



# Hope and Kindness Ministry Newsletter



November 2006

*Bringing a message of Hope and Kindness to Kenya*  
*Registered Charity No. 1108996*

## What on earth are we here for?

Our church in Redditch has recently been enjoying some teaching based on a book called "The purpose driven Life" (written by Pastor Rick Warren). The main purpose of this book is to help us find the answer to that question and at the same time help us to become more focused and better equipped to fulfil that purpose.

It was a question that challenged us, back in August 2002, during our very first month in Kosele. From time to time, overwhelmed by the level of poverty and desperate needs of so many children in just this small



corner of Kenya, it is a question that continues to challenge us. At such moments it is good to just stop and to look at the children we know. Children like 6 year old Wycliffe and 2 year old Collins. These are the children who were brought to our home in April this year suffering from serious neglect and physical abuse. You may remember that they had been "living" in the police station for over a week because there was nowhere else for them to go. In just 4 months these two boys have been transformed by the love and care they have received in their new home.

During the last year, two little girls, Vivian and Mary have also joined our "Kosele family." Vivian is just 8 years old. She was less than 6yrs when her mother and then her father became sick and



died. With no relatives to care for her she was taken from her father's funeral by a family who later passed her onto other "strangers." In this new "family" she was given plenty of work to do but was not allowed to go to school with the other children. She was frequently beaten and verbally abused until concerned neighbours reported the case to the Children's Officer. In our home she has received physical and emotional healing and, as you can see, has learned to smile, to laugh and play again.

Similarly, Mary's parents died when she was so young that she cannot remember their names or where they lived. Over the years she was passed between various family groups who used her for labour but did not allow her to go to school.

Eventually Mary ran away and was found begging on the streets in the local town of Oyugis. Although she is almost 12 years old, like so many of the children suffering from the effects of long term chronic malnutrition, she is very small for her age. Mary could not remember ever having a pair of shoes or even a pair of "flip flop sandals." Her bare feet and poor diet meant that she also came to us with severely scarred feet with deeply broken and infected skin which, 6 months later, is still proving difficult to heal. Both Vivian and Mary are loving their new home and love going to school.

The latest addition, 10 year old Isaac, brought himself to our home during our visit in August. His unmarried mother had died two years earlier. With no relatives to care for him he had been taken into the home of a "good samaritan." At

the beginning of this year that lady also died. Because Isaac was not a relative her family chased Isaac away. He walked back to the town of Oyugis and



spent several months begging at the homes of old neighbours and sleeping on the streets. Fortunately someone told him about our home.

Without our home it is very likely that Isaac and Mary would eventually have taken their chances on the streets of Kisumu. As our nearest city it is the place where many children in desperate situations run to, only to find themselves in an even harder and often more dangerous place. A place where they are often abused and where they quickly learn to abuse themselves in their only escape "sniffing glue."

Most of the children in our care have been brought to us by the District Children's Officer. Government workers operate in very difficult circumstances. They have the power to correct and where necessary arrest people who abuse children. However, when they have to remove children from abusive situations or find abandoned, orphaned children they have no finances or resources to provide the care they need.

Currently we are providing a safe and caring home and/ or food and schooling to just over 60 children. Sometimes it feels too much like a "drop in the ocean" but, thanks to Wycliffe, Collins, Vivian, Mary and Isaac we have the very best answer to that BIG question. Thank you for the part YOU play in making new beginnings possible.



# New school - urgently needed



For a long time now it has been our wish to build proper classrooms for our children's School. That **wish** has now become an urgent **need**.

These pictures, taken earlier in the year, show some of our children in their classrooms. Once the children sit in their seats it is difficult for them to get out again (some teachers I know would consider that highly advantageous!) but the reality is that there is often inadequate space for children to do their work and no chance of adding more children to the classrooms even though the largest class (in our largest room 15'x 9') has only 20 children. Since these pictures were taken we have had 5 more orphaned and abandoned children brought into our care by the local Children's Officer. We have squeezed them into the dormitories and squeezed them into the classrooms.

Subsequently we have come under significant pressure from the Children's Officer and the Local Education Inspectors to send our children to the local school, even though everyone acknowledges that our children are achieving far higher standards than any of our local schools. Both the trustees and the Kenyan "care team" believe that it would not be in the best interests of the children to send them "out" to school. The reasons for this are many. Firstly, when the Kenyan Government introduced free Primary

education in 2003 over 1 million children were suddenly added to the schools. Unfortunately the additional funding of teachers and resources did not follow them. Most schools have a teacher teaching a class of over 60 children and consequently it is becoming common practice for those parents who are able, to make payments to ensure that their child sits near the front and/or has their books marked. Children still have to pay for a uniform to be allowed into the school and they have to buy all their own books and writing materials. The school population has also changed so that there are now increasing numbers of children in school who have fathers living far away in the cities or who have widowed mothers often suffering from ill-health or who have lost both parents and are living with grandparents.

Consequently, although corporal punishment is now officially illegal in Kenya many teachers resort to caning the children to stay in control of these challenging circumstances. Many of the children who come into our care have already suffered serious "physical abuse" at the hands of "responsible" adults and many have arrived aged between 8 and 11 years with very little or no previous schooling at all. Last year a report on the "Kenyan Schools League Tables" stated that the schools in our District had the poorest

performance of all the schools in Kenya.

We hope, therefore, that you understand our resistance to using a local state school for the education of the children we have in our care. We also believe that building a full primary school is one of the best ways we can help many more of the most desperately needy local children. The three rooms that we are currently using for "the school" are being shared with local children (usually orphans living with grandparents or widowed mothers). These are children who would not otherwise be going to any school at all because their carers can barely keep them clothed and fed! Sadly we are all too well aware of many other children like these, within walking distance of our home and school, who are still not able to go to school.

During the next year we are determined to build at least 3 new classrooms. The good news is that during our summer visit we secured the payment and signed the paperwork that means we now own the two main dormitories, the "school house" and the bungalow used as an office by day and children's "sitting/play" room in the evening (also used to accommodate visitors.) A very unexpected donation has also secured the purchase of a new field that will become the children's new "play area." This means we can now use our current playing field to build the new classrooms. Thanks to the hard work of all our fundraisers here and the donation of £2000, that one of them has been able to raise from the company Npower, we will be able to start work on the first classroom early in the new year. It will cost

approx  
£3000 to  
build and  
furnish a  
good sized,  
strong and  
**permanent**  
classroom.



Judi Mott

## The power of twinning

Judi and I were in Kosele this summer and had a great time. We experienced the usual combination of up, down, up emotions. We got back together with a lot of old friends and made some new ones. We were challenged again by our own weaknesses and the size of the job we have to do in Kosele. Since coming back, in time to start the new school year in England, we have been building up our hopes for next year. Dreaming about what might be possible if we can build a new school in Kosele and praying that we really are following God's spirit in all our endeavours.

The more time we spend in Kosele the more we realise that we really have to make **connections** between here and there. Connecting the life that we live in the affluent part of the world and the life that is being lived right now in another, poorer, part of the world. It would be easy to say, "Well, how much can we connect - we live here, they live there. We do what we can. We give..." But saying that would miss the point. It's not a "we live here.." kind of thing. It's to do with our hearts and the belief that we can make meaningful connections.

I live in Astwood Bank, on the outskirts of Redditch. I've lived in Astwood Bank for 10 years, and I've lost count of the number of times I've read the "twinning" sign that says that Redditch is twinned with Mtwara. (Somewhat unusually Redditch is twinned with a town in Tanzania). Towns all over the United Kingdom are twinned with towns, I guess, all over the world, but especially in Europe. I remember twinning being a big thing in the seventies when I was a teenager. There were ceremonies. There were stories in the paper. There were cultural exchanges. There was talk of building community and healing wounds from the past. (is it a coincidence that the international version of "It's a Knockout" was very popular at about the same time?). Looking back on the seventies I can't help thinking that twinning was



a lost opportunity. Who knows, (or cares), who their town or village is twinned with any more? What did it achieve then? Is it making a difference now? I suspect the answer to all of these questions is "Not much!"

Twinning **could** achieve so much more. If you've read any of my previous articles in the newsletter you have probably noticed that I suffer from "bees in the bonnet" syndrome. The one that's been buzzing loudest most recently ties connection and twinning together. I haven't counted the number of houses in Astwood Bank, but I guess there are a few thousand. Doing some simple maths I wondered how much difference it would make twinning Astwood Bank and Kosele, initially financially. What if ... every household in Astwood Bank gave Hope and Kindness £5 every month to support the community in Kosele. £5 is, not very much over here. It could make a big difference over there! Multiplied by the number of households in Astwood Bank, (let's say 1,000) it could make a huge difference. There are of course issues to do with trust, (would that many people trust us to spend the money wisely and honestly?). Assuming we do what we say we do and make sure that we do it transparently just think, for a minute, about the possibilities of that kind of twinning.

While I've been doing this kind of maths I've also been thinking about the huge amounts of money that the United Nations, world banks and world governments have "invested" in Africa. When you spend time in a country like Kenya you can't help being struck by the ongoing inadequacy of the "big solutions" to the problems people live with. I don't want to rubbish all that is happening at a world level - at the level of headlines. I do want to suggest that

there **is** a powerful alternative.

Joseph Schumpeter's book "Small is Beautiful", (probably not coincidentally first published in the seventies), is a powerful testimony to the potential impact of working at the micro level. What we know and understand about the world beyond our shores is limited by the extent to which we are disconnected from it. By the belief that the problems are too big and too far away for us to make any difference - so it's not worth trying to, other than occasionally, (Live Aid, Children in Need etc).

But it doesn't have to be that way. Twinning is about affinity, not proximity. If you are reading this as one of our sponsors you may be feeling a little indignant - after all you are showing that you care by supporting the work in Kosele. Your hearts **are** in the right place and we thank God for you, (frequently). What I'm talking about is how great it would be if you could share your heart for being connected with somebody else. Developing a contagious heart for the orphans, widows and poor people that you are connected to in Kosele.

Fund raising is an important activity for us - without funding we can't do anything. I've spent some time over the years trying to think how to raise enough money to simply meet the monthly costs in Kosele. Thanks to the loyalty and generosity of our sponsors and supporters I've moved on, in my thinking, to think about how much more we could do if we got more people connected.

Elsewhere in this newsletter we have written about ambitious plans to build and run a Primary school in Kosele. The Bill and Melissa Gates foundation could probably build a school out of the small change that is available to them. I pray that they will set a trend amongst the great and the rich of the world. **But you don't have to be rich or famous to make that kind of difference. You just have to be willing, committed and connected.** And if enough connected communities develop, twinned at grassroots level by organisations like ours, I believe there is no limit to what can be achieved.

*Terry Mott*

## New Visitors and new sports equipment



This summer we were greatly encouraged by our visitors Becky Walton and Rachel Potter. They are both young teachers in England who gave up the chance of a "rest" in their school holiday to spend time with our children in Kosele. Thanks to a terrific fund raising event at St Peter's C of E School Droitwich, (where Becky's mum and Judi used to work), their time in Kosele was made extra exciting because of all the super sports equipment that the school had bought for us.

Their visit involved lots of new games but rounders proved to be a very popular first choice. St Peter's also raised enough money to buy all the new school books for our first Standard 4 class AND our first locally made school uniforms.

We can't wait for our next "Inspection!" ASANTE SANA Becky, Rachel and "all" at St Peter's.

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## The baldy man!

People have gone to great lengths to raise funds for Hope and Kindness since we started our work in 2002 but we have to take our hats off to Dave Kite for the fundraising stunt he pulled off for us.

Dave and his daughter Heidi visited Kosele as part of a team that Robin Baker took out in May 2005 and were both really moved by the experience. So much so that Dave



decided to do a sponsored head shave for us to raise funds. Egged on by young people who attend the Oasis Christian Centre youth club on a Friday night Dave went through this fund raising "hair experience" on Friday 3rd November.

As you can see from the picture above Dave had long blonde hair before having his head shaved. The transformation was started by Robin's wife Esther, an experienced



hair dresser and finished off by Richard Putt, one of the youth club leaders. Quite what the

young people made of it is anybody's guess, but they did go very quiet while it was happening!

Dave received a lot of sponsorship support from his family, friends and work colleagues at Corby Chilled in Alcester. Dave had to go into work straight after the event and assured us he had brought a woolly hat with him to keep warm.

A number of people took video of the event and we will be editing a copy together for Robin to take out to show the children in Kenya in January.



We are enormously grateful to Dave and his family for supporting us in this way. (Don't worry Kieran - your Dad's hair **will** grow back).



### What a difference 4 months make!

You read about Wycliffe and Collins earlier in this newsletter. These "before and after" pictures show what a difference love, care and good food can make to young children like these. Wycliffe and Collins are now well settled at Kosele and thriving. Your continuing support helps us to continue providing Wycliffe, Collins and all the other children the care they need. Thank you from us and from all of them for your support.