

**Mission as Liminal Space**

*Sam Harrell reflects on the notion that embarking on a journey into the unknown and unsecured may well be the threshold from which we begin to discover ourselves, our calling and our Guidance.*

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**Change for Children progress report**

*As of December '06, all building projects in Rift Valley Province are complete.*

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**"Kutana" launch in 2007****KUTANA**

*A re-vamp of our "immersion" programs, "Kutana" is designed for undergraduate and divinity students who travel our way to engage in service learning opportunities, cross-cultural discovery.*

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**News Summary**

*A snapshot of the activities of 2006 and a glance at plans for 2007.*

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## Mission as Liminal Space

*"If the crisis is getting deeper and deeper, then that is part of the solution"*

*African proverb*

Having had the opportunity and privilege of introducing students and partners to the Kenyan context over the past several years, we are always interested in the long-term impact that such exposure has on participants. Undoubtedly, even a brief experience in an unfamiliar context often carries with it combinations of joy, wonderment, bewilderment, anxiety, surprise, etc.

Our programs attempt to carefully balance all of these so that growth might result. Obviously, time is a huge variable and the amount of time one has or one takes in a new situation makes a difference. In each case, however, it has been interesting to note the different ways that these encounters are interpreted and incorporated once participants return to their culture of origin.

Of particular interest to me has been the reaction to being exposed to lack or suffering in one context or another. Generally, responses would fall into one or other of the categories described below. While one would hope, perhaps, for a progression from one state

to the other, often I find that they are end results rather than stages:

1. **Great Trip!** It was an eye-opening (mission) trip, but that was then and this is now - little carry over between the short-term experience and life in home culture other than some unique photos / souvenirs and some memorable stories from the "safari."
2. **Painful Re-entry.** When I came back, everything seemed different for awhile. I eagerly related my experience to others and struggled with the blank stares that often resulted. There was a period of time where I really wondered if I was living in the right place and doing the right thing in light of what I had seen and experienced. The intensity eventually faded, though occasionally I will see a picture, hear an accent, etc., and have a vivid recollection . . .
3. **Conversion/Change.** I've never been exactly the same. I struggled for awhile with an emptiness, even depression until I realized that some of my priorities, some of my habits needed changing. It's not that I feel I should be back there, rather that having been exposed to a bigger vision of life and discovered a deeper knowledge of myself, I have a responsibility to live out that vision in appropriate ways in my own context. It's a struggle but I know it's where I'm supposed to be.

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To some degree, these reactions are in ways connected with the ability or capacity of each person to let go, to “un-know,” to invite ambiguity and “let Life have its way with us.” According to Richard Rohr, this is the “belly of the whale, a place of learning from pain and uncertainty and allowing them to do their work in us without solution until God casts us up on another shore.”

The term **liminal** refers to a level of consciousness necessary for an event or symbol to take on transformative meaning. In other words, our level of consciousness and awareness has everything to do with whether or not we recognize the “liminal space” wherein we can be shaped into something different than we were before. I am fond of quoting M. Scott Peck who said that “unconsciousness is the root of all evil.” I find this a very insightful and true characterization of reality. Life, it would seem, provides for us certain thresholds through which we can choose to enter new and greater realities. Unfortunately, however, we are often either unconscious of them or unwilling to embrace them since they usually involve letting go of something and embracing something that is not yet fully known and often painful. It is my belief that we have arrived at such a threshold when we begin to understand “mission” in terms of mutuality, vulnerability and solidarity with those whom God loves. Often this will lead us to surprising and perhaps difficult places of discovery, both about ourselves and about reality. However, with God’s help, we should not ignore, hide or turn back from such encounters. As Richard Foster so eloquently puts it,

Learning to stand with, ache with, weep with those who suffer may not be everything, but it certainly stands close to the center of our apprenticeship to Jesus. And it is right here that the watching world will be able to see our love. It is love in action, love with skin on it. Here we need to be sharply counter-cultural. Rather than avoid suffering at all costs we intentionally embrace suffering to the glory of God and the good of all people.”

May we have the courage to be fully conscious of the realities around us, even when they lead to change, loss of control and heartache. It is in these places that Life is waiting to be discovered!



## Change for Children Update

A very busy year it has been indeed! Our original goal of constructing two Integrated Child Development Centers (ICDCs) and three Church Operated Nursery School Enhancements (CONSEPs) has been accomplished with two weeks to spare! All buildings are now occupied and lots of learning is taking place. We’ve learned a lot in the course of the year:

- **Lesson #1**, don’t try to build 5 buildings simultaneously! In the coming year we will focus on one Center at a time.
- **Lesson #2**, don’t be distracted from the primary focus. We’ve determined that our purposes will be better served if we concentrate on ICDCs in every province and re-evaluate the CONSEP program at a latter date.
- **Lesson #3**, let the community lead the way, not attempting to short-cut or run ahead of their participation.
- **Lesson #4**, the process and methodology used to arrive at the final product are at least as important as the final product.
- **Lesson #5**, sustainability needs to be built in at the beginning, not as an afterthought.



College Park partners braved their way to West Pokot to complete and open the Nakuijit ICDC.

# KUTANA

“Kutana” is the Swahili word which means “to meet, encounter or come upon.” As Swahili is wont to do, it indicates a mutuality or reciprocity in that it is not one sided or in one direction. Thus, when one says, “tunakutana,” one is saying, “we are meeting each other, we are fellowshipping one with another, we are encountering one another.” Kutana is the name that we have chosen to describe our cross-cultural programs, particularly those that we carry out with undergraduate, seminary/ divinity school students. The previous term, “Mission Immersion,” is now used widely as a replacement for “mission trip” which is not what we hope to model our cross-cultural

programs after. Here are some of the goals we do hope will be achieved through Kutana:

- Our desire is to provide a context in which old assumptions are challenged on the basis of new relationships with indigenous people, scholars, clergy and cross-cultural workers.
- We are designing Kutana with ample space for self reflection and awareness. In undergraduate programs, we hope to approximate the “rites of passage” concept that is prevalent in African societies and integral for emerging adults - a concept that Western culture has all but lost.
- A core component of service learning is designed to place participants in development situations where they have the opportunity to transform as well as be transformed through working for, with and alongside local people.
- One or more environmental field components will provide opportunities for participants to explore some of the most diverse, rich and spectacular habitats on the planet. Ecological issues will be explored holistically, including a theology of the environment and stewardship of creation.
- We hope to promote both a preparedness prior to the experience as well as an integration of the experience into the normal lives of participants upon conclusion of the program.

Keep your eyes and ears open for news following our inaugural programs in May and June of 2007. Thereafter, Kutana will be held in May of each year.

Come join us!



*Journey into immensity - photo by Dean Warren*

## 2006 in review

- ❖ January: Rosslyn Academy Cultural Field Studies week - bridge building, Ntiakitiak, Masai Mara
- ❖ February: RAF Project Albert - construction team, Nakuijit, West Pokot
- ❖ March: East/North Eastern survey trip - Mwingi, Garissa  
- Roanoke, Virginia consortium - leader visit, survey
- ❖ April: Longewan ICDC construction
- ❖ May: CBF pastors tour, Pat Anderson - Rift Valley projects  
- Truett seminary team, Longewan
- ❖ June: CBF General Assembly - Atlanta, USA
- ❖ July: Speaking engagements/partnership visits, NC, Va, WV, Ga, Fl, Wi, SC, AL
- ❖ August: Rift Valley progress evaluation
- ❖ September: College Park Team for opening of Nakuijit ICDC, West Pokot
- ❖ October: AABF Assembly, Brackenhurst, Tigoni  
- HIS Nets distribution - "T" Thomas - Mara  
- Knollwood Medical Team - Longewan, Raya clinics
- ❖ November: Roanoke Consortium - Mai Maihu, Mara construction
- ❖ December: Garissa flood relief

## '07 Upcoming . . .

- ❖ January: Rosslyn Academy CFS - Mara build
- ❖ February: Garissa, North Eastern Province, construction begins; Eastern Province survey
- ❖ March: Raya ICDC, Garissa construction
- ❖ April: Eastern Province ICDC construction
- ❖ May: BTSR Mission Immersion (Kutana)
- ❖ June: Mercer University (Kutana), Ilchamus, Baringo district
- ❖ August: Passport Kenya
- ❖ September - December: Partnership teams, ongoing construction

## Our Thanks. . .

. . . to all who have given so generously in support of this work. *May you continue to be blessed so that you can continue to be a blessing to so many.* We urge you to contribute also to the CBF Offering for Global Missions which provides critical overhead support that allows 100% of all project funding to go directly and exclusively towards projects.

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