

# Cross Fire 2007-08 Journal

**Date:** 10/2/2007

**Submitted by:** Nick Maier

**Journal Entry:**

*Our team is off to a great start!* I know the team was off to a great start before I got here but it's a new start for me. I am sure you may have noticed this strange new name on the roster (or if we're coming to your church you may have realized you now need some place to house *five* people instead of four). Yes, Crossfire has now grown to a quintet. I was supposed to help train the national teams in August but I liked Crossfire so much I begged them to let me join. Actually, I had no intention of joining a team this year after I was on Watermark Denmark 06-07. (You may have also noticed that my biography on our team page for this year is over a year old and mentions me joining Watermark—though that should be changed in no time). Don't get me wrong, being involved with team ministry this past year is my most prized possession but I was pooped after our tour. To get right down to it, the decision I made to come on team again wasn't my own. God (in a very real way) revealed to me that this is what I should do this year. I had no thought in my mind about doing another year until half-way through training this year. Then God pretty much hit me upside the head with the idea that I should go and the decision was made in a couple days. (You might even call it a *Godsmack*). And I am so thankful for His Will being revealed to me. I have complete peace and even energy to storm ahead into another year and mission. Praise Jesus! I am very thankful to be here so if you'd like, please pray a prayer of thanks that I can travel around with such great people and proclaim Christ all over the world. Shalom.



**Nick Maier**

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**Date:** 10/2/2007

**Submitted by:** Rachel Faulstich

**Journal Entry:**

Starting the third week on team has brought new lessons to be learned and challenges about life as a missionary. My grandmother passed away a few days ago and not being able to make it home for her funeral was quite the difficult. During this time, God placed me a wonderful and caring host home. Five cheerful kids greeted me with never ending smiles and laughter. Their kindness helped me begin my heart's healing process from my grandmas's death. Life on the road has been an exciting adventure so far. I have loved meeting new people and seeing how God can work through their lives in various ways.



**Rachel Faulstich**

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**Date:** 10/6/2007

**Submitted by:** Simon Pedersen

**Journal Entry:**

Today we had the opportunity to go to the detention center where we played music, shared our faith in Christ and hung out with guys at the place. I kind of expected that the youth group would find us boring and uninteresting – my worries were put to shame! The boys and girls at the detention center started clapping to the songs at the end of the program and the very last song we did half of the crowd stood up clapping! When we were hanging out with the guys one of them was telling me about where he was in his faith journey and we had a little talk about it, which was a blessing to me. It's wonderful how we can bless each other! Thanks be to God!



**Simon Pedersen**

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**Date:** 10/11/2007

**Submitted by:** Christian Bane

**Journal Entry:**

Driving through South Carolina, I can't help but marvel at the beautiful creation of God. The roads lined with trees dangling spanish moss make writing a journal difficult. All I want to do is stare at the scenery. People here are very friendly, too. We've been given so much. I guess that's been true with everybody we've met on the road so far. God has blessed our brothers and sisters and they, in turn, are able to show us the same kindness. Christ is truly present in their lives and in our. It's been pretty sweet to be with my teammates as well. We are getting along and joking and having a great time serving the Lord. I'm excited to continue to travel here on the east coast. It's been super warm here and I hope the trend continues for the next couple of weeks. I don't know what the weather is normally like in New Jersey, but I want to swim in the ocean. I know the water will be cold, I just hope that the air will be warm. Today, we had the opportunity to go to the Lynches River. We were told that it is the river on which they filmed The Patriot. I could definitely tell there was a lot of history surrounding us. The water was really low on the river, so we crossed on a fallen tree. I walked around by myself for a little while through the cypress trees. It was cool to see the how the trunks were really wide, almost like the roots were above ground. It made me kind of nervous to walk around though because of all the snake holes in the ground. I was told there were rattle snakes and copper heads in the area and I was literally surrounded by snake holes. I never saw a snake, though. As I crossed the river again to the side we started from, Taryn slipped into the water ahead of me, then, right after I laughed at her for it, I fell in up to my knees too. We all had a good laugh about it. We've been watching a lot of movies in the evenings. We've been staying at a lot of churches, so we project movies onto the walls to watch them. We've also been reading a lot of books in the van. Nick loaned me two really good books that I enjoyed immensely. The first was Under The Overpass by Mike Yankowski and the other is Ishmael by Daniel Quinn and I'm about to start on a book I got last night called The Wild Boys by William Burroughs. I liked the books a lot because they make me think about the way we live our lives and how we live out our faith.



**Christian Bane**

A poem:  
South Carolina 52,  
Makes me sad we're just passing through.  
So long South Caroline,  
Churches, graveyards, cypress and pines.

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**Date:** 10/11/2007

**Submitted by:** Rachel Faulstich

**Journal Entry:**

Yum...fluffy butter, grits, and great conversations in the south. We are currently in Greensburo, North Carolina and just finished having breakfast with a men's devotional group. We were asked several questions this morning about what God has been showing us so far while serving on Cross Fire. My response to the question is this: It doesn't take a large worship service with great music for people to make connections with God. We have put on several of our music programs by now, and the response has been different in each place we've visited. Some people have loved the music, loved the program, and I could see on their faces that they were worshiping God with their whole hearts during our service. A different type of response from this was seen at a youth detention center we visited. Some of the kids admitted that they didn't really like our music, but it was after the program when we had the chance to hang out and talk with them that really made an impact in their lives. I really enjoyed talking with all of the kids and hearing their story. They told me about their interests and they showed me some really cool rhythms by using their hands and pencils to beat on the table. They even gave me some beat-boxing lessons since that isn't a very developed skill of mine just yet. It was a ton of fun spending time with them. So what has God been showing me? I can tell people with words over and over again how much God loves them and how much I love them; however, those words may never actually be heard. People want to SEE God's love, they want to SEE that we love and care about them no matter who they are.

While on the road, we've also been spending some time learning about east African cultures. Our self-led Swahili lessons have been somewhat productive as we are learning some of the most important phrases such as "Kiko wapi choo?" (Where is the bathroom) and "Mgonjawa"



**Rachel Faulstich**

(to be sick) and "Shikamoo" (a greeting of respect to an elderly person). We are even trying to translate a few of our sing-a-longs into Swahili, but that might take a while.

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**Date:** 10/13/2007

**Submitted by:** Nick Maier

**Journal Entry:**

In Great Falls, Virginia, all six of us stayed with the youth director and her husband in their single-bedroom apartment. It was cozy -- and I don't mean it was *"cramped but I don't want to say it"*. It was just right. It's nice to have the chance to all stay together (even when I have to smell Taryn's feet all night). Over dinner we talked about how our hosts met, their journeys through seminary and our own calls to team despite all the noise and flashy kilts in the Irish pub. We also met a group of nice kids before our program at the church. (We later found out that only one of them attended the church regularly and was able to collect all the other kids to come along. Now that's the kind of person you want to stick around in your youth group.) All the kids sat on the left and the adults sat on the right. During the program the entire left side was on their feet and the right stood up maybe once --but that's more response than we usually get in a Lutheran church so it was quite welcome. Afterward, I talked to one of the youth and he told me he is going through film school. His dream is to make documentaries for missionaries to have easily accessible tools to raise awareness and raise funds for struggling organizations or individuals. He was talking about tagging along with an international Youth Encounter team or joining a team so he could make a film to support the ministry. There are so many people that want to support or get involved with mission work but don't know how or don't know anything about it. With such a great idea it could bring some tangible results to the great need of supporting international causes and especially mission work. I hope and will be praying for the success of this dream (you can pray, too!). I get a little excited just thinking about it. body



**Nick Maier**

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**Date:** 10/16/2007

**Submitted by:** Simon Pedersen

**Journal Entry:**

I am enjoying being on team --it is challenging and new way to live your life. We are driving in "our" van from church to church where we do a program and the same night we go home with some people from the congregation and sleep at their houses. In another place we arrive early and visit a detention center where we did a second program. After that we had an appointment with a nursing home where we got the opportunity to do a third kind of program. And when we came back to the church someone from our team did a devotion for the others on the team. This is one example of how our day might look. Most often are we only stay two days at the same place. So it's not for no reason that Youth Encounter calls the work we are doing planting seeds. Understood in the way that we tell people about Jesus and most often don't see them again. So the Christians at the place get the privilege and responsibility to follow up on the new things that start growing in people's lives.

I hope you have a good time where you are!



**Simon Pedersen**

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**Date:** 10/20/2007

**Submitted by:** Simon Pedersen

**Journal Entry:**

This week I have been sick, so it has been more challenging than ever for me to do our program. Two of the times we did our program I was not able to speak, therefore I only played music and was a part of the silent skit we have in our program. Maybe one of the funniest parts about it all was that I stayed at a host home as the only guy. So I did my really best to get some noise out of my mouth. And we actually



**Simon Pedersen**

had some meaningful and funny conversations. Right now I'm almost totally fresh again. This evening we are playing volleyball with some middle school and high schoolers at a cook out before we will do the Sunday service for the same people tomorrow.

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**Date:** 10/21/2007

**Submitted by:** Rachel Faulstich

**Journal Entry:**

The Harvest is plenty but the workers are few.  
Towns and cities flashing by;  
I reach into my bag and as I feel the seeds I let out a sigh.  
Counting the yellow stripes on the road now;  
I begin to dream about each town we pass through and those we missed somehow.  
The seeds slip through my fingers;  
My hand is in the bag, grabbing onto and letting go of any seed that lingers.  
Windows open, wind rushing in;  
I can't tell where the last stop ended or where the next place begins.  
In the meantime, I flick a seed out the window;  
Watching as it falls to the ground and is swept away to a place only God will know.



**Rachel Faulstich**

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**Date:** 10/22/2007

**Submitted by:** Nick Maier

**Journal Entry:**

Today in Americus, GA we got to visit the Koinonia Farm. There is a long history in this town and community of determination through persecution. The story of Koinonia is a long and exciting story, starting with Clarence Jordan (pronounced *Jerdin* down here in the south). This is the man who wrote "The Cotton Patch Gospel", among other books, and started the first co-operative, integrated farm in the south. Through years and years of pro-segregationalist resistance the farm is still up and running today, including many other social programs and ministries like housing for those who can't afford it, summer youth programs, home repair and maintenance services, and lots and lots of pecans (that is, *pee-canns*, not *p'conns*). We definitely got our fill of pecans. Another point of interest is that Jordan's partner is the man who started Habitat for Humanity, among many other things as well. Our experience meeting the people there was very encouraging. An older lady from the congregation we were with gave us a tour, told us a wonderful history and introduced us to just about everyone there. We played songs for their lunch-time devotion (it's actually called dinner, though) and they were very thankful. To see people continuing on a legacy of intentional Christian living despite the rest of the world makes me want to keep on going on with what we're doing.



**Nick Maier**

There's a song we do that people like a lot called "Unify Us". (We actually played a couple songs for a Baptist church here in Americus and they loved it especially so. They said we had to record it and send them a tape. After we were done they made us do it again and had the women's choir sing with us.) The chorus of the song is "Unify us/ purify us/ so that we can change the world." This seems to strike a chord in most people. There is something about coming together which makes us feel empowered. At the Baptist church, Pastor Christian gave a children's sermon about the Tower of Babel and how all the people wanted to glorify themselves. They were powerful and united in their cause yet God thwarted their plans because he was able to divide them. They were looking out for #1, as Pastor said. But we say that God is #1 because He is the most powerful force and the only thing worth glorifying. This easily develops our theme this year; "Bridge the Gap." There is something mysterious that God works within us as a community when we become the Body of Christ that makes us all stronger than ourselves. I believe this is a natural human longing— to be connected to each other and to become a part of something larger than ourselves. And nothing unites as the power of the Holy Spirit, that obvious to me. There is nothing else that is able to wage peace and "bridge the gap" so absolutely between people as Christ is able to do. How are we able to travel the world and be welcomed everywhere we go like brothers and sisters? How are we encouraged amidst oppression and violence? How can we stand for something we believe when it

seems the world is telling us we're wrong? (Read Christian's next journal to see another way how Christ has empowered his people here in southern Georgia to unite and change the world.)

The Greek word *koinonia*, we're told, means deep community. It's the type of community the apostles shared in Acts 2 when they sold all they had and provided for all of each others' needs. Day after day I see testimony to the peace, and the unifying force and the triumph of Christ's love in people's lives and that is why we do the things we do on the road this year. I can't forget what Tom Wilkerson said in "The Cross and the Switchblade". He stated simply that the Gospel of Christ is change. One word: change. Here's a closing quote from Koinonia's founder, Clarence Jordan:

*"The proof that God raised Jesus from the dead is not the empty tomb, but the hearts of his transformed disciples. The crowning evidence that he lives is not a vacant grave, but a spirit filled fellowship; not a rolled-away stone but a carried-away church."*

Please visit The Koinonia website and see if you might want to support their ministries (or buy some of their delicious chocolates and pecans). They can tell you their story much better than I can. (They also have a special made for PBS that looks pretty cool.)  
[www.koinoniapartners.org](http://www.koinoniapartners.org)

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**Date:** 10/29/2007

**Submitted by:** Nick Maier

**Journal Entry:**

Yeah, don't even try to mess with Crossfire. My host dad, Karate Ken, showed us some of his moves. So if you were planning on strangling us or coming at us with a knife you don't stand a chance. During our youth night in Columbia, Illinois we went into the kids' fitness center to have some karate lessons. Sensei Ken showed us his weapons too, like his bow staff and sigh and nunchucks, pretty much the same weapons as all the ninja turtles (he even makes them himself!). It was probably a bad idea for us to learn that stuff because now we know how to beat each other up with more style (not that we beat each other up anyway...). Our contact at that church was Jenn Albert who was on team last year with Lifeline so it was nice to be able to be with her again. They have a lovely congregation and a cool baptistry that looks like a jacuzzi. We were also honored to be a part of the baptism service for a little baby girl.

Well, we have to get on the road now.

God's Peace,

Nick



**Nick Maier**

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**Date:** 11/3/2007

**Submitted by:** Simon Pedersen

**Journal Entry:**

This Wednesday it was Halloween, so all the children were dressed up and doing the trick-or-treats. It was a really exciting day for me because in Denmark (where I'm from) we do not have all those Halloween traditions. The church we stayed at had invited all the youth in the area to a Halloween/Worship night. So my team and I were dressed up for this night. We started the evening off with playing some different games, and afterwards we did the program and praised God with all the people that showed up. It all turned out to be one of those days you'll not forget about.



**Simon Pedersen**

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**Date:** 11/5/2007

**Submitted by:** Rachel Faulstich

**Journal Entry:**

We are in Amery, WI today and are enjoying a beautiful log home back in the woods. I went for a jog this morning, and on my way back to the house, it started to snow and has been flurrying all day. It is a beautiful sight to see. Also, we went on a tour of the two camps we will be working at this summer, WAPO and Ox Lake camp. The tour around Ox Lake camp was a bit of an adventure actually. As I had said, it has been snowing a little bit all day so by the time we were at the camp, the ground had accumulated a small layer of white flakes. The sight was beautiful- we saw deer running all over, a large group of turkeys and a bald eagle flying over the lake. We kept driving back on the dirt roads, being captured by our natural surroundings and not thinking about how the van might possibly get stuck on the now wet roads. As we started up the muddy hill, we soon found ourselves not moving anymore; however, with the strength of our three buff males on team, we were able to get the van moving again. Me, being the driver at that time, escaped the splattering of mud. I sure am pumped about the up-coming adventures we will have next summer working at the camp.



**Rachel Faulstich**

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**Date:** 11/27/2007

**Submitted by:** Simon Pedersen

**Journal Entry:**

This week we made some new puppet shows; they will be good for overseas. We have already tried one of them two days ago, and that went well. Now we only have to write down what the puppets are saying to each other so we can e-mail it to a nice lady that will translate it to Swahili for us.



**Simon Pedersen**

It is kind of hard to imagine that there aren't many days until Christmas break because if it's Christmas soon then it's also soon time to go to East Africa! We are going overseas January the 10. The thoughts begin of how will it be to meet such a different culture and then speak in broken Swahili or through interpreter about the unity in Jesus. I believe and hope it will be wonderful!

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**Date:** 11/29/2007

**Submitted by:** Nick Maier

**Journal Entry:**

SOTV and beyond!

Acts 1:8



**Nick Maier**

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**Date:** 1/12/2008

**Submitted by:** Christian Bane

**Journal Entry:**

Today was our first full day in Africa! I absolutely love this place. The people are friendly and helpful, and they love to practice their English greetings on us. Although it is very hot here, it is by no means uncomfortable. I find it to be good sleeping weather. We all slept very well last night, due in part to our long travels. This morning, I woke up to the sounds of the birds singing. We went a little later to a seminar at the church on effective leadership. It was all in Swahili so we were each assigned a seat next to someone who could translate for us. I sat with a very pleasant woman named Joice who



**Christian Bane**

was very thorough in her translation and even added her own thoughts on what the speaker was teaching about. We stayed at the seminar from tea time until lunch. The 5 of us went on a walk through Makongo, the town where we are staying. It was fun to use our Swahili greetings with the people we passed on the street. Some people would yell, "Karibu, wazungu!" which means "Welcome, whitey!" It will be nice when we know more Swahili and become more comfortable speaking it. Boni, the pastor at Makongo Lutheran Church, is awesome. He was on Rainbow of Promise a few years ago and knows quite a bit about how to be a good contact for a team. He's already done so much for us and we are so grateful to be with him. He took us out for dinner this evening to a local restaurant for some traditional East African food. It was delicious. Boni also informed us that we were invited to introduce ourselves at both of the worship services tomorrow morning starting at seven. I'm very excited to experience our first Tanzanian worship service!

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**Date:** 1/18/2008

**Submitted by:** Christian Bane

**Journal Entry:**

I was very much prepared to write a journal about how much I love Tanzania and how I could never imagine never being any other place in the world. That was all true until this past Wednesday. I had intended to wake up early to get a good start for the day but was thwarted by a pounding headache and bad stomach ache. I decided that I was simply dehydrated and it would pass in a matter of hours. When it came time for tea (breakfast) I struggled to eat a single bite, having no appetite to speak of. Still writing it off as dehydration, I filled my Nalgene and walked with Simon and Rachel down to EnviroCare. It was about a mile and a half from the church but well worth the walk. EnviroCare is a non-profit organization that sponsors projects for environmental awareness, gender equality, civil rights and much more. When the three of us returned I slept almost the rest of the day. We attended a choir rehearsal and then split up to go to host homes. Nick was kind enough to explain to our host family that I was not feeling well and that I should sleep. On top of my headache I believe I began running a fever (I was shivering and Nick had kicked off the blankets) and my stomach ache had progressed to all the symptoms in a Pepto-Bismol commercial. The next morning, Nick and I had our first experience on the daladala (the over-crowded local bus/van). We were to meet up with everyone and then to go to a Bible study from the church with Boni. The moment we arrived I fell into my bed. Rahel decided I should stay there and I happily agreed. At about 11 AM my host mama picked me up so she could keep an eye on me at her home. I slept for nearly fifteen hours. When I woke up I was greeted by a local pastor and his son who prayed over me for healing. My host family informed me that they had been asking everyone to pray for me, even their four year old grandson was asking for prayers of healing. At about midnight my host mama, her son, Rachel, Nick and myself went to the hospital so I could get tested for malaria. I don't have it (phew). I've been drinking lots of fluids and resting today. I ate a little bit for the first time since Wednesday tea. I still don't know what exactly is wrong but I am confident I will be better soon. The worst part is I'm missing out on programming. I want to be back with the team. I ask for prayers for health and safety, effective ministry and peace in Kenya. God bless.



**Christian Bane**

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**Date:** 1/20/2008

**Submitted by:** Nick Maier

**Journal Entry:**

Makongo

Symbols are important in a land you are unfamiliar with. Too many things here speak for themselves; bibis (grandmoms) sweeping dirt floors, watoto (children) collecting bottle caps from the ground, mamas (women or mothers) singing and dancing, babas (men) sitting on porches discussing important and trivial matters. I will bring you on my trip by giving you symbols. So this is symbol number one for SYMBOLS OF TANZANIA: "Jambo."



**Nick Maier**

Swahili is beautiful. One word can mean many things and many words can mean one thing. “Jambo” is the most common greeting I have heard thus far. The closest translation may be “concern.” It seems like an odd greeting. However, it is a common to say “Hujambo” which can be a question or a statement, meaning “You are concerned,” or “Do you have any worries?” The response is “Sijambo,” meaning, “I have no worries,” or “Please, don’t worry for me.” It is hard to expand such a simple phrase. Its beauty is its simplicity. Like much of my experience in Tanzania, life is simple. Many people have talked much about the peace that is here. This is probably why we greet each other by asking about concerns because “Sijambo” or simple “Jambo” means “all is well.” A literal translation of symbols is not enough but we must experience them to understand them. God, in his love and divine creativity, gives us many symbols of himself. We must be open to listen to them, interpret them and find personal meaning. So today, we listen for the whisper of “Jambo” all around us. Amen.

[Proverbs 18:15, Hebrews 3:7-8]

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**Date:** 1/21/2008

**Submitted by:** Taryn Hoover

**Journal Entry:**

Makongo

I have never met nicer people than the people we have met in Tanzania. Everyone here in Makongo has been so welcoming and really made us feel at home. They are so eager to hear about our lives back home but they also love to teach us about their culture and the language of Swahili. It is a lot of fun! The weather has been pretty hot and humid but we are getting used to it. Last night we got to do a radio show on the Lutheran radio station in Dar es Salaam. It was so much fun and we really got to share a lot about why we are here. God has blessed us with a lot of opportunities and we’re excited for what’s to come.



**Taryn Hoover**

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**Date:** 1/25/2008

**Submitted by:** Nick Maier

**Journal Entry:**

Makongo

Symbols of Tanzania: Hand-washing

Today I was sick so I stayed behind as the rest of the team did programming. During my time of restless unrest [I haven’t been able to sleep yet...] I bathed. I’ve been using a bucket, a cup, a brush, and soap for some time now yet just realized how hard it is to wash your hands.

Before each meal, it is customary to pour water over the hands of your guests so they may rinse and scrub their hands clean. I now understand this. They tell us in grade school to wash and then use a paper towel to turn off the faucet. It is so hot here our hands dry quite quickly. I see why we don’t need sinks to clean hands or paper towels to dry. Things are simple, yet complex. You have to experience to understand. In Tanzania, people give to receive. Anyone who has been here I hope will see how generous Tanzanians can be. They truly understand the Gospel. [Luke 6:38]



**Nick Maier**

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**Date:** 1/31/2008



**Submitted by:** Simon Pedersen  
**Journal Entry:**

Makongo

We have now been doing overseas ministry for 3 weeks. So far we have been based in Makongo which is really close to Dar es Salaam. The youth pastor, Boni, in Makongo has put a lot of time in driving us place to place so we haven't had the chance to think there is not more to do here. I see our ministry is going well and hear it from the people we meet. I would like to share a couple of things from yesterday.



**Simon Pedersen**

Yesterday, we went to a private school where we did two programs. The first was for a group of 8<sup>th</sup> graders. After we did a couple of songs, we opened up for questions. The first question was "can we compare our love to God with the love for our friends, parents, or our boy/girl friends?" Another question was "can I love God fully and at the same time have a boyfriend?" As there were deep in questions, we were able to give some deep answers. I am very sure that the answers had a great impact on the students that day.

The same day we went to some different classes in the school. One of the founders of the school told us how they established the school when Tanzania allowed private schools, which I believe is within the last 30 years. One of the main reasons for establishing the school is that so many children were sent to Kenya to study. By this private school, parents can send their kids to a school not as far from home and still give them a good education. The founder also told about how children in the school don't pay the same amount of money. For example, there are a few kinds that don't pay at all. The reason is that some of the kids lose their parents or that the family simply cannot raise the money anymore. In that way, it's a really grace-based school. To hear they need even more well-educated teachers gives me the longing to become a teacher in the school. Many places in Tanzania have a need for education. It is a need the church has as well. Those needs give me a longing to come back and make a difference.

All the things we do and all of the great impressions we get make me in the way very tired, so a night of sleep is not something I skip here- so far. I think one of the things that take a lot of energy is when we go to a place and the host is so nice that they don't want us to be alone. I really appreciate this culture's hospitality. It is a very nice experience. At the same time, it takes some of my personal time and I take a nap sometimes when we are driving from place to place. Tomorrow we are going to leave for Kampala, Uganda. I am full of excitement and a little sad. I am excited that we are going to a new country but sad that we are leaving a lot of friends. I will especially miss our wonderful host Boni. I am glad we will return to this place before going home. I will end this letter with encouragement to you to keep on praying for us and our ministry. It makes a huge difference.

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**Date:** 2/4/2008  
**Submitted by:** Rachel Faulstich  
**Journal Entry:**

Makongo

I woke up to the sound of roosters giving their early morning call. At 6 AM the heat and humidity has already set in. My host family has deep, rich, cultural music playing throughout the house. Since last Wednesday we have been staying with host families from the church in Makongo. It has been a wonderful learning experience. It has given me a chance to live as any other family does in this area. I have become very fond of taking a bath out of a bucket after a long hot day. I enjoy every minute of our chai (tea) times where we have a chance to relax and talk with many others. And I think I'm getting the hang of tying a konga around myself.



**Rachel Faulstich**

We started our programming last week. I was very excited to start it and it has been a tiresome, yet very rewarding week. All day Saturday we held workshops for the youth (ages 13-35). During these workshops we talked about leading puppet shows, skits, giving testimonies and praise and worship songs. Everyone really enjoyed the puppets which was somewhat of a surprise to me. We split everyone up into groups so they could create their own puppet show. They were hilarious. I was almost rolling on the floor from laughing so hard.

On Sunday we were in church from 7 am to 12:30 for two church services. I gave a sermon and the team sang four songs for each service. One challenge is the language barrier. We are all learning Swahili very quickly but we still need a translator for almost every program we have.

We have only been in Makongo for 11 days but it already feels like home. I've gotten to know some people really well and I can't thank them enough for everything they've done for us. At my first host home one of my host sisters wanted to teach Taryn and I Swahili. We all sat around the table until midnight learning new words. Taryn and I were tired so we accidentally kept falling asleep; but even so, our sister graciously kept teaching us. She is also the one who showed us the correct ways of wearing a konga and she also helped us dress in beautiful Tanzanian-style clothing. One difficulty in the Makongo area is the lack of water. Everyone brings their own water in from another town or have it hauled in on the water trucks from Dar es Salaam. The water problem has really made me appreciate every drop of water I'm given.

Today, we will be having lunch with a group from the Kilimanjaro area. After that, we will go to Dar es Salaam to arrange for plane tickets to go to Kampala. I expect it to be another crazy yet exciting day here in Makongo, Tanzania.

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**Date:** 2/4/2008

**Submitted by:** Christian Bane

**Journal Entry:**

Dear Mom and Dad,

This journal is for you. Well, it's for everyone, but you specifically. Since we've been in Tanzania, I've wanted to contact you to say that I am doing well. I was sick for a few, but feel great now. The weather here is beautiful and the people are all warm and accepting. We've been experiencing a lot. We went swimming in the Indian Ocean within the first few days we were here. The water was super warm. I really enjoy the congregation we are with right now. It's very encouraging to see how they translate their faith into every aspect of their lives. The families we've stayed with hold fellowship meetings in their homes or pray as a family daily. It's also very encouraging to see the involvement of the youth in the church. They are excited to be a part of a choir or to assist with worship, or even help with Sunday school. Overall, so far our experience in Tanzania has been very good.

I do want to express a struggle that has been on my mind for a while now. Last night, Rachel and I went to an internet café. I attempted to check my email, but couldn't access or send any messages. It was extremely difficult to contain my frustrations. All I wanted was some news from home; to know how the family and Liz and her family were doing. I know there must be a reason why I'm not able to stay in touch, but I can't figure it out. I feel more distracted when my thoughts are consumed with the fact that I haven't been able to communicate with anyone from home. I guess my struggle is that I don't understand God's timing. I know I've been called to be in ministry here in East Africa, but I feel such a need to be home right now. I don't know what to do with my frustration and distraction. I don't know where the right place to be is. I ask that you would pray for us in our ministry here and that God would give me peace and understanding about this struggle. Right now, we are waiting in a local Christian radio station in Dar es Salaam to record a program of interviews and a few songs. They are going to broadcast it next Sunday. We got tickets to fly to Uganda at the end of the week on February 1<sup>st</sup>.



**Christian Bane**

The sun here makes me tired. We walk a lot, get a lot of sun, and then are wiped out. I hope you are all doing well. Hopefully I can get some news from you soon. Until then, I love you very much and ask God's blessing for you.

Peace,

Christian

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**Date:** 2/4/2008

**Submitted by:** Nick Maier

**Journal Entry:**

Symbols of Tanzania: Bottle caps

I was frustrated when I saw an old woman sweeping trash off the side of the road. The trash would pile up quicker than she could sweep. I was happily surprised when I saw another old woman sweeping the dirt. She knew there would be trash and footprints there within a few minutes. I was shocked when I saw pastors throwing their bottle caps on the ground after their meeting. But then I understood. I understood when I saw children trading the bottle caps. They are such nice colors and such a variety of designs. You can stack them and you can organize them. You can play checkers with them and you can barter with them- all with children that find them just as valuable as you do.

It's hard not to judge a situation yet because I made snap judgments and opened my ears and eyes wide enough to realize I was wrong, I learned that things have value in themselves. We need to seek the good. Is it right for me to be mad about litter? Probably. Is it okay to smile and laugh with the bibis that sweep the dirt because you think it's silly? Sure. It's bad to look for bad in things. If we look deeper, we can see the significance. In Tanzania, life is simple so it's easy to judge. Yet life is just as complex anywhere in the world. We must be willing to be wrong and see the good. We have to understand why we judge so we can stop doing it. Once we look deeper, simple truths can be seen. Tanzania's beauty is its simplicity. Everything has its specific purpose and when it's purpose is through, it gets a new one. A bottle cap here can become much more than a bottle cap.



**Nick Maier**

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**Date:** 2/4/2008

**Submitted by:** Nick Maier

**Journal Entry:**

Symbols of Tanzania: Ugali

Before we started the year, Beckie led a devotion for all of the teams. She told a beautiful story that concluded with a spoon. She said that spoons are for serving. Surely that is a wonderful symbol for Tanzania. Most often, I've been given a lone spoon to eat with while in Tanzania.

Spoons are too common though. My East African utensil of choice is ugali. It's easiest described as corn meal play-doh. Ugali is a humble creature. It usually comes in a log or the shape of the bowl that it was made in. It's white and bland. It's a food, and it's a utensil. I don't get it.

I was looked at funny when I ate ugali by itself. You're supposed to knead it with your hand to form what I will say is like a spoon. You scoop and pinch the meat or the vegetables



**Nick Maier**

or whatever and eat it all. There's nothing wasted. I see ugali as clay. It's not much by itself, but in the hands of a sculptor and after kneading, working, and refining, it becomes more than what it is. Our hands may get dirty and people might laugh, but eventually we'll learn. I realize now why only one hand is usually used for all things. I think it has less to do with a "bathroom hand" and a "clean hand" but rather we use one hand so the other is free. I can't grip a glass with a hand covered in ugali, but I can use my "dirty hand." Maybe we have two hands so we can serve others with one, help ourselves with the other, and love God with both. In the end, we won't be able to tell which hand is dirty and which is clean. So for now, we can only laugh as we learn. [Matthew 6:3]

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**Date:** 2/6/2008

**Submitted by:** Simon Pedersen

**Journal Entry:**

It has now been 4 days since we arrived in Kampala, Uganda by plane. The people here have been very welcoming, especially our contacts, who have taken care of where we have been sleeping. Two of our contacts have been on a Youth Encounter team before, which makes it really easy for all of us. One of the differences between here and Tanzania is that the top 2 languages spoken here are English and Luganda, so it makes it easier for us to communicate sometimes. However, there are at least 55 other languages spoken here.



**Simon Pedersen**

I would like to tell you about a cool experience we had yesterday while going to a village. We drove for 2 hours, 1 hour was on a paved road, one hour on old bumpy roads. Finally we reach the village of about 120 people. We got a great welcoming with a lot of handshakes. It was funny to see how excited/shocked some of the kids were because we might have been some of the first few white people they had seen. After a while, more of the people gathered around to see our program which they had heard about. The program went well with sharings, skits, and worship. Our contacts translated our skit and sharing for those who did not understand English. After the program everyone came up to us to greet and shake our hands again.

A couple meters away, I could see some kids playing soccer. The soccer ball was amazing, it was made of the materials the kids could find in their village. I ran over to the kids to play with them, however, after 5 minutes or so it turned into a game in which I had to keep the ball away from the 30 kids. It was a lot harder than I thought it would be. Later on, a new game was started, a game of "Simon Says" because they were doing everything I was doing and saying. Having this opportunity, I used it to share the Gospel by telling them about Jesus, which they then repeated.

The time in the village was really interesting to my team and I, which I'm sure went both ways. I am excited about the ministry opportunities we will have during our next 2 and 1/2 weeks in Uganda.

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**Date:** 2/29/2008

**Submitted by:** Rachel Faulstich

**Journal Entry:**

Message from Youth Encounter Staff (this isn't Rachel):

Dear friends and supporters of Cross Fire:

We wanted to let you know that Nick Maier recently returned home from East Africa due to health reasons. He is home safely with his family now, recovering from his illness.



**Rachel Faulstich**

Please keep Nick and his family in your prayers as he recovers; and please continue to pray for the rest of the Cross Fire team, as they continue with their ministry in East Africa as a 4-person team, and as they adjust to Nick's absence. They will face new challenges, but we trust that God will provide the

strength and peace for them to continue with the ministry they have been called to.

Thank you so much for your prayers and support! They are incredibly important for this ministry to thrive and make an impact on so many lives.

In Christ,

Heather Carr  
Director of International Teams

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**Date:** 3/10/2008

**Submitted by:** Nick Maier

**Journal Entry:**

This will be my last installation of symbols from East Africa. I am writing from my home computer but won't bother titling this entry. I had thought of a symbol while in Uganda so I will mention this first.

The Bicycle.

More than in any other place we traveled as Cross Fire Uganda had the highest bike population. Now the funny thing to me is that there weren't a lot of bikes yet everyone used them. Most often I saw people ride two to a seat. Friends gave friends rides. Friends loaned their bikes for big hauls. Workers transported large loads and walked by their bikes. Businesses repaired bikes and there wasn't a single use wasted. This is the glory that I saw.

Nothing is wasted. Old tires turned to shoes. Frames used as scrap metal. Sold and resold. Bought and traded. This is Uganda. This is Tanzania. This is my home.

After contemplating bicycles for long enough I decided to wait to write anything. Bicycles are too common and I don't have anything original to say about them. Yet, in another moment I realized the truth of my thoughts. A man from our hotel approached me after dinner. He said he was concerned for me because I walked alone that morning. I had wanted to be alone. In a strange way, though, I never could be alone. I felt the freedom of the African sunrise, the energy of the heat, the peace of being... exactly where I was. I didn't walk more than ten paces that morning before I realized I could never be alone. And I loved it. I didn't love my feelings or my thoughts or the trees and birds. I loved the people. Hundreds of people between every block of the road, thousands of species of wildlife and plants, millions of living, breathing Created Things. This is my vision of Africa.

This is my vision of home.

When that man told me his concern it was because he loved me. No one should walk alone. No one should ride a bike alone. In Truth, these things are impossibilities in every sense. In Life, you can do-it-yourself. But in Love, we can do-it-ourselves. This is my D.I.O. theology. Philosophy. Ethic. Attitude. Feeling. And Life.

Dio, God, stands above truth. God, Jesus, stands above the earth. People, Jesus, can make this reconciliation. Ourselves, through and through, are a divine tapestry being thred together every moment of our lives, even before there were moments in God's created time, He was. And is. And will be forever and ever.

I believe that the most comforting words God is recorded speaking are, "I AM." After this, "Be still and know that I AM." But before all of these He spoke the most Divine Word. This



**Nick Maier**



Divine Word is that which is God-- His Word of Creation. I don't know what it is and no one ever will but He showed us this Word in His Eternal Art.

Words, symbols, kisses, birds, bicycles. All can all be misunderstood. Yet it is True Love, which I cannot even name very well, which is the Absolute. It is the Absolute that made Himself nothing. On that Holy Seventh Day of Creation, God rested. He put his head down on a pillow of stone and rested. It took only the lifetime of a man for our rest to come to us. I sleep well in my room because I know where Jesus slept. What more, he slept so we may live. He awoke and on that day the World's eyes were open for the First Time.

I cannot hold my joy in expectation of Easter this year because it is the first one I have with my life pieced together. It was hard for me to be far from home for so long but it never is easy to let birds fly. Because when they do they always have a home and a song. I've never seen a bird die and I hope I never do. I like to think they fly straight to Heaven. Amen

[Dedicated to our bird, Jack, who can fly without wings.]

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**Date:** 3/11/2008

**Submitted by:** Christian Bane

**Journal Entry:**

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

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

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



**Christian Bane**

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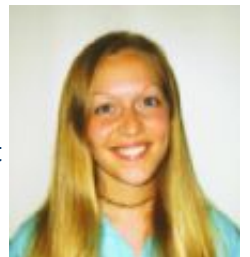
**Date:** 3/13/2008

**Submitted by:** Rachel Faulstich

**Journal Entry:**

We have been in Arusha for over one week now. I feel at home here. We spent the past few nights at my aunt and uncles house in Arusha and we are now getting ready to head to southern Tanzania for a big Easter conference.

Our mode of transportation here in East Africa has been mostly by bus. We have also experienced the small buses (dala dala) motor bikes ( boda boda) and several pick-up trucks; however, the bus rides seem to be the most interesting to me. When we take the bus, we usually have a 6 to 8 hour ride across some pretty bumpy roads. Everyone is squished into their seats and into the people sitting next to them. Also, there are several road blocks along some roads, so the buses are required to stop at these places to pick up an armed 'escort' to ride with us in these 'special' areas. Well, at least we feel safe I guess. Another one of my favorite things about these bus rides is that the buses almost never stop for a bathroom break. I am pretty sure God must have blessed the people over here with really good bladders because they never have to stop for a 'short call'. But anyway, there was this one particular bus ride where I had way too much Chai and water before we left so I really had to go part way into the trip. I was thinking to myself that I was in trouble because they would never stop the bus. However, low and behold, about an hour later, there was a beautiful field of long grass where the bus driver decided to stop. (The driver must have seen the worried look on my face or something.) As soon as the bus stopped, almost everyone jumped off and headed for the grass, guys and girls, all to the same place. I thought to myself, "well they don't generally need much privacy here," so I decided to walk a little further back into the grass. On my way, i was stopped by another lady who told me I would miss the bus if I went any further. She said that no one cares about making a pit stop in front of anyone else, its all the same.



**Rachel Faulstich**

So there ya go.

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**Date:** 3/15/2008

**Submitted by:** Rachel Faulstich

**Journal Entry:**

Last program in Arusha.

Today we traveled just outside of Arusha to an orphanage called Samaritan's Village. We were greeted by about 20 small children/babies who were playing on their front porch. After playing soccer, pushing them on the swings, and letting them comb my hair, we started to sing some songs with them. It wasn't long after we started to sing that we realized they were not very interested in the songs we were singing because they did not know the words to a lot of them. So, we started to request any songs they might know. Pretty soon, all 20 of the watoto were singing every single Christmas song they knew. Some where they had learned a large number of Christmas songs. So there we were, standing in the heat of the African sun, surrounded by large hills and beautiful green banana trees and flowers of all kinds, singing Christmas tunes from Joy to the World to Jingle Bells, to Feliz Navidad. It was wonderful to be able to connect to the kids, even if it meant singing about riding over the snow in a one horse open sleigh. We ended up spending the whole day with them, and left feeling blessed more than ever from their huge smiles and laughter.



**Rachel Faulstich**

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**Date:** 3/19/2008

**Submitted by:** Rachel Faulstich

**Journal Entry:**

Yakobi-Tanzania

Today we visited the Yakobi Lutheran Parish. I was so excited to have the opportunity to visit this particular place because it is the sister church of my home congregation, Zion Lutheran church in Ruthven, Iowa. As we were driving there, it started to rain a little, but we could hear singing and drumming in the distance. As soon as we turned the corner to the church's road, we saw many of the women and men, dancing in the rain, and singing a welcome song to us. It was such a beautiful sight.



**Rachel Faulstich**

After shaking hands and greeted everyone, we were led into a small dining room to have our morning chai, hard boiled eggs, and bread. The pastors and I talked a little about our sister parishes and we shared stories about visits to each. Then we walked over to the church and began the morning program. The church choir sang a few songs, then we sang a few songs and everyone in the church introduced themselves. As I was sitting in the pew, I had goose bumps because I could not stop thinking how amazing it was that I was actually in the Yakobi church. Not only is it the sister church of my home church, but it is also a church my grandfather used to preach at many years ago when he and my grandma lived in Tanzania. I kept thinking how awesome it was that here I was, sharing the Gospel with some of the same people my grandpa shared it with. God is great and sure does some amazing things and makes some pretty crazy connections in life.

After singing and dancing with them, one of the women told us they wanted us to go back to the States with proof from their church that we were actually there. They gave us each a small woven basket and then told the 3 boys to sit down, but they made me stay up front. Soon, they pulled me into another room and dressed me in some beautiful Tanzanian clothing and sent me back out to the front of the church to show off the new clothes. They began dancing and singing some more, so we all joined in the praise and worship. I'm pretty sure my face hurt from smiling so much =)

Another really cool even that happened was that I got to meet the 2 students my church sponsors. My grandpa sent a picture of them with their names, so as soon as I showed it to the pastor, he went and found them and brought them back to the church. It was a really cool experience to be able to meet them face to face.

We finished our time there by getting a tour of the nursery school and primary school and then eating chakula cha mchana (lunch) with them. As we drove off, they sang and danced for us one more time and told us we had to come back sometime soon.

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**Date:** 3/25/2008

**Submitted by:** Rachel Faulstich

**Journal Entry:**

The past week was pretty crazy! On Thursday we drove to a town called Kidugala to attend a large Easter Conference for over 1000 youth. The drive was supposed to take only 2 hours; however, due to roads being a little muddy (by a little muddy I mean sometimes being about a foot deep and very slushy and hilly), it took 6 hours. The land rover we were riding in was able to make it through the mud slosh, but the truck behind us kept getting stuck. So, in the dark, our driver would reverse back through the mud, hook up a rope to the other truck, and pull it behind us for a few miles. It seemed as soon as we unhooked the truck, we were come to another deep muddy patch and the truck would get stuck again. We finally arrived at the school around 9 pm. We ate beans and rice, and then headed over to another building for the opening worship service that last until midnight. Over the course of the next 5 days, I am pretty sure the students did not sleep more than 3 hours every night; however they still had plenty of energy to dance and sing for hours.

The weekend was jammed packed full of various speakers, music competitions and worship. Sunday, Easter morning, I woke up feeling energized and excited for the day. I was anticipating something really unique and wonderful for the Easter service; however, to my discovery, it was nothing as I had expected. There was a service, but most of the time was spent initiating the new youth leaders into office. It was very exciting for the kids there, but it left me feeling sad on Easter. After the service ended, Simon and I went on a long walk. We passed through a small village, and reached a stretch of road that was surrounded by corn fields and sunflowers. I've never seen so many sunflowers in my life! Pretty soon, we heard a beautiful sound coming from a distance. As we kept walking, we approached a very small brick church along the road. Coming from inside, we could hear the congregation singing a beautiful Tanzanian hymn. We stood along the road for a few minutes and let our hearts be lifted by these sounds of praise. A few minutes later, a woman greeted us along the road. She did not speak any English, but with the Swahili I've learned, I understood she was inviting us to her home for a while. She was so kind and she never stopped smiling at us. I explained to her that we had to go back to the conference but we were very thankful for the invitation. After the walk, my heart no longer felt sad. I had found the great Easter celebration after all. It was in the tiny brick church, it was in the fields of sunflowers, and it was in the woman's smile who kindly invited two strangers to her home.



**Rachel Faulstich**

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**Date:** 3/25/2008

**Submitted by:** Christian Bane

**Journal Entry:**

Message from Youth Encounter Staff (this is not Christian)

Dear friends and supporters of Cross Fire:

We wanted to keep you updated about another transition for the Cross Fire team. Taryn Hoover returned home from Africa for personal reasons on March 19th. This left the team with 3 of the original members, so we are grateful that a team alumni from Uganda, Ronald Muyamba (XF 01-02), will be able to join the rest of Cross Fire for the remainder of their ministry in East Africa, and possibly their stateside return, as well. Please pray for the team (and Ronald) as they go through yet another set of transitions (grieving Taryn's loss and adding a new teammate), and for Taryn as she returns home.

Thank you also for your continued prayer for Nick Maier as he has been at home resting and



**Christian Bane**

recovering these last weeks. He seems to be doing much better, and is feeling more like himself each day. Praise God, and thank you for your prayers for Nick and all of Cross Fire. They make a difference, and help make ministry like this possible.

Blessings on you all,

Heather Carr

Director of International Team Ministry

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**Date:** 3/25/2008

**Submitted by:** Simon Pedersen

**Journal Entry:**

Simon; March 17; Njombe, Tanzania.

Today we have been on a bus for 12 hours from Dar es Salaam to Njombe. A busride with a lot of speed bumps, some of them threw us up in the air because the driver did not want to slow down all the time. So now sitting in a bed that is not jumping up and down is SUPER nice!



**Simon Pedersen**

Sadly, it has been way too long since I last wrote a journal. It was 6 weeks ago at the beginning of our trip in Uganda. Of course, a lot has happened since then. We had been in Uganda for 3 weeks, Karagwe, Tanzania for 1 week, and Arusha, Tanzania for 2 weeks. In all of these places we have done a lot of ministry and met a lot of people. I would like to share one thing that I was, and still am, excited about with our ministry in Uganda: After our programs, one of our contacts would invite people to take part in a Bible correspondence course. The Bible course can be completed in 1 to 2 months and a diploma is given on completion. In the 3 weeks of our ministry in Uganda, about 800 people signed up for the course. I find it very exciting that so many people want to be educated in their faith because I believe it is very important for a Christian to get education in your faith.

Some sad stuff has also happened since my last journal. Nick had been in need of going home and he did so at the end of our journey in Uganda 3 weeks ago (you can read about it in another journal on this page). Our teammate, Taryn, has also been in need of going home which she will do from Dar es Salaam, where we left her today (I believe you can also read why she had to go home in another journal on this page). That Nick and Taryn had to go home has been very sad. However, I am glad that they are able to be home for their individual reasons. I hope and pray that they will recover fast and be well. This leads me to tell of some good news: yesterday in Dar es Salaam, we met up with Ronald, who had been one of our contacts in Uganda. The good news is that Ronald has become our teammate. We are now four on Cross Fire: Ronald, Rachel, Christian, and me. I praise God that we were able to get Ronald on our team. He is a blessing to our team and to the ministry. A cool thing about Ronald is that he had been on Cross Fire in 2001- 2002 and knows therefore how team life is and how to do ministry in East Africa.

So here we are after a long busride. I really enjoyed our meeting with our contact here. Almost the first thing he did was to begin our fellowship in prayer. After that, we went to supper where we had a very formal introduction of one another. Hearing about how they have been looking forward to seeing us and all they have planned for us makes me excited about being in Njombe and doing ministry here. One of the first things we will be a part of is the Easter conference. About 1000 youth will attend and it will last four days.

I will end this journal with some prayer request. Thank God for the ministry opportunities we've gotten in Tanzania and Uganda. Pray that the places we've gone will continue to grow in their faith and spread the gospel of Jesus. Pray that Nick and Taryn will get new strength as Nick has and Taryn will return home. Thank God for the ministry Nick and Taryn did here in East Africa. Thank God that it has been possible for Ronald to join team. Pray that Ronald will feel welcomed on team and that we will all have a great time together. Pray for the ministry we will do in Njombe, especially for the Easter conference and all the youth that will attend.

God's peace,

Simon

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**Date:** 4/2/2008

**Submitted by:** Simon Pedersen

**Journal Entry:**

Today is the 1st of April, the day after we arrived in Morogoro. This is the place we will stay until Saturday morning, once again, the weather is very warm, 33° C, too warm if you ask me, - I had just gotten used to the cold weather in Njombe. Morogoro is a beautiful place with mountains and rivers. It is good to be here because there seems to be a lot to do here. Our schedule started the moment we arrived after our 7 hour bus ride here. Almost as soon as we got off the bus, they told us about the program we would do later that night but they promised us some rest time before. Our rest time that we were all really excited about turned out to be really short when the youth pastor asked if we were ready after only 10 minutes. A few minutes later, we arrived at the program where people were already waiting for us.



**Simon Pedersen**

Today we did 2 programs, one at an all-girls school and one at a church. They both turned out well. I enjoy being here in Morogoro and doing ministry. I'm sure this will become a great week.

I would like to flash back a little time to tell whoever reads this that we had a good time in Njombe as well, and that the big youth Easter Conference went very well. Our main job at the Easter Conference was to be 1 of the 2 worship bands there. Njombe is a place I will miss along with all the good people there.

The next traveling we will do will be on Saturday to Nairobi, Kenya. We will do the journey over 2 days. First we will go to Arusha, and then on to Nairobi. I am exited about spending Sunday with our friends in Arusha. The End.

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