

# New Vision 2006-07 Journal

**Date:** 9/20/2006

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

New Vision was officially commissioned Friday night, and now we've been on the road for four whole days. Our first weekend, we did a Family Culture Program and three Sunday services in Mason City, Iowa. Sunday night we went to the University of Northern Iowa to do a Family Culture Program at a campus church. Emily, Sara and I stayed together for our day off on a farm in the middle of a cornfield. We watched all three Anne of Green Gables movies (at least 10 hours worth) and stamped cards all day with our host mom. It was a great day off. Tuesday morning we did a chapel in Waterloo, IA, and now we're in Ottumwa, IA. Sara and I are staying with an illustrator who draws the noodles for the Kraft Macaroni and Cheese boxes, the kids on the back of the Lunchables packages, and various other products.



**Amanda Whittaker**

This church has a prayer labyrinth set up in a large dark room that they let us use for our devotions this morning. It was really peaceful to walk silently along the labyrinth path and be still to listen for God. "Be still and know that I am God" is a kids' song we've sung a lot lately. I'm starting to think it's more than a coincidence that I like that song so much. I think those are words I need to dwell on a bit more. It's not real easy for me to block out all the distractions of traveling and living on the road and just sit silently and listen for God's word. I sure am in a different frame of mind when I make time to listen for God, though.

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**Date:** 9/22/2006

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker

**Journal Entry:**

On the road again. I am really having a great time this year. Four of us just stayed at this awesome host home. We were served and served and made comfortable by our hosts, and it felt so incredible to be in a place where we could just "be" instead of having to feel obligated to entertain. Our team has been having some fun getting to know each other better, and I must say that I really do enjoy their presence and the life and energy that we make on and off stage. I am a little homesick right now, because when I talked to my dad a few weeks back, he was having a hard time at work. And now some other things are happening at home, but I know that God will take care of everyone and that it is more important for me to be out on the road sharing the Gospel than it is for me to be back home with my family. I look forward to traveling in the South and look forward to how God is going to work this year.



**Boe Parker**

Boe Parker  
New Vision

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**Date:** 9/28/2006

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

The three girls and I, Pastor Cindy, and Emily, our host family's daughter, got a chance to visit a Catholic monastery. The monastery was of the St Benedictine order and dedicated to St. Meinrad. The whole visit made me very excited because over the past few months I've been reading on and off a book by Kathleen Norris, titled *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*, and throughout the book she mentions some of the Benedictine monasteries that she has visited. These monasteries have significantly altered the way she views her faith, and have helped develop it.



**Karl Schmitt**

Now that I've had the chance to do just a brief visual tour, I can understand why such a place would impact faith. The pure beauty of the location and buildings would encourage anyone to enter a worshipful mindset and focus on God. The chapel was amazing on the outside and reminded me of the cathedrals in Europe. There are stained-glass windows on a number of different Saints and beatitudes. Pastor Cindy was also able to share random tidbits of cool knowledge about monasteries, this particular monastery plus the nearby abbey.

We also had some interesting theological discussion about Catholicism and Lutheranism. This definitely rounded out a thoroughly educational and enjoyable outing in Holland, Indiana.

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**Date:** 10/1/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**

Hello everybody!! I hope all you journal readers are doing well! Today New Vision is in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and last night we had a program for some of the youth at Kern Memorial United Methodist Church. After the program, we had a bunch of kids over to the house we were staying in for some pizza, video games and worship. (What an awesome combination! You can't get much better than that!) We led worship this morning at Kern and really had a great time getting to hang out with the students afterwards for Sunday school and lunch. Thanks so much to Tyler, the youth director, Jay, our host dad, and all the people at Kern. You guys are awesome, and may God continue to use you to spread his message.



**Sara Williams**

We have been having an amazing time so far on the road. I feel so blessed to be doing this, and even though we have just started this adventure together, our team has seen God work in so many amazing ways. I already feel that my teammates are my family, and we have only known each other for six weeks! It's also so amazing to me how God continues to provide for us and how generous people are in welcoming our team into their lives and homes. I think that I am getting so much more out of this experience than I am giving. There are wonderful people we have met that are really having an impact on their communities, and it's so cool to see God work all around the country.

We are all called to be the hands and feet of Christ. Whether it's traveling around the world for a year, inviting perfect strangers into your home or just being a listening friend, there are so many ways that we can serve. I encourage all of you today to be the hands and feet of Christ. Take advantage of this beautiful day that God has given you and use it! Step out of your comfort zone, and you will reap far more than you could ever sow!

In Christ, Sara

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**Date:** 10/1/2006

**Submitted by:** Andrew Smith

**Journal Entry:**

A couple days ago, we had our best program ever. And it wasn't because the music was good, or that our team has a good stage presence. God was using us that night. He used us to connect with every single person in the congregation. And there were a lot of people. Everybody was clapping, and dancing, and singing along. Smiles on every face, hands and arms reaching for God. And God reaching back for them. It felt almost euphoric. But as quickly as the rush came, it went away.



**Andrew Smith**

The next day we arrived at an assisted living/senior care home to play a few songs and put

smiles on some faces. Every program up until then was basically the same. Playing for middle school and high school students, parents, youth ministers, etc. So I had no idea what to expect. I guess I was a little nervous. But nervousness turned to intimidation the second we walked through the doors. The first person we saw was a lady in a wheelchair gazing at us with a look in her eyes that I was completely unfamiliar with. I could almost hear her saying, "Why are you here? What could you possibly expect to gain from being here?" Downright gut-wrenching intimidation.

We set up, completely acoustic (hand drum and acoustic guitar) and started playing near one of the nurses' stations. People started gathering to hear us play. But it was difficult. I have no idea what any of them had been through in their life, but I could still read the despair in their eyes. Except for one lady. She was so happy and had the hugest smile on her face. She was clapping with the music. Kind of. But she was singing along. Then others were singing along. Clapping, smiling, enjoying the presence of His music. Then we got to migrate to "the other side" of the facility to share music with everyone else. And it was exactly the same as the first time. Nobody seemed to care. They seemed disinterested, or almost annoyed that we were there. Except for one lady. Right in the middle of the first song, her hands started clapping. Almost as if she couldn't control. As if her hands were being forced to move along with the rhythm. And she started singing. And others started clapping, and smiling, and singing, and swaying with the music. These intimidating looks changed to pleasure and peace of mind, if only for that moment. Like God had taken all of their burdens, all their worries, all of their cares, and held on to them so they could really enjoy themselves. If only for that moment, they were set free.

I came into this year thinking that God was going to be using me and my team to reach out to people. Just like he did at the program the day before where people got to worship in a new way and see a new light. But at that home, we were just there. God was using those two ladies to help other people open their eyes, and allow God back into their hearts, so that He could give them peace. If only for that moment.

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**Date:** 10/2/2006

**Submitted by:** Emily Wharton

**Journal Entry:**

Sometimes God gives you little gifts that you never expected, or even asked for. This time He gave me the gift of being able to stay with my family at home and playing at my home church. My team got to meet my family! I was so excited!!! All the girls stayed at my house, which included my parents, two brothers, and two sisters, and Cassie from the office was there too! Needless to say, we had a busy house for those few days. But it was so much fun!



**Emily Wharton**

We were able to play for my church's ESL program (English as a Second Language) called The Hope Center. We did a song in Spanish called "Cantad Al Señor" and another song that they had been working on in English, Spanish, and Albanian (there are several families from Albania that come to the classes). The next night was our concert. We had such a relaxed time, and everyone really seemed to enjoy themselves. It was a great encouragement to actually see the approval and support on my parents' faces that night. It was so hard saying goodbye to my family again, and I'm not ashamed to admit that I cried on the ride out of town. But I knew that it was a good beginning to our tour.

I really think it was good for my teammates to meet my family, if only to find out why I'm so quirky! I think they had a good time.

Later alligator!

**Date:** 10/4/2006

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

This week we spent our day off in Ashville, NC, at the church where we had done a Family Culture Program and youth Bible study the night before. We stayed in the church building, which is also a school. The girls stayed in a meeting room near the classrooms, while the guys stayed in the other building in the music room. I woke up at 7:45 on Monday morning to the darling sound of small children singing "The wheels on the bus go round and round" as they marched through the hallway past our door. After lunch, some of us went hiking in the Blue Ridge Mountains. We hiked up Craggy Pinnacle, which is just short of being 6,000 ft tall. The fall colors of the trees made for quite a view from the top of the mountains.



**Amanda Whittaker**

Back at the church, sitting on a book cart, I noticed a book entitled "What's So Amazing About Grace?". Being that we do a lot of programs in Lutheran churches, I hear the word "grace" tossed around a lot. I believe C.S. Lewis once mentioned that grace is what Christianity has to offer the world that all other religions are missing out on. Other religions have creation stories, salvation stories, and resurrection stories, but none of them make use of grace the way Christianity does.

What is grace? To me, grace seems to be the Holy Spirit-fed ability to give. To have grace is to serve, to forgive and heal relationships for no other reason than simply to praise and worship God by restoring and renewing creation to the Father's will. I flipped through a few pages of the book and tried to imagine what a grace-filled world might look like. I can't really comprehend how much healing the church could offer people if we graced every friend and stranger with love, regardless of their past. Instead of being fearful of people we don't understand, what if we graced all people with respect as precious princes and princesses of our King, Jesus Christ? Instead of forming negative stereotypes because we don't agree with someone's way of life, what if we graced each individual who is different from us with compassion? Can you even picture what a grace-filled society would look like? I don't think I can, but I know it would hold a breath-taking beauty that would make God proud.

Maybe then non-churched individuals wouldn't feel like they have to have their act together before they can step foot inside church doors. Maybe then persons with questionable jobs or lifestyles wouldn't feel so judged by those of us who have good intentions, but get so caught up in ridiculous, Pharisee-like laws, policies, and traditions that we cease to be inviting. I can't think of any life-changing force more powerful than copying Christ's grace-filled lifestyle of being compassionate and loving to people who haven't done anything to earn it. Wow! We, as followers of Christ, have a lot of potential to improve life for all.

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**Date:** 10/9/2006

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker

**Journal Entry:**

I have really been blessed these last couple of weeks with a great insight on how God provides for us. Andrew and Karl and I stayed at Andrew's aunt and uncle's house south of Nashville, and we left the next morning without the thought crossing our mind that we had forgotten our lunches. We decided that we would just scavenge the bin in the van for food when we stopped. We stopped on the road at a rest stop so that we could go over our program eval with Cassie, and when we were getting our food out at a picnic table, a couple of gentlemen came over and asked if we would like to take the rest of their lunch stuff because they didn't have enough room for it and they didn't want it to go bad. We said yes and talked with them about what they were doing, and they told us that their group was from a Baptist church and they were going up into the northeast states to travel around and to see the sights. It was awesome to see how God worked, because the rest stop that



**Boe Parker**

we stopped at was the only one for 50 miles, and the people were getting ready to leave right when we got there. I just love how God uses timing and little coincidental things to make things work out for us. God is awesome.

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**Date:** 10/9/2006

**Submitted by:** Emily Wharton

**Journal Entry:**

Today we toured downtown Charleston, SC. The three girls took the van and drove to the visitors center in the middle of town. We walked up and down the beautiful streets, looking at the architecture and the history of the town. We were headed toward the outdoor market, but got sidetracked while looking at the cute shops along the way. We ended up missing our turn-off and walked all the way from the center of town to the edge where the harbor was! It was a beautiful trip, yet longer than we'd anticipated. And we still hadn't gotten to the market yet. We took pictures in Battery Park at the waterfront. Sara fed the pigeons and Amanda climbed on the cannons! Then Sara and I did the "Charleston" in Charleston (well, we actually just made it up). But we had a great time. We finally made it to the market, but things were too expensive. That night we had dinner with the youth leaders and some of the youth. They cooked us a fabulous meal. The night before we had done a youth night with about 45 people there. It was a great time and the kids really got into the music. Some of the girls gave us directions to some of the little stores and coffee shops for our trip downtown. I was really excited to see this part of the country because I'd never been to the East Coast before. The people were so fun and welcoming, I hope we'll get to go back sometime soon.



**Emily Wharton**

Toodles for now!  
Em

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**Date:** 10/13/2006

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Today we got to do our first real lock-in! While the whole team was totally exhausted before we even got there, it was still a ton of fun. It kinda appealed to our rock-star desires a little (at least in my head) since we got to do an outside, night concert w/risers and everything. The kids were great and involved, and we got to do a question and answer session later with them where they asked some very good faith related questions, and Andrew got a chance to basically do a short version of his sharing.



**Karl Schmitt**

At this lock-in, I got to meet a pretty cool youth advisor, Alison, from one of the local churches. She is an at home mom with kids. The group she works with is small, actually about the size of the youth group I grew up in, 9-12 kids. I got to talk a bunch with her throughout the evening, and found out that she was a PK as well, which was neat.

We also got the chance to carve some pumpkins, (which my teammates laugh at me for how I say it...bah... we grow ours up at home...). Amanda was the primary drawer, I did some of the initial carving, and a friend of Emily's finished the carving. Sara had the vitally important job of cleaning out all the gooky stuff from inside. We almost saved the seeds to bake too, but that whole on the road thing. I even carved a mini-pumpkin. It was cute.

So that was just kinda the evening in a nutshell. Besides all that fun stuff we hung with the kids a little, blew out a surge protector, and spent an inordinate amount of time sound checking (since we changed from inside to outside I had to re-equalize everyone!)

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**Date:** 10/18/2006

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker  
**Journal Entry:**

We've been in Florida for over a week now. We started in Jacksonville, and moved down the Atlantic Coast to Miami. Tuesday we drove west across 75 to Naples. 75 is nicknamed "Alligator Alley", and the highway lived up to its name! We saw several gators from the highway as we drove past swamps and rivers in the Everglades.

I never would have guessed how blessed we'd be to stay here in Naples. Our whole team is staying in the nicest house that I have ever been in. We had a great day at Emmanuel Lutheran Church. We led two chapels this morning, one chapel for one-year-olds (that was a new experience) and one chapel for pre-schoolers. Emmanuel has educational programming every Wednesday, so we also joined in the festivities this evening. We started out by joining the families at dinner. During the end of dinner our team played a few songs and tried out a new skit for the families. After dinner we split up into three groups and led some of the children and youth classes. Andrew and I worked with the junior and senior high students. A few of them were rowdy, but once we started the Bible study activities, everyone participated and calmed down. We did a blind-faith activity, watched a video related to God's presence in the midst of storms, and did a Bible study. It was a great evening, and made me excited to go be a youth director again after team.



**Amanda Whittaker**

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**Date:** 10/19/2006  
**Submitted by:** Andrew Smith  
**Journal Entry:**

I absolutely love being on the stage and performing. I love leading Bible studies for junior and senior high kids. I love this ministry and everything this ministry does. I love it when we're playing a song and people raise their hands for God. I love it when people are totally into the music that we're playing. I love when kids ask me for an autograph. I love meeting and hanging out with the kids.

We haven't had a program in about a week. And it's given us a lot of down time. and time to reflect. Like I said, I love to be on stage and admired for my talents. And also I love delivering the Gospel in a new way to these kids. But where is that line? No one said I can't enjoy what I'm doing. But where is that line between me performing for myself, and me giving everything I have to God? I'd really like to believe that every time I play in front of people, it is for God. But I also think that I would have to talk myself into thinking that.

It's the Bible studies and relational ministries that really give me the slap in the face and remind me what we're all about. I do get too caught up in the performance aspect, but there is this really fine line there. We have to sound good musically, or no one is going to listen to us verbally. We have to have a good message, or no one will take this ministry seriously, and will view it as just a concert.

We stayed at a host home a few nights ago, and our mom gave me some great advice. I find it incredibly hard to stay humble when kids are asking me to sign things for them. For instance, an arm. It's a great feeling, but not one that I deserve. I shouldn't be performing for youth groups or congregations. I should be worshiping with them. And there lies my struggle. How can I stay humble, when I'm being admired so greatly for something God gave me?

Easy, every time somebody asks me for an autograph, I make them sign something of mine. Really, is there any better advice than that? It works two ways. They're confused because they don't know why I would want their John Hancock if they hadn't done anything. And I could tell them that neither did I. All I did was bang some sticks on a drum. God provided the music. God provided the worship.

I like being on stage. I like meeting new people. I like learning new things. I love God, and his Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. I look forward to sharing with you all the great things I will learn this year through my teacher.



**Andrew Smith**

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**Date:** 10/20/2006  
**Submitted by:** Sara Williams  
**Journal Entry:**

Hello everyone! Today we are in Merritt Island, Florida. We did a chapel this morning and then played some music at an assisted living center. As much as I love family programs, chapels and nursing home visits are just as enjoyable for me. Today I got to play with two-year-olds as well as talk to a 93-year-old woman who just became a great-great-great-grandmother. What an amazing ministry this is that I can meet such a wide array of people. God is incredible! We also went and visited the Kennedy Space Center this afternoon because we were free the rest of the day. I have been to the Johnson Space Center a few times before, being from Houston, but it was really neat to see the Cape Canaveral launch site, and the huge space shuttles never cease to amaze me. To me, seeing those aerial photos of the earth and pictures of the moon and stars prove once again that God exists and that he is sooooo much bigger than we are.



**Sara Williams**

Last week I led a devotion with my team about the creativity of God. We read from Job 38 (which is one of my favorite passages of all time!) and talked about the beautiful wonder of God's creation. We are so blessed that the six of us have the opportunity to see new parts of the country and also this year we will be getting the chance to see the wonders of a whole new area of the world. There is a verse in Job that says, "Stop and consider God's wonders." We have seen God's wonders all over the place. From the Blue Ridge Mountains to Naples Beach, from the face of a two-year-old to the stories of a 95-year-old man, God reveals himself to us every day. Unfortunately, because of the daily distractions of team life, I think we miss a lot of these wonders that God puts in front of us. My prayer is that as a team we take the time to "stop and smell the roses" and appreciate the small miracles that God reveals to us every day.

Please pray for us as a team as we continue this journey together. We would also love to hear how we can pray for you, too. Please drop us a line at [NewVision@youthencounter.org](mailto:NewVision@youthencounter.org). God's blessings!!

**Date:** 10/24/2006  
**Submitted by:** Emily Wharton  
**Journal Entry:**

I've been in a rather introspective mood lately. I've been thinking back to my first year on team (Captive Free West Lakes 01-02) and wondering what made me want to do this for a second time. And I have yet to come up with a good enough answer. Even during that first year I remember feeling an excitement at the thought of doing another year of team ministry, this time with an international destination. And when I came into New Vision this year, I have to admit I thought I knew what I was doing. I thought I knew what to expect. I thought I was strong enough to handle it all. But I was wrong. I think that we as Christians can get ahead of ourselves and ahead of God too. We may easily think that because we go to church, or read the Bible regularly, that we are immune to what the world throws in our faces in the midst of doing God's work and ministry. Even David, the man after God's own heart, cried out, "My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes" (Psalm 38:10). He may not have truly thought that life would be a piece of cake just because he had God on his side, but he still held onto His hand. I have absolutely no idea what this year will bring. But I do have hope; I still cling to God's hand. Do me a favor--read Zephaniah 3:14-17, 20 (the whole book is good, and only three chapters long, but definitely read this part). This passage has encouraged me a lot, and I hope it does the same for you. Ta mates! (Aussie slang for "Thanks friends!") God bless! ~Em



**Emily Wharton**

**Date:** 10/26/2006  
**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt  
**Journal Entry:**

So St. Michael's is apparently one of God's great blessings upon sound-techs, while at the same time being a kind of bane. When we got there on Wednesday night, we got to actually just GO to a service. We sang one song (for which our second acoustic guitar's jack didn't work) and got to see an awesome skit, and sing some great worship songs. Overall just a great night, followed by being able to all stay together at an amazing house designed so that it would be "THE" house, that is, the house where everyone would want to come over to.



**Karl Schmitt**

But that was a random tangent (but quality tangent) and only a small nugget as to why it's a bane and blessing. The next day, Thursday, we had an electric chapel planned. So we set up in the morning as soon as we got there. Thus began the serious sound problems. We had a terrible sound coming from the mains. Basically, it was a bad radio station. I had to track down help through Jeff and Adam, after trying to troubleshoot a large number of different issues. Luckily, at least a minor part of the issue turned out to be a cable I hadn't checked which Adam reminded me about. Yet it didn't even clear out ALL the sound issues, just the worst....we still ended up with a whine during some of our final songs and static-like sound during all of it in the background.

It's depressing to some extent when even your contacts discuss and comment on the crappy sound your speaker system makes. But it did get them very interested in helping us out with some repairs...and really, they were incredibly generous and helpful. Basically we were asked for a wish list...and with the exception of the large pieces of equipment (board, speakers, sub, amps) we got it all and more. Guitar stands, strings, mike stands, drum heads, all sorts of helpful stuff. It was like Christmas, and just about everyone got something! Probably the most important part of the supplies however was the awesome cable tester. THAT let us find where the true issues lay. It turned out to be a total of 5 bad cables out of all of ours, at least 2 or 3 of which were still in our system, even after I had taken the one that was causing primary problems. The pastor at our next church invited me to go repair cables with him--it was a blast! And they even reproduced; that is, we split one into two cables. So needless to say, many of our sound problems have been resolved. May God bless us and grant us more healing of our sound equipment. Laters! And may the Light of Christ light up your life.

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**Date:** 10/28/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**

Today we are in Fort Meyers, Florida at Gateway Trinity Lutheran Church. Last night we had a Family Night Program with pumpkin carving afterwards. We had a blast! I love this time of year. It has been such a blessing to travel in the fall because, being a Texas girl, I really don't know what fall looks like. We have summer and rain. Those are the two seasons we have. God is so apparent in the changing colors of autumn. It is absolutely beautiful.



**Sara Williams**

Tonight we got to help out with Gateway Trinity's annual "Trunk-or-Treat," a community outreach event where members of the congregation decorate their cars and then kids from the community and the church get to trick-or-treat at each of the trunks. All six of us dressed up like clowns, thanks to some old costumes that the church had on hand for such an occasion as this. A few of us got to help run some carnival style games while Karl actually climbed on top of our van and tossed candy down to screaming princesses, ninjas, Nemos and Power Rangers. We had a great time. It really brought out the child in all of us, I think. Between the "spooky tree" that we got to decorate in front of the church, a special appearance by Super Boy (aka Keith, the Youth and Family Ministries Director) and Pastor Kent's crazy mad driving skills, we won't soon forget our stop in Gateway.

At the pumpkin carving event after our program, Pastor Kent (or PK) shared the following illustration with us..."Being a Christian is like being a pumpkin. God lifts you up and washes all the dirt off of you. God opens you up, touches you deep inside and scoops out all the yucky stuff- including the seeds of doubt, hate, greed etc. Then, God carves you a new smiling face and puts his

light inside you to shine for the entire world to see.”

I really liked that image of God being our pumpkin carver and I pray that all of you today are being “Jack-O-Lanterns for Jesus!” He he! Thanks to all you journal readers for praying for us and keeping up with us on this crazy journey. You are amazing. That’s all I’ve got for now. God’s blessings!

In Him, Sara

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**Date:** 10/31/2006

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Yesterday we spent our day off in Largo, Florida. We stayed in a church’s youth room, which was one of those mobile home-type buildings. We slept and watched movies all day; it was glorious. A few of our guys hung out with the church’s young adult ministry and went to a “haunted village” in the evening. My aunt and uncle live in Largo, so it was great to get a chance to visit with them one evening.



**Amanda Whittaker**

Today, All Hallow’s Eve, we drove from St. Petersburg, FL up to Tallahassee, FL. We don’t have a program tonight, but we are staying with a family who has two little kids. And they have extra Halloween costumes, so we can go trick or treating with their kids tonight! Right now these incredibly generous people are grilling steaks for us for dinner! It smells so good! I’m looking forward to tomorrow because we have a chapel in the morning, a four hour drive, and then an electric set-up Family Culture Program in the evening. We haven’t had a busy day in a while, so it will be nice to have two bookings tomorrow.

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**Date:** 11/8/2006

**Submitted by:** Emily Wharton

**Journal Entry:**

Yesterday we drove into Louisiana. The booking was unique because our host church was in Shreveport, LA, and the church where our booking was located was in Longview, TX. Yes, I said Texas! We dropped our trailer at the church in Shreveport and drove over the Texas border to do an acoustic concert at First Lutheran Church. We got there and ate dinner with the Associate Pastor of the church. I’ve never had chicken spaghetti, and it was pretty good! We set up our instruments and projector and waited for our seven o’clock program. Seven o’clock came and there were two people at the church (besides us of course!). We waited about ten more minutes and still no one else came. So, we decided to go ahead and begin our program, with Pastor Ed and Lou the music director as our audience. I have to say, it’s an odd feeling doing a program where the band out-numbers the congregation 3-to-1. It’s certainly something that I’ve never experienced. But I also must say that it was one of the most relaxing and worshipful times that our team has had. Everyone agreed that we had a wonderful time with Lou and Pastor Ed. The program actually went really well, too! We’ve become so used to an electric set-up, that it’s a nice change to do an acoustic program every once in a while.



**Emily Wharton**

And something funny happened tonight where we learned just how flexible we can be when called upon. At the church in Shreveport, our sound-system decided to act like a child with an upset stomach--it whined and cried until we sent him to bed. We had to quickly change things around and do an acoustic program again, for the second night in a row! This was different for us, being an electric team. We were fortunate to have a congregation that was patient and very encouraging during our “technical difficulties”. Everything worked out beautifully, though. The people kept telling us that they had a wonderful time and that they really enjoyed themselves.

God definitely has an interesting way of working things out. He blessed us with a small, relaxed time of worship one night, and then wanted to see how we could handle a larger group and a finicky

sound system the next night. I think He likes to see if we can handle the things that we claim we would if the situation were to arise. Later mates! Cheers! ~Em

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**Date:** 11/9/2006

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Today we had an amazing experience at our two bookings. They were both "small" ones, but very, very, rewarding. The first was a retirement community that we had a very good turnout for and from which a number of us had really great conversations. The contact there was very excited to have had us because we were something totally different from most of the groups that come through and wanted to be more involved in the booking process next time (the church we're staying at now made the arrangements).

The next booking was utterly amazing! We went to a place called the "friendship house," which is an after-school program in a very poor, slum section of the city. When we first got there, only a few kids were around. So Boe and I got out our guitars to mess around with, Amanda her bass, and also the djembe. But while we were messing around, a number of the kids came in and took an interest in the instruments. Since not all of the kids were there (the high schoolers), when they asked if they could try them out we let them and so were teaching quite a number of middle and elementary age kids the basics of guitar, bass, or djembe...or just letting them play around on the instruments. It was a blast! The kids were adorable and so into it, you could just see the joy being excreted from them.

Once we actually started the program, we did a bunch of easy, teachable sing-alongs, but the kids and adults that were there really got into it. We had a few prayer requests at the end and they prayed with and for us. It was a great experience. Very affirming that what we do can make a difference in kids' lives!



**Karl Schmitt**

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**Date:** 11/11/2006

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker

**Journal Entry:**

We were helping out with a retreat that is called Alassippi (Alabama-Mississippi) and were working with a fairly large group of teenagers. We had a day where we just worked on roofing and painting and cleaning up the yards of two houses that were part of the Habitat for Humanity projects. Going into this, I was excited for the chance to do some laborous work. You may be like, "Why?" I have worked construction with my dad for about five or six years, during the summers mostly, and really enjoy that line of work. So the chance to do labor was really awesome. Anyway, I wasn't exactly sure what I would be doing or how much work I would get to do. I did get to do a lot of work, and I believe my biggest oppurtunity of ministry was not by showing other people how to do the jobs they needed to do, but was in the servant attitude and the work ethic that I tried to show (not to say that I am awesome or extremely humble). I treated the labor as if it were a project I was doing with my dad. The attitude I showed was "Try to get as much done as you can, and when you get done with one project, look for more to do, or help some other people, or if you aren't sure what to do, ask."

I never really thought that my work ethic, nor my attitude toward serving would be a ministry tool, but I know that it had to have rubbed off on someone. We started off the day moving pretty slowly, everyone trying to find their places and how they could do stuff, and by the end, we had shingled at least half of the roof. That's a pretty good accomplishment for a bunch of teens who had never really done this stuff before. I am not saying that it was my attitude that made all this happen, I am simply saying that my service and attitude toward the work, that was my ministry opportunity and I knew that I would have to come into that situation with a humble heart and a servants' heart, and check my pride at the door in order to get others to know how to have an attitude of service. And out of all of this, I pray and hope that at least someone in that group would see that type of attitude as valuable and they would take it and apply it to their everyday attitude.



**Boe Parker**

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**Date:** 11/14/2006

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Do you know that tens of thousands of houses were destroyed in Katrina? Do you know that Katrina victims called 911 to say that they were about to drown in the rapidly rising water as they sat in their attics? They knew no one would be able to rescue them. They just called to report their name and location, so that authorities would know where to look for their bodies. So many people have horribly tragic stories about the casualties of Katrina.



**Amanda Whittaker**

We're in Biloxi, Mississippi doing hurricane relief work for a few days. The destruction and devastation that still exists after 15 months is incredible. A casino barge weighing tons and tons was tossed 300 yds across Highway 90 as if it was a tinker toy. Yet, the lighthouse from 1699 still remains. This place literally looks like a war zone because razor wire was laid to deter looters. People put up signs on their property that say "If you loot, we shoot!" I've been to Indian reservations, inner-city neighborhoods, Central America, and Africa, but I've never seen anything quite like this. Conservative estimates state it will take ten years to clean up from Hurricane Katrina.

After 15 months, there are lots of jobs in southern Mississippi, but housing is still scarce. Even McDonald's is paying \$9/hr, but apartments that used to cost \$300 a month, now cost \$1300 a month.

And yet, the resilience of the human spirit that can be seen here is incredible. People from all over the world have come to volunteer. We're staying at Camp Victor, a food distribution site that houses volunteers and organizes work projects for us. We lead chapel after the evening meal. New Vision spent the rest of the day moving sheet rock, tearing down brick walls, salvaging bricks for reuse, unloading semi trailers of food, and doing general clean-up around the distribution center.

If you know of anyone looking for a service trip, southern Mississippi is definitely a worthy cause, with plenty of work to be done.

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**Date:** 11/21/2006

**Submitted by:** Emily Wharton

**Journal Entry:**

This weekend was great fun. We finished our time with the All-Tennessee-Gathering in Dickson, TN, and stayed the next few nights in Huntsville, AL. We did a program at a church there that Sunday evening and toured the Space and Rocket Center the next day. We had a wonderful time with the people there, yet our stay in Huntsville was overshadowed by the tragedy that occurred on the highway on Monday morning. There was a horrible bus accident that happened just a few miles away from where we were staying. It was a school bus carrying high school students, and there were four fatalities.



**Emily Wharton**

I know that this is a sad topic to be discussing in a journal, but the reality of the situation is too difficult to miss. I cannot help but think of the fragility of life when things like this happen. It makes me wonder *why* these things happen. Do they *really* have to happen? Why can't life be full of happiness, sunshine, and laughter? I'm serious here. Sometimes I don't understand why life has to be so hard. Then I remember that God never said that life would be easy, or even just "not hard". But He says He is with us. He'll never leave us. He'll never forget us. I have to hold onto that. I have to keep my fingers wrapped around that hope. Especially when I question, especially when such sad things like this happen, especially when I am unaware of what the future may bring.

I know that He is there. I know that He is holding me. I know that He is not oblivious to what happens in all our lives. He is *still* good. He is *still* love. He is *still* present. I pray that the families of

the four girls know the same.  
~Em

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**Date:** 11/25/2006

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**

Today we are in Peachtree City, Georgia (though, to be honest, I have not seen a single peach tree here and I am a little disappointed!). We participated in a Saturday night worship service tonight at Christ our Shepherd Lutheran Church. The pastor read "The Ragman" story, and though I have heard it many times before, it is still a really powerful story to hear again. Since we are approaching the Christmas season, I think it is important to be reminded of why Christ was sent to earth in the first place...he was sent to be an atonement for us. Christmas isn't just about cute barn animals, swaddling clothes and frankincense. Christ came to die so that you and I might live. Wow!



**Sara Williams**

On a lighter note, New Viz got to have a day of fun today at Dixieland Fun Park. Every month teams are given the opportunity to spend time together and simply hang out. We decided to go to a local amusement park here in Georgia, and we had a blast! We raced go-carts (I beat Boe!), played laser tag (Emily and Karl were amazing!), played on the bumper boats, Emily and I mini-golfed and we even got a few rounds of DDR in. (Amanda is a pro now and wants DDR for Christmas!) It is so much fun to hang out just as friends every once in a while. Team can be exhausting, and often times I think we see each other as co-workers instead of friends. We have a job to do, and sometimes we get so focused on programming or the given task at hand that we really miss out on getting to know each other on a more personal level. Dixieland was a great chance for us to get out of the van for a while, step out from behind the keyboard, guitar or microphone and just enjoy each other's company. It was a great day.

I cannot believe that our fall tour is already almost over! We will be "down under" in less than two months! That's crazy! Right now, though, the six of us are just excited for Mid-winter and for Christmas vacation. I am excited to be reunited with friends from training and I am really ready to go home for two weeks of recuperation before heading overseas. What a wild ride this year has already been. I can't wait to see what else God has in store for us. Take care!

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**Date:** 11/28/2006

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

It's a Tuesday, which means that yesterday was our day off. It also means that today is the beginning of our work week, complete with call-ins to our supervisors in the office, and a mail packet sent to the office with the previous week's paperwork. But before we begin the Tuesday morning office work, we start with a devotion. This morning we watched a short ten-minute video called "Rich." "Rich" is one of a series of Nooma videos by Rob Bell. "Rich" really brings perspective to the definition of the word. Rob Bell uses striking statistics to drive home the point that God blesses us abundantly and has already blessed us abundantly.



**Amanda Whittaker**

For instance, what did I do today? I ate three meals, used a cell phone, copier, fax machine, the internet, drove in a warm, dry vehicle from Atlanta, GA to Greenville, SC, and cleaned out two garbage bags full of rotten-slimy-dripping-fruit and trash that we've left in the van for a few weeks too long. There are at least 800 million people in the world that don't ever get to eat three meals, have access to this much technology, ride in new vehicles, or discard food they don't care to eat. If you own a car, you are richer than ninety-two percent of the world. Approximately 15% of the world lives on \$1 a day; you can probably find more money than that buried in your living room

couch cushions. That kinda changes my perspective on who the rich people are.

As Christmas approaches and I begin to make my Christmas list of all the things I "need," I can't help but be reminded that if Americans stopped eating ice cream for a single year, we would save enough money (\$20 billion) to provide clean water and health care to every poverty stricken person in the entire world! Yeah, I guess new running shoes aren't much of a "need" compared to clean drinking water. After three months of living on the road, it's tempting to complain about a suitcase that wrinkles my clothes, sleeping on church floors, or no shower access for three days. I may be a full-time volunteer dependent on the generosity of churches and host-homes, but I am surely blessed. Abundantly blessed.

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**Date:** 11/30/2006

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Friends, Family, and Readers,

So Thanksgiving is past, and I thought this might be a great time to look back and reflect some on my travels so far. Especially since I haven't sent an update to many of you in quite a while (hopefully you've been reading some of the online ones). I'll work my way backwards from Thanksgiving as best I can remember--who knows what will come up!



**Karl Schmitt**

Thanksgiving we got to spend with Shari at the house of one of her aunts. Shari is a teamer from last year who helped at training so all of us knew her pretty well (especially Boe and Amanda). This itself was awesome 'cause she understood how we were doing, and just what was going on, and it was very very low-key in that respect, however... Everyone except me was feeling kinda homesick at the holiday. I will say, I missed it since it's one of my favorite holidays spent with Aunt Kathy and Kevin and Fam, but, I also understand that I'm growing up...and this'll happen. It was a little different menu that I was used to...I missed our corn casserole! But it was still very good, and I still got to help cook some, which was nice.

Let's see, looking back, I got to have an amazing time last weekend as well at the All Tennessee Gathering! Now THAT is what I signed up to do, minus the stress. I basically ran our workshop on games for two sessions, and then help change our entire setup from Mono- to Stereo- for the dramatist that was on before us. That was both very confusing and somewhat stressful. I did get some cool help from a youth director who apparently had done sound-teching/road-managing for some big Christian artists, including FFH and others. I got it all figured out and so ran my first stereo show that night. It was cool. I also got to hang out with Andrew's cousins some more. Mary Beth is awesome, as well as Chris! And I definitely wish I'd gotten to know Sarah better. I didn't get a chance to dance with all of OUR girls, though, during the dance. That was sad. Or at least not the "serious" slow dance, just trying to be gentlemanly and all.

On the way there to the gathering, I got the exciting news that my cross pendant had been found at the YMCA we'd showered at in Birmingham, AL, which made me incredibly excited since it was a gift from my sister Katie last Christmas and I really liked it!

So those are the more recent activities...let me think back over the last month or two for some highlights...

We had our ministry to the Friendship House, and some assisted living facilities those were an incredible blessing to us, and clearly to those we played for and hung out with. The Friendship House is an after-school program for impoverished youth. There we just played some fun sing-along music and did a puppet show, but what really had us knowing that they appreciated it, beyond their great involvement, was hanging out with the kids beforehand. Then we'd had our instruments out and were fooling around, and some of them came up and asked if they could just strum once, or hit the drums... and eventually it turned into about 15 kids all crowded around different instruments asking if they could have a turn and us getting to show them what to do, and just seeing the joy on their faces! The assisted living was similar, but there we spent some time talking to people beforehand

and we really had a stellar time chatting and singing to them.

Another great memory is the Alassippi Retreat/Gathering. It was held in Birmingham, Alabama, and was a great time. We got to go to a Habitat for Humanity site so we could do a service project with the youth. There we worked on re-roofing a house. I got to learn how to put shingles on a roof, use a nail gun, and even came out with a new scar (I think). It was there that I dropped a whole package of shingles on my face. Not the most pleasant experience, but memorable. At the retreat, we also got to do an evening campfire thing, which was a lot of fun since I got to play camp songs and other things some. Though it was a bit odd doing a campfire around metal pit-fires, with kids in small clumps, and in the middle of the city, it was fun anyway. Finally, I remember this place because it is also where I lost the gold cross my sister gave me. However, we later passed through and just slept overnight there and I got a chance to track down my cross and find it! I should be getting it when I get to Minnesota. Oh yeah, and I met Mary there...more to come on her.

Another place that I hope to remember for all the good things (and not the bad) is Camp Victor. Camp Victor is a site for volunteers to stay who are helping with the rebuilding from Hurricane Katrina. It is located in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. We only stayed there for three days and did some short devotions and one mid-week communion service (musically, anyway), but I know that it was definitely appreciated by some of those there. Some of the workers mentioned really missing the music from previous visits which had really helped form the community together. Besides doing the music we also got to help a little with repair work. However, most of our helping was cut short by a large thunderstorm which pinned us inside for the entire second day we were there. It did, however, give us both our most exciting and helpful time (in my eyes), and our most reassuring time. In the morning, our power went out right as we were doing our morning devotions...so we kept playing more songs to help everyone stay focused and unfrightened. Which was good, since a tornado touched down about two blocks over and destroyed an elementary school! Also, that night the cooling unit on one of the refrigerator trucks went out. So most of us spent about 1.5 hours helping moving boxes from one truck to a nearby truck. The entire second half of which we spent singing fun-song/camp songs. It was a blast, and certainly made me feel productive.

We also saw all the destruction that occurred down there. It really can't be video taped or described. If you get a chance to go down and even just spend a few days helping sometime soon, I encourage you to do it. It might drastically change your view. If you do, and head to Camp Victor, look for New Vision's mark.

So I said you'd hear more about Mary; well, Camp Victor is supported by Mary's church, actually. So while we were down there we hung out with her one evening. It was fun, and relaxing, but also an experience, since we tried something new..."bubble tea". Bubble tea is like a smoothie with tapioca balls in. If you ever get offered one, turn it down! The smoothie was good, the balls were NOT. But during conversations with Mary at both the retreat and Camp Victor I found out that she worked at Nawakwa during many of the years I was at Kirchenwald (two out of four...we flip-flopped off years in the middle). Which means we probably played each other at soccer once long ago. Even more odd, I found out later that some good friends from camp, Anne Confer, Beth Garber and Carrie Gross, went to a mutual friends wedding at Valpo this fall, while I've been on tour...where they apparently met each other and hung out. Go figure, it's a small world!!

All right, I've spent two different evening writing this book. Time to post/mail/get it out there. Well, finish it and send it out next time I get internet access, anyway. I hope this finds you all in good health and blessed from God. You are all in my prayers and I hope that I'm in yours... (I totally still need it!!). There remains much on my mind to figure out and discern. And some big struggles that always remain.

Through Blessings and Grace,  
Yours in Christ,  
~Karl Schmitt  
May the Light of Christ light up your life

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**Date:** 11/30/2006

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker

## Journal Entry:

Yeah, so things are moseying along. I am super excited about Mid-winter and the chance to go home and see my family. It has been a good tour so far, but I really wish that we had more programs. We haven't had an electric setup for over three weeks now, and I am kind of feeling down about that.

Things are interesting, though. I've really grown to like my teammates and really have gotten to bond with them a lot. Each one is unique, and I learn to appreciate our differences every day. I am really glad that these people, these friends, are my teammates.

Lately, I have gotten the chance to watch a lot of Clint Eastwood Westerns. I really enjoy them because I have always been fascinated by cowboys and the West. I did my research paper in high school about cattle drives and how they shaped the West. The thing that I like most of all about those "Spaghetti Westerns" as they're called, is that they are a simple plot and they have the good plots about the good guys winning and good triumphing over evil.

Those Italian Westerns make me think of the Advent season, the season of hope. Hope that we will see better times and that we will be rescued "from this present evil age," (Gal. 1:3) as our theme verse says, and also hope to know that the ultimate good, God, has triumphed over evil and won the quick draw and redeemed us back to him. I love Advent. May you feel this sense of hope this season. God bless.

Boe Parker



**Boe Parker**

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**Date:** 12/25/2006

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

## Journal Entry:

Over break, I had the chance to have two very interesting conversations, which I thought I might relate as a prelude to our preparation journal entries. While I was flying home, I ended up sitting next to an older gentleman named Herman. We got to talking a bit, and I explained what I was doing this year, of course, and about Youth Encounter in general. It turns out that he is a very faithfully practicing Catholic, one that is heavily involved in his congregation. One of the things he is most heavily involved in is something that is a very meaningful ministry. He spends his Sunday afternoon/evening doing lay ministering at a local nursing home, primarily presiding over a worship service but also just talking and doing other things. Very similar to what we get a chance to do sometimes as teams at nursing homes. He even takes consecrated host with him from his morning Mass. He's been doing this for almost two years now he said, and seeing how meaningful it is to the residents, and how neglected it generally is, he has been thinking about attempting to make it a national ministry. Knowing how my grandparents feel about their religion and how they too have strived to help residents in their own community make it to church as they want, it was great to see similar things happening in and through another denomination.

The second incredibly interesting and meaningful conversation I had was with my 7(10? ... I've lost track) year-old cousin. Brannon, my cousin, has been spending a lot of time with a non-denominational friend of his, including meals and other things, and the family has been talking to him about things like the end-times and salvation. His mother (my aunt) was raised Lutheran and now is Unitarian. That said, she still holds some different views from the non-denominational church that my cousin's friend goes to. She was a little worried about some of the things they had been telling Brannon, as well as Brannon being very worried about how he might not be going to heaven because he didn't believe the right things. One of the days while they were staying at our house I went on a walk with him, my aunt, and my dog, and we got a chance to talk about faith and doctrine. It was really interesting and exciting to get to help him understand the details of Christian faith. He asked very probing and good questions. Having had chances to talk about and explore details and understand how to vocalize better my faith and doctrine, and that of the Lutheran church, I felt like I was actually able to answer his questions. And he felt like he got the answers he needed. It was pretty amazing to get such an opportunity to first off share my faith, second,



**Karl Schmitt**

instruct in the faith, and finally to be a role-model in the faith.

**Date:** 1/4/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

This is just a post of an old journal entry from my LiveJournal, I thought people might find interesting some of the struggles I faced when accepting my call to Youth Encounter. I also plan on turning this into an additional sharing for overseas.



**Karl Schmitt**

### ***A tale to tell and a call to hear....***

So, as you all saw earlier, I got called to be on a Captive Free team. I actually got my letter call about a week or so ago. There I was told that I'm being called to be the group's sound technician. This is not surprising, but still disappointing. When I read it, I definitely thought about just not going because I really wanted to go and play guitar/sing... which got me wondering if I was going for the right reasons at all... so here's how God made it kinda obvious I should be going:

2/15, I read the story of Paul's final journeys. Not even thinking/related yet, but I thought back to it later and thought how appropriate with the journeying to other lands, and the faith of receiving hospitality.

So within the last week or so, I just kinda randomly decided to pick up Bonhoffer's "Cost of Discipleship" and maybe start re-reading it. I read some of it, and some of the memoir's on Bonhoffer, and how he ended up returning to the place where his ministry was needed, also, the concept of still "earning" our grace...or costly grace (it's complicated). But this reminded me of being put into the servant role, for sure.

Katie was sick the other day for weekday chapel, which left Sarah and me leading music. While I knew the songs fine (at least the first two), and have been up there leading for two years+, for some reason, I was nervous...when I sat down for the speaker my heart-rate was probably up to like sprinting exercise level!! It had just barely calmed down when it was time to get up and do the last song.

--Moral: so maybe I'm really not as ready to be in front of people (and I'm going to HAVE to get more comfortable for the summer....)--

Went to Lenten Wednesday service last night, and I went to the breakout "Encountering Jesus in Scripture" ....we did a Lectio Divino on the passage where Jesus fasts in the desert then is tempted by the devil. Now I've heard this passage plenty of times...I often focus on the final image of a mountain top and seeing the nations...or the temple top. Last night though I caught other words....the first one was how Jesus ended his 40 days "famished"...and the phrase "Do not test the Lord your God" (or something like that)....and what came out in the end was a very interesting cycle (to me):

Spirit sends Jesus out --> Jesus becomes worn down, famished --> tempted, asked to trust in the Father, but not to test him (generally: challenged) --> being taken care of by the angels...so rewarded for not testing God, and enduring the circumstances....

It just seemed to fit how I've felt about life kinda recently and views on Witt, relationships, other stuff. And it reminded me that in all, we are not to lose faith in the Father, he has a plan for us.

The next two pieces I don't remember the exact order, but....

I was talking to Hilary about the whole situation, and she reminded me that even if I didn't feel super strong about the ministry aspects, or the reaching out stuff....maybe God was calling me through other means, knowing that I can do that anyway, that is, calling me through being interested in playing/singing and doing tech stuff...and I know I can do the ministry aspects well,

but I have been wondering if I was in the program to do that (the intent of the program) or the first (play/sing/etc)... < >

Finally, when we were done doing the Lectio Divino, I mentioned to the pastor who led it that we'd had that as part of our curriculum last year, and it had been one of the few things I'd saved...she asked if I could get her a copy...so I looked for it last night in my youth ministry folder and found one of the nifty little business card thingies I have from high school that says:

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord...  
plans to give you hope and a future...  
You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.  
Jeremiah 29:11,13

See that last one kinda finished hitting me on the head and being like...oh yeah: It all makes sense...you've been telling me to go ahead and do it already!  
(The Lectio Divino helped a LOT with that..)

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**Date:** 1/7/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

This week has been lots of craziness and business. I've certainly felt a number of days that I've had way more to do than other team members. Which can certainly be way frustrating, but I know is also some of my own fault.

Our first few days were spent doing some additional cross-cultural training. I think some of it was helpful, though it seemed like a lot was just repetition of what we had already learned in September or during Mid-Winter. There was however one session that I truly appreciated on culture shock. We reviewed what we had already learned about the four stages of culture shock and heard quite a lot of interesting stories. What was really interesting about it, though, was in talking about all the things which people can really feel crappy about or miss home because of, I became more and more excited to get to experience them. Things like new foods, new ways of doing things, learning how to truly speak like an Aussie, just the excitement of NEW. Of course, as we know this is the first stage of culture shock, euphoria. We'll see if/when I hit stage two...

While Tuesday and Wednesday were spent in session and (re)learning things, Thursday and Friday we have spent in the office doing various things related to our jobs, and learning how to deal with our jobs overseas. Let me tell ya what, I've had a grand old time learning about my jobs. I've got tons of responsibilities with more money that I am really physically/personally responsible for beyond my own accounts. I'm okay with it all, but it definitely makes me a bit nervous to think about and to just have to keep track of. That of course brings me to the second stellar piece of the days, trying to organize myself and what's going on. I definitely felt like some of the things I was given to "organize" myself and keep track of and through were not going to be helpful, and so had to spend time making my own spreadsheets and methodology for recording expenses, incomes and exchanges. Finally, I had the joy of dealing with thousands of dollars today. And tracking it. Grr. Between the traveler's checks, the new procedures, beginning to deal with sound stuff ,and trying to do personal preparations, I've become just exhausted and frustrated. Long days at the office don't make for a happy Karl when he's rushed out at the end of the day.

Still, there have been some good things for sure. After spending 9-10 hours solid doing work/learning of some sort, I felt like I'd really accomplished something, especially having completed the entire list I had made for myself. I've had fun being around the other international guys, even if I haven't been nearly as social as I should be. (Sometimes that need to have away time sucks, but I have been to keep sane, ah, I could be philosophical on this...perhaps another time) Going to the karaoke at B-dubs was tons of fun, even if I shouldn't have spent money (if only our stipends had come a day earlier!). Finally, another great host home has topped off the week. The family is so open, fun, and energetic, with behaved yet fun kids, and interesting parents. I'm definitely looking forward to the few days we'll be spending here.



**Karl Schmitt**

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**Date:** 1/8/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

This is just the newest sharing I've written so that I have a new one overseas:

For that know, this is from my second year of LT camp.

Can you think of someone you find or found really cute? I don't know how many of you have been to summer camps or something like that, but that was always a time where I seemed to find at least one cute girl, someone I liked. One summer I was at a youth leadership training camp, and here even more than a normal summer camp we seemed to get more time to socialize. Right from the beginning, there was a girl I found really cute. Her name was Jackie, and she was two grades below me. During the first day or two, we got to know each other better, and she definitely seemed to like me, too. So we played the whole asking through friends and trying to find out the truth. I can even remember one evening when our whole group watched a movie getting to spend the evening sharing a blanket with her, and just being really excited about it. But that night I found out some horrible news.

She had a boyfriend at home!!

She had completely acted like she didn't, and had played being interested in me, so this threw my whole world spinning. I was very confused and upset. I spent all the rest of that night and the whole next day just turning over and over again this situation and feeling betrayed and lost, and hurt.

The next evening we headed to one of the worship location in camp, a beautiful stone stadium at the top of a hill over which you can watch the sunset and see amazing colors covering the mountains that just demonstrate the splendor of God's creation. But I could hardly appreciate this beautiful setting for the trouble in my mind, so as we gathered in a circle with a candle in the center to pray I just kept repeating through my mind a request for peace and an relief. As the prayer slowly circled its way to me I just kept asking, not being able to think of anything to pray about. When it had almost reached me I got this incredible sense of peace. The peace that passes all understanding. My descriptions can not do it justice.

Man...what a simple answer. God rescued me...not by resolving the situation, but by resolving my turmoil and calming me.

God can rescue us even from the simplest situations, but we must remain open to different forms than how we might expect.



**Karl Schmitt**

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**Date:** 1/11/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

So, just to keep up with writing lots of journals and such, I thought I might put a brief entry in on our travel to Australia.

We ended up with approximately 27 hours of flight time, plus other travel time comes out to something like 30 hours of travelling. Now, the night before we left I slept about three hours. I also slept maybe another two or three on each of the longer flights. So right now I'm totalling nine hours of sleep in around 52 hours (starting the day before we travelled) if I'm counting my hours right...though it's really confusing having changed dates and so many time zones, which it is also fun to say that I'm writing this "in the future" around 1 o'clock Friday the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Now a little about the flights. The first was early, but totally manageable. It was the second one that



**Karl Schmitt**

was the killer. Fourteen hours on a plane is NOT fun. I watched the *Guardian* and *The Last Kiss* and hours of Warcraft III, finished a book (btw Becky, [American Gods](#), which I finished, was quite good) and then the little bit of sleeping I did. I think I turned out a lot less stir crazy than everyone else seemed. But I could be wrong. Amanda was pretty sane still after the first plane; it was the second plane that got to her.

We've now had the chance to experience two Australian meals, both morning tea (breakfast) and lunch, and I got the chance to try a "pastie," which to me seemed a lot like pot-pie. I thought it was pretty good. Our host even found a rhino-beetle--well, it attacked some of the team. I wasn't there, though. It was pretty neat getting to see one live (though I felt like I had before...maybe at camp?). Anyway, so far we're doing great, and it's time for a short nap to catch up a little since nothing is planned for the afternoon.

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**Date:** 1/13/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

We've been in Australia a day and a half, and I'm still completely euphoric. Everything here is absolutely gorgeous. The weather is like Florida in July, but it's okay because we're in AUSTRALIA. We're spending our first week at a boarding school in Brisbane while we hire (rent) equipment, record a CD, and take care of business and schedule logistics. Next week we'll drive 20 hours north to Cairnes and work with aboriginal tribes.



**Amanda Whittaker**

This morning we set up our gear for worship at the church on campus. This afternoon we took a train and a ferry to get downtown Brisbane. Downtown we went to an open-air market where they had gorgeous hand crafted goods from India. After doing the tourist thing, we came back for tea (dinner) and then went to a party. At the party, we had kangaroo sausage on the barbe(cue)!

Random fact about Australia: Our contact mentioned that in the States, approximately 1/3 of the population attends church "regularly" (I'm thinking regularly might only mean twice a year). Here in Australia, she said 8% or 12% of the population attend a Christian church "regularly."

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**Date:** 1/14/2007

**Submitted by:** Andrew Smith

**Journal Entry:**

It's been an incredibly long time since I've journaled. Hopefully this will be the start of you hearing from me much more often.

We spent 27 hours in the air. Did you catch that? Twenty-seven hours of flight. That was a fun experience, but completely worth it from the second we got through Customs in Brisbane. Our host mother was waiting for us just outside the security area with a colorful, dare I say cute, sign that said "New Vision" on it. I don't think she really needed it, though, as she knew exactly what we all looked like. Well, they got us home and gave a day or two to just relax.



**Andrew Smith**

After arriving at 8:30 in the morning, two days after we departed Minnesota, and getting to our home for the next week, I spent the better part of the day watching the Australia vs. England cricket match and learning all the terminology from one of the residents. I made it through about 30 overs before jet lag took its toll. I crawled into bed at about 2:00 p.m. and woke up 13 hours later. Needless to say, I didn't expect to sleep that long. Oh well. I got up and walked around a bit at 3:00 a.m. and decided I'd be better off in bed. The next day went much more smoothly. Kirby, our contact, and her brother took us into the city to go shopping at the South Bank Park. That's when I discovered I do have a bit of a tourist inside of me. Oh well, it was all fun.

We had the privilege of leading two worship services this morning for an amazing congregation. We were all a little hesitant about bringing our cross-cultural worship into a new country, but they were very receptive to it and gave some great feedback for us to take on our tour abroad.

This week is being dedicated to overcoming jetlag, learning the culture, and "speaking the language." I think I'm doing okay in all of these and couldn't be more excited to serve our Lord and Savior in this country. I look forward to speaking with you all again soon and will continue to keep you updated on our tour. God bless.

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**Date:** 1/15/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Today we started recording a CD. I'm exhausted, and we didn't even record the whole day. We set up this morning in a tiny little room but didn't start recording till after lunch. I can't image how tired I'll be tomorrow after an entire day of recording. We laid down tracks for drums, bass, and keys on four songs. We're hoping to record six more songs and all the guitars and vocals tomorrow.



**Amanda Whittaker**

I was really nervous at the beginning of recording. We'd play something fifteen times (all of which sounded fine to me), and the producer would still have us cut another track. I have no complaints, though. Seeing how all this sound engineering stuff works is intriguing. It's amazing the way they can splice songs together and cut out the bad parts.

When I signed a letter of call to be on New Vision, I just thought we'd be spreading the Gospel in schools and leading worship services in Australia. I never anticipated working with Aisle 6, the top Christian recording studio in Queensland, maybe in all of Australia. We're just some average people, recording some music to share with the people we meet along the road. How this worked out that New Vision is recording at Aisle 6 is beyond me. I just pray that God uses this CD for his glory. I still can't comprehend the generosity and kindness of the people who are allowing us to record this CD. I thought we'd make a garage-band-style live recording, not all this sound engineering stuff. Someday, I hope I'm in a place where I get to do amazingly generous things for others.

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**Date:** 1/16/2007

**Submitted by:** Andrew Smith

**Journal Entry:**

Alleluia! We just finished up our second day of recordings! This is amazing for me because now all of the percussion tracks are down and all we have to do next is lay all the other instruments and voices over it. Day One was grueling. I wasn't playing anything right, and Scott, the owner/manager/producer at Aisle 6 studios, the biggest name in Christian recording for Queensland and most of Australia, is a drummer. I spent probably five hours in the studio recording. I was tired and slowly getting the hang of things and making it sound right, but I was tired. I fell asleep maybe 15 minutes after getting home. Did I mention I was tired? I never could have imagined recording being this difficult.



**Andrew Smith**

Day Two went much more smoothly. We started off the day with hiring our van. We picked it up around 10:00ish, and I got to drive first. If driving on the "wrong" side of the road isn't hard enough, it's okay, Australia has you covered. We get to drive on the "wrong" side of the car, too. But they do cut you some slack and leave all the pedals and shift pattern the same. Given the constant stop and go and steeper, more frequent hills than San Francisco, I had the clutch friction zone figured out in no more than two kilometers. I make that sound bad, like it was really hard, but I had heaps of fun doing it.

The recording session went much more smoothly also. We were finishing tracks in only three or four takes, and they were sounding awesome. I guess yesterday I was too focused on the individual aspect and worried about how I sounded. today I went in with much more of a clear head and understanding of what was to come, and still a little ecstatic about breaking so many American driving laws, I hardly had any opportunity to worry.

And I'm not trying to say that there is anything wrong with worrying, but it gets in the way. Everything has its purpose, everything has a meaning. Worries are just questioning what God has in store for us. Nothing wrong with asking questions, but we need to understand that

everything that does happen, happens for the best reason. God already has a path chosen for us, worries included. And I think he knew I would figure that one out today.

Until next time, OI and G'day.

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**Date:** 1/17/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Whew! Day Three of recording is finished. It's such hard work paying attention to all the details that I don't usually hear on stage. On stage, there's always the jumbled stage noise of everyone else's instruments mixed in with mine. But in the studio we're recording each instrument separately, so I hear exactly what the bass notes sound like. Plus, the computer program can detect even the slightest nuance in wavelengths of notes. My bass playing has probably improved more in one day of recording than it has in months of practising on my own. Plus it's been fun to work with a creative producer who can suggest where to add slides and fun rhythms. I still can't believe we're making a recording like this. I'm very interested to see how the CD will turn out and to see how God will use this.



**Amanda Whittaker**

To change the topic, Australia is similar to but still so different from the U.S. Here are a few reasons why: their desserts aren't nearly as sweet as ours. An orange construction cone is called a "witch's hat". Juice boxes are called "poppers." (I guess juice boxes make a popping noise when you stand on them?) Malls, and most other stores, close at 5:30 p.m. When you go to a store in the mall, the employees ask you "Are you right?" and that means "Can I help you?". All the light switches flip on and off the opposite direction of ours. There are on/off switches on all the power outlets, too. Driving on the opposite side of the road (in a hilly city with a stick shift) has proven difficult. Please pray for our safety on the road.

We're on the east coast of Australia, so we're the first part of the continent to get sun. The sun comes up early, maybe sometime in the 4 o'clock hour. People around here seem to start work earlier, too. By 5:30 a.m., there's traffic, delivery drivers are making their stops, and construction works are making noise outside my "bedroom" window. But that's okay, because I'm usually already awake due to the insanely loud kookaburra birds. I should probably be annoyed by the kookaburras, but I'm still so enthralled by the newness of everything, that no annoyances have set in yet. We girls are staying on the floor in a church office. It's worked out very nicely because we're in the city recording 8:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m., so we aren't in the office workers way during the day. Plus, we have air conditioning! I've been told that air conditioning is not as common in Australia as it is in the USA.

It sounds like our main contact has us booked pretty solid for the next four months, and we're very excited to get on the road next week.

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**Date:** 1/19/2007

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**

Yea!!! The CD recording is done!!!! We could not have asked for a better experience in the studio and we could not have asked for a better "Yoda" than our sound engineer/miracle worker, Scott. Thank you so much, Scott, for all the work you put in to making us sound good. We can't even begin to thank you for all that you have done for us.



**Sara Williams**

Life in Australia so far has been amazing. The weather reminds me a lot of home--hot and humid!! We have been really blessed that we have had some down time since we have gotten here. We have had many opportunities to just spread out and slowly ease into the culture. It's so interesting to see how my teammates are all reacting differently to this experience of being overseas. Everyone is going through the stages of "culture shock" (as we knew we would from training), but everyone has a totally different take on this journey. It's really interesting for me to see that we all can be going through the exact same thing, and yet we have six totally different views on what is happening. I guess that's just another reason why God is so amazing. He made us all so unique but still brought the six of us together for a common purpose. In our differences,

though, I think that we all really compliment each other. It's that whole ying-yang thing.

I can't wait to get out and see more of this amazing country. The people here are incredible, and the fun accents aren't bad either! I hope and pray that all is well with you faithful journal readers. Stay tuned for more from New Vision "Down Under!" G'day, mates!!

Sara

P.S.--The toilets really do flush the other direction here!!! Random fun fact for the day! Also, if you want to brush up on your Aussie slang, "Ta" means thank you and "Rubbish" is trash. For example: If I took your "rubbish" and threw it in the "rubbish bin," you might respond with, "Ta, mate!"

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**Date:** 1/19/2007

**Submitted by:** Emily Wharton

**Journal Entry:**

I'll tell y'all something about our trip so far, but it's sort of difficult to do so. I mean, everyone else has mentioned our 30 hours of travel time to get here (I'm just glad I don't have to do that again for another four months). All this week we've had recording sessions with Scott Mullane, one of the premier record producers in Australia. He was a gem to work with. He taught each of us something more about our musical abilities.

Yet I don't want to make any more comments on those things because everyone else has already covered those topics. I'll try something else. We'll see how this goes:

Brisbane is beautiful. When we were driving through the city to get to St. Peter's Lutheran College (grade school) where we are staying, I was reminded of our time in Miami, FL. The streets and houses were packed closely together. Today at dinner (or tea, as they call it), Amanda and I sat outside at a table underneath a pavilion. The air was light and cool. The sun was dipping into a colorful sunset. And, my favorite part, flocks of green parrots with red underbellies sang and flew into the trees just in front of us. They were beautiful. I've taken walks around the grounds of the school where we're staying, and I love taking pictures of the flowers. Each one is different from anything I've seen before. Oh, and my new favorite candy is called Honeycomb; it's kind of a honey flavored compressed and condensed cotton candy, which I found they call fairy floss.

I hope these little observations give you a glimpse into where we are and what we're seeing. Cheers!

~Em



**Emily Wharton**

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**Date:** 1/22/2007

**Submitted by:** Emily Wharton

**Journal Entry:**

I've met a man who is worth 35 camels in the Moroccan market (back in 1986 or so, that was a whole lot of money!). He and his wife were there on holiday and were enjoying the market. His bargaining skills caught the attention of the boss-man of the marketplace. The boss-man offered the man's wife 35 camels if her husband would stay and be his right-hand man in the business. The couple laughed at first and thought the other man was joking. He most certainly was not. His security men tried to detain the man, who had to actually fight his way out of the situation. The couple quickly made their escape through the market streets and the massive crowds. An example of the man's bargaining skills can be seen through his sale of a broken hairdryer to a bald man. Those are pretty good skills! The most seemingly ordinary people can turn around and have extraordinary stories.



**Emily Wharton**

Well, we took our longest drive today. It was somewhere around twelve hours from Gladstone to Townsville. The sky was overcast because of rain in the north, so that cooled everything down. Yet when we actually came upon the rain, it made the drive more slow (and a bit scary on the

roads). There was even some flash flooding through the previously very dry creek-beds. Fortunately, we didn't come upon any across the road. When we got to Townsville, Amanda and I went to a couple who'd emigrated from Luxemborg to Australia six years ago. We ate fish n' chips while hearing and telling stories about traveling the world. The couple we stayed with was the same couple that had the exciting time in Morocco. To think that an North American girl would travel to Australia, stay with a couple from Europe, who had travelled the world and then settled on the other side of where they came from. God can connect people all the world over. You just have to let him guide you where He will lead.

Ta-Ta for now!

~Em

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**Date:** 1/24/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Let's recap the last few days briefly, both of touring and more.

Three days ago, I got to have some "world cuisine." Beef stew. It was excellent, made by a wonderful pastor that seemed to rarely have cooked for more than himself.

Two days ago we did our longest day of travel yet (including the U.S., I think), right around 12 hours. We also stopped and saw the giant mango. You might see a picture sometime later of me, or someone else holding it up. Yup, we're that strong. We also crossed the Tropic of Capricorn. My first time into the tropics, and I think the same for a number of us (though I think Emily and Amanda have been to a tropical location).

We then got fairly lost at the end of the trip trying to find the church we were meeting at. \*Oi!\* But we did find it eventually, bringing us to the host families of the last two nights. Mine has been great. They have also really impressed me with their foreplanning and environmental concern, and they don't even claim to be drastically green!

I almost wish I'd taken notes on all the great things they did to make their house environmentally friendly. Lever windows for maximum opening, tiles to absorb heat during the day, and radiate at night, proper angling to catch breezes on the block (they waited extra time to find a correctly located building plot!!), verandas to shade the sides of the house during winter or summer, special roof design. It was pretty neat!

Besides these great host families, WOW! The churches here are really, really excited to have us. Maybe YE should think about stretching out how often we go to churches in the U.S. or something. I feel like we're truly being taken advantage of here, in a good way. We've led a normally very upbeat Sunday night worship service (one of the first times I've felt our program be fairly worshipful), and as of now have two pretty amazing things on our docket for coming back south. We'll be leading a children's Sunday, but not just performing or doing our normal service (we'll be doing some of that stuff I think); we've actually created prayer stations that will be used in an evangelism effort after service, and they are (to my knowledge) fairly unique! When we were helping plan, I heard a lot of creative and new ideas, which I might hope to do someday. We're also going to give the jump-start to both a youth-led once a month service (hopefully) and help train up a chapel team for a Lutheran school in another town. And I almost forgot, we've got a church as prayer partners with us, praying for us and our ministry for a bit over a month, and with whom we'll be in close contact with. Now I know that other churches are still praying for us, and have us in their minds, but it was really neat to be asked if they could make it their mission focus for a month and kinda the guarantee that seemed to come with it.



**Karl Schmitt**

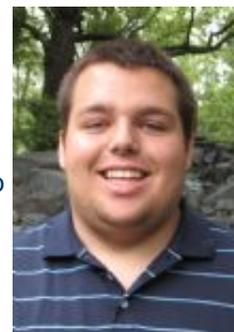
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**Date:** 1/25/2007

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker

**Journal Entry:**

So, they told us in training all about culture shock and how there are these different stages. Stage 1 is Euphoria. Excitement bursts from you and everything is amazing and...YAY!!! And then there is Stage 2 where you are totally, I don't care about anything cultural and everything is so different and I hate it how the people here don't have this or do that and...BLAH!!! I really didn't think that I would be hit so hard by either of these stages, especially going to a country like Australia, but already in the two weeks that we have been here I have experienced a lot of both.



**Boe Parker**

I've already learned some of the different views and opinions that people have about us as U.S. citizens, and a lot of the stereotypes that people place on Americans are so much more amplified when you are in a different culture. Even within the first week of being here in Australia, I have seen how eager we are to place our agenda on top of other people. One of us would be talking with an Aussie, and every couple of sentences, another one of us would interrupt or butt in with a comment.

I really have enjoyed the people we have stayed with. All have been great and wonderful to talk with. We are now up in the northern part of Queensland in a city called Cairns, and the rainforest up here is incredible. I can't wait until we see some more of the wildlife. There are so many interesting creatures and so little that I know about the animals here that I would like to know. It is exciting. Today we saw a green tree frog, native to the Cairns area. It was the size of a half-dollar, but really cool looking. Things are pretty awesome right now.

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**Date:** 1/26/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Happy Australia Day! Today is the day Captain Cook first set foot on Australia in 1788. In honor of the day we had pavlova, a traditional meringue dessert, with dinner last night. Today we did something that 96% of Australians have never done, that is, talk to Aboriginals. Not only did we talk to them, we played music, had a BBQ, led a worship service, and spent the night in their community of Wajul Wajul (which means waterfalls). We drove through crocodile-infested rivers (we didn't see any crocs) and up 30-degree switchbacks in the mountains along the Coral Sea to get to their community. The drive is considered the most beautiful sight in all of Australia. From outlooks, we could see lighter colored water in the ocean, which is where the coral reef is, just a kilometre or two off the coast. I guess the coral reef is about as big as California. The Aboriginees we met are similar to Native Americans in that they deal with a lot of the same issues, including suicide, grog (alcohol), prejudices against them, and unemployment. The Aboriginees of Wajul Wajul live in government-built houses and know English. Some of my teammates said that being in Wajul Wajul was their highlight of the year so far. It really was an honor to meet these people. They sang "Jesus Loves Me" to us in their native language. After our worship service outside under the mango trees, the children did a war dance for us. It was better than National Geographic.



**Amanda Whittaker**

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**Date:** 1/26/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

The trip to Wujal-Wujal

Our trip to Wujal-Wujal embodied everything I could have hoped for in coming on team to Australia. We started the day off by meeting at Peace Lutheran College and picking up the missionary vehicle that is keep for the church and school.



**Karl Schmitt**

Now, a little piece of info in case it hasn't been explained--here in Australia when we refer to a college, we are actually referring to private, primary and secondary education centers. That is, what we would know as elementary, middle, and high school, in a private and possible boarding setting.

Having not driven his truck for an extended period of time, Andrew was very excited to drive that day because we would be headed off of the bitchamun (Australian for asphalt) and onto a dirt road in the rainforest. So we loaded up, he drove, and I had a chance to ride in both vehicles, that is, first with David Spanagel, then in Andrew's (the missionary vehicle). David had amazing stories to tell and is involved in everything. The trip up to Wujal was amazing in itself. We spent probably two or three hours driving in the middle of a rain forest. The foliage and scenery was just beautiful. We even stopped at a lookout or two as well as walked out to see the coast at a resort beach. One can see why this is one of the largest tourist places in Australia. The actual driving was almost as exciting as the scenery, given we drove through a number of creeks, up inclines that were 20 or 30 degrees and through areas of extreme pot-hole-ness. Luckily it hadn't stormed recently or else those creeks may have been more than just minor obstacles. We made it though with no problems, and upon arriving encountered our first non-natural wonder.

Even before we arrived, the three women elders of the church had been waiting "under the mango trees." Literally. There is a trio of mango trees beside the church under which are benches and gatherings are likely to happen. When we talked to them, they said they'd been out waiting all day. They even skipped lunch because they weren't sure when we were coming. We set up for a regular acoustic type program and went over with David what he wanted. We were to do a simple program like thing for about an hour, have a barbie, then do our international worship service. This all went fairly well with a reasonable response from the group that gathered and about 35 coming at any time. We actually got a VERY warm response as we were to find out the next day in comparison (Hopevale was not so energetic for our puppet show and sing-along).

This all was a pretty good experience in itself but what was even better was to follow. The first was an experience that only I had. As I was finishing packing up my stuff, everyone but Amanda (she was wrapping an extension cord) and a few of the older ladies had left. The ladies that were left asked me to pray over two of them, Rachel and Ruby, for healing. It was the first time I'd ever been asked to do something like that and was an incredibly powerful experience to feel the Holy Spirit moving through me. After I prayed over them some of the other ladies help one back, and David drove the other home.

The second really amazing thing happened later that night after some card playing and general hanging out at the church's flat in the village. Sara and I decided to go out and look at stars, hoping to see more (and different ones) than at home. It was cloudy, but we decided to stay out and chat awhile about life. That was one of the best decisions we made so far this trip. While we were out, most of the aboriginal kids that had been at our service earlier were out playing. Three of them came over initially and we found out they were "killing king toads to bring the rain," and we talked to them for a bit, then they wandered back off to try and kill some more. Then a few minutes later a larger pack came by and started asking all sorts of questions. Things like, did we know famous singers and where we were from and just a bombardment of questions. They even serenaded Sara. Then one of them asked if we could pray with them.

WOW.

So we did. We all went into the church (we were talking under the mango trees again). I asked what they wanted to pray for, and their answer was simple. They wanted us to pray for them seven times, and for rain. What could I do but pray over and with them. We did a "repeat after me" prayer, and just experienced the presence of God in that place for a bit. We wrapped up the evening going back outside and just ended up playing with them for a bit by giving them all piggy-back rides and just kinda running around. Then they just all headed home. That was our evening.

Can we say amazing? That is why we go into mission work and communities.

Yours in Christ,  
~Karl  
LoC

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt  
**Journal Entry:**



**Karl Schmitt**

Though you all might enjoy seeing some songs/hymns in another language:

In Kuku-yalanji, the language of the Aboriginal people in Wugal-Wugal

Jesus Wawu Ngaykunku  
(Jesus Loves Me)

1. Jesus wawu ngaykunku,

Ngayu kangkal Godungu  
Nyulu Balkan ngaykundu  
Nyunguwundu kukubu

Chorus:

Ngaykunku wawu  
Ngaykunku wawu  
Ngaykunku wawu  
Wawu Jesus ngaykunku

2. Ngayu buyun-buyunji,

Jesus wulan ngaykunku  
Wulan, nganya ngulkurrr-ban  
Nyulu buyun kidanda

3. Jesus bunday jiringa

Nyulu nganya wundinka  
Wangkar ngayu dunganka  
Nyunguwunbu bubungu

Yundu Nganya Kari Bawa  
(Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour)

1. Yundu nganya kari bawa,

Jesus, ngayku God  
Yundu bama ngulkurr-bungal  
Nganya yalarrku

Chorus:

Jesus, Jesus, nganya nyakada  
Yundu kanbal kunjalkuda  
Nganya yalarrku

2. Ngayu wawu-daraymanka,

Yundu dayangarr  
Ngayu yunun babajinka  
Miyil nandaji

3. Ngayu manubaja-bungal

Yundu jukungu  
Ngayku buyun-buyun kidan  
Kida wawumun

4. Jesus, yundu ngayku jawun

**Date:** 1/28/2007

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**



**Sara Williams**

Hello from Cairns! Life here in Australia has been amazing. Right now we are in one of the most beautiful places on earth and are getting to meet some of the most beautiful people on earth as well. This past weekend, as Amanda already said in her journal, we spent a few days with two different Aboriginal communities. It is such an honor to be invited and welcomed into a place such as that. According to the book I'm reading (called In a Sunburned Country by Bill Bryson), Aboriginees are said to be the oldest known people group in the world. What an honor it was to worship alongside them and be a part of their lives for a while.

I had a really amazing experience while I was in Wujal Wujal. Karl and I had been outside around 9 p.m. under the beautiful mango trees, talking after our evening worship service. All of a sudden, three boys came up to us to see what we were doing. (Being that we are white and we have funny accents, we really stand out!) The boys had huge rocks in their hands and they told us that they were killing cane toads in order to "bring the rain." (It's important to note that cane toads are poisonous and a real nuisance in Australia.) Soon after those boys showed up, kids started coming out of the woodwork!! About 13 kids surrounded Karl and me. I had five boys trying to braid my hair at one time. One boy thought that we were famous Americans and so he asked me if I knew Tupac, George Strait, Snoop Dogg, and about ten other American celebrities. I think he was a bit disappointed when I told him that I was not famous and I didn't know any of the people he listed. When I told the boys that I was from Texas, four of them started singing "All My Exes Live in Texas!" It really made me see how small the world is but also made me realize how much influence the United States has on other parts of the world. These boys have probably never left their small community before, and yet they know who Shania Twain is. You be the judge on whether that is a good thing or a bad thing.

What really made the evening amazingly special, though, was what happened next. The boys asked us to pray over them. So Karl and I took the boys over to the Lutheran church, which is always unlocked, and sat them down on the floor. This church has no chairs or pews set up inside, and we couldn't find a light switch, so we all huddled together in the middle of the room and Karl prayed over the kids. You have to understand that the Christian faith is not always appreciated in this

community. A week or two before, two young members of Wujal Wujal committed suicide and some people took their anger out on the church building. A beautiful stained glass window was broken because someone threw a rock through it, and there is a hole in the front door to the church where someone punched right through the huge wooden door. In that moment, though, that simple church was holy ground. The moonlight was streaming through the holes in the stained glass, and I could see shadows of those beautiful Aboriginal children with their hands folded and their heads bowed in prayer. It was one of the most special moments of my life. I have never felt so far away from home and so distant from everything that I know. Yet I felt so connected to these kids through the bond of Christ. It was incredible. God is good!!!

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**Date:** 1/28/2007

**Submitted by:** Andrew Smith

**Journal Entry:**

Well, we just got back to Cairns, and we all had an amazing time in Wujal Wujal and Hope Vale. Apparently only 5% of Australians have ever spoken to an Aboriginal person, and we got to live with them for the weekend.

It started off with a drive of about 200 kilos on highway, and the last bit was through dirt roads and places only a four-wheel drive would make it. I got to drive. Anybody who really knows me knows that that is a very good thing. I love off-roading, and we got to drive through a few rivers, too. Yes, I said through and not over.

So when we got to Wujal Wujal, I was just a really happy person. Then we got to worship with some people who have a very strong Christian faith. That was awesome. Probably two and a half hours of music with them, including them singing to us in their language. And all of us praising our Lord together. The next morning we got to see what Wujal Wujal is named for.

Brief language lesson: Wujal is translated to "waterfall," and when two words appear together, it means multiples of that word. So, Wujal Wujal is translated to "land of many waterfalls." We got to see one, and it was beautiful. We walked to it on a path of boulders. I was constantly jumping from one to the next. I really felt like I was eight years old again the way I was running around.

When we got back to Cairns, we unpacked at a missionary house that the church has for people like us and slept. But not too late, because we had to be at Peace Lutheran Church this morning at about 7:00 to set up for a chapel.

That was another great experience. Our organization is Youth Encounter. We minister to youth often. I've found that I'm pretty good at it, and I definitely love doing it. We got to worship with over 500 kids this morning, ages ranging from first to twelfth grade. We all enjoyed that chapel a lot, and I know I can't wait for our next program. But, our day off tomorrow is definitely more than needed. Until next time, g'day.



**Andrew Smith**

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**Date:** 1/29/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Today is the first day of school in Australia for the new school year. We spent the morning at Peace Lutheran College. By college, I mean a primary and secondary school that doubles as a boarding school. We arrived at 7 a.m. to set up the sound equipment and get ready for a 9 a.m. chapel. We set up in a large pavilion/garage building. Many churches and schools in Australia have two side walls that lift up, or they'll have garage door size windows, so that the building can get a lot of air circulation. There were about 500 kids at chapel this morning, all in matching uniforms, complete with wide-brim sun hats. The college chaplain organized the chapel, and assigned us places to fill in songs that fit the theme "peace and unity." We played facing the



**Amanda Whittaker**

mountains, which run all along the eastern coast of Australia. I don't know how to explain the beautiful tropical mountains other than to compare it to pictures from one of those Caribbean Cruise commercials.

North of Cairns in Daintree is Daintree National Park. I recently watched King Kong (starring Jack Black) with a host family and couldn't help but think that some of the scenes where the dinosaurs came waltzing out of the forest looked identical to Daintree. The trees are huge and vine-y. The bright red, thorny looking dragon fruit looks sci-fi, and the sparkling clear rivers have peculiar looking lizards and toads nearby. In 1972, trees were found growing here that had supposedly been extinct for 100 million years!

Back to the chapel. Chapel was about 45 minutes long, and we invited the students from the school to come to our program that will be at the local church on Friday night. After chapel, the family that some of my teammates stayed with last week invited us over for lunch. So, after learning a bit more about our new sound equipment, we pack up, and headed over to their house for lunch. The family lives in the rainforest, on the side of a mountain. They served us all kinds of authentic Australian food such as liche, a transparent white, kinda slimy fruit that has a seed in the middle that looks like an almond. Liche looks a bit like a strawberry, except that you have to peel off the hard red shell to get to the edible fruit. They also served us whole chilled prawns (shrimp). They were such a kind family and went out of their way to make us feel at home. We spent the afternoon playing cards with the family, exploring the rainforest, and walking around town. Late in the evening we drove back to the mission flat, where we staying for the week.

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**Date:** 1/30/2007

**Submitted by:** Emily Wharton

**Journal Entry:**

We finally got a true day off today (we've been either recording, driving, or driving the past few days). So for our first real day off in Australia, some of us went for a boat trip out to the Reef. Yeah, the Great Barrier Reef. We're staying in Cairns (pronounced like Cannes, where that film festival is held) and Amanda found a deal to go to Green Island where there is reef near shore and the day was only \$63. That was a deal! So most of us took the boat ride over to the island and spent the day snorkeling along the reef just off the island. The coolest thing that I saw was the giant clam. It was about a meter across. Its giant lips kept slipping in and out of the shell as it sucked in the water and the tiny animals that I assume it was eating. Also, when I was on the boardwalk out to the boat, I looked down and saw a huge sting-ray "hiding" under some sand where I'd just been swimming! And the big one of the day was when Boe, Sara, and Karl saw the reef shark swimming near everyone. There were reports that it was seven feet long. However, apparently if you left it alone, didn't taunt it with food, or try to chase it down, the shark would leave you alone. I thought I heard Sara say that Karl tried to swim after it, but he has neither confirmed nor denied that claim. Well, no one is suffering from any shark-bites. We're just more than a little uncomfortable with all of the sunburns.

Ta-Ta for now! God bless!

~Em



**Emily Wharton**

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**Date:** 1/31/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

A day off at the Reef

We finally got a day off Jan. 30 and got to spend it doing one of the greatest attractions that Australia has: snorkeling the Great Barrier Reef. Only five of us went, but we were EXCITED! After explaining the truth about snorkeling to Amanda and her hiring ALL of the protective gear possible, everyone ended up snorkeling for a bit. Sara and Boe started off on the non-guarded, more impressive side. Emily, Amanda and I started on a guarded beach, but got to see something unique there as well. It was a nice easy introduction to



**Karl Schmitt**

the snorkeling for Amanda, and we got to see a live starfish in addition to a number of other interesting fish.

I had lunch on-board, a treat that I probably shouldn't have given myself, but I'm also trying to get the best experience out of Australia. Amanda and I headed out for a walk on the beach; after that where we got to check out some crabs, and snails, a helicopter, and just look at some of the coral that formed the base of the island. It was pretty neat and nice and relaxing.

Afterwards we headed over to the unguarded beach, and that was where the best snorkeling really was. Sara and I headed out about 50 or 100 meters off-shore and got the chance to do exactly like all the movies or pictures. We were swimming in the middle of an incredible assortment of fish! It was just like being in an aquarium and swimming in the middle of all of the different types of fish that they have there. The first trip I took out the highlights were chasing down the shark that was swimming near the wharf, seeing a skate, and just the immense variety that we swam among. I also made a second trip out that was basically by myself (I couldn't convince Amanda to come out very far). That trip let me see even different things. I saw a giant clam the size of a large dog or so, I saw two clownfish in the Nemo tradition (Sara was searching for some) and got to watch a flounder for a while. All in all, both were great trips out to the reef. I certainly hope I get a chance to come back some time, and perhaps go diving out in the farther reef.

~Karl  
LoC

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**Date:** 2/4/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

A week ago we were here in Townsville and planned a worship service with a few members of the congregation for this Sunday. The worship service was a children's service. Kids led us in singing and ran a lot of the service. During our part of the service we did a puppet show, a new skit about being in a flood, a sharing, and a song. The theme was "Jesus is our lifesaver" and everyone received a Life Saver candy on ribbon as they came in. We wanted the service to be very hands on, yet also cross-generational. So, after the service we did prayer stations around the building. We planned the stations the previous week with the planning committee, and they had gotten us all the supplies ready. Prayer station one was to mold something out of clay that you are thankful for, and get a bracelet that said, "God saw all that he had made and it was very good." Prayer station two was a footwashing station where you got a bar of soap with a Bible verse to take home. Prayer station three was a map of the world; each person chose a place to pray for and then placed a sticker on that location. And after the prayer stations. the church hosted a sausage sizzle in the backyard under the porch, because of course it was still raining.



**Amanda Whittaker**

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**Date:** 2/5/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Andrew and I are staying in the country just outside of Townsville this week. I've been keeping my eye out for snakes, now that Emily found one in her bedroom. I got up bright and early to call family and friends while it was still Sunday afternoon at home. Everyone must have been gone at Super Bowl parties, because I didn't get ahold of anyone. Super Bowl XLI came on here at 10 a.m. I watched it with my host dad, who remarked that the game is slow compared to rugby. After watching one quarter, he decided to record the game so that he could fast forward through the parts where referees quarrel and coaches challenge calls. It was fun to savor a bit of American culture, but watching the Super Bowl overseas on a Monday morning without chili, Doritos, and people yelling at the tv screen in football jerseys just wasn't the same.



**Amanda Whittaker**

The rest of the day it rained, just like it has every day for the past two weeks. People who live in a place with a wet season ignore the rain. Aussies still mow their yards, walk their dogs, and visit parks just like they would normally if it weren't pouring rain.

When our host sister came home from school she took us to Bowling Green National Park. Rapids have formed at the park from the recent flooding. The park was closed because yesterday a guy stuck on a rock in the rapids had to be air-lifted out.

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**Date:** 2/7/2007

**Submitted by:** Emily Wharton

**Journal Entry:**

On the inside of my Bible is a quote that I'd once heard: "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this."--C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity Underneath that quote is a reference to Hebrews 11. That chapter is called "By Faith," and what follows is a listing of the historical Biblical characters who accomplished great things because of the faith they had. Abraham, Noah, Moses, and many more are mentioned. "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them" (verses 13-16). Those people were concerned more for the world to come than where they were then. This world and the concerns and pressures it creates are real and present. We can't escape them. However, we do not have to accept them as the final end. As Christians we have hope for the future. We look toward Heaven. That is what the heroes of the Bible were doing. That is what Hebrews 11 is talking about. Verse 1 defines that faith: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." I've let this world clog my vision and let it become more worrisome than it should be. I've let myself become burdened by things that are not really my concern. At times over the past few weeks, I'd forgotten what I hoped for and was in desperate need of a reminder of what the better focus was and is. In reading Hebrews 11, I was reminded and encouraged by their stories. The last verses of that chapter say that "these were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect." That last part, "together with us," is talking about you and me, today, right now. The beginning of chapter 12 wraps it up nicely: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (verses 1-3).

Fix your eyes on Jesus, and upon the vision of Heaven and communion with God. The things of this world may be difficult, yet they are not permanent. Only his love will last forever. Remember that when everything else starts getting in your way.

Ta mates!

~Em



**Emily Wharton**

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**Date:** 2/12/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Roses are red  
Violets are blue  
Australia is grand

Hope your place is too!

Drove the team bus.  
It's not automatic.  
Nearly hit a kangaroo,  
now Sara is asthmatic.  
(not really, but it rhymes)

Got a flat tire  
in the outback  
it was a dirt road  
Felt under attack.

Put on the spare  
and tightened it up  
it seemed awful light  
no one had filled it up!

Went to Wahrooga  
Retirement Center  
Did the flood skit  
But not the song "Better"

A 3 p.m. practice  
To learn a new song  
"Set Me Free" was the choice  
It didn't take long

Family night program  
Evening tea  
Saw a whole rainbow  
Pretty as the sea

We're in Biloela  
No cyclones today  
We've been here a month,  
We'll be here till May!



**Amanda Whittaker**

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**Date:** 2/15/2007

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**

Wow, it's hard to follow that poem! The three girls made Valentine's Day cards for our boys, and Amanda made a poem for Andrew so that must be where the poetry stemmed from! Anyway, Australia is wonderful. We are starting to get really busy, so that has been exciting. We did eight chapels, one for each grade level, at a primary school in Biloela, and that same night we did a family night program for the Lutheran church in town. Today we are in Gladstone, and we spent an entire day teaching eighth through twelfth graders. I was really excited about spending a day teaching since I will be a teacher in less than a year, but it was really difficult for me. In college, I substituted frequently, and so I am used to being in that kind of environment, but today was a unique experience.

Though we were teaching at a Christian school, a majority of the students are not practicing Christians. Many of the Christian schools here in Australia have religious education classes for students on a weekly basis, but at this particular school, this eight-hour school day was all the Christian education that these students would get for the entire term, so needless to say, we were under some pressure. It was definitely a different kind of thing than anything we have ever done before. The students took a spirituality test in the morning to find out how they best experience God. There are four types of spirituality determined by this test:

1.) Scholarly study



**Sara Williams**

- 2.) Heartfelt worship
- 3.) Meditative contemplation
- 4.) Service

In the afternoon, we had sectionals for each of the spirituality types. We are a team full of 2's and 3's. Though I am a heartfelt worshipper, I taught a Bible study on Abraham and Isaac for those students who are Type 1's, those scholarly learners.

I have been learning this year to become more and more comfortable with getting out of my comfort zone. The experience today was another example of that. Team forces you to become comfortable with things that you might not touch otherwise. For example, most of my life, I have been the one behind the microphone, facilitating worship as a vocalist. Because we were short a keyboard player at training, I ended up switching to keys and am loving the new perspective that it has brought me. I am learning that God will place you in new situations in order to give you a new point of view. God placed me behind the keyboard to show me humility and to help me keep my ego in check. God placed me today in the scholarly sectional because he wanted to show me the importance of valuing other people's ways to worship. God brought me to Australia, all the way across the world from my comfort zone, to show me how small the world really is and to teach me how Christ crosses all cultural boundaries. I pray that Christ is growing and stretching you to step out of your comfort zone because I have to say that the view is beautiful!

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**Date:** 2/15/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Wowsers. First if you haven't read my other two teammates last entries, do so. Now. They are great in their own ways. I think they really speak to the diversity that is inherent in team life and that was made evident throughout today and yesterday. As yesterday was Valentine's Day, I figured it would be a good idea to do something for our females. I decided that they needed some flowers. Now, I had thought the day before to possibly order some or pick some up from a florist, but then it ended up being the day before Valentine's Day and late, and I hadn't done that. Well. I improvised and asked my host family if I could cut some of the flowers they had around their yard, and being typical Aussies, they let me. So, after Sara went to bed, I grabbed the clippers, went outside, and clipped a number of different flower types. I then sat outside and made different bouquets for the girls. I was also going to make cards, but the computer at the host home didn't have a publisher program, and anything that I had written/drawn out myself was not going to be pretty. On Valentine's Day, as Sara said, each of us got a Valentine's Day card which was definitely tuned to our own tastes. I got a sentimental one, Andrew's had a vicious dinosaur battle and non-sappy poem, and Boe's had a number of alternative ways to spend Valentine's Day, like playing in traffic, fight your pet monkey, or set up a sting operation (with a stuffed cat). Regardless, this all made for a great Valentine's Day. It was good all around.



**Karl Schmitt**

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**Date:** 2/15/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

So today we taught school. It was the school's sessions on Religion and Spirituality. Let me tell you, it was quite the trip. Besides not having people excited about doing it, it was tough just to get the kids interested and involved in what we were doing. I ended up running a prayer labyrinth as well as a male discussion on spirituality and society. The labyrinth went very well, with just about all the kids having a very good experience with it. I think the most rewarding group was the eighth graders, who just reminded me more and more of why I'm excited and interested in doing youth work. They came in, and even after an explanation of making the space holy, proceeded to be running through the labyrinth when I came back in. Once they slowed down a LITTLE, they practically speed-walked the labyrinth once with the exception of one or two of them. This took only like 15 minutes or so, and we had about 50, so we sat and talked very briefly about what they got out of it, then they were



**Karl Schmitt**

asking to do it again, so they did, this time with more encouragement to focus on a verse and do it a bit slower. There was only some change, but they did get a bit more out of it. Once that was finished, we talked a little more about how it was constructed, and some of the other elements and history of a labyrinth. They were a very inquisitive group. Lots of fun.

The other success story for the day was actually the only girl who didn't do the labyrinth. I overheard her and some of her classmates talking about it and teasing her a little for not doing it. Once they left I came over and reaffirmed her that she didn't need to do it and shouldn't feel bad about it. I then kinda asked if she got anything out of the day, and did a little open-ended questioning and responsive listening which let her feel okay asking the thing I think she was really interested in, and which caught ME off-guard (though she was clearly being thoughtful). She asked me for my testimony. This is an incredibly difficult question for me, because I've always been in the church, and have never truly felt that I've fallen from it. So I told the story of feeling distant and depressed after breaking up with a girl, and some of the ways I dealt with that. Then her parents arrived before we could really finish talking, so I made an appointment to talk to her tomorrow during one of their breaks. I hope she'll open up some and ask the questions that clearly are just waiting to be asked.

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**Date:** 2/19/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

"Don't come out here! There's a snake!" were the first words I heard this morning as I opened the bathroom door after taking a shower. My host mom was standing in the hallway banging a shovel, making gashes in her linoleum floor, to ensure the snake was dead. She was our heroine of the day. The snake was a meter long; Emily has a graphic picture of its remains. We don't know what it was, but it wasn't a tree snake (which are commonly found, and harmless to humans). We've been here five weeks, and twice I've stayed in a house with a snake in it. The family says they've never ever had a snake in their house before; I guess we're just lucky. Pastor said "Satan isn't happy today" and suggested it's spiritual warfare. At any rate, the snake had probably been in the house all night.



**Amanda Whittaker**

This week we're in Bundaberg, the tenth largest town in Queensland with 48,000 people. On the way to church this morning we passed sugar cane, macadamia nut, and sweet potato farms. Farms that have trickle irrigation do well in this sub-tropical climate. We also saw an ostrich in someone's yard. Bundaberg hasn't had rain since November, but now that we've arrived they've had at least four inches in the past few days.

At church, we met with two pastors in the morning to plan out the week and pray together. After lunch, we met the teachers and led 45 minutes of sing-alongs, a skit, and a puppet show for the 200 students at St. John's. A former New Vision teamer married one of the congregants from this church, so St. John's has a Youth Encounter songbook, and the students knew some of our songs! This evening for tea (dinner), we had fish that our host dad caught off the Great Barrier Reef with a great salad and fruit. I'm loving all the fresh food we get here.

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**Date:** 2/19/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Before I left on tour I had a chance to spend some time with my sister (Katie). While she was never really into computer games when we were younger, as she got older, she also go into playing some of the games. Apparently while at school, she got hooked on playing computer games, especially online multiplayer games. For a while, she was playing World of Warcraft (WoW), then sometime within the last year or so (I think) she switched to Guild Wars because it was free to have an account, vs. WoW



**Karl Schmitt**

which required a fee. You might be wondering right now what this has to do with a trip to Australia.

Well, before I left we were talking about who she played with most often, and she said a lot of the people who played were actually from New Zealand and Australia (though more so NZ). Well, I found one. My host family (Bunderburg) was definitely a gaming family. Both the mom and dad played WoW, and I spent some time (actually a lot of time, especially on our day off) playing online games with my host "dad" who wasn't really that much older than me. Regardless, it was neat to get to spend some host family ministry time playing computer games.

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**Date:** 2/23/2007

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker

**Journal Entry:**

Sometimes I question whether I'm still supposed to be here or not. I truly feel that it was totally God leading me to do this second year of team. I am pretty sure that God was the one who signed the paperwork and made everything come into place. If it would've been my actions, I would be home working, or doing something else. But I know that no matter how hard it is to get along with my teammates, no matter how much I miss my friends and family, no matter how many times I say I want to go home, I am supposed to be here. I am called. God didn't just open up all of these doors for me so that I could take a peek inside of them and then dodge back out. God opened the doors so that I would go through them and follow the path that He has laid out for me. And this is my encouragement for my brothers and sisters on other teams this year. God didn't call you to go this far and give up. He called you for this year, and no matter how hard it is to go on, no matter what Satan throws at you, God is bigger and better than any of it. He will never let go of you and will never forsake you. And my encouragement for any people who read this and aren't on team is that life has its ups and downs, and just because you believe in God doesn't mean it will be easier. But know that God is there with you on the mountain top as well as in the valley.



**Boe Parker**

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**Date:** 2/26/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

I think it's a lot of fun to pose theological questions. So, I'm going to spend some time (or, well, data bits) posing some for thought.

These do not represent theological statements of Youth Encounter, the ELCA, myself, or anyone else. They are only thoughts to ponder...

(I may have some responses posted in another entry; also, feel free to e-mail our team account with thoughts at [newvision@youthencounter.org](mailto:newvision@youthencounter.org). Maybe we'll get a thread started on MySpace or here or something.)

If Jesus was born of Mary, and the conception was immaculate, since Joseph was the descendant of David, doesn't that make Jesus NOT a descendant of David?

Let's contemplate: In Roman culture, to say "you are my son" three times meant that you formally adopted someone. In at least two of the Gospels, God as a voice speaks words along the lines of "you are my chosen one" or my "beloved son," so what if Jesus's divine nature wasn't fully realized until a third time when this was spoken? (I was originally thinking about the Garden of Gethsemane or the Golgotha.)

I had some other thoughts, but I think I'll save those for another time, as I must be going. Later!



**Karl Schmitt**

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**Date:** 2/26/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

## Journal Entry:

Last night we arrived in Maryborough, the third oldest town in Queensland. Our host dad owns a motel! Sara and I have our own motel room. We had most of a day off today, except for the hour of confirmation class. Since we're at a motel a block from Main Street, we spent the morning checking out an Aussie mall and wandering around town. Sometimes we see stores we recognize, like Payless Shoe Source or Woolworths. We also see American companies with different names. For instant Walmart is called "Big W" and Burger King is called "Hungry Jacks." Being a surfing region, there are a lot of stores that sell Billabong and Roxy, too.



**Amanda Whittaker**

We attended confirmation class at the local church this afternoon. Today's class topic was prayer. It was nice to contribute in discussion as a participant. After confirmation, Sara and I walked back to the motel for evening tea in the restaurant attached to the hotel. Tomorrow we have two programs at public schools in towns 85km away and then a community tea (church potluck) and family night program. We're going to get to play at state (public) high schools for the first time this week too. We've got a lot of electric set-ups this week, which should give us a chance to really get to know our overseas sound system.

Have you ever heard of someone dropping their bass (because the strap came loose) and having the bass slice straight through the quarter-inch cable when the bass hit the ground? It has happened to me twice in twenty four hours. And now I have to use a big ol' monitor cable because I only brought two quarter-inch instrument cables overseas. But that's okay; now I have more room to dance and jump around as I play.

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**Date:** 3/5/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

## Journal Entry:

We're on the Sunshine Coast! Yes, that's really the name and this place certainly is true to its name. There's even a surfing competition here all week. We drove past the beach at Noosa Head and saw real live people surfing! Maybe we'll get a chance to stop at the beach when we're back in Noosa next week to lead a day of school for the eleventh graders. Sara and Karl's host family said they'd take them surfing. Noosa Head is the epitome of a surfer's paradise. Although, I guess Surfer's Paradise really is the name of a town further south on the Gold Coast.



**Amanda Whittaker**

Today we arrived bright and early at Good Shepherd to set up sound equipment before school started. I don't know what the temperature was, but the humidity was 95-100 percent humidity at 7:15 a.m. We led a day of school for 104 twelfth grade students. We started out the morning with a concert and then spent the rest of the day doing our spirituality seminar. As soon as the school day ended, we packed up our gear and headed down to the Gold Coast. We stopped along the way to pick up a drum kit from Emma, our contact. Till now, we've only been using a drum kit when one was available. We drove on a four-lane highway through Brisbane; it's been almost two months since I've seen one of those. I think Brisbane might be the only place in all of Queensland that has a four-lane highway. I've enjoyed the thousand kilometers of coast we've driven past, though. I much prefer the one-lane ocean-view roads to the four-lane highways through cities.

And Emily has another snake story. Maybe she'll write a journal about it.

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**Date:** 3/6/2007

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

## Journal Entry:

G'Day again from down under! Things are going great here in Australia. We have been really busy with schools, churches, seminars, workshops, nursing homes, preschools and all kinds of ministry opportunities. We are so blessed to be here, though.

Australia is one amazing place. We have been here two months now, but I am still not used to seeing kangaroos on the side of the road, and I still have to have host families or contacts translate for me because I don't speak Aussie.

Yesterday we did a workshop in Noosa on spirituality. The first time that we did this workshop, which was about two weeks ago, I was asked to lead a Bible study for the students. It totally went over their heads. I didn't get any response from them, and so instead of a Bible study, we basically ended up having half an hour of Q&A on U.S. culture. However, this time around I approached things a bit differently. According to our contact in Noosa, even though we were at a Christian school, around 80% of the students don't go to church. I figured out that a "scholarly Bible study" was not the way to go, so I typed up four questions for the kids and asked them to respond to them as honestly as possible. The four questions were...

- 1.) Who is God to you?
- 2.) Have you ever seen God active in your life?
- 3.) What don't you understand about God?
- 4.) What question would you ask God if you could ask him anything you wanted?

It was really neat to see how the kids responded. For the first one, we ranged in answers from "God is my best friend" to "God is a fictional character." It was really exciting to see the discussion that took place with these students. The questions they asked were really great, too. One girl asked "Does God really send people to hell?" One guy asked "How has God always existed?" Other questions were things like "Why does suffering exist?" or "What happens when a tiny baby dies? Do they go to heaven or hell?" It was really neat to see how God worked in these kids, both the believers and the non-believers, to start some neat discussion and hopefully get these teens thinking a little bit about what they believe.



**Sara Williams**

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**Date:** 3/7/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

What kinds of questions are we commonly asked? It's kind of funny because we do get asked the same questions over and over. Some of my favourites are: How many murders have you seen? How many celebrities do you know? Do you want Hillary to be your next president? Is everyone in America rich?



My host mom woke me up early one morning to verify what Oprah was saying on TV. Oprah was talking about poverty in America, and my host mom didn't believe there were poor people in America!

I've also been asked why Americans are so patriotic. I guess it's true that some schools still say the Pledge of Allegiance each morning, and we sing the national anthem before sporting events and public meetings. I wouldn't say that Aussies aren't patriotic, we just have different traditions. We sang a hymn about Australia on one of their national holidays.

When the Portuguese found Australia (they were one of many groups that "found" Australia), they decided to make it a mission base. They named this big island "Australious Terra Espiritu Santu," which means Southern Land of the Holy Spirit. Here's the hymn we sang in church.

### The Great Southland

This is the Great Southland  
Of the Holy Spirit  
A land of red dust  
Plains and summer rains  
To this sunburnt land  
We will see a flood  
And to this Great Southland  
His Spirit comes

This is our nation

This is our land  
This is our future  
This is our hope  
A land of reaping  
A land of harvest  
This is our land  
This is our home

This is our nation  
This is our land  
This land of plenty  
This land of hope  
The richest harvest  
Is in her peoples  
We see revival  
His spirit comes

This is our nation  
This is our land  
This lucky country  
Of dreams gone dry  
And to these peoples  
We see a harvest  
And to this land  
Revival comes

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**Date:** 3/10/2007

**Submitted by:** Emily Wharton

**Journal Entry:**

I thought my toes were going to fall off. No, really. I was in that much pain. It happened in Ashmore on the Gold Coast. I was getting my bags from the van and was standing on the curb when all of a sudden I felt a small bite on the inside arch of my foot. It was annoying at first, but within seconds my foot was throbbing. I dropped my bags inside the house and immediately checked my foot for any snake or spider bites but could see nothing unordinary. Soon my foot hurt so bad that I wanted it to fall off because then I knew that the pain would be gone. My host mom gave me something to clean it with and also suggested that it may have been a black ant that had bitten me. My foot hurt for about two hours and then the pain was gone. And I still can't believe that an ant caused all that trouble.



**Emily Wharton**

I've created a new game for myself while on the road here. Its beginning came during our initial drive up to Cairns, on the day we drove for 12 hours straight. While I was navigating (which was very easy because we simply took A1 all the way north), I kept seeing large open fields where scrubby bushes and trees dotted the area. In between the road and the fenced-in areas there was also scrub, and occasionally an old car. Their broken-down, rusted frames were long abandoned and exposed to Nature's fancy. To some, she had not been very kind. Those were nearly undistinguishable as cars. Others were fairly new, just recently broken-down. Interestingly they were the ones missing their "feet", the tires were long gone. They must have been the only salvageable parts. According to some, when the vehicle breaks down, it's easier, and even more economical, to just leave it where it died and find a new one. So, on that long day of driving, my game was that of counting "dead" cars. It was actually quite fun, like a scavenger hunt or even a "Where's Waldo?" sort of game. Unfortunately I have forgotten the count from that day, but as a comparison we have had days where the drive was between two and four hours long and the count was between seven and twelve.

So, I have another snake story. If you're keeping track, this is my third. (Amanda has partial claim to the second one because she was involved, too. But I think my team is letting me claim ownership to the stories because whenever they happen I'm intrinsically involved.) I was staying with a family

in Noosa on the Sunshine Coast, and just before bed we took a walk down their street. The dog was having a wonderful time exploring the bushes on the one side of the street, and then running back over to the other side. A car drove up and it was one of the family's neighbours. I was introduced and we chatted for a moment. Then suddenly someone exclaimed and pointed in the direction where the headlights faced. There, going slowly across the road, was a six-foot python. It was crossing the path we had taken just moments before. It slithered up the curb and into the grass as I related briefly the other two snake experiences I'd had so far. We didn't see any more snakes while on our walk (I was fervently on the look-out!); however, my host mom told me that they'd used to have a pet python named Serephina that lived in my room.

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**Date:** 3/12/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Today we're in Redcliff, Queensland. The town gets its name from the red rocks that line the shore and cliffs of the town. We played at a Lutheran high school that has about 1200 students. We led two chapels for the year eleven and year twelve classes. Tomorrow we'll do three chapels for years eight, nine, and ten.



**Amanda Whittaker**

In the afternoon, two of the guys on our team took the van into Brisbane to get the oil changed. They also dropped off broken sound equipment to get repaired and said hi to Scott, our producer. Scott asked if they wanted to hear what our CD sounds like. They gave an emphatic yes, and Scott went to his car to get our CD out of his car CD player. We're really excited about the quality of the CD. Hearing how well the CD turned out is one of the highlights from our time here in Australia. I hope the music will bless others.

Meanwhile, the rest of us went to check out the shore. In Redcliff, there is a pool ten meters from the shore. I stood in the pool and could see the ocean; it was kind of funny. It was a beautifully landscaped pool that had an island in the middle with palm trees that cast shade into the pool. We saw a pool like this in Brisbane too, and they're free public pools!

Sara, Emily, and I are housed together today. We're staying with a really joyful lady. All her kids are out of the house, so she seemed as happy to have us as we were to be there. She fed us a delicious salmon salad and even rented us movies. She was so kind! I'm constantly impressed by how kind and hospitable our host families have been.

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**Date:** 3/12/2007

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker

**Journal Entry:**

It has been a heck of a week. I've learned that my grandpa was in the hospital and that he is now staying at the nursing permanently. It has been a hard thing to deal with, mainly because I can't be there for my family. I really wish that I could be there for them and now my worst fear is that my grandpa, with his Alzheimer's, won't remember me when I finally get home. It has really been especially hard to see this all happen, and to think back on the last few years, it has been quite a ride.



**Boe Parker**

I remember growing up, my grandpa was my idol. I looked up to him so much, and when I got older, I especially looked up to his faith. He had such strong faith. It was amazing. After seeing his faith for so long, it made me want to have a stronger faith. Even now, when Grandpa goes to church, he has the Lord's Prayer and the Creed and the whole liturgy memorized. It is truly inspiring to see how faith in God can break the chains of disease and sickness.

And now that I am in another country with different people and culture and not a lot of sleep, I wish so badly that I could go home to my family, but I know that my place is here. I know that God will take care of the things back home and all will be okay.

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**Date:** 3/14/2007  
**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt  
**Journal Entry:**



**Karl Schmitt**

Today's spirituality presentation went much better than the last time we were at Good Shepard Lutheran College. The year 11's were much more receptive to what I had to share in my session in seemed than any of the year 12's (even though some were still not terribly keen on it). I'm pretty sure at least a few of the kids got something out of it. If nothing else, our stay there was a great ministry in the family. I enjoyed incredibly the talks I had with my host father on everything from fraternities to guns to education. On all three nights we stayed there (one earlier and two this time), he and I talked for a very long time, with the most recent visit including Sarah for most of it.

Boe, Sara and I also got to swim for a while at the beach with Boe and me borrowing surf boards and trying our hand for the first time at surfing. It definitely is NOT as easy as it looks. It didn't help that we had some pretty crappy waves, but I certainly can not claim it was entirely the waves--it's hard, and a set of skills I don't have yet. But it was good exercise and fun. It was my "exercise for the week" as I've been joking with the team. (I seem to be getting at least one, sometimes two or three days of decent exercise in each week randomly) I will also add that I had no idea it could be so painful. The wax you put on the board to make it sticky...well, it doesn't just make it sticky to your feet; it also makes it sticky to your chest. Ouch. Yeah, Boe and I had wax chunks in our chest hair afterwards, and a nice rash, and I certainly had some blood as well. No wonder people wear shirts to surf, or look hairless on their chests (from being young, or just naturally not having any). (Random thought, do female surfers wear swimsuit tops under surf-shirts?) Neither Boe or I actually rode any waves standing up. I sorta caught two laying down, and tried to stand once, and fell miserably. Another wave I thought I'd caught then got the nose in the wave and about rolled feet over head to get whacked by the board. Boe rode at least one in on the board. But we still had a blast doing it all. I hope I get a few more chances to try and surf.

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**Date:** 3/16/2007  
**Submitted by:** Sara Williams  
**Journal Entry:**



**Sara Williams**

Howdy! Today we are in Logan, working with a pastor that has two different parishes in this area. This is very common for an Australian minister; pastors are so scarce that many of them are serving in multiple churches. It is amazing to see the dedication and the passion that these men have for their parishioners. They drive hours sometimes to lead a service in another city, but they do it with gratitude and a joyful spirit. I am really inspired by their servant hearts and their willingness to allow God to use them in such a great way.

We get asked quite frequently about our home congregations and what the Lutheran church is like in the United States. This has really made me miss my home congregation. My church in Houston is like my family. Don't get me wrong! It has been such a blessing to visit different churches across the U.S. and across the world. It is such a beautiful thing to see the Body of Christ in so many different capacities, but it also makes me long for that sense of home.

I miss going into service on Sunday morning and seeing my fifth grade Sunday school teacher. I miss seeing friends, and I miss hearing MY pastor share what the Lord has placed on his heart. I miss sitting in that pew with my family, worshipping with the people that I love most in the world, and I miss singing the songs that my church does on a regular basis. One of my favorite quotes by T.S. Eliot says, "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all exploring shall be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." I know that will be the case when I go home in August. I will have gained a greater appreciation for where I come from and a greater love for that place that I call "home."

However, this experience of traveling ministry has shown me the beauty of appreciating all kinds of worship experiences. No one way is better than another. It's all about the "Audience of One" anyway. It doesn't matter who I am sitting next to or what songs I am singing as long as God hears me and knows my heart. I have also learned how connected we are as the Body of Christ, and

even though my family or my fifth grade Sunday school teacher isn't in the service with me, I am getting the amazing privilege of praising God alongside brothers and sisters in my extended heavenly family. So yes, I miss my home and my church more than words can say, but I also know that God is present and alive wherever I am and I think that's pretty amazing!

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**Date:** 3/17/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

We're in the Woodridge, Beau-Logan area this weekend, which is south of Brisbane. Yesterday we did a morning chapel for pre-school kids and an evening Kid's Club for elementary school students. After Kid's Club, one of the host families invited New Vision over for a barbecue.

Today is St. Patrick's Day. Men and women all over the country are getting their heads shaved today to raise money for cancer research. Andrew and Boe both got their hair cut for the "Great Shave," a fundraiser for leukemia.

The family I stayed with took us on an afternoon drive through the hills of southern Queensland. At some outlooks we could see the ocean, and sky scrapers from the Gold Coast. We even stopped at a park to hike back to a waterfall. I know I've said this before, but the woods and rainforest in this country look like something straight out of Jurassic Park. We stopped at little fruit stands along the way to buy kiwis, avocados, and limes. The kiwis were the size of golf balls, much smaller than what you would see in a grocery store. Back in the states my family used to go on little drives like this in southern Michigan, except that we'd buy cucumbers, tomatoes, and apples instead of tropical foods.

We had fish and prawns for tea. I wasn't planning to try them again, but my host dad peeled one and put it on my plate. I liked them; the prawns were sweeter than the last ones I tried.

Sara, Emily, and I are staying with a great couple that just got married at the end of January. They both work in the school system, and they're pretty funny. I was impressed that their high school aged children do personal devotions every morning before school. It's really encouraging to see people living out their faith in their homes.



**Amanda Whittaker**

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**Date:** 3/19/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

This morning we led chapel at Keystone Disabilities. When we first arrived, the clients were cleaning and packaging headphones for Quantas Airlines (an Australian airline company). Ya know the headphones that the airline stewardesses give to you during the flight? My team now knows what happens to the headphones at the end of the flight. Quantas doesn't throw them away. They have the people of Keystone put on new sponges over the ear pieces and re-package them. Which, I suppose is a good idea, because that would be an awful lot of waste to throw out all those headphones after a single use. I wonder what China Airlines does with all those slippers they give people and then recollect at the end of the flight?

Doing chapel at Keystone was so much fun because the people there were so joyful! They enjoyed the music and even sang a few songs for us.

In the afternoon, we drove to St. Peter's in Indroopilly. This is where we stayed when we arrived in Australia, so it's good to be back. I remember being here in January and just taking in all the cultural differences. Even the little things, like how the toilet paper is only printed on one side, how



**Amanda Whittaker**

Australia has "hazchem" signs instead of "hazmat" signs, and how Aussies say "litrally" instead of "literally" seemed so odd in the beginning. Now, it almost seems normal, and it's only been two months.

We're at St. Peter's for a whole week, and most of us are staying with families who live on campus. Being in one place for the whole week is exciting because we'll get to know people better and get to spend more time with them.

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**Date:** 3/26/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Goodbye St. Peter's Lutheran College! We just spent an entire week at St. Peter's and really got to know some of the people at the school. We did chapels, visited classrooms, helped with a third grade art project, attended a student-led Bible study, led a worship service at lunch one day, and ate meals with the boarders in the dining hall.



**Amanda Whittaker**

On the way out of town this morning we picked up our CDs! I love the cover art on them because they are very Aussie. The CDs have an Australian lifeguard surf board on the cover with the ocean in the background. The lifeguard surfboards in Australia all have the word "rescue" on them in bold red print, and since "rescue" is our theme for the year, it's a perfect fit. We have oodles of CDs now, and just five weeks to sell them before our tour ends in Australia. So, if you would like to purchase a CD (or ten) just send us an email at [newvision@youthencounter.org](mailto:newvision@youthencounter.org) and we'd be happy to mail you one (or ten). If you're from a school or church that we've already visited, please let people know our CDs are available. Thanks!

We arrived in Caboolture this afternoon, and we're billeted out with staff and families from the school. Tomorrow will be a busy day as we need to start setting up at 7 a.m. tomorrow. We'll be busy with a full day of chapels for preps (kindergarten) through year seven (seventh grade) and classroom visits.

Christian schools in Australia receive government support, so there are a lot more Christian (especially Lutheran) schools in Oz, than in America. We've also learned that the majority of students in Australian Christian schools aren't Christians; this makes schools a pretty cool mission field for us. We get to share the Gospel message with fresh audiences that don't yet know what God has to offer. I don't know if it's because we're foreigners, but we've received some very warm welcomes in Oz, and I feel very lucky to work in a place where we get to see how much the people appreciate us.

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**Date:** 3/27/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

It was both a great week last week, and a bit rough. Being at St. Peters was an amazing blessing because we got to be someplace that really felt like home. I stayed with the family of two of the chaplains. Our host mother there really acted like a mom to us and treated us like we might be if we were home and our age.



**Karl Schmitt**

A second treat from our host home was getting to watch "The Dish," which is a movie about Australia's involvement in the Apollo 11 landing. It was really neat to learn more about that. I hope it was fairly accurate. I highly recommend watching if you get the chance. I think it was actually released fairly widely (I seem to recall seeing ads for it on American TV).

We also had our fair of bad with the good. As happens sometimes, there was some differences in attitudes about how things should be done and approached on team. We had a few tense days, and a long meeting about it, and now seem to be at least somewhat more settled about it.

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**Date:** 4/1/2007

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**

Hello again! Today we are in Everton Hills, which is a suburb of Brisbane. It is hard to believe that we only have a little over a month left on our overseas tour. I remember praying a year ago for the people of Australia and for my teammates, and it's hard to believe that so much time has already passed since then.

This is also the start of Holy Week. As Pastor Rob said in church this morning, "This is the week that changed the world." I think all too often we take this time for granted. We have heard the story before. We know all about the last supper, the betraying kiss, and the sacrifice that Christ made, but we don't let it change us and infiltrate us the way that it should. I know that I will never understand what Christ did for me 2000 years ago. No film or sermon or Bible story can ever capture the pain and the suffering that Christ went through for me and for you. It's easy to let Easter pass us by without really being reminded of what happened on that Friday. I encourage you, though, just as I am reminding myself, to take the time to really grasp the true meaning of Easter.

Max Lucado wrote a devotional book that I have been working through, and he mentions that if the guard would have hesitated as he was about to drive the nail into Christ's hands, Jesus would have taken the hammer and he would have done it himself. He loves us that much. It was also pointed out to me once that crucifixion is one of the most painful ways to die in the history of the world; it's hours and hours of suffering. Imagine if Christ came to earth today. If he was convicted of a crime in most places, he would have received a fairly quick and painless execution. However, Christ came to the world in a time where he would have to suffer beyond comprehension because he loved us that much.

When I was debating about coming on team in the fall of 2005, I was talking to a friend from college about everything that this year could possibly entail. All these doubts were running through my head. "What if I don't get along with my teammates? How am I going to survive not seeing my family for so long? What happens if I get really sick or I realize that I can't handle team life anymore? What if I have to eat grubs in Australia?! I don't know if I can do this!!" My friend Suzie listened to my fears and then simply answered, "Jesus did more for you." He certainly did.



**Sara Williams**

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**Date:** 4/1/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Tonight I lay out under the stars on top of our trailer and spent some time thinking about what I was going to do with my life. And what I wanted in my life. A thought rolled back to me, saying, "God, I'd be happy if I was only dating something seriously... with my life on a track and settled." (I guess I just want to be a homebody!) However, that made me think of a devotion that Emily read the other day that talked specifically about how there's always something that "I'd be perfectly happy if only I..." but that's not true. It is a matter of having a right relationship with God. (That opens another can of worms that I might get to.) It has to do with a relationship of love and mutual caring with God. But when I think of God, I don't think of love, really. I think of other things. I think of someone/thing all-powerful, a creator and cloud-like being (think V'ger from *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*). I think of someone I need to serve and obey, a commander and chief of my heart, actions, and soul. I think of something I don't and can't understand. And finally, perhaps the closest to love, I think of someone who takes care of me and watches out for me.



**Karl Schmitt**

But that doesn't bring out strong feelings of love. I can certainly see how it could come from love. I

can see God as a father figure watching over us and caring for us. Maybe it's a struggle between understanding how my own father expressed love and how I best receive it. Or maybe it is a matter of the difficulty I have in recognizing love when my primary love languages are very interactive, touch and words of affirmation.

A thought that occurred to me now is that one of the largest ways I develop a feeling of love is through the chance to care for, and protect, and just interact with that person. Yet how does one do that with an insubstantial God? I know we can see God in those around us, but then, what's to say we're not just interacting with those around us? One could answer then that we are interacting with both at the same time, but then I might ask, well, if that's the case, aren't I just doing THAT all the time, so what's to really suggest that God isn't just a figment of our imaginations to connect those all together?

I didn't come up with an answer. Besides maybe that I don't know how to love, or love God anyway, yet.

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**Date:** 4/1/2007

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker

**Journal Entry:**

I have gotten a chance recently to enjoy one of my favorite pastimes here in Oz (Australia). All six of us stayed together at a house, and our host dad loved golf and was good at it. In fact, he was an amazing golfer. He and I got to talking, and he asked if I would like to go out and play a round with him. At first, I was kind of hesitant because his handicap is a 4.5, which is a very good handicap. But he was a very social golfer and wasn't at all worried about the fact that I hadn't played golf for about a year. So at about 7:30 in the morning, we departed for the country club. We arrived and got all signed in and hired a cart and off we went.

The course was very dry, which isn't a surprise because all of southern Queensland is in a drought and are on tight water restrictions. I was actually kind of glad to see that the grass was brown and the earth dry on the course because I knew it would mean that, whether I hit the ball good or not, it would roll fairly far because of the ground being so hard. Right off the bat, I knew that I wouldn't be doing too hot. I hit the first ball off to my left and rolled a good distance toward the hole. I am very glad I didn't keep score because I would have probably cried at the total for the 12 holes we played. I was all over the course; in the rough, in the dirt, in the bunker (actually, my ball never did go in the sand.), even in the water at one point. Even though I played so horribly, it was great to get out and away from everybody and play a game that I both enjoy and am challenged by.

It is a great reminder to me of how much I should enjoy the little things in life. I mean, a game where you have to go around and hit a little white ball with a stick and try to get it into a little hole and seems so easy, yet can drive a person crazy if taken too seriously--now that is a game for me. Take the time to find something simple in your life and enjoy it, because it's not every day that you get to do your favorite things.



**Boe Parker**

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**Date:** 4/4/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

I thought I might write another journal about the future. It often seems like that is what our team is focused on, rather than the here and now ministry, but by no means can I say I'm different. I have been contacting both the graduate school I'm "planning" on going to, as well as at least one church in relation to a youth ministry position. I haven't really heard back anything from them besides acknowledgement of my contact. \*sigh\* Waiting and being patient has got to be one of the most difficult skills.



**Karl Schmitt**

However, the reason I wanted to write this was to spend some time reflecting on my current and

last host home. I am staying right now with the previous director of youth ministries for the district of Queensland. He had also worked in some congregational ministries before that, and both he and his wife had spent time separate and together working in the camp setting. What perhaps is more significant, though, is that now he sells IBM servers and such. He's gotten out of youth ministry entirely, minus involvement through his kids. Talking with him I've had a chance to explore that end of ministry experience and what had put him there. It was largely that he wasn't getting a chance to spend time with his family and that he was nearly to the burnt-out stage. It certainly is critical to be able to see that and watch what is going on towards that stage.

In my previous host family, both the mom and dad were teachers. One was a retired music teacher, the other currently teaches at the Catholic university nearby as a "on loan" professor from Australia's seminary. He is Queensland's advisor for any seminary students. He also specializes in teaching people who want to be teachers in the Lutheran school system. Just about every night we were there, he and I talked about teaching concepts, and faith and value based teaching, or the value of teaching versus youth ministry. He definitely helped me get a more thorough thinking about being a university professor.

We also talked for a while about the science-faith dialogue. He was interested in how I reconciled Creation with the Big Bang and evolution. We talked a little about how that can be approached in teaching. It also came up about how it is very important to have teachers and scientists that model a strong faith that is integrated with their scientific life, which tugged a few strings with me (and reminded me of Dr. George and Dr. Shelburne). I have also just finished reading a book about Einstein's equation and how there still a lot to be discovered about it through numerical methods and such, which is of course the area that I would be going into (roughly).

Oh, the controversy!!

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**Date:** 4/4/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Yes, I realize this is my second journal in the same day, but the other I wrote at 8 a.m., and it's 11 p.m. now...and this covers something else entirely.

I really noticed today driving back to our host home just how dry Brisbane currently is. It basically looks like late summer back home, when we didn't have a huge amount of rain. That is, everything is parched, the grass is all brown and dead, and only the bushes and trees barely look green. Now, this might not seem like such a big deal, and I suppose since it IS their fall, that might be ok. But one needs to realize that this is normally their wet season. When cyclones hit and drop buckets of rain. And compared to the rain forests we saw up in Cairns and Townsville and Wujal Wujal, it's practically a desert down here.

No wonder they just moved to level 5 water restrictions. Yeah. It's bad. Anyway, I just wanted to give you a bit of a thinker on how bad it really is here for water. Ironic when it is the only continent that is an island...



**Karl Schmitt**

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**Date:** 4/5/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Tonight we went to a Maundy Thursday service. However, unlike at my home congregations (that is, when my father is pastor), the altar was actually stripped at this service. This got me thinking about stripping things down. Earlier we had used Luther's explanation of Holy Communion from his Large Catechism. In that explanation Luther talks about those who truly believe in the forgiveness are the only ones worthy to take communion. So put the two together, and it made me think about how our faiths have been refined on this tour. I would not say it has been by building up, but rather a hard,



**Karl Schmitt**

brutal stripping down of our faiths. We are asked every day to share our faiths, to be excited and energetic for God. More than that, we are asked to do this before children. Of all of God's creations, children are perhaps the most discerning of all. I question now, perhaps more than ever, if I can truly love God, or what I believe in. Is it possible to believe in something we can't feel? Or how do we recognize the feelings? I can look back and see times where I have felt something directly influence me, or I feel that I have, for example I have a sharing about being granted the peace beyond understanding at camp once. But those feelings are few and far between. Yet we are asked time and again in the Bible to always devote ourselves God. The book I just started, The Science of God, suggests that we are to find that answer everywhere in nature. That it is practically inherent in physics, biology, chemistry and other sciences. I suppose that it is, but at the same time, when you are used to looking at it as science and not God it is much harder to see.

I was led to wondering also about the difference between heart and mind spirituality. Lutheran services are tailored much more intently towards the mind spirituality, I might even go so far as to say that without a pastor taking some free rein with the service or having a very heart-oriented message, it is entirely mind. This, of course, speaks to why there is so much controversy between "contemporary" services and traditional within the younger generations; people are used to being fed what they like and what fulfills them (probably a good thing). Well, not everyone (in fact, if I remember properly, a fairly smaller portion!) gets fed by the mind spirituality type. Therefore there is a need to feed others through other means.

I don't know what any of that last paragraph has to do with faith, but regardless I'm definitely still struggling to put the problems I'm facing as well as the growth and strength I'm feeling into words. I guess maybe with having to share my faith, I question what it is based on and I can't always find an answer. It is difficult to place my faith upon just the Bible. But that of course brings us to a concept addressed by Bonhoeffer, one must be obedient to have faith, and one must have faith to be obedient. They are both dependent on the other, which makes it a fairly vicious cycle to get into or to grow within.

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**Date:** 4/9/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

I've found it! I found a new kind of ministry that I've never seen in the US before; it's a combination of youth ministry and camping ministry. What could be greater? It's a place called Googa.

Several of the private schools dedicate a month of their curriculum to outdoor education. A school will set up a rotation during the year where they send 40 students at a time to camp. While at camp, the kids learn about teamwork, self-sufficiency, and a heap of survival skills. I'm so impressed that schools are willing to forgo a whole month of curriculum for an outdoor education program. The teachers say that the accelerated maturity that occurs at camp makes the kids much harder-working students when they return to school. The benefits of camp far outweigh the curriculum that is missed.

We are spending the week at Googa, one of the outdoor education centers that the schools use. We'll be leading a few campfire worship services, helping with a girl's night program, and various other programs, too.

A typical day at Googa starts with a timed 1.5 km run at 6 a.m., followed by morning devotions, breakfast cooked by the students, and cabin inspections. Students prepare meals over a fire and eat all their meals in cabin groups. This month, there are two girls' groups and two guys' groups at camp. After breakfast there are two morning programs, lunch, two afternoon programs, and job time at 4:00 p.m. Jobs include cooking and getting the day's food from the kitchen, cleaning, chopping wood, feeding the chooks (chickens) and gathering eggs, and working at the camp's avocado plantation. Five p.m. is shower time, and everyone only gets three-minute showers. After showers, everyone eats in their cabin's kitchen and cleans up by 7:30 p.m. Everyone meets at the campfire circle at 7:30 for the evening program and to receive mail. The kids learn how to do everything on their own without adults constantly prompting them; they even have to hand wash all their laundry.



**Amanda Whittaker**

Much of Googa's program includes a lot of the stuff you might see at an outdoor education camp in the US, including, camping skills, orienteering, team-building, and a high ropes course. But Googa gives the students practical opportunities to use the skills they learn. Some of these opportunities include pioneering (three days in the wilderness with your cabin group to build a shelter, campfire ring, sanctuary, toilet, clothes line, and anything else a community might need. One of the boys groups I visited also built a mail box, chicken coop, and hammock.), a three-day hike, and a solo (camping all by yourself).

Googa is such a great mix of camping and youth ministry. You work with the kids every day for an entire month, so you really get to know them and can cater programs to their needs, just like you would in youth ministry. But, you also get to be out in the beautiful wilderness of the Great Dividing Range and teach stewardship and respect for the environment. I've never seen a ministry quite like this one. I wish American schools sent their year ten students to camp for a month; I think it'd make us a lot more environmentally aware. Maybe the focus on outdoor education is why Australians seem to be more environmentally conscious than the average American.

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**Date:** 4/11/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Our experience at Googa was both unique and great. First, if you aren't sure what Googa is, take a look at Amanda or Sarah or Boe's entries. While we were there, we got a special opportunity to spend time with the "class" that was there which came from a high school we had already visited. I got to eat around four or five meals with some of the boys, just 11 of them in a dorm. It really gave a chance to just talk and be a guy with them that we almost never get as we travel.



**Karl Schmitt**

Our first full day there I got to do something else that was amazing, climb a tree. Yeah, it doesn't sound special, but when I'm climbing up about 30m (90ft), it is totally different! We were harnessed together with an instructor on either end and I was in the middle, with ~11 guys spread out between us. As we climbed the tree we also crossed back and forth between two other pine trees. It was quite a challenging activity, perhaps one of the most challenging I've done as part of a high- or low-adventure course. I even got asked to help again in the afternoon with a second group since I'd had climbing experience before, which was nice for me. I felt like climbing really gave me a chance to bond with the boys and become part of their group at least a little.

I should say that the guys in general were very welcoming and open, just including me right away, not really as an "adult" or someone they couldn't joke around with or be open around. Hopefully, that meant I could also be a good influence on them too (if there's any good of God from me to spread).

The other activity they did this week was their "pioneering experience." This is where a group gets dropped off out in the bush with rope, poles, an axe head (no handle), a fire drum/ring and a saw and let loose for about three days to do what they want. You might be thinking that while I left out food, they'd be getting that of course, too...you'd be wrong. They had to buy/earn their food, similar to true pioneers or settlers. The groups were rewarded based on how much they built and the quality of things that they built. They did receive some initial food based on their preparation and cleanup of their dorm areas before leaving camp. The experience seemed like it would be quite a blast, I mean they get to go out, basically unsupervised, and build stuff, and live out in the wilderness--what more do boys really want to do?

Finally, I wanted to talk about my chance to do a "solo." What that means is going out into the bush with a tent, some food, a radio and your sleeping gear...and sleeping out overnight by yourself, usually for 24ish hours. When Sarah, Boe and I did ours, it was only maybe 18 hours, but still overnight. It was such a blessing to get to go out, truly enjoy nature and the Australian countryside and just be by myself. Oh, and the sky! The most magnificent sky I have ever seen was there. More stars than you might be able to imagine. They just littered the sky. I have not seen the likes ever in America. Even "far" away from the cities, there is still so much light pollution so as to blot out some of the stars that can be seen here. And the Milky Way stood out so clearly. You could truly tell

where it was both in star-count and just the white dusting that went the arc of the sky. If all that wasn't enough, I also got a chance while I was out to just spend some time praying and reading my Bible. Something I have not been doing nearly enough over the past few weeks (reading my Bible for more than devotions and intentional prayer). As part of my prayer time, I also carved a cross out of Australian wood. I don't know what type or even if it is terribly "exotic" or "Australian," but I will still have the memories to associate with it.

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**Date:** 4/12/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

I'm spending three days hiking cross-country through Blackbutt State Park, Ironbark Nature Preserve Sanctuary, and through farmers' paddocks, including the property of Steve and Terry Erwin (the Crocodile Hunter) and Bobby Erwin (Steve's father). This was the most Survivor-esque hiking I've done. Seven fourteen-year-old girls and myself had a topographical map, a radio, and three days to make it 60 km across the wilderness, no track (well, sometimes a cow path), no trail, no road, just a compass.



**Amanda Whittaker**

Working with aboriginals in January was neat, but helping at Googa has been my highlight thus far in Australia. I've never seen a program like this one. The kids learn how to use the camp stoves, set up tents, and pack their backpacks for six to eight hours of hiking a day, and do it all without adult supervision. Hiking the first day carrying four liters of water and a heap of other stuff that weighted about eighteen kilos was difficult. By the end of the day we had hiked 18.5 km to our first checkpoint, and my hips and collar bone had bruises, but it was worth it to camp under the stars somewhere in the outback. Now that fall is here, and we're on the inland side of the Great Dividing Range, it's pretty cool in the evenings and mornings.

We woke up in the morning and made hot Milo (a less sweet kind of hot cocoa mix) with powdered milk. The first day of hiking we had a guide with us that helped the girls a bit when we got too far off course. Today when we reached the "Loo with a View," a three-sided outhouse that sits atop a hill overlooking Blackbutt Mt., our guide left us with directions, a map, and two compasses. We were left all alone with the most deadly snakes, bugs, and scary things that the Australia bush has to offer. Honestly, the only wildlife we saw the whole time was a deer, wallabies, birds, and more cows than I could count. Using the map and compass worked well at first. At noon we passed some big rocks that led to a track near a gully. It's always good to run into a track, instead of just bushwacking across woods or a paddock (pasture). But at one o'clock we were back at the same gully again. Needless to say the girls were getting pretty frustrated. I knew our coordinates on the map, but the directions made no sense to me. Fortunately it wasn't my job to figure it out. In fact, I wasn't supposed to help the girls at all. The girls were supposed to do everything on their own. My job was simply to be an adult presence in case there was an emergency.

Despite the tough task, I was really impressed by the way the girls encouraged each other on the hike and helped each other at times when we were semi-lost.

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**Date:** 4/13/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

Day three of my hiking adventure through the Great Dividing Range:

We woke up early today because cows were grazing on the hill we chose for our campsite. Being that we were awake early and a few kilometers behind schedule, we packed up early, I said a prayer for our safety today, and we started hiking by 7:30 a.m. We had the most difficult terrain to hike through today, but knowing that we'd already come nearly 40 kilometers and only had a few more hours of hiking to go gave us great motivation. The girls asked me to teach them some of our songs. We sang the entire hike. As usual, it was anything but easy to read the contour map. One difficulty was that our map is



**Amanda Whittaker**

thirty years old, and so all the rivers and earth dams marked on the map probably dried up a decade ago due to the drought.

Hiking through the hills today with a loaded down pack at the rate of 5-6km an hour was tough. Being weighed down by the heavy pack reminded me of the way that sin entangles us. If I hadn't been carrying 40lbs of stuff on my back, the hike would have been a breeze. The pack made me so tired and weary. The minute we stopped to take a water break, I dropped the pack to the ground and instantly felt like a new person. But the minute I hoisted the burdensome pack back on me, my pace slowed to a grueling crawl. We sure are lucky as Christians that we have the option of dropping the burdens of sin and worry at the feet of Jesus.

We hiked so fast that we were at our pick-up location (one of Steveo's farms) by 1:30! We radioed in our location, and the camp came to pick us up in a big white ute (truck). When we got about 200 meters from camp, we jumped out of the truck so that we could hike in to camp on foot. One of the staff members had a video camera out and recorded the last few steps of our adventure. We cleaned up our equipment back at camp and debriefed with the girls about their experience.

Most of us didn't know if we could hike 60 km. We felt a great sense of accomplishment in having completed the hike, and I think the hike taught the students that they are capable of a whole lot more than they realize. It reminds of the Bible verse where God says that the world has never seen what a person who puts their complete and total trust in God can accomplish.

If we simply continue trekking on, and believe in ourselves that God will give us strength we will accomplish amazing things. I'm incredibly thankful for having had the last few days to learn and grow with these campers.

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**Date:** 4/14/2007

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**

G'day! Today we are in Chinchilla, Queensland. We just left the town of Blackbutt (yes, you can laugh...) this afternoon. In Blackbutt, we were staying at a camp called Googa. Googa used to be an old forestry station in the middle of the bush, but some local Lutheran schools purchased the land and turned it into an outdoor education center. Now students from these schools take one month out of their normal education and attend camp at Googa. This is a required part of their curriculum!! Here the kids learn how to cook, camp, get along with one another, and basically survive on their own. It was an absolutely wonderful experience for us. Emily, Amanda and I got to go hiking with the girls at camp. The girls of Googa were sent out on a three-day hiking trip. The first day, the girls were accompanied by adult guides, but the second and third days, they had to navigate to their next campsite all alone and set up camp by themselves. The challenge was to make it back to Googa alive, basically! Amanda stayed with her hiking group the whole three days. Emily and I returned back on the second day when our adult guides came back. It was a really neat experience to hike in the beautiful bush. We got to see the local wildlife (roos, koalas, goannas), enjoy the amazing starry sky, and just be in the midst of God's creation.

One of the nights at Googa was a really special experience for Karl, Boe and me. We were invited to go on "solo." This is an overnight camping trip in the middle of the bush all alone which the students all do in their last week at camp. So in the afternoon, Karl, Boe and I were taken out and dropped off with our little camping stove, a tent and not much else. Let me say, it was amazing. I stared up at the sky for what seemed like hours. No American night sky can compare to what I have seen here. The stars are just unbelievable. It's amazing to see how creative and massive our God is. I thought that I was going to be petrified all alone out in the bush overnight. Just ask Boe--I was practically crying right before we got dropped off. However, that night out under that big sky has been one of my favourite memories from Australia. I did get a little nervous when I heard the dingos howling in the distance, but I wanted to prove to myself that I am stronger than I give myself credit for a lot of the time. It was a great time at Googa. We really hated to leave!



**Sara Williams**

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**Date:** 4/18/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

What makes a church vibrant? It's not dependent upon which century the praise music came from. It's not dependent upon what the worship space looks like. It's dependent upon the hearts of the people.

Tonight I'm staying with a family in Kingaroy, which is inland of the Great Dividing Range. They had such vibrant faith. They were the kind of people that when you hear them talk about the passion they have for God, you just can't help but get excited! They talked about some of the exciting things that God is doing at their church. What I liked about their church is that they're not copying the popular "contemporary" techniques that so many churches seem to be mimicking today. Trying to find a formula for how to worship God is not going to make a church grow. It's all about our hearts, and this was very evident in my host family.

When our goal is to know God and to be close to God something amazing happens. Our closeness to God produces an outflow of love that pours over the world. Expressing love and compassion to the world is a by-product of knowing God. This by-product is what causes a church to grow, not canvassing the neighborhood with fliers. It's all the work of God in people who are after His own heart.



**Amanda Whittaker**

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**Date:** 4/19/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

While walking through the school courtyard during morning tea time, I noticed a group of seven-year-olds cracking bullwhips. Yes, real bullwhips, at school, next to the playground! St. John's Primary School in Kingaroy has a competitive bullwhipping team! I didn't know bullwhipping was a competitive sport, especially not for elementary school students. Since we're in Australian cattle ranching country, bullwhipping looked like a cultural experience that I should try.



**Amanda Whittaker**

I walked over to the group to check out the dangerous looking whips flying through the air. One of the coaches handed me a bullwhip and taught me how to whip forwards. It's not as hard as it looks. Then he handed me a second whip and taught me to crack two at a time. Cracking two whips wasn't too hard, so then he taught me how to crack the whips backwards. There are whip cracking points for accuracy if the competitor can cut a Styrofoam cup into two equal parts. I was just starting to get interested in all the tricks when the bell rang to signal the end of morning tea. I was sad to have to stop practicing my new skill; it was fun to learn a new "sport."

It's so random the stuff you see and experience on team. In the morning I learned how to crack a whip; in the afternoon I learned about pigeons. We ate dinner with a family who raises white pigeons. The dad let the 33 pigeons out of their cage to do a lap around the yard for us. We learned how pigeons molt their feathers in a certain order and we even got to pet the silky soft wings of a pigeon. (Don't worry, Mom, I washed my hands with soap afterwards. No bird lice here.)

I turn around from watching the birds just in time to watch a teammate of mine fall off a unicycle. The family also had a unicycle. Boe and Karl were trying diligently to ride the thing. We had a delicious sausage sizzle for dinner and then went to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church to lead a Family Culture Program. I'm tellin' ya, you just never know what will happen on team; every day really is a new adventure.

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**Date:** 4/29/2007

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**

So we are quickly approaching the end of our tour! Our last scheduled event is a week from today and it's really neat because our tour is ending right back where we started. Our trip around Queensland has ended up being very cyclical. We touched down in Brisbane in January, and one of our first stops was at Resurrection Lutheran Church for a Sunday morning worship service. That night we led worship at a bimonthly contemporary Lutheran service (I know that's an oxymoron!) called Sunday Night Live at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Rochedale, Queensland. Now, as we approach the end of our tour, we will be leading worship at both Resurrection and "SNL" on the last Sunday before we fly out. Pastor Bryan prayed a blessing over us at Resurrection at the beginning of our tour. I contacted him this week and he told me that he plans on showering prayer over us again as we return to the United States. The whole time that we have been here we have had so many congregations wanting to lift us up in prayer and they have also prayed for our families back home. Australian churches have been very passionate about praying for us and we have certainly felt the impact that those prayers have had on our ministry here.



**Sara Williams**

What an amazing four months we have had over here in Oz! As we come up on our last week "down under," I find myself becoming very reflective on my experiences here. God has revealed himself to our team in so many amazing ways, some of which we probably aren't even seeing right now. Amanda commented a few weeks ago that her trip here has really taught her a lot about her own country, and I totally agree. It's funny that it takes going halfway around the world to really get some perspective about where you come from. For example, in the middle of our tour I was talking to a woman who teaches a religious education class in central Queensland. She told me that she constantly prays for the U.S. because we do not have religious education in our state schools. Here in Australia, every child that enters school, whether it's public or private education, hears the name of Jesus in the classroom. As a future teacher, this really fascinates and excites me. What a powerful tool this is to get the name of Christ into the minds and hearts of students.

The U.S. is constantly looking outside its own borders with regards to evangelism. We are always looking for that lost country or race of people to save, the latest international charity to give money to, the latest cause to support. One of the things I have learned since coming here is that we, as a nation, are failing our young people when it comes to teaching them about the Gospel. Don't get me wrong. It is important to support international causes, but we also need to look inward to see how we can reach people within our own country with the love of God. We are so worried about political correctness or offending someone that we are missing great opportunities to reach lost children. Australia has seized an opportunity in their school system that I greatly admire. Unfortunately, I don't see the U.S. changing their "religion in schools" policy anytime soon, but Australia is proving every day that it is possible to share Jesus in public schools without the world coming to an end. The U.S. needs to take a hint from that!

As we prepare to return home, I look back on my time here in "Oz" with a bittersweet heart. I am so excited to go home, but I know that Australia will always have a little piece of my heart.

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**Date:** 5/2/2007

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker

**Journal Entry:**

The past few weeks have been really incredible for me. The first awesome experience was AGMF (Australian Gospel Music Festival). We were in Toowoomba for a full week at a giant music festival with thousands of other brothers and sisters in Christ. It was so good. Plus, it was awesome to get to see some people that we had met at different times on our tour. We got to see some amazing bands, and I really learned a lot from watching other bands play. It was also nice that we didn't have to play or do anything. We could just go and do what we wanted and see who we wanted.



**Boe Parker**

The next really great experience was at an outdoor education camp called Googa. It was awesome to be at a camp with a bunch of tenth grade students and be able to hang out with them

and share a bit of our lives with them. We were so blessed to be able to experience some of the elements of the camp along with them. I really enjoyed the high-ropes course that they had and the tree climb. The tree climb was on these two enormous pines, and we were all harnessed together and climbed all over the trees; back and forth between them and up and down. Plus, I got to help and know a really cool kid. He was scared of heights and he was shorter than all the other boys, but it was awesome to give him encouragement and to see how well he did.

The last thing I will share is that, even though I had some amazing experiences, I did have an unfortunate one. My acoustic guitar was in the back of our van and the back door wasn't latching properly. Not everyone knew about this, and so one day when we were leaving a place, the door popped open and my guitar got run over by our trailer. No more guitar. But I really am not too upset about it. Sure, it was a nice piece of equipment and I don't really like playing on the other guitar we have, but I really don't care too much about material things. There will always be more chances to get a guitar, and at least it wasn't a person or something that got run over. I really think that God showed me how I should not be concerned for the things of this world, because they can be broken, but to keep my eyes focused on Him and the life that He has given me that cannot be broken.

In Christ,

Boe Parker

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**Date:** 5/3/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Struggling Faith

This year has been very good for me in relation to my faith. I've been able to spend time focusing on God, changing my habits and manners some to lead a more Godly life. I've started doing things like evening devotions EVERY evening, reading books about faith and leadership or physics or just in general, increased prayer, and regular morning devotions. However, many of these things are obedience-oriented actions; that is, following God's commands about how we should live our lives immersed in his word and among believers.

While we've been on the road, I've witnessed many faith lives, people who earnestly and actively believe in God and Jesus. I've especially seen this among my teammates. Though, when I say active, I also mean perhaps a very personal and "here" God, like someone that walks along beside them and holds their hand.

Yeah, remember how I said I've increased my obedience? This year has made it painfully obvious that my faith is different, perhaps lacking a very important component, something that I've looked at now from a few perspectives or so I've thought.

What is this piece of faith? How do people get there? I find it so hard to believe in something I don't have here and now physical proof. But that said, I feel like I just trust and act as if there is no question that he exists. How do I make this faith feel real? Where is the proof that convinces ME that there is a God and lets me know his love? Or maybe that's the truer question, how do I feel his love? How do I see him active in my life? It isn't like God's going to be sending me "words of affirmation" or "physical affection" like my two primary love languages say I need. I can always spend quality time with him, but that only fulfills so much of a need, especially when it can seem hard to feel a response. The last two "love languages" are going to be even harder to recognize as being from him at times, gifts and service. Everything I have is a gift from God. That's the Sunday school answer, anyway. I can believe it in my head, but in my heart?



**Karl Schmitt**

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**Date:** 5/29/2007

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker  
**Journal Entry:**

It was really great to finally get a break and a chance to see my parents. I had a blast hanging out with them and getting caught up on things. It was also very good to finally get a chance to sit down and let it all spew out...my overseas experience, that is. I really enjoyed telling them things from my time over in Australia, and they really enjoyed learning things from Australia and hearing my stories.

It was also nice to get to see everyone on the International Teams last week. I really enjoyed catching up with them and am really excited for VBS season. Well, I have to go pick up my teammates from the airport and then drive a few hours, so that's all for now.

In Christ,

Boe



**Boe Parker**

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**Date:** 6/5/2007  
**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker  
**Journal Entry:**

What's so important about people's stories? I've stayed with many people this year who sit down and want to tell me about themselves and share stories of events in their lives. I've heard stories of struggle, and stories of triumph, stories of signs, wonders, and miracles. Both in Australia and in the US, what I remember most about the people I've stayed with are their stories.



**Amanda Whittaker**

The book of Ezekiel in the Bible retells the Israelites' story. The book of Ezekiel is about a foreboding prophesy of death and destruction. As Ezekiel tells how bad things are going to get, God uses Ezekiel to remind the people of their history and tries to use their story to turn their hearts back to God. Why is it important to remind the people of the Israelites' fleeing from Egypt? Why do people tell their stories?

I think host families tell me their stories because it's a way of sharing themselves. Once someone has shared his or her story with you, you have a personal connection with them.

Is that why Jesus shares his story with us, not once, but four full times in the Gospels? People invest in their life stories. They tell the tales of their lives with emotion. It's an honor to listen to someone sharing what's on their heart.

Can you hear the emotion of God the Father in the Bible when you read the words of His son being tortured and dying for a bunch of rebellious and idolatrous humans?

Stories seem to play a large role in our Youth Encounter ministry. We often tell stories in our program of events that happened to us in Australia. As I mentioned earlier, we've heard a lot of stories, too. My favorite and most memorable part of host home ministry is listening and storing away the remarkable stories of how God has worked in the families I've visited.

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**Date:** 6/16/2007  
**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt  
**Journal Entry:**

We've completed our first week of Vacation Bible School, and it was pretty cool. This past week we not only got to run our normal VBS stuff, but we also got to go on field trips every day. We went to two hands-on kids' museums, a water park, and a kids' park (I didn't go to that, though) with the kids. We really got to know the kids more than just the little bit of interaction during our various sessions.



I led games all week, and I have to say I am very, very impressed with Group(tm) and their curriculum. Unlike Augsburg and Concordia, their daily themes, theme verses, and activities all actually tie together. It was pretty neat being able to link everything together, even when I led games. I didn't even have to come up with any games that related. They already had three different games that all had some good discussion questions to tie them back to the themes or the Bible story. Not all of the games were amazing successes, but since I only needed to do two of the games to fill up the 25 minutes I had kids for, it wasn't a big deal.

The other truly wonderful thing was just how well we got to know the congregation and members of it. From having a chance to really discuss all the working and goings-on in the church with the pastor and my host mom (Sharon), to worshiping with three very different demographics in the church, we saw just how the church is growing and varied. Beyond that, they really adopted us and provided for us in ways we could hardly have imagined. I think that just about everything on our displayed needs list was provided--even the eye doctor and chiropractor visits. It is amazing to see what skills and gifts God's children have.

I just hope that when I return home, I can stay excited about being involved in a congregation and helping it grow without pushing too much. It is a fine line to walk.

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**Date:** 6/17/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

Another theological discussion:

(Remember this does not necessarily contain theology supported by Youth Encounter, the ELCA, New Vision, or myself.)

Romans 8:9b (NIV)--And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

Now, before I begin some discussion and thoughts on this, I need to cite a few more verses:

Romans 8:2 ...the Spirit of life...

Rom 8:11 ...the Spirit of him who raised Jesus

Rom 8:15a ...Spirit of sonship.

Rom 8:15a ...Spirit of adoption. (alternate translation)

So about two days ago, Amanda led a Bible study on the first third of Romans 8, and the verse I quoted first really struck me. Especially after I read through the other verses and thought about them some. I quoted the other verses because when I read them, I hear Paul talking about more than one Spirit. Really at least two spirits, the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son. And to me, these sound different than perhaps the Holy Spirit as we think about it. Or maybe it is all the same, which I suppose is part of the conundrum of the Trinity.

So when I hear, "have the Spirit of Christ," I think of being like Christ. So, what I hear the Bible saying in one sense is that we must be like Christ, that is, act as Christ did, to belong to Christ.

This, of course, makes sense in that we will belong to Christ when we can live, love, and sacrifice like Christ. However, this is also completely unobtainable since it is impossible for us to be sinless as Christ was. We can only strive to be as loving as him who gave his life for the entire world. We are told that we become sinless once we belong to Christ, but if the only way we can become sinless is to belong to Christ, and the only way we can belong to Christ is to be like Christ, that is free of sin, we can never belong to Christ, and therefore are always stuck in sin.

Now before I continue talking in a circle, I suppose it is important to just stop and remember that it is Grace that we receive through faith, not by actually being as Christ. We are able to be like Christ through the grace that God has given us, through following the Holy Spirit's directions we are



**Karl Schmitt**

capable of loving (at least in small ways) as Christ did, as well as being sinless as our sins are removed through Christ.

Feel free to respond with thoughts to the team email: [newvision@youthencounter.org](mailto:newvision@youthencounter.org)

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**Date:** 6/18/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

It is interesting to note the difference between congregations. And I think the largest difference can be seen from the pastors. When pastors are excited and energetic about their ministry, a church is vibrant and lively in everything it does. Their ministries are growing and filled, worship is spirit-filled and touching. Yet it is just as easy to find congregations where a pastor has become burnt out and lost the passion of the Word that they once had.



**Karl Schmitt**

When do pastors lose that drive to grow their church? We just visited a "parachute drop," as they call it sometimes. That is, a newly minted pastor was hired by the synod to start a new congregation in a community, and he was sent in completely alone (he has a wife as moral support, but she is at another congregation in the area). He's been at it for a few months, and the congregation itself was only 10 weeks old when we worshiped with them (they might be 11 now). Still, he has had a chance to see God at work in many wonderful ways. Similarly, we were at a church in Australia and met a fairly young pastor who was excited about ministry, and because of that, his church was thriving. He had grown the children's ministry and even the elderly Bible studies.

Still, for all of this, we have visited so many congregations that, while certainly not lost or with pastors who don't believe, have pastors that have been worn down by life and parish ministry. Is there a way we can revive these pastors and help them reenergize their congregations? It saddens me when I visit and can't feel the Spirit moving in places, even though the congregation is faithful and loves God.

I suppose if I could answer this question well I'd be able to help fix all of the mainstream Protestant churches.

My current answer: All pastors need a nice, LONG (multiple-week, 3-6+) vacation.

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**Date:** 6/19/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

We are officially in Vacation Bible School season. We're in Columbus, South Carolina at Living Springs Lutheran Church. Our theme is Avalanche Ranch. We're doing three weeks in a row of Avalanche Ranch; we're gonna get to learn this curriculum pretty well. I'm staying with a great family that has a six-year-old daughter and a two-year-old daughter. Emily and I played a game called "Pretty Pretty Princess" with the girls and their mom one evening. Check out our New Vision photo page to see pictures of Emily and me decked out in plastic jewelry.



**Amanda Whittaker**

This week has been great. I was a shepherd, and led a group of four- to eight-year-olds. I loved them! They were as hyper as anything, but they were excited to be there, and that made it all worthwhile. My job was to accompany the class to each station. Our stations were drama, theatre (movie), games, snacks, and mission/craft time. Between stations, I taught the class songs, and we practiced our memory verse of the day. This VBS was kind of like a day camp, because we had class half the day and went on a field trip the other half of the day. Some of the places we went were a kid's museum, a park, a waterpark, and the state museum.

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**Date:** 6/21/2007

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**



**Sara Williams**

Hello from Columbus, GA!! We are currently leading our second week of Avalanche Ranch VBS. (Next week we will be doing it for the third time...) It's so fun to see kids get excited about God. I know that for most of them, VBS is about making crafts and playing games and seeing friends, but if any little part of what we or the other leaders say sinks in for them, I know that makes God excited. The innocent and simple faith of children is so beautiful. They are not clouded with complex theological discussions or deep questions about faith. They simply believe. I think all too often we get bogged down with trying to have all the answers. We want to completely understand God, completely understand the Bible, or completely understand God's plan for our lives. However, in trying to rationalize an unexplainable God, we are limiting who He is. We are trying to put a limitless God in the confines of our limited mind. We need to have faith like a child and simply believe because we know in our hearts that we have no other choice.

Now that our year with Youth Encounter is winding down, I really feel a bitter sweetness about what lies ahead. I am excited about going home. I have a student teaching position lined up and ready to go for when I return to Houston. I have a family that can't wait for me to be in their same time zone, let alone the same town. I have friends and an amazing church that I can't wait to get back to. However, these teammates are my family, too. Saying goodbye to Andrew a few weeks ago was one of the hardest things I have had to do. The thought of having to say goodbye to the rest of my teammates is really scary. I know that I will keep in touch with them, but this experience that we have had this year, though really hard at times, was life-changing for me, and it will be hard to walk away from. We become so dependent on each other for stability and support. I am going to miss the intense community that we have shared this year. My teammates will be able to understand a year of my life that no one else in the world will be able to completely identify with. Even other people who have been on team will not completely be able to know what went on with New Vision 06-07. That is a really neat bond that we share. Now, I am just trying to appreciate the time we have left and thank God for the year that we have had.

Please keep us in your prayers as we wind up our year. Please pray for renewed energy and excitement as we continue through VBS season and pray for our future plans as we try to discern God's calling on our lives apart from this ministry. Thank you so much for praying, and if you have any needs, we would love to lift you up in prayer, as well. E-mail your concerns to [NewVision@youthencounter.org](mailto:NewVision@youthencounter.org). We would love to pray for you, too.

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**Date:** 7/6/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**



**Karl Schmitt**

These are pseudo-random thoughts...

Tonight I rescued a snake (a garter, I think) from a pool. When I went swimming, I noticed it trying to swim away and escape up the edge of the pool. It didn't particularly bother me initially since it was clearly small and trying to get away from me. But it kept struggling. I kinda had a God moment a bit later when I got out and decided that it shouldn't have to keep struggling. So I searched for my host home's pool net and went fishing for it. The first few times it swam away, and wiggled out of the net. But I eventually snared it and took it outside the mosquito net they have around their pool.

It's really a good analogy for how ourselves and God interact sometimes. We're scared senseless when he's with us. We keep trying to escape where we're at, climbing the walls and falling down again. If we can't get out and stay there too long, we'll drown or die. When God reaches for us, we run away and wiggle out of his grasp. That is, until he cleanly snags us, then takes us to an even larger, better, not enclosed world.

But of course, this is all very cliché. \*sigh\* I haven't written in a while because I haven't really felt like there's anything new or exciting to write about. We are closing in on the end of the year in a lot of ways. And boy, it is time to be done. But I hate not being able to enjoy what's left because I'm anxious about what's next. Yet at the same time, I just want to escape some of the woes that remain here and get away.

I talked to a very close friend last night, and I might get a chance to hang out with her soon. But even thinking about that has a big twinge of something. Because I'm not sure of how much I've changed, be it better or worse. I honestly think I'm scared of when this will be over because I will basically have to make all new friends and completely reestablish myself. If I try only to maintain the old friendships that I have, I'll have incredible amounts of travel, and just be missing out on so much of what it means to just have friends to hang out with.

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**Date:** 7/11/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**



**Karl Schmitt**

As we travel we get a chance to experience many different churches. Both "contemporary" and "traditional" churches. There is a real struggle between the two. And the more I see it, the more I struggle to understand why it exists. Or why people struggle with blended services. I understand the traditionalists, and the need to keep things that have existed for years, but at the same time I understand the need to change, and add things that are current. It seems to me that most of the time people who want to change are unable or unwilling to recognize the value in the traditional, to remember that those practices were established for a reason and have developed out of years of the church growing. Yes, the world is different, but we are different from the world. No, that doesn't mean we can't incorporate some of that, but we should relax and remember that those things that are there have been put in place probably by people a lot wiser and more educated in the situations than us.

Yet the traditionalist cannot be upheld either; when they refuse to change and acknowledge that our world is different and that there are ways available to us to better spread the Word to impact people on more levels, they are denying valuable ministry tools. Similarly, while everything in worship may come from a good reason or someplace in the Bible, they were developed and added to the worship at some point as well, and similarly, new things can be developed and added to the worship.

It's all a classic example of people being unwilling or unable to see something from another person point of view. "You can't know someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes."

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**Date:** 7/19/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

This week we've been helping with a Vacation Bible School in Brunswick, Georgia. We're staying at a house on the tide waters on St. Simon's Island. Twice a day you can see the tide come in and raise the water level eight feet. The family we're staying with has a crab trap off their dock, and we boiled crabs for lunch yesterday.



We're doing an evening VBS, where we have dinner at 6:00 p.m. followed by opening **Amanda Whittaker** at 6:30 p.m. When we're finished with opening at 7:00 p.m., we go to the storytelling room to act out the story of the day and to teach the kids the song of the day. This church wrote their own curriculum called, "Gather Round the Table." All the stories have to do with food. It's one of the smaller Vacation Bible Schools we've worked with, but what I like about this one is that they also have an adult class. The adult class is studying the book of Acts and has more students than are in the children's part of VBS. When we finish with the storytelling room, I've been sneaking back into the sanctuary to join the adult class. We finish with a large group closing at 8:15 p.m. This week we've been using the puppets to review the story with the kids in the closing.

We drove in on Saturday and had a meal at church. Sunday we assisted with morning worship. Sunday was the first day the church met the new interim pastor, and it was fun to see the excitement of the church as God leads this congregation somewhere new. VBS started Sunday evening, and only lasted four days, so today we pack up and drive to Columbia, South Carolina.

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**Date:** 7/20/2007

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**

G'Day from Columbia, South Carolina. We are here for a few days doing a concert, working at a farmer's market, going to a baseball game with the youth group, and leading Sunday school and a worship service on Sunday. This is a beautiful area, and, though it is blazing hot, we are enjoying it.



**Sara Williams**

Things have been going really well for us. I think everyone is really trying to savor these last few weeks that we have left on the road. We did affirmations a few days ago as a team and we had to list seven things that we liked about each of our teammates. It was really nice to see how each of us contributes uniquely to the team and how our friends see and value who we are. I have four other teammates right now who are very different from one another and from me. However, I cherish each of them for what they bring to this ministry and what they each have taught me this year. One of the main themes we have addressed this year in our programs is the idea of the body being a unit and how the body of Christ is made up of separate but critical elements. I don't think any other experience could have made that idea more concrete to me than this year on the road. As individuals, we are very unique but together we are able to create something that is bigger than any one of us alone.

I know that there are many lessons I have learned this year that I haven't even identified or processed yet. Lessons dealing with friendships, conflict, compromise, forgiveness, acceptance, work ethic, integrity, and generosity have been addressed this year, not to mention the new perspectives I have on missions, prayer, faith, worship, and a new idea of who God is to me. There is a phrase from my university that is very well known among the students. Texas A&M is a very close-knit community with lots of traditions and rituals that are hard to understand if you are not associated with the school. The phrase is, "From the outside looking in you can't understand it, and from the inside looking out you can't explain it." I feel like that is a great description of team life. The lessons

we have learned and the year we have had will be hard for people outside of Youth Encounter to understand. This is not to say that I am not excited to return to my "real" life, but I know that this experience will be with me forever.

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**Date:** 8/2/2007

**Submitted by:** Amanda Whittaker

**Journal Entry:**

This week we're at my home church in South Bend, IN. We came in Sunday evening to do a family night program after a dinner and an ice cream social (with homemade ice cream). Monday through Thursday mornings, we led the music for Vacation Bible School. My church, Bethany, is a small congregation that's never had anything like New Vision for VBS, so it was a treat to get to provide a band for openings and closings.



**Amanda Whittaker**

Monday afternoon, we helped the local Lutheran school move furniture and get things ready for the opening of a new school building. Wednesday evening, we went down town to the Hope Rescue Mission to serve a meal to homeless people and to provide an evening chapel. It was nice to be involved in such a wide variety of ministries while we were in South Bend.

Today we will tear down our equipment after the VBS opening, inventory the sound equipment, and drive to Wisconsin to play at a county fair tomorrow.

We've met so many people this year along the road, all of which who have taught us more about Jesus. Thank you to everyone who has housed us, fed us, talked to us, or provided for us in any way. I came into this ministry with the intentions of ministering to others, never thinking about what I might receive from your stories, from you sharing your lives with us. Thank you for giving New Vision so much; you've made this ministry a success. You have also helped us grow and prepare for all the places that God leads us after team. Many blessings in your ministries.

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**Date:** 8/3/2007

**Submitted by:** Sara Williams

**Journal Entry:**

Wow! This is it. A year of my life has flown by, but I will take the experience of a lifetime with me. God has taken all of us on an amazing journey this year. I think back to about a year and a half ago when I was applying for Team. I really felt that God was placing this ministry on my heart, but at the same time, I had a job to start and amazing friends and family that I didn't want to leave. I remember having conversations with God in prayer. There were days when I was telling him "Nope, I can't do this. It's crazy! You are calling the wrong girl!" However, when God places a calling on your heart, you have no choice but to listen. It was impossible then to see what God had in store, but I am so glad that he gave me the push I needed to sign my letter of call. He was constantly reminding me gently that I was centered in his will, and he has validated that calling countless times throughout this year. That's not to say that this year has been easy. I have been stretched beyond what I thought I was capable of, but this experience that I have had, the people I have met, and the ways that my faith have developed are priceless.



**Sara Williams**

I would like to thank everyone who supported me this year, both financially and prayerfully. This year would not have been possible without the generosity and the faithful support of all of you. I would also like to thank my family for supporting me this year, for understanding the calling I had and for letting me go where God was sending me. I love you! To the Youth Encounter staff, thank you so much for all of your hard work and for an amazing year. I am going to miss all of you. Thank you for your unending passion for this ministry. You are truly changing lives around the world. To all the teamers this year, you are truly a family to me. You have all been such a great blessing, and it is going to be so hard to say goodbye. If any of you are ever in Houston, you have a place to stay and I expect a call!

To my teammates...Andrew, you are a great guy and I will never forget the amazing memories we

had together. I am totally coming out to see you in California! I know God is going to use you in amazing ways. Amanda, you are truly an inspiration to me. You are smarter than you know, and you have an integrity and a strength that I greatly admire. Thank you so much for being such a great friend this year. Karl, you are definitely one of a kind. I have greatly appreciated all of our conversations, debates, and laughs. You have helped me to see the world in new ways, and I greatly admire your passion and your enthusiasm. Boe, you really are my twin. We have had a great year together. I think you understand me better than almost anyone else in my life. I pray that we continue to stay close even after we say our goodbyes. Emily, what can I say? You make me smile. Thank you so much for your laughter, your insight and your "quirkiness." Start saving because three years is not that far away! It has been a privilege to worship God with you guys this year. You have changed me forever. (In a good way!)

To the teams next year, a bit of advice from an almost former teamer. Enjoy the moments you have with your team. They go by all too quickly. Celebrate the programs that don't go perfectly smooth. Those are often the ones that God uses to his glory in very apparent ways. Accept your teammates for who they are, but also don't shy away from conflict if something needs to be addressed. Take advantage of every opportunity you have to meet someone new. Record some of your van ride conversations. It's amazing what you talk about in there! Take time to get away from team life and just be alone. We all need a break. Make your personal faith journey a priority. Remember, just because you are singing worship songs all day doesn't mean you don't need that quiet time with God. Utilize the office staff and your family at home for support. They are there to help you! Take lots of pictures. This is a year you won't want to forget. Be willing to grow and adapt. This year will change you! Be willing to laugh at yourself and don't take anything too terribly seriously. Be open to God using you in ways that you might not expect. Enjoy the ride!

Thank you again, all of you, for everything. It's hard to say goodbye to such an amazing year and to such amazing people. However, I can't wait to see what God has in store for me next. Keep in touch! God's blessings!

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**Date:** 8/5/2007

**Submitted by:** Boe Parker

**Journal Entry:**

So for my final journal, I would like to personally thank everyone who has sponsored me, met me on the road this year, all those who have been praying for me, and all who have thought about me throughout this year. I really am blessed to have so much support, and I really appreciate everything that has happened this year. I have grown in so many ways this year and have been stretched to my limits, as well. I know that God has used these past two years for his glory, and I have been really amazed at the different ways God works.

I would also like to thank all of the people in the office. I have really been blessed with some amazing friendships, and we've all shared some sweet laughs. Thank you all so much for being awesome, even swell, people (a little inside, I know). I would also like to thank my teammates. I know you guys have had to put up with me for a whole year, but I thank you for sticking together. I know we've had our share of ups and downs, but it's been an amazing and unforgettable experience we've all shared.

Finally I would like to thank God for being the most awesome being ever, for teaching me and leading me, and never leaving my side, no matter what I'm going through. I want to thank my Lord and best friend, Jesus Christ, for saving me from all the torment and pain that I should deserve. I also want to thank the Holy Spirit for all the work you've used me for. I pray that it would continue in the world of "NOT BEING ON TEAM." It's all good.

Lastly, I want to leave this world of YE journals with a quote that some people will laugh hysterically at and others will not be sure what to make of, but it's mainly for the people who know it. So here we go!!!

"I'm kind of a big deal. People know me. I have many leather-bound books and my apartment smells of rich mahogany."

Peace and Love,

Boe Parker

New Vision 06-07



**Boe Parker**

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**Date:** 8/6/2007

**Submitted by:** Karl Schmitt

**Journal Entry:**

This is a set of Celtic prayers for "anyone in a time of transition or great change" or "someone going on a journey." While we have certainly all gone through those already (a journey and great change), I think it is important to remember that as we move from team to other parts of our life, we continue the greatest journey: into God's arms. We also are experiencing just as great a change going back from our journey, having been changed drastically.



**Karl Schmitt**

I pray that as each of us from team return home and get a chance to greet and thank those who have helped and supported us on our journey, we can inspire some great changes to happen to each of you as well. Thanks for all the support and reading and care you have all poured out this year.

If you choose to go through this prayer, remember I pray with you, and the saints of yore.

Normal: to be read by leader/in turn

**Bold: to be read in unison**

***Bold Italics: to be read by all in turn***

**My soul thirst for God, for the living God.  
As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for You, O God.**

In the name of the Father.

**Amen**

In the name of the Son.

**Amen**

In the name of the Spirit.

**Amen**

Father, Son and Spirit.

**Amen**

Father, Son and Spirit

**Amen**

Father, Son and Spirit

**Amen**

Thanks to you,  
O ever-gentle Christ,  
For raising me freely  
From the black and darkness of last night  
Into the kindly light of this day.

**You pour life into me,  
giving me speech, sense, desire,  
giving me thought and action.  
My fame or repute will be  
just as You allow:  
You mark the way before me.  
As I remember saints  
who have journeyed before me,  
Lord, teach me the way of their simplicity:  
strength with humility  
at peace in the fear of God.  
May I also go wherever I am led.**

**The keeping of Christ about me,  
the guarding of God with me  
to possess me, to protect me  
from drowning and danger and loss,  
the gospel of the God of grace  
from brow of head  
to sole of foot,  
the gospel of Christ,  
King of salvation,  
be as a mantle to my body.**

**All I speak  
be blessed to me, O God.  
All I hear  
be blessed to me, O God.  
All I see  
be blessed to me, O God.  
All I sense  
be blessed to me, O God  
All I taste  
be blessed to me, O God  
Each step I take  
be blessed to me, O God.**

***Peace between me and my God.  
Peace between me and my God.***

***May I tread the path to the gates of glory;  
may I tread the path to the gates of glory.***

**On your path, O my God,  
and not my own,  
be all my journeying.  
Rule this heart of mine  
that it be only Yours.**

We look for solitude.  
In solitude we learn to grow and love,  
to grow in love for God,  
to grow in love for others.

Christ's Cross would I carry,  
my own struggle forget.

Christ's death would I ponder,  
my own death remember.

Christ's agony would I embrace,  
my love to God make warmer.

The love of Christ would I feel,  
my own love waken.

**Great God of wisdom,  
Great God of mercy,  
give me of Your fullness  
and of your guidance  
at the turning  
of each pass.**

**Great God of shielding,  
Great God of surrounding,  
give me of Your holiness  
and of Your peace  
in the fastening of my death;  
give me Your surrounding,  
and Your peace upon my death.**

**Peace between me and my God.  
May I tread the path  
to the gates of glory.  
Rule this heart of mine  
that it be only Yours.  
God's path would I travel,  
my own path refuse.  
May I tread the path  
to the gates of glory.**

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