



## Kenya Mission Journal - Pastor Chris Singer

St. John's Lutheran Church – 2007

**April 10-11th, 2007**

We met at St. John's and encountered a doubting Thomas in our shuttle driver. He saw all we were to load and just shook his head in disbelief. But thanks to Dr. Jay and Darrell Dudley, we got everything in and after loading 8 tubs and everyone's luggage onto laps and crevices we were ready to take off. The driver started the car, and "Oops!" I yelled, "where is Robin Lyall"? Just as I finished asking the question there she was and into the van we went.

Our drive was quick to LAX and customs was really a breeze. We were required to pay extra fees for our extra luggage...but we were on our way.

The flight was a long one to London. 11 hours and I felt every bit of it. After 3 hours I was ready to be there! But thanks to my ipod and in seat video system, I did not go insane.

So now I am sitting with the team in London's Heathrow airport. Dr. Jay and my plans to catch the tube and go see Westminster Abby were shattered when we got to security re-check and a nice ol' chap informed us that we had to get everything down to only one bag per person. We quickly began consolidating. Then after driving on a shuttle for what seemed like another day, and hiking up all the broken escalators...we arrived at gate 14 where at 8pm London time, noon OC time, we will fly on to Nairobi and loose two more hours. When we arrive in Nairobi it will be 6:30am and we will sleep for several hours before the Ambassador team takes off for Evangelical Lutheran Church Kenya's Bishop Walter Obare's house where we will discuss ministry and a possible church plant in Rwika where the Grace Works building currently sits.

The Schlueters are doing well and MaryKay has finished her book which she really enjoyed. Darrell is still smiling and really taken it all in with style. Jacquelyn is really enjoying her time so far and thinks that Dr. Jay should go into stand up. Ryan Hall is having a great time too. He has been stopped only once through security with all his gear. We all tried to place phone calls home. Robin was the only one who had service so we borrowed her phone.

As for me, well I got into the collar which I know so many of you wanted to see. So Dr. Jay took a quick pic for you all to view.

More later.

Pastor Chris Singer  
Mission Possible – Kenya!

**April 11-12th, 2007**

I don't remember reading about the second flight being so long! Our second flight from London to Nairobi was going to last another seven hours! We boarded Kenyan Airlines flight 101 with a little adventure as well.

As I was hitting send on the last email update, a voice began speaking over the loudspeaker announcing our flight. We had been waiting for two hours for someone to show up at our gate in order for us to even check in. When Dr. Jay went to the counter he was reprimanded by the Kenyan airline representative who told him, "We have been calling you over the loud speaker for the last hour. We can't load any of your luggage (remember our nine pieces of luggage full of crafts and goodies for the kids?) until you check in."

Immediately we were instructed to follow a long hall down to an official Kenya Air desk where we had to check in. This was fine with one exception. "Where is Darrell?" I asked? We had his carry on bag...but no Darrell. As we were frantically checked in and hurried to an already boarded flight Ken saw Darrell strolling through the hallway completely unaware of the latest urgency. We got Darrell checked in and on board. I have suggested that Darrell have a special travel buddy who can help keep Darrell closer to us! (Darrell has had a great smile and taken the ribbing in great fun).

As with any mission trip, this is part of the deal. We get to know one another and new sides of each other that we don't usually see! I am so thankful that I am the one who is sending you all these updates!

All aboard and everyone accounted for we settled in for the seven hour flight. Cynthia, (Susan Njemansze's daughter) was fast asleep and had managed to locate a row with no one in it and so slept comfortably across three chairs. Meanwhile, Dr. Jay, Ryan, and myself felt like three sardines and tried to catch some sleep. The Schlueters also caught some sleep while Jacquelyn watched the special in flight movie. As the plane route was traced on our monitors to show us our progress I was struck with an incredible wonder as we flew over places like, Rome and just west of Egypt. To think that was where the apostle Paul spent so much of his time and the children of Israel were set free by God across that Red Sea...to be so close was really great.

When we finally landed in Nairobi, we exited the plane and immediately out onto the tarmac. What caught my attention immediately as we breathed in our first breaths of the comfortable yet humid air of Africa was.....CRICKETS. Now mind you I never saw them, but it was like an orchestra. Here we were between two huge 747's with their engines running and I felt like I had to shout over the song of the crickets.

We got through customs with no problem. Every one of our bags made it safe and sound...and so did Darrell. We were met by Susan Njemansze and Aunt Jane as well as our travel agency group, Somak who loaded their bus with all of our luggage and team. We began heading to the Jacaranda Hotel where we would be staying. As soon as we left the airport the open land was all around us. It looked like something out of National Geographic with the trees and the open plain. Then we moved through the city...it was rush hour. While there was only really two lanes marked on the road, there was quickly four lanes as drivers in both lanes split and drove on the shoulders. Both the left side and right side shoulders were filled with people walking, riding bikes, and selling newspapers. While the drive normally would take twenty minutes...we were in wall to wall traffic and it took nearly an hour to arrive at our hotel. Ken Schlueter commented that he expected more bright colors yet in the city of Nairobi there wasn't very many colors. The sky was a pasty white with clouds and Cynthia said she could smell the rain

coming in. We drove and made our way through the city all of us trying to accept it...WE HAD ARRIVED!

We came to the Jacaranda Hotel and were welcomed warmly by the staff. We filled in our paperwork and got our room assignments. All of us retired to our rooms for about three to four hours of sleep before we will all meet downstairs in the lobby for a bite of lunch somewhere in town. (When we landed it was Thursday morning 6am while it was 8pm on Wednesday back home).

Ryan was thrilled to see that the hotel had a pool. Dr. Jay and I noticed immediately there was no central air.... "Oh wait....here it is" I said to Jay pointing to the window! The weirdest thing was that the television station that the one channel that did come in fairly consistently out of the two was Al-Jazeera tv. They were interviewing one of our own US commanders and really giving him grief about the real purpose of their presence in Iraq. I called Bishop Walter Obare on the phone (phone service is hit and miss here even from landline phones) and we set up an appointment today at 3pm at what he called, "...the church compound". The whole group is eager to get to the village where we will get to work tomorrow.

After the such a long flight everyone was looking forward to a nice hot shower and sleep. Please say prayers of thanksgiving to God for safe travel and for all of our luggage arriving. Keep praying as we move into some very important parts of our trip today and tomorrow.

As I look down from my window, I call out "Jambo" (hello in Swahili) to our group. They are all there eagerly awaiting us for lunch. Your prayers are appreciated...who knows what we are about to eat!

Just returned from lunch...no time to waste we have a meeting with Bishop Obare in twenty minutes. Of course they tell me in African culture that means nothing but the American-German-Lutheran in me can't get comfortable with the idea still. Oh for lunch we had Leek Soup, rice, meat, carrots, and diet coke...known here as Coke Light. Robin and Jacquelyn stayed sleeping in the hotel...they were really worn out and weren't in the eating and adventure mood when compared to four-five plus hours of sleep.

Dr. Jay, Dr. Dudley, Ryan, Ken and MaryKay went out to haggle or be haggled at the near by mall. They were swamped with people wanting not only their full attention on their wares but also eager to try and trade them for anything American. Personal space was often violated in terms of what we Americans are comfortable with. Ryan had a couple guys actually take two coins right out of his hand and smile thanking him for buying them each a soda!

Susan Njemansze and I went to visit with Bishop Walter Obare and Rev. Ahmandi from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. Their building is a small one where they meet. It sits next to their current sanctuary. They are worshipping 100 every Sunday which is remarkable since what they have been through. He shared with Susan and I the deep history of the Lutheran church here in Kenya.

Bishop Obare was very hesitant with us at first when he found out where we were working. This revealed a story of tension with two other Lutheran churches in nearby EMBU. While it has been resolved you would definitely say that it didn't resolve into the two denominations working together. However, after some more discussion it was electric. Thank you all for prayers because after the initial reaction, the response was incredible. When we described our plans and how we saw things developing between GraceWorks and St. John's work of a possible church planting effort Bishop Obare was eager to hear more. He turned and said to us, "If you discover the need to plant a

church and can get things started, I will not stand in the way of the Lord's work...I will give you my full support as a Christian and as an official voice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya." He then explained the construction we has seen as we arrived to his property. It is a four flour building with 100 space parking structure underneath all with the help LCEF. (Lutheran Church Extension Fund). The vision they shared for the building was exciting. He invited our whole team to come over on Friday before we fly home to have a dinner with him and his wife.

We thanked him with a special gift of the ceramic St. John's J that we had received for our 125th anniversary as well as some special engraved fountain pens. Both men were appreciative and moved by our gift.

Rushing back to the Jacaranda the driver dropped Susan and I off at the hotel where we met the team for dinner in the hotel. The meal was wonderful. I had Fish and Chips which was very good. Others had Italian dishes, a turkey dish cooked in shitake mushrooms, and a few others had salads. We had a wonderful discussion as I shared the report of our meeting with Bishop Obare and we also shared some challenges for the days ahead. Each team gained new perspectives as we talked and shared about our objectives for the next day in the village. Everyone retired to bed as Nairobi isn't necessarily the kind of town you want to be walking through at night...not to mention that we are all very tired and looking forward to a great nights sleep.

Tomorrow morning we will get going at 8am with breakfast in the hotel, load into rented vehicles and travel 3 hours to Embu. There we will settle into a new hotel and we will go and begin prep work for the next three days in Embu and Rwika.

Please pray for our Anniversary party on Saturday. There is much nervousness about the word being out so much that there will be mobs of people for this event. That isn't a bad thing necessarily, but we are only geared up to do our share of the anniversary for a smaller group of children. Pray that God will bring the right amount of people for it to be an event which blesses people, not leaving any feeling left out.

Also pray for the people of Rwika and ask the LORD to soften their hearts to the work He wants to do there.

Till Tomorrow. PCS!

### **April 13th, 2007**

Well I think everyone got a lot of sleep last night. I was awoken this morning to the sound of a mosquito buzzing in my ear. After reading all I did on Malaria, I was up with a jump. It brings back the reality of a constant fear that surrounds us as a team. All of us are unsure of this place. There are so many things unknown. No one says it, but you can see it in most of our eyes. There are things to be feared of course everywhere you go. In LA between the earthquakes and the crime and traffic accidents alone are enough to have anyone ask why be there.

But being here in Africa has made me realize that the unknown is almost worst than the actual fear itself. Of course here in Africa there are things that we no longer really worry about in America. Like the water. I went to rinse my toothbrush and as a habit, washed it under the sink. Only later to realize that it would be safer to use the bottled water provided there by the hotel. Wow the things I take for granted!

That is why I began to cry this morning when I read Ps. 46. Sure I knew this psalm before, read it dozens of times and sang it as a member of a choir as a kid. But the unknown and being out of the comfort of all that I sometimes think I have control of in my life...made me appreciate these words all over again.

*Psalm 46: 1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. 5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. 7 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah 8 Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. 10 "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." 11 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

God has already used this travel experience to teach me again His sovereignty and His power. He has shown me my weakness. Today I pray He will show me His strength in the midst of things I can not control. He has already shown me His mercy in giving me the opportunity to discover this and not allow me to continue so head strong into my own life oblivious to my need for His strength.

Today we go to EMBU. Susan has shared with me already that one challenge we face is to have the people there see us as more than just money in flesh. The people see Americans and immediately begin thinking riches and try and they all want help and lots of it!

Last night at dinner the group discussed this. Dr. Jay brought up that it is no wonder you would have this kind of thinking when so many just live to see where their next meal may come from. Others chimed in and discussed how humans are no different anywhere really.

While we are here to meet some of those immediate needs, we realize that the true impact is not necessarily in what we give but in what we teach. The old saying, "You can feed a man for a day if you give him a fish, but you can feed him for a life when you teach him how to fish" (or something like that) is never more true than what we will face in the next four days.

The group gained a lot of hope through this conversation as we realized more clearly the LORD calling us to meet any immediate need that we were able, but also to be pointing them to something greater. A greater future. Dr. Darrell then shared the large complexities of what we face to make medical changes within Embu. It was overwhelming and Darrell was choked up by his emotions as he shared with us the pain of the people and what he had been reading. God has really given us a caring heart in Darrell.

Today we once again depart into the unknown. But God is faithful and strong. He has already begun to show us great things He will do. My conversation with Bishop Obare yesterday is only now beginning to sink in to a greater realization of what God has done. Susan shared with me that she was really impressed about what had happened when she learned that Bishop Obare had just been in the west (west Africa...a very, very long and ever perilous drive away from Embu). He had driven back for our meeting together. He will then return to the West today and be there through Thursday evening where he will preside over the burial of one of their other bishops. He could have easily just stayed

there and remained until his duties were done. But he was led to come back and meet with us. I pray that this might be the beginning of the forging of a relationship that might enable God to use St. John's in a way that is greater than ourselves.

Today please pray for our safe travel. I am also hoping they will have internet access for us at the Izaak Walton Inn so that I may continue to share all the details of what the LORD is doing here. I tried to send some more pictures but the connection speed is so slow and weak that my remaining minutes online were be wasted while it tried to load. But Ryan Hall has been taking lots of pictures. Tomorrow, we also begin shooting video footage.

We are on our way! Blessings to everyone back home, especially my wife Jeanette and my precious children, Caleb, Hanah, Rachel, Benjamin and Jacob.

### **Evening of April 13th.**

Wow. What a day.

We began with a breakfast at the Jacaranda hotel. Everyone sat together and Susan shared her story with us of how she came to the United States. It was fun to hear how the LORD worked in her life.

Breakfast was a buffet and included all kinds of sausage, bacon, eggs, omlettes, and lots of fruit. While there one gentleman asked me about my collar and it began a great conversation as he shared with me his faith and when he heard I was from California, he began to try and relate to me through mentioning Santa Ana California. Why? TBN! It was a short conversation but at the end he said, "Jesus is my Lord and my Savior", that was worth the collar alone!

At breakfast the group laughed as we shared stories about Wawi (Cynthia aka Susan's daughter) and her growing up. It helped all of us begin to get acquainted with the African culture a little more.

After breakfast Ryan, Jay, and I went across the street to get Dr. Jay the socks he had forgotten at home. When the lady rung up his 7 pairs of socks the amount on the cash register read - \$2950.00. Now those are some special socks. Then of course I remembered that number is in shillings the Kenyan currency.

We returned to the hotel and everyone brought their luggage down to the lobby and joined the pile of tubs and our box waiting to be loaded for the three hour road trip to Embu. We had a long wait for the bus to arrive and so packed all the luggage in a mini van and sent it on ahead of us to Embu. When the 24 seated bus arrived we all loaded, but found ourselves still waiting. Susan told us that Wawi wasn't back yet. Apparently she had gone to get her phone and when she arrived it wasn't ready. We waited for a long time and soon Darrell was off the Where's Darrell search as it became, Where's Wawi. She returned and after a bit of a motherly scolding she loaded the bus with us.

The journey in the bus was truly amazing. We got to see so much of the surrounding areas of Nairobi as we left and drove to Embu. The scenery was really inspiring as we saw lots of little cities and villages, farms, and rivers. At one point the bus driver pulled over and suddenly hands of merchants selling pineapples and bananas flooded into our bus with pleas for us to buy them. Several of us purchased pineapples and Darrell got bananas as well. We drove off just in time to spare Darrell's wallet as he was about to buy every piece of fruit offered to him. We enjoyed the bananas as we drove and continued to take in the scenery.

Arriving in Embu we quickly found the Izaak Walton Inn. Many mentioned once inside our rooms that the internet picture looked a lot better than the real thing! It is certainly a third world country and the rooms are certainly adequate...but not what they teased with on the website! Even now as I type I am unable because of the low power to charge my equipment. I may need to get some help with charging tomorrow.

We ate at the Izaak Walton Inn. Well, everyone except Jacquelyn. She wasn't up to the eating. She has a profound fear of bugs...hereafter referred to as the 'b' word. Right before we had taken our seats for lunch, Jay showed us a rather large grasshopper (black) in his room. I think that is what did Jacquelyn in. She needed time to decompress and breathe.

Ken Schlueter had sweet and sour chicken and loved it although it was really spicy. Robin had a cheese bread which she said was a lot like grilled cheese sandwich. Jay and I both had Kenya Beef Stew with rice and carrots. Ryan had a slim steak of some kind. MaryKay had tomato soup. All of us enjoyed the conversation and the meal. After we finished our lunch we prepared to load the bus and head for Rwika. As we were leaving there was a playful monkey who came right up to Ryan's video camera and seemed completely content for us to take pictures. (So Jeanette...tell the kids, I got the picture of the monkey they wanted!)

We loaded up in the bus and headed into Susan's village Rwika. Upon arriving we were greeted by many of the kids and families connected with GraceWorks. They had already begun preparations for the party tomorrow.

Most noticeable was the action of about six men in the corner of the lot. Susan invited me over and I viewed the head of a bull laying apart from the body. They had begun preparing this whole bull for tomorrow's celebration. Some details I will keep to myself but let me just say that this wouldn't get a grade A, B, or C from the county health department. I won't ever forget that scene. Although I hope tomorrow when it lands on my plate I will think of something completely different. Neither will I forget walking away from the corner to hear the ladies singing and dancing for us, only to turn back and see Jay taking a picture with the bull head. He had all the men laughing and I think all the women were terrified. Susan told me that they will cook the bull all night for tomorrow.

Susan then showed me GraceWorks. Her building is so very small due to the fact that she rents it and the owner sub divided this large room with a floor to ceiling wall. So every weekend GraceWorks literally stuffs 60 plus children (all of whom have lost one or both parents to aids and are currently living with single parent, grandparent or other relative) into this room on a concrete floor in order for them to hear bible lessons, sing songs, watch a little dvd, as well as view an enormous wall full of St. John's Sunday school pictures as well as a picture of Walker Hall Auditorium when Susan and I received a generous gift in the Sunday service from the girl scout troop on behalf of GraceWorks.

We then walked into the next room which serves as her sister Jane's office. Jane is wonderful Christian woman who runs GraceWorks full time. She has been so busy since our arrival and has been rather frantic wanting to be a good hostess. But she remains cool and collected as well as smiling and gracious even despite the pressure she is experiencing upon our arrival. The final room next to these two is a storage room and it was filled with rice and cases of coke and other sodas for the celebration tomorrow.

We then walked about 30 yards to the place of the new GraceWorks building. It was framed out in steel, roof on, and foundation ready for a cement slab. This building is big, wide open and has room for an additional building across the lot from the current

structure that St. John's helped build with our \$12,000. With an additional building and a playground Susan dreams to build a daycare center for these children. Our contact and new friend Paul Holgate met us there to explain the work that he organized and led on our behalf. Paul will continue to oversee the laborers and the finishing of this structure.

One man had dug a latrine which will be for septic tanks next to this structure. He dug it about 16 feet deep in two days...ALL BY HAND! We then walked up the road a ways to the Rwika Dispensary. Here Dr. Jay and Dr. Darrell will spend some time on Monday as this is the place where one lone woman serves a large area alone with medical prevention and some treatment. Also in this lot is the well which we had seen on the video's of MISSION POSSIBLE before we left. Several of us took turns pumping the water. Then Jay took his sweat jacket off and carried in it this large canister of water by draping it over his head. A Rwika girl, maybe 7, and all of maybe 40 pounds out walked him and we all knew she could have probably carried two without breaking a sweat. But Jay made it with his down the long walk back to the village as the children laughed to the point they were almost crying. Carrying water is a woman's job and so even the men were laughing at Jay.

We then headed down the dirt road to Susan's relative's home. There we saw and tasted Passion fruit, mango's growing on trees, sugar cane, pumpkins, yams, chickens, corn, and other vegetables. We saw the small structure where Susan and her 16 brothers and sisters grew up! Amazing that they all fit into this little place. We met Susan's mom Grace. She is in her 80's and is certainly in great shape and health. (she does have a really bad tooth ache, and Dr. Jay is going to see if he can help with that on Monday). Grace inspired and encouraged me as Susan shared with me how every single morning Grace awakens early so that she may sit alone in her modest front room on cement slab and there in the quiet pray for one hour each day. She pleads and blesses the LORD for all kinds of things...but during the last month had been praying for our trip and our arrival.

Is it any wonder why then our trip went so smooth through customs and all luggage and tubs arrived and on and on and on??? I will ask her to include me and my family on her list! But more importantly she encouraged me in my own prayer life.

We sat with Susan's relatives in that same front room as it was dark and they showed us their new electricity which was just hooked up two weeks ago. They were so thrilled to turn the switch on and be able to sit together in this front room. There we sat playing with the kids who were so adorable and trying to get a sense of what the conversation was shared by Susan's family in Embu.

It was dark and the walk back to GraceWorks inadvisable so Susan asked the small car to come and take us in loads. Somehow, they decided to send the bus. Susan was really upset because these dirt roads are an easy place of a bus that large to get stuck. The driver did get stuck...but managed to get it unstuck and even turned around after what must have been a 50 point turn in Grace's front area between the trees and the fences. We said our goodbyes and loaded back into the bus. Traveling back through Embu town we saw the merchants with kerosene lanterns still selling their wares and the nightlife getting warmed up. There is a dance place right next to our hotel and it is hopping with the people. Also our hotel offers pool and other games which they come up to enjoy from the club.

One of our drivers who is from Rwika, Paul, shared with me that he was thankful I was there and hoped I would "preach to the people". He said, "There is a devil of drunkenness here and it is really bad with the young men". He told me they drink to forget but always drink in excess. It is becoming a large societal problem for this community as many men are completely ignoring their families for time with the bottle.

I pray God might give me some insight on any words or even future plans of how we could effect such a change no matter how gradual it might be.

All of us are pretty beat from today but our spirits are really high from what we encountered today. They are still planning on 1000 plus people at GraceWorks tomorrow. If that is true then trying to move around in the crowd will be 100 times worst than what we experience back home at the busiest hour of the Street Fair!! There are several tents and hundreds of chairs. The parliamentary entourage is still scheduled to come. The agenda will include lots of presentations and at some point they are hoping I will preach to the people. Please pray for me in this that I might proclaim what God would want said to these people.

Jay and Ryan just popped over to my room, they showed me a frog they got jumping around as the rain began to fall lightly over our hotel. There is something amazingly beautiful about this place. And while they would certainly need to get internet wifi access here for me before I would live here...it is really healing to rediscover some of the amazing beauty that sits right outside our rooms (i.e. the monkey, the frog, the birds, the crickets amazing night songs) instead of every inch covered with cement and asphalt as we have back home. I don't think I would trade our roads for their's...but the pace might be what we need for a saner humanity!

In closing tonight I look in the mirror and notice bags under my eyes and a rash from that collar! The mosquito netting is above my bed and ready to cover me tonight. But I have been moved and encouraged today by our group, our mission, and certainly all of this from our LORD. It is our LORD who covers us with His blood. He is our shelter and strength and I saw it today. I stand amazed at His wonders and His creation. While the language is different and the skin color darker, I saw today in the eyes of those children the same gleam of hope and life that resonate in my own children's eyes. I saw the hope of men and women that I know Jeanette and I carry around in our hearts. I learned that even though the Cross is spoken with a different word, (Ma tha Rah ba....I think?) that those children knew the peace which it brings. I am so thankful God has called us to this place. I am grateful to my family who sacrificed time with me, as well as all of you who put forward money so that we might be here to represent the love of St. John's Lutheran Church. Another Psalm comes to me tonight as I reflect on this and the celebration we will have tomorrow.

*Psalm 5:11 But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.*

I will try tomorrow to find an internet cafe to send this to you. If not I will try again at the Jacaranda on April 17th.

### **April 14th, 2007**

Last night was an interesting night. After saying goodnight we retired to our rooms. Here at the Sir Izaak Walton we are in separate rooms. After typing last night's diary I retired to bed and covered over with the mosquito netting. All lights were out and soon I was too. That was until once again I was awakened by the sound of a bug flying around my room. I couldn't see it, but by the sound it was like a small cargo plane. I then realized that there was a light on. That freaked me out cause when I had shut my eyes, all lights were off. Then I realized as the rain poured down that Embu was suffering from

a power outage. No lights except this one light which was a generator light for emergency.

In the morning, the power was still not on. I went to see if they might have my short sleeve clergy shirt ready out of the laundry. But due to the power failure they wouldn't have it in time. So on with the long sleeve.

We met for breakfast and ate at the outside tables under the patio overhang. Our breakfast was omelettes, fruit, thin steak, cereal if you braved the milk, and coffee with toast. I stuck to only the fruit and one piece of the thin steak. Realizing that we faced eating bull, I also ate an extra piece of toast and took two hard boiled eggs. At breakfast Paul shared with us that upon his arrival several weeks earlier he and six out of seven total came down with Malaria even though they were on the medication. None of us were happy to hear this as we were living blissfully in the belief that our medicine was enough.

I then led the team in devotions. I read Psalm 5 and then a chapter out of "Blue Like Jazz" entitled Problems. I spoke about the brokenness or sinfulness in all of us and how whether we were African or American it was the same. I discussed the difference between those who admit it, and those who deny it. Yet the hope of Jesus Christ is also the same. For God will never despise a broken and contrite heart.

Susan then gave us instructions for the day including a warning that we were not to give anything to the kids this day as there would be far too many on this public celebration for us to handle and provide for and that by not having something for everyone could really cause a big problem for us and for Graceworks. So we postponed the original craft until Monday.

We loaded the bus (after Wawi did finally make it inside the bus...."Where's Wawi?) and headed towards Rwika. On the way Susan received a phone call from her sister, Jane, telling us they were not ready for us to arrive yet.

So we made a stop in Embu for Susan and Wawi to get some supplies for the party. Meanwhile Paul led Jay and myself across into a shop to buy phone calling cards so that several of us could attempt a call home. Then we ventured down through the open street market to purchase a drink. Jay joked that as white people we stood out like a snow ball in a coal mine. He was right. But here the merchants were not aggressive as in Nairobi. They were laid back and more pleasant. Someone called me 'father' since I was in my collar. Jay and I laughed as we headed back to the bus.

Upon arriving in Embu we were still a little too early for them. The Kenyan's want their hospitality to be just right. So we drove the road further and went to the local primary school where Wawi attended. If you didn't know it was a school, then looking at it from the outside may have left an American thinking these were concrete storage halls or some kind of open air prison. But to Wawi it brought a smile and great memories of growing up. We peeked into these rooms and it reminded me of when I was a child. When I was young I went to a 'historical museum' where they had old structures restored to the time of the pioneers. In one particular structure they had these stark, wooden bare classrooms. As I looked into these rooms today, they were similar. Basic wooden benches and wooden desks with a solid wall of cement as a chalkboard. Walking further we found a door open and two female teachers studying! (It was Saturday) Jay quickly made conversation since his wife is a teacher as well. We shot some pictures of their room and moved on towards St. Phillips church where we will be attending church on Sunday. It was also the church Susan and her family attended growing up.

When we walked onto the grounds I was introduced to the Reverend Purity. Rev. Purity had two children and her husband was worked in another town. She invited us graciously into her home and we played with Ivn and Bob who were maybe 3 and 1 years old. I began to discuss with Rev. Purity how she had come into this position. She explained that she was sent her from her previous role with the church as the secretary of youth. (secretary would be similar to what we know as 'minister'). She said the youth challenge was very difficult but that her Bishop sent her to Embu and St. Phillips because he had transferred the previous pastor to another parish. It later came that this part of the area and the Anglican church is very cut off from the other areas and they are experiencing a huge crisis....a severe shortage of pastors.

She asked me to share the Gospel with her people tomorrow when we visit. I agreed knowing that I had previously met with Bishop Walter Obare who had shared with me that they are working to help these Anglican churches and are in close fellowship with them. Further conversation at the celebration with Rev. Purity revealed a lot about where this church is at. They are currently at 135 people and are split about who the Bishop currently presiding. They all seem eager to have Rev. Purity to take a side. She sees her role as one helping during the needing healing and until the new Bishop is named next year. That is when I discovered that she is a temporary fix for what the Bishop sees as a temporary problem. She also agreed that the problem of a drug known as Mira which is currently grown locally and not illegal has presented a new challenge for ministry. Many of the kids are refusing school for being able to make big profits in the selling and growing of this drug. The crop land that fathers could be using to feed their family and sell to the community are starting to show slow down in production because of a preference in choosing the drug to grow for quick profit. As confirmed by others she also confirmed that alcohol is a big problem with the middle aged to young men. She also said that so many in the community see orphans as an issue for anyone else but them. This self focused thinking keeps the pressure on the church to fill in the gap. She was very open to receiving help from the ELCK. An issue I intend to follow up with Bishop Obare about on Friday night when we arrive at his house for dinner.

We returned to Graceworks and they were ready. The women greeted us with dancing and walked us to our tables which were highly decorated and right in front in a place of honor. What ensued was a lot of speeches from various dignitaries, elders, and graceworks workers. The children performed songs and dances, there were four acrobatic boys that did some really cool stunts, there were the traditionally garbed Embu drummers who also performed. Then more speeches, and then food. This was where I held my breath. My plate came and I ate all but a couple of bites. It was during this eating that I realized I had not seen one single McDonalds in Africa. I wondered if I could find one later. Jay took and ate a delicacy called, Bull Innards" They smelled bad and Jay later told us they tasted as bad as they smelled. Good for him for trying it.

I was invited to speak and I shared with the people a word of 'hello' and gratitude form St. John's Lutheran Church in Orange.

After the cake cutting ceremony we finally said our goodbyes and headed for the bus. You would have thought it was Tom Cruise and Angelia Joli walking to the bus. We were swamped by kids, parents and teens. We got into the bus and headed back to the Izaak Walton. Time the party was over 5:30pm! That is one long party.

Upon returning I was eager to use my phone card to make my first call home since leaving a message at London's airport. No one seemed to really know where the pay phone was and after asking my fifth hotel staff, I was shown the phone about a ½ block down the street from the hotel. I picked up the phone and began dialing. Only then realizing I didn't know the USA country code!! After five trips and five different trials to

the hotel and back to this pay phone, I had the right code and got a chance to speak to my wife and all my kids. It was really emotional. While it had been only four days the emotion and tension of the distance and perceived risk in this trip I could barely speak the words, "I really miss you". My wife has a big job with me being gone for so long. She was eager to hear about me and I was eager to hear she was doing ok. After a twenty minute conversation I could finally feel the tension out of my shoulders. I walked back to the Izaak with a little more jump in my step and walked right into the hotel restaurant in time to join the group as we ordered our dinner.

Dinner was great again as I sat across from the Schlueters and we explored our common background discovered when we learned that we both connected to Colorado. It was a fun conversation for all of us as we recounted many places, many people, and shared Lutheran events. After talking with my family it was the next best thing to help warm my heart in a far off distant place.

Memories are wonderful like that. Often when we counsel families who have lost someone special we work to remind them to share memories with one another often and soon. I remember another important person who told us to "Do this in remembrance of Me." While that statement is loaded with so much more theological implications than my Colorado memories...I realize that the remembrance of what Jesus did for me has the same heart warming effect.

I retired to bed and typed more of this diary until I was nodding off and the battery wearing down. Unfortunately I purchased the wrong transformer and am now facing the difficulty of recharging my laptop. Realizing this as I tried to get it to charge became a real anxious experience when I remembered I still needed to put some work in on my message for tomorrow. I worked until the battery almost died and fell asleep late to catch a couple hours of sleep until I would finish it early in the morning. Breakfast was at 7am and the bus leaving at 7:45am for the two services.

## **April 15, 2007**

I wrestled a lot with my message and where I should go. What made it really challenging was questioning whether my stories would translate and if any humor would be caught. The LORD was faithful as always and led me to preach on Romans 15: 1-7. This passage was very important because it challenges on us "bearing" up with other's burdens and "accepting" others as Christ accepted us.

We met a man named Bill at breakfast. He was a missionary with the Living God Ministries. He was very eager to share with us all about his ministry and interestingly never inquired about our ministry work. Darrell Dudley and I shared a moment of thankfulness for our Lutheran understanding of the difference between Law and Gospel as we listened to Bill's approach to either live God's way or not. I would love to live God's way all the time. The reality is that the choice to live God's way goes way beyond my power and is completely dependant upon Christ crucified and resurrected for my freedom. It's His strength in my weakness. As the book "Blue like Jazz" reflects, "because we live in a world of checks in balances" so many of us feel to much fear to admit, discuss, even consider our own brokenness. But as Psalm 51 shares, God despises the proud but will never turn away a broken and contrite heart. He does not delight in vain sacrificial living but rather a sacrificial life follows one which has first been broken and joined to Christ on the cross. Then it is raised by that same Jesus and given new life.

We loaded the bus and headed out. As we were getting closer I noticed that it was 8:30am, service start time. Robin Lyall and I laughed at how freaked out I would be if this was the situation back home. However in Kenya 8:30 is like an arrival time not what we call in the band world, downbeat time which is the 'start' time.

The first service was in English. As the processional started the keyboard player had the drum machine going and it very quickly was apparent that the song leader and the congregation was in a completely different key. I looked at our group, they looked at me as we tried not to be judgmental, but you could see on everyone's faces that we were having a hard time not being distracted. The wireless mic they used was more like one my children played with and it had a horrible feedback problem. In the second song I realized that the key problem was because the keyboardist only knew two chords! In fact, every song for the remainder of the service was played in that same key even though the song leader might start singing in a different key.

It came for my time to share the Gospel with the village of Rwika. I spoke directly to the issues that Rev. Purity had shared with me. I shared with them how Kenyans look at Americans as being SO rich and considering themselves SO poor. This line of thinking left them leaving lives that were weak and in many cases disabled. They seemed interested to hear that we in America share many of the same problems as they experience in Africa. They were delighted and broke into applause when I shared with them that they had taught our group the importance of "slowing down" and "enjoying God's creation". Then I challenged them to stop thinking that their struggles were someone else's responsibility. God's word in Romans spoke for them to stop looking to their own interests only but to look at their neighbor's burdens and failings....bearing them up in the strength of Christ....believing in the love of Christ and sharing their faith in the way that moves us into action beyond simple words. The Gospel is that Jesus did this for them. That their failures, their selfishness, their burdens were 'bared up' on the cross by Jesus. That by this death Jesus acted upon what He claimed with His lips...that He would lay down His life for the forgiveness of our sins. I ended with an evangelism application and asked them to pray for us in California. I received many words of thankfulness for the message both from our group and from the members of St. Phillips. I was very thankful and hopeful that God's Word penetrated and maybe planted seeds of vision for what the future of St. Phillips congregation might look like.

The service had really gotten going around 8:45am and lasted until 10:15am. (No that wasn't due to my sermon!) We took 10 minutes before turning around and going into the second service which was their traditional service in the native language in Embu. Before walking out Rev. Purity asked me to do a baptism of a three month old baby girl named Fiona Roweena Wanja. I was startled and somewhat nervous mostly because I really wasn't sure about saying the girl's name correctly. We met for one minute with the parents and they confirmed the request for me to perform the baptism and so after writing it out we walked into the next service.

Thankfully there was a new keyboard player. We also had elder Ishmael (who had helped to build St. Phillips) there to assist. Elder Ishmael had also been the MC for the Graceworks party the day before. He is really a wonderful Christian man whose heart beats for the LORD. We also had Susan's brother (ok almost the whole town is related to her!) Dr. Moses Dwoiga there to translate my message for this service.

As we got into the service it was also Grace's (Susan's mom's) birthday honoring. She turned 75 years old. She gave the church as is their custom a thanksgiving gift. She gave to St. Phillip's a new gold communion ware set which Susan had gotten in America (another God-lead story there). Susan's whole family gathered at the altar and there were prayers and songs as the congregation walked and brought their offering forward.

Then it came time for the baptism. When it came time for me to hold the baby, I took her into my arms and Rev. Purity continued in the native tongue as we got closer to the actual baptizing. At first the baby was looking over my arm to the altar. Then she looked up at me. Her eyes grew big. It wasn't just that I wasn't mommy, I am sure I was the first Muzungu (white person) she had ever seen. Luckily for me God and my wife has blessed me with five children and I quickly recalled every bouncing and patting technique I knew....PLUS I turned to help the baby see the altar again. Finally it was my turn and I baptized her Feona Roweena Wanja in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I pronounced the name perfectly and was relieved and thankful to God for the new life that He had just given to this baby. When I spoke the blessing, "Now may God who has given to you this new birth in the water and the Spirit keep you now in this baptismal grace unto life everlasting...amen" I was really struck at the power of those last words. Here in this village where aids kills so many and other sickness harms so many more...those words and the importance of what God gives to a child in that baptism suddenly took on a whole new and powerful perspective for me.

When it came time for my message, Dr. Moses translated and it was going really well although the stopping in between lines made the work a completely challenging and focused kind of effort for me. But once again God's faithful Word made an impact on our group (there for the second service too!) and the members of St. Phillip's.

We finished church 2 hours and 45 minutes after it had begun!! Once again....no it wasn't because of a long sermon! The group laughed and Robin and Jay told me they had decided that I could really get a lot of mileage out of this experience by pointing out this long service compared to when we go 1 hour and 15 minutes.

We loaded the bus and were invited to go to Grace's house (Susan's mom) for her birthday celebration. The meal of the day? GOAT! When we arrived they were bar-b- quing it all up. It is called Yama Choma. They served it off the bone and in a soup that they had made. Once again they offered to us the delicacy...the innards. This time Jay passed and the only one who partook was Ryan. He said he loved it. And so he and Richard (Susan's husband) enjoyed the dish while the rest of us ate the goat meat and drank the goat soup and rice.

I went and played soccer with several kids in 'the field'. It is three dirt circles beyond their property and near the school we had toured the day before. The dirt is so red...and claylike in its consistency. We played several soccer games and then was called back for cake. We sang, we celebrated, we took pictures, we ate cake. Finally it was time to head back to the hotel. And so at 5:30pm we loaded up and headed back.

Ken, MaryKay, Ryan, Jay, and I changed clothes and then met for refreshments at the hotel patio. We had a wonderful and deep conversation about the culture and the people and began to discuss how ministry might look in a place like this.

We then were joined by Robin, Darrell, and Jacquelyn for dinner. Dinner was again an absolute blast full of humor and fun stories. We said good night and headed back to our rooms. Tomorrow we meet a little later for devotion and breakfast (8:30am) and then head to a full day of work. Children's team will work with the 65 plus GraceWork kids and the crafts we brought and then travel to an Anglican orphanage. Dr. Jay and Darrell will visit a local medical clinic and will serve in the local dispensary where one single nurse typically gives out medicine to a great area. Ken and Ryan will go and mark out the acre of land that is available to a new GraceWorks building. Susan and I will be running between the three as well as I will be meeting with some key leaders and hoping to have an opportunity for casting a vision for the future and possible church ministry work.

I am tired after today. Yet I am also refreshed and excited with the rest of the group to go into tomorrow, our last day in Embu and Rwika.

### **April 16, 2007 (Monday)**

It was very difficult to get up this morning. Yesterday wiped me out. Yet today is so important.

We met again for breakfast. When Jacquelyn showed up for breakfast she wasn't looking to well. Turns out that when she got into her shower with the water running she looked down to see a very large bug that was completely unrecognizable to her sitting at her feet. We all tried to sympathize and not laugh knowing her fear of bugs. She then told us that it was still in the tub. So Jay, Ryan and I went to her room to investigate. We finally felt like we were able to hunt something in our safari gear. When we got to her room we went into the bathroom and pulled back the curtain. It was big! It looked like a spider, no wait, it is more like a crab. (you have to see the picture). Here are three guys looking at this thing and then Jay grabs a wash cloth and smashed it. Ryan and I decided it best to supervise the whole thing. We took it outside and photographed the wild beast. Went back and confirmed that Jacquelyn's fears were substantiated. Later that night we couldn't recall whether or not Jay had removed the wash cloth from her room and further wondered if by accident Jacquelyn might have used it before dinner. And as we pondered that out loud I that Jacquelyn was going to pass out.

The morning's conversation centered around African history especially highlighting the AIDS epidemic. Susan shared a lot of good information dating all the way back to the British Colonial period and Kenyan's fight for independence. We then turned our hearts toward God as His word from Psalm 68: 1-5 and the remainder of the "Problems" chapter out of "Blue like Jazz". This section focused on the "man in the mirror" concept. It reminded us that instead of pointing the finger at so many things we could spend the rest of our lives just looking in the mirror and dealing with ourselves. We ended by reading Ephesians chapter two which reveals that Jesus died for us while WE were in such a dead state. It was Jesus who gives us the forgiveness and the new life which our old adam hearts need.

We loaded up all 8 crates and 1 box by loading them to the top of the bus. We tied them down, loaded, and headed back to Rwika. The trip takes us down the hill from Izaak Walton through town (especially the merchants selling wares....reminds me of Tijuana...just African in flavor) and then around the corner and back up hill towards Rwika. We drive for about 15-20 minutes until we reach the dirt road that takes us into Rwika. As we pass Kenyans many stare at us as those we are aliens (we kind of are) but certainly a busload of Muzungus is curious. But most actually wave. One little girl was running across a field to wave to us. We have now traveled this path so many times it has become so familiar to all of us.

As we pulled into GraceWorks we were once again greeted by the woman and children dancing. They walked us to the back of the compound and into chairs where we once again were entertained with three or four songs by the GraceWorks children. All of us were eager to get to work. As soon as the songs were finished we jumped into action. The tubs and box came out of the bus and we loaded into the GraceWorks building to cut the tie wraps and begin organizing. We lined the children up and as each child walked in we fitted them with one of the St. John's "Kids for Christ" t-shirts, then Dr. Jay was at the next stop and he quickly looked in their mouth with a colored popiscle stick to evaluate the dental hygiene. Wawi took each child's name and wrote down the dental health rating that Dr. Jay gave her. Then they kept their stick and walked out to the

porch where Jacquelyn gave each child a sugar free lollipop in the shape of a cross. Then they were lined up for a group picture. We ran out of t-shirts for all the children which was weighing heavy on our hearts...especially Robyn and Darrell. This was because while GraceWorks has 60 officially signed up, they have an additional group of close to 25 on a waiting list. The children on the waiting list were allowed to come and had already been spoken to by the leaders telling them that they might not receive a shirt. We were delighted to give them the suckers and still check their teeth. We also had enough crafts since we had planned to use these for the anniversary of about 500 kids. After the group picture we divided the children into two groups. The first group went into the building where MaryKay read to them the creation story through a very large creation story book which Susan's sister Jane helped to translate. Then the children worked on coloring a picture of creation. These pictures were collected and will be posted in the new GraceWorks building which St. John's sponsored! It should be open in about a month. MaryKay was certainly in her element. She was so awesome. Her love for teaching and love for children really came through.

Meanwhile the second group went with Robyn and Jacquelyn to draw on their picture frames and color their mirrors. This craft was a lot of fun for all of them as they gather around five or six circle tables and stood to make their designs. Both Robyn and Jacquelyn were great. They were helping and organizing and so encouraging.

Ryan had been taking photos of each child as they came out of the early assembly line and had received their lollipop. He and Ken then left to take video and pictures of the new building. I then sent Dr. Jay and Dr. Darrell over to the dispensary. Ryan and Susan and I joined them and we met nurse Lucy. She was very glad to see us and very hopeful for her community. She sees patients five days a week, all day, alone! There was a long line around the building as people waited to be seen for ailments. As we asked permission for our Dr.'s to sit with her, she was delighted and then turned to me and quoted my sermon from the day before saying, "you were right to say it is time for this community to come together". That really meant a lot to know that God had used that message to inspire her and give her a renewed excitement for an overwhelming amount of work. Darrell and Jay watched in amazement as Lucy handled everything. Jay called her a "one woman band...saying she played all the instruments", that was for me the musician. They discovered lots of great information and saw firsthand her diagnosis of HIV AIDS documented as well as standard procedures for her to treat Malaria which is so common here.

I then asked Ishmael, the respected elder of this community to walk with me to Rev. Purity's house. We walked a LONG way...and he walked quickly. It was very hot today and it really hit me as we walked down a worn dirt path. It was really awesome to meet this man and to talk and walk with him through the African terrain. We came upon a tree just humming with some kind of bee or wasp nest and around the next corner there were two donkeys tied and eating down the brush. This is a common practice in Kenya. They are like lawnmowers which cut down the overgrowth shrubbery. He told me about life in Africa. I asked him about snakes. He asked me if I was scared of the 'bush'. I told him I wasn't afraid, but that I wouldn't be walking this path without him. He got a great laugh from this and then we arrived at Rev. Purity's house. She welcomed us and gave Ishmael a coke and I received a Stonee. Stonee is like a strong giner-ale and is a local drink. It was really good. We met and had discussion for almost two hours about vision and ministry. It was an exciting exchange and gave some more importance to the upcoming meeting on Friday night with Bishop Obare. We then closed our time together with exchanging contact information. I also shared with them pictures of my wife and kids and our pictures from our mission work for Katrina relief. They were in awe of the pictures and were very interested to hear about earthquakes. (they only have a shake maybe once every few years)

Ishmael then walked me back to the GraceWorks compound. This time he asked me many questions about California. He shared that he had correspondence with Pastor John Geisler from St. John's about 15 or 20 years ago regarding Susan's mother Grace who came to our congregation when visiting California.

Upon returning Ken Schlueter had gone into town to purchase a generator because of the power outage. We had wanted to print the pictures of the kids and had no power for the printer. Ken knew that the workers for the new building would need a generator as well. While in town, he stepped outside to test the generator when he looked up in the window and saw Robyn and Dr. Jay on tv. Kenyan news had been there at the anniversary party and they ran a spot on the celebration and shared with all of Kenya the work that was being done through GraceWorks. Susan was also interviewed for the story!

We fired up the generator and got our plugs in, only to discover that I didn't have the right cord to plug in to the back of the printer. So Wawi's brother Jimmy drove me in his car into town and took me to a store where he had worked for two years to purchase a cord. We had a pleasant drive and I enjoyed getting to know him and his way of life in Nairobi where he is attending school. The store didn't have the right cord but gave us a usb-usb which he thought would work in another port. On the way back to Rwika we were behind a large dump style truck. It was billowing black smoke. Jimmy asked me, "Would this truck be allowed to drive in America?" I laughed, I told him most of the cars in Kenya wouldn't be allowed to drive in America because they couldn't pass the smog test! He has never been to America.

At our return we tried to get the printer to connect but we couldn't make it work. We resolved to send the photos later and Susan assured us that this would work out for the best since it was getting late. We gathered out back and Susan asked me to speak to the guardians. The guardians were women and a few men who were the relatives who were overseeing these orphans. Susan told me that these guardians walk with the orphans (especially the girls) to GraceWorks and stay in chairs, outside, in the heat so that these orphaned children can have this experience. A few of them have babies and they remained today from 9am until 5:30pm! As I walked to this group they immediately broke into a song. Susan told me they were singing, "Look God is so good, He has given these children parents". With a translator I then spoke to them and thanked them for being the hands of God to touch these children. I told them that they were a bright shining example to the community for their efforts and wished them God's blessing.

I then turned and spoke to the children. I reminded them of Jesus' dying love for them and that God would never leave them nor forsake them. I encouraged them to realize the gift they have in the guardians and GraceWorks and then echoed the recurring theme that I wanted them to be kind to others as Jesus and these people have all been kind to you. Then I asked them for their prayers.

It was only appropriate then that we sing a song for them. So our group gathered and sang, "Jesus loves me" with sign language. The children were fascinated and tried to imitate the motions. Then we said all of our goodbyes and took our final pictures. We loaded the bus and headed to Susan's mom's house one more time. Ken, Ryan, Jay, Richard, Susan, and I went to film and view the acre of land that Grace has said we could build a 'guest' house upon for missionaries. The space is so beautiful. All of us were excited to think of the future that God might bring for this mission work.

We tasted a non-ripe guava as we left and then loaded the bus and headed home.

At home we once again gathered for some refreshments and share our experiences of the day. Then we moved into the hotel restaurant for dinner. We were a huge group

this time as the group "Ordinary Women" a small women's bible study-mission group who attend Saddleback. They were here during the same time and their leader Marianne had been with us at St. John's when we held our Africa fundraiser. It was great to see them and eat together. They are staying here at our same hotel and so we will see them again for breakfast.

Dinner has never been so loud. I think all of us finally felt a strong sense of accomplishment in our work today and spirits were really high. At one point Ken called from the other end of the table and laughed that Jay, Ryan, Robyn, Jacquelyn and I were so loud they couldn't hear their own conversation. We were in rare form. They all wondered if we had our diet cokes spiked. But they weren't, it was just really great fellowship and fun. When we had first arrived at Izaak Walton Jay had seen ice cream on the menu and had tried to order it however the waiter never brought it. So tonight, Jay asked again. Once again...no ice cream. This time Jay called the waiter over and asked him for ice cream. The waiter looked puzzle. So Jay pointed to the menu and said "Look, two scoops of ice cream....please?". A few minutes later the waiter appeared at our table with two glasses of ice. Everyone cracked up...it just seemed to be the way of things.

I told the team before we exited the bus upon our return from Rwika and before dinner, that I was so proud and thankful for each one of them. I really was amazed to see how divinely appointed each of them was for this trip. Today's work highlighted a shared passion and expertise that really made an impact with the love of Christ.

Tomorrow we return to Nairobi. We will shop at the Masai Market where there are some great deals and authentic African stuff! Tomorrow night Robyn and Darrell will leave us and head home. We pray for their safe travel and will miss them for our short safari stint at the Masai Mara before we return to Nairobi for dinner with Bishop Obare. Then Saturday we will hang out, shop, pack, check out and load a plane to head back to the states ourselves.

## **April 18, 2007**

Last night we had a spectacular thunderstorm. Lightning flashed across the sky as the rain poured down. I was really going to go to sleep right away this night, except that when I pulled back the covers a black and orange bug suddenly appeared from under the sheet and began crawling up my mosquito netting. Susan tells me I shouldn't share stories like this because most people are not going to want to come and serve...but my story won't make sense if I don't share this. I went to wack it with my sandal and the bug flew up in the air and landed on the headboard right above where my head would normally be. Now it isn't so much of where I would be that bothers me about this. Its more that the bug is willing to go on the headboard that starts keeping me awake at night. I went to the bathroom to get some tissue to rid my room of such bug. Paul Holgate had told us on our first night here that Embu has these little black and orange bugs that sometimes land on you and if you squish them their insides are so toxic that it will burn a boil type soar onto your skin. This didn't sound fun and I wasn't sure if this was the bug he was talking about but I certainly was not taking any chances. When I appeared with the tissue, the bug was gone and I could not find it anywhere. Now I definitely was not turning any lights out nor was I going to sleep. It isn't that I am afraid of bugs...I was afraid of this one crawling on my head onto my face in the middle of the night, me feeling the itch, slapping it and waking in the morning with a huge boil on my face scaring the natives.

So instead I went outside and stood on the porch of my front room and watched the rain and lightning show.

Finally I went back to my room and as I sat in the chair to set my alarm clock for the next day when I saw the bug crawling once again up the side of my bed. I grabbed the tissue and killed it. Now I could sleep.

Waking at 6am in the morning and time to repack. Today we go back to Nairobi and back to the Jacaranda. I am excited to actually be able to use a shower in which I can stand up. The shower here has been with a very old metal tubing attached to what looks like a dishwasher sprayer. It only goes long enough for me to kneel in the tub if I want to wash my hair. Been doing this for four nights now.

Today Robin, Darrell, and Susan's husband Richard leave us.

We met for breakfast and shared it with the Ordinary Women who were on their way to a conference. We all had some great conversation and then we prayed for the OW group as they went to speak at their conference and then go and finish their work of digging wells in another part of Africa.

We loaded all our bags and remaining tubs into the bus and we were off. We stopped at the gas station next to the hotel to fill up with gas. I had three minutes left on my phone card and so ran to the pay phone and was so thankful to hear my wife's voice as she answered the phone. We talked quickly and then it was time up and time for me to go.

Wawi and Lane went with her brother Jimmy to Nairobi. We started off back as well in the bus. Along the way there came up a question about theology. It began a conversation that lasted for the entire trip back to Nairobi. We talked about Lutheran vs. Catholic understanding of the sacraments and salvation, to the Da Vinci Code, to politics and right hand left hand, two kingdom theory, reliability of the scriptures, back to the heilsgischichte (history salvation) seen through out God's working in history. What was interesting to me personally is that earlier before breakfast I was trying to prepare a devotion. I was really tired and nothing was hitting me yet, so I prayed, "Lord you give me the words You want to share with the people today". When we arrived at the Jacaranda everyone shared how much they had learned and were thankful for the theological conversations. God answered that prayer with exactly what we needed.

I was exhausted however when we walked into the Jacaranda. I let Jay check us in and up to our room. We had made plans to go the Masai Market which is an open air market of all kinds of merchants selling their wares. Wawi had made a big deal about it and all of the shoppers in our group were kind of holding out for a chance to go their. Turned out that it is only open on Tuesdays and so we quickly went and dropped our bags and then back into the bus for more driving! But first lunch. Susan's cousin Kimara led us to a place he knew of called the Mamba Village. On the way there (35 minute drive or more) we stopped at an LCMS place called Scripture Mission (I think??) we met Kathryn and she came onto our bus and said, "Jambo to all of you. You are most welcome to Kenya". We thanked her and continued to the Mamba village. The mamba village was wonderful. It had a man made lake next to the restaurant that was in the shape of the African continent. We ate our soup inside even though we had wanted to eat outside. However, there was a conference group finishing out there. So after soup, they were gone, and the staff led us to sit out by the lake and by where the buffet was. We sat at Port Sudan. The sign by our table showed where we were on the lake in relation to its reflection of the continent. The buffet was really good. Robin, Darrell, and Richard all shared some of their favorite memories of the trip since they were leaving today. Jay almost broke a tooth when he bit into some spinach. I don't know what it was, but he

said it was a rock and found like four more. No one ate the spinach. Everything else was absolutely great. We headed back to the bus and saw that they also had an Ostrich farm and an alligator farm which you could pay \$15 dollars per person to tour. Everyone wanted to shop.

Then Kamara led us to a Giraffe refuge and some of the group got out and fed and photographed the giraffes from this tall porch. Darrell was taking polaroids of the staff with his camera and astounding the staff by giving it to them. One mentioned to Jay that the camera must be very expensive. Jay joked that the camera was cheap, but that the film was expensive and made by the same company. The staff guard laughed and said, just like our cell phones. In Kenya most phones are cheap, but the minutes are purchased in card form and are rather expensive.

We left the giraffe refuge and went down the street to a gift store that had antique African gifts and some more contemporary touristy stuff. The group was split half and half on whether to purchase or not. I chose to wait until the Masai Market.

Getting back on the bus it was confirmed that our earlier reports of canceling our proposed trip to the orphanage Project Starfish was indeed the course of action we should take. The reason? Last night's rain had made the roads (which were unpaved) to her place very unfavorable. We all decided that instead of getting stuck today, we would pray for dry roads and return there on Saturday before we leave. We felt bad for Darrell and Robin who would have loved this excursion so much.

So it was off to the Masai Market. As we approached, Susan told us to leave everything valuable in the bus and get our money organized so as not to have to pull it all out when we buy. She had never wanted to go to the Masai market in the first place because of its chaotic pace and sometimes dangerous. I think the group wanted to go there in a similar way to how tourists to California want to walk the streets of LA or Hollywood because of the name. When we were five minutes away, the rain began to pour. We arrived and it was apparent that Susan's warnings were real and everything now was covered up in plastic. Imagine the hills next to a freeway full of people standing with their wares on the ground packed in together ready to sell. It was not really a market....more like Tijuana. So we went to the Nairobi city market. Here many of us found some great gifts. Many people called me Father and immediately would show me wood carvings of the nativity or the last supper and want me to purchase them. When I told them I was looking for a gift for my wife and children they paused confused (Catholic Priests don't marry). But then they adjusted their title and called me pastor and the selling would continue.

We loaded the bus exhausted. We headed back to the Jacaranda and waited in the front lobby for the Somak bus to come and pick up Robin, Darrell, and Richard. The rain started pouring again. We talked as we waited out the hour wait until their pickup arrived. Then Susan's family showed up at the hotel. We filled the lobby as we exchanged greetings and gathered. Soon we made a circle and prayed for safe travel and then said our goodbyes.

The rest of the group went to the restaurant here in the Jacaranda where Prim, the owner of Somak purchased us all dinner. We ate rice, meat, and the usual bread and coke-a-cola light (diet coke) which is what we have ordered almost everywhere we go. You also have to tell them you want it cold...otherwise it is room temperature. You don't dare ask for ice because of the water issue. We again had pleasant conversation while a man played a keyboard in the corner singing American hits from every genre and generation you could think of. He did pretty well. Jay tried to get me to play and sing because he was really tiring of the guys singing ability or lack thereof. I told him that I felt I had done my share of "surprise performances" this trip. We laughed again about

the Sunday service and yet reflected on how we would never get this kind of experience from a tour book. This was the real deal.

We finished dinner and to our rooms. Tomorrow breakfast is at 6am and then Somak takes us at 7:30am to Safari at the Masai Mara. We arrive in time for lunch at the lodge and then we go on an afternoon drive. I am so excited to NOT wear my collar tomorrow. (When I told Jay this he joked that he was going to the mall to get a gun then for safety). But tomorrow we are with Somak and I told them they will have guns. Susan will go to stay with her sister while we are on safari.

So here I sit. Jay is asleep, and everyone else in our group I am sure has probably drifted asleep as well. I type this diary cause if I don't, I will forget too many things I really would like to remember. The wind is really blowing. Reminds me of the Santa Ana's. There is a party in the pool/bar area below us. All I can hear is the bass cutting through our wall. I hope Ken and MaryKay can't hear it. They had been kept up till 5am in the morning while we were back at the Izaak Walton one night. In fact when the keyboard player at dinner changed to a different drum machine beat, Ken moaned. It reminded him of the beat he was still trying to forget from the Izaak Walton.

Tonight I will try and include some more pictures for you to view. Hopefully the connection will be strong enough and fast enough to handle it.

Thanks for your prayers for us and our families. Remember Robin, Darrell, and Richard as they travel over the next 18 plus hours.

In closing tonight's diary it is lunch time back home. Here it is 10:15pm. Not too late which is good for me! As I reflect on this trip so far I am amazed at the doors God has opened for us in situations I would have never imagined I would be in...let alone imagining I could do! So many of us in the group feel that way. It is like we have touched not only a different world...but a different time. So many of the things we take for granted! Robin was on the bus today when Jay mentioned how he was impressed that there was not complaining from our group at all on this trip with all that we have experienced. Robin quickly added, "If I complain when I get home someone should slap me". I thought that was really well stated and made me smile. All of us in this world have heartache, disappointment, and difficult situations. Yet all of us can find someone in the world whose situation is one we would never trade these for. As we woke this morning the BBC was covering the Virginia Tech shooting. Our hearts and prayers go out to those families who now have experienced this unexpected loss! Perhaps that is why Scripture encourages us in the following way:

*1Th. 5: 16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

Tonight I pray for my family. I am so anxious to see them again and take some of these things God has shown me and use them to lead my family better by accepting this gift of thankfulness that God has given to me and pouring it into their lives. I hope it blesses them as it has blessed me. I know my wife could really use me home. I finally caught up on her emails today. I pray for her last and best of all!

Good night. I hope to write more on the safari and actually still be able to send it from the lodge we will be staying at. Prim told us he believed their might be access! Can you believe that?? It almost seems wrong to be able to communicate in such primitive setting as Safari. But how cool for me to share immediately the wonder of God's creation as I witness it in a way I never have before!

**April 19, 2007 (Wednesday)**

Special update: I wanted to share with you two letters I received from the children while I was here.

(As I was leaving the Anniversary party, an older boy...early teen, placed this short note in my hand. Susan had warned us that some outsiders may show up and ask us for money and I thought maybe this was such a request but written. However, later that night at the hotel, here is what I read)

I am Haydn Mugambi from Rianjeru. I am in class 8. Pray for me as I do my exams on Nov. 3-7 KCPE. The ceremony was good. All the best. God bless you.

The second letter was one Susan received. I shared this with the group and there wasn't a dry eye.

Dear Aunt Susan,

I greet you in the Name of Jesus Christ. I am Maeharia one of your Rwika Giving. I am saved and above that Jesus Christ is my light each and every day I wake up.

Mine is to request you mom to assist me join a secondary school. I did my KCPE last year and I am still at home and I still have hope that my Lord will still perform a miracle and I join a secondary school. I am an orphan because my both parent passed away. My grandfather who could support us also passed away 2 years ago. We were left with my Aunt Lydiah Njoki who is a squator at Rwika and with six children also to support. I will not mind even if I am taken to a day school. I will be going on foot in the morning. I pray that may the good Lord touch your heart and think good about my life mom.

I didn't score good marks because I was very busy through out the year connecting from Kimangaru to Rwika for food. Any way, this is a long story but I know God is going to make it a sweet story instead. I was told I can join Gatondo secular school starting from Term 2. I beg you to hear my prayers. Thank you.

Yours faithful wycliff  
Your child.

There is such an adult awareness among these kids regarding their situation!

Breakfast at 6:30am at Izaak. We gathered again for breakfast. We heard the story of Ken and MaryKay's work on their cabin in Colorado and were really feeling warm and fuzzy as we heard them explain how they built it by their own labor. But the story ended with a thud when they shared how the Haman fire came through and they lost everything....only the fireplace remained standing. All of us listening simply didn't see that coming!

Jay reached his wife by phone this morning by using the pay phone at the mall across the street. While the morning light was certainly more of a safe condition, it makes us all aware of our surroundings when you need to walk by a guard in full uniform and gear to leave the hotel grounds. Jay made it safe and had a good land line to talk to his wife.

Ryan wasn't fairing so well. Apparently last night he couldn't get his internet connection to work. He tried to go to various places in the hotel and couldn't seem to stay connected. For whatever reason, my internet worked great in my room last night. He ran to call Jenny and when he was back he was real frustrated about getting his own emails out to her. I tried to help him only to discover that I too was now having the same exact problem as he was in the lobby of the hotel. With it downloaded to my thumb drive, I will send it for him along with this update to her when we get to our lodge.

Soon Somak was all loaded with our stuff and we had to shut everything down and board the SUV. We all said goodbye to Susan and were now in the hands of our driver named Gideon. Gideon is Kikiku and began to share with us some interesting details about the areas we would be passing through. We moved rather quickly through Nairobi and soon were heading over very rough roads. (Most roads throughout this trip are not well kept. We constantly wondered how the wheels were staying connected to the vehicles we traveled in). Soon we were descending down one side of the Rift Valley. (Yes they even named the fever after this very important valley). Apparently it use to be filled with trees. However, the people cut them down without ever considering replanting. As you look over the valley now it is mostly plains. We could see to the other side and that is when Gideon pointed out that we would be going to the other side. The total drive would take anywhere between five to six hours.

The road wound through various cities and even slums. We came to a two and half hour mark and Gideon needed to get gas. So he dropped us off at a gift shop/rest area so that we could use the washrooms and 'promote' these store owners. (That is what they say to you when the merchants want you to buy something...instead of saying, Would you like this? They say, "Please promote my work".) We got some refreshments and Ken got to dealing for some gifts. As I went to use the washroom (as they say) I stood in a structure that was for all intents and purposes an outhouse. As I looked up there was a black wasp nest with three large wasps there. I haven't been that nervous in a 'washroom' since I was a grade school boy using the stall next to school bully. Gideon returned from getting gas while Jay traded his American shirt with one of the young men selling a Masai blanket. That is when they started talking politics. Bush isn't liked very well here. They were all very eager to talk about the upcoming election and knew of Obama who is running on the democratic ticket. We loaded our wares and were off.

Now we began to climb a long road up the other side. The road was paved and then dirt, paved and then dirt. The worse spot came at one pass up the side of the mountain where there were five trucks all stopped, three cars and a large group pushing one car past them all. The rains had made the road nearly impassable. Finally it was our turn. This is when we knew that Gideon was the man. We steered and countersteered as we slid through the mud maneuvering through the sludge and ruts, narrowly between truck and stuck vehicle and made it to the top. We all cheered and breathed a sigh of relief.

From there the road was long and really bumpy. Jay joked that he had forgotten his kidney belt. All of us were jolted around like rag dolls. Did I mention the drive was going to be six hours long?? We made good time but certainly it wasn't without driving on both sides of the roads at all various times to avoid ruts and mud holes.

We were now in Masai Mara country. (spots- they use this word because as you look across the African landscape here you will see spots of trees, spots of animals, and then nothing but plain space right next to it) This people are marked with their traditional wearing of red blankets which they wear and the jewelry and spears. (yes they were real!) The culture that we were seeing were pretty contemporary however. Many of them would wave at us as we drove. Others would pose with their hands out. (they are familiar with tourists taking pictures of them and giving them money to pose). We drove

quickly and soon came upon our first signs of wildlife. We saw some zebra moving to the right of us and some antelope up to the left. We still were not to the reserve area however where we would take our safaris and stay at the lodge "Keekorok" which means black trees. As we drove the Masai people became a little more primitive. One boy stood at the side of the road with a herd of goats. He had flies in his face which really bothered me. I told the group in the car that if he came close enough I would like to spray his face with OFF spray which I had next to me. (the flies would land under his eyes...he never swiped them away....made me so uncomfortable...but for him...no big deal). He asked us for the only English word he probably knew, "pen". I guess American pens are big here. We told him we didn't have one (which we didn't have with us) but I asked out loud if he even had paper?

We continued through streams and narrow bridges and finally arrived at the gate to our lodge. As our driver got out there were Masai women who immediately shoved their masks and necklaces in through the windows asking us to buy. Several of us haggled to get some pretty good prices compared to what we had seen in the city. We pulled up and the lodge is stunningly beautiful. After all we had been through I think everyone in the group was extra relieved to know we weren't going to be in tents. We checked in and made plans with Gideon to go on our first safari drive after lunch. It is called the afternoon safari and we would leave at 4pm.

We all went to our rooms to check in and then met back at the main lodge for lunch. This is when I finally relaxed. As we got to the buffet I saw spaghetti, potatoes, normal rice, a dessert table full of incredible offerings, and even a salad bar. The food was great! I was in heaven! Finally, some food I can really agree with. We all laughed as we remembered the past trip and spent some time figuring Richard, Darrell and Robin were on the way from London to the US. I went back for seconds and took my first deep sigh since we landed here. The hotel rooms were really nice and we returned for 'rest' until we loaded back into the SUV with Gideon for the afternoon drive.

That is when I told Jay that Jacquelyn had been near the grass and bushes by her room and what seemed to be the edge of the property when she heard something in the bush, she looked through and saw a hippo. She was nervous and quietly retreated back to her room. Jay slipped on his mud boots, I went in my flip flops and we threw on coats as the rain began to fall and went to the edge of the property.

Now I have never been good at following signs when I set my heart for adventure. I remember one time driving for a camping spot with my best friend Jason when we came upon a sign that said, "No Motor Vehicles". The sign wasn't really like a road sign, it was more like a single stick in the ground which I took to be more of a suggestion rather than a rule. So we continued up the road. It was treacherous...but I figured that was perfect for adventure. That was until we came upon a fallen tree across the only pathway to continue up the hill. Now most would then say, "Oh that is why, and return the other way". Not me. I was determined to get up that hill. I drove Jason's jeep forward and tried to cross over the tree. We were half way across when the tree began to collapse in the middle and the jeep shifted until we were high centered on this huge tree. Wheels spinning front and back and in the middle of nowhere. We had to get the jack and wrench to get out of that one.

Well that explains (at least for me, I don't know what Jay's deal with this issue is) why when we came to the sign that said "No permittance beyond this point" seemed more like a suggestion rather than a rule. If they wanted it to be a rule don't you think "No trespassing" would have been more clear? We began to walk on a pathway just past the sign and into a woodsy type area and followed it in through the trees and a grassy opening which overlooked a large pond shape area of a stream that came from the left

and eventually flowed through this pond shape and to the right. That is when we saw a wooden walkway to the right and the obvious path we should have taken. So because I am older and wiser now, and because Jay said we should go there, I turned and we walked back through the grass and trees, back onto the property and around to this wood bridge which lead to an observation deck. As we started out I saw a huge dirt island and then next to it a big rock. Well I thought it was a rock, but most rocks I have seen do not move. This one did...it rose up out of the water revealing the rock to be a huge hippo. We were like two boys should be in the jungle nearly running around the bridge to the large wooden observation room/deck that was directly next to where the hippos were staying in the water. We opened the sliding wooden framed windows and readied my camera. They were huge! I was literally yards away from five or six wild hippos. We saw a gazelle on the grass to the right of the deck. We are now in the Africa we always pictured. As we sat on the stools watching the hippos I felt a sharp sting in my right leg. I looked down and saw a very little bug and squashed it. When I did and swept it up on my finger, I noticed a blood spot where it had been. I asked Jay, "what kind of bug is this?" Jay saw it and confirmed my fear...it was a tick! I must have picked it up when we walked past that suggestion sign that said, "No permitance beyond this point". I quickly scanned my legs (yes I was in shorts and flip flops) I found another one. Jay didn't seem to be bothered by the whole thing as he continued to watch the hippos. Jay goes camping all the time to hunt Dove and other various creatures he likes to eat and thought nothing of the tick. Meanwhile, I was panic stricken but played it cool like I too was a camper extraordinaire and familiar with ticks. The truth is I am only familiar with the kind of ticks that come in clear plastic containers and various flavors. (Tic-Tacs).

We then walked from the deck in the opposite direction from where we had come in on and went to the other end of the property. It is so beautiful here. We saw a frog leaping in the grass, and a beautiful bird which Darrell would have loved. We returned to our room and shared the news of the hippo sighting with Ken. I sat into a chair on our patio and read one chapter of my book until my head dropped back and I was asleep with the beautiful sounds of Africa all around.

That's when I heard Jay laugh. I opened my eyes and he was laughing at me for the way I had fallen asleep in the chair with my hands crossed over my book and head hanging over the back of the chair. We went up to the lodge main building and got some coffee and met everyone there for our first safari trip.

All of us were not expecting much this first afternoon trip. BOY WERE WE WRONG. Not even 15 minutes into the ride we saw a baby gazelle and its daddy up close. Camera's started clicking. The SUV has a roof which lifts up so that you can stand and take pictures over the top of the vehicle with the roof up high. Then we saw some birds that reminded Ken of grouse. Then as we rounded a curve our driver pointed out a herd of elephants off in the distance. We were in drive and on our way to intercept a slowly moving pack of elephants! All of us were just in shock and awe! Sure enough, about five minutes down the trails and we were sitting with them coming right toward the left of our vehicle. There was around ten elephants all spaced out. They stopped and ate some bush to our right. We were clicking like crazy. We spent a good twenty minutes alone with these elephants. Then Gideon said he heard a call about a lion sighting. We couldn't even catch our breath and we were off down the trails again.

At the next crossroad, there were two other vehicles of safari travelers also racing toward the call. We turned left (cutting them off....well not really, but even though I wasn't in OC traffic, I still wanted to be the first in line) as we drove for about 10-15 minutes we saw them. Five or six lions (no big male though) resting on a large dirt hill. We pulled

around the hill and starting shooting (photography ;) them. There were two lion cubs playing together in the tall grass. We stayed with them for about twenty minutes as well. Then off again!

This time we came upon three giraffes to our right. We stopped and watched them although we were not as close and they were walking away from us. We might have moved for a better shot but the call got our drivers attention again. They had found the big male lion of the pride up ahead. We drove up the trail and there it was laying in the grass. Only problem, it was asleep. We couldn't even see its face. We waiting a little bit but decided to keep moving.

We came through herds of antelope and gazelles. We photographed them and Ryan ran some video too. Then Gideon pressed the gas pedal and we were off. Up ahead we saw two vehicles on either side of an animal. As we pulled in the creatures moved to the left side of our vehicle. Three female lions were all clinging and grappling with an antelope they had just killed. We were there for 30 minutes as we watched them wrestle and feed. A jackal was circling around to see if he could get any leftovers. I have watched this stuff on National Geographic for years at the expense of my wife's boredom and now here I was watching a lion not more than five feet from me eating dinner live!

We drove further and found four buffalo and they too looked right at us almost posing. Several us had begun joking that these animals must be tethered to these spots or that the animatronics were really good here because it was so unbelievable what we were witnessing on our first safari.

We left the buffalo to begin heading back. All of us had barely been able to breath and were now starting to exhale. This all in two hours of safari time. We were content and ready to head back. As we drove back we passed the spot where the male lion was. Miracle! He was sitting up now. We pulled in and began shooting again. It is no wonder they call him King of the Jungle. What an incredible animal...so majestic, so powerful.

As we left the lion we were  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way back when we made the final turn to the lodge. As we turned directions the west was to our right and the sun was now setting. Gideon stopped and invited us to once again stand and take pictures. We looked around but no animals. Then we saw what he was showing us. The sun was setting over the plain of Africa and the Masai Mara. We all shot the sun with a lone tree in the foreground. We stayed here another twenty minutes simply admiring the beauty. It was quiet, serene, peaceful and I could barely think of anything to say (that's really something when a preacher has no words) because the colors were just stunning.

As the sun set the lights came on, the top shut as the rain cloud rolled upon us and sprinkled lightly. We got back to the lodge and changed clothes and readied for our 7:30pm dinner. (I was so excited and anticipating eagerly to see what this dinner would be!) We arrived in the lobby and ordered drinks with Jacquelyn, Ken and MaryKay while waiting for Ryan. Finally Ryan arrived with a big smile on his face. Ryan was coming from his room when he heard noises from the bushes. He remembered Jay and I explaining the hippos when all of a sudden, three hippos came up onto the property and on the green grass. (I guess they didn't get a sign facing the pond like we had). Ryan couldn't believe it and started moving towards them to take a picture. Now one of the hippos was a baby, which means the other one of the three was most probably the????? Mother! Ryan reasons that he can outrun it and is obsessed with getting a picture worthy of National Geographic. He is twenty yards from the hippos and about to final focus for the shot when a security guard steps up and demands he back away so that

they don't charge. Ryan didn't get the shot. The guard explained that they come up on the property to eat the grass. He shined his light on them and they got a little nervous and returned to the pond.

We laughed and moved in to another great meal! We ate while an Indian family had a birthday. About 15 Masai Mara warriors came in to the restaurant with a tribal song and march as they paraded through the tables and then everyone sang happy birthday to him. Then the warriors went to the patio to perform.

While that was really unique...it honestly couldn't top what we had seen and so we headed back to our rooms.

Tomorrow we leave for at 6:30am for a morning safari. We will return for breakfast and then take another drive in the evening tomorrow. Friday we will do one more morning drive before we depart back for Nairobi and dinner with Bishop Obare.

Then Saturday we try and go to Project Starfish and then to the airport to go home.

This has truly been an amazing day! Seeing that lion reminds of Aslan and the Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe as well as the verse that surely inspired CS Lewis relating Aslan to Jesus, Rev. 5:

*Rev. 5:1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."*

We certainly learned so much today watching God's creation. It was the beginning of this trip, the first morning at the Izaak Walton when Ken, Darrell and I were reflecting on this very truth. We were talking about creation and animals and in amazement as well as wonder of why God created animals and let Adam name them. I shared with them that I believe God did that so that Adam could learn more about who God really is. So many times throughout Scripture God uses the object lesson of an animal to teach us who He is for us!

Here we are in the season of the resurrection and how true it is that with the KING of our JUNGLED lives, Jesus Christ, the Lion of Judah has NO ENEMIES who threaten Him. And His resurrection and eternal life which He fought for and won is now the prize He wants to share with us! Jesus holds the keys of eternal life and the victory over death.

#### **April 19th, 2007 (Thursday)**

Today we got up. Jay and I both have sore throats. Mine started yesterday, his today. Mine is on the right side only, his is on the left side only. That is kind of how the medical

health of this trip has gone for me so far. I was the first one to struggle with a lower intestinal pain that lasted from Friday and didn't leave until Tuesday night. Jay started his intestinal pain after I did. Ryan also woke this morning not feeling well in his lower intestines. I don't know for sure that it is indeed lower, I am just assuming.

All of us met at 6am, got coffee and the sun began rising over the African plains and there we were headed off to see them. This morning's safari was very slow. We spent the first half hour chasing a ghost rhino because some people from India in another safari were also chasing it. People are funny like that. If a group of three people stops in the middle of the sidewalk and begins staring at something above it isn't long to more people join the first three to look for whatever one might see...or think they see.

Or maybe it was hope that kept us looking. We had seen the other animals. Our list still contains a rhino and so the whispering chance that it might be there kept us hunting.

We finally gave up. As we drove a little further, Gideon must have felt bad. He stopped to show us some small bird walking along the dirt. No one got their camera's out. Finally I said in a genuine voice, "Too bad Darrell isn't here." (Darrell loves looking at birds) The whole group laughed out loud as it was apparent that none of us really gave a hoot about the small thing walking next to our SUV. So Jacquelyn told Gideon, "big things", and we were off.

We drove for a long time seeing the usual gazelle's and more birds. Then we spotted a whole group of people surrounding something. With the number of cars I knew it had to be a kill. Sure enough...There was two mother lions with about five or six other younger lions feasting on a wilderbeast.

I had been studying the reason why Jesus is called the Lion of Judah and came across this verse in Genesis which was spoken over Judah,

*"Gen. 49:8 "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. 9 You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness — who dares to rouse him? 10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his."*

When lions are there at the capture of prey, they are really not worried. No other kind of animal ever comes in threatening to take the prey. All other creatures like the Jackal and the Vulture just wait hoping to pick up scraps. When Jesus captures our hearts, He isn't worried either. He has us, we are His and belong to Him. No one can come and snatch us out of His hand and protection.

Thinking of protection reminded me of a book I read and finished Monday night while in Embu. It was called "Interviewing Your Daughter's Dates" by Dennis Rainey. I had heard Dennis speak on this subject a little at a recent event I attended. Now my girls are 10 and 8. You may be wondering why I would read that now. I am not really sure especially when I consider that my girls will not be dating until they turn 26 years old...and you think I am joking about that? Well I was reminded of this short read when I think of protection. I also think of my wife...and my boys. They need me like these lion cubs need their parents. An interesting story is told in this book about some wild and out of control teenage elephants. Seems they were attacking people, and other elephants. The problem...they had no older male bull elephants. So the reserve

introduced some male bull elephants to the same area and the young bulls shaped up. Children need their parents.

We stayed here for a quite a long time while the photos went off. Some german guy answered his cell phone in the SUV next to us which was really annoying. (Glad I don't get reception here or I might have been tempted to answer mine and brag about what I was viewing).

Finally we drove off and it was time to return to Breakfast. I stayed standing in the SUV looking out of the top feeling the wind (and dirt) against my face. I began to wonder if I might be part dog as I always love that feeling of moving and wind against my face.

I was so excited to get back to breakfast. This lodge place understood food as I understood it. I was confident that I would finally eat breakfast. I told everyone I was so excited to eat breakfast cause I hadn't had it the past 10 days. We all laughed. As we drove the long trip back I realized that part of the fact that none of us were REALLY disappointed about not seeing any new animals on our list (Gideon was truly apologetic) was because here we are in AFRICA! As we stared around to the left, the right, no matter where you look you can't see any buildings. Just land, nature. In California, that is a rather rare and infrequent occurrence. So for us, this in itself was amazing. To drive for two hours and never hitting a traffic light, a building, or smog was simply refreshing in itself.

We went to breakfast and let me say that while it was better....I am still waiting to have breakfast. The English have so influenced things over here that I couldn't get hash browns or corn beef hash (two of my favorites) to save my life. The eggs are also a little weird here. It's almost like "generic" brand eggs. The yolks are almost clear, not yellow like we have. I began to wonder what laid these things and before I got down the list I had to stop because I wanted to be able to at least finish them. So I closed my eyes and remembered the breakfast I had with my beautiful wife at I-hop right before I left. It didn't help the taste and the hash browns still didn't appear, but boy my wife sure looks good!

It is often during this trip that I have realized more clearly beauty like that. It took a trip of over 18-20 hours for me to realize the beauty we have back home and appreciate it more deeply. Strange creatures we are! As I thought this I suddenly let my thoughts become vocal and I said to everyone at the table, "Wouldn't it be funny if a Safari SUV pulled up to the window right here next to our table and it was full of zebra's and giraffes taking our pictures as the hippo tour guide showed us eating our breakfast like we had been shown the lion's eating their breakfast? A couple laughed, others thought maybe I really did have Maleria and the delusions were coming on with a fever, while Jay said, "Yeah and the Giraffe's head out of top the vehicle straining to get a good shot." At least he understood. Although he did tell me then he has similar thoughts but tries to keep them unsaid!

We finished breakfast and I went to work. I sent out last nights diary and Ryan's email reply to Jenny for him. I won't do either again till we are back at the Jacaranda however, it was 300 shillings for ten minutes on their lame pc computer. I say lame because pc's are not mac's and therefore lame and because it was so slow that I could have gone out and found a chicken, had her lay an egg, fry it up and had the breakfast I wanted before it could load a simple document for email. It took 600 shillings for me to send two emails.

After that I met everyone in the gift shop. Here in the gift shop were some of the nicest gifts at the best prices we had seen yet. The street guys really mark it up. I guess they know they are going to haggle and so start a lot higher so they can make a shilling or two. I had been really waiting for a few more gifts and decided that I would go ahead and get them here and skip any more haggling. Some people really like it. Ken is pretty good at it. He played hard sell at the market and got the price he wanted. Perhaps I am just too nice. I tell myself that I am doing something for the economy here.

After breakfast and after shopping we saw monkeys and went out to the observation deck. The hippos were not here. We were hoping to help Jacquelyn face her fears. Last night she couldn't sleep. It turns out the hippos were right outside here windows up on the grass chewing it all up. She was afraid they might come in to her room and get her. I told her that wouldn't happen and she wanted to know why it wouldn't. I told her, "Because they won't fit through the door". She laughed. I guess her fear was real enough to make her sleep in the bathtub putting a second locked door between her and the huffing, chewing hippos. As we stood in the observation house we noticed they were not there and that is when the worker only made it worst. He told us that they were not here but would most certainly be up in the grassy area (pointing to Jacquelyn's room) again tonight. He said that is their favorite spot.

We saw a giraffe off in the distance and returned to our rooms to read, rest and whatever before our next safari. Our list still stands for Gideon. Cheetahs, Rhinos, Baboons, and the zebra and giraffe up close.

We also found out that for about \$150 bucks we might be able to fly to Nairobi. There are several of us who are considering spending the cash. The road trip home is not exciting anyone. We have a luggage problem as these planes don't transport our big bags...but Gideon has got to go that way anyway...we are probably just doing wishful thinking...but Jay already said he is going to ask Gideon when we go this afternoon.

We rested and then Wawi and Lane showed up. We went out to the observation booth and hung out. Wawi told the story of how her driver had pulled up to some lions that were lounging around. They would come and lay next to the car to get into the shade! They had pulled up next to some cars to witness this. Her driver shut off the engine to watch them. When her driver went to start the car it wouldn't start. That is because the jumper cable connector was loose over the battery. It had happened to them once before but not when there were lions right across from you. So they had another car pull in between them and the lions so that they couldn't see the driver get out and adjust the cables. He did, and he is still alive!

We finished up and met Gideon at the Safari SUV for a 4pm run. This would be our last safari. We really wanted Cheetahs. For the first 30 minutes we saw nothing. We had gone a new direction because Gideon shared with us that this is the off season (rainy season starts this month) and the Cheetahs hadn't been seen for awhile. Well we were enjoying the country and the fact that we were the only car in sight except Wawi, Lane, Jimmy, and their driver who was following in a four wheel drive behind us.

Then we saw them. About seven, maybe eight elephants. Gideon worked to get us close...and wow were we. We took lots of pictures. We went down to another group of elephants and photo'd them as well. Then we headed off again when we saw a whole herd of gazelle's, antelope, and Ostriches. We sat there for another 20 minutes or so just enjoying the beautiful scenery and surrounded by these animals. It was like a scene

out of Jurassic Park. A storm was moving in over the mountains and yet sun was breaking through the clouds.

As we turned and headed back I put on my headphones and while standing in the front part of the van holding on and viewing everything from above the roof line I listened to Toto's Africa and a bunch of other music. It was something I had really wanted to do...silly, but for me to say I listened to "Africa" in Africa was something I wasn't sure I would have ever done in my life. So I did it.

We stopped to photo one more bull elephant and a young bull and then the rain came. Gideon was a little nervous as it started to pour. Out here when it rains it could spell disaster to try and get anywhere. You don't want to get stuck out here in the plains! When we made it back Gideon sighed relief.

We made plans to meet in the morning at 8am to head back for a five-six hour drive. At dinner the group discussed the possibility of flying back. We found the flight to be \$115, a 45 minute flight, and landing right in Nairobi. There are a few who want to and some that would rather save the money. We need to make sure Gideon can take our luggage, so the group will have to decide what we will do in the morning at breakfast.

After dinner we all came back and are pretty worn out from the excitement and riding through some rough terrain today. But all of us are really in touch with God's creation. It is so difficult for me to stand right next to an elephant and not just be amazed at what God creates. I think God delights and takes pleasure when we find ourselves in awe and wonder of Him. That is called worship. Perhaps that is something too that God wanted us to experience. In our concrete jungle of OC we are constantly surrounded with so much man made things that maybe we forget how great God's works and wonders really are. I hope this experience of safari takes me a long time to forget. As we were closing in the final mile to the lodge from our last safari, I was listening to "Indescribable" on my ipod. This praise song is one we do often in church. It really meant something totally new and refreshing to me as I sat in my seat silently worshipping the LORD. Had I been in front of my keyboard I would have led the whole team to sing along.

So tomorrow we go to Nairobi and to Bishop Obare's home. Then Saturday Starfish (hopefully not too much rain) and then to the airport to fly home.

### **Friday, April 20th, 2007**

Well we woke up this morning and I asked Jay, "So what do you think about the plane". Jay says, "It isn't on the itinerary, I would miss the companionship...I kind of thinking car." I told him, "I was thinking the same, thinking about Richie Valens and the Big Bopper...not sure what kind of FAA they might have here but not real confident the plane has been well maintained."

When we got to breakfast everyone felt the ride was best. So we checked out, loaded up, prayed with Gideon and off we went. It turned out to be a great decision because we took an opportunity right outside the park to stop and visit the Masai people in their village. For 1000 shillings (\$15 US) which went to support the Masai schools they performed a traditional Masai Welcome Dance by the men and then by the women and

invited us into their village to see how they live. Right away inside the village with goats and cows all around we noticed that there were very few 'clean' spots to step. The whole village was surrounded by Wooden Sticks or spikes to keep wild animals away from their small animals. Inside this big circle the ground was covered in goat and cow droppings. Some of the Masai sandals others in bare feet. We tried to step carefully.

Once inside the village the tour guide who spoke excellent English explained to us their customs. Right away he explained, "We are polygamists". Apparently there were 3 brothers (1 was the chief) and all the wives belonged to them. The Chief had 8 wives while the new men and new generation has only one or two. Jay spoke up and said he only had one wife. The masai man responded, "not enough". We laughed. Then Jay introduced the pastor (me) and I asked the religion of the Masai and he said, "Christian".

We walked into their mud hut. It was pitch dark and he showed us the place where the chief sits around the fire and a special room for their goats at night. There was one bed for the men and their wives and across the fire on the other side was another bed for all the children.

They then showed us how to make fire by spinning a stick between their hands into rose wood and then placing the burning ash into some straw. They were struggling a little bit as three of them tried to get the spark they were looking for, I laughed and quietly said to Jay, "Should I pull out a match"? As we walked several Masai looked at my watch and Ryan's knife and wanted to initiate a trade. We politely declined. Then the whole event finished when he said to us, "now I will show you the village market". I was thinking Albertsons, a place where the community gets their food. When we walked in it was more like Disneyland. It was a gift shop. They had taken a whole area, put grass in it and all their bracelets and statues and like were spread on tables all around in a circle while several Masai waited to sell to us. Just like Disneyland in the sense that they dump you off the ride into a gift shop. Jacquelyn traded her tennis shoes and watch for some goods. Everyone else cleaned their shoes and loaded the bus.

We drove for a long time and the roads were bumpy but not muddy like when we rode in. We stopped in Narok (which means black river). We stopped at the same stop and we saw the same young men we spoke to before while our driver went to get gas. Jay got talking politics with them and again we were amazed at how much of American politics they knew. Most of them loved the democrats and did not like Bush. We had some good friendly debate (mostly between me and one of them) until we loaded the bus and were off again. Before Gideon shut the door, the young man I was speaking with leaned his head in and said, "No matter, democratic or party republic...vote for best man". We agreed and shook hands. It was a peaceful and fun exchange. But all of us reflected as we left on the knowledge they had about our politics. Apparently, the old Michael Moore movie has made its round here.

The trip back gave way to a great zebra shot and we were all thankful for that. We continued to talk and enjoy the country as Gideon kept steering us from one side of the road to the other. Finally we made it back to the Jacaranda and we checked in. Jay and I went to the mall and had our first hamburger (Wimpy's) in 10 days. It wasn't In and Out but it sure beat eating goat again. The catsup here is called tomato juice. It is much more runny then ours back home. But it actually tasted good.

We went and got some coffee, picked up one for Susan and headed back.

When we got back we got cleaned up for Bishop Obare's. We met everyone in the lobby. Ryan was still having problems connecting. I ran him up to my room and got him onto mine so he could contact Jenny. Then we resolved to look at his when we got back.

We loaded into two cars and headed out to the ELCK compound. We got there and a young couple there drew a map for us. We were off. As we stopped by a light merchants tried to sell to us from the road. Then as we were sitting there, one woman came up with her hand out begging. Susan had reminded us that this is a bad practice to hand out money. So I refused telling her I didn't have anything to give her. So after her begging and pleading didn't work, she pulled back a blanket revealing a little two year old boy. Now that just isn't fair. However, I trusted what Susan had told me and I refused her. As she left, about half another minute another lady came up begging, she did the same thing by revealing her baby at my first refusal. Then half another minute another lady came up with the exact same pitch. I looked at Paul our driver and said, "This looks more like a business than being in need." He smiled as he sees this everyday and does not give to them either. I had told the last two women to go to the church and request some help as it is better for a native institution to give and appropriate the money more than Americans.

We got to Bishop Obare's house and he and his wife, Eunice, as well as one of his daughters, Lydia, welcomed us. We were also welcomed by a man serving the ELCK who had attended Concordia Seminary Fort Wayne, Mark. He was a native Kenyan but had studied in Indiana. The dinner was wonderful and Bishop Obare and Mark shared much information with us regarding schools in Kenya and how they work as well as some more insight to the Anglican situation which certainly helped me to see clearly the direction the LORD is leading us. I am eager to share with the Mission Council, Senior Staff, Trustees, and Elders the information of the many open doors to St. John's and the Gospel here.

We prayed together and sang the doxology. We left and returned to the Jacaranda. We made plans in the lobby to try and attempt the Starfish Orphanage tomorrow. We also want to try a restaurant named "Carnivore". If we have time it will be our last meal here in Kenya before loading up around 7pm and heading to the airport. We will leave on Kenyan Flight 102 at 11:50pm to London Heathrow. From Heathrow we fly out on Virgin Atlantic FLT 7 leaving at 2:35pm. We should be arriving at LA at 2:35pm.

All of us are ready to come home. The car rides are getting more and more quiet as our hearts begin to get anxious to go home. Starfish tomorrow will be great. Margaret is such an inspiring woman of God. To see her and Susan together sharing their passion will be great. We have necklaces, crosses, and some other things to take to them. I am anxious to see this project too.

We had remembered another funny story that happened on this trip. When Darrell was on with us we considered him the friendly ambassador. Darrell would be so excited to learn a new word and share it with people. Early in our time here, Darrell was driving around yelling "Jumbo" to people as we drove by believing he was saying 'hello' in Swahili. Some of us noticed how people always seem to look at him funny and were not really sure why except thinking that perhaps he was picking the wrong people to say 'hi' to. Wawi heard him several days later and corrected him, she said, "Jambo is 'hello', Jumbo is 'elephant'". No wonder people were looking at him funny.

One of the thoughts I had today was how everywhere we go in Kenya when we visit the people is their hospitality. They really go a long ways to make sure we know and feel

welcomed here. Most of the tribes have welcome dances. We have seen three of them while here! (They are long too!) I bet that is what heaven will be like. When we get there it will feel strange and new to what we have known, yet Jesus will welcome us and want us to know we are home. I am not sure He will have a dance, but I bet all of heaven will celebrate and throw a party for each sinner who is redeemed and welcomed there like the Kenyans did for us here. This thought helped me to feel even more excited about heaven. It also makes me excited to know that God wants us to welcome sinners into His kingdom even now while we are here. It is called evangelism in church language, but in simple terms, it is known as welcoming. It is the same thing Jesus did while He walked among us.

*Luke 15:2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."*

Consider also Jesus invitation for us to join Him in this work:

*Luke 9:48 Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in My name welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me. For he who is least among you all — he is the greatest."*

This work of Graceworks is that kind of project. But it isn't the only one. Every Sunday our Children's Ministry works with it's dedicated staff to this same work. All of us should welcome one another in the same way that Jesus has welcomed us through the gift of faith.

### **Saturday, April 21st, 2007**

Last night before going to sleep I was able to respond via email with Jeanette. Very excited to go home. Miss her and the kids a lot yesterday and today. We go to Starfish today and I know that will be good but I just want to be on the plane already!

We woke up and got together for breakfast. As with every meal we continue to have great conversation as we get to know one another more. Susan shared more about her background and experience growing up.

The plans got revealed for us to met in the lobby around 9:30 to load up and prepare to go to Starfish. Susan's cousin, (one of the many here) Kimara is going to drive us there.

I reloaded the tub with souvenirs so that I could check it and bring stuff back to America for my kids. The airlines here but especially at Heathrow will only allow ONE bag. When we were coming here that posed a problem and we all had gotten held up in customs as we tried to share and combine stuff so as to get everyone down to one bag.

We waited in the lobby, and waited, and waited. Susan was getting a little irritated and finally called her sister, Jane. Jane told Susan they were running late. Finally at 10:30 we loaded up a school SUV loaned to us from Susan's aunt. Susan's Aunt had started a school with her husband which is one of the many miraculous and inspiring stories of these people's will and drive to provide something for their children out of literally nothing in terms of resources.

The drive was long, traffic was really bad. They have no lines in the streets. Susan says they are imaginary lines. Judging by the way some of these people drive I really would hate to see what they are picturing as they drive. It works, but Americans shouldn't try and drive here. Just too much. This statement comes from a guy who hasn't gone more than two days without driving somewhere since I was 16!

When we hit the dirt road it was really bumpy and had some big ruts. We laughed remembering our road to the Masai Mara and told Susan that this was nothing compared to what we had been through. We traveled this dirt road for a good 20 or 30 minutes. Finally we turned on the road that would lead us to the compound of Project Starfish. This road was bad. We went into the first puddle and hit a large rock. For a moment we thought we were stuck but then Kimara backed off of it. However, when we cleared it and got the front wheels onto the other side, the car just wouldn't move. Kimara had to start some momentum out of 2nd or 3rd gear because 1st was not working! I thought that this might be God's humorous way of keeping us working here in Africa. Kimara never showed a bead of sweat and in we went to the next huge puddle. This one also was a little scary and we still had 100 yards to go! At the next huge hole Kimara went off road and we tried to go up and around it onto the grassy hill. That is when we got stuck. In trying to come back down and onto the road the angle of the bus lodged us over the grassy bank and the left rear wheel was off the ground. We got out and ready to push. (We had joked all trip about pushing and now it was really happening) Ken, Ryan, Jay, and I got out and tried to push and lift, but no luck. A local came over and began working under one of the wheels, placing some rocks under the tire and told us to try again. We did, and the car moved. It still wasn't driving in first gear and I wasn't sure we would be able to make it back, but we were here at Starfish. We hiked our stuff in and around the compound and headed over to the school

When we came to the two buildings that served as their school we could see all the children lined up. I whispered to Jay, "uh oh, I feel a song coming on". Sure enough when we made it to where they were standing all the children lined up and sang two welcome songs to us. One of the songs was Father Abraham. Hearing the children sing, we joined in as well. The look on the kids faces was precious because I don't think they expected us to know it. But next to me was MaryKay who I am sure had sung this tune more times in her teaching career than all of us put together. We sang and clapped and then it was done. We stood in several moments of silence. White Mzungu's looking at these African children, and they looking at us. Several were wearing clothes like Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Kline...clothes that were brought over and donated from the US. Keep in mind these were obviously used clothes, but name brand none the less.

They shared with us the project they were working on as we had arrived. They were stripping the corn off of the cob and onto a blanket. They then gather all these kernels and put them into bags for storage. Maize is a major staple for them here at Starfish which is led by Margaret. Margaret is an amazing woman of God. She is the head of Child Services in Kenya and her late husband was the number two man in the jail and/or prison system here in Kenya. Together they bought 21 acres and started adopted orphans. They have two children of their own, both now off into Universities. They started with two or three and now Margaret has 79 children. They go to school and live in dorms right on the property.

We went back to the home where they all stay. As we walked into the gate I saw five boys all waiting to use the bathroom and my head started swimming with questions. How do they do it? I looked over and saw laundry hanging on the line...they have one washing machine, its all done by hand. Margaret has a staff of three teachers and several "aunties" who live in each dorm with several of the kids. The children have their own clothing, their own cubbies, and beds which the younger ones share but the older ones have their own bunks. It was truly amazing and gave me so many ideas of what

GraceWorks could become as it grows to do more work with more children. Susan was gleaming from ear to ear.

We handed out the glow in the dark crosses which say, "God is Love" on them and when I explained that they glowed in the dark, the kids had a blank stare. Margaret rattled something off in Swahili and soon the kids were holding the cross up to the light and then placing them under their shirts and looking at them to see if they could see them glow! We then handed out starbursts and I began just tossing them to the kids. A small organized riot broke out at which point Susan just shook her head, smiling, walking out of the room as if to say, "I can't watch this". My wife does the same thing when I get home and she has gotten all the kids to bed. I get home and get them all crazy with tickling and loud screaming. I can't help it. I call it a dad's privilege. We toured the whole compound and were amazed at the well organized ministry she runs. She actually has children coming from the community to go to her school. The tuition they pay helps keep the school expenses paid while Community Church (can't remember the exact name) in Texas has sponsored all 79 of her children's tuition to go to school.

I then had some bubble wrap which had covered our St. John's 'j' crosses which I gave to Margaret. She loved the cross and said it would remind her of St. John's, the cross, and Jesus. I then took the bubble wrap into the room where all the children were sitting quietly. I laid the bubble wrap on the ground and got a couple of them to dance on it making the loudest popping sound ever. Margaret was right beside me and she was laughing (which I was thankful for). The kids had a great time and we said goodbye and loaded into the van.

I asked Kimara if we were going to be able to get home. He said, "oh yes, no problem". I asked, "What about not having first gear"? He laughed and told me, "Who needs first gear when I have mzungu's like you to push". We all cracked up. They are way too comfortable with us and it is really time for us to leave before they really start putting us to work!

Off we went and with no problems at all made it through every hole knowing now where the rock was. We drove for 30 minutes to a restaurant called "Carnivore". Here you get many different kinds of meat. You eat until you 'Surrender' by laying the flag on the table down. It was great and we had so much fun together at this last African meal. We ate beef, chicken liver, chicken gizzards, pork, lamb, pork ribs, alligator, ostrich meatballs, and some other unidentifiable things! It was very good and we had a great time as Jay entertained us with the story of his family's immigration into the US from Canada. We also laughed upon remembering the trip and made our plans to get together for home. One story we told Kimara was about our driver Gideon from Somak. When we saw the huge muddy hill and all the cars and trucks stuck in the mud, Jay asked him, "Gideon, will you put it into four wheel drive?". Gideon smiled and said, "its only two". Jay says, "we need four wheel drive". Gideon says, "car is two wheel drive, driver is four wheel." Kimara laughed very hard. It is Kimara's dream to have his own safari company. Based on the story he told me, I want to go with him on safari sometime. Susan said, "With Kimara it is always an adventure".

We went back to the hotel with two hours to shower, pack and meet in the lobby. We met in the lobby and Kimara, Susan, Grace, and Jane all showed up to say goodbye. We loaded into Somak's SUV after I led a devotion and prayer. We were off to the airport. I had lost some of my patience and graciousness as I was now like a race horse who knows he is getting close to the barn! I am so ready to go home. We got to the airport and could not unload the luggage because the driver could not open the hatch. Finally we got it open and stood in line for an hour to check in. Stood in another line for passports to be checked. Stood in another line for security. And then sat in a room that reminded us of the old Ontario airport. Mass chaos broke out as they called us onto the

plane. But finally we boarded and were off. We slept and then they offered "Breakfast". It was the same as the one we had when we were coming here. I still can't believe they would call this breakfast. They gave us two pieces of bread, a tropical yogurt and some kind of strange granola mix. I ate one biscuit with jelly and refused the rest. I just can't be open to eating this anymore! I am ready to be home.

Now we are just over Paris and we have only about 30 minutes before we land at Heathrow. We left almost 45 minutes late from Kenya....Its Kenya time as we have joked this whole trip.

I am eager to get to LA. Very eager to see Jeanette and my children. That perhaps is the hardest part of any trip like this...being away not only from things that are in your comfort zone, but also away from those you love so dearly. Many of us would have moments of being homesick after hanging around Susan's family or playing with the orphan children. It was therapeutic and lonely all at the same time. Yet what joy this whole trip has brought to our hearts and the experience is something that will flavor the rest of our lives.

God is really amazing. He took us all over 8,000 miles to accomplish some great things. He took us over 8,000 miles to help us realize His greatness and the variety of wonder in His creation, He took us these many miles to remind us of His beauty. He brought us this far to help us remember to slow down and enjoy. He carried us these many miles so that we could know more fully the work He can do with our willingness of St. John's to bless people in Rwika. And He had to bring Jay over 8,000 miles to get him to church!

What an amazing trip. We will all get together at a later date and share pictures, stories, and memories as well as go over a comprehensive plan for the potential of what St. John's could accomplish here through the power, and through faith and grace from God in Jesus Christ!