

Tanzanian Testimony



VOLUME 2; ISSUE 10

LORIEN KNAPP

OCTOBER 2008

Dear Friends,

I started this month with a little vacation. I had been going nonstop for 9 months, and realized that I needed a break to refresh my spirit. Certainly my homesickness was playing a part, but also I was overwhelmed by the rigors of the ministry here. My sister is working on an HIV program in neighboring Zambia, so she travels to the region several times a year. We spent a wonderful week together in Zambia, and I returned to Mwanza with my energy recharged.

Back in Mwanza, I kept busy with TCRC. I focused most of my energy on the very small boys who are always desperate for a little TLC. We spent quality time together getting haircuts, doing First Aid on all the wounds, and going to get new shoes. The older boys are in need of greater counseling, encouragement, and advice as they make their ways into adulthood. While the little ones also need these things, mostly they just want to hang out. They are most encouraged just by spending time together.

Each year there is a Missions Conference for all who are serving with AIM here in Tanzania. I was excited to go and be a part of this time of fellowship. The night before I was to fly to Dar es Salaam for the meeting, we had a big fire at TCRC. I delayed my flight for a day, and opted to return early so that I could be there for the boys during this difficult time. It was a struggle to leave them for the week, but I realized that I needed the spiritual renewal and the encouragement from fellow missionaries. I returned to Mwanza feeling closer to God and more able to minister to the boys. This next month will be quite a new adventure as we join together in healing.

PRAYER CONCERNS:

- ✓ **Praise God for the many way he has blessed us in the wake of the fire's devastation.**
- ✓ **Praise God I was able to get away this month for time of renewal and spiritual growth.**
- ✓ **Please pray for TCRC as we recover from the devastation of the fire and all that was lost. Pray that we are able to get sufficient support to rebuild and repair.**
- ✓ **Please pray for financial doors to be opened for the needs of ministry here in Mwanza.**
- ✓ **Pray for continued wisdom and discernment in all of my relationships and interactions.**

**If you wish to offer financial support, mail check to:
AIM: Finance PO Box 178 Pearl River NY 10965**

Checks should be made payable to AIM in order to be tax-deductible. Include a note stating my name, and the money will be credited to my account. Also note if this is for a project (vehicle project ID is 037850-010), or for general funding. Your support and encouragement is appreciated!

Mission Callout

There have been several responses concerning a mission trip to Tanzania for the summer of 2009 with my home Church, 1st Presbyterian Church of Anderson Indiana.

If you would be interested in joining that group, you are most welcome! Please send me an email letting me know of your interest and I will connect you with the Team Leader.

Please be prayerful about if God is calling you at this time!

Shoes

For many months boys have been coming to me asking for shoes. Shoes are a constant issue here, especially considering how active young boys are. Between the adventures and the normal wear and tear of daily activities, shoes go through quite a beating. Also the boys outgrow shoes quickly and need bigger ones. The youngest boys are always receiving the hand-me-downs though they are often quite worn. I now have a better understanding of the struggles of parents who try to keep their children's feet covered.

One day, a 10 year old boy gave me great wisdom as I was cleaning the wounds on his feet. He expressed the fact that he was coming to me for First Aid almost every day because of new foot wounds. If he had shoes he would not be injured so much. I agreed with his logic, but explained how difficult it is to buy shoes for so many boys. He reminded me of a certain type of shoe that is available here. The great recycling program of East Africa involves turning old tires into new shoes. The shoes are called *Katambuga*, which translates as a shoe you can use to *cross the desert*...probably because they are strong and have built-in tread. These shoes are very inexpensive and are made right on the spot to fit your own foot.

I began taking the boys in groups to go get new *Katambuga*. Sixty of the boys had gone with me and were proudly sporting their new shoes when the tragedy of the fire came. A few of the boys were able to rescue their shoes, but most of those tire shoes, which were strong enough for the desert, were not strong enough for the flames. The sad looks on the faces of the boys was enough to make one cry as they brought the remains of their shoes, evidence of the unforgiving fire.

I told them we would start from scratch and return to buy the shoes again. So once more we are a community of bare feet. Sadly it was not only sandals which were lost, but also school shoes and those are quite a bit more expensive. *Pole Pole* (slowly), with God's help we will cover the feet again! The boys have become experts in the area of patience, and they constantly teach me more. Please keep these many feet in your prayers! J

During my week in Zambia I spent some time learning about my sister's work. I observed some training sessions aimed to help reduce infant mortality and prevent the spread of HIV from mother to child during birth. It was all very educational and inspiring. Mostly though, I was greatly blessed to have sisterly time together. Having her as an attentive ear and a source of wisdom and love was really uplifting.

When I first arrived in Zambia, I was welcomed by her colleagues and members of her project. They greeted me with warm song and dance which was so lovely that it brought tears to my eyes. When they learned about my work in Tanzania they were very interested to know more details, and when they learned that I had come as a Christian and a missionary they erupted into a new gospel song thanking God. I wear a cross around my neck, and I had more comments about that necklace than I would have imagined. There is a strong Christian presence in Zambia. People were all too eager to ask if I was saved and reborn. The Zambians were lovely warm people and I understood why they have had such a deep impact on my sister in her work.

Of course we also found time for adventures, but didn't get into too much trouble...as Knapp girls are prone to do. We spent a day hiking around Victoria Falls. Since it is the dry season, much of the water is absent and you can walk across the top of the falls! We ran into a man from Zimbabwe who was selling money from his country. The 100 billion dollar bill is now worth a few cents, and the government has decided to remove all of the extra zeros in a few months. Many people are excited to purchase the old currency as a souvenir. It was sobering to see a man selling money in order to make money. It is just a reminder of how unstable so many African countries are, and how creative people must be in order to survive and support their families. In the picture below, Zambia is the cliff on the right; Zimbabwe is the one behind me on the left.

It is remarkable to think that two sisters from the US could end up working across the world in neighboring countries. I think we are closer in proximity here in Africa that we were in the States. God has quite a sense of humor!



FROM THE ASHES...

September was a hard month for me. October began as a month of renewal but still I was at a low point in many ways. I felt like I was carrying a large load... burdens too great for me to hold because I did not have the strength. God tells us to give him our load so that He can carry it for us, but sometimes in our human experience our loads are so heavy that we feel unable to give them away. Sometimes I get into a fix-it mode where I imagine I can solve the troubles as if they were equations, though truly HE alone has that power.

The ministry with the kids is challenging because of the emotional wear. Each day I encounter stories and situations that are difficult beyond my comprehension. It is not always easy to offer encouragement and hope in the midst of such affliction. I see now that over time I was storing these concerns in my "baggage" because I didn't know how to give them to God. I felt like Atlas with the world on my shoulders at a time when I was most weak.

Then the fire came, forcing me to refocus and get on my knees and cry out to God to help us in our desperation. I could not bow down to Him while carrying a load; I had to give it away first. Also, it would be difficult to reach out to the boys to help lift them up, if my hands were still full. As the fire burned through our dormitory, erasing the presence of clothes, shoes, and mattresses, it also burned through my burdens allowing me to come before our Maker as a vulnerable child. I found that I couldn't focus on the struggles so much, but for the sake of sanity I had to look at our blessings. The fire was a grounding experience for me as I recounted His provision: God had mercy on the boys, and there were no deaths or serious injuries...to imagine losing any one of these precious children was an unbearable thought. Certainly there was great sadness because of the destruction and loss, but it could have been so much worse.

On the night of the fire I had a talk with one of the boys and he told me, "Fire is a very bad thing." I agreed that fire can be bad sometimes, but I reminded him that it can also be very good. It gives us warmth, allows us to cook and purify our water, and also it gives us light in the darkness. I am grateful that he allowed this conversation to come about, because it is really important to remember the place that fire has in our lives. Rather than focus on the ways that it can be harmful, I began contemplating the idea of a cleansing fire. Occasionally a farmer will use fire to burn a field to prepare it for new growth. The fire removes the bad plants so that the new growth can be stronger. Fire is also used in welding to join two strong pieces of metal together so that they form one solid piece.

Our fire could be seen at as a destroyer, or we could choose to look at it in a healing light. The fire burned through many things, but we have been building on the most solid foundation, the word of God. Now we have a new layer of sediment on our strong base, and from the ashes a new field of plants will grow and the roots will be deeper. We have a new reason to be united together, to join as one body as we grow and heal from these wounds. Sometimes we must become very weak so that we may be given strength. Our God is a creator, and a master designer. I know that He will bless us as He continues in His creation work with each of these children and staff members at TCRC. I am excited to see the ways he changes us in the coming months as we grow and become more saturated with His Spirit.

Enjoying the boys

These kids never stop entertaining me with their ingenuity and cleverness. In light of our destructive experiences of the month, I thought I would share some moments of creation and creativity with you.



A stick and a bent piece of wire: a perfect mango picker. Most boys throw rocks at the fruits to knock them down, or they climb the tree to pick them by hand. This young man decided to make a tool instead!

They designed a clever prank: a bunch of mangos is tied together into a booby-trap. The boys tell an unsuspecting friend to come and look at the ground, and then the mangos fall to surprise him. The boy in the back is controlling the mango string.



The boys love to catch birds. They will keep their new feathery friends for the day and return them to their homes in the evening. Forget bird-watching, they bring new species for me to see all the time!!!



A bread bag on the head is a perfect hat on a rainy day...after all you don't want your hair to get messed up!

1 Peter 5: 6 - 10

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."