All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19
FLAMES Flickered in the dark Ethiopian night, illuminating faces of friends around a campfire. Everyone sang, and the children of Project Mercy shared testimonies of God’s faithfulness with us. “I am thankful because God is my father,” one girl said.

Two weeks earlier, we had arrived at Project Mercy not knowing what to expect. We quickly learned that living with the unexpected is the usual way of life for the people of Tekezeh. However, a “typical” day for us involved teaching in the morning, tutoring, interacting with the “house kids” in the afternoon, and gathering for devotions and debating at night.

We taught large kindergartens, first, and second grade classes, continuing the work of previous Lighthouse teams. We taught various subjects integrated with English to children who could barely speak or comprehend it. Cultural, religious, and communication barriers made teaching difficult at times, yet we experienced great joy in giving the students unique educational experiences.

Our faculty sponsor, Dr. Solomon Abebe, stayed behind to help train teachers in effective methods, modeled partially on the teaching we did. He helped Project Mercy’s Ethiopian founders, Marta Gabri Taleck and Dembe Ikile Wolde, strengthen the school that serves 1,600 students. Marta and Dembe started the school to provide opportunities for an English education to this impoverished region. This education plus two nutritional meals per day empowers the next generation to positively develop their country.

Project Mercy is also home to more than 60 abandoned children of all ages, children who won our hearts with their smiles. Most afternoons we played sports and interacted with them, which gave us an opportunity to show God’s love through relationships. We treasured time with the children, like the night we gathered around a crackling bonfire. We thought we had so much to teach them, but the unspoken lesson of their joy, gratitude, and love will stay with us forever.

“God has called me to open my eyes to the needs of those around me—to be intentional and bold in Christ in my relationships and services,” Luke 23:13

DURING THE FIRST HALF of our trip, we spent time in Cape Coast doing a variety of ministries alongside the Foundation for the Development of African Culture and Heritage (FODACH). In the evenings, we participated in performance-based outreach to nearby villages, sharing scripture, testimonies, songs, and more. Our morning activities varied from medical assistance to teaching in an elementary school, to touring Kakum National Forest. In the afternoons, we received lessons in traditional African drumming and dancing from a performance troupe with FODACH.

Following a beach rest day and tour of a slave fortress, we headed inland to Kumasi for the second half of our ministry. There, we walked every day to the campus of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), and partnered with Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC). We spent time in conversational, evangelism, and discipleship with the students. We spent evenings debating the day’s events and worshipping in music and fellowship.

No ministry comes without challenges, and we met our fair share. We struggled to dig deeper in conversations with students who said, “Yes, I’m a Christian,” and left it at that. We found it difficult at times to communicate through cultural and English accent differences. We were challenged by spiritual warfare and met with discouragement from theft, illness, and a few plans falling through.

But through every trial, God made His presence clearly known in the way our team interacted with one another in worship, in the conversations that did go deeper, among the students who invited us into their rooms, and in the relationships that reached beyond a half-hour Gospel explanation. We sensed God’s presence with us because without Him, we could not have accurately represented His love to those beautiful people. He is sovereign, and His control over our lives was evident in every aspect of our ministry.

I loved every minute in Ghana, and was challenged to authentically show my love for Christ, but also to authentically experience His love for me and ALL believers.”

Christina Pena ’14

BY GABE BAIN ’13
& DIANA MEAKM ’14

BY MARIA MARTIN ’14
THE MAJESTY of the Andes Mountains never ceased to amaze us in Ayacucho. But even more beautiful were the people we met there. Pastor Jorge and Manuela Clark founded Hogar Casa Luz 30 years ago, and it has since been a safe haven for 60 children from newborns to 12th graders. These children receive shelter, nutrition, education, and most importantly, the love of God. We were privileged to serve alongside our hosts through VisionHaiti and pour out our hearts for these wonderful children.

On a typical day, we began by singing Spanish songs with the whole group, then teaching the children and teens separately. We did VBS for the younger ones, making crafts, performing skits, and reading Bible stories. With the teens, we had discussions on purity and finding their identity in Christ, much-needed topics for youth without parental role models.

We spent free time with the kids in the afternoon, sometimes at Casa Luz and other times on outings to the park or pool. We played soccer, volleyball, and board games, danced, read books, let them crawl, on us, or just held them. It was delightful to become friends and discover each child's personality.

Four evenings a week we worshipped with everyone at Pastor Jorge’s church. It was meaningful to share worship of our same God with brothers and sisters of another culture. We also provided hygiene education to the community, performed health assessments for the children, served on a local farm, and took the teens on a mountain retreat.

“We were humbled by the servant hearts of our hosts in the hospitality they showed us, and the passion with which they served Christ. Through our time to teach and love, the people we encountered taught and loved us. Just as much, God has significant things planned for Ayacucho, and it was a blessing to participate in His work.”

Sarah Hughes ’14

BY GEOFF NELSON ’15 & SARAH SIE ’14

AS WE BEGAN our initial drive into Kathmandu, we realized that the next three weeks were going to look very different from our lives back home. We were overwhelmed at first, but we could not yet understand all that God was going to do. Our gracious hosts were from Tiny Hands International (THI), an organization that seeks to fight some of the world’s greatest injustices. We experienced difficult and heart-breaking issues in a raw and tangible way, but also in light of God’s plan of redemption and hope.

We had the opportunity to visit six of the THI children’s homes in Kathmandu and Pokhara. These homes consist of a dozen or so children from a variety of backgrounds. Their stories are marked by brokenness, yet God has joined them together with new loving families. Here we had the chance to play games, sing songs, and take part in other activities with the children.

We also visited two of THI’s monitoring stations on the Indo-Nepal border, where their staff is dedicated to intercepting potential sex trafficking victims. We were struck by the staff members’ humble determination in their pursuit to save innocent lives from complete devastation. THI’s 24 border stations are no more than simple shacks, but God has used them to rescue thousands of lives.

Finally, we had the chance to work with a variety of other ministries during our last week. We used our talents and abilities in various projects for THI and other organizations. This included everything from photography and marketing to relational ministry with street children, land surveying, and office organization.

As a team, we feel that our experiences exceeded words and that the lessons we learned will forever remain a part of us. Please keep Tiny Hands International in your prayers as they seek to show God’s love to the lost and broken in Nepal, Jammu.

“I am grateful for this experience because it radically changed my understanding of God’s greatness and love for all of His creation.”

Stephen Snratts ’14
THE HONORS GUILD Freshmen traveled to the Bahamas to study Small Island Sustainability. We learned about the geology and ecology of the islands and about resource development and management in relation to creation care. Service-learning projects were a key part of our experience as we cleared trash from wetlands, planted mangroves, and collaborated with our hosts to develop plans for an aquaponics system, a composting system, and a humane exhibit for their educational center. We also met with university president, Dr. Hilbert, in Nassau to discuss ways to make Taylor University more sustainable and developed proposals to bring back what we learned. Our hosts at the Adventure Learning Centre were very welcoming and hospitable and we met with several different political and environmental leaders. We also visited churches with some Bahamian alumni and spent a day with them. Although we studied environmental sustainability, we also engaged in relational sustainability by building wonderful relationships with the Bahamians.

Through all of these encounters we became very close as a group. Whether we silently watched the ocean waves crash against the rocks, worshiped around a campfire, helped each other negotiate a tricky hike, or sang the doxology before dinner or in a cave, we constantly bonded together. The friendships we developed are sure to last a very long time. We came home with a newfound passion to sustainability care for creation.

Through our service and times of discussion, we developed a variety of gifts for ourselves. Our desire to implement them flows out of our deep appreciation for God’s creation. Not only was there beauty everywhere we looked, but in learning about the science behind the earth we experienced a glimpse into the unfathomable power and genius of the Creator. We join with the Psalmist in declaring the praise of our awesome God who has entrusted this earth to us until He returns.

Over three weeks our team was able to break through the difficult Czech language barrier by exhibiting Christ’s love in tangible ways in a spiritually needy region. By working alongside the host missionaries from Calic’s Heart, Joanne, Tima, and Ondra, we made meaningful connections with the youth in the town of Chotebor and aided our hosts in their goal to establish the first evangelical church in the city.

On most days we taught English in the classroom and led physical education sessions that enabled us to make connections and to spend time with teens outside of school. Our main purpose was to build relationships with teens in youth group settings. These times included group games and activities, sports, scripture memory, and small group discussions. We organized other events including a competitive soccer tournament, a junior high lock-in, a retreat for all ages, and a chili dinner we cooked and served for the community.

We also spent time with and ministered to Gypsies; teens through after-school programs, inviting them to fun activities such as pool and ping-pong tournaments. Being a severely marginalized group, Gypsies are in crucial need of feeling the Lord’s love and acceptance.

Additionally, we visited children’s homes, toured Auschwitz in Poland, and spent two days in Prague. Our team experienced the Lord working in and through us in unique ways and we were able to bring energy and encouragement to each other and our hosts during our time together. Although the cultural differences we faced were less dramatic than other trips, there was still an equal need to share God’s Love with this under-reached area. God helped us to look past obstacles and instead let Him use us in ways that only He can, as He continues to make His presence known across the Czech Republic.

“We learned that ministry does not only happen on mission trips. We did normal, everyday things; things that we could similarly do within the communities around Taylor.”
Ashley Rudd ’15

“We were reminded that God is the God of all nations, peoples, tribes, and tongues, and He expresses Himself through the beauty of all people in the world over. His love transcends borders, boundaries, and barriers.”
Taylor Hughes, ’16
Our small team of twelve had the special privilege of fellowshipping with the unreached Sea Tribe People. We were honored to be welcomed into the homes of our host families in each of our three remote islands along the Southeast Asia coast. Our team enjoyed and valued immersing ourselves in the rich culture of the islands, which included sharing meals, learning the language, and participating in ceremonial dances.

Our host organization shapes their ministry model, around the importance of relationship, and the power of conversation that grows out of mutual trust and respect. They emphasized that in order for ministry to be successful, in particular, among the Sea Tribe People; developing a relationship must precede evangelism.

Our primary means of outreach was accomplished through prayer and during spiritual conversations with our hosts over meals and family gatherings. Deeper conversations often centered on topics such as personal prayer, good deeds, and sharing stories about our lives and our experiences with others. Most of the people with whom we spoke were eager to listen and were very open to discussing similarities and differences between our faiths.

We felt the prayers of our supporters. Although we cannot share stories of entire villages coming to Christ, we understand that our purpose was to plant seeds and raise questions in the hearts of our new friends. We are grateful that our hosts will continue to visit these communities and follow up with the people, strengthening relationships and communicating more about Christ.

Never have I understood better what a privilege it truly is to know Christ, nor have I had more confidence that I can talk to Him anywhere, anytime, and that He wants to hear me." Molly King ’14

Teams

By Sara Wainscott ’14

SE Asia

Tamara Barrett
Kyle Dethard
Jonathan Eshleman
Emily Hart
Erinn Houts
Molly King
Matthew Kilgust
Conner Lee
Sara Wainscott
Michelle Wright
*Tony Manganello
*Pam Meadows

Grana

Jeremy Anderson
Heather Costeran
Tyler Cordts
Chad (Bach)
Stephanie Kaloustian
Mel Kergin
Lori Kimbell
Lawrence Kinnaman
Maria Martinez
Emily Olgren
Christina Peña
Hunter Sims
Morgan Williams
*Erika Montland
*Jeff Smetzer

Bahamas

Jessica Baile
Kyle Bedwell
Leah Buchanan
Levi Bowell
Ron Brusette
Eric Croft
Katie De Haan
John Dennis
Ashton Dennis
James Guettler
Sam Hill
Taylor Hughes
arline Johnson
Amy Karlson
Emily King
Felicia King
Sarah Lyons
Alex Mose
Malcolm Patterson
Suzi Rine
Carrie Skelley
Kari Ross
Emily Simmons
Tyler Smith
Ben Stuckley
Jessica Telkenberg
Darielis Trigg
Paula Weinman
Eritza Zain
Amelia France
*Mel & Carolyn Guettler
*Craig & Jennifer Meechberger
*Aaron Myhren
*Sarah Schindler
*Jarrell Smith
SINCE 1972 Taylor’s Lighthouse program has enabled students to gain unforgettable, life-changing experiences during January studying and serving cross-culturally around the world. The program equips them to join God’s work alongside international partner ministries, step out of their comfort zones in faith, build relationships across cultures, develop their gifts and abilities, expand their global perspective, and explore their vocational calling all while sharing Christ’s love and truth.

And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news” Romans 10:15