

BLESSINGS - AUGUST 2009

I wonder if this is my first newsletter with the title 'Blessings'? I hope not, or else it is a poor reflection on my communications! I feel incredibly blessed and privileged to be a part of this great work God is doing to help street children be rescued, rehabilitated, reconciled to families, and ultimately resettled back into their communities.



And yet because of my great love for these kids, the blessings can have a sad side too, as was the case recently when our beautiful Sylvia died suddenly and went to heaven. I heard the news when I was in Scotland (I had gone there briefly to visit my Mum on compassionate leave as she had a fall and fractured her spine but is now recovering), and felt such a deep sadness, I missed being with her in those final days, I missed attending her funeral. I remember the day I first met Sylvia on the streets nearly 6 years ago, she was about 10 yrs old but her body was so small and fragile, her eyes were yellow, her abdomen distended, her fingers

showed signs of her significant respiratory failure – and yet she was beautiful. As a nurse I tried to find medical assistance for her, we went from place to place to discover her complicated story – she had severe congenital (from birth) problems with her heart, lungs and liver, she had sickle cell anaemia. She had surgeries, numerous investigations, I was told many times that she would not survive but she and God proved them wrong. She came to stay with us at the DP Home and when she was stronger she was resettled back to her family. A wonderful Irish team led by Colin Law built a house for her family, and she loved being there. Her health fluctuated over the years and yet she did not complain, she was always thankful for any assistance, she had a gentle peacefulness in her spirit and I truly thank God for the blessing she was in my life. I often had her at my home, this was not a nurse-patient time but rather it was fun and there was always lots of laughter when she was around, she was a joker and loved telling funny stories, her DP brothers and sisters miss her too.



When I first came to Africa in 2001 God gave me a little girl Esther to care for, she also had lots of health problems but recovered and was eventually adopted, her face lit up when I entered the room, even after a long tiring day, I loved to carry Esther around and her cuddles and love refreshed me. This was true with Sylvia too, there were times she would quietly come into my clinic and just stroke my hair and I was blessed.



Another story of blessing is Alex, you see this strong young man on his 20th birthday which we celebrated last week at my home with another 9 noisy hungry guys! Alex escaped from abuse at the age of 7yrs and began a life on the streets, he was rescued at the age of 12 so I have had the privilege of knowing him for 8yrs now! His life has been a rollercoaster at times, he has not always made the right choices but I see him learning from them now and trying to get his head in gear (is that a Glasgow phrase?) and make good choices for his life and future.

May I say now that this may be a real mixture of a newsletter so I hope you can follow the 'flow' or lack off?

Update on Dwelling Places

During my time in Scotland I was blessed to have some time with my Church minister and elders, they encouraged me to write a brief update on where the work of Dwelling Places is now, recognising that some readers are newer, some had followed this journey for years, but may still appreciate an update.

I see the work of Dwelling Places going from strength to strength and I thank God for that great testimony. I don't say this blindly or without insight, I have seen and experienced many painful challenges in our ministry, I continue to see poverty increase, hunger, drought and famine are rife, HIV continues to devastate this nation and continent, abuse of children continues, the urban migration of young people from rural communities continues, thousands of children are living on our streets, hundreds of millions more around the world. Where do I see hope? Where do I see strength? I see it in the hearts of Ugandans seeking to reach out to help



children in need, I see it in the hearts of children changing from hopelessness to hope. I see God moving, changing people, changing children, I see Dwelling Places seeking God every moment of our ministry. We are still highly donor-dependant, we have always endeavoured to encourage income generating activities, farming, crafts, etc and yet that is only a fraction of our budget. We are

absolutely thankful for those of you to continue to help and support us, in fact we cannot thank you enough, please contact Doreen to receive regular updates on the general work of DP (donorcom@dwellingplaces.org).

I came to Africa in Sept 2001, with Africa Inland Mission (www.aimint.org), I like to remind people that this great mission began with a Scottish man Peter Cameron Scott over a hundred years ago. I was asked to help as a nurse with a Ugandan lady working with street kids, that is honestly about all I knew as I boarded the plane! I hit the ground running, I saw need everywhere and no idea where or how to access health care, I was in a new language/culture/medical setting. Let's just say I learnt alot of lessons then, some helpful, some not so helpful. Over the years our team and ministry has grown and yet our ministry, calling, vision remains the same – to help rescue street children from a life of despair and hopelessness and give them hope.

Our ministry focuses in 4 main areas, rescue, rehabilitation, reconciliation, resettlement. Our Ugandan team is multi-disciplinary – we have social workers, teachers, residential staff, admin and accountant, public relations and volunteers dept, projects and income generating depts, and last but not least health dept. As our space, time and resources are limited we can only rescue some children at a time, have a period of rehabilitation as they adapt to life off the streets, we strive that they attain optimum health, start in education, find any existing relatives, receive counselling to work through incredibly difficult issues such as abuse, bereavement, rejection and much more.



Most of our street children are not orphans in the African context, they have existing relatives somewhere and we strive that they are reconciled and resettled



there if at all possible. For those without relatives or the situation at home is not safe, then we pioneer in the area of foster care and adoption, a relatively new concept in Africa, we are particularly keen that Ugandan Christians open their hearts and homes to our children.

I never want to ask people for money, I recognise that many people struggle with finances, not just in Africa, yet I would rather inform people about the needs and if they would like and are able, there are ways that you can contribute in children's lives, partnering with us to help children living in despair and hopelessness and help give them hope.

Through AIM (deborah@aimeurope.net) you may allocate gifts regularly or one-off, in a variety of ways.

FOR MARSALI CAMPBELL – that will go towards my being here, living and working in Uganda.

FOR DWELLING PLACES HEALTH CARE FUND – this is a recently set-up account specifically for all the health needs for our children, hospital bills, dental, eye tests and glasses, HIV testing and care, health teaching and workshops, working in the streets, slum areas and remand centre, purchasing medicines and first aid supplies.

FOR DWELLING PLACES - AIM have a specific account that your money will go towards the needs of the whole ministry of Dwelling places.

If you are interested in sponsoring a child contact Diana - mawaalidiana@yahoo.com

As I close, my heartfelt thanks for your thoughts, prayers, encouragements and so much more!

WITH LOVE FROM AFRICA

MARSALI

