

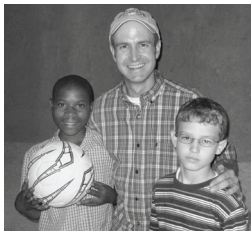
GREETINGS FROM A BEAUTIFUL FALL—JEANETTE'S AND MY 13TH WITH ICHTHUS—IN MANHATTAN!

I am genuinely blessed by what I see God doing in Ichthus, the good work of Gretchen, Luke, and Tyler, and what I see in these students. May reading this be a blessing to you as well!

This past summer my son Joshua (age 10) and I had the experience of a lifetime. We went with 12 other current and former K-State Ichthusians, and a couple delightful “random” relational connections, to experience God’s work in Uganda and minister alongside a bunch of Ugandan college students. Sarah Schultz, former K-State Ichthus student and staff member and dear family friend, is the personal assistant to an Anglican Bishop there and facilitated simply amazing opportunities for us.

SOME NUGGETS:

- Though on the equator, Kampala (the district and capital city of 2 million where we were based) was in the low- to mid-80s, low humidity, and a gentle breeze off Lake Victoria—basically Hawaii weather. Lots of mosquitos though—thank you, Lord, for anti-malarial medication and repellent!
- Ugandan food is good—lots of fresh fruit and yummy rice/cabbage/meat mixtures—but little variety; they basically eat the same meal every day for lunch and dinner. We missed our tacos, burritos, and barbecue!



- Our group stayed with host families—the best way to truly learn the culture—and fell in love with these warm, exceedingly hospitable, and generous people in widely different settings [Joshua and I got pampered with our own bedroom and bathroom (and constant electrical power), while one of our students stayed with 13 Ugandans in a 2-bedroom, 1-bath apartment (with intermittent power) for 6 weeks!]

- The core of our first month of ministry was training (and worshipping) with Ugandan students for ministry in two different prison contexts—overcrowded places that still showed the mighty work of God. In the men’s “remand” (where men go after arrest and before trial, though statistically 60% are found innocent, can you imagine?) prison, we shared testimonies and preached to hundreds of inmates—seeing some 30 men give their lives to Jesus. In the women’s prison, we got to participate with the Christian women in probably the most awesome setting for worship I’ve ever been a part of. A couple drums and many women—some on Death Row, including the leader of the women’s ministry, perhaps the most beautiful in Christ woman I’ve ever seen, Susan—singing their hearts out to the Lord. Musically I have never heard anything like it; how I wish I could have recorded it. To see Jesus shining so brightly in places of such poverty and pain, finding “good soil” like I’ve never personally seen in the U.S.—it was truly awesome. What an experience for Joshua, me, and our group!

- We did so many other things—visiting an AIDS clinic, experiencing worship services (I and a student even got to preach one Sunday) and prayer events with the church in Bugolobi (the name of the part of Kampala where we mainly were), going “upcountry” for some ministry to youth in a rural African setting (huts, thatch roofs, lions, and all), and even visiting a Game Park. Some pre-med and nursing students got to shadow doctors and volunteer in hospitals, health clinics, and pregnancy centers. Others served in a baby home with beautiful Ugandan orphans. One student got to work in the prison and teach English; another designed a program at a tailoring school for abused women; two others went to Sudan and filmed a documentary of sorts with an organization there. So many stories!

- One of the highlights for Joshua and me was visiting our Compassion child in Uganda, Byiringiro Moses, who lives with his family in Kisoro (the mountainous area by Rwanda, considered by Ugandans themselves to be the most beautiful area of the country). Visiting two days before Byiringiro’s birthday, we got to personally deliver his gift (a soccer ball) to him! What a joy to see Joshua and Byiringiro flying paper airplanes, swatting a beach ball, and playing soccer while we got to witness the (first-rate) work that Compassion is doing—wow. Such poverty (Byiringiro’s parents make less than \$1 for an entire day’s work in the fields—when they can find it); such beauty in the land and the people. What a privilege to visit and hug this child in the name of Jesus and tell him we love him and are committed to helping him thrive in school and the Lord.

Oh, of course I could go on and on. Basically, I am as grateful as I can be for the privilege of going on this trip—an unparalleled opportunity especially with my son at this time of his life. My heart for Africa and its people was confirmed; I loved Uganda and everything about it. If I could clone myself, one of me would still be there right now. I miss the people and plan to go back some day with our entire family when the Lord opens the way. Thank you for allowing me this chance to go with your love and support of this ministry, and thank you, God, for giving me and us this chance!

LIFEGROUPS:

This has been an exciting semester in Ichthus. Sensing a lack of life and “institutional inertia” in our Lifegroups (the co-ed missional communities at the heart of Ichthus), our leadership team decided to suspend normal Lifegroup meetings for the first month of school to devote ourselves to prayer and allow Lifegroups to reform around more overtly missional lines. The body of Ichthus has responded enthusiastically, confirming God’s hand in this decision. At the end of the time, nine Lifegroups had formed with the following missions:

- Habitat for Humanity, especially the ReStore (recycled or donated building materials at low cost) store—work days, relationships with homeowners and store owners, etc.
- International students—befriending international students through the HIS program, inviting them to a joint dinner on Sunday nights followed by a Life Group gathering
- Prayer—the artillery of our community, praying for God to raise up workers, for specific missional opportunities that arise, for people who need healing or with special situations, basically wherever prayer is needed
- Arts—another “support” group that aims to not only reach the arts community of Manhattan but also give creative support to any other Lifegroup that needs it—e.g., they are pursuing a gingerbread house project in conjunction with Lifegroups that reach children
- Youth—opportunities with an FCA in a local middle school and pairing with a local church in a needy nearby community, St. George
- The community surrounding a local elementary school, Amanda Arnold—this is the Lifegroup Jeanette and I are part of; she is doing a Friday Toddler Story time in a low-income housing complex and we’re doing a Sunday football/fun day at the school with earnest prayer that God would lead us to “good soil”
- To intentionally reach some of the ignored, neglected, and less privileged areas of Manhattan with love and the gospel of Jesus—This group is calling them selves the “Fertilizer Lifegroup,” from the Neil Cole quote: “[Needy] people make the best soil—there’s a lot of manure in their lives”
- The Sick and Elderly—Volunteering at Meadowlark Retirement home is opening up; we’ll see if leadership steps up for a hospital or medical opportunity as well
- Freshmen and Transfer students—A good group is forming with five leaders and a number of freshmen; they even came and cooked the Schwartz family dinner a few weeks ago!