

Spotlight on Orphans



Vol. 6, No. 3

“...ye have done it unto me.” Matthew 25:40

March 2007

Impressions from Out of the Whirlwind

By Vicki Kritzell

After a long and exciting flight, we finally landed in Nairobi sans our most important luggage—those containing our material for the meetings and many gifts for the children, as well as letters from sponsors. Much to our relief, it surfaced two days later but, combined with repairs on our vehicle, we started our journey to Glory Center one day late.

My first impression of Nairobi is that it is a sea of humanity. There are literally thousands of people everywhere, honking horns, music and conversation constant. I could never get tired of looking at the diversity and beauty of the people. However, I was always in danger of being run over either by another human being or a vehicle. There is no order to the movement of either, and it is one's personal responsibility to move out of the way of both.

On our second day, I saw a side of Nairobi many do not witness, as Pastor Moses Nyamora drove us into the slums of the city. I have never seen such poverty. The streets are lined with tiny shelters, the residents trying to earn a few shillings to put something in the pot for dinner for their families. Small children are everywhere, a sunny contrast to the misery around them. When they spot us, they shout, “Musungu (white person), how are you?” When we shout back, “Fine,” they squeal with pleasure. The best way to gather them close is to take a photo. Soon dozens of children join, all wanting to be photographed. Thankfully, with my digital camera I was able to satisfy them, as well as to show them the picture. I have a notebook with the names of mothers who begged me to send them a print—likely the only one they will ever have of their child.

I thought the misery could not get worse but I soon found otherwise. Pastor Moses drove us to a refugee camp that he has been working with for several years. Congolese, Rwandese, and Sudanese are gathered into an area of several thousands of people. When we arrived, a small group had been waiting for us for hours, foregoing lunch until our evening arrival. Their modest church, little more than a shed with a few pews, belied a joy and love of life I could hardly comprehend, given their living conditions. As I listened to the songs of praise they sang, I could not help but think that this handful of beautiful people raised their voices to God in a way I had never imagined. I have been in churches with hundreds that could not compare to the emotion these few evoked.

After a meal of juice and bread, we walked into the community and visited some of their homes. They were so happy to have us just step in and have a prayer with them. Most lived, with

several children, in a space about 12 x 12. I could not wrap my mind around their happiness, thinking of their struggle: a people without a country. I am left to wonder why in America where we have so much, we lack their peace and loving hearts.

After a several-hours-long journey on Thursday, we finally arrived at Glory Children's Center. The children had been waiting for us since the day before, and when we pulled up at the gates, we were greeted with shouts of joy. We filed into the play yard where the orphans entertained us with a program they had prepared. I could not keep from crying as I watched their faces. They were overjoyed just by our presence. I considered how they had suffered watching parents die, starving, being beaten, but just our being there thrilled them beyond measure. I did not feel worthy.

The next few days went by in a blur of children. They always wanted to sit on our laps, touch our skin, rub our hair, and receive kisses. Some even crawled under the benches to touch our legs. I was very surprised by how much smaller they are than I imagined. They are very smart and have so much love to give. We spent a day interviewing and photographing them for their sponsors, which gave us an opportunity to have private time with each. At the end of the session, each was given some small toys donated by various sponsors and groups.

Our last day was spent with the secondary students who are currently staying in Prisca's house next door to our new property. This land is beautiful. The foundation has already been dug for the girls' dormitory and several crops are already planted. We interviewed the students and found them to be so bright, with great dreams for the future: doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers are in the future of some with the right opportunity. I wondered how different their lives would be if they had been born in America.

On an entertaining note, I soon discovered the dangers of latrines. While trying to accomplish the proper position, my glasses fell off my face directly into the hole. All I could do was laugh, and I swore Esther to silence as I was sure Moses and/or Prisca would try to retrieve them! Fortunately, I am due for an eye exam upon my return home anyway.

After promising to return next year, we bade a tearful good-bye and continued on to Hope for Children Center. Nothing could have prepared me for the welcome at this orphanage. We arrived late at night after a marvelous journey through Masai country. I was thrilled by the splashes of red as the tall, elegant tribesmen dotted the hillsides

herding their cattle. I could not contain my excitement when we saw over a dozen huge giraffes grazing near the road! Further along, we saw gazelle and zebras by the dozen.

The road into the bush surrounding HFCC is brutal, and the darkness is unreal. All of a sudden we saw a white shirt and a tall boy standing at the side of the road. He was our sentry, directing us down the lane to the orphanage.

As we pulled into the drive, I could not see a thing. All of a sudden, hundreds (250) of squealing, excited children popped into my vision. We could not even get out of the van as they rushed to hug and kiss us. Pastor Maurice rescued us and we joined them in the dining hall to be greeted. They have the voices of angels and I could not control myself as I looked across this ocean of happy, beautiful faces. To think that they love us so much for the little we have done, is overwhelming. Much to our dismay, we were whisked away to the home of Edith and Maurice, as it was felt we needed to rest. I could not sleep in anticipation of seeing the children in the light the next morning!

After breakfast, we were greeted with the reality of life at this orphanage. Before we could even start our day, Pastor took us to the gates where children had clustered, praying this day they might be admitted. The sight of these small children clad in rags was more than we could manage. There were about sixty. We brought them in and began to sort through the clothing we had brought with us for the children of our volunteers. We also had clothing left over from three bales we had purchased for Glory Center. By the time two hours had passed, we had replaced their rags with beautiful new clothing. They were so proud. (The next morning we were faced with four times this original number. We had nothing for them, so had to send them away to come back on Sabbath. We purchased one more bale and replaced the clothing of over 200 before church.) That task completed, I met my sons, Moses and Dickens. I will tell you more about these wonderful boys in a later issue. Let me just comment that I am trying to figure out how I can fit them into my luggage.

On Monday, we walked the distance to Good Samaritan Home, where we were once again greeted by excited, beautiful children. We interviewed the children and spent a wonderful afternoon getting to know them and assessing the needs at this latest location, which are many. Mother Teresa is doing a wonderful work with them, and they are happy and eating well. They attend a nearby public school and seem very smart. They had a good time decorating balloons and playing with them until they popped! When one would break, they squealed with excitement. We had worried that they might cry, but they seemed to consider this a part of the game. We listed their needs, handed out letters and gifts, then returned to Hope Center; an oasis in this desperate area.

We have now interviewed each of the children at our three Kenyan orphanages. The purpose of this exercise was to give each child an opportunity to have special time with us, as well as to gather some insight into their individual personalities. As we recorded their dreams of the future, a stark reminder of their losses became clear. Not a single girl said she wanted to be a "mommy," and they did not know what "playing house" meant, even when described. It nearly broke our hearts to realize these children, as orphans, have little concept of a family life.

I can hardly believe that this whirlwind visit is nearly over and in less than a week I will be back home in freezing Ohio. I have so much more I hope to eventually share with you. However, since we are limited for space in this issue, just let me conclude for now by saying that I have seen the miracles you are working in this place. I wish each of you could sit with these children to feel their love; to admire their gentle ways. I cannot express the love I feel for them

and I feel selfish to have experienced the beauty of them in your place. I can only tell you that you are doing a great work, that your children love and pray for you each day, that when asked, "Who is your sponsor," they shout back your names. God bless you for what you are doing for them. It means so much more than you can imagine!

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ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

By Scot Harvey

Hearth to Hearth Ministries has several websites. The first one is www.hearthtohearth.org. It is the main and most popular site. A counter started on that site on the 12th of November, 2006, was set to count the first time someone visits the site. There was an average of two hundred new visitors a month for the first two months the counter was on. Many people visit more than once because there are over three hundred visits to that site in a week. The second site is www.spotlightonorphans.org. It is for the youth and is not as popular, with less than half the visits. The newest site is www.spotlightonorphans.net, which has all the *Spotlight on Orphans* newsletters on it. There is a search feature that allows you to search for a certain word or phrase to see what article has it in. We actually own twelve domain names, mainly to protect our interests.

I have never worked on websites before and I realize that there are many improvements that can be made. I would appreciate it if you would go to the different sites and send me your comments and suggestions. For one thing, my grammar and spelling skills leave a lot to be desired and no one has the time to proofread all the sites. If you see anything that could be improved, please email me at webmaster@hearthtohearth.org.

You can also help improve our sites' standings in the search engines. Search engines use several things to decide where to place a website in the search results. One of them is link popularity. As of the 14th of January, www.hearthtohearth.org has a link popularity of 128. **If you have a website, please put links to our sites.** If you are part of a forum, say something about Hearth to Hearth Ministries and share some links to our sites there as well. One of Vicki's sons is part of a forum on which he has put links to our sites. Not only has he helped with link popularity, but several people follow the links every week.

When you search the web you type in a word or a phrase. Just now I typed in "Kisii orphanages" and found our site in the middle of the second page. By following the link to our site I "voted" that our site was more important than the ones before it. You can "vote" for our sites by searching the web and then clicking our site's link. Our link popularity is not great enough to use single words like orphans or orphanages, so try different phrases. Search engine placement changes constantly. This morning our site placed well on four search engines (including Google) for the phrase "sponsor an orphan." This afternoon we only show up on Altavista at 54 and AOL at number 32.

Here are some interesting facts: For the week January 7th through the 13th there were 488 visits to our sites. Our hosting site can trace the country of origin of some of the visits. Three hundred six of the visits could not be traced, but of the ones that could we had visitors from Germany, Poland, France, Morocco, Mexico, and the United Kingdom. In the past we have had several visitors from Brazil, Denmark, Canada, and Australia among others.

Thank you for participating in the work for these children by posting these links. It is a simple thing to do and the results will be known only in eternity.

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NEEDS, POSSIBILITIES AND PLANS

By Esther McDaniel

We are sitting at the edge of the road to Kisii, waiting for a tire change on the Hope Center van. The rocky, deeply-rutted road seems a protest to the intrusion of such a manmade contrivance on the peaceful, pastoral countryside, and it has taken a heavy toll on the intruder. This is our second such experience with this vehicle.

While we wait, the distant hills stand witness to the unfolding drama at the road's edge. An elderly man stops to greet "the musungus," proudly addressing us in our native tongue. A young mother strolls by with her baby shaded from the midday sun by an umbrella clutched awkwardly in her overflowing hands. A widow with her teenaged son at her side stops to ask for assistance with his secondary school fees that have become unmanageable. She is determined to somehow help her son achieve his goal of becoming a lawyer. Another teenager stops just to visit. He is obviously very bright, I think, as he tells of his experiences as a Kenyan orphan. Secondary school is out of the question, he relates. "What do you do to keep busy?" I ask as he jumps to move his bicycle out of the way of a clattering, rattling, banging, approaching vehicle. "Nothing, he replies." How sad, I muse.

The edge of the road is a friendly place as the rolling country road produces young and old, seemingly out of nowhere, to offer friendly smiles, handshakes and words of encouragement and welcome as we continue our wait.

Eventually our all-to-frequent wait is over and we are back to the business of the day—traveling to Kisii to purchase clothing for the over 860 ragged, dirty children waiting outside the Hope for Children Center gate this morning. Tomorrow there will no doubt be more.

Everywhere we go, there are so many needs. Giving clothing to these children is a very rewarding effort but we are saddened to send so many away still naked. Thus far we have visited our three orphanages in Kenya and are quite aware of many of their needs as well.

Our first stop was at Glory Center where the overall needs are the greatest of all our projects. It was extremely helpful for us to finally understand the reasons for some of the difficulties they have been facing at that Center. The gist of the matter is that just over one year ago, when they moved their operation out of Nairobi and into Kisii, the only facility they were able to locate that would accommodate them, was a long distance from the area of Kisii where Moses and Prisca have their property and their roots. We have learned that Kenyans—even those from the same city—are clanish. These "foreigners" moving nearly fifty orphans into an area that was already teaming with their own orphans, were looked upon with resentment and disdain. Moses and Prisca have put forth much effort in an attempt to gain the acceptance and respect of the local people. Unfortunately, the outcome of this effort has resulted in real overcrowding both in the orphanage and in the school. One thing became very apparent as we visited their new property—we must get them moved there as soon as possible! And the best news yet is that it will take just \$20,000 to get them in. After that, we can continue building the rest of the facility.

Twenty-thousand US dollars is, of course, only a small percentage of what is needed to complete an orphanage for Glory Center. The reason the move can be accomplished with such a small beginning is due to the fact that their new property is adjacent to property belonging to Moses and Prisca. On their property sits a beautiful large home that they were able to build several years

ago. Prisca is truly looking forward to moving into her home that she has never occupied.

The plan is that once two latrines can be built and the girls' dormitory completed, they will move their boys into that dormitory temporarily and move the girls into their home. Their personal latrines will be adequate for use by the girls and their temporary school buildings can be dismantled and reassembled at the new location. This solution is not ideal, but it IS doable and the result will save much back-and-forth transportation as they complete the facility.

There are two wells on the Nyamora property that will be adequate to serve the orphanage but proper covers are needed for both of them in order to ensure the safety of our children. The cost of the two, as given to me by the builder, will be \$425. There are many other needs at Glory Center but we believe that if they can maintain things the way they are now operating until we can move them, both time and money will be saved. We only hope they won't have long to wait!

At Hope for Children Center, we were dismayed to see that their two wells also need proper covers though we have not yet received a quotation regarding that need. Being the American grandmothers that we are, Vicki and I were both frightened as we witnessed young girls drawing water from these gaping holes.

From our observation, one of the most crucial needs at all of our projects is the need for appropriate four-wheel drive vehicles. The move to the new/current HFCC facility has really made transportation difficult with the vehicle they now have. As alluded to earlier, the HFCC van is currently in very bad condition due to the impossible roads of this country. If we can raise enough money to purchase a new van for them soon, we should be able to still get something out of the current van from someone who will use it in town rather than out in the country. Pastor Maurice has made arrangements with a friend who purchases vehicles directly from Japan to purchase a brand new Toyota Prada or Hilux for approximately \$13,000 including tax and shipping costs. Furthermore, it is likely that he will be able to get the same deal a few months later for each of our projects in turn. We are praying that this urgent need can be met. Without acceptable transportation, communication between this ministry and its projects is nearly impossible. Too much time is taken up in just catering to the basic needs of the projects themselves. While HFCC is crippling along with its own vehicle, which is in need of many repairs, GCC is using a borrowed vehicle, also in need of repairs. Also, one wonders when the owner—no matter how tender-hearted toward the orphans he may be—will want his vehicle back and in what condition he expects to receive it.

At Good Samaritan Home, we were pleasantly surprised to learn that Pastor Maurice had, by saving up his own stipend money, built a mud building as additional temporary housing for the children there. Unfortunately, they had endured a flood, which has weakened the building. Water marks are plainly visible over one foot off the floor in some places. We are looking forward to beginning construction on their two temporary dormitories very soon as the money for them has already been promised.

Next week I will be traveling to Uganda to visit our projects there and am looking forward to being joined by Pat Reese. Until then, I can only report on our Kenyan projects, all of which have various needs, though none are as urgent as those listed above.

(Continued bottom of next page.)

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The Last Word

THOUGHTS OF BOOTS AND RED DUST

By Steve Reiners

Africa beckons to people around the world. To some it is the indescribable natural beauty, while for others it is the promise of wealth from vast natural resources. Reasons abound. For me, the beautiful orphans of Kenya are the glory of the country.

Arriving at Glory Center, located in an inadequate facility, I was inundated by happy orphans. Always, I will remember photographing a beautiful little girl with her boots on the wrong feet. Even the red dust and mud unavoidably found on the shoes, clothes, and sometimes faces, made them no less lovable.

(Continued from previous page.)

As reported previously, our secondary students are remaining out of school this year as we try to regroup from a serious deficit caused by too many unsponsored children and two too many famines in 2006. We are happy to report that, although this is a disappointment to these children, nearly all are taking it very well. One wrote the following to her sponsor: "I am out of school for one year but I know God is not asleep. He will help us to carry on with our life smoothly. I wondered why you decided so but our mum Esther has explained to us clearly what is the cause of all this and I appreciate for that and I pray hard God to do many and marvelous things to you and your family. This is my humble encouragement whenever you have a problems lift up your eyes and pray. Psalms 121:1-6."

At our Administrator's Convention we spent much time in discussing the possibilities for our secondary students for the coming year beginning in January of 2008. We have decided that the best option is for the Glory Center secondary students to attend a local day school next year and for us to purchase land and build a school for the Hope Center secondary students. This is an ambitious plan but we believe it is imperative that it is accomplished, even if we must use temporary buildings to get started. Pastor Maurice has plans to also build a large vocational building where students can learn many practical skills that will benefit them greatly in their futures. Surely we must have a good program ready by next school

At Hope Center, the children outside the gate in the mornings, clothed in rags, deepened the bond with the little people who had won my heart. A few remained at a distance, precluding the relationship that I so much desired.

However, under a starry Kenyan sky one night I understood why Providence had led me to this land of incongruities. It was not for the little that I could do for the children. Instead, it was that I might better understand God's love for me, and my teachers were the orphans that I had come to serve.

How many times after determining to live more closely to Jesus I ended up with my boots on the wrong feet and covered by the red dust of a sinful world. Repentance was my response to the times that I had chosen to remain away from Jesus while He continued to lovingly draw me. Only eternity will reveal the actual rewards of my visit to Kenya.

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year. We invite all of you to pray with us that God will bless our efforts for these patiently-waiting young people. They are the future of Kenya.

You also need to know that while these young people are waiting, they are not waiting idly. Their administrators are putting their energy to use in clearing land, planting and weeding crops and learning vocational skills. They have also discussed getting them involved in missionary outreach to the surrounding communities. This year will not be wasted for them and the experiences they are gaining will be theirs for life.

We have been greatly encouraged as we have visited these projects and visited with all of the administrators and their wives at our Administrator's Convention. We are thrilled as we view what God has accomplished through a few dedicated people. Not only have we been encouraged, but we have also been vitalized as we contemplate returning home and sharing our enthusiasm and vision with you regarding the future of this work.

Life without electricity has been difficult. Life without email (or very infrequent email) has been even moreso. We hope that you will be pleased to hear the news from "on location" to the point that you will not miss our usual format, nor our photographs. We will have so much more to share with you when our lives get back to "normal."

God bless you, each and every one!

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