time in East Africa, since they can be revealing if you don't wear them right.

The last part of the day consisted of going back to our host church, kind of, and our contact Mark arranged for two men to drive Craig and me to our "host home." We almost drove for one hour until we reached a small town named Kitengela. We are staying at a nice guest house (host home) about five minutes outside of Kitengela. We met with our host mom, Mama Edna, who owns the guest house. She is the chairwoman for one of the churches in the Nairobi district. She is very nice and has an interesting background. She is originally from Tanzania, the Kilimanjaro region, and moved to Kenya because her husband is from Kenya. She has children in different parts of the world studying or working. Anyway, she was told that we wanted to stay in host homes because we wanted to keep our budget small and couldn't afford a hotel every night. She graciously accepted Craig and me as her guests and is letting us stay here, providing our meals for nothing. God is good! Her generosity is a reminder of how God provides for us all the time. We are very thankful for her hospitality, and we will always remember this place.

Date: 3/23/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Today was a day full of waiting, seeing wild animals, and watching a movie at a theatre. A pretty normal day! Okay, maybe the only normal part of our day was the waiting part. Yes, today we waited. We were supposed to leave at 9:00, but we didn't leave for the National Park until 11:30. Once we got there, though, the fun began. This was our second safari. We saw many animals close up...like zebras, giraffes, water buffalo, gazelles, and many other animals. We were all a little disappointed because we didn't see any lions. But we did see a glimpse of a leopard and a bobcat. So we at least saw some big cats. After the safari, we went to a movie and had our first team outing! We went to the movie "Meet the Fockers," and after the movie, we went out to eat. We got back home at about 9:30 p.m. So today was a long day but a fun day as well.

Peace,
Katie Ernst



Katie Ernst

Date: 3/24/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Before we left Nairobi the first time, we were told this week was going to be hell, so we'd have the first day to rest up for it. Well...hmmm... "hell" is not exactly how I'd describe our time so far. Monday we arrived and went to host homes to rest. Tuesday we had the whole day to rest. Wednesday we visited Nairobi National Park. Today we were told we'd be going to a congregation. To us, that usually means that we meet choirs and congregants and share songs for a few hours. Well, when we arrived at our scheduled meeting time of 3:00 p.m. (yep, we got to rest this morning, too!), we were told we were only going to attend the Maundy Thursday worship service at 5:00 p.m. So, we were all shocked at how "hellish" this week has been. Tomorrow we actually do meet with youth for most of the day, but one program in five days is not what I would term a difficult schedule. The hardest thing is the undetermined amount of time (30-90 minutes or more) it takes to travel from my host home to the church via the public transport of the matatu. Thankfully, we always have someone to guide us, otherwise this week would be a lot more like hell. There are too many routes for me to know where to start. Despite our crazy schedule of relaxing, it has been a welcome change from the typical two or three programs a day. Another Thursday done, the only excitement being the transportation, but not nearly as adventurous as last week.



Jayme Rowoldt

Date: 3/25/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

It's Good Friday. I've found it difficult to imagine a Good Friday that doesn't include my family's tradition of hot cross buns, cheese and muccada (or summer sausage, for all you non-Finnish speakers out there). I don't even like hot cross buns, but it's been a tradition for as long as I can remember, and the day just doesn't feel right without it. Last night I was told I would get an African traditional treat. I was excited...until I learned what it was. Sour milk. Yes, you read that right. I tried to keep an open mind as I watched my host mom pour the chunky drink into my cup. My intent was to at least try it. I even got so far as to raise the cup to my lips. However, the smell was far too much for me, and I couldn't do it. Ann didn't even attempt after my reaction. Fortunately, our six-year-old host brother was more than happy to slurp it down for us.



Alison Ondracek

Today we had a Good Friday worship service. We sang a couple songs and merely participated in the rest of the service. It was quite nice. Afterward we were given some sodas that were actually on the cool side. Then we were escorted back into the church, where we were told that a large crowd and some TV cameras were waiting for us. We were asked to perform our "greatest hits" first so they could be taped for the TV camera. We then experienced a choir sing-off unlike any that we'd ever experienced before. The MCs for the event really liked to rap, so we got a lot of that. I half expected flashing lights and glittery clothes to appear at some point in our four hours there. We also saw a passion drama put on by the youth/young adults of the church. I was impressed that even though it was mostly in Swahili, I could still understand what was going on. It was somewhat of a comfort knowing that the Gospel transcends all boundaries, including language.

Peace,
Alison

Date: 3/26/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Today we got to see some different sides of things in Nairobi. We were due to meet some of the youth at the church where we were yesterday for Good Friday around 2 p.m. For Josh and me, that meant catching a matatu into the city centre, meeting Anariko—one of our trusty helpers for the week and the oldest son of our contact Mark—then catching another matatu out to the church.



Craig Schubert

We'd intended to get to town early and do a few things, but after the Waiting Club had been in session nearly three hours for our lift to the bus stop, our time in town was brief. Once in town, it took about a half an hour at a brisk walk to get from where we alighted to the cybercafé. It was interesting to see a bit more of central Nairobi with the big banks of hotels, a nice parkland with a row of Kenyan flags flying high and proud, and a street boy passed out on the sidewalk with his glue pot right by his head. We did manage to get about a half an hour in at the cybercafé before catching up with Anariko for the next part of our trip. After a short walk and a short wait, we rode another matatu for about a half an hour then took a 15 minute walk to the church. This walk was a big contrast to our stroll through the city centre; we saw mud and stagnant water all over the place with algae and rubbish everywhere (some of which smelled like open sewers), houses made from rusty corrugated iron and whatever else could be salvaged, and market stalls filled with all sorts of wonderful fresh and colourful produce.

We arrived a bit before two and the rest of our team got there a bit over an hour later. While we waited, we pulled out our Frisbee and got a game going. It kept some people going the rest of the arvo. When we started our more formal program at about 5 p.m., Ann led a short Bible study around our theme verse, Luke 8:22-25—Jesus calming the storm—then had a discussion time. It didn't take long for a hairy question to come up. "What about the situation in the Anglican church in America?" Umm, okay. Even though we all had a pretty good idea what he was referring to, we asked for clarification. "About gays in the church. About men marrying men—do they have a biblical

basis?" Whoa! The issue of homosexuality out there in black and white. At least, a lot of them saw it that way.

How do you start to answer a question (asked with a sense of appall and accusation) on such a complex topic that is hotly debated both in and out of the church? Well, we started off by trying to show that most issues are not always clear-cut; there are often grey areas. We had people throwing Leviticus and "hate the sin but love the sinner" at us, but how does that really work when a person's sexuality seems to be such a core part of his or her identity? It also raises the huge question of how the Old Testament laws apply to us today? If only some, which ones and why? If none, then do the passages still have some relevance to us? There were people there hounding the law, saying the church has to take a stand! But then there also people there with a more accepting view. Again, contrasting situations in the same place.

I'm sure it won't be the last tough question we get asked, so I pray for wisdom for our team to be able to always answer with truth and love. Keep asking the hard questions and searching for His truth!

Shalom,
Craig

Date: 3/27/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Happy Easter! Today we went to church all morning. The first service at Uhuru Highway Lutheran was at 9 a.m. It's their International English service. There were people there worshipping from all over the world, and we all understood the service because it was all in English! Yeah! The first service ended at 10:30, and we had some time to visit with the congregants. We also go the opportunity to meet for about 15 minutes with the youth. It was nice to gather together, even if it was a short amount of time. Then we headed back to the sanctuary for the Kiswahili service. We were one of three choirs. There was a lot of music, and the service went from 11 a.m. to just after 2 p.m. That is a long time to not understand what's going on. We were thankful when the service ended. We went into the church boardroom for a soda and a snack of buns and sausage. We met with the youth from the Kiswahili service for about 30 minutes and then headed to our old home, the YMCA, for lunch. The menu is the same, and they still only have about one-third of the options available. Anyway, we had a nice lunch and headed to the church to meet Mark. We walked through town to take the boys to their bus. It was fun to walk through town—we saw more of Nairobi than I've seen in all the time we've been here. The matatu took us all home after leaving at first with just Katie and Momma Grace. She gave the matatu worker a piece of her mind when they finally came back for the rest of us. Once we got back home, Ali and I helped Grace and Modesta get supper ready. I really love times spent in the kitchen—I get to be amazed at what they can make with a charcoal kijiko as well as have lots of good conversation and usually plenty of laughter, too. After getting the dishes done and laughing a bunch, we visited a little and then headed for bed.



Ann Strum

It was kind of strange knowing it was Easter but not having it feel like a day that was different from any other. Part of it probably was due to not really participating much in Lent and also not really having any special traditions to celebrate. While I didn't really feel like it was Easter, I'm thankful that the reality of Christ's resurrection does not rely on my feelings. It's a truth that I can live and believe in, regardless of my emotion.

Date: 3/28/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Happy birthday Dan, Jeni and Tela!

Today Ali and I participated in the Waiting Club. We were supposed to be at a youth

gathering, and we were supposed to leave at 10. But due to the variety of things that can come up when you're two of nine people staying in a two bedroom house, we didn't leave until about 11:15. We arrived pretty late at the gathering, but we still got to hear Mark preach for about an hour and a half. The parts that were in English were really interesting! After he preached, we sang two songs and then headed out. It was 1:45, and we were supposed to be at Uhuru Highway Lutheran at 2:00 for a youth debate. We stopped for lunch on the way, so we finally arrived at the debate around 4:00. The youth were debating whether or not parents are to blame for youth immorality. We might have participated, except at least half the talking was in Kiswahili. Oh, how I wish I was a fluent (or anywhere near fluent) speaker! We had agreed before that we would leave the debate at 5:00. It was not difficult to want to leave, since we weren't really following the discussion anyway. It sounded like the others there were finding it helpful! We sang two songs in Kiswahili and headed out. We went to the cyber café. It's always good to have some time to communicate with loved ones at home. I was especially glad to get to call and talk to my brother, Dan, on his twenty-fifth birthday. It's so nice to be in a city where things like phones and Internet are accessible and not too expensive! After finishing up, we headed to the bus station across town to drop off the boys and then head home. When Ali and I got home, we were met by a roomful of people. Grace and Modesta's two brothers and cousin had joined the room of boys. We had a nice conversation and dinner together. Ali and I talked with Mark for a while before going to bed. I will be sad to leave this family. We have definitely become part of the family—playing with the boys, doing some cooking, and letting two-year-old Caleb climb on us and eat from our plates. I love it! This will be a family I will always love and remember; I hope we can visit each other again in the future! Good to have family all over the world!



Ann Strum

Love to you all!

Ann

Date: 3/30/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:



Katie Ernst

So my journal day started on the bus that we took from Nairobi, Kenya, to Kampala, Uganda. We got on the bus at 10:00 p.m. and got off the bus at 11:00 a.m. Night bus rides are not my favorite thing in the world because I can't sleep on the bus! Even if the roads were smooth, which they are not, I wouldn't be able to sleep. So it was a long trip with little sleep. When we arrived in Kampala, we were met by our new friends Ronald and Dorothy. They took good care of us; they got us cabs and took us out to eat. They took us to a Chinese restaurant! It was a great change from the regular chicken and rice. We loved it so much that we actually have been there twice now. Afterwards, we went to check e-mail. When all the fun of the Internet was over, we headed back to our host home and rested while we waited for supper. The wait was long; dinner didn't come till 10:00 p.m. or so. I was so tired by the time supper came around, I just wanted to go to bed! But they prepared us dinner, so we had some food and then quickly proceeded to bed. For some of us, that was quicker than others. Alison and Jayme still had to hang their mosquito nets before going to bed. But there was a problem because the plaster was too hard for a nail, and they didn't have any tape. So their host mom took some Band-aids to hold the net up. In the end, the nets fell down in the middle of the night, but it was a good try!

Peace,
Katie Ernst

Date: 4/1/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

So, this morning we all got up peacefully, with no animals making noise or people or vehicles. We ate breakfast right at the time it was scheduled. Then, with no waiting,

Ronald brought us to the Lutheran Media Ministry office, where we sat and had a brief introduction to our week. Then we drove the empty streets of Kampala to a place where we had lunch. The meals came as soon as we ordered them, and we continued our day with ease, no waiting at all, and ate dinner before the sun went down. Then we all parted ways for our host homes and went to bed. And if you believe that story, then APRIL FOOL'S! That's not really the way it happened. Our morning, of course, began with a dog whining. Then we had to wait...a lot. We did do all the things I mentioned, but it was not as smooth as the dream I mentioned before. But, what would a day be without hours of waiting and a little adventure of weaving through traffic? It hardly seems complete without it.



Alison Ondracek

Date: 4/2/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Today was a great day! We were able to relax in Kampala. This meant time to check e-mail, have a look round the markets and have some really good food. Lunch was at a place that had really good pizza—according to those who like cheese—and a nice chicken burger for me. Then, we had asked our contact (and Cross Fire alumnus) Ronald to take us to have the best ice cream in Uganda, so on our way home, we stopped at a restaurant. We looked at the dessert menu, and the sundaes were almost 10,000 shillings (about US\$6) each! We were feeling the small budget of our volunteer status, and so we ordered one between two. Then they came out—the Belgium ice cream was magnificent! It was such a treat.



Craig Schubert

Thank you, God, for special things like Belgium mocha sundaes.

Shalom,

Craig

Date: 4/3/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hi from Kampala, Uganda! Today we got to experience worship in Uganda for the first time. It was great! The service was all in English, and we all had a hymnal to use so we could follow the entire service! Yeah!! It was fun to pay attention to a service from beginning to end and have that amount of time be less than 90 minutes! The Lutheran Church is pretty young here (only about 12 years old), so there is a lot of excitement to share the Gospel and the Lutheran tradition here. We were called on to share several songs and also enjoyed singing some congregational hymns (Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus, Beautiful Savior, and What a Friend We Have in Jesus). After worship, we spent time visiting at the Lutheran Media Ministries office where we had just had the service. We talked about many things and started to learn a new song in Luganda, a tribal language used a lot here in Kampala. After a soda, Ronald and Alex arranged for transportation for us to go to a graduation party. One of our contacts, Dorothy, invited us to come and celebrate with her family because her sister graduated from university. She told us the party would be starting around 2:00 or 3:00 and dinner would be around 4:00. We arrived after 4:00, and the festivities were in full swing, with many different people giving speeches; unfortunately, all in Luganda, so we didn't understand them. Oh well! We were seated under a tent in lawn chairs—did I mention that all this fun was happening outside? So, since we were in the back, we took to quietly visiting amongst ourselves. The girls watched the other women and their clothing. People were very dressed up for this occasion; it was almost like a wedding reception at home. Some of the most fascinating clothing was the traditional dress. Many women wear a dress that has puffy, pointy sleeves, two buttons on the left side of the chest (a square neckline), and then is draped over a sash that is tied in the front. At first, we saw these dresses outside the tailor's shops, and we thought they looked kind of funny. The more I see women wearing them, however, the more I like them. It's always fun to look and see the material



Ann Strum

they chose and the sash—sometimes they match more than others!

Once the speeches ended, they cut the cake and served it to all of us on platters in bite-sized pieces. When the graduate served her family members, she knelt before them—this is a sign of respect in this culture (we've only seen it in Uganda). We had seen this during the speeches also. After cake came the meal. We ate around 9:00 p.m.—a huge plate of traditional food. Some I enjoyed more than others. Then the dancing began. The DJ kicked up tunes and the people all danced, especially when the traditional dance was called. The women here can really shake it! Their traditional dance is *all about the hips!* So cool to see them! We all danced and had lots of fun. We returned to our host homes, exhausted from a fun day. KT, Josh and I headed home. The next morning, we heard that Alison, Jayme and Craig were treated to a midnight buffet. It seems that their host mom, Olivia, had worked all evening preparing beans and chipeti for them. So, even though they were tired and not hungry, they ate and enjoyed!

God is good! Tomorrow is a day of travel—we head to Masindi for all that waits for us there!

Peace,
Ann

Date: 4/5/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Today we had a few programs on the outskirts of Masindi at a few schools and a church. The first school had interesting scenery because on one side of the dirt road was the school, and on the other were a mud house and a field where some women were working. African scenery is both interesting and beautiful. Interesting in that dogs, goats, cows, or whatever animals are around can be seen walking or running or sleeping alongside the road in town. Sometimes traffic is stopped because of an animal or group of animals crossing the road. You know that joke, why did the chicken cross the road? In African terms, it's simply to get to the other side of the road and not get hit by a vehicle in the process. After our two programs at the schools, we had a couple of hours at our guest house to do devos and check-ins. We even got to see most of the movie *First Knight* before heading to our last program. This time it was at a small church that was made of mud bricks and sticks and was built next to a big tree. I wonder if the church started under that tree like so many others we have seen. The surrounding area had many hills and trees, and it was cool scenery to look at. For some reason, today I just did not want to be here. I didn't want to do any programs, sing, or be relational with anyone. Today at the church on the hill where we were surrounded by beautiful nature, I was not in a good mood. I just wanted to go home. When we tried a new skit here it was about sharing God's love. It reminded me that no matter what mood I am in, I should share God's love with others so that I can see more and more of it. The less you share it, the harder it is to see. Then I thought about where I was and what I was doing. I'm in Africa! I'm sharing God's love through music in Africa! How many times does someone get to share God's love through music in Africa? It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I'm so glad to be a part of it. May God grant you and me the strength to share His love with everyone and to do it in whatever mood or stage in life we are at!

Josh



Josh Black

Date: 4/6/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

First on our list of things to do for program today was to go to Masindi Primary School, where we sang for 800 kids! I know, a lot of kids, but what is more impressive is where they put them all to listen to us...under a tree. Now, the tree was bigger than the average tree that a person would find in the States, but considering the situation, it was still a small tree for the job. So they crammed all of them under the shady parts under the tree. It was an amazing feat...all I could see were the children's heads, and the only



Katie Ernst

bodies I could see were of the children in the front row. After we sang for 45 minutes, we played the funniest game in the world that is played by African kids—play with white people's arm hair! I didn't know that the hair on my arms could be so entertaining! So I had at least 20 kids touching and rubbing my arms; some kids would be okay with touching my arm hair, but others were pretty scared and they had to build the courage to touch it!

After that program, we headed to a secondary school. We figured we would be doing a normal program; for the most part, it was, except for the camera that was filming us to be a part of a documentary that will be aired on the BBC! I know, how crazy is that? The deal is that Ed and Joanne are making a documentary about religion in the schools in Africa, and we happened to be at the school where they were filming! So hopefully the footage they took of us doesn't get left on the editing floor! Who knows, but it was a pretty weird thing that happened. Afterwards, we went back to the guest house we were staying at to rest, eat and sleep.

Peace,
Katie Ernst

Date: 4/7/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

We began our morning singing in a village market near Masindi. The crowd continued to grow as we sang more songs. There were some people just standing and watching, but others were trying to sing along. There were many children gathered in the front, and some of the little ones were dancing to the music. As we stood in the direct sunlight, we all continued to grow hotter and redder. After we were finished, the children gathered around as we shook their hands until Alison started the "look at the magic skin" game. They were all amazed that pressing our skin made it turn a different color. Our next program was at a primary school in another village. We took the common transport of the motor bikes around Masindi. We look like quite the gang when seven-plus bikes are driving down the road. We also gather attention because we're white and most white people ride in cars everywhere. We find it fun even when our drivers head into a ditch in the road.



Jayme Rowoldt

The primary school program involved about 500 children crammed under the shade of some trees. We sang and did a drama. The children got involved a little bit but were pretty shy about dancing and cheering with us. Yet as we were leaving, they began to burst into the cheer we had shared with them during our drama. They may not have understood much of what we said, but we still left something behind. From there, we headed to the bus station to catch a ride back to Kampala. We all piled into a taxi, like a Tanzanian daladala or a Kenyan matatu, and sat for an hour waiting for seven more people to fill it. I was beginning to think that the boring Thursday had returned. It was fairly typical with two programs, some travel, and another marriage proposal for me. But as we headed down the road to Kampala, we heard something crash into the side of the taxi. We pulled over to survey the damage from the gazelle that ran into the side of the car. The damage was just a few dents in the door; we were thankful it was nothing more, like hitting a deer in the States. So the adventure ended there, but we were thankful when we arrived safely back at our host homes in Kampala.

Date: 4/8/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

It's funny how God works sometimes. There have been days here when I've been completely exhausted and haven't wanted to do anything but sleep or just plain go home. I've been ready to call it quits and change my flight so I could leave Africa early and go back to all that is familiar and comfortable to me. And it's exactly on those days that God uses us the most. It's most often on those days that we are in some of the most amazing places I've ever seen. The beauty so captivates my heart that I want to stand there and sing praises to my God for endless hours. All of the other stuff—the



Alison Ondracek

exhaustion, the worries, everything—just seems to disappear, and I'm left standing in complete awe that the God who created the incredible beauty surrounding me also created me. I'm so glad that this God loves me.

Peace,
Alison

Date: 4/9/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Well, today we visited three schools. It still seems strange to me for schools to gather on a Saturday, but then so many schools here are boarding schools. The first was a primary school/orphanage, and from where we gathered outside, it had a great view over Lake Victoria. As often happens, as well as us singing for the students, they sang for us. Some days the traditional songs all sound the same, but today I really enjoyed it. The students made a great sound, and the drumming was impressive, especially for primary school kids! Next we went to a high school with about 800 students. I'm never sure how well the six of us do at being heard with a big crowd, especially in open-air settings, but they seemed to appreciate what they heard. They saw the inaugural performance of our "love ball" skit, which was enjoyed as well.



Craig Schubert

Our final program saw Katie M.I.A. with a migraine, so we were without our trusty Program Coordinator, leaving Ann to call the shots, especially songs. Katie's absence also limited our song selection, but we found enough to get us through. We also got another impressive display of singing and dancing! Not a bad day all up, except Katie feeling crook—sorry.

Shalom,
Craig

Date: 4/10/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Today we worshiped with the oldest and largest Lutheran church in Uganda. It was great! We sang some songs, joined in some KiSwahili choruses and celebrated Holy Communion with the body of believers gathered at the school. It was a great service. One of the cool things we learned during the service was that one of the students from the secondary school we visited yesterday, after hearing our program, asked for special permission to leave the school grounds to attend the service. He came by himself but fully participated in the service—how neat! After the service, I got to visit with some girls who were from the school where church was held. They showed me their living space. I'm amazed at how these students live—happily. Their quarters make my smallest college dorm room look like a mansion. It's a huge room that they have, but it's shared with many people, and the beds are double or triple bunks! I think I would kill myself when I woke up in the night if I were on the third bunk!



Ann Strum

After worship, we went back to Pastor Dan and Ann's house; they are hosting all the girls. We use this as our gathering place and central headquarters. We were making plans to head to lunch and then the source of the Nile when their neighbor came over and invited us to his house for lunch. His child had been baptized that day, and they were having a celebration. He said lunch would be in about 20 minutes, so we decided to go. We arrived to a DJ playing music and lawn chairs placed around the lawn with many people visiting and kids playing. The host came out about three hours later to thank us for coming to celebrate the baptism and housewarming, and to say the food was ready. We had rice, chicken, meat, soup, matoke (cooked bananas), avocado, chapatti, and fruit. What a feast!

After eating, the host asked us to sing one song for his guests, so we went back to Dan and Ann's to

get our instruments. We sang and said thank you, congratulations and goodbye. When we got back to Dan and Ann's, we quickly put our instruments away, grabbed our cameras and headed out. Next stop, source of the Nile River. We got there and drove into a parking area where a group was performing some traditional dance and using traditional drums and what looked like a HUGE xylophone. We watched for a brief moment and headed to the river. It was beautiful! There was an island in the middle with a huge tree and some of the biggest birds I've seen. We walked down a small path that led right down to the water. We stuck our feet in and took lots of photos. I had to keep saying to myself, "Your feet are in the Nile River!" How cool! We thought about taking a canoe to the actual place where the river starts—it was just a short ways, but we definitely were offered the wazungu (white person) price, so we decided to just enjoy where we were. We saw a statue that noted that Gandhi's ashes were scattered here, and we walked a ways to see some more traditional dancing and hear traditional music. Unfortunately, we got there just as they were packing up. They let us play one of their drums and a finger piano—cool! Headed back home for visiting and relaxing. A good day!

Date: 4/11/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Today we had the day off. We slept in, went to lunch and attempted to check our e-mail. Then we went to Bujagali Falls. These past months, it has been fun to see the African landscape; it has been so different from what I expected. But these past two days, I have been awe of God's amazing creation. The source of the Nile and these falls are absolutely breathtaking. The falls are beautiful and so powerful. I can't describe it and do it justice—wow! There was a swimming area nearby, and it was fun to watch lots of kids enjoying the water. There were a couple awkward moments too, when I was looking along the shore and saw a few different places where people were bathing. The water has many functions: beauty, refreshment, entertainment and cleansing. I am so glad to have been here to experience it!

Love ya,
Ann



Ann Strum

Date: 4/12/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Well, today was our last day in Jinja. We have liked being in Jinja and getting to know Pastor Dan and his wife Ann. Craig and I also enjoyed our host dad, Moses. His family has hosted Cross Fire teams before; we were the fourth. They were excited to have us.

So today I was supposed to slaughter a chicken before I left, but time wouldn't allow because of our programs. We had a good 40 minutes to sing at Bubogo church and the school. We ended our programs around 6:30 and headed to my host home for dinner. Moses invited the whole team over as we watched the soccer match between Liverpool and Manchester. It was a fun match to watch because everyone gets so excited anytime a goal is made or even close to being made. The day ended around 11 for me because I was starting to fall asleep in my chair. I went to bed, but I could still hear everything going on in the living room because the door to our room is a curtain and the room has no ceiling. This is no advantage to my sleep, especially at 4 a.m. when the rooster and chickens who live inside the house are going crazy. Sleep has not been especially great the last three nights because of that, but I am thankful for a place to stay and that I'm safe. Thank God for the little things!

Josh



Josh Black

Date: 4/13/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Hello my dear friends! Wow, have I made so many new friends in the past three months. Let me now tell you a story of the closest friend I have made so far...her name is Imodium! I love her so; she calms my stomach when it feels nervous and just makes me feel better. I get to have time with her at least once a week, and if I am really lucky, she comes by twice a week. That is right; lately I have been having stomach problems. I haven't been feeling all that well. It seems as if all the food we eat is fried in grease or oil, and that does not agree with my stomach. After every meal, I get a gut ache. So, life for me lately has been not so good. It is hard to eat something that you know will make you sick, but if you don't eat, then you stay hungry and are sometimes considered rude. I just pray that my stomach will get better, but until then, I'll keep my dearest friend close by. Praise the Lord for Imodium!

Peace,
Katie



Katie Ernst

Date: 4/14/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Another travel day. The only truly exciting part was crossing the equator. Our four-hour bus ride was lengthened by the two-hour wait at the bus station for the bus to get full. It wouldn't have been so bad if the seats weren't made for short people with no hips. Not so comfortable when you cram in three tall Americans when plenty of hip. During the two hours, we saw many vendors pass outside the window and through the bus. None of us were too interested in the shoes, silverware, dishes, toys, watches, belts, or floor mats that they had to offer. I thought we'd finally escaped the hassling of the vendors when we started to leave, only to hear the sounds of a salesman on the bus. His first item was to cure any skin problem from ache to rashes anywhere on your body. After that, he moved onto the de-wormer. He kept referring to us in his Lugandan or Swahili speech, but he never mentioned us in the English translation. At least we got to see the equator marker pass quickly by as we headed back to the southern hemisphere. We'll have to wait to see what adventures are waiting for us in the coming days here in Mbarara.



Jayme Rowoldt

Date: 4/15/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

So today seemed like it would be like any other day. We had programs scheduled, so we got up and had breakfast. We headed off in the taxi minibus that we had rented for the day, and we fit in all of our instruments, five Cross Fire members, two guides and the driver and taxi operator comfortably. Don't worry, Katie had gotten sick and stayed in Kampala and would soon join us to tell of her own adventures she'd had there. But that's another journal entry. Anyway, we went to a church to do our first program. When we arrived, very few people were there. It turns out that they had expected us the day before. Somehow the dates had gotten mixed up within the lines of communication. So we waited for a half an hour to allow the word to spread that we were here and for people to gather. We sang songs and did a skit for them, and then we were off to lunch. We all ordered and waited for the food to be prepared. We found that for the first time since arriving, we were actually going to be served all at once! Unfortunately, Josh's food took a long time to prepare, so while his was cooking, everyone else's food got cold. Mmm...cold eggs! Once we finished our meals, we headed to a secondary school where we were to sing next. Turns out that the time had been arranged for us to be there was really inconvenient. So would we mind waiting two and a half hours and coming back when exams were finished? Why not? So we were invited to a parish member's home where we



Alison Ondracek

could be comfortable during our long Waiting Club meeting. Ann was brilliant enough to bring her deck of Phase 10 cards with her, so we kept ourselves busy that way. During our game, a man came in and said that a woman had wanted to give us gifts. He pulled out two gourds that were painted. Upon further inspection, we discovered they had names on them. One was for Jayme and the other was for me. It sounded logical to me that he had four more for the rest of the team, but he didn't. I really don't understand what the thought was for this, and I don't know that I ever will. The gifts are beautiful and I'm grateful for them, I just don't get it.

Well, we packed up after our Waiting Club session and headed back to the school where we sang for students who were completely exhausted. Then we headed back to our host home where Katie and Ronald were waiting for us. The end of another day, the end of our surprises for the day.

Peace,
Alison

Date: 4/16/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Today was my cousin Simon's wedding. Congratulations! He got married to my old housemate. My old choir sang at the ceremony. Relatives from across Australia gathered for it, and I'm in Uganda. This is at least the third wedding I've missed this year, with another within a month—my last housemate and a friend from uni and choir. Some I knew I'd miss when I agreed to spend a year serving overseas, but it's still sad to not be able to celebrate such important events of people close to me. I guess wherever I am, there will always be something I'm missing.



Craig Schubert

"If you can't be with the one you love/Love the one you're with!" I'm not sure who said that (Ed. note: Lots of people, but Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young said it first.), but it sounds like good advice. Today I couldn't be present to celebrate with old friends, but I got to spend it with new friends. This morning we sang at two vocational training centers, and this afternoon we got to relax at our host family's house. They have three boys; six, four, and one-and-a-half, and a two-month-old adopted baby girl. From the joy of just strumming a guitar to sharing everything at hand—including pre-chewed food—they reminded me to celebrate the life wherever I am.

To Simon and Sarah,
May the depth of your love
be ever increasing
And your friendships grow
wherever they are found.

Shalom,
Craig

Date: 4/17/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Today we participated in a Friendship Service that had been coordinated by Edison, the evangelist here. He invited students from all the secondary schools in the area to come together for worship. It was amazing! Each group of students shared two songs after we had had an extensive time of worshiping together. I love the joy, enthusiasm and energy these students put into their worship. They were clapping, dancing and jumping while they sang. I was blessed during worship! I also enjoyed having our host brother sit on my lap while the choirs were sharing with us. I love how little kids will sit and snuggle with you during church!



Ann Strum

After worship, we went back to Pastor Solomon and Georgina's house for lunch. We had a rousing

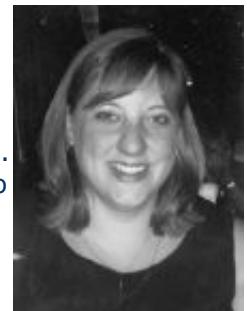
game of Phase 10 with Ronald and Regina (our contacts who traveled with us) and got ready to travel back to Kampala tomorrow.

Date: 4/18/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Yep, another travel day! We waited quite a while for the bus to fill before we could leave. On the way back, the bus, which was the size of a taxi/mataatu/daladala, hit a gazelle, so we stopped to assess the damage to the vehicle; the boys went to look for the animal. They didn't find it and the damage was minimal, so we headed out again. The rest of our ride was uneventful—yeah! We got back to Kampala, got some supper and checked our e-mail. A good day. I'm looking forward to doing ministry this week in Kampala. It's hard to believe how quickly our time is flying by!



Ann Strum

Blessings!

Ann

Date: 4/19/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Hello all! Today was a day of rest. We actually got to sleep in. Can you believe it? After sleeping in, we all met up at the house of Pastor Charles, our main contact, where half the team has been sleeping while we are staying in Kampala. One quick note about Pastor Charles: he is our contact, but we have seen him a total of twenty minutes until today. He is one of two Lutheran pastors in all of Uganda, so he is a pretty busy guy. Anyway, we spent some time hanging out at the house playing Phase 10 and watching the only two channels on TV. One was music videos and the other was TBN! It's definitely interesting to watch some of the TV evangelists from the U.S. and a few from East Africa. So, as much as fun as that was, it eventually had to end, and we headed into the busy town to check e-mail and eat lunch in the early afternoon. Then on the way back to Pastor Charles' house, we stopped at the drum shop. We looked at the different sized drums and variety of instruments the owner made. In all, we ordered four drums and are having the skin shaved on the top. Ann bought a small one with the skin already shaved off, and it's a neat little drum. So we hung out some more at Pastor Charles'; around 7:30, Pastor Charles and two visitors from the U.S. popped in. Their names are Cliff and Rudy from Alabama; we met them briefly a couple of days prior. They are pastors with the LCMS and came to Uganda to help give supplies to families in need. They are headed back to the U.S. tomorrow, so they were invited to eat dinner at the house with us. It was nice visiting with other Americans and hearing about the work they are doing. They said that they were encouraged by us young people sharing the Gospel through music in Africa. They were encouraging as well. Then dinner was ready at 10:30, and I was hungry. The food smelled great, but when I was ready to dive into my plate, I spilled my food on the floor. Ahhh!!! It was quickly cleaned up, and I still got to eat. Yum! Today was a good day; God bless Cliff and Rudy. Also, please pray for Pastors Charles and Daniel who work really hard for the Lutheran church in Uganda.



Josh Black

In His Grip,
Josh

Date: 4/20/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Greetings,

Today was another rough day for me. I woke this morning at 4:30 a.m. with acid reflux

and wasn't able to get back to sleep until 6:00 a.m. Another two hours of sleeping, and it was time to start the day. My stomach still wasn't doing well, so I had only a bun for breakfast. After getting some food my stomach was better, thank God. So it was off to our first program of the day at a small school in the village. It went like any other program except Craig had to sit out a song because he didn't feel well either! Afterwards we went to get a soda and to rest a little. Soon after it was off to program number two. As we were going there, my stomach started to act up again! STUPID STOMACH! I hate being sick, I absolutely hate it. I took some Tums, and it helped a bit. We did our second program and, as the first, it was just as any other program. Next on our schedule was eating since it was 4:00 p.m. and we had not had lunch yet. We ate at one of our favorite places--Steers, an American burger joint! Next we dropped Alison and Craig off at the hospital to have Craig checked for malaria...he has none, just to let all you know. As they were at the hospital, we went to pick up the drums we ordered the previous day! We have African drums!!!! That is very good news! Then we went to pick up mail! I love mail. Got many letters from home, which made me very excited. Now we are at the Internet cafe checking e-mail, and I am feeling better. Hey, before I forget, I want to say HAPPY BIRTHDAY to my dearest sister who is turning 25 today! I love you, Jill. Well, I hope all is well with everyone.



Katie Ernst

Peace,

KT

Date: 4/21/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:



Jayme Rowoldt

During most programs, we take time for a question and answer period, so people can ask us whatever they want. We usually get questions about Cross Fire and our ministry, as well as those about us individually and the U.S. For many programs, we were asked about our marital status. Lately we've been going through a dry spell from that question, but today it resurfaced in new form. Most of the time we are all asked as a group if each of us is married. Today "sister Jane" (that's me) was the only one asked. One brave man stood up and asked me to share about my family background. I was so flustered that they singled me out that I just told them I was the second of three children. I didn't even consider that they were asking about my own family. So I didn't answer if I was married, but when six other guys crowded around to talk to me after the program, the news was shared. They all seemed quite excited to hear of it and told me they'd write to me. We'll see if they actually do write. Although many men wanted my contact info, there were no marriage proposals today. I guess I'll have to wait for more cows another day. At least I can rest assured that if I never find the love of my life in the States, I can move to Africa and pick from a multitude of men. Only two more weeks to go, but we're heading back to Tanzania where the marriage proposals were much more frequent. I wonder how many more offers I'll receive. At least I know that through all of the love and proposals, God still works and Jesus is still Lord.

Date: 4/22/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:



Alison Ondracek

So, not much happened today, other than a small child informing Josh that only girls wear earrings. So she called him a girl. It was funny.

One thing that has become a constant in our lives while here in Africa is dirt. You know you are dirty when the water running from your hair is literally black. It seems that no matter how hard we scrub ourselves, we still have a layer of dirt that has been ground into our pores. And once we've finished scrubbing ourselves and gotten dressed in our clothes that usually are in need of washing themselves, we step outside and are instantly dirty again. We've gotten used to this constant state of dirtiness, however, and some of us have even attempted to embrace it. But we do look forward to the day when we can take a hot

shower or bath, put on clean clothes, and actually continue to feel clean for hours. This whole dirt thing reminds me a lot of how we, as humans, are bound to our sinful nature. No matter how hard we try to live a pure and sinless life, we are doomed to failure simply because we are human. I'm so grateful that our God has the ability to wash us and make us completely clean. I look forward to the time when I can go home to my Father's house and stay clean.

Peace,
Alison

Date: 4/23/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:

Today we had on our schedule one of the important activities for anyone overseas—shopping. It's great to have an organised time to look for gifts and cool things to help us remember our time here. Before shopping, though, we got to go to the Internet café. We've been kinda spoiled here in Kampala to have fairly easy access and lots of opportunity to use the Net with (mostly) reasonable connections. Being here has helped me realise how much of a privilege it is to be able to communicate easily with special people.



Craig Schubert

After lunch, we headed to The African Village to do our shopping. The African Village is a string of roughly 30 small concrete shops around the perimeter of a grassed area. The shops are staffed by someone who will do their best to entice you in—"looking is free"—so hopefully you will agree to lighten your wallet buying something you could have potentially found in over half the stores there. When something catches your eye and you ask a price (price-tags are rare), the storekeeper will tell you an amount. Now if you're new to this African shopping caper, this amount might sound like a bargain. Don't pay it; it is just the starting price, a launch-pad for bargaining. Also, the starting price will vary depending on who you are. If you have white skin, for instance, you will get the wazungu (white person) price because it is a good bet that you're a tourist with money to spend. If, however, you are a more seasoned African shopper and you've decided you really do want the item or items, you will begin the bargaining process. Sometimes it is possible to pay less than half the starting price (possibly because it was a ludicrous price, or the salesperson really wants your business), but usually the final deduction isn't quite that drastic.

My shopping experience today wasn't brilliant. Having looked at similar places before, I wanted to find some of the nicer and more unique items, so I ducked in and out of almost half the shops trying to get an idea of what was there. Today, as well as my indecisiveness hindering the process, we didn't have too much time. I ended up getting a few things I like, but also with Ugandan shillings left that I planned on getting things with.

After shopping, we headed to do our April team outing—bowling and ice cream. The bowling alley was in a big, fancy shopping mall, and the six of us played one game on one of their four lanes. Now, I feel the attire should be mentioned: the girls were all wearing their culturally appropriate long skirts with varying degrees of mobility (some had to be held up while bowling), and all of us had bare feet. I had thought ahead and brought socks, but their shoes only went up to 11 and so didn't fit. Ann ended up with the highest score—in the 140s including three strikes—and a good time was had by all. Next we went for ice cream. For those who've read my journal from three weeks ago, we went back to the same place, but this time we could all get a Danish ice cream sundae and a drink each. They were again delicious and savoured. It really was great to have a day to do touristy things and just have fun as a team.

Shalom,
Craig

Date: 4/24/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Today we worshiped with the Kampala congregation. We helped to lead the worship, sharing songs, doing readings and prayers, and Alison gave the message. The thing I remember most about today is the outfit I wore. When we were in Masindi, Momma Jane and I became good friends. She always wore the traditional dress called a gomess and was beautiful wearing it. I commented on it and mentioned that I was thinking of getting one made for myself. On our last day in Masindi, she took me from the bus stop to her tailor to get my measurements. She had a beautiful gomess made for me. I bought a sash to go with it (with Ronald and Jayme's help) and wore it today. From Ronald's house, Katie, Josh, Ronald and I started out on foot to find a taxi. All the way, I could hear people saying, "Oh, wazunga, so smart!" It was fun, but a little embarrassing, too. When we got to the taxi at our driver's home, he commented on my dress. Before we left, Ronald told me the mommas wanted to help me. So I quickly found my sash being untied and my dress being unwrapped, right outside. Even though I was surrounded by four women, I still felt a little awkward. They folded, tugged, pinned and rewrapped until I was put together another way. They gave me a quick lesson so I would stay together and still be able to walk. Throughout the day, I was stared at and got many compliments. I love my dress, mostly because it reminds me of my friend, Jane, and because it's a piece of Ugandan culture that I can bring back home with me. What a beautiful and generous gift!



Ann Strum

Date: 4/25/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Today we left our friends in Uganda and headed back to Tanzania. It was a sad goodbye—again. We were with Ronald, Charles, Olivia and Jennifer on and off for three weeks. We stayed in their homes and became very close. Since there's no bus that goes from Kampala to Bukoba (that's the road we're taking), we hired a taxi and made arrangements for a daladala to meet us at the border. We got a bit of a late start (shocking!) and then made two stops—one at the equator for some photos of us standing in both hemispheres, and one for some quick bites for lunch. When we got to the border, our daladala was there. We had gotten our visas earlier in the week, so crossing the border was no problem. Once we got to our daladala, the adventures began. We quickly realized that we were back in Tanzania, where KiSwahili is the main language (a big change from Kenya and Uganda) and where there's always room for more people in the daladala, even when we feel we're past full. Jayme got to ride the first leg of the journey with two men's butts in her face—what fun! We had ridden about 30 minutes from the border when the driver stopped and said we had arrived at Kyaka, our agreed-on drop spot. I asked them to take us to the Nyumbeni ya Vijana (youth house). There was a lot of confusion; someone left and came back with a woman. She, thankfully, spoke English and explained that the place we asked to go was "just down that road" about 55 kilometers. UGH!! So, we tried to call our contact to get clarification, but his phone was off. I had tried to clarify over e-mail, but something hadn't worked right. So, we were 55 km away, with no arranged transportation, and after paying for our ride to Kyaka, we had less than 9000 Tanzania shillings between all of us. The driver said he would unload the other passengers and take us for another 60,000 T-shillings—a crazy amount. But our only other option was to wait for the bus coming from Bukoba. That bus probably would not have room for six people and all of our luggage. Plus, they would probably not let us on if we couldn't pay up front. Again, communication and transportation are the major stressors for me! So, we agreed to take the daladala and prayed that we could borrow some money from our new friends when we arrived. As we got to Kyanga, I was glad we had not chosen the bus route because the youth house was well off the main road. It was very humbling to arrive in a new place, ask someone to go find the contact, and then say, "Hi, I'm Ann. Can we borrow 60,000 T-shillings?" I am so thankful for the graciousness of Jovinary, who didn't bat an eye when I explained the situation—he just said it was no problem and they would help. Even when you arrange transportation to the wrong town in a foreign country where you don't speak the language well and you don't have the local currency, God still meets our needs and Jesus is still Lord! Amen!



Ann Strum

Peace,
Ann

Date: 4/26/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Karibu tena Tanzania! Welcome again to Tanzania! Our first full day back in Tanzania since we left for Kenya six weeks ago. Wow! So many things have happened in the past weeks that will be very memorable. We dipped our feet in the Nile River and Lake Victoria. We have also seen Lake Victoria, the second largest lake in the world, from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. We have gone on two safaris but didn't see any lions or cheetahs. Sad days! But we did meet a lot of amazing people and establish new friendships, too.



Josh Black

Today we had time to sleep in after an interesting journey from Uganda. Around 10 a.m., we went to visit the Bishop of the Karagwe diocese. He had lived in Decorah, Iowa, studying for two years and another five years in Chicago. We asked him about his experiences there, and he asked us about our experiences in East Africa. He was easy to talk to. As we were talking, he knew that we needed to fly to Dar Es Salaam, but we informed him that we had not made arrangements yet because of not knowing who to talk to; we also needed to be able to use a Visa card because the team budget was low due to being near the end of our trip. He immediately called the airline and arranged everything for us, making sure about luggage weight, payment options, and a place for us to stay the night before because we were to fly out of Bukoba, which is on Lake Victoria. Within ten minutes, he probably made about four or five phone calls confirming everything. He was really generous and helpful towards us. Once I saw him pick up the phone, I knew that this man was a man of action. It was cool how God took care of us through the Bishop. God bless him in the ministry of the Karagwe diocese.

Around 12:30 we headed over to our Danish friends' house for lunch. Jorgen is a teacher and Mette is working for the hospital in Karagwe. Carolina and Frederick are their kids. We met them back in Morogoro, TZ at the language school and made acquaintances with them. They are currently living on the church compound, and their house has a beautiful view of the African hills. It was good to hang out with them for a good portion of the day, as well as sing for them and learn about them and their experiences since we last saw them. As we were looking at their pictures on the wall, Jorgen told us where they were taken. Jorgen and Mette got married at age 20 and traveled around the world for six months for their honeymoon. Can you believe that? That would be so awesome, but something like that would take a lot of planning. It was definitely good to see familiar faces and hang out.

In the late afternoon, our contact Pastor Jovani wanted us to walk through the town of Kayanga, where we are staying. It took all of about five minutes walking, and there wasn't anything significantly different about it compared to other small Tanzanian towns. But when we were walking, an African man yelled at me in French. It was kinda awkward to be greeted that way since East Africa is not where I would expect to hear French spoken. So I responded with the very little French that I know; it made the five minute walk through the town that much more interesting. After dinner, Pastor Jovani and the lady who serves us at the guest house taught us a new song in Kiswahili. It was fun learning a new song to add to our repertoire, and we danced and sang around the table. We definitely were making a joyful noise to Jesus, our Lord. Sleeping in, visiting, eating, more visiting, more eating, and singing...not a bad day.

Date: 4/27/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

We are back in Tanzania! And we are back with all the fun of Tanzania, too! Let us take today as an example...first breakfast. Now, as we are eating breakfast, we hear screaming from the kitchen, and as it continues, I look up to see a man with a knife going after a woman! I guess this man was having troubles, but they controlled him and everything was fine. It was an exciting and interesting way to start the day. The



Katie Ernst

rest of the day was full of programs, tea, soda, waiting and talking with people. As we came our last program and the place where we were spending the night, we got a flat tire. Now, if there is one thing Africans can do with great speed, it is changing tires. Within ten minutes of it popping, they had it changed! Now, if it was me, it would have taken me 20 or 30 minutes. We sang for the students, and then it was off to bed, but they insisted on us ladies showering before we went to bed. So we agreed and we went to bathe. They said it wasn't very big, and it was getting night time, so we all should bathe together! At that point, I just started laughing, and all four ladies started laughing. They left us there behind a metal sheet fence, outside behind the rooms where the students stay, with four buckets to bathe with. We stood there looking at each other laughing, and then we proceeded to wash our feet! Only in Tanzania! Then after our shower, we walked to the choo (bathroom), and on the way, I slipped in mud and covered my foot and skirt in mud. Well, it was back to the bathing area! I cleaned my feet again and washed the mud from my skirt. I wasn't frustrated, mad, or even annoyed. That is how I know I am used to this way of life. Oh, the fun that has been had here in Africa!

Peace,
Katie Ernst

Date: 4/28/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Things I won't miss about days like today:

Being awakened at 6:00 a.m. by people who seem to rarely sleep
Arriving 45 minutes late to our program, but still having to wait another hour
Eating lunch at 2:00 p.m.

The coldness of me after sitting in the rain and the cooler mountain air
The incredibly bumpy ride that causes me to get air several times and allows me to have a free body workout while sitting; also, not being able to join in the sing-along because of all the bumps



Jayme Rowoldt

Things I'll always cherish and never forget:

The incredible hospitality of the people of the parish as they welcomed us and fed us a wonderful meal and served us tea, which helped us warm up
The music of the choirs, literally in a choir sing-off to go to the district competition
The dancing and celebration of the winning choir
The little girl who was oblivious to life around her as she danced along with the choirs and sang her own tune
The blessing the people found in the cold rain because now their crops will survive and they will have more water to live
The people walking long distances to come to church to worship with us
The breathtaking view of the valley from the hilltop
The joy people have as we share with them
The children, whose smiles captivate my attention and capture my heart
The beauty of each and every person we encounter

Every day there are good moments and frustrating ones, but in the end, the good always outweighs the bad. The frustrating ones provide funny stories of "remember that one time..." The good moments provide lasting memories of the amazing things I continually experience here; the things that change my heart and my life. Thank God for days like today.

Date: 4/29/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

We've had lots of adventures in Africa, and you'd think by now that unexpected events

wouldn't seem quite so unexpected anymore. I think they still often catch us off guard and make us have to do some mental adjusting. Take today for an example. We were told that we would visit the bishop, visit offices, and do a program at a secondary school. Well, we did meet with the bishop, and then we were asked to sing for the blessing of a new office that just happened to be celebrated today. Then we went back to the bishop, and then went and visited all of the offices there. After that, we piled into the Land Cruiser, expecting to head to the bank and then lunch. Instead, we were taken to a vocational training school to listen to the students sing for us and to sing one song for them. Then we were off to the bank. We expected to be able to just go in, exchange money and be on our way again. Instead, we had to argue our case that postage should not be \$10 for each of us and that an international stamp only costs sixty cents to send our traveler's cheques back to the States. After discussing this with the manager, we finally discovered that the actual charge was supposed to be only \$1 per cheque, which is a lot cheaper than what he was going to charge us. We finally got this whole crazy mess settled and headed to get lunch. We had expected to eat lunch at 1:00; instead, we ate around 3:00. Then we headed to a secondary school where we expected to do our normal choir sing-off with them. For the first time all day, this went exactly as we had expected. Afterward, we headed back to the hostel where we are staying. We decided to go to an Internet café so we could communicate with home and get some of our work stuff done. We went there and expected that we would all get to get online and send a few e-mails. Instead, only two computers were working, and then the network was down after the first two people used them. We've learned lots of lessons in patience in our time here. Even when nothing goes as expected, Jesus is still Lord!



Alison Ondracek

Peace,
Alison

Date: 4/30/2005

Submitted by: Craig Schubert

Journal Entry:



Craig Schubert

It seems a little strange for this to be my penultimate African journal entry, meaning we only have a little more than a week left before we board a plane to head back to the U.S. There has again been the memory time-warp, where it feels very recently that we arrived here, but at the same time it feels like we've been here for ages.

Today we had only one stop on our program—visiting the Nyakahanga hospital. When we arrived, we were shown their schedule outline with all the necessary items like signing the guest books and taking tea, and a three-hour program. Wow, a three-hour program. I got kinda discouraged at that, thinking we would have to fill most of the three-hour slot, which would be tiring as well as digging deep into our bag of songs. Really, though, there was nothing to worry about; the program was a big sing-off with the Hosanna choir from the congregation that meets at the hospital, and boy, were they good! I dare say the best we've seen all trip. So the program really was a joy and privilege to be a part of.

The last thing on the schedule then before goodbyes was lunch, and the hospital put on a magnificent African meal for us and the choir. It was a great chance to enjoy some fellowship over a fine meal. The hospitality never ceases to amaze me. The people we've met have made me feel truly welcome here in East Africa and taught me about being a gracious host. May our God of grace inspire you to offer a gracious hand to the guests in your life.

Shalom,
Craig

Date: 5/1/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Today we worshiped at the Cathedral of the Karagwe diocese. We left our guest house

around 9:30 so we would be there in time for 10 a.m. worship. On Friday night, our contact Jovinary asked me if I would be ready to preach on Sunday. I asked him to tell me the lessons for the day, and he said, "Be free," which meant "Pick anything you want." So, I'm a bit tired today because I was up late and up early preparing what to share. Anyway, the service actually started about 10:15—practically on time! We shared many songs and a drama, and the Amani choir shared many songs and got us to dance with them! I really love when we can share our gifts together, especially in worship, and I love when they incorporate their joyous and energetic dance into the service. During the service, we celebrated Holy Communion, which is always a privilege. I've been blessed by the realization that when we commune, we are dining with the entire Body of Christ, even those on different continents. Worship ended with an auction outside. Jovinary bought us several of our favorite things: pineapple and sweet bananas. I bought a bunch of bananas for 200 shillings (about twenty cents) and gave them to Jorgen and Mette, our friends who are missionaries from Denmark. We met them and their two children when we were in language school at Morogoro in January. What a treat to get to visit them at their new (since October) home! We also were given a bag of coffee beans by one of the congregation members. So generous! After worship and the auction, which ended about 2:30 p.m., we went to lunch. Some of the church members had prepared a wonderful meal for us. We visited with a couple of the members and the bishop while we ate. We said our thank-yous and goodbyes before heading back to Jorgen and Mette's for a quick farewell. Then we headed back to the Nyumbani ya Vijana (youth house), also known as the Karagwe Hotel, which has been home base this week. We finished packing, loaded our things, paid our bills and said goodbye to Grace and Pastor Martin, two of our friends in Karagwe. We finally got on the road around 5:00 for our journey to Bukoba. When we arrived in Bukoba, we checked in, unloaded our things and headed out to get some food and to see Lake Victoria. Pastor Koraro and Chirizo, our driver, took us to a restaurant right on the lake. We have now seen Lake Victoria in all three countries! It is a HUGE and beautiful lake—second largest to Lake Superior in the world! We ordered food and sodas, walked on the beach and put our feet in the lake. Our food arrived about 90 minutes later, so we had plenty of time to enjoy the sand in our toes. After dinner, we settled into our rooms to get some sleep.



Ann Strum

Date: 5/2/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Another travel day in Tanzania, another day of questions and waiting! We awoke to claps of thunder, flashes of lightning, pouring rain and no electricity. Actually, I knew when I woke to the rain that there probably would not be power. So I decided to sleep for another 15 minutes rather than try to shower in the dark. I packed my things and made a mad dash through the rain to dining room for breakfast, but the door was locked. We waited outside until someone opened the door. It was 7:00, the time we were supposed to be picked up, so we hurried to eat and headed to our rooms to get our luggage closer to the parking lot but still sheltered from the rain. When Jovinary and Chirizo arrived about 7:45, we loaded and headed to the airport in two shifts. Craig and I went in the first shift with our luggage. When we arrived, I was ready to hurry to get our luggage on board and get going, as our flight was scheduled to leave at 8:25. But when we got there, there was no one there. Chirizo finally found someone who said we would not be flying now because of the rain. So we waited outside on the porch, sort of for a while. Eventually, the staff came and asked us to bring all the luggage that we wanted to have checked in to be weighed. We knew that we exceeded the weight limits because we had weighed them earlier in the week and made arrangements with the airline. Unfortunately, the person we had spoken to wasn't there. So, we chose a few pieces of luggage to stay behind until the next flight—perhaps today or tomorrow—and they agreed to take the rest, even if it was a little overweight. So, the others went through security, and I waited with Jovinary and Chirizo to see if perhaps our other bags would fit on the plane. It was suggested to me that with a little "incentive," there might be room on this plane. Five thousand T-shillings later, all our luggage fit just fine. So, I set out to tackle the next problem. It was after 10:00, and we were still in Bukoba—we were supposed to be in Dar, and Boni and Isaac were waiting to meet us there. So, I used the pay phone and some extra phone cards I had from Same in February to try and call. However, apparently you can't use a land line pay phone to call a mobile phone, which is what Boni and Isaac use. Ugghh!! Communication and transportation in East Africa make me crazy! I said



Ann Strum

many times today, "Six days. I'm ready to go home."

I finally talked to Boni's mom and asked her to tell Boni that we were still in Bukoba and didn't know when we would leave because the rain just kept falling. I guess dirt runways, small planes and heavy rains just don't mix. I went through security and sat down in the waiting room with the others. We said goodbye to Jovinary through the window. Saying goodbye just doesn't get easier for me. It was getting to be about noon, and we started to think about how we would get lunch. Jayme and Katie went out to investigate and brought back sodas. While they were gone, Craig came and told me we had been invited to go and get lunch by the woman who had given everyone candy and biscuits earlier. I spoke with her, and she wanted to treat us to lunch at their café in town. She arranged for transportation, and we all headed to lunch. After lunch, she invited us to her home to meet her husband. We saw pictures of their grandchild in India and also saw the third largest registered elephant tusk in the world. They have two tusks—one is 120 pounds and the other is 167. That's a lot of ivory! It turns out they own the Precision Air office in Bukoba, as well as many other businesses on this block of town. When they heard we were visitors to the country and the flight was delayed, they decided to show us hospitality and invite us to lunch. How kind! It was a bit confusing, though, because we didn't know exactly what was happening. But it was a memorable experience, and we got back to the airport in plenty of time. Around 1:30, a man came out and said we couldn't fly yet because of a thunderstorm over Lake Victoria. More waiting! Then, at about 2:30, he said we were still delayed because visibility in Mwanza was zero. Uggh! We finally heard we were going to go around 3:30. After they walked the runway to make sure it was okay, we got going a little past 4:00. Only eight hours after our scheduled departure! The flight to Mwanza was fine. When we got there, we found the Precision Air flight had already gone, so we would have to wait and see if there was enough room on the Air Tanzania flight to Dar that was leaving at six. Thankfully, we got on the flight and had supper in the air. Just before we left, a new friend that we met during our waiting in Bukoba let us text message Boni to tell him we would be coming on Air Tanzania. I was so thankful to arrive in Dar with all our luggage and to find our first East African friends, Isaac and Boni, there waiting for us. What a wonderful reunion!! They took us and another friend, Sylvia (who is in Tanzania and Malawi for eight weeks doing medical practice studies) to AEE, where we got settled back into our first home. It is such a blessing to be back here with familiar faces and places. I am amazed and so thankful to our good friends who were expecting us around 10:00 a.m. but were there to pick us up when we finally arrived around 8:00! It is going to be a good week with good friends!

Date: 5/3/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

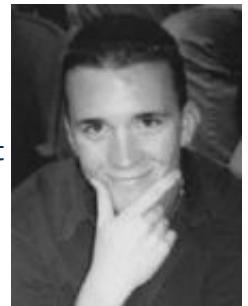
Journal Entry:

Today was our first day back in Dar Es Salaam and the beginning of our last days in East Africa. It's crazy how fast time flies. I can remember when we first arrived in Tanzania in January and how hot it was and how we didn't know anyone. Dar Es Salaam is still hot, but now we have made many new friends in East Africa, and I will miss them.

Some other things that were strange to us then have now become normal. Like going to the bathroom and usually having a hole for a toilet instead of a European toilet; traveling in daladas (small buses); saying "Habari?" (How is your news?) and "Asante!" (Thank you!). I will miss the goats, chickens, roosters, dogs, donkeys and cows that we see on the side of the road or sometimes on the road, stopping traffic.

Today was mainly relaxing. We shopped a little bit in town and hung out with our contact and friend Isaac at the African Evangelical Enterprises where we are staying. It's the same place we stayed when we first arrived in East Africa, so it's nice to be somewhere familiar for our last week here. I will certainly miss this place that is so amazing and has taught me many things about myself, about people, and about God. The people we have met really love their guests and love God with all of their hearts. The people have been so good to us, and I feel like they have given me more than I ever gave them. My hope is that I can give more of myself every day, like the people of East Africa have given to me.

Josh



Josh Black

Date: 5/4/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

So, for my last journal in East Africa, I was going to write about some of the mysteries we have encountered in the past four months...like Ann's ability to fall in all three countries. Ann's packing job and what does she put in there? How my faith has grown because of the scariness of public transportation. The mystery of a hermaphrodite cow found on the side of the road in Kampala, Uganda. But instead of talking about all of that, I want to talk about something else. What that something else is, I don't know. I will just start writing and see what my pen wants to put down.



Katie Ernst

Sixty-forty. That is how my heart feels in these last couple days. Sixty percent of my heart wants to stay here in East Africa, here with the people, here with the culture. Forty percent of my heart wants to go home, home to see my family and friends, home to my culture. I find it hard to express my deep gratitude to God, to Youth Encounter, and to all who have supported me this year. Words would only fail to express my feeling and thanks. Because of these experiences, I will be forever changed; as a matter of fact, I am already changed.

A wise woman once told me "You are not the person God has intended you to be until you travel overseas and experience another culture." When she first told me that, I believed her, but I had no clue what she meant. And now I know. One of the major things I have learned while being on Cross Fire is about the family of God and ALL of his children. Every time I drink water from the tap, I will think of my brothers and sisters who don't have clean water. Every time I am able to drive to a place and make it safely, I'll think of my brothers and sisters who know at least one person who has died in a vehicle accident. Every time I see people in the hospital, or if I'm ever in the hospital, I'll think of my brothers and sisters who don't have proper health care or even the ability to get to a hospital before they get worse. Do you get what I'm saying? I could go on and on. Every time I complain about being late, I'll think about my brothers and sisters who are just thankful for being able to wake up in the morning.

My prayer for all who read this is that you would have an experience that would shake you to the core of your being, that would remove your foundations out from under you. That you would have an experience that would stretch and pull you till you are a new shape. I also pray that you remember the whole world always and not just your own little world.

"Learn to do right, seek justice, lift the oppressed, and defend the widow." Isaiah 1:17

Peace,
Katie Ernst

Date: 5/5/2005

Submitted by: Jayme Rowoldt

Journal Entry:

Here it is...the last journal I'm writing from Africa. It is hard to believe we are just days away from leaving. I hope I'll have the chance to come back, but I know I'll be forever changed by my time here. Today we got to go shopping. Our friend Jane met us to accompany us. The good thing about shopping with a local is that they'll take you to local places. We were on a search for more khangas and kitengas. Jane took us to a little street I like to call "fabric heaven." There was store after store of fabric, and an entire corridor flooded with vibrant materials. It was incredible. From there, we went to a local market for Alison to buy a pounder/grinder thingy. It was so great to go to places that most tourists never even see. That is the joy of having so many friends here in East Africa.



Jayme Rowoldt

Date: 5/6/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek
Journal Entry:

It's difficult to believe that in a few short days, I will be back in the States. As I think back on our time here, I remember how strange things seemed to me. Even though I had been to Tanzania three years ago, many things about the culture, the environment, and just life in general took some getting used to. The biggest thing was getting used to the food and how to eat it. Now when I eat rice, it won't seem right without some sort of soup to put on it, and I'll miss eating ugali with my hands. I'll also miss the warm greetings we are sure to get whenever we arrive anywhere here. I've grown to love the fact that people look forward to our coming and rush to meet us as soon as we set foot out of our vehicle. The greetings overwhelmed us at first, but now I've noticed that they put smiles on all of our faces. I've grown to love tea time. I've learned so much about hospitality and what it means to receive a guest. A visit hardly seems complete without sitting down to tea and conversation with one another. And as annoying as it seemed at points in our journey, I will miss the shrieks of delight that escape children's mouths as we pass by because they've just seen "wazungu" (white people). I will also miss the joy that appears on their faces, sometimes even accompanied by a happy dance, when we acknowledge them. I will miss being a part of a community that cares more about people than about keeping to a time table. I will miss the immense beauty that has constantly surrounded us, even when I've forgotten to look. And I will especially miss all of the amazing people who have shown us so much love and have more often than not gone out of their way to help us. I will miss my new friends, and I will miss the culture that they live in. I hope and pray that God will once again allow me to return to this incredible place so that I might meet up with all the people here whom I have grown to love.

Peace,
Alison



Alison Ondracek

Date: 5/7/2005
Submitted by: Craig Schubert
Journal Entry:

Well, it's our penultimate day in Africa, and things here are getting wrapped up: souvenirs with cloth and newspaper, and team business with errands. Since we needed to change our shillings to US\$ today, a trip to town was in order. Jayme, our team treasurer, was the only one who had to go, but Ann and I went along as well for the chance of last minute shopping. After waiting for a while, we did manage to make it to the bureau before it closed. That taken care of, we headed out shopping to use up our remaining Tanzanian shillings.

In the afternoon, we headed out for our last visit to a congregation (apart from the service tomorrow night). This was the church of Martin, who works at Upendo FM, the radio station we visited in January and again this week. When we arrived, there were four choirs finishing their rehearsals, so we went round and said hello to them. Then it was on to the program. Our last Africa choir sing-off. A few choirs hung around at first, but it ended up just us and the youth choir swapping songs. Then we had dinner together, said our goodbyes and headed back to where we were staying.

So, our time here is just about at an end, but I pray that the memories, lessons and effect of our time here will live on.

May the God of eternity fill your moments.

Shalom,
Craig

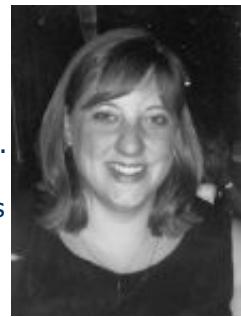


Craig Schubert

Date: 6/18/2005
Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hello friends! It's good to get back to writing to you via the web page journals. It's been a while—sorry about that. Since returning from East Africa, I've had many wonderful experiences. It's been interesting to see how I look at things differently this past month. To see how different some things are and how similar others are when I compare my Team experiences in East Africa and the United States. One thing is communication. It's much easier to communicate with friends and family now that we're back. Some of our host families have internet access and let us use their e-mail and telephones. It's great. The other is getting back to our friendly 15-passenger white van and trailer. We used to complain about "living in the van," but after experiencing East African transportation, we are living the luxurious life in the van that seats 6 with spaces for many more. On the flip side, some things are very similar. Back in the USA, we continue to meet amazing kids and adults, and we experience God's wonderful love in so many places.

**Ann Strum**

Today in Bartlett was the closing worship for VBS. We had a terrific week of Serengeti Trek, and it was such a blessing to sing and dance with the kids. It was also great to be able to share some of the East African culture that we experienced with them. They were quick to learn and love the song Mambo Sawa Sawa. The English translation says, "When Jesus is on the throne, everything will be just fine." It's a song that blessed me often when we were in East Africa, and it continues to remind me to trust God now. What a cool thing to watch 250 youth and all the adult leaders worshiping by singing a song in Kiswahili! Another way I was blessed today was by my host mom, Sharyn. Katie, Ali and I have had the privilege of staying with Sharyn for the past week. She's a wonderful woman of God who has truly been a mom to us. She has made us feel right at home and blessed us in so many ways. I have loved our breakfast and late night chats—we stayed up until 1:30 last night sipping tea and talking about life. Today, we did a little shopping and had a blast. I feel honored to be able to call Sharyn my friend and sister in Christ. God continues to add faces to my memory bank of people I will never forget, and I am so thankful!! May you be blessed today and think of the people who have blessed you in such a way that you will never forget them!

Love always,
Ann

Date: 6/24/2005**Submitted by:** Craig Schubert**Journal Entry:**

Gudday again!!

It's been a while, I know—sorry. We did such a good job of keeping on top of our journal entries once a day in Africa, then we got back and three a week seemed too easy, perhaps. Anyway, here's something from the road at least.

**Craig Schubert**

Today was my birthday, golden one at that—24 on the 24th. Since we are doing evening VBS here in Westfield, Wisconsin, we had the day to spend how we pleased. The booming metropolis of Westfield (around 1,200 people) doesn't have a cinema, so we took a half hour drive to watch a movie. Even there we didn't escape the kids from VBS; one of the families had come to see the same movie at the same time!

In the evening we had the VBS wrap-up event, which was a picnic at the park with us doing some songs. It was cool to spend time playing with the kids and hanging out with some families.

Then in the evening I got to talk to Mum and Dad. It had been a while, so it was really good to catch up for my birthday.

Anyway, there's a quite update from the life of Cross Fire, back on the road here in the U.S. of A.

Keep smilin',

Shalom,

Craig.

<>

Date: 6/30/2005

Submitted by: Josh Black

Journal Entry:

Wow! It has sure been a while since we have done any journal entries. Sorry for that. Well, we arrived back in the U.S. on May 9 and have some VBS's and some programs and continued traveling. It has been fun to be able to stay in one spot for a longer period of time and get to know the people a little better, but at the same time, it can feel funny not to travel after a few days.



Josh Black

We have also had the chance to visit a few different Bible camps in Wisconsin and that has been fun. It is cool to see the different things happening at each camp but also some of the similar things they are doing. Going to camp as a camper and even as a staff member is one of those experiences and even a blessing that leaves a lasting impact on someone. It is such a cool way to get to know God through the activities and songs. I really enjoyed my time at camp, and I pray that all of the camps around the country are being blessed by God in their ministry and experiencing the impact he has on all of us.

Anyhoo, after the many different forms of transportation in east Africa, I really enjoy the space of our big white van more. Before we left, the van was not as appreciated as it probably should have been, but now it is definitely seen as a blessing because we have so much room for ourselves and all of our things and we don't have to walk everywhere either. Some things I just take for granted sometimes, and I hope I can learn to want what I have more regularly than always wishing I had more.

Well that's about all I have to say for today. Please pray for all of the people we met in east Africa and for continued blessings for the people we have met here in the U.S.; you are all such a blessing to us. Thank you!

Peace!

Josh

Date: 7/1/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Yes folks, we are still alive! You don't believe me, do you? Well, BELIEVE it...we are alive and kickin'! God is good! We have been so loved since being back and so well taken care of. We absolutley love the people that God puts in our path! I can't even start to tell you about the endless hosts we have had since being back that were exactly what I needed...like when we stayed in Bartlett, IL for the first time and we stayed with a woman named Sharyn. She fed me coffee ice cream and let me watch the biggest TV ever! Oh, how I needed to just get away that week from the world, and boy did I ever. So thank you Sharyn! Oh man, there are so many other stories; I just don't have the time to tell all of them. It is amazing how God takes care of us. He gives us exactly what we need when we need it. He knows us; He should since He only formed us and everything! Well, I hope those who are reading hear this simple message about the grace of God. I pray that you do and that God will also remind me from time to time.



Katie Ernst

One Love,

KT

Date: 7/3/2005

Submitted by: Alison Ondracek

Journal Entry:

Hey Mom, look! We're doing journal entries again! Yes folks, my mom yelled at me. Sorry all.

So, we're back in Iowa. It's interesting to be back here. I went to four years of school not far from where we are right now, and I've begun to miss people. I think about how different our lives are now, but also how amazing it is that we even met to begin with. There are some people that I'm not truly sure how I even met them. I think it's amazing how God brings people together. I wonder what it would be like if one of us had decided not to join this team this year. Many of us had different ideas of what our lives would look like this year. Take Craig, for an example. He originally intended to join a team last year, but life happened, and he had to wait a year. What about Ann? She had a great job and life made sense right where she was, but she decided to go against logic and apply for team. In the end, God's perfect timing worked out to bring five incredible people into my life, plus the people on the other 12 teams. I am so grateful for these people, and I wonder how I lived before I knew them. It's a good thing God is so much smarter than us. I think we'd be in a lot of trouble if she wasn't.

Peace,
Alison



Alison Ondracek

Date: 7/14/2005

Submitted by: Ann Strum

Journal Entry:

Hello friends! Today, I'm writing to you from Prairie Village, KS. We arrived in town yesterday--30 minutes early! (It's notable for those who know me because they know I'm rarely early.) We set up and had dinner with the youth. They had just returned from a servant trip to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. It was cool to see a group of high school youth so excited to be with each other at church and to hear what they experienced and learned while serving a people living in poverty. After supper, we shared our experiences from East Africa in our program. It was awesome to see our brothers and sisters of all ages and stages worshipping God while dancing and singing in English and Kiswahili. I am always moved when I see people's willingness, even eagerness to connect and learn about Swahili culture when we teach a song in Kiswahili. It is such a privilege to me to be able to share God's love this way and to build bridges between cultures.



Ann Strum

Last night, Ali and I stayed with a really cool family. We enjoyed visiting with Katie and Hannah and Katie's parents until the girls had to leave to go hang with friends. I loved that they talked about "real" things like friends, drugs, curfew, etc. When Katie left, she tried (not too diligently or successfully) to push her curfew back and then kissed her folks good night. It was awesome to see the love shared so openly between this teen (and her friend, too) and her parents. As I think about it today, it's a good reminder to me of how God wants to be a parent to us. He wants us to talk to Him about the real stuff of our lives. He wants us to bring our friends to hang out with us, talk to Him and hang out at His house. But mostly, He wants to love us in amazing ways, and He smiles when we love him back.

Have a terrific day and know that God is loving and blessing you today in the midst of your circumstances.

Love always,

Ann :)

Date: 8/7/2005

Submitted by: Katie Ernst
Journal Entry:

Hey everyone,

Sorry for not being so good about the journals this summer. I won't even make up any excuses about why we never had time because, let's face it, I would be lying! Why today am I writing? Well, tonight we go back the Twin Cities for our last week together as a team--that is, with Youth Encounter. So I believe and I am almost for sure that this is the last journal entry of the year. Thank you for reading, and I hope you have enjoyed. I know I will look back at our journals and remember the fun, sad, hard, tiring, stressful, great times of team life. When I read them, I'll remember the events that took place that day, the smell, the sights, the sounds, and the tastes. But more importantly I will remember the people who filled my day with blessing and hope and joy. A special thanks to those who might be reading this who housed us or took care of us in any shape or form. You are why this ministry runs so smoothly. So goodbye, my friends, and hopefully we will see each other face to face someday!



Katie Ernst

I leave you with this prayer from Shantideva:

May I become at all times, both now and forever

A protector of those without protection

A guide for those who have lost their way

A ship for those with oceans to cross

A bridge for those with rivers to cross

A sanctuary for those in danger

A lamp for those without light

A place of refuge for those who lack shelter

And a servant to all in need

For as long as space endures,

And for as long as living beings remain,

Until then may I, too, abide

To dispel the misery of the world.

The peace of the Lord be you always,

Katie