

# the Larmey letter

 YoungLife

December  
2007



## Thanksgiving at the Larmey's



**By Maria Manges.** Maria was one of six ladies from **Crossroads** who served the Larmey's for a special Thanksgiving Dinner

Tonight, we all sat down at another decorated table. Jennifer Brown squished a bunch of soft pillow like pumpkins, gourds, etc into her luggage, along with glass acorns, table runners, and long stemmed glassware candle holders. It was so pretty, but the real beauty was while Steve was explaining the history of this American holiday to the African men and women, it became very apparent to all of us that for the first time in our lives, we were having a thanksgiving like unto the first thanksgiving. Two people groups, two cultures, visitors in a foreign land coming together with the nationals to share in a time of gratitude to God for his provision in our lives.

Of course, we went around the table (numbering 24) and told one thing we were thankful for. I was thankful to be in Africa after a lifetime of dreaming of coming here, and that the trip also included a lifelong dream of safari. Most around the table expressed that they were thankful for family, but after the interpretation, there were several Tanzanian people who were thankful for the difference God has made in their lives: thankful for his love, and thankful for relationships with Christians from around the world. Meanwhile, the sweet potatoes, cranberries, and pumpkin pie were devoured according to Steve's instruction, "the tradition is to eat until you can't eat another bite." Most of them lived out the tradition! It was a night of giving thanks unlike any we'd ever experienced.

## Macarena, Bollywood and Reconciliation from Steve

I got a profoundly new appreciation for weddings (I think from God) recently. A few weeks ago, Dyan and I helped with a very special wedding in Zanzibar. The groom was a Tanzanian-born Indian Muslim man from a fourth generation Zanzibari family which is very significant in the business community in Tanzania; and the bride was an Irish Catholic woman from Dublin.

They wanted a spiritual aspect to their wedding but could find no imam or mullah (surprise) on the Muslim side or priest on the Catholic side to marry them. Some of their friends told them about us and they asked me to preside at the ceremony. We met with them a few times and really liked them and I was struck by their sincere desire to invite God to their wedding. We said yes, and like so many "yes's" God calls us to, He shows up and blesses us in tremendous ways way be-



Patti (French), Jennifer (Brown), Toni (Ellsworth), Stephanie (Barron), Donna (Myers) and I brought our individual family dishes – and yes, I even brought the green Jell-O salad.

Dyan cried from the time she saw the table decorations until she'd emptied her plate. Everyone was touched by our efforts, and the prayers and preparations of the **Crossroads** family. Our time in the Larmey home and **Young Life** Training Center is quickly drawing to a close. There are 115 scrapbook pages completed, relationships have been built with the children, with the housemaids, the chauffeur, the family dogs, and I must say, even the pet turtles.

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yond our expectations. It was a wonderful wedding and a wonderful day. God did show up. It was in a beautiful place--right overlooking the Indian Ocean on the east coast of Zanzibar, right at sunset. There were people at the wedding from 5 continents, many religions and skin colors and cultures. There were Muslim Indians from Indonesia, India, Germany, London, Canada and Africa. There were Indian Sikhs from India. Indian Catholics from Pakistan. There were Irish Catholics from Dublin and Belfast. And Irish Quakers from Galway and Dublin. There were friends who were not interested in anything religious from all over Europe, Australia and North America, and many others from the same places with no religious convictions but seeking hearts.

Before the wedding we were meeting with a photographer who was a Kenyan Brit who had grown up with much hardship and had left God somewhere along the roadside of one of the many rough roads she had lived through. We also were with some South African friends who knew the Lord but had strayed recently. They were concerned that the sun would be shining right in the faces of the bride and groom right at the time of the wedding and that all the pictures would be ruined. They tried many ways to shade and block the sun but to no avail. They threw up their hands. I said maybe we could pray and have God bring some clouds right at the right time. They laughed and patted Dyan and I on the back, "That's your area Steve. You talk to him and work it out." They shared the plan with the Muslim-Dutch wedding coordinator and they all smiled and laughed. The wedding was beautiful. The bride and groom glowed and all could tell they really loved each other. We had readings from Khalil Gibran and ee cummings and an Irish ballad and a Muslim chant. I gave a message and mentioned the name of Jesus once and taught briefly what he taught about marriage. And at that moment when they looked into each other's eyes in the presence of God and their friends and family, as they became one, all of us from different cultures, religions and countries also became one.

And... at just the perfect moment, some clouds gently rolled in low in the western sky and blocked the sun and cast a glorious golden-hue on the wedding. The wedding coordinator and the photographer looked at me with their eyebrows raised. God is really good...and He cares about little things, too, doesn't He?

But the wedding didn't stop there. We then flowed into a seven course reception banquet and people from all different groups were mixed at the tables. Wine and beer, food and laughter were flowing--both the Irish and the Indians really know how to enjoy themselves and together it was a magical (and a little lethal) combination. Dyan and I had more conversations about Jesus and kids at a wedding than we have ever had before. We talked about Jesus with Muslims from London, Karachi and Zanzibar. We talked about Jesus with Catholics from County Cork, Dublin and Pakistan. We talked about Jesus with atheists and agnostics. People came to us to talk. We talked about teenagers and the struggles parents are having and their concerns --with all the same people and all the same places. Parents and adults concerned about teens in their families and towns --just like in suburban Indiana or Atlanta or Denver. And people really wanting to know about Jesus.

We laughed and talked and drank and ate and sang and danced--we danced the Cha Cha Slide and the Electric Slide, we danced to songs from Bollywood. Old Indian women in saris and head scarves, Indian and Irish men in tuxedos, young kids and old, from all over the world dancing. With every passing hour the group became more and more united--more and more one. When you are "riding the pony" and doing the Macarena with someone, it's hard to not like them.

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**"You know Steve, right now in Iraq we have Muslims killing Muslims, Christians killing Muslims and Muslims killing Christians, yet here we are all are: eating and drinking and dancing and laughing together."**

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At one point in the evening I was having a conversation with a liberal-leaning Muslim woman from a very wealthy family and her friend (a more radical-leaning Muslim woman from another wealthy family) and they were asking about Jesus. Finally she stopped and delivered a line I won't ever forget: "You know Steve, right now in Iraq we have Muslims killing Muslims, Christians killing Muslims and Muslims killing Christians, yet here we are all are: eating and drinking and dancing and laughing together--maybe what the world needs in more weddings." Maybe so. Maybe so.

I guess it is no coincidence that Jesus in the Gospel of John begins His ministry at a wedding in Cana (where he was invited....), and that His ministry ends (and begins for ever) with another wedding, and a great heavenly banquet where we will be together, where food and drink and laughter and joy will be overflowing. Where we will be surprised (I hope, oh how I hope) at who all is there--people from every tribe, nation, and religion(?!). Where we will be singing and dancing (hopefully not the Macarena) and all things/people will be brought together as one at last under Him. Because that's why Jesus came, isn't it? To bring people together: people together with God; people together with people. To reconcile us to Him. And now we share that ministry of bringing people together, that ministry of reconciliation. So that all people can enjoy that wedding and banquet. Wow, what a day that will be. What a gift to be invited, and what a privilege to get to be a part of His work--bringing people together under Him. Thy Kingdom come.

Thanks for your friendship, love and support. <><

**Steve**

Mark your calendar... the Larmeys are coming to the United States and a preliminary reception is being planned for them on **December 30th.**



Mark your calendar... African Young Life staff are coming to **Crossroads** and a preliminary reception is being planned for them on **January 27th.**

**[www.africa.younglife.org](http://www.africa.younglife.org)**