

News from KSU...

Much has gone on since the writing of the last newsletter and it's a full summer, so here's some summarized highlights from Wildcat Land (*by the way, if you're craving more frequent Schwartz/KSU Ichthus news and don't already receive it, email me at thusman@ksu.edu and I'll put you on my email prayer list that I send out every 3 months or so...*)

school minister at Colonial! I am honored to know these couples, and delighted that one, Paul and Sarah (Burford) Bruss, will be staying in Manhattan for the next 18 months or so as Paul does graduate work.

◆ **Sending another class into the world...** Another year has ended, and another 20+ seniors are heading out to follow Jesus in their post-college lives. I can't really convey how much these students have changed and grown over these past 4-6 years; God has done so much. Frankly it's somewhat hard to see these friends I know and love and have shared so much with leave Manhattan, but this is what Ichthus is about—being a discipleship engine to the nations. May God's kingdom come through them!

◆ **And sending two others...** Tyler Roark and Luke Healy have been part-time/intern staff with Ichthus these past two years; they are now moving on to a fun new Ichthus venture in urban KC (see below). These two have become dear friends, have served faithfully, and—especially this past year—were a tremendous blessing to Ichthus and me with their multiplied ministry at K-State. I'm asking God how to best operate with them gone—and thankful that God has provided a 2009 graduate, Jenna Wilson, to work part-time with Ichthus women starting this fall.



KSU graduating class



Baptist Missionary Church at 43rd and Prospect

◆ **An urban experiment...** As I mentioned above, Tyler, Luke, five other recent and current K-State Ichthus grads, and another couple are moving to a church building near 43rd and Prospect in Kansas City to live in community and prayerfully see ministry opportunities God might open up for them in the neighborhood—right in the heart of "The Murder Factory" (as a recent KC Star series called the zipcode they're in). We see it as an Ichthus "plant" and look forward to networking with this work, openly confessing our huge learning curve and harboring no grandiose idealist ideas of riding in and saving the day. Basically, these young men and women are seeking to follow Jesus, be His hands and feet however He allows, and rely on Him fully in this difficult place—and I am very proud of them.

◆ **Lots of miles on the big white van...** Summers for the Schwartz family always have a good bit of travel. We've been/will go to KC and the Lake of the Ozarks in June, North Carolina (family reunion and beach time) and Andover (wedding) in July, South Dakota (family wedding) in August, and I took a solo trip to Colorado over July 4th. Good thing we love road trips...



Jeanette and I on a fun 15th anniversary cruise last December

News from KU...

For those of you who aren't certain who exactly I am, a quick bio: I am an Ichthus Wildcat who has found a home in wonderful Jayhawk land. I am one of the bi-vocational pastors/influences of KU Ichthus—my day job is as a civil engineer in Kansas City. I've lived in Lawrence for the last year and a half as a part of this dynamic community (Ichthus, or what we call "house church") exploring following Jesus with this family in this place. I know it has been a long time since any "news" has come out of Lawrence, so first let me thank all of you who have had us on your mind and heart at any time in the last years. We are indeed still here, attempting to live as faithful disciples; faithful to Jesus and faithful to our particular context: Lawrence, KS.

Graham Ripple

In the last months, I've found myself reflecting on Henri Nouwen's article *Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry* (http://www.fbccs.org/resources/papers/soli_comm_mini.asp). In this article, Nouwen describes how often our natural progression in life (and thus in our faith expressions) is to begin by doing... and after struggling and trying harder and struggling some more we finally retreat a little and ask our community to come around the movement we have begun... and then after struggling and trying harder and struggling some more we retreat a bit further and come to the place of solitude, where we ask the Father to speak both to ourselves and to our particular situation.

Nouwen remarks that our movements should be the opposite. We should begin in the place of solitude where God can name us as His beloved and remind us who we truly are. From that place we enter the place of community, where our lives, understood as God's beloved, interact with others who are beloved by the Father. No longer do we need to seek other's affirmation or approval, but instead we can freely love those around us without condition. Ministry to others naturally flows from this place because our love for one another has an expansive momentum; our actions are simply the byproduct of being loved by the Father and desiring to express His love for others.

This article has helped center and encourage me as an individual disciple, but in the last year it has gained additional meaning to me from a corporate perspective. What I have found so fascinating as I have observed our community the last months is that it seems we are naturally walking this journey. Starting six or nine months ago, in my own life and in many in our house church, the Father began to speak to those deep places within us. He seemed to be interacting with those places that form our identity, our sense of self; the place where we desperately need to understand that we are, in fact, beloved by the Father. Suddenly all sorts of new things seem to be arising from within us, both the beautiful (passions, dreams and hopes) and the ugly (fears, sin, entrapments).

As the Father's encouragement and healing touch found these places, our communal sense of self seems to have deepened and expanded. Increasingly, I hear people describe our community as their "family." This isn't because anyone has pounded this metaphor for the Kingdom of God into their head through teaching, but simply because "family" is their best description of their experience with us.

The result of these two movements is that our community has grown and deepened. Two friends who have been attending house church for two years off and on and spending hours upon hours at a local Christian coffee shop suddenly found themselves to be followers of Jesus; their previously general spirituality fully realized in the specificity of Jesus. In the last year, we have gone from 9 to 12 regularly attending to 17 to 20, with our age range of 19 to 25 expanding to 18 to 30.

Now, as I honestly survey what is happening in our community, I am beginning to ask myself if the movement from community to ministry will take place... and if/when it does, what it will look like. Lawrence is a fascinating place to be a follower of Jesus and a church. Its post-modern, post-Christian culture means that church must be done creatively and in a fresh way. I continue to believe that our church has a role to play in both transforming lives in Lawrence as well the culture of Lawrence.

We deeply thank you for your support of us as we work out this experiment. We appreciate you continuing to pray for us as we attempt to live as disciples of Jesus: simple and faithful. God bless you all!



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