



## Missionary Reflections

### Campus Pastor Recounts Trip to Africa

After spending more than two months in Tanzania, Africa, Campus Pastor Paul Rohde has a new appreciation for the term “daily bread.”

This summer, Rohde and his wife, Susan, served students at the Ruhija School of Music, a school for church musicians of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, and the Massai Girls Lutheran Secondary School in Monduli, Tanzania, a school for students under the sponsorship of Operation Bootstrap Africa.

The experience, Rohde said, was a lesson in trust.

“Life felt very Biblical. Our daily bread really was daily. We had a one-burner kerosene stove. We never knew what we’d have for food yet, somehow, something always came together,” Rohde said. “To that end, the question for us in Africa was not survival; it was managing our anxiety.”

Rohde’s trip is part of his work toward a Doctor of Ministry degree in “Spirituality and Story” at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Throughout his journey, he tested the power of journal writing to serve attentiveness and integration, especially of liminal space.

“Travel is a learning experience because you can’t just pull back. You’re forced to think about exploring your ideas in new ways. The reality is, you’re there. You have to deal with it. It’s an embodied experience.”

“One of the central commands of the Bible is ‘go!’ and one of its most central promises is ‘you are not alone!’ God will be with you and people will surround you,” he writes.

Once complete, Rohde’s guidebook, “And Grace Will Lead Me Home: A Guide for Pilgrim Journals,” will serve as a journaling resource for student travelers.

“Second to taking the trip, the next most important thing is telling the story. Writing is a great way to describe and remember your experience. Writing in many ways will help you pay attention to what you see and hear and feel and discover,” Rohde writes.

For Rohde, journal writing was core to his experience in Africa.

“Next to cross and resurrection, the challenges and gifts of Africa may be the most difficult thing I’ve ever tried to communicate. You speak of the gifts and people get a very romantic view of life; you speak of the challenges, such as polygamy, AIDS and genital mutilation, and people can’t imagine there are gifts.

“I believe Africans live trust on a daily basis. And, they readily name God in the trust. We learned faithful freedom and joy and openness and spontaneity from them.”