

Kindred 2007-08 Journal

Date: 9/21/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

"Yesterday is too late. Tomorrow might not come. NOW is the time." - Patrick, an inmate in Mike Durfey state prison.

These words were spoken during the intro to "Come, Now is the Time to Worship" by a young, latino, inmate named Patrick. How profound last night was. How humbling an experience to hear the praise of God come from imprisoned men. To see the joy of Christ on those men's faces as they worshipped the GOd who set them free from their spiritual prison of sin and death. It took all I had not to break down and cry as I listened to these men sing praise as loud as they could to our Savior. All my preconceived anxieties vanished as I looked around the chapel and saw the joy and surrender in the inmates' faces. I hope I never forget last night and how Christ ministered not only to the inmates, but to my teammates as well.



Rachel Ringlaben

What touched me the most was sharing Holy Communion. We all stood in a circle around the chapel and as ONE body we took part of Christ's blood and body. While we were in the circle the piano player was playing "Who Am I?" by Casting Crowns. Danielle (my teammate) was on my left and Patrick (an inmate) was on my right. What touched me was the fact that the 3 of us were singing the line "Not because of who I am but because of what You've done, Not because of what I've done, but because of who You are..." Those words cut me to the core - it is because of who GOD IS that I praise Him. The ONLY difference between me and Patrick was that one of us was in a physical prison, but we BOTH were once slaves to sin in a prison of darkness. But because of who GOD is - He liberated us.

I am no more free or liberated than Patrick just because I am not surrounded by a barbwire fence - we both are captives who have been set free through Christ Jesus. "Not because of what I've done, but because of who YOU are." Patrick and I are the same - nothing we've done or not done freed us from our prison of sin - it is because of God's rich mercy and His character that we can rejoice in our spiritual freedom in Jesus.

At the end of our program Patrick came up to me and showed me that he had written our teammates' names in his Bible so that he could pray for us...

We got to sing a few songs with their praise band. There we were, "free" and "prisoner" worshipping Yahweh. There were no barriers between us. We both rejoiced while we sang loud, "Praise the LORD, I saw the light!" We both raised our hands in worship to our King. We both closed our eyes in awe of our Redeemer...After tonight I am beginning to understand our theme "Bridge the Gap."

"But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has DESTROYED the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." - Ephesians 2:13-14.

ONLY through Christ can any two groups be brought together as ONE in HIS body. Only the Holy Spirit has destroyed the hostility between us...

Rachel

Date: 9/21/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Most of us probably think of prison as a depressing life behind bars, a life of captivity.

That may be true, but my evening at the prison tonight was one of the most freeing experiences I've ever had.

Let me start by saying that we did prison ministry tonight. Neither myself nor my teammates had been arrested on any charges. We visited a state prison in Springfield, SD. The inmates here have broken state laws and most won't serve life terms. Weekly chapel services happen once a week, and this week, the entire chapel was filled with inmates desiring to share worship with us.

Before the program, I met many of the inmates and was surprised that a small number of them had lived in Minot at one time (some were in the Air Force). The inmates were a joy to talk to and were so thankful to see people from the "outside." Their praise band performed a few tunes for us, and we worshiped with them. Then we did our program, which was broken up by a time of communion and fellowship.

God has worked amazing miracles in the lives of many of the inmates. One inmate, Tim, told me of how he was feeling depressed in the darkness and captivity of his cell. Then he read Psalm 23, which tells how God is always with us, "Even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Immediately, he felt the bars disappear and sensed God's presence. Now he is hoping to become a pastor when he is released.

During the fellowship, one of the inmates, Andy, who I had met before the service, handed me a note. It read:

One thing to remember about this prison that you share with other people that you share God's word with, the word Inmate on our Khaki pants means:

I'm
Now
More
Anointed
Than
Ever

How true this message is for all of us. I think I better understand why Jesus chose tax collectors and others that society frowned upon to be his disciples and spread his message. God desires a broken spirit. He wants us to come before him in our brokenness, so He can lift us up, and we will praise His name. Psalm 51:14, 17 says, "Save me from the guilt of bloodshed, God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness...The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. God, You will not despise a broken and humbled heart." God is using the inmates in that prison in such amazing ways, and I learned more from their stories than I ever expected. We joined their praise band at the end of the service, and I don't think I have ever felt the joy of the Holy Spirit as tangibly as in that prison.

Kindred (our team name) means family. What a blessing it was to join with God's family in that prison. "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will have the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" -Romans 8:38-39

Danielle

Date: 9/21/2007

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

What an adventure this ministry has been already, and we've only been on the road for a week! We started off in Wilmar, MN at Paz y Esperanza (peace and hope) Lutheran Church. I had the pleasure of staying with 82 year old Flo, who wore a purple hat and likes to write poetry. She took me for a drive around town. It was so much fun talking



Danielle Hance



with her and hearing some of her life stories! She spent a year working at a Navajo Indian reservation as a nurse in a hospital, and she spent four winters and a summer in Mexico in her 70's just because she could.

Kami Kimmel

From Wilmar, we traveled to Hector, MN where we played at a coffee house. God works in mysterious ways. That morning, while loading the van, my skirt ripped. I could still wear it, but it wouldn't hold out very long and I wondered how it was going to get fixed. When we got to Hector that night, I asked our contact if she knew someone in the area who was a good seamstress. To my good fortune, there was a woman at the coffee house who sews and she ended up being the host mom for the girls, so my skirt was fixed that night! We had our day off in Hector. It was a wonderful day of R & R! The family who was hosting Rachel, Danielle, and I took us to the lake to ride their wave runner. I felt truly blessed by all the ways this family provided for our needs.

As we were leaving Hector and on our way to Marshall, MN, we had time to stop at a Sioux battlefield. We missed the turn, and as we were turning around in a field, our van got stuck in the mud. We were working at it for about a half hour and help finally came in the form of a man named Jeff. He had a big truck that had four wheel drive. What a miracle this was for our team! Later, as we were talking about this event, we realized again how good God is. Sometimes we are like the van that gets stuck in the mud so badly that we can't get out and it takes someone or something bigger than us to get us out. Also, Jeff wasn't certain that he'd be able to get us and his truck out of the mess successfully. It was a risk for him to help us. But then, Danielle helped push his truck so both vehicles could get out. Sometimes in life we need to take risks (especially in our faith) and it may require someone pushing us a little bit in order to take that risk.

We are now in Yankton, South Dakota for a few days of prison ministry!

Mucho amor, (much love)

Kami

Date: 9/23/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

We survived two church services, a dead van battery, two prison services, picking up Eric, and my sprained ankle today! It was quite an adventure today. The prison ministry at the federal prison was amazing. The inmates were so responsive to God's word. I got choked up while I was singing "Wholly Yours" – "a certain sign of grace is this: from broken earth flowers come up pushing through the dirt." I feel that line described those men I was singing with. God's new life for them sprang up out of their "dirt" while they were in prison. Like all us believers, they are all new creations which have sprung up free from their slavery to sin. I just felt the Holy Spirit during the whole service. Their choir sang some songs for our team after the service, too. "People Get Ready" and "Nobody but You" were the two gospel songs...I felt like I was back in the south at my church! What an amazing gift of fellowship and affirmation with our brothers in Christ. "People get ready there's a train a'comin'. You don't need no baggage – just get on board...You don't need no ticket, just thank the LORD."



Rachel Ringlaben

Date: 9/24/2007

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

This morning I went for a jog as usual. Unfortunately, just as soon as I started stretching, it started raining. I decided I might as well go ahead and jog, expecting the rain to get worse later. So I ran into town and took the path by the creek, under the bridge. When I turned around to come back, there was a man under the bridge. At first, I just ran past him, but the Holy Spirit began telling me to turn around and talk to him. So I kept running instead. Then I turned around, then changed my mind, then turned



Ronnie Melin

around again and headed back toward the bridge. I had no idea what I was going to say, but I felt like God wanted to sit with this man.

I sat down beside him, made a comment about the rain and how nice the bridge was for staying dry. I introduced myself and moved closer to him. He was eating soup out of a can and holding a bag of groceries. He had greasy black and gray hair, a blue sweatshirt with white stains, and loose fitting, well worn jeans. We talked about our travels, the weather, and life in general. He never once made eye contact with me. He told me his name, though, which translated from Sioux means "Morning Flower". As we were talking, he was growing visibly more uncomfortable with the human interaction and stood up to leave. He said it was nice talking with me, so I said the same and patted him on the shoulder.

I'll never know why God had me stop and talk to that old Indian man. Maybe he needed someone to care. Maybe no one had asked his name or put their hand on his shoulder in years. I don't know his story. But God does. God loves Morning Flower in a way I cannot understand. And I know it breaks His heart to see a lost man like that.

As I jogged away, I began to cry for this man that I don't even know, understanding just a little bit better the love of God.

Date: 9/24/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

"Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." –Psalm 37:4

Why don't we get everything we want? Obviously, we realize that many things we ask for in prayer are selfish, self-seeking, so that we do not receive them. But what if we really feel we are trusting in God, and yet we do not receive what we ask for in prayer. What could be at fault here?



Danielle Hance

I think the answer lies in the word, "delight." Delight is an extremely high degree of joy, so much, that we hardly use the word in everyday English. When was the last time you went to a movie and said, "That movie delighted me,"? It sounds ridiculous. But that is the kind of joy we are supposed to find in the Lord.

My host sister here in Yankton is in the 4th grade. Just by reading my biography, she determined that we were soul mates. Her middle name is Danielle, which is my first name. I went to the same college as her parents. And I am a writer, which she would like to be someday. Since we were obviously soul mates, she begged her mom, the pastor, to let me stay at her house, before she had even met me. When her mom asked her why she had picked me, she responded, "I didn't even look at the other ones." She had determined that I was the person she was seeking.

As my "soul mate", my host sister takes delight in everything that I do. She wants to sit with me whenever she is home. She listens to every word I say. She insists on hugging me any time one of us leaves. She delights in me. She delights in me so much that she wants to emulate my desires. At the dinner table last night, she told me that the lemonade was sour with a look of disgust on her face. I told her that I liked my lemonade to be sour, and immediately she decided that she also liked her lemonade to be sour. Her desire now matched my desire.

What if we treated God like this? What if we listened intently to every word he said? Our desire should be to spend every moment with God, to be hanging on to every word He says, and to have an unrelenting desire to make His desires, our desires. It is only then that we will truly "delight" ourselves in the Lord and receive the "desires" of our hearts. C.S. Lewis once said that we pray, not so that we can change God, but so that God can change us. Prayer is allowing God's desires to penetrate our hearts and become our desires.

Date: 9/27/2007

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

McCook, NE

Today Kindred experienced what it means to be a "traveling team"! At approximately 5 hours in length, we had our longest trek in the van so far. We left Lincoln, NE this morning where we had spent a couple days doing ministry. We led sing-a-longs for a Wednesday night service. Thursday morning we led chapel for three-year-olds and did some sing-a-longs and a puppet show. What a joy these little ones were! We had so much fun being silly with them! It is truly a gift to have faith like a child.



Kami Kimmel

After chapel, we began the long journey to McCook, NE. Here we had a wonderful potluck awaiting us (complete with tomatoes from the garden....my FAVORITE!!) along with a warm and welcoming community to meet and begin to form relationships with.

While in McCook, God revealed a few things to me:

1. Expect the unexpected.
2. I'm going to be spending lots of time with people by the name of "Flo".
3. God works in mysterious ways.

Yes, I will explain! In May, I received my Master of Arts in Gerontology (the study of the aging process). When I began this experience on Kindred, I was doubtful that I would have the opportunity to actually use this degree. Little did I know that God had other plans! (That is the "expect the unexpected" part.) That brings me to my second and third revelation. My grandmother, a very special person in my life, is named Florence (who is occasionally nicknamed "Flo"). Our first night on the road, I was housed by an 82-year-old woman named Flo. Where we are now, I am being housed by an 80-year-old woman named Florene! God is making me smile with all the special "Flo"s He's brought into my life! J He works in mysterious ways and never ceases to amaze me!

Florene has been a treat to talk to. She has shared with me about different places God has called her to and about different ways she's heard God speaking in her life. As a traveling team, we have the privilege of hearing many different testimonies from people we encounter on the road, and every day I am amazed at how God works in people's lives; how He works in people everywhere in the world! While it is hard to meet so many wonderful people in one community and get to know them, only to move on to the next town, it is such a blessing to be able to encounter so many different kinds of people in so many different walks of life and to hear their stories. I praise God for the many different people he's brought into my life so far on this journey!

Tomorrow evening we will be leading a lock-in with youth from McCook and Saturday we have a 7 hour trek to Hayesville, KS where we will be leading two worship services on Sunday morning.

Kami Kimmel

Date: 9/28/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Nothing Too Small

Three- and four-year olds taught me a lot about praying yesterday. At the end of the chapel, the pastor asked the children what they wanted to pray about. Twenty toothpick arms eagerly awaited the pastor's call. One girl prayed for "doggies." A little boy prayed for his mom and dad. Another child prayed for her brother and sister, though the pastor had to remind her that she only had a brother. The pastor, in an effort to curb the amount of prayer requests he had to write down, asked if they had any problems to pray about. One boy asked for a prayer for a friend who had just lost two cats. Another boy wanted to



Danielle Hance

pray for the "owie" on his knee.

These children reminded me that nothing is too small for my heavenly father. I can't remember the last time I prayed for "doggies" or for an "owie," but why don't I? Why do I think God only needs to hear about the "mountains" in my life? I pray hard when my grandpa is sick or when I question what God wants me to do with the rest of my life, but why don't I tell Him about my headache or trust Him with the littlest detail that I will write on our team schedule for this week? Luke 11: 11-13 reads:

What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

God wants me to approach Him unabashedly, trusting that He loves me more than my Earthly father, who always wants the best for me. Nothing is too small for God.

Date: 9/28/2007

Submitted by: Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Journal Entry:

Para empezar quiero contarles que durante el entrenamiento fuimos a una iglesia al sur de Minneapolis, Minnesota (MN), que se llama "El Milagro" y es una comunidad de hispanos, donde los acompañamos durante el servicio. Despues tuvimos el entrenamiento intercultural y al final nos encontramos con algunos de los miembros de KINDRED de años pasados 2004-2005 y 2006-2007.



Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Terminado el entrenamiento tuvimos un culto de envio el 14 de septiembre y al siguiente dia fuimos al hospital para que nos pusieran vacunas y despues de eso empesó nuestro tour por USA. El primer lugar al que fuimos fue Willmar, MN, donde hay una comunidad hispana y me quede en la casa de un mexicano ''adicto al futbol''. El domingo 16 de septiembre tuvimos nuestro primer culto. Despues fuimos a Hector, MN donde hicimos un programa familiar en un cafe cristiano, el 18 de septiembre. Despues fuimos a Marshal, MN, donde despues del programa fuimos al college y participamos de un estudio biblico con estudiantes del college. Eso fue el 19 de septiembre.

De Marshal, MN, fuimos a Yankton en Dacota del Sur (SD), donde pasamos 5 días con la congregación y el ministerio en las prisiones. La primer prisión que visitamos fue en Springfield, SD, despues el sabado 22 fuimos a Scotland, SD, donde hicimos un culto. El domingo tvimos 2 cultos seguido de dos visitas a prisiones en Yankton, SD. Y de esa manera termino nuestra primera semana de tour. Lo mas impactante de esta semana, ademas de conocer muy buenas personas, fue la disposicion de las personas que estaban en la prisión, ellos tienen un corazón muy dispuesto para escuchar la palabra de Dios.

Despues de salir de Dacota del Sur, el 25 de septiembre, fuimos a Nebraska (NE) pero para llegar a Lincoln, NE tuvimos que pasar por Iowa, pues la autopista más rápida a Lincoln, NE va por Iowa, así que despues de 4 horas de viaje llegamos a Lincoln donde ayudamos con un culto para jóvenes que están haciendo el curso de confirmación. Al día siguiente hicimos un pequeño culto para niños de 3 y 4 años. Despues de este culto tuvimos que salir rapido para la siguiente población, McCook, NE. Llegamos el jueves 27 y tvimos un programa donde todo fue muy bueno y así hasta ahora, viernes 28 de septiembre.

Date: 9/28/2007

Submitted by: Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Journal Entry:

Hi, this is going to be a little difficult for me because I am not very good writing in

English but.... Here we go.

I want to tell everybody that this time with KINDRED has been one of the greatest experiences in my live. All the people I have met in Youth Encounter and the people in the different churches I have met so far, each one of them has taught me something important for my live. I want to say that my team mates are awesome and also that I am looking forward for meet more people on the road.



The experience with the churches so far are great, I have special memories of each one of them but I remember watching Mexican and Colombian "futbol" in one of my host homes. Also, when we were in the prisons at Springfield and Yankton, SD.

Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Today I am in McCook, NE and I called my mom and she told me that one uncle and my Godfather are sick, they have cancer so please pray for them and their families.

Date: 9/29/2007

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Whew, what a week! We spent a couple of days in Lincoln, NE at Sheridan Luthean Church. We drove from there to McCook, NE where we spent two nights. In McCook, we had a program and a lock-in (on different nights). God really makes me smile at how He works and sometimes I think He's got a great sense of humor. When we arrived at the church in McCook, I found out I would be staying with an 80 year old woman named Florene. Now, normally this wouldn't be anything too significant. However, for me it was. First of all, my grandma's name is Florence. My very first host stay was with an 82 year old woman named Flo. I think I'm gonna be spending a lot of time with people by the name of "Flo!" What a joy she was to stay with! We had a great time chatting and she shared with me how she has followed God's calling in her life and various other stories. When I started training, I didn't think I would be able to use my Master's degree much (Gerontology, the study of aging), but I think God has other plans!



Kami Kimmel

After we departed from McCook, we had a 6ish hour haul to Haysville, KS. Danielle and I were on our way home with our host mom and sister; Danielle was in the passenger's seat chatting with the mom, and I sat next to and began to talk to three year old Emma. After awhile, we were talking about dogs. She was talking about their dog "Wacy" (Lacy) that they had before their current dog. She talked about how much she liked Lacy but that Lacy was dead. As a way of keeping the conversation going, I told her that I had a dog too for a long time and was describing my dog and how much I liked her. Emma looked up at me with her big brown eyes and asked "Where is she?" Having been a major in Family and Consumer Sciences, I knew this was one of those "teachable moments" we talked about in class, but for the life of me, I couldn't bring myself to tell this impressionable three year old that my dog was dead. She stared up at me with her big eyes and I fumbled over my words, finally saying "She's not with us anymore." Emma asked "Can she come back?" to which I responded "no". Then Emma asked me "Is she with Jesus?" My breath was taken away. Wow. How incredible is it that at three years old, Emma knows about being with Jesus? And how amazing is it that at three years old, she was able to say things that a 24 year old couldn't quite come to say? Faith like a child....what an amazing gift!

Date: 9/30/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Make Me New--Bartlesville, OK

Brenda, my host mom's sister, was cleansed of stage 4 ovarian cancer. She had surgery to scrape most of her internal organs clean, including her ovaries, most of her stomach,

all of her liver, abdomen, and appendix. After that, she had a very risky treatment that very few people have sustained. She had two chemotherapy ports that would drip for 24 hours. Then she got "shaken like a can of paint" for 4 hours. This would allow the chemotherapy to penetrate every part of her body. Six times they performed this routine. The shaking is too extreme for most people to endure. The doctors asked Brenda if she would like to try a different treatment. Brenda asked what her success rate would be with a different treatment. The doctors told her that none of the other treatments would be as successful. Brenda continued the treatments, even though they were the most painful thing she had even endured. Now Brenda is in remission. The chemotherapy purified her body.



The 2nd chapter of 1st John talks about Jesus being the "propitiation" of our sins. The word "propitiation" means "the removal of God's wrath." This was done through animal sacrifices in Old Testament Times. Now we don't have to sacrifice animals because of Jesus' sacrifice. His sacrifice removes God's wrath. Still, I need Jesus to cleanse me from all my sins and make me new. Sin penetrates every aspect of my life, like a cancer. The more I let sin linger in my life, the harder it is to remove. It gets more painful the more I let sin spread. Everyday I need God's grace to drip into my body. Sometimes I need a good shaking, so that God's grace purifies my body from all my unrighteousness. Only God can make me new.

Danielle Hance

Date: 10/1/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

This past week has been a time of growth, resolution, and discovery. Eric (a past Kindred teamer) was a great on-the-road trainer. His wisdom and patience were well welcomed. Our team traveled from Yankton, SD to Lincoln, NE to minister at a mid-week service on Thursday at Sheridan Lutheran Church. They had an established deaf ministry at the church, so I got to meet three deaf parishioners and sit with them during the service. They expressed their gratitude for having someone "speak" their language (I learned from my step-sister who is deaf) and I was touched by their faith. It was great to meet and talk with them and to be part of the deaf culture again, if only for half an hour.



Rachel Ringlaben

After church, Kami (my teammate) and I went to our host home and watched "The Princess Diaries" and enjoyed some much needed "girl time." Friday was Eric's last day with us and he led us in a Taize order of confession and forgiveness with the team. Grace and forgiveness were so abundant and the Holy Spirit gave us spirits of gentleness to live with and support each other. After our devo we helped lead a daycare chapel. How precious the little children were! We sung, did a puppet show, and prayed with them. When it was time to ask for prayer requests about a dozen of tiny hands shot up in the air! Some of their prayer requests consisted of: "my mommy and daddy," "the owie on my knee," doggies, a great-great-grandfather, and a cousin who's 2 cats had died. Listening to those children trust in God with such enthusiasm and joy took my breath away. It reminded me of the Father heart of our God - he sees us as innocent, fragile children - and He longs to hear us trust in Him with our needs, no matter how great or small we may think they are.

It was interesting because being with the kids reminded me of ministering in the prisons - the inmates had the same child-like faith, responsiveness, and joy in our Jesus as the toddlers did that morning. Both groups were bursting at the seams with excitement about the Gospel and recognized the Father heart of God. How refreshing it is to see Christ's reflection in little children who have such hope and dependence in God.

Everyday has been a new miracle. When we got to McCook, NE my host home family detailed our van for us...for free! I am constantly being blown away at how richly God is providing for us every day. How beautiful it is to see the Church - the living and breathing body of Christ - serving one another! Thank you, God, for those daily kisses of grace.

Date: 10/2/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Home

"If I take one more step, I will be farther from home than I've ever been."

-Sam in "Lord of the Rings"

Sometimes, I feel like Sam in "Lord of the Rings." Even though I have visited ten countries and consider myself a seasoned world traveler, part of me is still a Midwestern hobbit who doesn't want to leave the shire. Everyday, we drive a little farther south, farther from the familiarity of the Midwest. Nebraska still seemed like the Midwest, Kansas was vaguely similar, but Oklahoma signified my first feeling of real unfamiliarity. The accent of the people now sounds "southern" to my ear. My teammates from the South enjoyed their sweet tea. I wondered if I would be able to find anyone who had even been to North Dakota.

Danielle Hance



Not surprisingly, I didn't find anyone from North Dakota, but my host parents happen to be huge fans of Minnesota, where I went to school. They love going hiking and canoeing in the North Woods near Lake Superior, one of my favorite Minnesotan locations. The first night we spent a large portion of the night sharing Minnesota stories.

The next morning, I wore my "I love lefse" shirt with a Norwegian flag heart emblem in the middle. My Oklahoman host asked what lefse was and explained the tradition of eating lefse. Basically, lefse is a Norwegian tortilla made of potatoes, eaten with butter and sugar. Many Midwestern families eat lefse and many even make it themselves.

Our morning discussion about lefse prompted my host mom to call her friend, Turid, who is from Norway. That night at dinner, I met Turid. She was an older woman with short blonde hair that was gradually turning white. She spoke in a warm voice with the distinctively up and down Norwegian lilt. Kristiansand is her homeland, an area I had visited with the Concordia College Band in May on our Norwegian tour. I heard her story and conversed in Norwegian. What a joy it is to be able to communicate in someone's native tongue! She brought me two huge bars of Norwegian chocolate and a couple of postcards. One of the postcards had a picture of the church we performed at in Kristiansand. We looked at my pictures, and I had a picture near where she lived. We sang, "Norge mit Norge" [Norway, my Norway], a Norwegian patriotic hymn. It is much like "America the Beautiful," but more beautiful and significant to the Norwegian people.

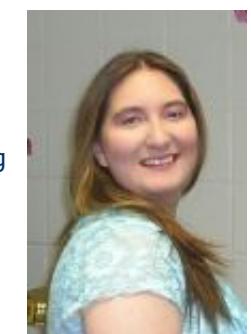
It was only later that I learned what a gem of a woman I had just met. Her husband didn't treat her well, but you would never know by what she did. At her church, she was in charge of the card ministry, sending cards once-a-week to all of the homebound church members. That was the only thing she felt she could do as a foreigner to this country. What she does brings joy to those who can't leave their homes. People who might be feeling isolated just like me, but for the opposite reason. It was then that I realized that we all share the same home. Now we are spread across the world, but in heaven, we will all have the same citizenship. Home is not a place. It is a destination.

Date: 10/5/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

Southern culture here we come! The taste of sweet tea late in the evening and sitting on a hammock in Bartlesville, OK was just the beginning of familiarity for me and Ronnie (who is from Georgia). Our team headed to my home town, Little Rock, Arkansas on Tuesday and we were welcomed at my house by the smells of authentic Mexican food and great big hugs from my mom and bonus-dad. It was great to see my team get a "taste" of my home culture with enchiladas, frijoles, rice, and habañeros. My mom baked her famous strawberry pie for Ludvigs' birthday and we all sang him his favorite camp sing-a-long – The Hippo Song. The sounds of laughter filled my childhood home and it felt like I never left home. After being entertained by stories from my



Rachel Ringlaben

mom, we headed to bed.

On Wednesday I took my team to the historic Old Mill (the scene for the first frame of film in the movie *Gone with the Wind*) for a picnic. We then took a historic homes tour at the Historic Arkansas Museum where I used to perform as a living history actress. Afterwards we took a stroll through the River Market where we passed by the Old State House, Little Rock's capitol building, and the Tae Kwan Do garden (Arkansas hosts the world championship every other year). Our last stop was Little Rock Central High, where the first nine African-American students were integrated into the Arkansas public school system by order of President Eisenhower. It was a day of sight seeing and laughter. I loved playing tour guide and my teammates were gracious enough to acquiesce to my desires of taking them around town.

Our program Wednesday night was special for me since it was at my home church, Faith Lutheran. What a blessing it was to see familiar faces from my Faith family, fraternity sisters and brothers, and friends from college. We were tremendously blessed by the Faith family who responded to our needs list and gave gifts for the five of us. It is so incredible to see God's provision working through the hands of those we meet (or reunite with) on the road. After the program, mom cooked us a classic Cajun dish of shrimp ramalaude over green salad. Yummy!

We left Little Rock all too soon to head to Richardson, Texas on Thursday. The heat and the crazy traffic clued us in that we were entering the great state of Texas. We were greeted at St. Luke's Lutheran by the youth director, Christie, who served on YE Rainbow of Promise ten years ago! The six of us headed to dinner at the Black Eyed Pea where Ronnie and I helped our teammates order Southern delicacies such as fried corn, chicken and dumplings, chicken fried steak, fried okra, sweet potatoes, turnip greens, corn bread, and of course, SWEET TEA! We were full of good Southern cookin' before our program that night!

This past week has been such a gift and cure for my homesickness. I can't wait to experience the culture of my other teammates when we travel to North Dakota, Illinois, and Colombia. I'll be more than happy to let them play tour guide, too. J

Date: 10/7/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

El Paso, TX 10/7/07

"That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. *For when I am weak, I am strong.*" – 2 Corinthians 12:10

Today we served as the worship band at San Pablo Lutheran Mission in El Paso, TX. We played and led songs in the English-speaking service and the Spanish-speaking service, which was a challenge since our native Spanish speaker, Ludvigs, was ill today. Throughout both services, God showed me how weak I am without Him. I was so nervous during our puppet show since it was the first time we had performed it entirely in Spanish and because I had to play lead guitar in Ludvigs' absence. But all of my feelings of inadequacy vanished when I went outside the church and a little boy, David, told me "Gracias por vienen aquí." (Thank you for coming here.) He was about five years old and had the cutest smile. We began to speak to each other in Spanish and he told me how much he enjoyed the puppet show! Glory to God! His older brother, Ivan, joined us and said he liked the puppet show and the music that Kindred did.



Rachel Ringlaben

David then showed me the craft he made in Sunday school – a world made out of construction paper with a big, red heart in the middle of the world. John 3:16 was written on the back. In his squeaky voice, David said that the red heart was big because it had a lot of love to give. I thank Jesus for using David to remind me how deep and wide Christ's love is. David and Ivan got it – it is all about LOVE. How God loves each of us and uses us all to minister to each other. Here I was, so concerned about the technicalities of our worship service that I had lost sight on what was truly important – God's universal love.

I am reminded of the verse in 2 Corinthians 12:9 when Paul writes, "But he [God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." It amazes me how God uses my weaknesses to bring Him glory. I thank Him for David and Ivan and for the reminder that God's love is the reason I am here on team.

Date: 10/7/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Today we did 3 services—1 in English and 2 in Spanish. We already felt overwhelmed, and then our native speaker Ludvigs was sick. The first two services, one English and one Spanish, were in El Paso at the mission. We did pretty well. I took over as the organist, which was interesting. The most comical part was our puppet show in Spanish. It was our first all-Spanish show, and a few things got lost in translation. Our driver Enrique was a bit confused because he thought we had named one of the characters, "casero" (one of marriageable age) instead of what we had intended to say, "carcelero" (a jail keeper).



Danielle Hance

In the afternoon, we went over the border to Saragosa, in the Juarez area. I feel really at home there because last February, I did mission work in the Juarez area on my church's adult mission trip. We sang three songs before the sermon. My only major Spanish flub-up was saying, "contar" (to count) instead of "cantar" (to sing), but fortunately, I caught my own mistake and corrected myself. I talked about joining our family with their church family, becoming one body in Christ, and everyone clapped. I felt like a preacher. Afterwards, the pastor talked about our work and took a "small" offering for us. He said it wouldn't be much, but maybe we could buy a soda or something to eat.

I was so moved by their generosity. Here I was, wealthy just by my citizenship, being supported by poverty-stricken Mexicans. Most of them make 40 pesos a day (about 4 dollars) or less, if they are blessed enough to have work. Their generosity was Christ. I encountered the face of love in every person there—the old woman in the purple skirt, who sang out-of-tune but with the passion of a mariachi, the little boys who crowded closer and closer to my drum while we sang "Danzo como David" (Dance like David), the pastor, who spoke of our unity in the body of Christ and how to share the first fruits of our wealth with our Christian family. And here in front of me was faith in action. I held in my hand a sandwich-sized Ziploc bag filled with the weight of peso coins and a few dollar bills. I held in my hand, Christ's love.

Date: 10/9/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Marcianos

Completely exhausted, I stood outside our dented white van, leaning against its back corner for support. After spending the afternoon in Mexico, we had decided to bring our Colombian teammate Ludvigs to the walk-in clinic which turned into the emergency room after insurance troubles. Our van was back at the mission because we didn't have insurance for Mexico. So we were with the Ysleta Mission's van from El Paso, where we had been staying. Our driver Enrique had brought us back here to wait for our teammates after we were caught in a standstill in front of a parked train. We had hoped to hang out at the mission until we could come back and pick them up, but it just wasn't happening.



Danielle Hance

Consequently, here I was standing, wishing to be in bed, but not wanting to be in a van of any kind for another moment. Soon, our driver Enrique joined me. Enrique is "chaparro," short. His skin tone was the color of melted chocolate chips. His dark hair split like the leaves of an aloe plant on his forehead. He claimed to be seventy, but he had the spirit of a young boy. Although Enrique lived in

El Paso, he rarely spoke English. Our conversation was limited to my extensive but rusty Spanish that was slowly being refined by our couple days in Mexico.

Enrique has a joke for everything. I never know when to take him seriously. Going out of the border crossing where there are many winding barriers, he tells the groups that he closes his eyes. He does close his eyes, but keeps one eye slightly open to see the road. He calls himself a "mentiroso honesto," an honest liar. In our conversation outside the van, I finally learned some "serious" information about my friend. He had wires in his pants to keep his arthritic knees warm in the air conditioning. He had a letter in his front shirt pocket that showed that he was permanently disabled from a back injury. I didn't believe him at first. I was waiting for the punch line.

Soon, Enrique returned to his normal "chistoso" (joking) self. He told me that he used to be whiter than I was. I didn't believe him, as usual. He told me his legs were white because they hadn't seen the sun in many years. To prove it to me, he lifted up his pants leg...to reveal a very white knee-high sock. This was the Enrique I knew. We heard a strange metal-clanging in the swift breeze and looked around. Enrique credited it to the "marcianos" (martians) that were coming for him. After all, he was half-white and half-dark, as he called himself. Obviously a martian. The rest of our conversation was about being taken by martians. Enrique said he would be taken up by the martians. Then he would take an UFO (pronounced "oof-o" in Spanish) and come calling my name from above.

Although our seemed quite fantasmical, it is a good metaphor for our Christian faith. The Bible tells us that we "are not of the world." We can hide our unworldliness under a disguise of this world, but ultimately we have a different citizenship, heaven. And God call for us from above, calling us to where we belong.

Date: 10/9/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Hermanos

I didn't particularly care for Juarez market. I remembered the last time I was there when the Mexican vendors would follow me around telling me, "Lady, you want a purse," "Come inside. I show you nice things." I got sick of saying, "No, gracias," and instead starting speaking Norwegian.

When my teammates wanted something to do on our day off, I suggested the Juarez market for lack of a better idea. Might as well buy a few cheap souvenirs, I thought. We wondered the market and talked with a few vendors. Hoping to get a better price, we told the vendors we were missionaries. Before we knew it, it seemed that the whole market knew our missionary status.

One slender, white-haired vendor made friends with my teammate Ronnie. He sold musical instruments, among other things. And when Kami and I walked by, he was showing Ronnie an indigenous dancing drum. We tried it out but couldn't afford it and walked away.

Later, we came back because I wanted to buy a rain stick. The vendor said in Spanish, "You are back with your sisters, Ron. These are your sisters, right?"

I replied, "No but yes. We are all family."

"You mean, family in the body of Christ?" he said, looking to the sky.

"Yes, we all have the same Father," I added.

"Then, I am your brother, too," he stated, pulling out a cross necklace from under his button-up shirt.

"Yes, we are all brothers and sisters," I said simply.

This man, whose name I cannot remember, explained how he had been a believer, even through



Danielle Hance

fourteen years of jail. He explained how he likes to tell young people about Christ. Here was a man, redeemed. A man who reminded me of the lessons I had learned in prison ministry, that we really all are family. And here was a man, who had been released from his chains and was continuing to live in the freedom of Christ. The acronym for INMATE, "I'm now more anointed than ever," was true. The chorus of "Amazing Grace/My Chains Are Gone," ran through my head. "My chains are gone. I've been set free. My God, my Savior, rescued me." We didn't share the same native tongue, the same government, or the same currency. But what we did share was faith. This man, my teammates, myself, redeemed and adopted into God's family.

Date: 10/12/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Citrus Trees

As we drove past a citrus grove in Yuma, AZ, our host Lynne told us about the trees. She said that all of them are the same tree, a lemon tree. What makes them different is the kind of branch grafted to them. So an orange tree would be a lemon tree with an orange branch grafted to it. The reason, she told us, for using lemon trees as the base, is because they are the strongest. A friend of hers had a tangerine tree and pruned it too much and ended up with a lemon tree.

Lemons are a symbol of our troubles. I am reminded of the phrase, "If life gives you lemons, make lemonade." Lemons are bitter to taste. I don't know anybody who would eat a lemon over an apple. But from the bitter roots of a lemon tree, branches of sweet fruit like oranges and tangerines are grafted on. My life is rooted in sin. I was born into it. My will is inherently sinful. But through the sacrifice of Jesus, God has grafted new life onto me.

John 15: 2, 4-5 says,

Every branch in Me that does not produce He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit...Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me.

Without Jesus, I would have continued growing in sin, bearing lemons. Now, I can bear good fruit, sweet fruit. But only if I remain in God and the life that only comes from Him.



Danielle Hance

Date: 10/13/2007

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

"When are you coming home?" a gut wrenching question posed to me by my 4 year old nephew Kade in a phone call to my brother on Monday. I had difficulty responding without letting him hear the emotion I felt in my heart. This question has stirred a great deal of thought in my mind as to what home really is. When my nephew asked me about coming home, it made me think of God asking this question instead, and yearning for us to be home with Him. I can almost hear Him asking me, "When are you coming home?" As Heather, our team director reminded us in training, home is lots of things and places. In the earthly sense of the word, home is becoming so much more to me than Danforth, IL and Charleston, IL, the places where I've lived all my life. Home is the churches we've been to. Home is the people we've met along the way. Home is all the places God has allowed us to be. Today is my nephew Evan's fourth birthday. It is hard on me not to be there, but at the same time, I'm feeling guilty for wanting to be home, because those feelings are taking away from relationships with my teammates. Is it possible that our 15 passenger van and these people that were strangers to me two months ago are now becoming "Home" for me?



Kami Kimmel

And finally...I've been reading "90 Minutes In Heaven" and am just amazed at this man's

description of heaven. It makes me want to be there, to leave everything and be with God in paradise. My happiest moments on earth pale in comparison to the beauty of heaven and what it holds in store for us!

"That's When I'll Know I'm Home" by Prays Twice

There is a place more precious than any other, this side of heaven's door. A place where we love one another, a shelter in time of storms. Though it's a treasure, this home's not forever, I long for the life that's waiting beyond...where no one will ever be hungry or cold. No one will hurt or will ever grow old. No one will die and leave someone alone...that's when I'll know I'm home. There is a place where truth will always be spoken, and promises can be believed, a place where your heart can't be broken and loved ones will never leave. So if you are longing, for a place of belonging, the home that you've dreamed of is waiting for you; where no one will ever be hungry or cold, no one will hurt or will ever grow old. No one will die and leave someone alone. I'm home forever no pain or disease. All will be equal and all will be free, true love will come and will fall at his feet, that's when I'll know I'm home. Finally I'll see with the darkness erased, not through a glass but then face to face! And that's when I'll know I'm home.

Date: 10/13/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

10/13/07 Yuma, Arizona

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." – 1 John 3:16



Rachel Ringlaben

This week has held many challenges for our team: putting aside pride, denying our own wants, surviving exhaustion. But today's bible study and check-ins were redemptive of all we've been through together. We studied 1 John 3 and talked about how we can "lay our lives" down for each other. We shared our struggles in our weaknesses and learning on how to surrender them to God. I am excited about the work that God is doing in each of our lives and how He is using us to minister and to show love and compassion to each other. I get goose bumps when I think of how much our team is going to grow over the year and how we are beginning to learn to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters on Kindred. My spirit delights in the ways that my team (including myself) is surrendering to God more and more. We are truly a *family* of believers.

Our devo/check-in tonight reminded me of how the early church met when James wrote, "Therefore confess your sins to each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (James 5:16) Kindred is encouraging and walking beside each other – speaking the truth in love, repenting and forgiving, praying, receiving healing. How exciting it is to see the Spirit of God move when we surrender our wills to Him!

Let me amend that verse in James 5:16 --

*Therefore, confess your sins to each other so that *KINDRED* may be healed. The prayer of a *Kindred teammate* is powerful and effective.*

I don't think it is a coincidence that the five of us were placed on a team whose name means "family" – we all must learn to love and honor our family members all over the world above ourselves, no matter how uncomfortable. God calls us to be uncomfortable – to love so radically that it effects change!

"How good and pleasant it is when *kindred* (Ronnie, Danielle, Kami, Rachel and Ludvigs) live together in unity!" – Psalm 133:1

Date: 10/15/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." – John 3:8

I was thinking about the Imperial Sand Dunes we saw in California two days ago...how beautiful they were. I remembered my host dad say, "They won't look like this tomorrow; the wind changes their shape." It got me thinking about myself as a surrendered child of God and how I trust God to use His Holy Spirit, His Wind, to form and change me. I cannot tell where it is going but I know that God has "plans to prosper me." (Jeremiah 29:11) The same God who controls the wind to change the shape of those sand dunes is the same God who delights in fellowship with me and who takes joy in forming me in His hand into one who is more like His Son.



Rachel Ringlaben

I am overwhelmed with gratitude and praise! God's wind of change is such a powerful thing...I will not be the same person I was in August by the end of this year. What a beautiful thought that as my team, Kindred, continues to surrender to God's Spirit wind, we will change and become more like the persons He created us to be!

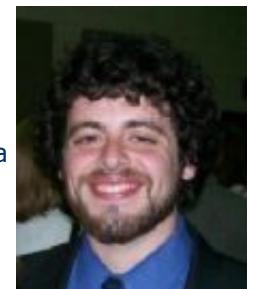
"And we who with unveiled faces all reflect the LORD's glory, are *being transformed* into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the LORD, who is the *Spirit*." (2 Corinthians 3:18) My prayer is that I will be as accepting of God's wind of transformation as the sand which goes wherever the wind blows. Let my life be a reflection of the transforming power and glory of our God as I continue to learn to surrender myself into His most holy hands...

Date: 10/15/2007

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

Right now is a time of growth for me. As we approach the end of our second month as a team, relationships are being put to the test. We have had so many long drives lately and the stress of not always knowing our next destination is weighing on us. Loving each other has been harder than ever and relying on God's strength is more crucial than ever before. I thought I was doing okay on my own, but the truth is, without relying fully on God, I just mess things up.



Ronnie Melin

Being crammed in a van for 3 months is nothing new to me, but every team is different. Learning to relate to my teammates in a way that serves them best and honors God the most is difficult. Lately it has been more difficult for me. I don't know if there's some great cosmic reason that the five of us are together, but the fact is we're stuck for the next year! I know that it is a total blessing. If I can learn to love (only through the changing power of Christ in my heart!) this will be an incredible year. On my own I rebel, resist, judge, criticise, and grow angry when things don't go my way. God alone can complete the work that He has started in me. God has brought four very different people into my life and has given me a great chance to rely on Him. Together, as a team, there is so much that we can do for Christ that I would never be able to do alone. Thanks be to God

Date: 10/15/2007

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Yesterday I had the biggest literal wake up call I've ever received from God! After worship we headed back to our hosts' home for lunch. The couple who were hosting the girls invited the boys to join us. While the meal was being prepared, I returned a phone call to my sister. My family was all gathered together for Evan's 4th birthday party, the oldest child of my sister and brother-in-law, and I wanted to chat with them



Kami Kimmel

all for a few minutes. Well, I found out some pretty exciting news while talking to my sister...she is pregnant with her third child!! :D I was very happy to hear this news, but at the same time I began to have a strong desire to be at home celebrating with my family, so much so that I had to excuse myself from the fellowship at our hosts' because of the tears flowing down my face. During the meal our host made a comment that I was a million miles away (I had told her the reason for my tears, and she reminded me that I was supposed to be here.)...and she was right. My mind wasn't in Yuma, Arizona, but it was in Danforth, IL with my family and in the garage where I knew the party was being held. What happened next, I will never forget. My teammate Ronnie, reached for food that was close to my plate, and in doing so, he accidentally spilled my big glass of ice cold water in my lap. In this accidental dousing of water, I remembered my baptism. I remembered my call to faith, and most importantly, I remembered my call to this year of ministry!!

Thanks be to God! :)

Date: 10/15/2007

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Life on Kindred seams very surreal at times. I will be sitting somewhere and think thoughts like, " I'm swimming in a pool in Yuma Arizona, with two girls I met a very short time ago, and we're staying at the home of people I've never met in my life." Or I'll have experiences like we did in Tuscon, AZ where the grade school kids at a school interviewed us about our lives and gave reports to the class. Or a host mom will comment about cleaning the house before we came. I wonder, "who am I that people clean their houses for me, a small town girl from Illinois? Who am I that kids at school are interviewing me about my life, a life that really isn't super exciting. What makes me special?" And then I know the answer. I'm special because Jesus loves me. I'm special because God chose me as one of His children, and I'm not special because I can play the piano and sing. It's an amazing thing to realize that God chose me, and I don't have to do anything special for His love and grace. I got it simply by being born. WOW! :D



Kami Kimmel

Date: 10/17/2007

Submitted by: Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Journal Entry:

Otros de los lugares en los que hemos estado son: Haysville, Kansas (KS) donde participamos en dos servicios y la familia donde me quedé nos llevó a Wichita, KS donde vimos un monumento de los Indios Nativos de esa region, pero como estaba haciendo mucho viento, no pudimos ver como unas antorchas se encendian al rededor de este monumento. Despues fuimos a Bartlesville, Oklahoma (OK) donde cumplí 30, un día antes fuimos a comprar algunas cosas con Anita, la señora con quien me quedé esos días, y también fuimos a una especie de club de costura, sólo por unos minutos, pero estuve hablando con estas señoritas por un rato y me ofrecieron Te y Galletas, fue bien divertido, pero bueno la pasé muy bien.



Ludvigs Ayala Porras

El 2 de octubre, para mi cumple fuimos de Bartlesville, OK a Little Rock, Arkansas (AR), donde me celebraron mi cumple en la casa de una de mis amigas del grupo (Rachel), también fuimos a un museo y al centro de la ciudad, es bien bonita y se parece a Bogotá en algunas partes, especialmente el trafico. Despues fuimos a Richardson, Texas (TX), fue un viaje de cerca a 6 horas, hicimos un programa y salimos para el siguiente pueblo, otras 6 horas de viaje. En Midland, TX, nos quedamos una noche y salimos hacia El Paso, TX.

En El Paso, TX me encontre con Joshua M. quien fue a Colombia hace dos años con KINDRED y pasamos un buen rato en El Paso, sin contar con que me enfermé y no pude acompanar al grupo en los cultos, pero el lunes 8 de octubre fuimos a Ciudad Juarez en Mexico, al principio estaba preocupado por ir, pero hablamos con un oficial de Inmigracion y nos dijo que no habia ningun problema, asi que tambien fui a Mexico =).

Ahora estamos en Arizona (AZ) donde fuimos a Tucson, Yuma, Lake Havasu City y hoy estoy en Kingman, a una hora de LAS VEGAS, NEVADA, vamos a ver si podemos pasar por ahí de camino a Barstow, California (CA). Despues les cuento más.

Date: 10/19/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Love in a Red Sweater

Delores did not look much different than the other elderly women at the Rim Rock Convalescent Center in Barstow, California. Except for her bright red sweater. I was greeting the residents before our hymn sing and had picked the second row because one of my teammates had already greeted the first row residents.



Danielle Hance

Many of the residents had Alzheimer's. The first lady I talked to asked me, "Have you seen my husband? I don't know if he is here anymore. We just got here." She asked me repeatedly and seemed distraught. I hadn't seen her husband and for all I knew, he might have been dead for years. All I told her was that I had been in a hurry to get here and gone straight to the activity room. Faye, wearing a tan autumn leaf sweatshirt, had the same name as my aunt. She told me a couple times that she had only known two other Faye's and her maiden name was White.

Delores didn't give me a choice of whether I was going to meet her or not. She reached out with her bony, mottled arms that swam in her t-shirt sweater and grabbed my hands. "There's my sweetie!" She exclaimed like an overzealous grandmother. She looked at me with her greenish-hazel eyes and wiry large frames. Her eighties-style, brown-gray hair made her long, thin face seem wider and more commanding. "You are so pretty. You are so beautiful. You are so pretty. You are just so pretty. I love you. Aren't you beautiful," she repeated over and over again, continuing to clasp my hands in hers.

I am pretty sure that she would have kept going on like a hamster on a wheel, but my teammates were beckoning me to begin the program. So I excused myself, and we sang a bunch of hymns and gave a couple of sharings. I shared my story from a nursing home for abandoned women in Mexico. I told our audience about how helpless I felt and how much I had to rely on other people, much like they did. But I was able to give back by playing my clarinet for the women at the small home. What I didn't expect was how I was blessed. Each of the frail women tried to lift themselves out of their wheelchairs to give me a blessing. I reminded the men and women at this home in California that they are blessings to many people, even if they don't feel like they can do much.

After the program, I said goodbye to all of the residents. And I had another encounter with the red sweater. Delores reached out her bony arms again and drew them to her face. She kissed both of them. "I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I just love you so much," she said again and again but with the heart-felt gusto of an orchestra conductor expanding his arms in the triumphal moment of a piece.

Why did Delores love me so much? She loved me before I had done anything for her. What did I do to deserve her love? She reached out to me to tell me I was beautiful. Afterwards, she wanted to draw me close to her and tell me how much she loved me. But all I had done was shared some hymns with my team and shared a simple story. It really wasn't much.

Delores' love modeled for me what I imagine an encounter with God might be like. God chose me before I even had a chance to love him. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because God first loved us." I did nothing for God that He would choose to love me. If God were right here, I think He would continually tell me that I am beautiful because He created me. He would tell me that He loves me over and over again. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers," says 1 John 3:16. Love would not be possible without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And how amazing it is that God never ceases to love me. Ever. "I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you," He tells me in every face I encounter.

Especially Delores in the red sweater.

Date: 10/21/2007

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'



Kami Kimmel

Today I had the opportunity to be the face of God's love to "one of the least of these". Between worship services this morning, we were hanging out at our development table (aka Sales table). A short distance away from us I noticed a woman in a wheelchair; she was struggling with some items in her lap. Though there were many several people around her, no one else seemed to notice. She was wearing dark glasses, and I realized that she was probably blind. I went over to her, kneeled down and asked if I could help her. She said yes, please. So I put down her cup for her, and helped her with her purse. In this process, we began chatting. I asked her if she could give any advice to a young person like myself, what would it be? This is what she told me. 1. Remember Jesus Christ. 2. Read your bible. 3. Don't forget about yourself; don't let people take advantage of you. I didn't need to prompt much for the conversation to continue and she explained this advice. She began to cry and said that in March she came close to being with Jesus. March is when she became blind. Lois also has Parkinson's disease. In frustration, she said that she's not sure why she's here and that she feels useless. I told her, "we don't always know God's plan and reason for doing things, but there is indeed a plan. He wanted you on Earth. You have blessed me just by letting me spend time talking with you." Lois responded in disbelief, "I have?" and I said, "Yes!" Then she told me that she wishes she could tell her younger self to read the bible more because now that she can't, that's all she wants to do. As she was saying this, she began to cry. I felt God urging me to do something for Lois. I asked Lois if I could read to her from the Bible. She said yes. So I asked one of my nearby teammates if they could please get me a bible. I asked Lois if there was anything in specific that she'd like read. She said no, you can choose. I suggested the Psalms and when I opened my bible, it opened to Psalm 40. As I was reading it, I realized that it was just the right words Lois needed to hear. The following are some verses I read to her:

1 I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.

2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.

3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear
and put their trust in the LORD.

11 Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD;
may your love and your truth always protect me.

12 For troubles without number surround me;
my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see.
They are more than the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails within me.

16 But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your salvation always say,
"The LORD be exalted!"

17 Yet I am poor and needy;

may the Lord think of me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
O my God, do not delay.

I read a few more things from the bible. It was about time for the second service to start and my teammates had already gone in. Not wanting to leave her yet, I stayed. I asked her if we could pray together, and when I was done, there were tears in her eyes. I'm so grateful that the Lord gave me the opportunity to serve Lois and to help fulfill some of her needs. God continues to show me something new in every place we go, and to bring special people to my life. It's so humbling to know that He doesn't need me, but He wants me. I'm learning how to look for ways to help my brothers and sisters in Christ, learning how to be the face of God's love, and am learning how to love and praise God with reckless abandonment. I challenge you: think of others before you think of yourself. Show grace, love, mercy. Look for ways to serve one another. "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Date: 10/21/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

10/21/07 – Culver City , CA

God has a way of blessing me by revealing Himself to me in the smallness of life...little kisses of grace, as I like to call them. I received a kiss from God today in three men who were developmentally disabled that attended worship this morning. After the early morning service the team was stationed at our "resource table" to talk about our ministry. The three men came up and started quizzing me on who we were, where we're from and what our ministry entails. Time went on and I found myself extremely comfortable with them. We giggled and conversed until it was time to go into the sanctuary for the traditional service. Our team sat in the second row, right behind two of these amazing gentlemen... oh how much God blessed me through them!



Rachel Ringlaben

I watched as they helped each other with the hymnals and bulletins. What touched me the most was their joy – their complete joy in worshipping God. Their off-key melodies with the songs were an absolute delight to listen to because I could hear the passion and gentleness in their voices. When our team went forward to sing *Psalm 25* (a sing-a-long) we noticed that there were not any children in the audience! So we invited the "young in heart" to come up and join us. The three men came forward with grins on their faces and we all had a blast moving and singing and praising God.

I will not forget their joy...They sang and prayed with such gusto that it did not matter what is sounded like to my human ears; they were only concerned with how their spirits sounded to our Heavenly Father. The reckless abandonment I heard and saw in those three men is something I will treasure for many days to come.

Psalm 119:7 says, "I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws." Today I caught a glimpse of what an upright heart looks like. It is one that is only concerned about the approval and favor of God. It is a heart that recklessly follows Christ. It is a heart that finds joy in lifting up his or her voice to God. I thank the Lord for showing me His face in those three men...

How I long to praise Him with an upright heart.

Date: 10/22/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

A Long Day of Unexpected Ministry

"Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise." –Lyrics of "Be Thou My Vision"

I woke up at 5 a.m. with my teammate Kami, so we could get a ride to the metro from our host, Kaye. Our team was hoping to get on "The Price is Right," and to ensure that we got tickets and allow my teammates to sleep in, we were planning to take the metro and the bus to CBS Studios in Los Angeles, CA. It was Monday, our day off. A day to be in the world.

We left a little late from our host home. Kaye sped along the freeway to try to get us there on time. We arrived and hastily purchased our tickets. Kami put in a ten dollar bill and got five dollar coins back. It was strange, but we didn't think too much of it.

We got on the metro and rode along for a while. I had brought my Bible along and did my devos. Then, I wrote a poem to Drew Carey about getting on the show. I wrote about being from North Dakota, about Ludvigs' tonsils that need to be removed, about our team, about our dented van—all the reasons I felt I deserved to be a contestant on the show. If I won money, I could pay for Ludvigs' tonsil surgery. If we won a vehicle, we could trade in our van and ride RV-style. And I probably could keep a little something for myself. When would I be in California again? Surely, God knew how far I had come. Plus, I had sacrificed sleep so that my teammates could wake up at ten and ride our van in to meet us.

Danielle Hance

Our map told us to get off at W Washington Blvd/Grand. The problem was that there was both a Washington and Grand stop. Playing it safe, we got off at Washington. I looked around and saw a "To Street" sign. It wasn't looking too promising. I read the connection board and realized that to get to Beverly Hills we had to get off at Grand Station and find the Olive Street bus station. We would have to catch to the next red line metro. It was already 6:23 a.m. We were supposed to catch our next bus at 6:47 a.m. I said a few prayers for our tickets.

A short Mexican man with a tan cowboy hat came over to be saying "Ciento veinticinco" (one hundred twenty-five). I realized that he was trying to buy a metro ticket, so we walked over to the ticketing screen. He was forcing a dollar bill in the black slot in vain. I told him to wait a moment. I selected a ticket for him, so he could insert payment. The bill didn't work. I tried it too. I asked Kami, "Tienes un dollar?" and then realized that I was speaking Spanish to my English-speaking teammate. I asked her in English, and she found her dollar coins. The man got his ticket and went to wait.

We waited too, for another twenty minutes. Both directions of the metro were experiencing delays. When we got back on, Kami battled her claustrophobia. We held onto an overhead rail near the door, and people touched us as they squeezed by to get off. Luckily, we only had to ride for a couple stops. We got off at Grand Station and followed the crowd out of the metro station. We lost the crowd quickly, and I felt we were going in the wrong direction. I tried to ask two people where Olive Street was but neither one seemed to speak English. We asked a Japanese man for directions. He stared at our paper for a while and told us to keep walking the same direction. I wasn't sure about the Japanese man's English skills, but I figured he knew more than us. We saw an African-American woman pushing a cart, and I thought that she had to speak English. I asked her where Olive Street was, and sure enough, it was five blocks away in the other direction.

By the time we walked five blocks in the reverse direction, Kami's bladder was exasperated. McDonald's was across the street, and I said I would wait for her at the bus station. I wasn't going to miss another form of public transportation now that we were here at Olive Street. Kami insisted that I go with her. "I'm not going anywhere without you," she stated. I knew I had to go with her. I had to trust God that we would get the tickets even though it was already 7:30 a.m., and we would have to be at the studios at 8 a.m.

On the way into McDonald's, a tall homeless man with a tattered plaid shirt and torn Wranglers asked us, "Ladies, please a little change for a coffee." I turned my head away and walked in. I felt bad for not even acknowledging him. I was in a hurry. I came here to appease Kami. Then we had to get to CBS Studios.

I walked to the bathroom, and my guilt still consumed me. "Why don't you have time to give this man a drink?" "Why do you criticize our time-oriented culture and materialism, when you are falling



into it right now?" "Whatever you did for the least of these you did for me," I remembered these words from our skit.

I used the bathroom and walked back out. There was no line at the counter. Kami was still in the bathroom. I looked out the window, and the man was still in the parking lot. "You have no excuses. You have money. Give the man something to drink." The Holy Spirit had to be directing my thoughts. I stepped up to the counter and ordered a coffee. She asked how many creams and sugars. I had no idea. I don't drink coffee. I got one of each, paid for the cup, and walked out with Kami, who had just rejoined me.

We walked out. "This is for you," I told the man, handing him the cup in the middle of the McDonald's parking lot. "That's very thoughtful of you," he said to me. I was surprised that he said anything. I put a hand on his shoulder and said, "God bless you." Then we hurried across the street to catch our bus.

We had missed the RapidMetro bus, so we were stuck riding a regular, stop for anything and everything bus. The bus was full of Hispanics. Kami and I might have been the only native English speakers, the driver included. I wasn't sure if this was the right bus, so I asked the guy across from me in Spanish if the bus stopped on Beverly and Fairfax. He told me it did and told me that the bus driver could stop there for us if we asked him. We could which was good because there was no map in the bus, and Kami and I had no idea how people knew where to stop.

I asked the guy next to me how long it would be until Fairfax, and he told me 20 minutes. It was already 7:50 a.m. We weren't going to get to the studios on time. I had to trust God again.

"Hablas espanol?" the man next to me asked.

"Un poco," I answered, not wanting to exaggerate my Spanish ability.

"Muy bien," he answered, and we proceeded to have a conversation.

I learned that the man next to me was named Rodrigo. He was sturdily-built and wearing street clothes. He came from Mexico twelve years ago. He was from a town in the same Mexican state that I had studied in. He had a brother and sister in California, but his parents still lived in Mexico. He learned about my North Dakotan roots and about Kindred. He asked me what religion our group was. I explained that we were Christian and visited a lot of Lutheran churches. I asked him what religion he was. He answered, Catholic. "Like all of Mexico," he joked. I asked him if he had a church. He attended church once in a while, he told me. I told him that I ended up in churches all the time because of the work I was doing. I didn't want him to feel bad.

Rodrigo told me he was late to work, as it was already after 8. We joked about Mexican time. He had only two stops left. I asked him what I could pray for him.

"Do you want my phone number?" he asked in Spanish.

I explained again that I wanted to pray for him. I asked him what I could pray about. He couldn't think of anything specific and seemed a bit taken aback. But he told me I could pray for him if I wanted. I told him that I did and wished him blessings as he got off the bus.

Ten minutes later, we finally arrived at the studios. It was 8:23. We wondered around the studio and tried to get into the actor parking lot. We were redirected to "The Price is Right" ticketing. We asked a big football-player sized security guard where to go, and he just wanted to see are IDs and was skeptical that my little Eddie Bauer backpack was a purse. We made it in line finally, and I hoped and prayed that we would get tickets after our three-and-a-half hour adventure to get here. I talked to the page, Jeffrey, in a red "The Price is Right" jacket. He had never met anybody from North Dakota. We chatted for a while we waited in line. We got our priority numbers 50-54 and had to return at 12:15 p.m. Hallelujah! We had tickets! Even though it took 3 hours and 37 minutes.

Continually throughout the day, I had relational ministry encounters. There was Scott at the Steinway store, who told us more about Los Angeles and let us play on 9 ½ foot grand pianos. When we came back to CBS studios, the guard, Jose, who checks IDs, conversed with me about North Dakota (obviously my favorite topic of conversation). I saw Jeffrey, the page, again, who had prepared a list of questions and one-liners about North Dakota but was too bashful to ask me. We

met some of the other contestant-hopefuls and shared about our ministry. We even met another ministry team called Masters made up of a bunch of college-aged Californians.

I brought my Bible with me to the studios (it was my purse since backpacks weren't allowed), and I read it to calm my nerves about being a contestant. Even though I really wanted to be on the show, every time I opened my Bible, I knew I wasn't going to be. Really, why did I deserve to be on a game show? Even though I am a volunteer, I am extremely blessed. There is nothing that I lack.

We made it into the audience. I went crazy clapping, cheering, and trying to give high fives to all of the contestants. It's not about me, I realized. It's never about me, actually. After the show, the new host Drew Carey talked about how beautiful it is to watch all of us cheer for complete strangers. But, when I think of my day in Los Angeles, I like to think of all the brothers and sisters I met there. Even the angry cell phone pick-up guard yelling, "Go get your cell phones!" after the show. I told him, "Have a nice day." He paused, taken aback, and then replied, "You too."

God is not a game show.
He is not about chance, but opportunities.
God isn't about competition, but victory.

Nothing is a coincidence.
Everything coincides by the power of God.

We are all victorious over sin
through Christ's victory over death.

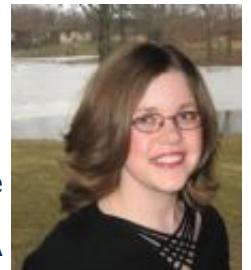
There are no games with God.
Only grace.

Date: 10/24/2007

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Hello! Today is now Wednesday. Yesterday we were able to take some time and drive down Hollywood boulevard and we also saw the sidewalks with all the stars, the Chinese theatre, and all the handprints and footprints of actors and actresses. Today we're in Brea, CA; tomorrow we're headed to Bakersfield, CA. There have been a lot of fires in CA in the last week, eleven all together. Please keep the families and the firefighters in your prayers! Also, the air is thick with smoke. It's difficult to be outside very long, so please pray for the smoke to go away! Monday, Kindred had the opportunity to go to the Price is Right! None of us were contestants but we were in the fourth row, so we will be seen a lot on tv. The show airs on December 7th.



Kami Kimmel

I just wanted to share with you all a song that has become very special to me. I rediscovered it awhile ago. Rachel was navigating while I was driving; she played this song and said "This is Kindred." So, in those few moments that are challenging-those times when I don't think I have the strength to play one more song, the moments when I don't think I can take one more minute in the van, the times when I just want to be at home with family and friends who know me, I think of this song and my energy is refocused to doing what God has set me out to do!

"In Me" by Casting Crowns

If you ask me to leap
Out of my boat on the crashing waves
If You ask me to go
Preach to the lost world that Jesus saves

I'll go, but I cannot go alone
Cause I know I'm nothing on my own
But the power of Christ in me makes me strong
Makes me strong

Cause when I'm weak, You make me strong
When I'm blind, You shine Your light on me
Cause I'll never get by living on my own ability
How refreshing to know You don't need me
How amazing to find that you want me
So I'll stand on Your truth, and I'll fight with Your strength
Until You bring the victory, by the power of Christ in me

If You ask me to run
And carry Your light into foreign land
If You ask me to fight
Deliver Your people from Satan's hand

To reach out with Your hands
To learn through Your eyes
To love with the love of a savior
To feel with Your heart
And to think with Your mind
I'LL GIVE MY LAST BREATH FOR YOUR GLORY

Date: 10/26/2007

Submitted by: Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Journal Entry:

Some of the places we have been are: Haysville, KS were we had 2 worships and my host home took me to Wichita, KS to see a Indian monument, it was very cool, and cold... and because of the wind we could not see some kind of torches. Then we went to Bartlesville, OK where I turned 30 years old and (Anita) my host Mom bought me some stuff and took me to a knitting club and they gave me some tea and cookies and we talk a little bit (5 min), it was fun...



Ludvigs Ayala Porras

October the 2nd for my birthday we travel form Bartlesville to Little Rock, AR to Rachel's home and they gave me tacos and my older sister sent a packet to me with a Star Wars book, that was a great surprise. Also we went to downtown Little Rock and I felt like I was in Bogota because is a big city with a lot of traffic. After Little Rock we travel trough Texas. We drove 6 hours to Richardson, TX where we did a program and then 6 more hours to Midland, TX and the next day 5 more hours to El Paso, TX where I get sick for 2 days and I could not be with my teammates in Sunday worship but when I get better we went to Ciudad Juarez in Mexico.

From Texas we went to Arizona and we were in Tucson for a chapel and confirmation worship, in Yuma we spend some time with the youth and we sing a couple of songs for worship. Then we went to Lake Havasu City and we saw the LONDON BRIDGE... that is nice. We also went to Kingman and from there to LAS VEGAS, NV but before we pass through the Hoover Dam where has recorded TRANSFORMERS... NEAT

Then we went to California where I am now and the special places I have been are, Barstow (It was hot), Culver City (2 blocks from SONY STUDIOS and LOST AND FOUND concert, NEAT), Long Beach (A huge city and a LONG BEACH), Glendale (The best pasta ever in the pastors house, nice kind at the school), Brea (Where my host home was a friend from Bogota, nice kids at school, confirmation and preschoolers) and today I am in Bakersfield (the best lasagna ever)

I will tell you more later...

Some thing more I almost forget, I was in THE PRICE IS RIGHT the 22nd and we also went to HOLLYWOOD WALK OF FAME and the CHINESE THEATRE where the foot and hand prints are... COOOOOOL

Date: 10/27/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

10/27/07 Monterey, CA

"Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you." – Hosea 10:12

I have been thinking about the fires and the smoke here in California. And how if it had been just *one* fire, the smoke would not be so bad, but there are more than twenty fires and our team has been serving right in the middle of them all...



Rachel Ringlaben

When fires are put out, the affected area is not magically restored – it is charred and new life cannot grow out of it for a while. Healing and restoration must come before the ground can bare fruit again. The same is with us – when we repent of our sin and allow God to put out the selfish fires in our hearts with the living water of his Holy Spirit, the sin is gone. But the effects of our sin are still visible in our hearts. The effects of selfishness, pride, and anger make it hard for spiritual fruit to burst forth from our souls. We must allow God to break up our fallow ground and allow Him to heal us. We must allow Him to take us out of the ash, the dirt, and death. We must let Him set us in lush, green pastures with still waters that *restore* our souls (Psalm 23). It is only after that time of pruning, refreshment, and renewal that we can begin to bear fruit that will stand through the fire.

We must catch ourselves when we see that spark of our old selves try to creep back into our lives and ruin the marvelous plans God has for us. It's easier to put out a small campfire than it is to put out twenty forest fires, but our God is more than capable to handle both scenarios...Our Lord delights in turning our ashes into beauty, our mourning into dancing, and our fear into strength.

Let us break up our fallow ground and seek the Lord who took our filth and ash on His cross and gave us new life through the victorious resurrection. Thanks be to God!

Date: 10/28/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Oktoberfest!

"Based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10)



Danielle Hance

Polka music reminds me of my grandparents and the polka dancers in the North Dakota State Fair parade. I got pretty excited when I heard the "Clarinet Polka" as we walked into the Oktoberfest celebration at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Monterey, CA. I was bringing my clarinet over from the church service to put it away, but secretly I wanted to join the other two clarinetists in the polka band. It seemed like fun to jam with a bunch of old folks in German-style hats playing accordion, trumpet, baritone saxophone, and of course a couple clarinets. As we ate lunch, I bobbed back and forth to the music and really wanted to get up and dance the polka.

When the band took a break, Kindred took over. It seemed kind of awkward to be a Spanish-speaking group singing at a German festival, but we did it anyways. We sang "Il ma sauvé" in French, and one of the polka band men asked me what language we were speaking. Then another one asked me where my clarinet was. He must have seen me carrying it in at the beginning, I thought. "The pretty girls always play clarinet," he said, "Why didn't you join us?" I asked him if they were going to play again, and he told me that the clarinetists and accordion player might play later. I said that I would join them if they played again.

Twenty minutes later, the man with the funny German hat with a feather on it came to get me. He

told me they were going to play Swedish music from Minnesota. How fitting since I am half-Swedish and went to college in Minnesota. For the next 30 minutes, I jammed out with Vern, the clarinetist with the funny hat, and Judy, a thin, older lady with braces in a traditional German dress. I had a ton of fun sight-reading polka music and having fellowship with these funny clarinetists. I never played with an accordion before either. I used to joke about having a polka band when I am older. Now, I have been in a real live polka band. My teammates took pictures of me, and I was all smiles when I wasn't playing, of course.

The polka band really enjoyed my playing and thought I was pretty talented. I got invited to join a Thursday night clarinet quartet, and I am booked to be in Monterey at this same time next year to play again. I felt pretty valuable.

Sometimes, I feel out-of-place playing praise-and-worship clarinet, something that I might be a pioneer in doing. But today, I could see why God placed me in this ministry. This opportunity was for me. I was the only one on my team, who could take it. Today I was called to fellowship with Vern and Judy and whoever else was there to enjoy our music. Thank you, God, for giving me unique opportunities!

Date: 10/29/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

"Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it." – Jeremiah 38:9

One of the miracles God showed me this week was His provision...

When our team was in Bakersfield I went to the clinic and was diagnosed with a lung infection from breathing in all of the smoke and ash that has been in the air due to the numerous fires in California. We arrived in Monterey on Sunday and I was in so much pain I could hardly focus or warm-up for our program that evening. Near tears, I asked Danielle to talk to the pastor of the church about a doctor I could see. While I was eating dinner with some of the guests at the church, the Pastor called me over to the phone and said that a parishioner of the church is a lung specialist and could see me in the morning! I went to the phone, tears of joy and thanksgiving filling my eyes, and talked to the doctor about my infection, my asthma, and the problems I had with my lungs when I was younger. After the list of questions was done he said that I could come and see him in the morning...free of charge. I thanked him and hung up the phone in awe of God and His speed in answering my prayer and for providing me!



Rachel Ringlaben

How amazing is it that I am suffering with a lung infection and the church we are partnering with has a member who happens to be a pulmonologist and is willing to see me *for free*? I started crying and lifting up my hands in thanksgiving when Danielle came over to me and hugged me. We just stood and praised God together. Then Ludvigs joined the two of us and we all three hugged and continued to worship our Lord.

"Isn't God amazing?" I said.

Ludvigs answered, "Yea, He's the greatest guy...ever!"

We all laughed and took joy in realizing how loving our God is...

The next morning I went to see the doctor. He diagnosed, treated, and gave me medicine...all without charge. Praise God!

This whole experience has been such a refresher course on grace. This doctor didn't know me from Eve, but he knew *Who's* I was and was willing to give of himself for my well-being. Isn't that what God is all about? It is because we are His *children* that God calls us to commune with Him. I did nothing to receive His love, but He gave (and continues to give) so much of Himself for me. I thank God that he sent this angel doctor to give me yet another glimpse of the mystery that is His insurmountable grace.

To HIM be the glory,

Rachel Beth

Date: 10/30/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

10/20/07 Barstow, CA

Rimrock Convalescent Center – just another nursing home that would smell bad and where awkward conversations would take place, right? Wrong! God had different plans. I was greeted with gentle smiles as I walked into the activity center and made my way to the front of the room with the rest of my teammates. All the residents focused on our sharings and hymns. One resident, Marie, sang loudly during "How Great Thou Art" – it was such a delight! We sang several hymns and it was beautiful to hear the residents sing with us. On occasion, Marie would doze off, but her buddy Delores would nudge her awake in time for the chorus of the hymn.



Rachel Ringlaben

After we finished our program, we got a chance to chat with some of the residents. I met an older woman named Okie, from Korea. As I crouched down to look her in the eye, she took me by the hand and thanked me for singing. I told her how much I enjoyed being there and meeting her. I asked Okie how long she had been away from Korea. A perplexed expression came over her face; tears began to fill her eyes as she gripped my hand tighter and said in a trembling voice, "I don't remember." I clutched her hands with both of mine and whispered, "It's okay, Okie...it's okay. I'm so glad you're here. You are such a blessing." She forced a smile and loosened her grip on my hands. I asked her if I could give her a hug and she said yes. As I hugged Okie I whispered in her ear, "God loves you very much." I looked at her as tears began to fill her eyes again and she said, "Thank you. God loves you, too."

I'm not sure what Okie's story is, but I know my Heavenly Father designed her and knows her every thought. I believe in a God that does not forget His children, even when they cannot remember their own stories. I love a God who "tends his flock like a shepherd...[and] gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart." (Isaiah 40:11) I believe in that moment with Okie, God allowed me to usher her into a place close to our Abba Father's heart so she could know comfort and peace. I do not know Okie's story, but I imagine that it is not so different from my own. It is a story of scandalous grace. It is a story of the immeasurable love that our God has for us. "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all...for he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:8, 12b) Okie's story is my story. It is a story of love, of hope, of peace, and of comfort.

Date: 11/1/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

"Alma"

She stood watching as we sang "Draw Me Close to You" and "All in All" outside, under the awning leading to the church fellowship hall. She had bouncy, shoulder-length curly hair that matched her dark, artsy glasses and complemented her olive complexion. She carried a designer-knock-off bag with a magenta, orange, red, and green peace-sign emblazoned on it. She wore a thick silver heart necklace. She looked like a put-together twenty-something.



Danielle Hance

We finished the song and said hello. "I was just listening to the music," she told us. Rachel walked

over and introduced herself, and I came over soon afterwards. Her name was Alma. Rachel reminded her of a friend Alma had named Rachel. It was ironic.

She told us that she liked our music, and we talked about what we do. Rachel, seeing an opportunity to recruit, asked her if she was in college. To the surprise of both of us, we learned that she was just 17.

Rachel asked what she wanted to study in college. She was hoping to be an artist though she also enjoyed chemistry and economics. I was able to relate to her love of chemistry; I took two-and-a-half years of chemistry in high school.

"So are you guys Christian?" Alma asked.

We explained our Lutheran roots and ecumenical beliefs.

Then Rachel asked a seemingly-logical question, "So do you go this church?"

"No, I'm not, you know, religious," Alma replied. One of her parents is Jewish and the other is Catholic. When she was in South Carolina, some religious leaders tried to force Christianity on to her.

I was taken aback that I was actually talking to a non-Christian. Sometimes, I feel like I am in a bubble of "church people," and one of my prayers of late has been that I would be able to minister to people without faith.

She continued talking about what she had experienced with Christians—people who went to church on Sunday but spoke mostly in four-letter words starting with "f," Christians who only cared about how much money was in their bank account, believers who would walk past suffering people. What she said was truth. Those people belong to cultural Christianity.

This gave Rachel and me an opportunity to talk about our faith. Rachel talked about what real Christianity is. About how it is about comforting suffering children in Iraq and being Jesus to those around us. I talked about how Christianity is a lifestyle. We're not religious. Our faith is not about going to church on Sunday. It is about how we live our lives.

The words ebbed and flowed out of our mouths. Rachel talked about grace and how we are loved even though we screw up. I talked about how I know that there is something greater than myself. I don't even understand myself, so I have to believe that there is someone greater than does. I talked about how I am created, and so I have to have a creator. It is just like chemistry, I told her, nothing can be created on its own.

Alma asked if we had always been Christians. She listened intently as Rachel told the story of her baptism in the hospital when she wasn't supposed to live. Rachel talked about the gift of her singing, which should be physically impossible with her underdeveloped lungs. I told her that even though I was raised Christian, I experienced a lot of doubts in college. I talked about stories like Jonah that are sometimes hard to fathom. She asked me where the dinosaurs fit in, and I just told her that I believe God created them if they have dug up bones. And that probably there were dinosaurs with Adam and Eve. But really, I don't have answers for everything.

I explained to her what faith is. I told her I had a paper in my pocket and asked her if she believed me. Then I showed her the piece of paper in my pocket. The first example is faith, and the second example is knowledge.

"Faith is acknowledging that we don't have all the answers," I told Alma, "Don't you want to believe that someone does have all the answers?"

Alma nodded her head yes. "They keep talking to us about higher powers in the NA [Narcotics Anonymous] meetings, but I don't really get it," she said.

The whole experience was surreal. God put words in our mouths and allowed us to speak in terms that Alma would understand. Although I had used those same arguments and examples before, I knew that I had never expressed them the way I did tonight.

Rachel shared the story of how her relationship with her father was restored and how he came to

love and serve Christ. She spoke of the redemptive power of Christ in her life. She talked about how good it is to be living in the will of God.

"It's scary. And it's not comfortable," Rachel said, cupping her left hand and placing her right hand inside of it to illustrate her point, "But it is the best place to be."

We continued talking. Somehow God held Alma's attention while Rachel and I continued to think of whatever we could do to minister to this young woman. I realized that we were not going to be able to answer all her questions then and there and that we couldn't provide everything that Alma needed.

"Do you like to read?" I asked her.

"Ya, I do," she replied.

"Can I give you two good books for you to read?"

"Ya," she said and quickly added, "Please don't say the Bible. My aunt gave me her study Bible and it has all of those connections or what are they called?"

We couldn't figure out what she was talking about, but I comforted her by telling her that the Bible was a tough book and that there are other books that could help to confront the issues she was having about Christianity. I told her about "Blue Like Jazz" and "The Case for Faith." She was really interested in "Blue Like Jazz."

I was about to write down book titles for Alma when Rachel realized that she had "Blue Like Jazz." Rachel grabbed my keys and ran off to the trailer to find her copy.

While Rachel was gone, Alma disclosed to me bit of her past. Everything had been going fine until she was 13. She got really confused. Everything was really confusing, she told me a few times. She started using [drugs] and totally "screwed up" her life, she said. She's been clean for a little while now, and everything seems to be coming back together.

"I just feel like there is still a missing piece," she told me.

I wanted to scream, "That missing piece is God!" but I knew that wasn't the most effective thing to say.

"Why don't you try God out?" I said instead.

I explained to her Pascal's Wager. If you believe and there is no god, you haven't lost anything. If you believe and there is a god, you win everything. But if you don't believe in God and God exists than you lose everything.

She told me it made sense. "But I don't want to believe something to believe something," she told me, gripping her heart necklace, "I want to believe because it is deep in my heart."

Isn't that what we all want, I thought, she has her heart in the right place.

She had tried, "The Fairy," which is based on some New Age religion that I am unfamiliar with. She told me that she had to pretend to be a princess, but it didn't really work. Recently, she had tried "The Troll."

"He just sits there and doesn't do much," she told me.

"You need something real. Try God," I said.

Rachel walked back to us with her new unread, "Blue Like Jazz" book in her hand.

"Now I understand why I bought this," she said. "God planned this thousands of years ago."

Alma looked shocked at that thought. I would have been too.

We wrote down our names, e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers for Alma. We offered to be there whenever she need somebody.

"You can talk to us about anything," I said, "Even if you don't think you can tell anybody."

"We won't be here to tell anybody," Rachel added, "We may not ever see you again."

It was sad to think that I may never see Alma again. Would this be my only opportunity to minister to her? I thought.

We talked about how strange it was that we would meet.

"I was just listening to the music," she said again.

"We're glad you did," Rachel replied.

"I hope I'm not keeping you," Alma said.

"This is what we do," said Rachel.

"This is an opportunity from God," I told her, "just like seeing a homeless man on the street. God gives us an opportunity, and we choose whether we want to take it."

We told Alma we would pray for her and exchanged hugs.

"Good luck with everything you are struggling with," I told her as we started to walk in opposite directions.

"I'll need it," she told me.

"You'll be fine," I said in a half-whisper and hoped it was true.

Ironically, the word "alma" means "soul" in Spanish. Please pray that Alma would be one more soul that is saved.

Tonight was just another reminder that this ministry is not about me. The music we were singing when Alma was listening was far from perfect. In fact, we were just learning it and getting a bit frustrated. But what mattered was what was inside our music, the message that it contained

The chorus of "Draw Me Close to You" describes what Alma was feeling:

"You're all I want. You're all I've ever needed. You're all I want. Help me know you are near."

Alma came wanting to believe that there is a higher power, wanting to feel God deep in her heart, wanting something real, wanting to know that God is real.

And the words of "All and All" are what Rachel and I had to testify to:

"You are my strength when I am weak. You are the treasure that I seek. You are my all in all. Seeking you as a precious jewel, Lord to give up I'd be a fool. You are my all in all."

God always meets us where we are. He is all that we need in all situations. We were outside, not just to rehearse for the prayer service tomorrow, but to draw Alma closer to God and testify to his goodness.

Date: 11/1/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

"You are my desire, no one else will do. Cause nothing else could take Your place...to feel the warmth of Your embrace. Help me find a way. Lead me back to You..." – Draw Me Close

There was no room in the church available, so we decided to rehearse outside in the crisp night air outside of the fellowship hall. After singing through "Draw Me Close" and "All in All" I set down the djembe and looked up to see a petite young woman with



curly black hair, thick red framed glasses and a glint of interest in her eyes...

Rachel Ringlaben

"I was just enjoying your music," she said.

"Thanks," I replied and introduced myself and Danielle to her. She told me her name was Alma and she said I reminded her of a friend named Rachel she had.

As the other three teammates continued rehearsing, Danielle and I continued talking with her. We found out she was here for the N.A. meeting. We chatted about college, what she liked to study, where she grew up. Then she asked us what we were doing at the church. The door opened...

"We're a traveling ministry team," Danielle said.

"Oh, so you guys are Christians?" Alma asked. The both of us nodded. I asked her if she went to church around here and she said, "No, I'm not religious."

"Good," I replied. "I'm not either." Alma gave me a puzzled expression and I continued, "I'm just trying to follow Jesus." Danielle nodded and agreed saying, "It is not about rules; it is about a lifestyle. And we're trying to live a life that shows love."

Alma posed questions and concerns about the Christianity she grew up knowing and the hypocrisy in the church. At one point she said, "So, you believe in the Bible? Where do the dinosaurs come in?" I smiled and said, "That's a really good question! I have yet to figure that one out, too. But the good thing is that I don't have to know." Danielle responded, "That's what's so amazing about God. He takes all the pressure off of us!"

Danielle and I continued to share authentic ways God has worked and is working in our lives. We discussed our frustrations and doubts. Alma talked about how she felt pressure to be perfect from the churches she went to in South Carolina.

I looked into her eyes and said, "That's what I love about Jesus. I don't have to fix everything before I go to Him. He meets me where I am. He sees me in my depression and anger. He sits with me and says, 'Oh, my child, I love you. I have so longed to be in communion with you. I have so much good in store for you.' But it is our choice whether or not we allow Him to take us out of our mess. And all I know is that ever since I decided to be in communion with Him, I've never felt freer. Being in God's hands is scary and uncomfortable, but there it is the best place to be."

Alma was now listening intently to what we were saying while the Holy Spirit was providing the words for Danielle and I to share. Danielle began to talk about her time of doubt in college and questions. I shared with Alma about the redeeming work God did in my father and myself. Words of life were just pouring out of us and Alma was drinking them in.

"Do you like to read?" Danielle asked Alma.

"Yes," she replied.

"I have a great book for you to read," Danielle started.

"Please don't say the Bible," Alma said in disgust.

"No, the Bible is really overwhelming," Danielle continued. "This book is called *Blue Like Jazz* and it was written by an atheist who went through a lot of doubt and questioning about Christianity and hypocrisy..."

Danielle continued on, but my brain stopped there. Just about a month ago I was in a bookstore in Oklahoma, saw *Blue Like Jazz* and bought it absent mindedly, sort of an impulse buy. Since Oklahoma it had stayed unread, packed away in my suitcase. In that moment while Danielle was talking to Alma, I felt the Lord tell me to give Alma the book

Jumping back into the conversation, I told Alma that I had a copy of *Blue Like Jazz* and that I wanted to give it to her. I rushed to the trailer, fumbled through my suitcase and found it with the receipt still in the front jacket. I raced back to meet her and said, "Here you go."

"Are you serious?" she asked. "You guys are for real. You really believe this stuff."

I handed her the book and said, "Do you realize that, like, eight thousand years ago God knew and planned that we'd meet each other and have this conversation?"

"Sounds like He doesn't have too much free time scheduled in," she said sarcastically.

"Yea," I said. Then I looked into her brown eyes and said, "But you're worth it to Him."

The three of us hugged and I thanked her for the conversation, letting her know that we would be praying for her. I hated leaving, but knew that God was going with her where I could not...

It is interesting..."alma" is the Spanish word for "soul, spirit, and or heart of a person." What a beautiful coincidence that while Alma is trying to find truth, our Jesus is preparing her soul for His presence. I pray that Alma will come to know the deep love her Heavenly Father has for her. He created her and will meet her where she is...

For she is in His care.

Date: 11/2/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

11/2/07 San Francisco, CA

So give us the grace to change the whole world.

No one too lost for me to love

No one too low for me to serve...

- *"The Face of Love" by Sanctus Real*



Rachel Ringlaben

He told me his name was "Wolf" when I introduced myself to him on the street by his bicycle. He was part of the *Grateful Dead* scene years ago and had moved out to San Francisco in the sixties. All I had were a couple of quarters in my pocket, but I gave them with a smile as I made my way back to where the team was walking. As the day went on I forgot about my encounter with Wolf...

While walking along the bay in San Francisco, my mind was on trolley cars, clam chowder and the Golden Gate Bridge. Our team was being guided by Mark, who had served on *Rainbow of Promise* to India in 2004, and we were enjoying the time to be tourists. Like in every major city, San Francisco has a high homeless population, but I didn't want to focus on that...I wanted this afternoon to be my "day off."

After an afternoon of site-seeing, clam chowder tasting, and subway riding, I was exhausted and wanted to head back to our host homes...pronto. My feet hurt, I was cold, and I was not in the mood to be gracious. I was in the mood for a foot soak and a back massage...

I was focused on sitting down and resting my feet, but God had different plans...He tends to do that. As our team walked to catch the next trolley car I passed by Wolf again. He was now sitting on the sidewalk by his bike with his head down and his arms folded across his chest to protect himself from the cool breeze coming in off of the bay. On my left was this man, on my right was a Starbucks, and in front of me was the precious trolley I'd been aching for...

I jerked around, touched Wolf on the shoulder and asked him if I could buy him something to eat from Starbucks. "Sure!" he said, "But they won't let me come in, they'll kick me out."

"Well, you wait here and I'll get you something, ok?" I said as I walked into Starbucks.

I ordered two toasted sandwiches and a bottle of water. While waiting for the order to come up, I wrote a message to Wolf on a napkin. I knew that my teammates were getting anxious about missing the trolley, but I knew that this was where I needed to be. Danielle came into Starbucks to find me and said tenderly, "We're waiting for you." She pointed to the sign in front of us that said "Today's special blend: Kindred Spirit." We looked at each other and giggled.

I picked up my order and the two of us walked back outside into the chilly night towards Wolf. I knelt down by him and handed the two warm sandwiches and bottle of water. "Thank you," he said as he looked in my eyes. "It is my pleasure. It was so nice meeting you," I said and I handed him the napkin where I had written this message:

This food will perish, but the word of the Lord will not. And He says that that you are worth it and that He loves you. I pray that you feel loved tonight in this gift, because you are worth it. It was a pleasure meeting you. You are in my prayers.

- A fellow traveler like yourself

I took his hand and said, "I want you to know that God loves you, ok?"

"Thank you," Wolf replied, "God bless you."

I walked ahead to join my group...we had missed the trolley and had to wait for the next one. But it didn't matter anymore. If I had to wait another 20 minutes so Wolf could get something to eat, so be it. And my teammates were happy to oblige.

I pray that Wolf got a glimpse of Jesus tonight. I know I got a glimpse of my Savior today in the face of one of His children, Wolf.

Date: 11/11/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Finding Purpose

We had to get from California to North Dakota in less than a week. We had consecutive drive days of 10, 8, and then 6 hours. We were exhausted and frustrated by the lack of "ministry" that we were able to do. We would arrive, eat, and then sleep. Only to stare at the white or yellow lines on the road once again.



When we made it to Billings, Montana, on Saturday, we were excited to have something **Danielle Hance** to do again. We would get to sing special music and lead Sunday School opening the next morning. Hallelujah!

Saturday night was very laid back. We watched the University of Montana-Missoula Grizzlies with our hosts, the pastor and his wife, who were both graduates of that school. We ate supper, rehearsed, and watched Star Wars. We really didn't feel like we did anything.

I was able to talk to the pastor that night about his ministry. He told me about the devotions that he wrote and e-mailed every morning (usually at about 5 a.m., much too early for my taste). It started as a ministry to his daughter, who was undergoing trials of faith. Now it reaches more people than the pastor had ever imagined.

Our ministry on Sunday morning went well. We had a lot of fun and felt like we did something significant. But the majority of our ministry happened before we stepped foot in the church. The pastor mentioned to the congregation that we had watched Grizzlies football with him and how much fun he had with us. Over lunch, he told us that he had written his morning devotion about us.

Here is what he wrote about us:

Check out Luke 9:1-6.

Our guests arrived in the late afternoon as we expected. We had received a request a couple of days ago to house some members of a Youth Encounter team. They are traveling the country, sharing the good news of the gospel of Jesus.

I am struck by the boldness of their calling. The five travel in a van and pull a trailer, so it isn't as though they have no bag or anything as Jesus sent his disciples. But they do live pretty minimally.

And they are dependent upon the hospitality of strangers from night to night. I wonder how comfortable I would be, going from house to house as they do.

Yet they come in the power of the Lord. They were gracious guests and we tried to be gracious hosts. And they will leave here having accomplished that for which Christ sent them. They will sing the good news and show the power of God. And we will have been blessed by their presence, for if God is with them, then God through them has been with us.

Lord, let us be faithful in our witness and bold in our proclamation that you are salvation. Amen

I was so humbled by the words the pastor wrote. It reminded me of what I already knew but needed to validate: God uses every situation we are in for His ministry. Romans 8:28 reads, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Every moment of my life is a calling. I may have thought I was signing up for a music group when I applied for this ministry, but now I truly understand why we are called a relational ministry. Every moment has a purpose.

Date: 11/21/2007

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

"Why not Minot?" A phrase commonly heard about our current location. We are in Minot, North Dakota. The change in temperature has been a bit of a shock to what we've been used to. We were in California and Arizona for over a month and switched from wearing shorts and t-shirts to wearing scarves and hats in about two days!! We covered about 2500 miles in four days, traveling from Monterey, California to Montana. We recently led a lock-in in Hazen, North Dakota, where I was reminded again of what it's like to be in junior high and high school. We led sing-alongs, played lots of games (including the ever so popular YE game "Sardines"), and had a good time of fellowship. The next day we led a worship service, and that evening we led a full evening program. We had our day off in Hazen, North Dakota where we were able to sleep in, relax, spend time with our host sister, and enjoy a hot tub! I highly enjoyed the room I was staying in...it was completely decorated in John Deere and had a treadmill.



Kami Kimmel

While in Minot, we've been able to enjoy a little taste of home. We're staying with Danielle's family, and we'll also be here for Thanksgiving. We've been introduced to hot dishes (also known as casseroles in the Midwest) and lefse! It has also snowed already. Being from Colombia, Ludvigs has never experienced cold or snow like this before. He's also never celebrated Thanksgiving before since it is an American holiday. It is fun to share these new experiences with him!

This is my first time being away from my family and home for a major holiday. It is difficult to be away from the ones I love so much, but at the same time, I am realizing what a blessing this new Kindred family is in my life! I am grateful for each one of them and for the different things we each bring to the team. Though at the beginning it was difficult, we've learned how to celebrate our differences and how to use them to benefit the ministry and the team. This year on team I have learned how to trust that God will truly provide for me every day of my life, and I am thankful for how he has provided for me and my teammates!

Happy Thanksgiving!!

Date: 11/22/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Thanksgiving

When I found out this summer that my team would be at my house in Minot, North Dakota over Thanksgiving, I was really excited. I had been told that I would only be home for Christmas, so an extra holiday was a bonus. I was a little disappointed that we would only be doing Thanksgiving worship at my church; a lot of my congregation would be out of town, including my pastor.



I realized what a blessing "home" is during the time that I've been here. Minot is called the "Magic City," and it has lived up to its name during the time we've been here. My uncle took our new team pictures. One of our congregation members made a recording of us, so that we will have something to give to the people in South America. My grandma sewed up a storm, making my teammates' clothes usable again (we were especially glad that Ronnie's khakis got fixed, so that we wouldn't know every day what color boxers he was wearing). My mom resurrected Kami's computer, which had been unusable for at least a month. My parents found a new Bible study for Rachel to use. My mom also made sure that everyone had winter jackets, hats, and mittens.

Danielle Hance

What I was most blessed by was not all of the services we received (although they were amazing), but it was the time that I ministered to and was ministered to by my family, my biological family, my church family, and my Kindred family. We got to sing old-time hymns for my grandparents and the "Forever Young" seniors group at my church. We led Thanksgiving worship and even made up a new puppet show about five leprosy puppets. I got to introduce my teammates to hot dish and make them eat lefse. I got to watch Ronnie and my brother duke it out playing "Guitar Hero III." I watched my dad beat Ludvigs at ping-pong. I got to have late-night conversations with my friend, Sarah, who came to visit me. Rachel and I soaked in the hot tub in the snow. I got to help my mom make Thanksgiving dinner. I watched home videos with Kami. Although I may never live at home again, I have realized how much impact home has had on me. My family has demonstrated servant-heartedness. My congregation spiritually supports me. Without that in my life, I wouldn't be on this journey with my new family, Kindred.

Date: 11/27/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Broken

"The sacrifices of God are a **broken** spirit; a **broken and contrite heart**, O God, you will not despise." Psalm 51:17



Danielle Hance

As cold and flu season is upon us, I have been battling my fair share of colds. Ironically, the last two times we have had full programs, in Hazen, ND and Warroad, MN, my voice has been going. I only sing lead on one song, "Broken," which fortunately comes early in the program. So I have been half-singing and lip-synching the first few songs and doing my best to engage the congregation in worship.

When it comes time for "Broken," I say a few prayers and hope I will be able to sing higher than D (which is usually pretty easy for me to hit, but not lately). I start to sing and the first few lines are missing every other word because the high notes won't come out. By the time I get to, "I'm falling apart. I'm barely breathing," I am really embracing the words because that's the way I am feeling. I am praying that I will have enough voice to make it through the song and that my newfound gritty, I-sound-like-I've-smoked-one-pack-too-many-voice (even though I have never smoked in my life) will speak to the brokenness of the songs. I hope that maybe I sound like the pictures—depressing

pictures of a little boy dying, of a man without a home, of desperation.

It's been in these worst performances that I sing the words like I mean them. It is all I have left. And my "all I have left" has been blessed so much. I won't die from complications of the common cold. I have access to cough drops. I can afford health care. I don't worry that my teammates won't have enough to eat, or that I might lose a friend to starvation.

Ironically, in my sickness, I have received the most comments about my "beautiful voice." But I know it is not me at all. It is God. He's been the only one who can get me through these performances. I've had the choice to either wallow in self-pity or trust that God can use me to portray His message. God has exceeded my expectations of the way He uses me, a broken person, a sinner in need of His constant grace.

Date: 12/3/2007

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

*My soul, wait only upon God and **silently submit to Him**; for my hope and expectation are from Him. He only is my Rock and my Salvation; He is my Defense and my Fortress, I shall not be moved. – Psalm 62:5-6*

These past few weeks have been quite tiring. Long drives, early mornings, and plenty of ministry opportunities--I don't regret a minute of it. However, I have been feeling like my cup has run dry and I don't have anything left to give--my throat is sore, I have a cold, I am tired, and I miss my family. But in this state of feeling "useless," God has spoken words of joy and liberation over me.



Rachel Ringlaben

We sing and talk about brokenness and healing in our program. I am realizing the reality of this brokenness-to-healing process every day on tour. God is a god who is in love with broken hearts. He finds pleasure in healing and bestowing compassion. And I thank Him for that. My Abba never fails me. In my feelings of restlessness, loneliness, inadequacy, and anxiety, He comes to me and speaks joy over me. He reminds me that I am "more than a conqueror through Him who loved me." (Romans 8:37)

God is teaching me to surrender--to surrender my heart, soul, mind, and strength. Daily I am faced with the reminders of my own limitations, but it is when I realize my limitations and submit them to Him that God works marvels in, through, and around me. When I realize that all I have is His, I am able to worship without hindrances. When I let my guard down so that others may see my raw humanity and my clinging to Jesus in all things, that is when I see miracles happen in this ministry.

"Hear, O daughter, consider, submit, and consent to my instruction...because He is your Lord, be submissive and reverence and honor Him." – Psalm 45:10

Oh, Father, be patient with me as I daily learn to surrender. Abba, continue the work You have started in me.

Date: 12/5/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

"It isn't worth it!"

No parent wants to find their child in a correctional facility. Most of the boys at Salem Boys Ranch, where we ministered last week, come from homes where parents are really trying. The common factor for most of the boys is distant, abusive, or absent fathers, I was told by the director.



We moved in our equipment, and a skinny boy with a tan complexion and on-the-verge-of-afro hair offered to help us. Despite his rollerblades, he still was able to move amplifiers in with ease. I was impressed by his willingness to help and thanked him. When we moved into our accommodations for the night, we were warned that many of the boys were "lost" and that the most well-behaved boys were at a volleyball game. We **Danielle Hance** prayed with the staff member right then and there. Later, I understood why.

Right as we were about to pray for our dinner, one of the boys asked to use the bathroom. The director asked him to pray instead. He was defiant and rude, but in the end, he prayed. We ate dinner with the boys, and they trash-talked about all of the other boys. Two boys were on the run. One had returned, but the other was still out there. The boys talked of flood lights, search teams and helicopters.

They were angry but talked of running themselves. Maybe when they were at a home visit, they wouldn't come back. Nothing was fair. They didn't need to be here. Some boys needed to serve "hard time." Some were sissies. "Juvie" [juvenile] hall would be better because the beds were comfortable, and no one would make them do anything. At the ranch, boys have responsibilities. They scoop horse manure, care for the horses, go to school, attend chapel, and have devotional time in their cottages. And despite what the boys told me, the staff there love and care for them; some of them just don't know how much they need tough love.

That night's program was difficult but beautiful. The boys listened intently when Rachel and Ronnie shared. I hoped that they could identify with parts of their stories. At various times during the program, boys would act off and be reprimanded. But what I held onto was that, at one time or another, each and every boy was paying us his full attention.

The next morning, we did a devotion with a couple of the staff. We found out that the runaway had returned. Surprisingly, the runaway was the boy who had helped us move in our equipment. The staff told me that he was a frequent runaway. This time, he only walked out, with only a blanket. He came back and sat in his cottage. He asked his dorm dad, "Why did you think I came back?"

"Because you were cold," the dorm dad replied.

"No, I knew it wasn't worth it," he said, giving in.

I wonder if those boys get tired of running from God. If eventually they realize that someone loves them. That it's not worth it to try to run from God. He will keep finding us and bringing us back home.

Date: 12/9/2007

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

On the Streets of Chicago

It had been a frustrating night in Chicago. We arrived that afternoon to Millenium Park, but soon realized that there was nowhere to park. A close encounter with a parking garage proved that we were too big to park anywhere easily. We cruised Lakeshore Drive and Michigan Avenue at least ten times each, in search of above ground parking that apparently did not exist. Eventually, Ludvigs and I dropped off our other three teammates at Millenium Park for a quick tourist trip before searching for Chicago pizza.



Luckily, we found some above-ground parking for 25 dollars (which didn't matter at this point). After so much frustration, we ordered a ton of deep dish at Pizzeria Due. I was pretty excited about my Spinoccoli (pronounced "Spin-ah-koli" not "Spin-o-koli"; the waiter corrected my mispronunciation), a combination of spinach and broccoli. We eagerly consumed our pizza but realized that our pizza pans were larger than our stomachs could handle. We could feel the thick bread rapidly expanding in our stomachs.

Before we left, Ronnie asked our waiter, Anthony, how we could pray for him. Anthony, pulled up a chair, and told us that he had a job interview for an after-school program the next day and that he was planning to propose to his girlfriend of six years in the near future. We wished him luck and offered him our prayers.

We left the restaurant with four to-go boxes of left-over pizza in a plastic bag. As we stepped outside, a boy on a black bike stopped us. "Can I perform a poem for you all?"

He then recited a poem he had written about his mom who was a drug addict and prostitute. He talked about taking care of his little sisters and his struggles. We gave him our pizza, and I told him to keep writing poetry (since I am a poet myself).

We walked back to our van, throwing snowballs at each other. The fresh, damp snow was perfect for snowballs. Whenever someone would "whoop," there would be an unexpected echo.

We got back to the parking lot, and Kami took pictures of us continuing our snowball fight. The parking lot attendant walked over and asked where we were from. I told him where we were from and asked him more about himself. It turns out, my new friend, Neja was an Iraqi immigrant, who had only been in the United States for a few months. He had come from Southern Iraq, not far from Baghdad. This was his first snow. I asked him if there was anything I could pray for him for, and he said no. He asked if he could take a picture of us (with Kami's camera), and then he asked if he could be in a picture. After the pictures, we exchanged handshakes and hugs. Neja began to walk away. "Have you ever been in a snowball fight?" I asked him. He said no.

I picked up some wet snow from the parking lot, formed a ball and threw it at him. It missed. I tried a second time and hit him. He smiled, and we waved goodbye. "Now you have had your first snowball fight," I yelled at him. In the span of ten minutes, we had four "chance" encounters with these amazing people. Please pray for them.

Date: 1/12/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

We're here! Thank you for all the prayers for our travels! We arrived in Guayaquil last night, where it was very hot! I got my first mosquito bites, and they were huge! I was eternally grateful that I have malaria medication. Today we traveled to Cuenca, where we will be for about a month. I am relieved to be staying with one family for the entire time. We will be working with churches and with schools here in Cuenca. It's beautiful here, and we traveled through the Andes today to get here. I will write a longer journal when I get the chance, but I don't want to keep my host brother waiting. Thanks for your prayers, everybody!



Date: 1/12/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

Seeing Christ in Cuenca

After spending the night in Guayaquil on the 11th, which was SO humid, we took a bus ride to Cuenca on Saturday. I tried to sleep on the bus, but the sights were too amazing. The flora and vegetation is so green here. Guayaquil is by the ocean and Cuenca is in the Andes mountains, so we got to experience two different climates in one day. The bus made its way by jungles, forests, mountains, waterfalls, lagoons, llamas, straw huts, plantain trees, mist, rain, fog, and *campesinos* working in the fields. The road twisted and turned as we made our way up the mountains--I had to close my eyes a few times!



Danielle Hance

Rachel Ringlaben

We arrived in Cuenca a little after one and met our contact, Milton, who is part of the Lutheran Church in Ecuador (FIEL) and also teaches at the bilingual school where we'll be doing a lot of programs. It turns out we'll be in Cuenca a little over a month! Milton took us to eat arroz con pollo, platanos, sopa, and frijoles. It has been great using Spanish again, but I realize that I've gotten a little rusty in the past four months on the road in the States.

I took a taxi to my host mom's house in Cuenca. Her name is Mariana, and she is so precious! Her house is cute and she has plants everywhere, so it is like I'm in the jungle when I walk through her breezeway. She took me up to the patio on the third floor to see the amazing view of the city of Cuenca. After Mariana took me on a grand tour of her house, she told me to go to my room and rest until dinner...I was happy to oblige.

During dinner, we talked about our families, church, college, pets, etc. Then I got bold and asked her if her husband was still alive because she had mentioned him before, but he was not in the house. She shifted her eyes down at her mug of tea and said that they were separated. Tears began to fall down her cheeks. I took her by the hand and told her I was sorry for bringing it up and that I was sorry about her current situation. She looked at me with tear-filled eyes and said, "Gracias." There was a brief pause and then she began to tell me how it happened. She explained all the different emotions she was feeling and her struggle to forgive her husband. With every word she spoke, I could see and feel the pain she has in her heart. I am so humbled by her faith in God. She kept saying, "Gracias a Dios por ____" whatever was going well for her.

When she was finished speaking, I took her by the hand and told her that I know how hard it is to have a family split into two pieces because my parents are divorced. I told her that what has happened to her is horrible and I know how awful it feels when it is a family member that is the cause of the pain you have inside, but I also know that God is faithful. She looked at me and said, "Si, gracias a Dios."

After dinner, Mariana called me into her room and showed me jewelry she makes as a hobby. She pulled me over to the bed and dumped a blue shopping bag she was holding off the comforter--bunches of little bags of beads fell out. She squealed with excitement as she showed me each kind of bead she bought in Peru (where her daughter is a missionary). She had such joy in her voice as she talked about her hobby. After examining the beads, she handed me a bracelet made out of wood and said, "Quiero dártelo, Raquel." I accepted her gift with gratitude and hugged her. She then showed me her new outfit and I felt like her own daughter as she asked me to help her pick

out which necklace would go best with the suit.

I am so grateful to be here with Mariana. There is so much I can learn from her. And she's patient with my rusty Spanish. She's shown me love without merit, and I am so blessed to receive it. I pray that God would allow us to minister to each other during my stay here. I pray that she would find comfort in her Abba Father during this time of hurt and loneliness. I look forward to getting to know Mariana better and to see what God has in store for the both of us.

En Cristo,
Rachel (or Raquel) Ringlaben

Date: 1/13/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

¡Que chévere!

Today the five of us took a bus to Paute, Ecuador to la iglesia *El Justo Por La Fe Vivirá* (The Righteous Shall Live By Faith). We arrived at 10:00 to set up, tune, and pray before the service at 10:30. Our contact, Marcelo, was so excited to have us there. I loved singing with the small congregation in the sanctuary that was about as small as my living room at home. "Renuevame" is one of my new favorite songs, and we sang it for confession and absolution. During the puppet show I couldn't remember the Spanish word for "loud," so Ludvigs whispered "*fuerte!*" and I was able to continue my dialogue with Fluffy Duck. Then, when I was teaching *Danzo Como David*, I said, "Levanta, please...uh...por favor." We all laughed and continued to sing and dance. During the song, two young men in soccer jerseys walked by the church, heard the music, looked through the door, and then came to stand at the back of the church! They left during Ludvigs' benediction, but I pray that they saw the Spirit of God in us all!



Rachel Ringlaben

After the service, we all chatted with the parishioners and handed out some CDs we recorded in Minot in the fall. One woman came up to me and said, "*Tu voz es muy linda,*" which means "Your voice is so pretty!" The two of us talked about how it was our group's first visit to Ecuador and how Ronnie and I were excited about trying the food, especially cuy (wild guinea pig which is eaten in the southern parts of Ecuador). A huge smile spread across her face, and she said that she wanted us to go to a Lutheran retreat center nearby and she'd fix cuy for us! We agreed.

Marcelo took us on a grand tour of Paute which required about two hours of walking. We went to the mercado and tried fresh guava, plum, zapote (a cross between pumpkin and cantaloupe), and plantains. *¡Que delicioso!* We walked through the park where there were many families out playing soccer, eating, and relaxing. We then walked along the river and made our way to the retreat center where we ate well. *¡Fue un banquete!* We had fresh squeezed tomato juice, potato soup, chicken, rice, beans, plantains, peaches, and ...cuy! Ludvigs, Ronnie, Danielle, and I tried it. There wasn't much meat on it, and it had the texture of squishy, sticky, dark chicken meat. It was not my favorite, but at least I can say that I tried wild guinea pig in Ecuador!

The bus ride back to Cuenca was quite pleasant because of the views from the bus: mountains, rivers, trees, waterfalls. I returned with Mariana to go shopping, and we hiked back up the steep hill to her house. We exchanged stories over dinner about our pets (she used to have a pet monkey!) and how they get into human things such as dentures, retainers, bottles of liquor.

After the meal, I went upstairs and I could hear her singing praise songs. Later she told me that she may not have the most beautiful voice, but she sings with her heart and her mind; singing lifts her spirits.

This day was a gift and I thank my Father for giving it to me.

Date: 1/16/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

1/12/08 The bus trip from Guayaquil to Cuenca

This is a bit of poetry (or rather fragmented thoughts) of what my senses experienced on our first bus trip in Ecuador, traveling from the coast into the mountains.

Green everywhere.
Thick, sticky air
replenishing our
dry, Minnesota skin.
We're hot from walking through
the terminal with our luggage.
I roll up my pants and open
the bus window beside me.

The smell of gasoline
reminds me of Mexico.
A cow lies on the
side of the road.
Small 3-walled shacks
with tin roofs.
Banana trees everywhere.

Houses on stilts.
Cool mountain air
whips my face from the bus window.

Un rio pequeno
rice fields?
A man stands with
a shovel.
In the distance,
mountains peeking
out of the fog.

Smell of rain.
Black highway
with a film of rain.
A herd of cows
on the shoulder
led by a man on a horse.

Stopped at the gasolinera,
I can hear a man sing
on the radio.
The falling mist
almost looks like snow,



Danielle Hance

but lands like a dusty rain.

A chicken wanders and pecks
in the parking lot.
The gasoline worker in a
mocking yellow shirt with
a blue collar, blue pants,
and blue cap, walks past
my open window, diciendo,
"Hola, how are you, baby?"
I remember I am a "gringa,"
a white girl.

A man with long, green guava
slung over his shoulder
trieds to sell some to me.

I try to sleep,
but vendors hop on
selling papitas rellenas
and so many things.
The smells pierce a
hole in my stomach.

The vendors leave.
Car horns honk.
I sleep a bit and
wake on a windy,
mountain road.
I'm surrounded by
mountains with adobe
red soil and green vines
and toothpick trees.

Fog is thick but
not impermeable
like a thin bed sheet.
It reminds me of the
mist on the Amazon Trail.
I hope our driver can see.

A little waterfall streams
down the mountain like
a rope.

Looking up. I see
a wooden guardrail
that's been smashed through.
I'm happy to be on this road
not that one.

My ears pop from altitude change.
The mist wind makes goosebumps
on my arms.
A tinyt puddle of condensation and dirt
tries desperately to stay on the sill of
my window.

I froze trying to nap and
put the curtain across
my open window.

When I wake up,
everything is clear.
The sky is blue.
The air is cool
and light green pasture
grass covers the mountains.

The air smells clean,
and there is a little warmth
like late spring air.

The puddles on the sill are dry,
but the hair on the nape of my neck
is still wet.

The Andes are beautiful.
Ten shades of green, rock,
circles of water.

I was just 10 feet from a white llama
outside my window.
Where was my camera?

The music on the radio has
the beat of La Bomba
with accordians.

I spot an occasional family
in the mountains.
A few animals.
Clothes hanging on the line,
a huge black caldron.

A man and a boy ride horses
in the median.
A lady with a neon orange skirt,
a indiginous lady, walks with a man
on the other side.

We are in the city, Cuenca.
Wood is piled.
Half-constructed brick buildings.
Again the smell of gasoline and comida.

A whole soccer team in blue jerseys
on the back of a pickup truck.
Lots of old beat-up cars
and SUVs.
Some fixed with duct tape.
We're here.

It has been 5 days in ECUADOR and it is nice, the first day we were in GUAYAQUIL, a very big city and very hot. Then we went to CUENCA by bus and the landscape was beautiful. That remind me a lot my country.

The time with the kids at the school is great, they like a lot the music, puppet shows, skits and interactive bible stories. Also we talk before the program and when we have time during break between classes.

Another great story was going to PAUTE; we walk a lot, like 2.5 miles, first going down hill and then up hill... and also we had fruit from this region, and for lunch we had CUY (guinea pig), and I like it...



So far everything is going good, I hope all the time is going to be like this. We have **Ludvigs Ayala Porras** 2 programs every day and all is going good and it is going to be like that all this month. To my friends in Colombia, I will be there in 1 month and 3 weeks, so see you soon.

Date: 1/16/2008

Submitted by: Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Journal Entry:

Han sido ya 5 días en ECUADOR y es muy bonito, el primer día llegamos a GUAYAQUIL, una ciudad grande y muy caliente. Después, al siguiente día, nos fuimos a CUENCA en bus y el paisaje es muy bonito. Eso me recordó mucho a mi país.



Ludvigs Ayala Porras

El tiempo que pasamos con los niños en la escuela es muy chévere, les gusta mucho la música, show de títeres y las historias bíblicas interactivas. También hablamos antes de cada programa con ellos y cuando ellos tienen la hora de descanso.

Otra historia fue cuando fuimos a PAUTE; caminamos cerca de 4 kilómetros, primero bajamos al río y después subimos a un campamento donde comimos CUY, a mí me gustó mucho, no sabe a pollo por si quieren saber.

Hasta ahora todo ha estado muy bien y espero que todo siga así. Tenemos 2 programas cada día todo va bien y vamos a seguir así por lo menos este mes. A mis amigos de Colombia les digo que vamos allá en 1 mes y 3 semanas... nos vemos pronto.

Date: 1/16/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

***"Muriendo cada dia para verte en mi
Llenas mis espacio llenas mi vida
Me iluminaste como el sol
Quiero que crescas y todos los dias
Ser un reflejo de tu amor"***

-- *Mi Entorno* by Jesús Adrian Romero



Rachel Ringlaben

We all met at the Escuela Bilingüe at 8:00 to prepare for our program for fifth and forth graders. It was so surreal because the kids would run up to us and ask for our autographs in their notebooks, Bibles, graded homework, and on their shirts! I kept thinking, "Who am I to receive such esteem? I pray that they remember us as Christ's servants, not rock stars." Something I absolutely love is hearing kids yell out, "iKindred!" and then waving at us. I think, "Yea, we are a family and I love it." I pray that the children see us as a group of brothers and sisters in Christ. When they yell out "Kindred!" it reminds me that is where my identity lies this year – not being individualistic, but putting the needs of our ministry as a team before the needs of "Raquel."

After lunch Ronnie, Ludvigs, and I went to some Incan ruins and a museum near by. It was a lot of fun seeing things I had studied last year in college. We got to walk outside the ruins of the canals, baths, pyramids, and houses. Then we walked down to the gardens where there were hundreds of indigenous plants, crops, and flowers! It was a great way to satisfy the history nerd in me. I went home to Mariana's and watched tv with her while I wrote in my journal and she made some jewelry. At dinner she told me, "Yo doy gracias a Dios que estás aquí conmigo." Which means, "I thank God that you are here with me."

Again, I give thanks to Christ for putting me with her. I'm so excited to be here in Cuenca, but I do miss home and friends at times – mostly to share this experience with them. And I know that I am changing everyday on this journey on team. I continue to pray that God will stretch my faith and help me become more Kingdom-focused. I pray for my teammates and myself and that Christ would keep molding us into His disciples – that we would grow in love towards one another. I pray that God would be with us and show us how to best serve Him here in Cuenca.

Date: 1/16/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

Cuenca, Ecuador

This has been quite a week! Here we are in Ecuador after what seemed like an endless week of preparation. It has been an adventure so far. As soon as we landed I forgot my passport on the plane, but fortunately the staff helped me retrieve it. Too bad my Spanish seemed to disappear as the guard was asking me questions. Fortunately he finally figured out which seat I was in and they brought it to me. And to think I might not have been able to get in to the country after spending the whole day flying and changing planes.



Ronnie Melin

Since we've been here, I've been enjoying the food immensely. I thought I would, and I have not been disappointed. Hot milk on cereal is a little weird, though. The most interesting thing I've had so far is cui, that's the word around here for guinea pig. It's a traditional dish in the Andes, so we thought we'd give it a try. Not bad-and Ludvigs loved it!

This week we've been doing programs for the kids at a local bilingual school. Ludvigs and I have been catching the school bus in the morning to get there! We are like rock stars to the kids, so we have to sign autographs all the time-on notebooks, sheets of paper, bibles, faces, arms, even graded math homework! It has been "chevere" (that means cool) and I can't wait to go back tomorrow for our last programs there!

-Ronnie.

Date: 1/17/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Cuenca, a beautiful city in the mountains. "Is it hot?" a question I've been asked by people back in the states. Contrary to popular belief, not all of South America is 100 degrees. Like the U.S. there are mountainous regions where it is cooler (like Cuenca), regions that are hot and humid, rainy places, dry places, etc.



Kami Kimmel

What do I see-a beautiful river flowing close by my host home, random farm animals in front yards in the middle of the city, chickens crossing the road (literally), stray dogs in the park, tropical fruit in the market, roses on my night stand that are white with pink around the edges, the moon is upside down, a pet monkey in my host home that hasn't warmed up to me yet, tropical trees such as plantains, cocoa, mango; beautiful children, crazy driving, beautiful green mountains, gated houses.

What do I hear- lots of Spanish that I only understand a little of, roosters crowing next door at 5:30 am, firecrackers going off randomly for "carnival" (which can be equated to the same thing as Mardi Gras in the U.S.), the high pitched squeaks of the pet monkey, the coming and going of friends and fellow missionaries at the host home I'm in, car alarms going off, How Great Thou Art in Spanish, and other amazing Spanish songs of praise. Currently I am listening to Love Song For a Savior by Jars of Clay.

What do i taste/smell-homemade juice, the best pineapple juice i've ever had, the most amazing fruit I've ever put my lips on, homemade peanut butter, homemade wheat bread, the delicious scent of fresh tomatoes, ketchup that has a bit of a sweeter taste than the U.S.

Culture Notes from my journal

- pedestrians don't have the right of way.
- Ecuador is the largest banana export in the world.
- we tried guava and a fruit that is a combo between pumpkin and canteloupe--odd texture but good flavor.
- indigenous women wear bright colored wool skirts, colored shirts with a shawl, hair in braids and a hat.
- many people make their living by farming or selling things
- we were offered cui (guinea pig) on Sunday, only our second full day here, but I didn't take it because it was a social situation where it wasn't required. I'll save that adventure for when I don't have a choice in the matter! My teammates all tried it.
- don't flush toilet paper. Flush your business and throw the toilet paper away in the trash.
- I'm going by Camilla here (even though Kami is really my full name), but I spell it Kamila because the double l's are a ja sound in Spanish. It's a name the people here are more familiar with. Kami is hard for them to say.
- Indigenous people can be differentiated into which tribe they belong to by the type of hat they wear.
- people here call the U.S. "the states".
- Faucets in sinks have an "f" and "c" instead of "H and C" like we have in the U.S. F is frio, meaning cold and C is calor, meaning hot.
- Yogurt is all drinkable here-not eaten with a spoon.
- There are a lot of roadside chicken and hog stands ie restaurants. the chicken is rotissary chicken and the hogs are cooked on a sort of open grill.
- don't eat produce fresh from the market because it isn't rinsed. We ate some on Sunday the 13th without knowing this. Oh well....HAKUNA MATAT!! (no one has gotten sick.....yet.)

mucho amor,

Kami

Date: 1/17/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Observations from day 1:

Mosquitos do exist in Ecuador. The first night, I had a monstrous bite on my arm and was thankful that I had malaria medication.

The only observable rule in Ecuadorian driving is that there are no rules. Cars frequently enter oncoming traffic. A red light means go at your own risk. A stop sign means go right ahead. Our driver told us that who ever drives faster has the right of way.



Danielle Hance

Date: 1/21/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

A brief introduction to my host family:

I'm staying in the north part of Cuenca, in the hills. My neighbors include a couple of cows and a corn field, even though there are many houses on the street where I live. It is interesting to see the mixing of rural and urban here in Cuenca. Rachel has even seen cows and sheep in the playground.



Danielle Hance

My host dad, Patricio is a former Kindred member. He was on Kindred in '84-'85 (the year I was born). He was the first international team member (or maybe the first from South America). Ironically, his first trip to the United States was to Fargo, North Dakota (North Dakota is my home state.). Patricio's wife, Marilou, works at a dentist's office.

They have three children. David is 17. He plays drums and guitar and would like to be on the next Kindred team to this area in three years. Pedro is 13. He is the quietest and most easy going family member. Anita is 7. She has a ton of energy and sees me as her older sister. We spend a lot of time together reading books, playing games, and watching TV. She is learning English in school and likes to run around the house yelling "Que, que, que, practicamos inglés." (What, what, what, we practice English). She also does such random things as trying to catch flies with a hair clip and drinking lemon breath spray.

They have two pets, Bingo, the dog, and Pepito, the cat. The pets fight a lot and both beg for food at the kitchen table. Pepito has a habit of joining me in my bedroom at 5 a.m. and cleaning himself. I don't quite understand it! With so many family members, every day at my host home is an adventure! But I will have a lot of great stories to tell when I get back!

Date: 1/22/2008

Submitted by: Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Journal Entry:

In the last week I have been having a lot of great experiences. First I went to a museum, The UMAPUNGO ruins museum and there are a lot of things about the INCA culture in the Ecuadorian region. And they have a great garden also, with plants that they farm before the Spain colony. It was nice for me because it is very similar to the native cultures that lived in Colombia.



Ludvigs Ayala Porras

The programs with the kids at the school were very good, they liked a lot and they were very active and participative. Some of the most interesting things with those kids are that they were asking for autographs and giving as food and cards and things like that, and that is nice especially after a hard day of cultural shock.

On Sunday we had a nice time in a small church, Ronnie and me have to walk a lot to get there... well not too much the church is down stairs from our host home, we had a couple of songs before the scripture and more music and a puppet show after the sermon, everything was good. That same day we had lunch together with our contact in CUENCA and his family and also with a KINDRED alumni her name is ISABEL she was on KINDRED like 15 years ago.

On Monday we had a small devotion in front of all the High School and we were only 3 because Kami was sick and Rachel was on a traffic jam. We had 2 programs that day with 8th and 9th grade, the first one was not very good, they were very shy and they don't sing along very much, but with 9th was the best, they were very active and they like a lot the program. And something nice, the High School pastor plays the drum set and is very good and he helps us with the program. I think that is all for now.

Date: 1/22/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

"en la vida espiritual, no hay vacaciones" - Pastor Jorge

I got the opportunity to give my testimony in Spanish yesterday and I could feel the Holy Spirit's presence all around me and all around the students listening. However, sometimes I get frustrated because I don't know ALL the words in Spanish that convey my thoughts or feelings. But I have faith that the Holy Spirit will equip my tongue, my mind and my heart when His Truth needs to be preached...

Surrendering to Your Spirit -
needing Your tongue of fire to speak for me.
I depend on the universal truth
of Your love -
of Your cross -
of Your sacrifice
to speak to broken hearts.
Confident in Your calling,
taking refuge in Your wisdom,
I stand in awe of Your power.
Thankful You've chosen me,
I stand in front of a sea of faces,
praying that my words are not falling on deaf ears.
Spirit, be my tongue.
Christ, be my hands.
Abba, be my heart.
I follow You -
trusting that You will equip me,
for You have called Your daughter -
here I am.
Spirit, be my voice.
Christ, be my witness.
Jehova, be my song.



Rachel Ringlaben

Date: 1/24/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Hello! Today is a beautiful day in Cuenca. What has this week looked like for Kindred? Every day we've done two programs for the high school students at the bilingual school. This week, the drummer from the church connected to the school joined our team. We also had microphones and a bass guitar. It was quite a different set up than Kindred is used to! Next week we'll be helping out with an English festival at the school, so today we are going around to classrooms teaching them the Star Spangled Banner, Grand Old Flag, America the Beautiful, and we've been making Uncle Sam style hats out of construction paper.



Kami Kimmel

We've had various sight seeing opportunities. This week Danielle and I went to a couple museums downtown with a group of college students from Trinity Lutheran in the state of Washington. One of the groups' leaders is the mom of a friend I met at camp this summer, so it was fun to have a connection from the U.S. in Ecuador!

This is the furthest and longest I've ever been away from home and without verbal contact from family and friends. It has been difficult, but I am growing from the experience. Every day I am being stretched and learning so much. I'm enjoying learning more about life in South America, and am trying to take everything in. My Spanish is progressing, sometimes a little too slowly for my liking. But I know it will come in time. My teammates all know Spanish fluently, and have been amazingly helpful to me! We are all growing closer together more and more every day, and it is beautiful to see changes that only God can bring. :)

Jesus te ama (Jesus loves you)

Kami Kimmel

Date: 1/26/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

We have been working at the bilingual school here for the last two weeks. Most days, we do two programs in the morning, starting with kindergarten and working our way up. Yesterday, we did programs for the oldest kids--those finishing high school. Pastor Victor gave us a totally electric set-up, and he played the drum set with us. The drum set was the last piece in making us the rock band Kindred, or Kinder, as we are sometimes called.



Danielle Hance

Rock band is not our focus, though. We really try to integrate a lot of faith into our programs with short sharings about our own faith journeys and reading Bible verses. We invite the kids to ask us questions about our faith afterwards, too. Even though the kids may enjoy the music more, faith hasn't turned them off. I have seen teenage girls wipe away tears as we sing "Renuevame," translated as "Renew me," a song about needing the heart of Jesus and needing him to clean us from the inside out. At the end, they all yell "Otra," literally meaning "other," but really equivalent to "encore."

After the last program yesterday, three girls came up who were interested in joining team. They had a great enthusiasm and reminded me that everything we do can be a testimony. Both of our hosts, Maria Jose from the elementary school, and Victor from the high school, prayed with us at the end of yesterday. They praised God for our testimony and prayed that God would continue to use our words and actions to affect the people here and around the world.

Date: 1/28/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

This weekend was full of adventure! On Saturday, our team did an outdoor program at a boy's prison here in Cuenca. The youth group from Paz de Dios came with us and helped encourage the boys to come and listen to what we had to say. Our message was the basics: who Christ is, why the cross, repentance, forgiveness, communion with God. I also got to give my testimony in Spanish - and I didn't even use my notes! I could feel the Holy Spirit speaking through me as I made eye contact with the boys who were prisoners there. It was amazing to see these young men quit playing basketball and come over to listen to me speak - actually, God speaking through me. After the program, we got a chance to speak with a lot of the prisoners and play games with them.



Rachel Ringlaben

On Sunday, we led worship at Iglesia Luterana de Nuestro Salvador and we ate at a past Kindred teamer from 1985! We all went to the Parque Paraiso, which was beautiful, and ate fresh fruit with helado! Yummy! Last night I ate at our contact's house and his wife taught me how to make fried platanos (plantains) which are my favorite thing to eat here. So I was able to perfect my cooking of South American cuisine!

I've been recently praying to witness God's miracles (great or small) in the lives of the people here in Cuenca. I have found solice in these verses from Psalm 77:10-14 -
Then I thought, "To this I will appeal:

the years of the right hand of the Most High."
I will remember the deeds of the LORD;
 yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.
I will meditate on all your works
 and consider all your mighty deeds.
Your ways, O God, are holy.
 What god is so great as our God?
You are the God who performs miracles;
 you display your power among the peoples.

I pray that God will open my eyes to see his wonders here in Ecuador. Let us praise to our God who is a God who performs miracles! Amen!

Date: 1/28/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

¡Este fin de semana fue una aventura! El sábado, nosotros hicimos un programa en una prisión masculina de menores en Cuenca. Los jóvenes de la Iglesia Paz de Dios nos acompañaron y animaron a los prisioneros a venir y escuchar. Nuestro mensaje fue básico: quien es Cristo, el por qué de la cruz, arrepentimiento, perdón y comunión con Dios. Yo di mi testimonio en español y ¡no usé mis notas! Pude sentir el Espíritu Santo que estaba hablando a través de mí mientras hacía contacto visual con los prisioneros. Era fantástico poder ver estos hombres como dejaban de jugar baloncesto para escucharme hablar – pues, Dios era quien hablaba por medio de mí.



Rachel Ringlaben

El domingo, dirigimos la alabanza en la Iglesia Luterana de Nuestro Salvador y ¡comimos con un señor que era parte de Kindred en 1985! Fuimos al Parque Paraíso, que es hermoso, y comimos fruta fresca con helado. ¡Yummy! Anoche, yo comí en la casa de Milton (nuestro contacto en Cuenca) y su esposa me enseñó a cocinar plátanos fritos, que es mi comida favorita aquí. Entonces, pude mejorar mi talento en cocinar recetas sudamericanas.

Recientemente he estado orando para poder ver los milagros (grandes o pequeños) de Dios. En las vidas de la gente que vive en Cuenca. He encontrado refugio en los siguientes versículos de los Salmos 77:10-14 -

Y me pongo a pensar: «Esto es lo que me duele:
que haya cambiado la diestra del Altísimo.»
Prefiero recordar las hazañas del SEÑOR,
traer a la memoria sus milagros de antaño.
Meditaré en todas tus proezas;
evocaré tus obras poderosas.

Santos, oh Dios, son tus caminos;
¿qué dios hay tan excelso como nuestro Dios?
Tú eres el Dios que realiza maravillas;
el que despliega su poder entre los pueblos.

Mi oración es que Dios abra mis ojos para ver sus maravillas aquí en Ecuador. ¡Alabemos a nuestro Dios quien es un Dios que hace maravillas! ¡Amen!

Date: 1/29/2008

Submitted by: Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Journal Entry:

One more week and everything is good, the time I have had at my host home is good, the friendship with Ronnie is growing because we have a lot of time to talk, and also the relationship with my teammates is growing because I can help them much more.



Ludvigs Ayala Porras

There are some things that make me happy, I start to jog 5 days ago and I am feeling very good. The park I go is very nice, the name is "el paraiso" (the paradise) and is surrounded by two rivers and is very peaceful.

Today we had the English Festival at the school and the theme was USA holidays, we sang the national anthem of United States and some patriotic songs, from USA, we had games and we had a great time with teacher and students.

Also some people remember the other KINDRED teams, especially KINRDED 04-05 and they send greetings to all of them. This weekend we are going to a family camp by the ocean and I think it is going to be a great time to do relational ministry, please pray for us.

Date: 2/1/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Finding my rhythm in South America.

I have had a difficult time finding where I fit in here. I don't know Spanish well, I've never traveled overseas before, and the instrument I played in the US, the keyboard, is not with us here in South America. Also, I had been staying with an American family, whereas all my teammates are with Ecuadorian families. A couple days ago, I picked up the djembe and started feeling how to play it, and for the first time ever played it well, and it was then that I found my rhythm of life where we are. I'm now with an Ecuadorian family. While I enjoyed my time with the American family, I am enjoying being immersed in the culture of Ecuador. I'm learning Spanish, and they are learning some English for me. We've had some frustrating moments of communication but all in all, we are learning a lot from each other and it has been amazing.



Kami Kimmel

Yesterday we went on our team outing and stopped at a city in the middle of the ride. We had a lot of fun at a parade going on there. Afterward Danielle and Rachel were trying on traditional skirts at a shop, and the owner had her two children in there with her. I made friends with one of the little boys. (Later in the day I found out his name was Jonathan.) At first he wouldn't talk to me, as much as I tried. I went outside to wait with Ronnie and Ludvigs, and opened some Doritos I had brought for a snack and offered some to them. Little Jonathan came out when I walked outside, and was watching me. I put some chips in my hand and offered him some. I sat down in a chair by the store and he came and sat down next to me. I gave him more chips, and the more I gave him, the more he started talking to me. The only trouble was, I couldn't understand anything he was saying. I asked one of my teammates to help me translate, but when I tried to get Jonathan to repeat what he said, he wouldn't say anything to my teammates, he only talked to me. It was a beautiful interaction between two complete strangers, and I was reminded once again that words are not always necessary to show people God's love, and that we are all truly family and brothers and sisters in Christ.

Date: 2/1/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

Yesterday was quite a cultural experience. In the morning we headed out to Cañar where we found ourselves in the middle of a Carnaval parade. People were dancing, music was blasting, and flour and foam were flying everywhere. The team parked ourselves in a storefront to see the action. A great place to get bombarded by the foam and flour, and an especially good place to get pulled into the dancing. As gringos, we were prime targets. Interesting that in Spanish the word of target is the same as the word for white...



Ronnie Melin

We sat down to a large 3 course meal that cost us each a whopping \$1.25, then we caught the bus to Ingapirca. Despite the cold and the fog, seeing the Inca ruins was beautiful. The temple was still intact and the building was awe-inspiring. It was just as it was hundreds of years ago. We looked at the rest of the ruins, which were just the foundations of buildings and walls, and read about the history at the museum. After a quick stop at the artisan shops, we were headed back to Cuenca, home sweet Cuenca.

Date: 2/4/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Carnaval Time!

Carnaval is perhaps Ecuador's largest celebration. Some say it is bigger than Holy Week. We have been victims of Carnaval in the streets, getting hit with water on the streets. On Thursday, we went to Canar for a team outing. Accidentally, we found a Carnaval parade. Everybody was covered with shaving cream and flour. We joined in the fun. Some of the parade participants invited us, or rather pulled us in to the dancing, where we got totally covered with the cream and flour. I even danced with the devil. Shame on **Danielle Hance** me! It was a great cultural experience, aside from the appearances of Barney and Mickey Mouse. Everyone dressed up in indigenous clothing and performed dances native to Ecuador. The strangest music was this strange, piercing (because it was so high-pitched), whistling.



This weekend, we went to San Francisco about an hour and a half south past the desert. We went hiking and swimming and got lots of mosquito bites. We did an impromptu program last night. We sang Blindman but didn't know any of the words in Spanish. Be Still was a big hit. The most popular song all weekend was La Cosecha. It was requested over and over. I set a mosquito bite record. I have 48 on my right leg and 57 on my left leg. I look like I have the measles! I am so thankful for my malaria medication because I discovered that mosquito repellent gives me migraine headaches! Overall, it has been a fun celebration, and we've been able to do great relational ministry. The most fun relational ministry was exchanging trabalenguas or tongue twisters. The most meaningful was being able to pray for Maria Victoria, a vendor of skirts. While, Rachel and I bought skirts, Kami played with her two sons. God is pretty awesome! We even met an Ecuadorian child, who was born in Minneapolis!

Date: 2/5/2008

Submitted by: Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Journal Entry:

One more week and I feel closer to Colombia. This last week was good, not very much programs and a very good weekend in a family camp where we had some of relational ministry. After the English festival at the School, we had some time to rest and prepare ourselves to three days in a place with a lot of bugs; we came back with a lot of mosquito bites and sore in our legs for hiking... no was more like climbing a mountain. After 1 hour and 30 minutes we arrive to the waterfall where we get wet and bitten for mosquitoes but were a great time and a good exercise.



Ludvigs Ayala Porras

This weekend Ecuador was celebrating the "CARNAVAL" and all the country was having 3 days of and the main thing is getting wet and throwing water to every body, well it is a lot of fun. Also we (Ronnie, Rachel and Me) had the opportunity to see something like a concert... well it was more like people singing with a prerecorded track... the funny part was that as soon we arrive to that place start to rain and stop later and we heard some music and also dance, it was a nice intercultural experience.

Now we are close to our first good bye with the amazing people we have met here, and is also exiting to know that we are going to meet more people from different places, after a month here we are going for one week to Machala, it is hot and humid and it is by the ocean, I know that it is a different culture than Cuenca, but it is going to be nice. Please pray for us as we go to a different place to share the love of God.

Date: 2/6/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

This week we celebrated Carnaval. Here in Ecuador, it's a very important holiday lasting three days and ending midnight before Ash Wednesday. To celebrate, people gather for food, music, and fun, and businesses and schools shut down for the festivities. Water is a huge part of Carnaval here, and people love to get others wet. When walking down the street, one has to watch out for water balloons, buckets, and bottles ready to soak anyone nearby. During the days of Caranval there's also an abundance of spray foam and flour.



Ronnie Melin

Our team was invited to go with a local church to a retreat where we led the music, even though no one told us we were in charge ahead of time. It was fun and relaxing, despite the fact that the mosquitoes were eating everyone alive. There were balloons thrown and bottles poured there too, and many got thrown into the pool, including myself, fully clothed. When we came back there was still day of Carnaval left, so Rachel, Ludvigs and I went to the park to experience it all. There were singers and people dancing. An old lady pulled me in to dance with her, even though I told her I didn't know how. So I just made a gringo fool of myself trying. Later a younger, more attractive girl asked me to dance and she tried to teach me. Afterwards, Rachel coached me a little more. Who knows? Maybe by next Carnaval I'll be an amazing dancer. And I'll make sure to come prepared with lots of water balloons.

Date: 2/7/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:



Kami Kimmel

It has been quite a week. Last week I moved host homes and I am now staying with a family from Ecuador. Its been a very rewarding experience. I am learning MUCH more Spanish, and the family is learning some English from me. We have had our frustrating moments of communication, but after much rephrasing and hand gestures, usually our points come across. There are two sons and two daughters...their names are Andres, Jonathan, Joanna, and Dianna. I enjoy spending time with them.

Last week we went on a team outing to see some Incan ruins, and stopped at a city on the way. We heard some music and discovered a parade going on. There were people dancing in the street in native dances, and lots of people with native outfits on, and sombreros. People were spraying foam everywhere along with throwing flour in the air. The people dancing pulled us into the street with them and had us dance with them. Being gringos, we were prime targets! Once we were dancing, we were also targets for more foam and flour. After the parade I met a new friend. Danielle and Rachel were trying on traditional skirts, and the owner of the shop had her two small sons with her. I wasnt having any luck with the skirts so I decided to talk to the little ones. They wouldnt talk to me, no matter how much I tried. I went outside the shop to wait with Ludvigs and Ronnie, and opened a small bag of Doritos for a snack. I offered them some, and realized that one of the little boys, Jonathan, had followed me outside. I knelt down and offered him some chips. He took them, so I gave him more. Then I sat on a chair by the door of the store, and surprisingly he came and sat next to me. I offered more chips, and he started talking to me. I couldnt understand what he was saying, so I asked one of my teammates to help me translate. However, when I asked Jonathan to repeat what he said, he wouldnt say it again...he only wanted to talk to me. It was another example for me to realize that sometimes actions really do speak louder than words, and not all communication has to be verbal. I enjoyed this interaction with a new friend!

This weekend Kindred went to a family camp in the mountains with people from the church. It was amazing. We spent a lot of time in fellowship with each other, and I began to feel like I was truly with my family. Saturday night Rachel revealed to the people we were eating supper with my hidden talent of balancing large things on my head for a long time, so she put a basket of bananas on my head and everyone wanted me to walk around the dining room. So I did, and Rachel and Ludvigs were drumming on the table, and I made it all the way around the kitchen without dropping the basket. On Sunday we hiked up a mountain in the Andes mountain range with some of the families from the church. Our goal was to make it up to the waterfall. We got about a quarter of the way up and I was close to turning back because it was a straight vertical hike. But Rachel, the amazing Life Encourager that she is, told me that I couldn't quit and that I could indeed make it. So I decided to stick with it and just took my time getting to the top. We reached the waterfall, and it

was definately worth it! It was so amazingly beautiful I wanted to stay there longer. A few of us played in the water for awhile, and then began working our way down. It was an amazing day and a beautiful weekend.

I have really enjoyed Cuenca, and all the people weve met here. I've been challenged, stretched, and have grown a lot in my time in Ecuador. I am beginning to find my place here, and enjoy the new experiences Ive been able to have. On Monday we move to a small city in the jungle called Machala.

Thank you for your love and prayers!

Date: 2/7/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

1/24/08

My voice in Ecuador

II Tim. 1:7-9

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began."



Danielle Hance

This is my resolution for this year. Even though I am a missionary, I struggle to share my testimony. I have learned better to overcome my timidity in English, but in Spanish I struggle more. It's not that I don't have the words, but that I am afraid. Afraid of not being understood, of feeling stupid, of being judged, of comparing myself to the testimony of others.

I have to remember that I have a purpose and a voice here. And it's not my doing EVER. It's God's ALWAYS. Some days, I am braver than others, and I know it will continue to be a struggle. But God is ALWAYS with me.

Date: 2/8/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

Today I saw an empty playground turn into a sanctuary...

We met at the Bilingual School at 2:00 to meet our contact for la iglesia Luz y Libertad. We loaded our instruments into the school bus and headed over to the other side of Cuenca for an outdoor evangelism program. The playground is in the neighborhood where Kami and I are staying. It was interesting to see our posters plastered on the playground equipment and telephone poles...



Rachel Ringlaben

We arrived at the playground at 3:30 and as soon as we got our instruments out, children ran from their "hang out spots" near the elementary school to check us out. After singing *Grano de Mostaza* we introduced ourselves and taught *Salmo 25* to the kids who were gathered on the playground equipment. Then we sang *Jesús Mi Fiel Amigo*, which I got to play for the first time since Ronnie has been teaching me how to play bar chords on my guitar. After our opening songs, we did a skit portraying the story of the widow's offering in Mark 12:43-44. Before singing *Te Alabaré* I gave a short spiel about worshipping God with all that one has even if it is "smal" in comparison to another person's offering. Then Ludvigs gave the salvation message about who Jesus is and what he did for us on the cross. We invited the children to ask us questions if they were interested about our faith and knowing more about having a personal relationship with Christ. We

ended with three *alabanzas* and started talking to the kids.

I walked up to a young boy and asked him his name and he said, "John." Then he asked, "¿Ustedes son cristianos?" which means "are you guys Christians?". I said yes and then he said, "Yo soy un cristiano también" which means "I'm a Christian, too." John and I talked about school, cartoons, food, and musical instruments, but the most important thing we talked about was Jesus Christ. John with his blue baseball cap and joyful heart will be one of the people I will remember most from my time here in Cuenca.

I am amazed by my Heavenly Father for turning an empty playground into a place of worship and making His name known. I praise God for bringing the children of the Trigales neighborhood to hear about how much He loves them. Thank you, Abba, for ushering those children closer to Your heart today.

Date: 2/8/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

Hoy vi como un parque infantil desocupado hacerse un santuario...

Nos reunimos en la Escuela Bilingüe a las 2:00 para conocer nuestro contacto de la iglesia Luz y Libertad. Pusimos los instrumentos en el autobús y fuimos al otro lado de la ciudad de Cuenca para hacer un programa evangelismo afuera en un parque infantil.

El parque está en el barrio donde Kami y yo nos quedamos. Fue muy interesante ver nuestros afiches pegados en las estructuras del parque y postes de luz.



Rachel Ringlaben

Llegamos al parque a las 3:00 y tan pronto sacamos los instrumentos, los niños vinieron de sus casas para escucharnos. Después de la canción *Grano de Mostaza* nos presentamos y les enseñamos la canción *Salmo 25* a los niños que se reunieron. Después de las canciones de apertura hicimos un drama sobre la ofrenda de la viuda que relata Marcos 12:43-44. Antes de cantar *Te Alabaré* hablé sobre la necesidad de alabar a Dios con todo lo que tenemos, no importa cuan grande o pequeña sea nuestra ofrenda. Ludvigs predicó sobre el evangelio de salvación e invitamos a los niños a preguntarnos sobre nuestra fe y una relación con Cristo. Después de algunas canciones de alabanza, hablamos con los niños.

Caminé hacia un joven y le pregunté su nombre y él me dijo, "Juan" y me preguntó, "¿Ustedes son cristianos?" Dije "sí" y Juan dijo, "Yo soy un cristiano también." Juan y yo hablamos sobre la escuela, dibujos animados, comida e instrumentos musicales. Pero la cosa más importante de la que hablamos fue Jesucristo. Juan y su cachucha azul y su corazón alegre será una de las personas que más voy a recordar de mi tiempo en Cuenca...

Estoy asombrada de mi Padre Celestial como puede cambiar un parque infantil en un lugar de alabanza y hacer conocer Su nombre. Alabo a Dios por traer los niños del barrio los Trigales a escuchar cuanto él los ama. Gracias, Abba Padre, por traer los niños más cerca de Tu corazón hoy.

Date: 2/11/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

God at Work

I've had a very interesting last week here in Cuenca. In my last journal, I talked about Carnaval and all of my mosquito bites. At that time, my bites weren't very bad although they are plentiful. Since then they have become flame red and hard. My host sister thought I had the chicken pox!



Danielle Hance

I've actually felt like I have the chicken pox, especially at night. My bites hurt and itch simultaneously, despite the use of every cream in our first aid kit--anti-itch, hydrocortizone, triple

antibiotic, menthol, and a sulfur cream that my family let my use. I even took some melatonin and benadryl to knock me out. Every day my bites got more and more inflamed, to the point of sleeplessness.

At 12:37 a.m. on Saturday morning, I turned on all the lights, covered my legs in cream, wrote an angry "I can't take it any more" journal entry, and gave into the impulse to scratch every bite on my legs. I read fourteen chapters of Matthew until I couldn't read anymore.

The next day, I tried to tough it out, but being on the verge of tears for most of the day, I knew I couldn't. My teammates and I walked to the pharmacy to get more help. We bought another cream, some children's insect repellent, and Vitamin B injections to avoid the mosquitos. I was told by the pharmacy to visit a doctor for my bites.

My family called every doctor they knew. Since my host mom is an orthodontist, she has a lot of doctor friends. It wasn't looking good to see a doctor, but then she got a hold of her friend, Rosita. My host parents, host sister, Rachel, and I all got in the car to go to her house. We all sat in the living room while she looked at my bites. She told me that I am allergic to the mosquitos here. She prescribed four different things (one of which was an antihistimine injection. My host mom asked about any side effects of the medications and any interactions I might have with the malaria medication I was already taking. I was thankful to have her there. She reminded me of how my mom questions doctors to make sure that they are doing the right thing. Then we walked to the pharmacy.

When we got back, she took me to an adjacent room and had me lie down on a short wicker futon. I once again remembered that I am a giant here in Ecuador. I received the very painful shot while listening to Rachel play and sing a beautiful song in the next room. I rested for a while and then went back into the other room. We socialized while my host dad, Patricio played us some Ecuadorian music on the piano.

When we got back, I slept through the night for the first time in a week. My bites still look kind of leprous and still itch and hurt. But I am thankful for how God has worked through this nasty situation. He forced me to rely on my host family here, and I got to see that they really do care about me. Patricio, my host dad, drove us to the doctor's house, even though he wanted to rest. Marilu, my host mom, called all her doctor friends to get someone to see me. Anita, my host sister, noticed the tears in my eyes and gave me a big hug. It's good to remember that even when I am going through a hard time that I still have family here. I have so many brothers and sisters in Christ here in Ecuador.

Date: 2/14/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

Add another name to the list of countires visited! Today I had the privilege to travel south of the border to Peru. Most of the team decided to relax at the beach here in Machala, but Kami and I were feeling a little more adventurous, and we headed to Peru. (Ironically the rest of the team went to the beach because it was ''safer'' but you can read their journals to find out how safe it really was.) Vicky the daughter of our contact, came with us to help guide and translate the super fast Spanish of the Peruvians. We left early this mornign, but had to catch the 10:20 bus. We arrived around lunchtime after a few stops at the immigration offices, and wandered around Tumbes on foot and in a three-wheeled motor car. I hoped to find a charango, but no luck . We waited around and enjoyed the artwork and the city itself, and headed toward the town center where a wedding was taking place. We ate at Inka Peru where I ordered a parihuela which is basically a soup with every type of sea creature imaginable in a bowl. After eating way too much, I helped Vicky with some of her chicharron de pescado (fried fish), with some serious hot sauce on the side. Let me tell you, those Peruvians ain 't afraid of no heat! The seafood, fried and dipped in hot sauce reminded me nicely of my Cajun friend Charles' cooking. After eating enough for a week, I topped it all off with a small pepper. Ten minutes later, when I was done crying and sweating and catching my face on fire, we left the restaurant and headed back toward Machala. I watched out the bus window as



Ronnie Melin

we drove back into Ecuador, enjoying the green beauty of Peru, hoping one day my travels might bring me back to that magical land.

P.S. I may or may not have seen an actual dinosaur today.

Date: 2/18/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

I had many firsts this week: first jellyfish sting, first motorcycle ride, first visit to Peru, first ride in an ambulance, first drink of coconut milk.

But the neatest first I had this week was the opportunity to go door-to-door, preaching the Gospel. We went with Tuesman, whom we have affectionately nicknamed Tweety. He is the most enthusiastic missionary I have ever met. He jokes around all the time. He calls us all doctors.



Danielle Hance

We are doctors here, though. Jesús said that it is not the well who need a doctor, but the sick. That has been a struggle for me this whole time because we spend so much time with believers. But this week, we got to talk to a few people who weren't believers or who were only "cultural Christians." At the first house, we all gave reasons for believing to Poncho, a teenage boy. He wasn't converted, but he did come to our program that night.

Another lady, Mirian, Tuesman has been encouraging to come to church for six years. Finally, she came. And she is trying to get her husband to come now. At the last house we visited, we had to hold hands to walk on the bricks and logs stranded in a huge puddle. We talked for a while with two teenage girls, and then Tuesman left me alone to talk to both of them individually. Their father is separated from their family. He doesn't go to church. He is addicted to drugs and alcohol. And it has gotten worse since he left. Their younger brother, eight years old, cries every night for him. I got to pray with the oldest daughter, 15. It was an awesome ministry opportunity. One that I know that God uniquely designed for me. Please pray for the community here in Machala!

Date: 2/18/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

***Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.
You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.*** - Psalm 77:23-24



Rachel Ringlaben

We arrived in Machala, Ecuador last Monday, and the first thing that hit us (besides the humidity) was the hospitality and friendliness of the people living here. This past week has been such a blessing to us as a team. We have been treated like long-lost friends, receiving the best of all the community has to offer: from chocolate-covered bananas to beach trips to seafood to prayers to lasting friendships. It has all been absolutely beautiful.

This week was also exciting because Danielle and I made "friends" at the beach on Thursday. Ludvigs, Danielle, and I traveled to Jambilin with some neighbors to relax while Ronnie and Kami went on a day trip to Peru. Relaxing happened for the first hour, but then the adventure started. I got stung by a stingray and Danielle got bit by a jellyfish (don't worry, I'm okay!). At first, I thought that I stepped on a seashell, but after ten minutes the pain was all over my foot and moving up to my knee...I could barely walk. After searching for the First Aid cabin, a man ran up to us and told me that he could get me an injection for the pain. I agreed and he came back, injected me and I sat down praying that the pain would go away. The pain was so bad, but it increased when the man came back with scalding hot water and poured it all over my leg and foot to counteract the venom and began pushing and squeezing the wound to get the venom out. I couldn't hold back the

tears anymore. I cried so hard. Ludvigs was holding my hand and Danielle was rubbing my back. The pain was excruciating.

A policeman let me ride with him on his motorbike to the pier so we could catch a boat back to Machala so I could go to the doctor. We all went into the boat and headed back to Machala on the slowest boat ride I've ever been on in my life. The pain was increasing, and all I could do was pray. An ambulance was waiting for me at the pier (the man who gave the injection called it for us) and they took me inside the ambulance. Soon a huge crowd was forming outside the ambulance to see what happened to the "gringa" at the beach! The paramedic was very nice and explained that he had studied in the USA, so I could trust him. He had to draw blood to see if there was any pus in the wound, so he stuck my wound with a needle ten times and squeezed to get blood out. The whole time he was doing that, I was singing "Te Alabare" to distract myself. I thought it was over, but then he said he needed more, so he stuck me ten more times and squeezed the wound again. I started singing "Todo Poderoso" and Ludvigs started to sing with me. The paramedic bandaged my foot and gave me another injection for the pain. We all climbed into the ambulance and the driver took us back to our host.

On the ride back, the paramedic asked what we were doing in Machala, and the three of us got to tell him about our ministry in the States and here in South America. It was so cool explaining about how much God has provided for us and how we have seen his love in the people of Machala. I remembered how I had seen God that day in the help of the citizens, my teammates, and my hosts. The hands of Ludvigs and Danielle, the help of the man at the pier, the comfort of my hosts, the skillfulness of the paramedic, the assurance of the doctor saying the wound was fine--God was there in all of these people. On the boat ride back from the beach to Machala, Ludvigs held my hand to comfort me. Every time the pain was too much, I'd squeeze his hand really hard, but he'd squeeze my hand even harder as if to say that no matter how bad the pain was, he was there for me. Isn't that what God does for us? In the pain, discomfort, and despair of life, He is holding our hand with the love of a father. Any time the hurt is too much to bear, we hold tighter, but His grip strengthens even more, for He sustains the universe and the hearts of those who follow him.

I thank God that I was able to see him that day through the hands and spirits of my friends and the people of Machala. I praise Him for showing me how much He sustains me.

Date: 2/19/2008

Submitted by: Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Journal Entry:

What a week in MACHALA! It was great. First, it is very hot and humid, but the people in that town are amazing. First they told me about my brother and his team 9 years ago and also about KINDRED 04-05. They remember all of them, and it is nice to know that they remember my brother so much.

Something for what I am amazed is the love they have for us; for example, my host grandma gave me her bed so I should not have to sleep with Ronnie in the same bed, and also she gave us a lot of food that we could not refuse because she is very persistent. Her favourite words were "Coma no mas," "Pida mas si tiene ambre" (Eat, eat all. If you are hungry, there is more). Well, maybe she is very persistent, but she is full of love for everyone in her house.



Ludvigs Ayala Porras

This last week, we did an evangelistic campaign for three days and also we went to the beach and Perú. It was great. Perú was very sunny and I had a headache for that trip.

And for the trip to the beach we had very good stories, like Rachel got stung by a sting ray and Danielle got stung by a jellyfish...I got nothing.

The last night rained a lot and one river flooded, and we could not travel to Guayaquil, so we spent one more night in MACHALA. We had time to say goodbye to all our friends. I am happy because now we are in a big city. It is hotter than MACHALA, but I like big cities.

Date: 2/21/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

Con mis manos y mi vida, te alabo bendito Señor...

Our team got the opportunity to serve in Daule these past two days. The city of Daule has suffered from massive flooding, which has resulted in damaged crops, limited amounts of food, and transportation by canoe to most places off of the main road. Through all of the difficulties surrounding this part of Ecuador, the people have amazing faith and servant hearts. There were many encounters that were spirit-led and new friendships were formed.



Rachel Ringlaben

On Friday, we left Daule to go to Guayaquil. After a quick dinner we rushed to the church to begin our program. We were told that many of the attendants would be non-believers, so we geared our program to talk a lot about the need for Christ and for salvation. I gave my testimony about how my father and I reconciled after many years of resentment and Ronnie spoke on his call to ministry. We were really intentional about speaking the message of salvation, the message of the cross and the freedom that comes from God's sacrifice of His only son.

It was interesting because before our program I prayed that I would be more intentional about using Spanish and searching out opportunities to have deeper spiritual conversations with people who come to our programs. God answered my prayer that night! After the program a guy of 19 years of age asked me how long I had been playing guitar. He said he also played guitar so I handed my guitar to him and said, "Tócala por favor." He started strumming and we continued our conversation. His name was Christian and he had been playing for four months. Soon, his four friends surrounded us and we all started talking. Pablo was in his second year of college and Raul, Jonathan, and Pablo were still in high school. We talked about music, school and the United States. Christian went away to play my guitar some more but the other three boys stayed with me. I asked them if they were believers and they all responded, "Sí, claro." I asked if there was anything I could pray for them about. They shrugged and looked at one another. So I asked if their parents were believers. All three said no - their parents don't have time and don't care about spiritual matters. I thought about how blessed I am to have parents who have personal relationships with Jesus. Jonathan asked if they could pray for me and I told him I need discernment on what to do after team.

I asked if we could all pray together in that moment, so I got Danielle and we took the three guys outside to pray. I started the prayer thanking God for the new brothers I had met and that they would continue to grow in Him and be examples for their families. Pablo, Jonathan, and Raul prayed for their families, for me and Danielle, and for Kindred. After we finished we all hugged and said good-bye.

It was so awesome to see God answer my prayers for more opportunities to have deeper conversations in Spanish with the people here. I pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to guide Christian, Pablo, Jonathan, and Raul. I pray that their parents would come to know the deep, amazing, overwhelming love of Jesus Christ. It is moments like those with those guys that remind me how powerful, yet personal our God really is.

Date: 2/22/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Therefore **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.** The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become **new.** --2 Corinth. 5:17

Susanna made eye contact at me, pointed at herself, and smiled as we sang "Los enfermos se sanaran" [The sick became healed] I knew exactly what she meant. This small middle-aged lady in brightly-striped pajama pants and a plain white t-shirt had been healed from so much.

Two days before, we had had a long conversation, which started because I talked about my travels to Norway, and she had a missionary friend, who was from Norway (there are Norwegians in abundance here in Ecuador). Pretty soon, I would get the privilege of hearing her life story.

It was a miracle that I could even understand a word she said. Her two front teeth were missing, as a result of abuse from her mother. She has a scar on her forehead and a scar on the left side of her head from the reconstructive surgery. She also has a scar that runs halfway up her left leg. She didn't have enough money to get her teeth replaced. Her mother was from Spain, where now her 17-year-old daughter lives. She would like to go visit her, but she is embarrassed because of her teeth and failing health.

Her father has almost always been absent from her life. She doesn't know where he is. She only knows that he was a very dark Indian (a term they use to describe the indigenous people here), and that is why she has a dark complexion and tight-curly hair.

We got to talk about how our heavenly father is perfect, even though earthly fathers make mistakes and are mere men. How amazing is it that our heavenly father loves us always! We are never alone!

She told me that Psalm 23 reminds her of God's provision and that she is never alone. But for a long time in her life, she felt very alone. She grew up without God in her life. Because of her family past, she turned to smoking of many different substances and alcohol. It was only three months ago, when she learned she had diabetes, that she realized that she needed to stop. On the dirt road next to the church, a demon found her, and she realized that she needed someone to protect her. That protection, she found in God.

Since that time, her life has not been easy. There is abuse that has happened to her that I don't even feel comfortable writing on this page. She needs to get more pills for diabetes (she doesn't even have access to insulin). She has lost an incredible amount of weight since being diagnosed and has pain in her knees and back.

But what is most incredible about my friend and sister in Christ, Susanna, is her heart to serve. She works at the church doing whatever is asked of her--cooking, running errands, and a lot of cleaning. It doesn't matter to her that she is weak and can't do as much as she wants. She wants to serve Christ. She wants to go to Africa. "I'm poor," she told me, "But I want to help kids without parents, feed them, clothe them, love them."

We talked together about forgiveness, as I sensed that this must be a difficult for her. I talked about how it is a continual process of forgiving. She motioned to the sky and said, "We have to give everything."

Susanna is a healed woman, a new creation. But it is still a fight. I wished I would have counted how many times she or I said, "lucha" [fight] within our conversation. She wants to move. There are too many people who know her past here and too many demons for her to face. I reminded her that in our weakness, God is strong. I reminded her that she is a testimony. And now all I can do is pray--for her health and healing, for strength against demons, for witnesses for her family, who does not believe. I pray that God will continue to make all things new in her life.



Danielle Hance

Date: 2/27/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Hola todos! (hello everyone) We are currently in Quito, Ecuador, the capital. It has been a super busy two weeks with not much access or time for the internet. But we have an afternoon with little to do so we found an internet cafe in Quito. Saturday we are going to the equator!



Kami Kimmel

Prayer request: I am experiencing altitude sickness because we went from zero elevation to 10,000 feet in one day.

Here are excerpts from some of my journal entries.

2.17.08 12:14 am Location....Machala, Ecuador

We led worship this morning and had the chance at the end of the service to encourage the people through a few minutes of testimony. Ludvigs translated for me and I talked about how sometimes I struggle with my place on team when I cannot play the piano here. We have had a keyboard for the last two programs but don't usually have one. When we don't have one, I clap. Sometimes I don't like that that is all I can offer musically, but I know that it doesn't matter what I do, as long as I do it with my whole heart and with a joyful spirit....God loves it! (And I am still putting my sense of rhythm to good use :)

The team went to the border town between Ecuador and Peru, because Ronnie and I were the only ones that went the first time...everyone else wanted to go too. We went after church with a couple of the families from the church. We saw monkeys, parrots, and I ate coconut! I didn't like the juice or the fruit much, but it was fun to try it.

2.18.08 11:03 pm

Today we had devotions with the pastor's family. We talked about how we are changed through Jesus and how Jesus is with us. We went to the bus station to get our tickets for Guayaquil, but no buses were going there because it had rained so much the roads were flooded. So we went back to the pastor's house and spent some more time with his family and relatives. They took us to eat at the mall, and wanted us to try some different food. I told them how old I was and one of the ladies didn't believe me and said that I look so young because I don't eat much meat...so she ordered us three big platters of meat, including cow utter and cow stomach. I didn't try those, but had steak for the first time.

2.19.08 12:21 am

We left Machala, and it felt like we were leaving long lost friends and relatives. I loved my time with the people from this congregation. They showed us so much kindness, love, friendship, and generosity. I will truly miss the people of Machala.

We got on the bus for a 3ish hour ride to Guayaquil. Our contact took us to the river front. We stayed at the Lutheran Center in Guayaquil....the place we stayed was like an apartment. The electricity went out for awhile because it was storming a lot, so we all put on our head lamps and entertained ourselves by playing some music. I learned another song on the guitar, and we sang a song in 4 octaves....which we will never do again!!

I have realized that the reason for me to be on this team is not for my musical ability. God has been showing me this little by little since I left for camp in May. It is hard because music is such a big part of me, but playing the piano isn't all I am and its not all God wants me to be. I am realizing that through this year of ministry he wants me to find my true, WHOLE identity in him and not other things. I am learning that who I am isn't the person I thought I was before. I'm learning that it doesn't matter if people hurt me in the past and the negative messages I got from those things.....they don't matter either. It doesn't matter if I'm short, or have a crooked smile, or a little bit of frizzy hair. What matters is that Jesus Christ loves me, died on the cross for me, and is my

salvation. He is in my heart. Every bad experience, every negative thought I've had in my 25 years of life...none of it matters. I have peace in my soul because of Jesus Christ and his love for me. That is what matters.

2.20.08 10:58 pm

What a day! We were picked up about 10:30 am at the mission house to go to a town called Daule. We crammed all of our stuff in a vehicle, barely managing to fit all of us in. We had a 45 minute ride with a quarter of my body out the window most of the way because there wasn't room for all of it where I had to sit!

We got to Daule and went to the house where the church is. We had some free time and got into a discussion that in the end we had to agree to disagree. We had a program for kids and I did my first puppet show in Spanish. Surprisingly, it wasn't bad! After the program we talked to some of the people, and Ronnie and I taught some of them a song in Swahili, Mambo Sawa Sawa. We had done it in the program and they were all wanting to sing it again. I met another little girl named Kamila (my name during our time in South America.) and she attached herself to me right away when she found out we had the same name...she gave me a rose and we had a lot of fun playing.

Afterward I went home with my hosts Isabel and Lena. That was an experience I will never forget! Lena and Isabel (mother and daughter) live in a house on stilts in the middle of an island in the middle of a river. And if that isn't exciting enough, we got to the house by canoe in the pouring rain in the pitch blackness of 10 pm at night! Very exciting, and I loved every minute of it. The next night the water had gone down a bit in the river so she said we could walk through the river to get to the house. She lent me a pair of galoshes that went up to my knees, so I hiked up my pants and we were on our way. All I can say is thank goodness for working at Ox Lake for the summer because it prepared me sooo much for living conditions here!! I love all the things I am experiencing and learning, and love seeing a different way of life!

2.22.08 11:30 pm

Today we went back to Guayaquil...and crammed back into the same vehicle, however this time I was in the front and had a little bit more room....but not much. We had a program tonight for the youth. There are also Norwegians staying at the same place as us and they went to our program. We had people there from Ecuador, U.S., Colombia, and Norway. It was awesome.

2.23.08

We went to a town on the outskirts of Guayaquil. It's a little higher up in the hills, and therefore a little cooler, but not much. We had a program for kids that had been having vacation bible school all week long and the last day was today. We did several songs and a puppet show. It was fun.

2.24.08

On Sunday we led worship and had lunch with the pastor's family and many relatives. The team watched a movie while lunch was cooking and spent time with the family afterwards. I washed a few dirty clothes....BY HAND! Later in the evening I had my hair braided by one of the pastor's daughters, and one of the other youth made a bracelet for me. We watched the first part of the Oscars, and I had a bit of culture shock realizing that I was watching the Oscars in Ecuador where it is hot outside in February!

The houses we stayed at in Paraiso (the city on the outskirts of Guayaquil) were very basic. The house I stayed in the first night had one room. There were three beds pushed together in one part of the house with one dresser for five people. The baby slept in a hammock strung above the beds. In the other half of the house was the kitchen area. The bathroom was in the backyard. The roof was a tin roof that didn't completely connect with the house. They had mosquito netting for all the

beds.

The second house I stayed in was all concrete. It had one large room with two beds, a table, and the kitchen. There was another room off to the side that had the tv, fridge, and dishes. The upstairs had one room for the girls with a sheet for the door. The top floor did not have four walls. You could walk upstairs and have an incredible view of the city lights. Again, this house had a tin roof and wasn't connected to the house. The door for the house was a piece of tin, but had a lock. It was good for me to see how people live here, and I have been thinking about how the houses are made. On the coast, it doesn't matter if they are completely connected because it's so hot. In the mountains the houses are a little more insulated because of the temperature.

2.26.08

Yesterday we had breakfast with the pastor's family. His brother took us to the bus station where we got on board for an EIGHT HOUR ride to Quito. About halfway through I started feeling claustrophobic and the window where Danielle and I were sitting only opened a little bit. Luckily they showed a movie so I had a distraction. We went from zero elevation on the coast to 10,000 feet in one day to the mountains of Quito. I started feeling a little better the higher we got because it got colder. We got into Quito about 7:30 pm and had a drive to a small town on the outskirts of the city, and had supper about 10:30 pm. My head was hurting really badly and my brain could barely think in Spanish. The next day I woke up and had a hot shower with running water for the first time in two weeks. It was amazing! We had devotions and my head started hurting again. There was a program for kids at 11 am but Danielle told me to stay behind and sleep because I was feeling a lot of altitude sickness. We had the afternoon free and after a bit more sleep I was feeling better. Ronnie and I walked to the church because there was a piano there we could play. I've only played a couple times since being in South America and was feeling the need to play! I came up with a melody and want to write lyrics for it. We had another program in the evening, and got to experience a thunderstorm in the high mountains of Quito!

Date: 3/2/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

As we travel, we have the privilege of staying with many different families. Every family has a different story and a different financial situation. We've stayed with people that have a lot and with people that have almost nothing. But in some of the poorest parts of the country we've seen people living rich lives. It's because those people have things in their lives of true value- faith in Christ, strong family ties, and committed friendships. Though their house may be made of sugar cane, or you have to pour water in the toilet to flush it, they have so much that they share their abundance with us. What they have can't be measured by earthly standards, but their treasures are stored in heaven.



Ronnie Melin

I'm convinced now more than ever that whether you drive a Porsche or walk in undersized flip-flops through flooded dirt roads, the only thing of true value is Christ. The poorest family is rich in the love and grace of God. The richest businessman is poor and destitute without it. I'm so rich and I forget it. And I'm not talking about money or possessions- I'm rich because of the personal relationship I have with God and the promise of eternal life. I'm even richer because I'm blessed with five siblings and sister-in-law as well as strong Christian friends. Because of this, I know I have to share Christ with those who don't know Him- I have everything and they have nothing. What a privilege to get to share my wealth in a world so full of needy people.

Date: 3/2/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

March 2, 2008 Quito, Ecuador

After the worship service today Ronnie and I went with the youth group to play soccer. Well, Ronnie went to play; I went to get fresh air. As the boys ran on the field, I sat down and began to write in my journal. I wrote for about three minutes until a girl from the youth group came and sat next to me. Pamela told me that she writes in a journal, too. We started making small talk in Spanish and then I started asking questions about her family. Her parents separated when she was one years old and she grew up in the Compassion International organization as a sponsor child. Her father is married to a non-Christian so Pamela doesn't visit him much.



She told me that she remembered my testimony and how amazing it was that I forgave my father. But soon, tears filled her eyes and she said, "I can't forgive my dad yet. My heart breaks whenever I think about him. I am tired of hurting. He might as well be dead because he doesn't try to be a father to me. I just...I just can't forgive him yet." Tears were streaming down her face and she forced a smile and looked up at me – as if prompting me to say something.

Rachel Ringlaben

I told her that it is a process – the more you let God shape your heart, the closer to forgiving you will be. I put my arm around her shoulder and told her that it is okay to be angry and hurt – but I encouraged her to give those feelings over to God. She said, "Gracias a Dios que el está siempre conmigo. Es un amigo fiel." ("Thank God He is always with me. He is a faithful friend.")

She started singing *Dios de Maravillas* and smiled. We hugged and I asked her if I could have her dad's name so I could pray for him – that he and his wife would come to know Christ. Her eyes lit up and she told me her dad's name, Alfonzo. I showed her that I was writing his name in my journal so I would remember to pray for him. She took my hand and squeezed it and said, "Gracias por venir aquí."

The subject changed and we walked back to the neighborhood. We hugged and said our good-byes. Pamela thanked me again and I walked with Ronnie back to our host home...

Jesus, I lift up Pamela. Comfort her, Oh God. Draw close to Alfonzo, her dad, soften his heart to receive Your Word. Thank you for the opportunity to pray with a sister in Christ. How amazing and loving You are! Praise be to You, Abba.

Date: 3/6/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

With or without Christ

I have gotten to see and live where the poor live. In Guayaquil, I stayed with a couple about my age with a 6-month-old baby. Their house, made out of sugar-cane, bamboo, cardboard, and tin, was about half the size of a studio apartment. It was about $\frac{3}{4}$ the size of the dorm room I stayed in my freshman year of college. There were two rooms, without a door to separate them. The front room had a kitchen table, baby crib and CD player. The back room had a bed and a stove-top. The bathroom was, if you haven't guessed yet, outside. It was a little sugar cane shack with a movable tin door. The toilet itself, which I would not have identified without the toilet paper next to it, was a rectangular wooden box with a slot about the size of a ruler to urinate in. I had to trod up and down a mud path, which given the flooding rains of the coast, was the most difficult part.



Danielle Hance

Despite the "inconvenience" of an outdoor "toilet" and lizards running across the ceiling in my room, I never felt like I was living "poorly." As my hosts told me when I walked in, "Our house is mostly empty, but it is full of love." When I was woken up at 4 a.m. by the sounds of my host "mom" (we're the same age) making breakfast for her husband, I remembered how much love was in that home. The first lunch I shared with them, they offered me two trinkets, one of a baby with a stuffed pig, to remember their daughter, and another one of a married couple, to remember them. These people, my friends, gave up their bed for me. They slept with the baby on a mat on the floor, so I could have their bed. The only thing I could give in return was my time and gratefulness. I stayed up until 2 a.m. every night talking with them. I told them how grateful I was for the cold bucket of water that I dumped on myself and for the bed with a mosquito net. I told them how amazed I have been at the generosity of the people here. That despite the fact that it is a "Third-world country," I feel that I am always treated beyond my expectations. The people here are rich in their generosity. Rich in their faith that God will provide. That is what matters.

When we visited our Compassion child, Yesenia, just recently, I felt very differently. Yesenia had been looking forward to our visit for weeks. She came running into my arms when we reached her neighborhood. She held so tightly I thought that she wouldn't let go. She cried, and I cried too, as I realized how meaningful this was, and that I could feel every rib as I hugged her. We got inside, and she continued to hug me. Then she burst into tears and cried against my chest. She was nearly inconsolable. She hadn't slept the night before, anticipating our coming. I told her I would cry with her. And I did. Tears of both joy and sadness. I was so happy to be with her. But somehow I felt like a savior. And I am not. Later in the visit, we were asked to share testimonies. Omar from Compassion told us that her parents are not believers. Rachel told them how much it means to be in God's family. I shared our theme verse from Ephesians, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace." (Eph. 2:13-15)

I explained how the wall of sin separated us from God and that we had no way of coming near to God. But through the arms of Christ on the cross, we have a bridge into eternal life. The cross is complete. But the cross in the lives of Yesenia's parents is not complete. They told us over and over again that they were "pobres," poor. But they had much more than my family in Guayaquil. Their home was only one room, but they had running water, a television, and a DVD player. Her mother felt ashamed that she couldn't provide for her children.

I tried to explain to them that we do not want to be sponsors to provide for their children. We want to be sponsors to be a part of God's provision for their family. To be a part of God's faithfulness to their family. But without the faith of her parents, we, Kindred, may continue to be the Jesus in Yesenia's life. To her we are saviors, but it's really God that provides everything. I wish I could help them understand that. I don't want to be a savior. I just want to be an instrument for His work. I gave her parents an extra Bible that I had brought with me. I didn't know why I brought it with me that morning. But now I understand, and I pray that

her parents will read it. That they will read it and learn that they do not have to be ashamed of their poverty. That God and not "gringos" [white people] will provide for their family always. That God is personal and that he loves them. This is my hope. That they would no longer be far away from Christ, but that God would bring them near to Him.

Date: 3/8/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

The Deep South

What an evening! We were invited to a Hoedown this evening, for the missionaries and visitors here in town. When we showed up, the dancing was already under way. I hopped in alive and learned a few steps of line dancing, and as the songs changed, the caller taught us new steps. Since he was from Texas, his slight twang made the calls that much more authentic.



Ronnie Melin

After a few steps we had a dessert break. First I tried some sweet tea- not quite like Mama's, but it'll do here in South America! I made my way around the table, and lo and behold- Banana puddin'! It was the baked kind with meringue on top. Needless to say, I ate way too much of that...I told my northern/Midwestern teammates that if they could spend a week eating half as well as we do in the South, they'd never wonder again why we're so proud to be Southern.

After stuffing our faces, we hopped back onto the dance floor to learn some square-dancing moves. After struggling to learn the steps and finally using them in a couple of songs, the night came to a close. It's good to be here in the south- South America, that is.

Date: 3/10/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Monday 3-10-08

Shell, Ecuador



Kami Kimmel

When we were done with our program, Dana and GooGoo (the kids at my host home) were waiting for me when I got back. I hadn't had supper yet and was so tired I could hardly hold my head up and just wanted to go to bed. However, they really wanted to play with me and somehow God gave me the energy and joy to play with them. They are so excited to have me here, they wait everyday for me to get home so we can play. I give and give so much of myself but am getting SOO much more back.

I've learned that as I try to speak more Spanish with people here and learn more about them, they try to learn more English and learn about me. It's a beautiful thing when people try to understand each other and each other's cultures. I finally get it and I want to be able to show this to people I know back home.

Date: 3/11/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Message from the Youth Encounter office (this is not Danielle).

The International Teams Fall Tour Newsletter is now available for download.

[**Download Now.**](#) (You will need Adobe Reader 6.0 to view this file)



Date: 3/11/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Tuesday March 11th 2008.

I have had some interesting relational opportunities with my host brother and sister lately. On Saturday night before the Hoe-Down with the missionary families I decided that I needed some more exercise (little did I know that I would get plenty at the hoedown with all the dancing we did and especially with Ronnie as my square dance partner!). Dana and GooGoo were playing outside, so I went out there and soon we were running around the church parking lot. (Their house is above the church.) We played some sort of game where I chased them and they were "safe" from me if they were at a certain place in the parking lot. Then we played hide and seek and I quickly discovered their favorite spot! After that game we just ran around for awhile. When I got tired I laid down on the ground and made a game with the kids trying to get me up from the ground. They got tired too and laid spread eagle on their backs next to me. We looked at the stars together and soon GooGoo started singing Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star in Spanish. It was beautiful and as he was singing I was struck again by the thought of how amazing God is and how happy I am to be here!



Kami Kimmel

The other relational ministry opportunity: Last night I took a shower before bed and brushed my teeth. I went in the kids' room to say good night to them and they were saying the same thing over and over and from the motion they were doing I figured out that they wanted to brush their teeth with me. I was thinking "well that's kinda weird" and was starting to try to tell them I had just brushed my teeth. However I realized that I only knew about two of those words in Spanish so I just smiled and followed them into the bathroom wondering what I was getting myself into. It was the most fun I've ever had brushing my teeth! They were fascinated by my travel size toothbrush and my small tube of toothpaste. I started brushing my teeth, for the second time that night, and GooGoo did also. He brushed not only once but twice. Meanwhile Dana was trying to get him off the step stool by the sink so she could take her turn. When GooGoo (his real name is Clovis Jr) was done he blew on my face as a way of telling me he had done a good job brushing.

One of the best things I've learned about relational ministry is meeting people where they are, whether it's brushing my teeth with 3 year olds, playing games with older kids, talking to teenagers about my faith, or talking to an elderly couple before church. It doesn't matter what it is...it can all be done in the name of Jesus and to glorify Him!

Tonight I was talking with Lisseett (my host mom who is actually a year younger than me) and two of her friends about Spanish and English. They were surprised to find out that English doesn't sound the same everywhere. I explained that it sounds much different in the East, West, North, and South, like Spanish sounds different in the coast than in the mountains or the plains. I love these kind of conversations because they help bridge gaps between people and cultures. I am excited when I am actually able to say all those things in Spanish without much help. Tonight I was even able to make a joke with the ladies! It felt great to be able to use humor in a language I barely know.

Date: 3/12/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

Yesterday Rachel, Danielle, and I, along with our Canadian friend Crystal, went to the JUNGLE. The day started with a 2 hour bus ride to Arajuno, which is as far as the buses go. When we got there we walked around town, trying to find the river. Eventually we found a path and walked down. The river was massive and flowing super fast. We had to cross a creaky old Indiana Jones bridge to get to the other side. Rachel was nervous, but we all made it alive. On the other side of the bridge was pure jungle. South American Rainforest, baby. We began to explore, taking the paths carved out by early explorers and their machetes. We passed a papaya tree, so I climbed up and threw down a little snack. We tried a bit, (I tried a lot) and moved on. We spent the whole afternoon trekking through the selva and trying every fruit we saw- bad idea. At the time it seemed like a good idea. That is, until I tasted the absolute worst fruit of my life. After a couple of hours living like Tarzan, we headed back and caught the bus to Shell. That night I reflected on my adventurous day and thought about all the cool things I had seen. Suddenly my body began to react very badly to something I had eaten (probably that rotten papaya) and I began to clear my system out, so to speak. After a few bathroom visits and after having absolutely emptied all the contents of my stomach. I finally went to sleep. It was a rough ending to such a cool day, but all in all it was worth the adventure.



Ronnie Melin

Date: 3/12/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Wednesday March 12, 2008

This morning we gave a program at the hospital. I gave a sharing in English which Danielle translated in Spanish as I was giving it. I know something I said must've been good because I got a couple of amen's at the end! After the program we gave another short program in one of the corridors of the hospital for patients. Then Danielle and I were invited to see newborn twins. I never pass up a chance to hold a baby, so I went to the room of a young mom who had given birth 12 days ago to twin boys. They were each only 2 lbs when they were born, but are now 3 lbs. They were so tiny! I got to help feed one of the babies, but had to use a dropper because they don't want to take the milk on their own. After the nurses left, I held one of the babies and took the opportunity to use my lullaby voice as I like to call it, and began to sing to him. He'd had his eyes closed as most babies do, but when I started singing, he opened his eyes and looked at me. It was a beautiful moment!



Kami Kimmel

While Danielle and I were with the babies, Rachel, Ronnie and Ludvigs sang for patients in the waiting room. After the program we went to the home of a man and his family from a local church. Again, we had a good time sharing fellowship with each other. In the afternoon we had devo's and affirmations, and then had time to rest before supper and a workshop at a local church on how to lead interactive bible stories.

Tonight we had tacos!! It was the first time since we left the states. A couple from the church invited us over for supper as a way of thanking us for the ministry we've done at the church. The husband also works in an airplane workshop which we got to see. We walked in their house and I saw the fixings for tacos on the table. I was so excited! I told them "me corazon es encantada" (by the tacos) which means "my heart is enchanted." We had a good time visiting with them and sharing fellowship with one another. I had a moment in the meal when I thought "Wow, I'm really, actually in South America!" I've been in Ecuador for 2 months already, but sometimes I still feel the amazement that I am really here.

Date: 3/14/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

3-14-08 9:30 pm

Today we had kind of a stressful program. When we got there the kids started surrounding us and it was more than I could take. I hadn't slept well the night before and I was feeling a lot of stress for a number of reasons. I had a very bad headache by the end of the program and was about ready to cry. I didn't think the program went very well, and the kids didn't seem to listen. However even with all this stress, the time spent at the school was worth it if only for the conversation I had with a child before the program. In Spanish, a very young boy asked me why I speak English. And in Spanish, I replied that I was born in a place that speaks English just like he is from a place that speaks Spanish. And he responded back in Spanish, "God made you a different language!" I love spending time with the children here!

**Kami Kimmel**

This afternoon while taking every moment possible to rest, I had the opportunity to help a youth from the church with his English homework. It amazes me how powerful relational ministry is because this is the same teenager, David, that I talked to one of the first nights in Shell. He continued coming up to me after programs and wanted to talk, and one night he asked for help with English homework. I said yes, and knew it would be interesting with the little Spanish I know. So he came over this afternoon and I had the chance to help him.

Tonight we had our last program in Shell. I barely had the energy to keep my head up but somehow God gave me the strength to make it through. Afterwards Ronnie's hosts had all of us over for supper to celebrate his birthday. We had chili and rice with peanut butter cake and ice cream for dessert. It was GOOOD! We had a good time and shared the stories of how our parents met and fell in love. What a random, but fun, day!

Date: 3/14/2008**Submitted by:** Danielle Hance**Journal Entry:**

Alexander

One year old. One week since he came. One ounce of milk every hour.

Alexander was tiny. More than that, bony. I think his bones outweighed his flesh. I could study the human skeleton, holding this baby at the Casa de Fe Orphanage in Shell, Ecuador. The orphanage mom, Patti Sue tells me, "He looks like something you'd expect to come out of Africa."

**Danielle Hance**

Bulging eyes on a mahogany brown backdrop. Big eyes. The only thing big on him. Angular, pointed chin. He feels like a three-month old. Can't walk. Crawl. Talk. Doesn't even cry when you set him back down in the crib. Not like the other five babies in this room, who scream when you set them down, knowing full well that it may be hours before they will be held again.

Alexander's mom dropped him off last week. Most kids arrive at this orphanage after their mom's were asked to dispose of them. Patti Sue says that these kids are blessed to even be alive. "Many dump their babies in the river. They figure that the baby is better off not living," she says. Most of the children here have one syndrome or another. Many have "special needs." Many of the parents think, "Why not start over?"

Alexander's mom is pregnant with another child. That scares me. Alexander's stomach must be the size of a small stone. He is greatly malnourished. He needs to eat but can't. When Kami was holding him, he spit up the contents of his stomach. But they keep trying. They feed him 24 hours a day. One ounce of milk. Every hour.

When my teammates are in another room, I pick him up again from his crib. He weighs a couple pounds at best. I hold his tiny hand--rough and scaly. I can't grip my fingers like a normal baby can.

I hold him against my chest, feeling very motherly. He's a child without a mother. Holding onto life.

One girl here was left for dead at the back of a bus at three days old. Others abused. Some left with disabilities. A few used for sex. Some just simply unplanned, unwanted, uncared for..

But somebody found them. Loves them. All 47 of them. From two months to 12 years. As Alexander's head falls against my right elbow, the phrases, "better off not living," "Why not start over?" loop around my head. "But God doesn't do that," I think. "God created Alexander." I think of what would have happened if God didn't think I was worth it. If he thought it would be better to "dump me in a river" and "start over," rather than dying for my sins. Romans 5:5-6 says, "Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."

Alexander's eyes try to focus on me but can't. His right eye trails off. In his helplessness, he can't even look at me. But Christ died for him. Christ died for Alexander. I tell him, "Cristo te ama, Alexander, Cristo, te ama," until I can't hold him anymore.

I tell this to all the babies. The two-year-old twins with curly black hair and browning teeth, who can't support the weight of their own heads. The children of teen mothers. Children with various syndromes, ailments. The babies scream because I cannot hold them long enough. I walk outside to say goodbye to the older kids. Hug them. Pick them up and spin them around. One girl, Olga asks, "Cuando vas a venir?" When are you coming back? I tell her we are leaving soon. But I know we will live together in heaven someday. Pero solo porque Cristo nos ama. Only because Jesus loves us.

Date: 3/17/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

3-17-08

Happy St Patrick's Day! I didn't wear green and got pinched for it! Tonight we went to a community called Salasacha. It is a Quichua speaking community...much different from spanish! We were given supper, which was quite an interesting experience. The first course was South American chicken soup. Then came the more interesting part of the meal. We had been told that we would be having either rabbit, or cuy (guinea pig). I have a hard time with meat, so I began preparing myself mentally to overcome the challenges that this meal was bound to present!! I was really excited when we began to be served the main course. A woman had several plates on a large platter and when she came up to me there was one with no meat in it!! Seeing this as a sign of grace from God, I took the one without meat quickly before it went to one of my other teammates. I was very excited to not have to eat unfamiliar meat, and my teammates know me so well about my pickiness with meat that they were all smiling and chuckling at me.



Kami Kimmel

I thanked my lucky stars and began eating the rice and potatoes when suddenly appeared a chunk of interesting looking meat in my bowl! The woman serving us had noticed that my bowl didn't have meat and didn't want me to be deprived, so I was given meat....we all laughed at the irony of it. The meat was rabbit, and surprisingly it wasn't too bad. Forgive the catch phrase but it really did taste like chicken. I continued eating...very slowly, because it's common not to drink anything with the meal in South America. I had to smile at what was definitely a cultural experience and meal in South America!

That night in Salasacha we were one of 6 bands that were performing for the first public Christian concert ever in that city. I learned that only 1 % of the community was evangelized. (It is a community of 14,000) There is definitely a need for Jesus. As I thought of the significance of all this, I realized how blessed I am to be able to worship whenever I want to, that I have had the gospel given to me from the time I was born, and that I can read the bible in my own language!! It

is amazing to see God at work here.

Date: 3/18/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Dios solo pagi

It was already getting chilly in this mountainous indigenous community called Salasaca. The elevation here is about 10,000 feet. I walked around the market, looking for gloves to warm my hands until we would play at the Christian folklore outdoor music festival. All the women here wore long black dresses with brightly-colored woven belts, a blouse or sweater, and a spring leaf green shawl clasped with a jeweled pin. Many of them also wore Panama-style hats banded with a thick ribbon. All the men wore long black, sleeveless ponchos. They are all tiny in stature. I don't know how the people can tell each other apart. Even our missionary contacts here have trouble distinguishing people.



Danielle Hance

My friend Karen from Canada, an intern in Bible translation, has been living with these people for a few weeks. Her host mom gave her traditional clothes to wear, so if it wasn't for her blue eyes and blonde hair, I would have thought that she was a local. She led me to a market stall of homemade alpaca goods. The little old Salasacan lady, dressed like all of the other Salasacan women, and very short like all Salasacans, only about as tall as my hips. I found the largest pair of gloves that she had, because although my hands are tiny in American standards, they are large here. I paid two dollars for my red gloves with a llama design. She told me, "Dios solo pagi." I thought she was trying to tell me something about God and didn't understand. But then I realized she was speaking to me in Quichua, an indigenous, Incan language. All the people speak Quichua here although they understand and can speak some Spanish. I asked my friend Karen what she said. "Thank you," she told me. I told the lady, "Dios solo pagi," and she smiled at me. I had spoken her language.

I learned a few other phrases in Quichua, so that I could introduce myself. I can say my name and where I'm from. "ñucaga Danielami. Dakota del Norte mundami gani." I also learned "Dios bendiceatchu," (just pretending to sneeze at the end of this phrase works pretty well, "Achoo") which means, "God bless you." Quichua sounds like a strange combination of Chinese, Spanish, and Swahili. It was fun to have the euphoria of learning a language for the first time again, getting excited anytime I could say or understand anything.

But the phrase that stuck with me was, "Dios solo pagi." It sounds very much like, "Dios solo paga," which means "only God pays." And that's true. God is the only one who pays. He's the only one who paid for my sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus." Jesus paid the price of my death with His death. Without that, I wouldn't have anything to be grateful for. During this Holy Week, every time I say "thank you" or "gracias," I will remember, "Dios solo pagi." God alone paid the price for my sins, and I am eternally grateful.

Date: 3/19/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

3-19-08

If you have never been immersed in another culture, here is an example of what culture shock might feel like:



Kami Kimmel

Well, I have to use the bathroom very badly but I'm not going to because I will have 4 pairs of eyes watching my every move. I'm tired of plans changing every 10 minutes. I'm tired of being stared

at because I'm white. I am tired of not being able to drink water from the faucet, because my body isn't used to the water in this place. I'm tired of speaking and singing in Spanish. I am tired of the fact that my teammates are the only people I can have real conversations with. They're pretty cool people, but after living in each other's armpits for 7 months it becomes a little less than exciting to see each other everyday! I'm tired of not being able to call friends and family when I want to. I'm tired of taking time for breakfast every morning. Today I ordered a hamburger for lunch and they asked me in Spanish if I wanted chicken or carne. WHAT?? Hamburgers are BEEF! How can a hamburger be chicken?? I'm tired of not being able to flush toilet paper down the toilet. And PESOS? WHY?? Stop signs-- USE THEM!! (I was almost run over today.) And there's got to be something more exciting to eat than rice. I'm tired of wearing the same three outfits all the time. And speaking of time...when something says it's going to start at 9 am, it should start at 9 am....not noon! I'm tired of not getting more time to myself than the time I am sleeping. I'm tired of people thinking that I am so interesting...I'm just me! I'm tired of never knowing what is going on because of the language barrier. I'm tired of my brain having to work twice as hard to listen, understand, and speak Spanish. I'm tired of being so tired by the end of the day that I can barely hold my head up....but I still have to talk to people because that's what we do. I'm tired of eating eggs. I didn't like them when we came and after a hundred servings later, I STILL don't like them! If I have to eat them one more time, I just might go home. (I wouldn't seriously go home...) And I don't want to hear dogs barking, people playing futbol in the house, roosters crowing, planes taking off, or spanish for the first things I hear when I wake up. I JUST WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE!!

Jesus, HELP ME!!!!

And here is a lesson I remembered, that made all these feelings go away and refocus my thoughts.....

Good Friday: I remembered a very valuable lesson tonight. I realized that I have been looking too much at myself to see the cross. Let me explain. In training we had a session about the concept of "ducking" so the people we minister to will see the cross and not us. I've been so caught up in thinking about what I can and can't do that I haven't been focusing on Jesus much. After worship I cried because I knew my focus had been on the wrong things. During supper, I was trying to figure out what in the world was wrong with me, and that is when the word "duck" came to my mind...and it hit me. It's not about me!! On a holy day such as Good Friday, when the focus is on the cross, I remembered that it's not about me, and it's ALL ABOUT THE CROSS!! Alleluia!

Date: 3/21/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

3-21-08 Good Friday

Tonight I am watching the Passion with my host family, and something amazing happened. Karen, who is about 8 years old, when Jesus was being beaten, said that he was ugly. I was able to explain in Spanish that yes it is ugly, but it was necessary. even more importantly, I was able to explain (in Spanish) WHY it was necessary for Jesus to go through that pain for us!! She was asking questions about Jesus and God and I was able to explain a lot in Spanish. Praise to Jesus!!



Kami Kimmel

Date: 3/24/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Greetings from Bogota, Colombia!! Happy Easter! We finished our time in Ecuador and arrived in Bogota last monday. It is quite different than Ecuador! The chocolate and coffee here are amazing! We're experiencing a lot of new foods. Two of the most common are soup that has potatoes and eggs in it that is served for breakfast, and something called arepas which are like a thick potato pancake. I had a very peculiar kind of fruit that looked like an orange on the outside, but was kind of slimy juice on the inside. The slimy juice surrounds seeds that are sucked down. I am enjoying the new sights, sounds, and tastes of Colombia!!



Kami Kimmel

Thank you for your continued prayers and encouragement! :)

Love,

Kami

Date: 3/25/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

What is it like to celebrate Easter in another country? I will tell you what it was like for me. :) I woke up bright and early at 6 am for worship at 7 am. My hosts served me breakfast before we left, and we led worship at Ludvigs' church. It was amazing to experience Easter morning worship here! We included two hymns in our worship....Jesus Christ is Risen Today, and Because He Lives....in Spanish, and it was amazing to hear these songs I knew so well in another language. We led another worship service at a different church at 10, which was really 11 because that's just how things are in South America, and it was a very different kind of Lutheran worship than I had ever experienced! It was more like southern baptist. We sang the song "Danco Como David" and we REALLY danced!! It was so much fun!! No, there were no Easter bunnies, or egg hunts, but it was more amazing because of the worship. We had the amazing blessing of experiencing Easter morning worship TWICE!! And yes, it was more different than I had ever experienced Easter, but that is why I loved it!! (...And we did get a little bit of chocolate because our contact bought us each a chocolate egg.) That night we saw fireworks at a huge park in Bogota. This weekend had been a theatre festival from around the world and last night was the closing, which included the most amazing fireworks I've ever seen in my life!



Kami Kimmel

We are going to be in Bogota for the rest of the week and then will travel to three other cities before heading to Venezuela to finish off our tour.

Date: 3/25/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

"Jesus paid it all – all to Him I owe; sin had left a crimson stain...He washed me white as snow." *Jesus Paid It All*

Good Friday March 21, 2008



It rained today and I felt at home. Every year in Arkansas it rains on Good Friday. It is almost like Heaven is **Rachel Ringlaben** remembering this day and mourning along with us. For devotions today, we read the Passion Story aloud together. I realized how often I forget the weight and price of my freedom and life. The season of Lent reminds me of the unimaginable price my God paid for me in order to enjoy communion with Him – giving up His only Son as an offering for my sins. How often I forget the price! How often I forget how great the debt I owed that Christ canceled through His blood.

We led a Good Friday service this afternoon and sang *Jesus Paid It All*. My favorite line is "I'll wash my garments white in the blood of Calvary 's Lamb." Only Christ's perfect sacrifice – His blood – can make my stains disappear. Only on the cross can I hang my sinful garments and exchange them for a robe of righteousness. How deep is the Father's love for us!

During the service today we sang the hymns, *O Sacred Head Now Wounded* and *The Old Rugged Cross* in Spanish. I had a moment where I missed my home church family during this season of Lent and how I wasn't going to hear our choir sing *Jesus Remember Me When You Come into Your Kingdom*. But as we continued singing the hymns I began to realize how many people my Savior bled for. Here I was worshipping and singing songs about Christ's sacrifice with people I have never met and probably will not see again until heaven – it dawned on me that my Jesus bled and died for them, too. My Savior gave up His spirit and took His last breath for my brothers and sisters, not only in the United States, but for the people here in Bogotá, in Ecuador, in every city, in every time and in every place. My Redeemer suffered and paid the price for us *all*. How precious that thought is – we are *all* equal at the foot of the cross.

We all gaze up and see this man, Jesus of Nazareth, paying the price on *our* cross. It is at the cross where humanity realizes how desperately we need a Savior – and we find it in Christ Jesus. We can all find forgiveness there at Calvary , where the crimson river tide pulls us in closer to look upon the face of the One who created us and the One who has redeemed us. It is here at the cross where we can hear Jesus say, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise ." This is the promise for all who believe.

"Jesus paid it all – all to Him I owe..." These words from our hymn are etched into my mind...

At the cross I hear Jesus say, "Beloved, rest assured, your debt has been paid."

It is accomplished.

Date: 3/26/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

Impressions of Colombia

So here we are, finally in Colombia. It 's been a little more than a week and we 're adjusting to life in a new country. It 's been nice getting to know Ludvigs ' home and family. We 've met his friends and seen all the places fom his stories. It has been a great time of understanding another teammate 's life and culture.



Ronnie Melin

Bogotá is a big city- 8 million people and growing. There are a ton of Lutheran churches. We 've been a different one every day , and we still have a week 's worth of churches left to visit! We 've traveled all over the city to visit these places and we 've barely seen all that is Bogotá. As we 've been working with the churches, one thing that 's killed me is the concept of youth. Apparently someone in their early thirties falls in the same category as a teenager. And pretty much until someone gets married they live with their parents. There's not a lot of pressure to grow up or be independent here. We have had some interesting cultural experiences too. The food here is great, and I absolutely love bandeja paisa. We attended a play during the Theatre Festival and went to the big shebang on the closing night. That was an experince- being surrounded by literally millions of people in one park watching the hugest fireworks show of my life, and having to wait two hours to

catch a taxi back home. We also celebrated Easter here. They have Holy Week, which lasts from the week before Easter until the Tuesday morning after. We got to celebrate the resurrection Colombian style.

Today we traveled to Sogamoso and got to finally see how the country looks. The appearance is quite different from Ecuador. They use a lot of red brick in their architecture, and the homes in general seem to be bigger and nicer. I'm excited to see what this week holds for us and what other new experiences we'll have during our time here in Colombia.

Date: 3/29/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Recognizing our Father

The last few weeks for Kindred have been the most difficult. We've been adjusting to a new country and customs (here in Colombia). And we also had our first holiday away from home. I love Lent, Easter, and all my church and home traditions that come with it. I longed to sing "Abide with Me" on Good Friday. On Easter, I missed having hard-boiled egg wars with my family, hearing the brass play "Jesus Christ has Risen today," eating muffins, and hunting Easter eggs.



Danielle Hance

On Easter Sunday, we led two services (one at 7 a.m. in Ludvigs' church) and did a program in the park. We bought Kinder eggs (the closest thing to Easter candy we could find here). One little girl really reminded me what Easter (and all year long) is about.

She was about two years old. She was wearing a little white Easter dress which complimented her olive skin and black hair. As I walked by her, she smiled at me. I sat down to eat my Easter tamale and hot chocolate, and she came over and held my hand. "Papá," she said. "Donde está?" I asked, "Where is he?" She did not answer me. She just took me by the hand, and we walked. We stopped to smell some white lilies, and then continued to walk around the grassy patio. "Papá," she said again. Then we kept walking, holding hands. Until we stood in front of a tall Colombian man in a beige shirt. "Papá!" she shrieked and climbed into his arms.

"Ella es mi hija," he said proudly, "She is my daughter."

Everything was so simple. She smiled. She took my hand. She said, "Dad." She took me to him.

Sometimes I start to think that everything is so complicated. I got bogged down in the hard questions of faith. I think, "How can I lead someone to Christ if I can't explain the Holocaust?" But it really is simple. Show the joy of Christ, invoke the name of the Father, take people by the hand, lead them to the arms of the Father.

When we say "Father," he says, "Child." In the Gospel of John, when Mary says, "Savior," Jesus says, "Mary." All we need to do is recognize that He is our Savior. What a beautiful gift of life we have been given!

Date: 3/29/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Jesus, mi fiel amigo (Jesus, my faithful friend)

The words to this song rang true for me last night. Why was last night different than any other night? I gave my testimony for the first time in Spanish! (up until now, I gave it in English and one of my teammates translated it for me as I gave it.) The night



before, I had been practicing my testimony with Ronnie at our host home, and was close to giving up. I was very nervous and unsure of myself, and didn't think I could get up there and give my testimony well in Spanish. Ronnie prayed for me and as we were talking about my struggle, he said, "Kami, who has been with you and who has helped you through your time here...and who is going to continue to be with you? Just trust in God, and let him use you to share what he's done in your life."

Kami Kimmel

Before the program, my teammates prayed for me. The time came during the program for me to give my sharing. I put a picture of my family on a music stand in front of me, glanced at it for encouragement before I began, felt the support of my teammates, and for the first time shared my story in Spanish. Rather than feel nervous, I was excited. Excited that I was in another place and able to share what God has done in me in another language!! And for the first time, I finally believed in the words I had shared so many times before....that it doesn't matter what words or language we can speak, it doesn't matter where we come from, or what color our skin is....Jesus Christ died for each one of us, and that is what is important!

After my sharing, we sang a beautiful song, "Jesus mi fiel amigo", that talks about how Jesus is our faithful friend and mi dulce caminar 'my sweet path" and I realized again how faithful Jesus has been in my life, and how sweet it has been and how sweet it continues to be to walk with him!! Then we sang Te Alabare (I worship you) and I was brought to tears during the line "Hoy hay gozo en mi corazon, con mi canto te alabare" The translation is "Today I have joy in my heart. With my song I praise you." Today I have joy in my heart because of what Jesus has done for me, and for the precious sacrifice He made not just for me but for the entire world! I have joy because the Savior of the world is in my heart and I praise him not only with my song, but with my very life.

Date: 3/31/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

Remembering Easter Sunday...

3/23/08

Alleluia! Christ is risen! How beautiful it was to celebrate the resurrection of our LORD with the global Church.



Rachel Ringlaben

We led three services today! At 7:00 a.m. we led worship at Ludvigs' home church. We sang hymns El Señor Resucitó (Christ the Lord is Risen Today) and Porque él Vive (Because He Lives) with the congregation this morning and I loved hearing the hymns I sing back home being sung in a different language. Danielle delivered the message for the morning – she was so filled with the Holy Spirit. It was absolutely beautiful.

At 10:00 a.m. we led a service at Iglesia Castillo Fuerte. I gave my testimony and talked about how as Christians we have resurrection in our lives everyday. The congregation was very charismatic – I felt like I was in my home church! I loved seeing people lift their hands in worship of our Savior who has risen to give us victory.

On the way to our next venue, our contact bought us Kinder Eggs (chocolate covered candy in the shape of an egg with a toy inside) because he knew that we hide eggs on Easter day in the states. At 3:00 p.m. we went to a park to do an outdoor evangelism program. Soon, a huge crowd formed around us as we sang songs, did puppet shows, and gave testimonies.

Although I missed being home for Easter, waking up early for the church Easter egg hunt, walking into our lily-filled sanctuary, hearing our choir sing with trumpets accompaniment during Christ the Lord is Risen Today, and ending our service with the congregation shouting, "Alleluia, Christ is risen indeed!" -- I was reminded of the joy of the Easter message. How Christ has called us by name to be witnesses to His glory.

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my

brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her" - John 20:17-18

On Kindred we have the great privilege to tell our brothers and sisters in South America that "we have seen the Lord!" We have the joy of sharing that Christ has brought resurrection to our hearts and lives. We have the burden to show the love of the Father who gave His only Son for us. How truly amazing it is to shout from our souls that "we have seen the Lord!" Amen.

Date: 4/5/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

April 1, 2008 Tunja, Colombia

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." - John 3:16-17



Rachel Ringlaben

God has a way of putting me in check. My attitude was less than perfect today...okay it was not good at all. After being picked up an hour later than I was told, our program being cancelled and after a week of miscommunication between us and our contacts, I was ready to go back to Bogotá. Our team took a break and went to Villa de Leyva, a Spanish colonial town, for lunch and hang out time to refresh and reconnect with each other. We had a great time but soon realized that we were going to arrive late to our 3 o'clock venue at a drug rehabilitation center in Tunja. I was so exhausted and was ready to "get through" our last program before returning to Bogotá. By the time we got to our venue, other frustrations had taken place with communication and preparation and I was ready to leave.

We started our program in front of fifteen men at the rehab center and the Holy Spirit convicted me of my attitude – I was not pleasing God with my thoughts or mentality during the past few hours. Seeing these men worship reminded me of the prisons we ministered to in the states. These men had messed up, but they knew where to turn. These men were falling on their faces in worship of the God who is renewing and restoring each one of them.

With hands raised and loud voices we shouted, "Eres todopoderoso...Eres fuerte, invincible y no hay nadie como Tu." Truly there is no one like our LORD – He who makes the wretch His precious jewel, who renews our strength like eagles, and who corrects us in love so we may grow closer to His heart.

During our prayer many men laid prostrate on the floor before God and prayed aloud as Ludvigs prayed. Oh, how beautiful are spirits broken before the LORD, our Redeemer...We spoke on John 3:17, how Christ did not come to condemn us, but to save us.

As we sang our last song, Alabaré, I was overwhelmed by the angel chorus in front of me as the men worshipped our Father in spirit and in truth.

"This is the attitude of worship," I thought. "Broken hearts worshipping a holy God. Those who have been forgiven much, love much."

As forgiven people all we can do is fall face down in gratitude to our God who has truly SET US FREE.

Amen.

Date: 4/6/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

April 4, 2008 Ibagué, Colombia

"I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." - Philippians 4:13

These past few days have been really hard for me. For the last three days I have been throwing up, been bed-ridden with stomach cramps, and dehydrated. I couldn't go to Ibagué with my teammates because I had to recover from my sickness. I felt fine to go ahead and travel later, but when I arrived in Ibagué late on Wednesday night the pain in my stomach was excruciating. I was in so much pain that I couldn't get to bed until 3:30 in the morning.



Rachel Ringlaben

Yolanda, my host mom, took me to a clinic in the morning. After waiting forever, I was seen, examined, had blood drawn, and sent back into the waiting room to wait for the results. An hour later I was seen by a doctor who said that my body is reacting poorly to the changing of locations so frequently. I have a traveler's sickness due to the change of locations, food, water, and climate. He said it will come and go until I get back to the states and he gave me medicine for the pain and to treat the bloating in my stomach and intestines. He also put me on a strict diet, which is very hard to follow when I don't have any control over my meals. But the people here in Ibagué are so accommodating. They have ushered me to doctors, pharmacies, and restaurants. They have asked repeatedly if there is anything that they can do to make me feel better. They have treated me like an honored guest. And I thank God that I have seen His love through my hosts and contacts here in Ibagué.

After dinner I went to the church for our evening program even though I felt like crawling in bed and lying in the fetal position because of the horrible cramping in my stomach...but God gave me a miracle. Before we started, I prayed that God would give me the strength to make it through the program...

God granted me unspeakable joy, healing, and love during our service. The Holy Spirit was ever present tonight. As we sang each song I felt us drawing closer to the throne of Christ. As we all sang, "Si el espíritu de Dios está en mi corazón, alabo como David," I could sense us uniting as people of God – praising Him in His sanctuary. I was a witness to a miracle – God granted me healing and strength for our program so I could focus on ministering to my brothers and sisters in Christ. I sang loud, "Si tuvieras fe como un grano de mostaza...tu le dirías a los enfermos, 'Sanense,' y los enfermos se sanarán." (If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can tell your sickness to heal and they will be healed.)

"I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." It is only through Christ that I was able to sing, preach, play guitar and djembe without pain. I praise Him for the tiny miracle He performed in me tonight and for the miracles I saw Him do in the lives of my brothers and sisters during our service tonight.

To Christ alone be the glory! Amen!

Date: 4/6/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Make Me New

Tonight as I was getting ready for bed, the sound of something small came to my ears and as I looked around the floor, I saw with sadness that it was a bead from the necklace that my cousin Julie gave me before coming to South America. I bent down to pick it up and more beads started falling off, and I realized that the necklace would probably not be able to be worn anymore. This was very disappointing because it is a cool necklace



Kami Kimmel

and it matches every piece of clothing I brought, and I've been wearing it all the time since February. However, Danielle, always the objective teammate, said, "Well, maybe you can bring her the beads and she'll make you a new one when you get home." And immediately I was cheered up.

I realized in that moment how blessed we are as sinful people to be able to take all of the broken, cruddy pieces of our lives to Jesus, who will take them away for us and make us a completely new person! And what is more amazing is that He makes us new not only once or twice in our lives but EVERY TIME we sin! And what a priceless gift it is. All we have to do is confess when we've done something wrong and ask for forgiveness. We are all human and sin everyday, but I am SO glad that I don't have to live this life alone, and that there is someone who loves me enough to die for me, and someone who makes me new!

"Make Me New"--lyrics of a song written by a friend of mine

VS 1: One too many times I've turned away. One too many times I've let you go. Won't you give me strength to live for you. Take this life of mine and make me new!

Chorus: make me over and Lord won't you make me new. Make me over Lord, just like you. Lord whatever you do, please be sure to make me new.

VS 2: One too many times I've gone astray. One too many times I've lost your light. Won't you give me strength to follow you. Take this life of mine and make me new. End

This is my prayer for the last month in South America. It has been difficult sometimes to keep going, and easy to think of myself and how much I'd rather be at home and with familiar people, places, and things. But my prayer is for Jesus to take away what I've done wrong, to make me new, to give me the strength to keep on following Him and His call in my life to be on this team, and finally to serve Him in every moment!

Your sister in Christ,

Kami Kimmel

Date: 4/9/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

Apart from our time in Bogotá, we've visited three other cities: Sogamoso and Tunja to the north and Ibagué to the south.

Sogamoso- We got to see where Ludvigs grew up and sing at the school he went to. Kami and I, along with our contact, Oscar, stayed with the grandmotherliest old lady in all of Colombia. She was great and I'll probably miss her most of anybody here. Our last day in Sogamoso we had to make an hour and 1/2 worth of material last four hours for a workshop on Praise and Worship. Fortunately, Oscar was able to easily fill two hours of that time. (If you ever hand a Latino a microphone you'll see what I mean)

Tunja- Our fist night there was a talent show We watched the kids try their hardest and then Rachel and Ludvigs did a duet, then I played an original song. Oscar, a recording engineer, was inspired, so he had me record that song as well as another with Rachel. (Hopefully one of these days I'll get a copy of that...)

Ibagué- Tropical, warm climate. We spent most of the time between the apartment we were staying in and the church. We ate most of our meals at the church's comedor. There was plenty of time to relax and more time to address team issues. I spent Sunday afternoon getting to know the rest of the city, led by the Pastor's lovely daughters.

Here we are now, back in Bogotá, counting down the days until we fly to Venezuela!



Ronnie Melin

Date: 4/10/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Culture Shock....stage 3, acceptance of what is different and being okay with it.

The inspiration for this journal entry came when Ronnie said a couple days ago that rather than think of everything as different, think of the things that have become "the new familiar".



Kami Kimmel

For example, rice. We pretty much know that we will have it served at least once a day. Rice is just what people eat here.

I understand now why people want to give me slippers when they see me barefoot in their houses. In the US a lot of times people take their shoes off upon entering a house (as is the custom in my family culture) to show respect for the house and its furnishings. Here in South America, barefootedness is typically viewed as a sign of poverty.

Today at lunch, I looked up and the two kids my host mom teaches preschool to were both staring at me while I was eating. Rather than get irritated that yet another person was staring at me, I told myself that since they were 3 and 5 years old, I was probably the first gringa they had ever seen. I look different and talk different so yes it's understandable why they'd be staring at me. And I turned the staring into a game. I stared back, in a friendly non-creepy way of course, and made silly faces with them and played peek-a-boo.

And yes, my teammates all know Spanish better than me, but it is ok! They took lots more classes on it and have lived in lots more places that use Spanish than I ever have, so what a blessing it is for me to have a chance to learn Spanish and be able to ask them for help! I've seen through them how useful it can be to know this language and I am happy to have this opportunity even though it is my first and definitely not the first time for my teammates.

Yes Danielle and Ronnie talk in classical music terms and talk about music theory and sometimes it drives me bonkers but it's OK because they both went to school for music! Thank goodness I know people with different backgrounds than me because I can learn so much more.

And speaking of learning...I thought I was finished with learning when I graduated from grad school. Little did I know that this year was going to be the hugest learning experience of my life and I now known what Dean Hine (one of my grad school professors) was talking about in my Third Age Learning class when he said learning is a life-long process, something we'll always be doing throughout our life. And it is good because I think we can learn something from every life experience we encounter.

And YES my teammates and I all come from different places with different talents, and with our own story. But THANK GOODNESS because how boring would this team be if we were all 5 from Illinois, or if all 5 of us had a southern accent, or if all 5 of had a northern accent, or if all 5 of us played guitar, or if all 5 of us used the same testimony, or if we never fought about whether it's pop or coke!

I am grateful for how God made each of us different and I am fully realizing that we each have our own, unique and special purpose in the body of Kindred and in the body of Christ!

1 Corinthians 12: 4-11 "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them

to each one, just as he determines."

So, if you've ever felt like me, like you don't have a place and like you don't matter, you are important, and you do matter, and we all have a place in the body of Christ to be used for His glory!!

Date: 4/11/2008

Submitted by: Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Journal Entry:

Message from Youth Encounter Staff (this is not Ludvigs).

The Kindred Overseas Tour Newsletter is now available for download.

[Download it here.](#)



Ludvigs Ayala Porras

Date: 4/11/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Praising God

John 4:21-24 "Jesus declared, 'Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.'"



Kami Kimmel

Today was a big day. It was my first time that I didn't play the keyboard for a program when a keyboard was available. You may wonder why. Well I know that I've used playing piano as a way of defining myself. But I want my whole identity to be in Christ, so I decided to challenge myself to not play piano for anymore of our programs in South America. It wasn't easy! We gave a program this morning at a Bible translation center in Bogota where they had a Yamaha keyboard exactly like the one I played in my college praise band. And it took everything I had in me not to get behind the keyboard and twinkle the ivories. I sang and shook the egg, and I praised God with joy.

Then we rehearsed for awhile and again, I had the same keyboard available but didn't play it. And again, it wasn't easy. But at least I didn't run out to a tree and cry for two hours like our first rehearsal at training in August when I didn't have a keyboard. We practiced a couple of new songs that I worked out harmonies to. And then it happened....the tears came to my eyes and the devil started telling me that I'm not as good of a musician as everyone has always told me, and that I can't praise God with the voice God gave me. It took all I had in me to stay at rehearsal, but after an attitude check I knew the right thing to do.

After the program we had free time, and unfortunately I continued thinking that I was only valuable if I played the piano. As we were preparing for another program that evening, I was told I was giving my sharing. I said that I didn't want to, and my teammates said that if I didn't give it, they'd all sit down so I'd have to give it anyway. (Now that is some tough love!) I had some time to think about it and knew that it was the right thing to do. So I agreed to give my sharing.

In the car on the way to the program, I talked to Danielle and Ronnie about my struggle of not being enthusiastic about worshipping anymore, and that it's just become something I do. Ronnie said to pray for God to change my heart. So, when we got to the church, I started praying that exact prayer... for a heart to worship God. We sang Te Alabare and God gave me the answer in one line "en todo tiemp te alabare", which means in ALL times I will praise You. In ALL times... not just when the songs are in English, not just when I'm playing the piano, not just when I'm 100% happy, and not just at night when my voice is warmed up well.... but in ALL TIMES I will praise the

Lord!

And after this song, I gave my testimony for the second time in Spanish. And for the second time in one day I praised God without the keyboard, without letting it define my praise and without letting playing the piano define me! I know it is a moment by moment and day by day process, but my prayer is for God to change my heart about worship, that my worship would be how He wants me to worship and not how I want to worship. I knew coming into our time in South America that this year isn't about me playing music. I knew that God had bigger lessons for me to learn. But that doesn't make it easy. God has taken almost everything I thought true about myself and is stripping it away to make something more beautiful-a woman who is completely and 100% defined by her love of Jesus Christ and His love for her.

"Change the Way" by Aaron Shust

"king of all the universe we love you and we come to you now asking for your healing touch. We need you this very hour. Would you help us comprehend what it means to worship you cuz we're blinded by our circumstance. Heal our eyes today. May we know your love through the course through our veins circling our hearts, embracing our souls. we need your love, grace to remain to rearrange our hearts. Change the way we praise."

Date: 4/12/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Open Doors

Open doors. Church doors. This is something I have noticed throughout our time in South America. Church doors are almost always open. Not just a little bit open. But all the way open. Sometimes I wonder if doors exist because I can't see them. Here are a couple of my journal entries about open doors:

This morning, we were with "descapacitados" or disabled people. It was the first time we've worked with disabled people this whole tour. Many of them had sticky hands from the suckers they had been given. It was really hard to understand, but they were full of joy.

Danielle Hance



One disabled man stood the whole time. He didn't know the words to the songs, so for all of them, he would sing, in whatever key he chose, at the top of his lungs, what I understood as "Padre." I guess he is not bashful about crying out to the father. Another petite older lady with short, straight grey hair kept proclaiming blessings!

We did pretty much a kids' program, and some of the kids from the neighborhood hear us (because of the open doorway) and walked in. That's one of my favorite things about South America--open doors. Truly everybody is welcome here. Nobody is bashful about just walking in...

...During the service, the doors of the church were completely open. People walked by. Some stopped to listen. One walked in. I know that in a North Dakota winter, where I live, it's just not practical to keep the church doors wide open. But metaphorically-speaking, we can be inviting as a church body--letting the outside world feel comfortable enough to stop and listen, and maybe even walk in.

Date: 4/14/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

*"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and **has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility**, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His*

*purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, **thus making peace**, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by **which he put to death their hostility.**" - Ephesians 2:13-16*

Today is our last day in Colombia. Time has flown by so fast here compared to the two months we spent in Ecuador. What I've learned most from my time here in Colombia is how great and powerful, yet intimate and personal our God really is. I see it in the faces of those we serve, of those who serve us, and of those we bring the gospel to for the very first time. God is so big that He created every person we've encountered on our tour here. But at the same time, God is so personal and that He longs to have deeper communion with every single human on this planet. It amazes me! Each host family has a different story about how God has changed their lives and how He has moved in their congregation, city, and country. I could sit and listen to my hosts talk for hours about their relationship with God because it reminds me how grand this family of Christ is.



Rachel Ringlaben

In her sharing, Kami talks about how language and culture can divide people, but the only thing that can truly unite human beings is the pure and holy love of Jesus Christ our Lord. I love it when she gives her sharing because she reminds me of who is responsible for unity...the Holy Spirit living in us. We cannot rely on governments, guerillas, presidents, etc. We, who have indwelling of the Holy Spirit, have the responsibility to preach unity and reconciliation to our divided world. We, as ambassadors of Christ, have the privilege of sharing the great news that our God has torn down the dividing wall of hostility between us and Himself and between us and our fellow man. Only in Christ can we all discover the peace that passes all understanding which can guard our hearts. Only in the arms of our Savior can we surrender our prejudice, bitterness, and unforgiveness. Only through the work of the Holy Spirit can true unity and peace begin: within ourselves and in our relationships with others. Only through Him can we find eternal peace.

This past week has been hard for me. I received news from home that it is likely my brother, Topher, will be deployed to fight in Iraq soon. I can be angry, afraid, resentful, bitter, a number of different destructive emotions. Or I can choose to trust in a peace-loving Lord, in a protecting God. I must choose to have faith that the same God who formed my brother in the womb is the same God who will protect him from harm. I must choose to live in peace, even when the world does not.

I must continue to pray that the world comes to know the Christ who has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

Date: 4/19/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

Maracaibo, Venezuela.....on the coast

Living Water

Water. I am drawn to it. I have loved water, especially going to the lake since I was young. I grew up camping every summer with a circle of family friends. Several weekends a summer my family went camping and took the boat on the lake. I loved (and still do) telling my dad to drive the boat faster so I can feel more wind in my face and put my hands out to feel the breeze flow through my fingers. I am drawn to the majesty and beauty of water.



Kami Kimmel

Tonight (4/16) I had the opportunity to see God's beauty in a large lake at Maracaibo, Venezuela. They call it a lake but it is more like an ocean inlet. After being in big city after big city I've been craving time to be in God's natural beauty. On our way to a birthday party tonight, the girls who took us took a detour and much to my excitement I realized we were at a large body of water. As soon as we got out of the car I could feel the ocean breeze and smell the salty water. In that moment I knew I was right where I wanted to be. There wasn't a beach to walk on... it was lined with large rocks. Carefully I found a seat on a rock and enjoyed the water. Ronnie was talking and I asked him to be quiet for a bit so I could hear the sound of the rushing waves. I closed my eyes and blocked out everything except for the sound of the waves and the feel of the salty, warm sea

breeze on my face.

A couple days ago I told Ronnie that water soothes my soul (we were talking about how much we were looking forward to seeing natural beauty) and tonight when I was looking at the ocean and thinking about that comment more I realized why not much more than water can make me feel so peaceful. First of all, I am reminded of the body of Christ analogy in 1 Cor 12. Imagine what the ocean would be if there was only one drop of water – there wouldn't be one! But instead it takes lots of drops of water to make up the ocean. Like the body of Christ, it takes lots of people to do His work.

My favorite reason for why I love water so much is that Jesus Christ is the living water. It's interesting to me that Jesus is compared to water. Water is a basic necessity of life, something ALL of us need to live. Jesus is the water of life. We need Him to live. Water is such a vital aspect of our human bodies and without it we die. Without Jesus, we die. In the moments here in South America when it's so hot I feel faint without water, I realize the comparison of Jesus and water, and I see how much I need Jesus!

I've learned the truth of the necessity of water here in South America. There have been times when it was difficult to get water. We always had to make sure we had some extra because we couldn't just go to the faucet or we would get sick. Right now we are in a place with as much access to clean, cold water as we want and I am sooo grateful for it! (especially because Maracaibo is so hot!) And because of this experience with how precious a resource water is, I realize how precious Jesus is to my life. Like the water that flows through my body keeping me alive, Jesus flows in me and through me, keeping me alive!!

Kami

Date: 4/19/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Alleluia

The days leading up to our arrival in Venezuela were very stressful. Ludvigs visited the Venezuelan Embassy in Colombia multiple times, hoping to get a visa. On Monday, the day that we were flying to Venezuela, he returned to the embassy to find out if he had received the visa or not. They told him that if his application was accepted that he wouldn't receive the visa until Wednesday or Thursday. I had some very stressful moments with the office trying to figure out what we should do. Should he fly with us without a visa? Should he wait? Why did he even need a visa in the first place?

The embassy website said that Colombian citizens don't need visas, but with the recent political tensions Hugo Chavez, the Venezuelan president had implemented restricted immigration policies for Colombians. So we didn't know what to do. Ludvigs called saying that he had stopped the visa application process and was going to fly with us anyways.

I told the office to send lots of prayers our way, and then I headed to Ludvigs' house to print off the tickets. When it came time to print, the printer ran out of ink. Ludvigs' dad went to go buy more. Then Ronnie had left some gifts at his host home and headed back to get them. In 40 minutes or so, he came back with his gifts and a mail packet from the office that had just come. An hour later, Ludvigs' dad came back with more ink. We printed the tickets, said a quick prayer, and hurried to the airport to check-in. We made it to the airport in pouring rain with about 4 minutes left to spare.

Then Ronnie realized that he had left his churango (an Andean stringed instrument) in the taxi. We called the taxi company to try to get it back. We checked-in and were about to go through security when we found out that the taxi driver had come back with the churango. He got there, and the taxi driver had left. Meanwhile I was waiting at the terminal while all the passengers boarded, hoping my teammates would come soon. We boarded the plane just as it was finishing.



Danielle Hance

We sat down, and Kami was asked to have her luggage inspected. Then Ronnie was asked if he had brought a small guitar. At first, we thought they were talking about his guitar that was already on the plane. Then we realized it was his churango. So Ronnie went off the plane with the stewardess to go get it. Kami came back, having had to deflate a couple of soccer ball souvenirs that she had bought. Ronnie got back on the plane with his churango.

We had a connecting flight in Panama. When we got off the plane, everyone had to use the bathroom, and I was left watching all of our stuff. When the boys came back, I wanted to go to the terminal because our plane was already boarding, but they wanted to wait for everyone. I told them that we had to get there soon, and that I was going to check. I started walking and saw a screen of departures. Our plane was on LAST CALL. I hurried back to tell my teammates and rushed across 32 gates to tell the agents that I had four more teammates coming. We got on with very little time to spare!

We had a very turbulent flight, but more turbulence would come when we stepped off the plane. We were the last ones off the plane because we had to retrieve the guitars. They gave us the immigration and customs forms when we got off the plane (instead of in the plane, as is normal). We took forever filling them out and made lots of mistakes. We could fit the whole address in the spaces. I had to write down that my camera was worth \$20, so that my cost of luggage estimate would work out. We all wrote that the state was "Furia" (anger) instead of "Zulia." We weren't even finished filling them out when the immigration officer walked rapidly over to tell us to hurry up and get on through. Nobody else was left outside of customs.

We sent Ludvigs up first since we were the least sure that he would be able to get in. The officer looked at his papers and said, "No! No! No!" Ludvigs asked what he was missing, and the grim officer told him that he needed a letter of invitation. Ludvigs looked to me to see if I had anything. I didn't. I had our team poster, our team biographies, passport photos, but no invitation letter.

We all started praying even harder that they would let us in the country. We had made it past all of the obstacles of the day. Surely, God wouldn't bring us this far, just to turn back and go home. Ludvigs took out his letter from the office. He handed it to the man, but he wouldn't accept it because it was in English. He quickly switched letters, but accidentally handed him another letter in English. Finally, we found the letter that Ludvigs had translated from Spanish that we had made for the visa application.

The customs official looked at it very skeptically. Then he asked, "¿Vas a visitar iglesias?" [Are you going to visit churches?] Ludvigs answered, yes. The customs officer exclaimed, "Alleluia" and stamped Ludvigs immigration form with a hearty "whap." The rest of us made it in without a problem. The same officer, who had been so stern and disgruntled earlier became jovial, telling me in English to "come on." He stamped my form, no questions asked. God was faithful to our team.

I found out yesterday that someone in the office had prayed specifically that we would be let into the country when they found out we would be doing God's work. And that was exactly what happened. Never doubt the power of prayer!

Date: 4/24/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

Venezuela...

It is obvious that we are in a new country almost every time I turn around. The currency, the food, the colloquialisms, and overpricedness of everything! In Ecuador I remember the good ol' days of \$1.25 lunches. Here you're lucky if you can find anything under \$6! Transportation has been outrageous too, considering the fact that gas is like \$.14 a gallon. It has been an interesting week adjusting to the slight changes, but we're having a good time nonetheless.



Ronnie Melin

As a matter of fact, our week in Maracaibo was one of the best experiences we've had so far.

Because the Lutheran church in Venezuela was too busy to host us for these weeks, we contacted a former team member's fiancée and she was able to plan the last leg of our tour. She is a member of the church, CENFOL, and an active member of Campus Crusade for Christ. Needless to say, things have been different working with another denomination. (Truthfully, it's been a little more like home for me, especially after a very Lutheran month in Colombia). Anyway, since we were working with her, we spent the majority of our time with the college kids in Maracaibo. We had such a blast! Almost every time we got together it turned into a party, and in Venezuela that means dancing. So I have been learning and practicing a lot, still hoping one day to meet the girl of my dreams dancing, just like my dear old dad.

We had a farewell party and shared a really special time with the people there. Despite the blazing heat, Maracaibo would be a pretty awesome place to live! God willing, I may return there someday.

-Ronnie

P.S. This is actually the first journal I've written on a computer and not on paper first.

Date: 4/24/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

April 17, 2008

Maracaibo, Venezuela

Dancing... I love doing it and I am fascinated by other people when they dance. Movement without words, dancing, is one of my favorite ways to express myself... becoming one with the melody and rhythm and conveying what I cannot explain.



Rachel Ringlaben

This afternoon we went with the college group from Vida Estudiantil to the lake in Maracaibo. When we arrived, most of them went to play volleyball, but I stayed behind to sit on the bleachers and watched the waves move on the lake. As I breathed in the salty air, movement from the gazebo across the street caught my eye. A couple was salsa dancing, probably practicing for a class, but they were beautiful together. There was no music, just the wind and the waves that perpetuated the rhythm to guide their movements. They would intertwine and go in and out of each other's arms never missing a beat. I stared at them from a distance in awe by the smoothness of their movements. It was beautiful...

Later on in the evening we all reunited at the volleyball court to play games. David, one of the students who is from Colombia, led a game called "Cuando cristianos bailan" ("when Christians dance") and I was energized by dancing with my teammates and the youth. We all went and ate ice cream and then came back to the court for hang out time. One of the college students, Josnen, and I started talking about Venezuelan culture and how dancing is a huge part of life here. I told him that I love to dance and that I studied it for 13 years. He energetically asked me to teach him some ballet. So I showed him a single pirouette (turn). I told him that there are three steps to the turn: the positioning, the prep, and the turn itself and that the most important thing is to "spot" (keep your eyes focused on one spot for balance). Josnen tried over and over again and it was quite hilarious watching this muscular college student attempt a delicate pirouette!

Soon, David and Ludvigs joined my "class". I showed them leaps, footwork, and turns. We laughed so hard at the contrast between my gracefulness and their clumsiness as they attempted to learn something I love. Afterward, David came up to me and said he wanted to teach me his country's dance which is Salsa. I obliged. He turned on a salsa song on his phone, set it on the grass and we began to dance. Keeping the rhythm while doing the twirls, arm formations, and turns was quite difficult, but I caught on quickly. The song ended and he applauded me as if I had past a test. "Bien hecho," (nice job) he said as he laughed, out of breath. I was again energized by expressing myself through dancing – which is something I haven't had the opportunity to do much this year.

Growing up I was in dance classes, dance teams, and theater. In college I was in a campus dance

ministry and in a music fraternity for women which did Greek step dancing. Since the beginning of our tour I had missed expressing myself this way – through movement – and I was refreshed this evening in my time of dancing...

Sharing a dance is sharing a part of who you are, a part of your culture. King David danced before the LORD and I know why. Movement with out words expresses needs, wants, desires, joys, and praises that cannot be put into sentences of any language. It is a privilege to learn the dances of the people here in South America – salsa, meringue, rumba, cumbia. Understanding how they move helps me understand who they are. It is something I can relate to – the need to express oneself through movement.

Date: 4/24/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

April 24, 2008 Barquisimeto, Venezuela

Today I learned to play two new instruments. While we were waiting to be picked up to go to our host homes, Ronnie decided to teach me how to play the drum set. His logic was if I can play the djembe, I can play a drum set... well, I tried! I started with just the bass and the snare and then added the cymbals. Ronnie kept showing me different rhythms and once I got the hang of one, he'd show me another rhythm that was more complex. I never knew how hard playing a drum set is! Your feet have to keep a different rhythm than your two hands! Interestingly enough, if I looked at Ronnie's feet and hand coordination and thought of it as a dance move, I could catch on quicker. It was a lot of fun and I can't wait to show my dad that his daughter can do a couple of tricks on his main instrument. (He's been playing drums since he was about ten years old.)



Rachel Ringlaben

Then after our program for the youth, Kami and I returned to our host home. Rafael, our host dad, ushered us into the kitchen and served us salad. We got on the subject of music and Elvira, our host mom, told us that Rafael has four guitars. I asked him to entertain us while we ate. He pulled out his classical guitar and began to sing with Elvira. His voice was so loud that his shoulders shook with his vibrato! After they finished, Rafael asked me to play something, so Kami and I sang Acercame a Ti (Draw Me Close in Spanish). After applauding us, he said for us to play more, so Kami and I sang three more songs together.

After we finished Todo Poderoso, Rafael took out the cuatro (a type of guitar with four strings and is tuned to A) He began to play typical Venezuelan music which is a lot like flamenco. How delightful it was to watch Rafael and Elvira sing and play together...

They finished singing and cuatro lessons began! He handed me the cuatro and told me to play with him. Rafael would play something on the guitar and I would follow him on the cuatro, trying to transpose in my head as fast as he was strumming. "Es facil, Raquel," he'd say as he showed me where to place my fingers and then he'd play a very complicated rhythm. I laughed so hard trying to catch up and it was a lot of fun bonding with our host parents. I love days like these where you connect with people through something that they love.

Date: 4/26/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Without Words

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."--1st Corinthians 11:1

These last few days, I have really been without words. My throat has been sore, so I haven't been talking or singing during the programs much. I lip-synched the last two



programs. After the first program, a lady in the back came up to tell me how well we had **Danielle Hance** sang. How ironic!

Today, I can hardly talk, and I get a rest day. The little mosquitoes that I am allergic to called jenenes (which translates as black fly, I think) are in abundance at the river they went to today for some baptisms, so I couldn't go.

I haven't talked much to my hosts today, both because I am tired and because they can barely understand me when I talk because of my voice. But in the last city we were at, Maracaibo, I learned a lot about how important it is for us to set an example with our actions.

At our going-away party, one of the youth talked (let's call her Julia). She is a typical Venezuelan, a thin "morena" who wears tight-fitting clothing and heels. She can go from fighting to crying instantaneously, and she is very selective about her food (She might be a combination of my two female teammates). She accompanied us many places and is very fun to be around.

I learned earlier that Julia had had a bad experience with a North American missionary. It is customary for females to greet each other with a kiss, but this missionary would not allow Julia to kiss her. She would shout, "Don't touch me!" The missionary asked that Julia not greet her anymore. "You don't respect my space," she would say. Julia struggled a whole year with this missionary.

But during her speech at the going-away party, Julia had very different things to say about us. She told us that she had seen us joyfully put on the same clothing everyday. She saw us sweat like pigs on the public bus with them, and we didn't complain. We kept doing programs, even when we were tired. We only had our backpacks as our luggage for four months.

Our example made her realize that she needed to be more humble in many areas of here life, she said as she cried.

Sometimes as a team that knows a lot of Spanish, we think that we have a ministry of words. We can have conversations for hours with almost anyone (and have on multiple occasions). But Julia didn't mention anything we said, just what we did.

1 John 3:16, 18-19 says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers...Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence"

Jesus had a relational ministry. He had very good words. But what was necessary to save us? He had to die. It was his action not his words that gave us life.

As I continue to have few words, I will try to remember to set an example with my actions.

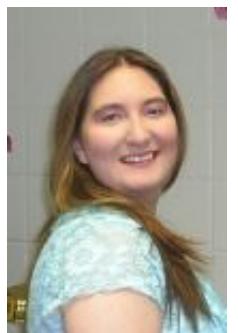
Date: 4/27/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

April 27, 2008 Barquisimeto, Venezuela

There have been a number of times here in Barquisimeto that I have asked myself, "God why did You place us here? What purpose do You have for me or for my team here? How can I serve You and reach people in this city?" It was this afternoon where I found my niche here in Barquisimeto...



Rachel Ringlaben

Kami and I are staying with a woman named Elvira whose husband does not go to church. Elvira's brother, José, also lives in the house because he is disabled and cannot walk well. About a year ago he was bed ridden with a heart condition and with an infirmity that crippled his

legs. Elvira took him in to care for him, but he is very lonely since he cannot leave the house. After talking to the pastor of the church here, he told me that José doesn't come to church because he cannot climb the stairs. This broke my heart.

Last night after Kami and I returned to our host home from rehearsal at the church, Elvira and her husband were not home, only José. We rang the doorbell and watched José struggle to walk to the gate to let us in the house. Once inside, we all sat down at the kitchen table and talked and drank orange juice together. I asked José when the last time he went to church was and he told me it had been a year. Due to his condition, he had spent an entire year away from the Christian community. My heart sank. I told him, if he wanted to come to church with us in the morning, we would gladly help him up the stairs. He declined. Then I felt the Spirit moving in my bones. I looked at him and said, "What if church comes to you tomorrow? We can have church here. Would you like that?" José's eyes lit up. "Sí, Raquel," he replied. I asked him about what kind of songs he liked and he told me he loves *Cuan Grande Es él* (*How Great Thou Art*). So Kami and I told him we'd bring the rest of the team over in the afternoon so we could have church!

Today, after we led alabanzas at the church and ate lunch, Kami and I took the rest of the team to our host home. Elvira was there, preparing places to sit on the patio. I went into José's room and told him we'd come and get him when it was time for church. We set up chairs, I picked out scriptures and Kami and I chose songs for us to sing. Kami went and led José by the hand out into the patio. As he walked through the doorway I hugged him and said, "¡Bienvenidos a la Iglesia Afuera! Por favor, síntense." (Welcome to the Outside Church, please take a seat!) José laughed as he sat down with his cane. I began the "service" by reading Psalm 139, which talks about how God knew us before we were born and how He stays with us no matter what. I took José by the hand as we sang *Cuan Grande Es él*. It was so beautiful listening to him sing in a soft voice next to me. As the service went on, people from the neighborhood began coming to the gate! Elvira opened the door and got more chairs as more people began showing up! We sang hymns, read scripture, and Ludvigs gave a "sermon" on Psalm 23.

After our "service" I went and began talking to those who came from the neighborhood. I asked one woman if she heard the music and decided to come, she answered that the Holy Spirit called her, so she came. A family of four from down the street came as well... I can't really formulate thoughts right now. All I can do is stand in awe of my Awesome Father who has unimaginable plans for each of His children. I found my niche this evening leading José and others into a deeper reality of God's love and favor.

Later, I overheard the pastor say that he wanted to have "church" there next week. I am in awe of the way the Holy Spirit can effect change. I am in awe of the way He uses me and my teammates. I am overwhelmed with the amazement at my Savior who uses buildings, orphanages, prisons, and patios and transforms them into places of worship and adoration.

I am thankful that God chose Kami and me to share His love with José. It is my prayer that José remembers the community of believers that came to him from across country lines to remind Him that the Creator of the universe is by his side.

Date: 4/27/2008

Submitted by: Kami Kimmel

Journal Entry:

4/26/08

Baptism

Barquisimeto, Venezuela



Kami Kimmel

"Jesus paid it all, He washed me white as snow" - words to a song Kindred sang on Easter Sunday.

Today we were invited to a baptism time with the church we have been working with. We loaded onto a bus with about 30 other people and after waiting for what seemed like forever the bus took

off and we rode an hour away. It was a beautiful drive and I enjoyed being out of the city. We arrived at a park with a river flowing through it. After waiting some more (we've kind of gotten used to waiting for things to start in South America! that's just how it is) we began to wonder what our purpose was in the day's events. But then, I realized that all the little details don't matter. People were being baptized and that was all the detail I needed to know! We played Jesus Esta Vivo (Jesus is alive) before the baptisms and about 20-30 people, young and old, went down to the river for immersion. I had tears of joy as I felt the Holy Spirit moving and thought how awesome it was that people were becoming followers of Christ and were being made a new creation! I held Rachel's hand and she said "That's where we got our first call." That is the same thing my dad said to me my last Sunday at my home congregation before leaving for team in May, and it reminds me that baptism is the most important call we have-to be believers and followers of Christ and to spread his word. Sometimes I think we get too wrapped up in knowing a divine plan for every decision we make, when all that REALLY matters is accepting Christ in our hearts, asking forgiveness and sharing the gospel!

During the baptism I noticed one woman in particular. She was sitting in the middle of the river with a white gown on that she had worn for the occasion. Seeing her sit in the river with her white gown on was a beautiful reminder of how through Jesus' blood we are made white as snow, and in the waters of baptism we are claimed by Jesus and made a new, white creation. And what is more, we are made new not only the one time during our baptism, but we are made new every time we go to Jesus with confession in our hearts. What a beautiful thing.

Date: 4/30/2008

Submitted by: Ronnie Melin

Journal Entry:

Friend of God

It's been 8 years since I first heard the call of God on my life. Very early on I understood what it means to make God the Lord of my life. My priority became seeking God's will and serving Him with all my heart. But I think somewhere along the way, I lost sight of the friendship I could have with God. My life had become about serving and obeying out of love, but more of a respecting, fearing love than a personal kind of love.



Ronnie Melin

I think especially when I began my education at a Bible college, my faith changed. My sensitivity to the Sprit changed from more emotional to more fact-based. While that is good, I lost a little of the sensitivity I had before.

But today, God revealed to me a different side of Himself. During our team devotional we began to discuss what it means to be a friend of God. I expressed some doubts and questions I've been dealing with lately, particularly wondering how anyone can really be God's friend. The team told me I should ask God to help me understand what it means to be His friend, so during our devo I asked God under my breath to help me begin to get it. At the end when we started praying, immediately I felt the Holy Spirit overwhelm me. I began to sob and lose control of myself. I felt God saying in the moment, "Ronnie, I am a personal God. Stop doubting that. I want you to understand what it is to be my friend. In order for you to do the work I have planned for you, you must understand what it means to be a friend of God."

It has been nearly 8 years since I felt the presence of God so powerfully. I'm determined to search the Scriptures and go before God in prayer until I understand what friendship with God is. I know God has amazing plans for me, but unless I understand this side of Him, I can't grow anymore. I'm excited and maybe a bit nervous about what He has, but I'm trusting that God will stick by someone He calls friend.

"You are my friends if you do what I command. 15I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." John15:14-16

Date: 5/5/2008

Submitted by: Danielle Hance

Journal Entry:

Praise God

Our overseas tour is over. Yesterday, we said goodbye to Rachel and Ludvigs in the Bogota airport, and tomorrow I will part ways with Kami and Ronnie in Houston.

Yesterday, our contact, Gonzalo met us in the Guayaquil airport. We got to talk to him about the ministries here that we got to work with in February. Gonzalo told us that in Daule the youth are beginning to meet. Before, no youth group existed there, but now they are inviting Tuesman, a gung-ho evangelist we met in Machala, to come and help them out.



Danielle Hance

When we came to Daule, everything was flooded (those of you who keep up on journals may remember some stories from Kami about riding a canoe to her host home). And many people were spiritually drowning. Susanna (who I wrote about) was one of those people until God met her on the road and made her new.

We talked to people all the time about our ministry. My host dad in Caracas, who is the National Director of Campus Crusade in Venezuela, was very confused about our purpose. He asked me why we spent so little time in each location. I explained to him that we are here to join with existing ministries, not to start new ones. We don't often get to see the fruits of our labors, but we trust that God is always at work.

So even though we don't get to see the fruits of our labors, it is encouraging to *hear* about *la obra de Dios*, the work of God in the people we ministered with during our tour in South America.

The music that sings in my head as I consider all that God has done during our time here comes from the Doxology:

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

Date: 5/6/2008

Submitted by: Rachel Ringlaben

Journal Entry:

I can hardly believe that our South American tour has come to a close. I have learned so many things and grown in the Spirit of our Lord every day. However, the lesson that has had the most impact on me is how my view of the Church, the Bride of Christ, has changed since joining and working with ministries in Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. Simply put, God has reshaped my view of the global Church.



Rachel Ringlaben

I have learned that the Church is the heart, with Christ as the lifeline – a church without Christ is dead. I have seen how grand and overwhelmingly HUGE the Church really is. It is not only a movement but a lifestyle – I have seen people live Church. The Church's passion is to glorify God and it is motivated to show God through love.

I have seen the Church in little children singing "Tengo Paz," in elderly women showing up two hours before the service on Sunday morning to pray, in college students who have a burden to share the Gospel with their schoolmates, in the hands that provided us with food and shelter, and in

the faces of those who welcomed us as their brothers and sisters. I have seen the Church comfort, encourage, and pick up weary travelers of the Word. I have seen how the Church claims nothing for herself, but everything in the name of Jesus Christ. I have witnessed the Church respond out of love.

This Body of Christ I have witnessed is not sedentary. The Bride of Christ is at work. She recognizes the need for the world to know the Savior – and she is responding. This Bride is not deaf to the cries of the fallen world. She realizes that her strength lies in the One who called her. Her only agenda is to love without fear. This Church's love has the power to expand and rise above language, nationality, race, religion, country lines, and war zones. The Bride of Christ has the victory because she knows who is fighting with her. This Church, the Body of Christ, is spiritually feeding the world.

This Church will not be satisfied until the world is saturated with the Spirit of God. She will not rest until her Bridegroom returns...

We are a part of this beautiful, living Bride of Christ. While we are waiting we will watch and pray. We will respond. We will point the world to the cross and hope in expectation for the world to join us in adoring the King of Kings.

What a privilege we have to enjoy sweet communion with our Savior and with our brothers and sisters from all over the world! Let us rejoice in the calling our Lord has given us. Through the Spirit, who grants us unity, let us continue to proclaim the great message of love that is delivered in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

I'd like to close this last journal from overseas with lyrics to my favorite song we have sung repeatedly during our tour in South America. It is called "La Cosecha" which means "The Harvest." It has often served as our "encore song" and every time we sang it together I felt as if we were encouraging the Church and reminding ourselves of the Great Commission our Christ has given to us. Jesus reminds us that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Let us pray that God rises up harvesters within us so that we may boldly bear witness to the incomparable love of our Lord, Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

*"Alza tus ojos y mira
La cosecha está lista...
Levántate y predica
A todas las naciones
Que Cristo es la vida!"*

*Y será llena
La tierra de Su gloria
Se cubrirá
Como las aguas cubren al mar"
--- La Cosecha*

*"Lift up your eyes and see
that the harvest is ready...
Rise up and proclaim
to all the nations
that Christ is the Life!"*

*And the earth will be
filled with His glory.
His glory will cover the earth
as the waters cover the sea"*

Journal Entry:

Hello! As you may or may not know, our time on Kindred has officially come to a close. We had our homecoming celebration in the Twin Cities last Saturday with all of the Youth Encounter teams. It was a beautiful day of celebration, and when the day came to a close it was difficult to say goodbye. It's definitely been a change to adjust to my teammates not being around...I feel the absence of their presence. However, I know that even though our official time as a team has finished, we will ALWAYS be Kindred in heart and spirit.



Kami Kimmel

Just a couple of final thoughts to leave you with. This week I've been thinking a lot about the year and I compare it to a piece of music. At first when we started out, the music didn't make any sense. There were notes on the page in no specific order, you couldn't tell what the melodies and harmonies were. The sharps and flats were all scattered around, and the treble and bass clef signs made no sense whatsoever. As the year progressed and we began to really know one another, the melody and harmony came together. Then the sharps and flats were added to spice up the song, and the treble clef and bass clef were put in order, and the music that came was a beautiful song, where everything was working together and made glorious music.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your tremendous support throughout the year, for your notes of encouragement, for your financial support, for your prayers, and mostly for your love. Without all of you I wouldn't have been able to experience the incredible 15 months that I had on team. It had its challenges, the occasional roller coaster, and some pretty awesome moments of fellowship and love. My faith has been solidified through this year and I've been able to experience God's love for me and the world in incredible ways. It was an amazing time of growth for me, and a time of learning things that I wouldn't have been able to learn anywhere else but on this team. It was an amazing gift to be able to be on Kindred and I am SO glad I had the opportunity!

The night of homecoming I was trying to find scripture to sum up how I was feeling about the year, and I found them in 2nd Timothy 4:6-7 and that is what I leave you with:

"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

God's blessings and much love to you,

Kami
