

Thirteenth Edition - January 2009

"I hope you are not giving only your surplus. You must give what costs you, make a sacrifice, go without something you like, that your gift may have value before God. Then you will be truly brothers and sisters to the poor who are deprived of even the things they need." Mother Teresa

Sharing Our "Wealth"

I recently joined members of the Ndola United Methodist Church as they took bananas, apples, oranges, and laundry and bath soap to the hospital. When we finished, the public relations officer remarked, "You fed the whole hospital!" We had enough to share with not only the patients but also the staff and the bedside caregivers. Their faces lit up as we prayed with them, handed them a gift, touched them gently and said, "God bless you." We plan to do this every 3 months; I'm hoping next time we can go to the children's hospital. (You know me!) The church members also took similar gifts to the prison where 30 women are incarcerated. I was greatly disappointed that I could not go with them because "foreigners" are not allowed.

Kafakumba

Terese, Patricia and I "gifted" the Fisenge women's group with a Christmas party. We pooled our resources for a delicious lunch of chicken, rice and vegetables. Patricia baked cakes for dessert. We had a Christmas quiz with apples for prizes; questions were taken from the story of Jesus' birth, and I added a few of my own: Who is the wife of Father Christmas? *Mother Christmas!* Who is their daughter? *Merry Christmas!* They enthusiastically elected officers for their group which they have named Twikatane, which means "United." As poor as they are, they truly understand cheerful and sacrificial giving. One day, they took an offering to buy sugar for a mother with a sick baby, and they all went to visit her. Another day, as Terese and I were sitting on the bus waiting to go home, one of the women ran up

and handed us 1,000 kwacha (about 20 cents) to help pay for our fare. This would have bought enough vegetables for her family that evening, but it was her way of thanking us for coming. I was reminded of the widow who gave all she had. (Mark 12:42 - 44)



The women spent many days weeding an aloe vera field here at Kafakumba to earn money which they will use to start some small businesses to help their families. I helped one morning, even though they protested that I should not be working that hard. I guess they think I'm too old! I told them I'd had lots of experience hoeing soy bean fields in America. Later Terese and I went and picked some weeds to cook for lunch; in Congo they call it "lingalinga." In the U.S. we call it "pigweed." Actually, it

is quite delicious. I thought about all of the nutritious vegetables I've killed and tossed out over the years.

Lifesong School

We began our new school year on January 3 with 175 children enrolled; this is an increase of 30 percent over last year, and we turned many away. This year we have expanded to include a third grade. We've added two new teachers, both of whom are recently retired from the government school system and bring vast experience and the needed maturity to complement our staff. We've also hired a teacher's aide, a part-time art teacher and another maintenance worker.

One thing that stood out as I was introduced to the new children was the frequency of an orange tinge in their hair, one of the signs of malnutrition. I am curious to see if this goes away after a few months in our feeding program. They are also desperately in need of love and affection; they quickly responded to my hugs and now eagerly run in anticipation of that closeness and loving touch that so many of them do not receive at home. We've been plagued with a few serious cases of a strange body rash and malaria with high fevers; we took the children to the clinic and all are doing fine now. Another phenomenon has been the rash of complaints of stomach pains and headaches on Monday mornings. We discovered the cause—the children have not eaten in over 24 hours or more. A bit of bread and a drink of juice quickly relieve the problem, and the children can return to class.

One little boy, Chalwe, had what we believe was some kind of bug bite on his foot. The family took him to the government clinic and were given a powder to mix with water to clean it. Of course, the water they used was dirty as was the rag they tied around his foot. By the time he came to us, it had grown to the diameter of a nickel and was filled with infection down to the bone. He was taken to the private clinic where he was put on a course of antibiotics and daily dressing changes. By the second day he was running and playing soccer with his friends. Here's a picture of a happy Chalwe!



“My Children”

It is a critical year for the former street children we support. Kafuti has started grade 12; he is complaining that the teachers are on strike and are not coming to class. He studies on his own, often requests more books, and enjoys a high school study CD I brought back from the U.S. Benson is still waiting to hear if he has been accepted at the University of Zambia. He has decided to go into chemical engineering if he can't get into the medical program. He quit his job as a house boy in order to have more time to study for his entrance exams. We are still waiting for the results of Daudi's and Jonathan's grade 9 exams. Joseph has finished high school and is in the Congo with his family. Three more of the children will be writing exams this year—Vincent and Kelvin for grade 9 and Andella for grade 7.

Sneak Peaks:

- I am no longer bothered by ants in my tea! They add protein.
- I discovered a baby lizard in my bed on Christmas Eve. I was thankful that I found him *before* I got in!
- Africans can see in almost total darkness, but most of them sleep with the lights on!
- I must be alert when driving on the highway to avoid not only the massive potholes but also the stray goats.
- Our school maize crop is amazing! It is growing so fast you can hear it. The children who worked so hard to plant it are proud. This will help offset our costs. We are now planting cassava and pumpkins, and in February we will plant tomatoes, onions and greens.
- Sign recently seen at the hospital: “Spaceman Room” (Interpretation: Specimen Room)

Prayer Requests:

- Pray that the economy will improve. Prices have soared, businesses are suffering and many people will not be paid at the end of this month.
- Pray that we will find ways to improve the living standard of the families we serve by finding meaningful and profitable income generation activities.
- Pray that our parents and guardians will come to treasure the children who have been placed under their care as a precious gift from God. That no child will be deprived of food, insulted or beaten out of frustration or anger that comes from being overburdened.
- Pray that our Lifesong staff will be united in purpose and commitment to the children and will serve them with willing and loving spirits founded in Christ.
- Pray that all of our children will come to know Christ as their Lord and Savior and come to be His followers not only in word but also in deed; they can make a difference to this country.

I sit here at Kafakumba listening to all of the activities. The saw mill is sawing, the truss factory is hammering, the dogs are barking and the puppies are whining, the birds are singing and squawking (especially Enright's African Grey parrot that speaks in several languages and perfectly imitates a car hooting its horn), the women who come to buy wholesale bananas are arguing over who should be served first, and my computer keyboard is clicking away. I wonder if we are so surrounded by “noise” that we miss the voice of God. I was watching a movie, “The Nativity Story,” and in it the children were learning the story of Elijah in the cave. God was not in the windstorm, the earthquake, or the fire but in the gentle whisper. Take a moment to sit quietly and listen for his call, even amid the noise and bustle of a busy day.

In His service,

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