

“Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden” was a verse that was mounted above the door in a village church in Tanzania.

Good morning!~

We represent the 2009 J-Term course, *With One Voice in Tanzania*. We looked at health care in this developing country and shared a few songs with the people we met there in both English and Swahili. We even had a little choreography involving snapping, clapping, and swaying ----which we all did to the best of our abilities. This morning, students will share a compilation of their journal entries with you. Everything you hear from this point on has been written or said by students.

(Different students came forward to read the various paragraphs, going back and forth between the 2 pulpits.)

Driving through the hills/country on safari, everyone was commenting continually on how beautiful Tanzania was. Now that I'm home, friends ask me all about the animals we saw on safari. And I tell them, it isn't the animals I want to tell you about.

It amazes me how many awkward welcomes I've had in the U.S. Here in Tanzania----NONE. When we arrived at any of the preaching points we were ceremoniously greeted with heartfelt song and dance. Never before have I received such a warm and genuine welcome from a group of people who didn't even know my name. As soon as we stepped off the bus I felt right at home.”

It was a welcome unlike any welcome I have ever received. Never have I felt so respected by strangers. We drove down the bumpiest road ever, past mud hut after mud hut, and hours later we arrived... When the bus came to a stop we were completely surrounded by the most energetic singing and clapping by all the people of the town. It was surreal. As we got off the bus our hands were grabbed and we danced to the doors of the parish. Words were not

exchanged between the townspeople and us at that time, but I don't think it was necessary. The song welcomed us in, and it is something I will never forget. They were so excited for us to be there it was unbelievable.”

These people are so happy. They are so thankful and happy for all they have. I have not seen a sad person here yet. Everyone here in Tungamalenga has so little. You can see it when you drive through the village. Their houses are small and their clothes are raggy, yet they see nothing to be sad about. You can see it in their dances and in their songs.”

I have realized that not only does the music make me feel so welcome, but the presence and spoken conversations make me feel something I've never felt before. I feel that when we sing with the people I have known them for years. I may not even know their name, but I have connected with them in a much deeper way, even with the difference between our cultures.”

“An elderly man stood in front of the church today in Tungamelenga and sang a few verses of a hymn for us. He was a cute little thing, standing up there singing his heart out. As weird as I thought it was the other day when that woman rapped at the preaching point until she was exhausted, I think I appreciate these two acts of faith more. Recognizing the language barrier, these two people still wanted to share their faith and gratitude with us through music. Led 100% by their hearts, these people shared their spirit and love with us all.”

I was really overcome with tears as the children entered singing and dancing and joined their elders at the first preaching point we visited. We sang to them nearly all of our songs and they even picked me out of our group to join in dance with them.”

The Masaai were such a hospitable group of people. Wearing traditional clothes and laden in handmade jewelry, the Masaai are a reverent, ancient society. They insisted on singing, dancing and thanking us from the time they greeted our bus to the time they walked us back to our bus. We were privileged to visit their church and stunned to learn that the women of this village have built this church themselves in a bold move of unintended feminism.

Most, if not all, of the songs that we heard at the preaching points are about their faith and God. It is unbelievable that all of the people in the village know these songs. The music brings them together in their faith and in doing so strengthens their community.”

While at the Iringa church today , I realized how emotionally driven their music is here. People don't sing from their thoughts; they sing from deep down in their hearts. There is just so much feeling and it hits you at your core.

I can always feel so moved when I hear and see them sing... It's like they have reached the deepest part of my soul.

During our preaching point visits in Tungamalenga, “singing became our form of communication with the people. Singing allowed us to share our emotions with them. It was the easiest way for us to break down the language barrier. Although each new preaching point we went to had totally new people, music never failed to bring us together.”

There are times I wish I understood what the words they are singing mean, but then I realize I already know what they are singing because I hear the words in my heart.

When the bus broke down on our way to Iringa, and we were singing to the children of that village, there was an older woman

who was so taken by us that when we were singing , she was dancing and hollering.

While on the bus today to a preaching point, the entire bus broke out singing the Tanzanian National Anthem. It was so much fun and cool at how it brought everyone in the bus together, regardless of skin color.”

"We spent the afternoon at the orphanage today, and I think it has been my favorite part of the trip thus far. We played soccer and volleyball, painted fingernails, and blew bubbles. The children were so loving, and happy and smart! I had to stop and think about how these kids truly have nothing. No parents, no house, no family, virtually nothing. Yet, they still find happiness in their lives and things to be thankful for. They were so full of love and affection. It was unbelievable. It amazes me how happy children can be when they have so little."

"We spent some time before lunch at the parish playing with the kids. Dusty little barefeet, ripped shirts, and a bright white smile to complete the ensemble. They'll mimic every move you make. The kids are definitely my favorite part of being here."

The most profound connection I had while singing with the children was when we were playing ‘head, shoulder, knees and toes’ and there was a boy sitting outside of the circle who wouldn’t speak or join in but held on to my hand when I reached for his and watched me while I sang.

“Mama Chelea came to greet us when we entered the orphanage again. She thanked us for coming and thanked us for our prayers and songs the previous week. She said that Jesus heard our songs and prayers and now he has healed her and she is feeling much better. She looks like she is doing better too. Mama is an amazing woman, I wish I would have had the chance to sit and talk with

her.”

The faith of the people have in Tanzania is something that I will never forget. In our busy lives we tend to focus on our daily routines and then try to fit in God when there is time. Here, however, God is the focus of their daily life and all else centers around their faith. I am in awe of the faith they have. They are so aware and so trusting. Their positive outlook on life because of their faith can be seen and felt.

After we were introduced to some of the important people of the community, Barnabas asked to pray the Lord’s Prayer in our own languages. We all began praying as the Swahili and English words began getting mumbled and jumbled together. I’m sure it sounded ridiculous to someone outside the room. But as we continued through the prayer, we paused in the same places, spoke in the same tone, and as the prayer concluded, we said “Amen” in unison. That is a moment I will never forget because it was then that I felt that although we are all very different people, we share a faith that is the same no matter what language it is practiced in.

"At the hospital in Iringa we were able to sing in almost all of the wards and the people seemed happy to hear our songs. They would clap or make noises with their tongue like a yell. I was surprised at how welcoming they were to us when we were in the wards. It's hard to believe that people in so much pain and suffering would be okay with having a bunch of Americans sing to them.

We walked around each ward and then sang to the patients. They very much appreciated our singing and many of them joined in. When we sang in Swahili I saw many people singing along with us.

“We walked around Tungamelenga today and visited people who

suffer from HIV-AIDs. After giving them a small care package, we would sing some quiet song that sounded nice. Upon arrival, their spirits seemed low and possibly even ashamed. It was frustrating for all of us because we wanted to talk with the patients but could mainly communicate through body language and singing.

My feelings of sorrow for the patients and being unable to help them is profound. But, after reflecting on this , I realize that we in fact did communicate our feelings through the songs we sang to them.

“At the hospital in Ilula we did sing for the patients. We sang ‘Marching’ in English and Swahili. I wasn’t too excited to sing but when I saw some of the patients singing along, it made such a difference...they seemed very appreciative and hopefully comforted by our attempts at comforting and communication.”

Women walk miles from small villages in active labor – seeking the c-section that will save their lives. Nutrition is poor, small bone structure makes giving birth a life or death experience. You could really tell most of the new mother appreciated the gentle words from the songs we had to sing – to see them mouthing the words back was so touching. The way that music is accepted in the hospitals in these areas kind of blows me away.

Walking into the Tungamalenga dispensary--- it is a very relaxed atmosphere. People waiting patiently on benches outside the office; children crowded around the water well to fill their buckets. It’s fairly quiet..... In one room is Dr. Barnabas. He greets every patient with a pat on the head and it is evident that he truly cares about what is ailing them,. He assesses the patient, spends time

with each one, even though there are many others waiting to be seen. In the next room, two nurses try their best to treat the patients according to Dr. Barnabas' orders. They search high and low in the supply room and make use of whatever is available or close to what they need. One would never guess that healing is taking place behind these doors. Human relationship is valued more than anything at the dispensary. It is amazing what Dr. Barnabas and the nurses are able to do when their options seem so limited.

Barnabas. Daktari na muchungaji Barnabas treated me with such care and respect, it actually felt like we had known each other for a long time, simply reuniting. He chose to become a doctor because God told him to do so and he became a doctor through the power of God. It seems he gives God the glory for his work. That is so impressive. His passion for his people and his God will always stick with me.

Barnabas was a man of great wisdom and great compassion. He was true to himself, his people, and his spirit. He let his Spirit guide him and direct him in all aspects of life. He has shown me that by simply opening yourself up to the Spirit, wonderful things can happen.

Watching Barnabas made me realize how touch and caring can help heal patients. I was so impressed when Barnabas would caringly place his hands on the sick. He reminded me of Jesus laying his hands on his people.

Loud voices, both young and old
Dancing to drums with broad smiles
This is a greeting in Tungamalenga.
Holding hands and playing with children
Singing and praising God in different languages

Hospitality at its fullest
These are days spent in Tungamalenga.
Malaria and AIDS hinder lives
Still hope and faith stays strong
With a doctor's loving touch
People heal physically and spiritually
This is the wholistic health care in Tungamalenga.
Throughout both sickness and poverty
And rejoicing and laughing
There is love and there is faith in Tungamalenga.

"Sweating. It is 9:45pm here in Tungamelenga, and it is 80 degrees in our room. It's almost funny that it is this hot...I can't even imagine what it's going to be like tomorrow!"

"The people of Tanzania live with an uncertainty of tomorrow. This is why relationships are so important to the people here. The relationships mean more than anything else".

I've been trying to figure out what causes the deep care and I think it is the genuine love that Tanzanians have for all human beings. It allows them to love very quickly and develop friendships almost immediately. This instant, but completely genuine love is something that I will remember for a very long time.

Traveling to Tanzania was very much like visiting the early church of Paul's letters. A church which truly values unity in Christ and where the Church is the heart of the community.

I wonder how it is that in such a short time people can become so close that parting becomes so sad."

What started as an awkward and uncomfortable encounter between two completely different peoples quickly became a powerful fellowship between a single community of believers united by our

desire to share our gifts with each other. It was their hospitality and their ability to welcome unknown guests from across the globe that allowed for such wonderful fellowship. They welcomed us with such warmth and offered us not only themselves, their song and dance, their time, their space, and their food and drink, but also their deep faith rooted in the Christian Church and in their hope through our unity in Fellowship that I was left with no doubt as to the power of our God moving in that place and through the people of Tanzania."

I think more deeply about the things I take for granted at home that I am extremely thankful for now: clean clothes, new clothes, clothes that fit, new shoes that don't have hole in them, clean water, education, power as a woman, independence, choice in food, money to support myself and others around me, good healthcare, and much much more. Of course, there are many, many things that Tanzanians have that I could have more of in my life: Rejoicing, hospitality, welcoming, an eagerness to love, the ability to love completely, genuine caring, and much more."

"Leaving was very difficult. I found myself in tears because I realized how much hospitality these people have shown us. They have so little but yet they have welcomed us so warmly. I will never forget the smiles the people had. They always seemed to smile from their heart. Seeing them smile always made me do the same. I will truly always remember the people of Tungamalenga. I only wish they knew that they have truly have touched my life".