

Spring 2011 Update



Agape
Children's Ministry

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Habits of Joy

"Lord, please watch over Old Michael and New Michael."

~Connor and Ireland Gibbs

Every month, every week, and every day, that genuine and heartfelt petition is included in my children's bedtime prayer routine.

Current estimations reveal there are more than 150 million street children in the world today. Located on nearly every continent, every country, and every large city, Kisumu, Kenya is no exception. With the Lord's gracious provision, Agape continues to bring its ministry of **Rescue, Redemption, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration** to the lives of hundreds of Kisumu street boys.

Rev. Ben Patterson, Campus Pastor at Westmont College and author of *He Has Made Me Glad*, uniquely illustrates and labels the way we, as Christians, spread our sails as "habits of joy." The four "R's" are indeed Agape's habit of joy!

But did you know there's a way in which you can actively participate, alongside Agape, in that "habit of joy?" The Agape's Child Sponsorship Program is how!

Almost every Christian in the United States has been exposed, at one time or another, to a child sponsorship program. However, no two programs are alike and I would like to introduce you to the uniqueness of Agape's program. For those of you who already partner alongside Agape through the Child Sponsorship Program, this might be old news, but we also think it might serve as a sweet reminder of why you chose this sponsorship program in the first place.

The Agape Child Sponsorship Program is designed to connect each Agape boy with a loving and supportive sponsor or group of sponsors who are committed to (1) praying for that child on a daily basis and (2) providing financial assistance to cover the expenses involved in the care, schooling, and assistance that Agape provides. For boys living on both Agape's main campus in Kisumu, as well as those who are being taught at Agape's vocational training center ("The Farm"), it costs Agape approximately \$200 per month to care for each child. Therefore, Agape asks sponsors to contribute a minimum of \$30 each month towards the sponsorship of their child. Agape will often assign multiple sponsors to each boy in order to fully cover the total cost, but will never assign more sponsors than is required.

Money contributed to the Agape Child Sponsorship Program is used solely for the costs related to directly caring for the boys at Agape and The Farm. Agape's overhead expenses in the United States are fully covered by contributions to the General Fund, which means absolutely no percentage of the Child Sponsorship Program funds are used to help cover the ministry's cost of overhead.

~Kris Gibbs, Sponsorship Coordinator

Sponsors learn about their sponsorship child in two ways. First, Agape provides each sponsor with an initial photo and profile of their sponsorship child. This profile includes important details such as the boy's name, age, and background, as well as special information about his personality, interests, challenges, and hopes for the future. Then, at least twice each year, Agape sends sponsors an update on their sponsorship child that includes information about their boy's progress in school, after-school activities, special achievements, as well as any changes in his status, such as graduation from our Primary School, steps towards possible reintegration with his family, etc. More importantly, each update always includes prayer requests specific to the sponsor's child. What an amazing and personal way to truly "pray for each other" (James 5:16).



So, you're probably still wondering who are Old Michael and New Michael. In 2005, our family began sponsoring an Agape boy named Michael O. ("Old Michael"). Our children, Connor and Ireland, even had the unique opportunity to travel alongside my husband and I on a trip to Kisumu, Kenya to visit Agape Children's

ministry. What a delight it was for Connor and Ireland to widen their "habit of joy" by meeting, playing, and laughing alongside Michael. Just last year, through the work of the Agape Reintegration Team, Michael was reunited with his mother and now attends boarding school where he is finishing his elementary education. Although Connor and Ireland grew accustomed to the idea of Michael living at Agape and interacting with their grandparents (Blake and Esther), it was time to (1) embrace the importance of **Reintegration**, which the Lord graciously afforded Michael and (2) relish in the fact that our family had the pleasure of sponsoring another boy at Agape.

Connor was fortunate enough to travel back to Kisumu this past summer and hand-picked our new sponsorship child, "New Michael"—a darling, young boy who had recently arrived to the Agape campus. "Lord, please watch over Old Michael and New Michael."



As more and more of our boys are being reunited with their families through the work of our Reintegration Team, we are currently re-evaluating how our Child Sponsorship Program can best serve both our boys and our sponsors. If you are looking for a new way to express your "habits of joy," please indicate on the reply card that you'd like more information about the Agape Child Sponsorship Program.

A Special Message from our Founder: Darla Calhoun

What a joy it is to be sharing in this quarterly newsletter. I couldn't be more thrilled about the additional missionaries we will have on our team during this 18th year of ministry. Thinking about all God has done through the years brings to mind all He has taught us. We surely had our struggles in the early years, but working through the problems gave us some insights and a realistic foundation to build on. I would like to create a series of articles in the coming quarterly newsletters sharing some of these insights. Today let's look at one of these.

Lesson one: Not every child can be rescued.



An African man once told me, "To work with street children one must have the skin of a rhino, the heart of a dove, and the patience of a Tibetan monk." While that thought still makes me smile, I have to admit his advice was comforting many times. We have to accept the built-in heartache that comes with this work. No matter how hard we try, there will always be a few children who do not respond to what we have to offer. A child who seems to be making good progress may suddenly leave Agape, go back to sniffing glue, and refuse any further help. One lesson I've had to learn is that God requires only my obedience. He does not hold me responsible for the choices others make. I like to fix things—especially unhappy children—but sadly, that is not always possible.

Patrick was one of the first boys to come to Agape. He was about 10 years old when I met him with a group of other street boys. One day I received word that Patrick had been hit by a car and was in a local government hospital. His face and head were swollen from the impact. However, my friend and I were able to talk with him, and Patrick prayed to receive Christ that day. He was released and came to Agape, and seemed to blend in well. We soon realized he loved to sing, and he would even lead songs during devotions. We were able to locate his mother working in the tea fields of Kericho. When she was called to see her son, she looked like she was seeing a ghost. She told us she thought this boy was dead. Patrick was one of 11 children (all by different men), and his mother could not remember the name of Patrick's father. She made it clear Patrick could not stay there with her. Although there were positive aspects of his behavior and he was likeable, there were also setbacks. For example, Patrick would frequently lose his temper and become violent. Yet, he could never accept responsibility for his actions. Eventually, he became so unruly and disruptive with this antisocial behavior, we had to let him go for the sake of the other children. This was a very painful decision to make and we had to accept that all the love we had to give was not enough to heal Patrick's deep wounds. The best we could do was to stay in touch with him and continue to pray for him. We still do.



The good news is the Lord loves these children far more than any of us can imagine. The boys have told me the very fact they are still alive proves God's love for them. The Bible tells us that the angels of these children always see the face of the Father. What a wonderful consolation.

It is definitely worth all the hard work and energy it takes. What a joyous day it will be when we're together in heaven surrounded by the radiant faces of former street children!

We're Grateful that:

- Our Agape boys on the main campus are doing well and growing physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.
- Don and Hughena Brenneman and Steve and Betty Bishop are safely at our Agape Vocational Training Center and their ministry is having a mighty impact in the lives of all of our boys there, and on the surrounding community of Matoso as well.
- The January team did a marvelous job erecting our new Dining Hall and Kitchen. Work remains to be done to complete everything to operate the kitchen, but the facility is already being used for our Foundations and our Orientation classes and for our Sunday morning worship services.
- Steve and Dianne Warn are both recovering well from their surgeries in Costa Rica.
- God has blessed our reintegration program with so many children returned to their families.

Attention Fellow Knitters!

Join us in knitting some sweaters to keep our boys warm on cool nights! Details can be found at: www.ravelry.com/groups/sweaters-for-agape-africa
You may also email Lisa Kjeldgaard for more details: Lisa@agapechildren.org

Missionary Highlight: Steve and Dianne Warn

Though Dianne is from New York, and Steve is from California, they found God chose to bring them together after many wasted years in what they plainly call, "sin." The Warns shared that the Lord first had to remove their sins as far as the east is from the west and cast them into the deepest sea. Both Steve and Dianne had a desire to read and study the Bible. They attended Modesto Junior College. Dianne then went on to Fresno State to get her teaching degree in Child Development, as well as Simpson Bible College. Steve went to Multnomah School of the Bible. Their heart for ministry and reaching out to the lost and hurting only grew as their marriage began and God blessed them with children. Steve and Dianne also gained the essential skills of discipleship training and equipping with their own four children, three boys and one daughter.



The ministry years began while serving at a home for troubled boys and the local Juvenile Hall. Steve and Dianne spent 20 years of ministering in Department of Corrections facilities, after-care programs, and housing, feeding and discipling those coming out of prison. In 1995, Steve and Dianne left the United States with four teenagers and headed to language school in Costa Rica. Motivated by God's love and a burden for Spanish speaking people, they planned on living in Costa Rica for one year. God kept them there for 10 years to work with an international youth group, serve again in prison ministry, and minister in La Carpio, a Nicaraguan refugee area.

In 2005, Steve and Dianne committed to serve with Agape for two years in areas of outreach and "wherever the greatest need might be." Since you're reading this in 2011, you can see that God has continued to keep the Warns blessing the boys in Kisumu. They would say that, "God developed in us the giftings and heart for the street boys." This year Steve and Dianne are transitioning their ministry focus from outreach to a combination of outreach and discipleship on the Agape Kisumu Campus.

Over the past two months, the Warns have been trusting God for physical help with personal health issues. They left Kenya in January for a trip to their beloved Costa Rica to visit for the first time their new granddaughter and also receive some very inexpensive medical treatment that would be difficult to receive in the United States. Please pray that God will continue strengthening them in this time of recovery. One of the Warns missionary hero's prayers is: "Send me anywhere, only go with me, lay any burden on me, only sustain me, sever any ties but the ties that bind me to your service and heart."

Steve and Dianne will return to Kenya, Lord-willing, in May. They say they are learning a divine secret; "Cast all your care upon Him; for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). They desire to return and see imparted on the hearts of the Agape children a spiritual love for the Lord Jesus Christ, helping to hide His word in their hearts. They return with a more purposeful determination to be involved with the Kisumu Main Campus, making disciples of staff as well as the students. The Warns say, "Go and make disciples is what the Lord said to be about, and we hope to see many young men come out strong for the Lord and making disciples themselves."



Please Join us in Prayer for:

- Chris and Tammy Page and their four children as they continue raising their financial support and prepare for their move to Kenya in August.
- Eric and Lisa Kjeldgaard and their eight children as they begin fund raising and making preparations to spend a year in Kenya working alongside Chris and Tammy on the main Agape campus in Kisumu.
- Continued recovery for Steve and Dianne Warn as they prepare to return to Kenya in mid-May.
- Quick approval from the Kisumu City Council as they consider our request for land and buildings to house our new Transition Center.
- More opportunities to share Christ with our boys, with children at the Remand Center (Juvenile Hall), and with the families of children we are working to reintegrate.
- The Lord's continued provision for Agape's financial needs and for the financial needs of all of our missionaries.



Agape Contribution Opportunities

Nearly 80% of the money we send to Africa to carry out our ministry to street children comes from our General Fund. Support for the General Fund is one of the most direct ways to make a difference in Agape's ability to do the work the Lord has called us to. In addition to the General Fund, please consider making a tax-deductible gift to one or more of the current specific needs at Agape:

- Sponsor one of our five Reintegration Team members. To cover the cost of salary, benefits, and a portion of the cost to reintegrate a child, such as school fees, uniforms, school lunch program, etc. \$250 per month
- Sponsor one of our ten Primary School Teachers. To cover the cost of salary and benefits \$150 per month
- Fund development of our rain water collection and distribution system on our main campus, including three 5,000 liter storage tanks, associated plumbing (valves, pipe, etc.), and labor \$2,600
- Fund construction of a retaining wall to help stem erosion on the main campus. Materials to include cement, wall stones, re-bar, sand, gravel, and labor \$3,500
- Fund remodeling of our old dining hall and kitchen into administrative offices. Labor and materials \$4,200
- Purchase Bibles for our boys and staff \$800 (\$170 given to-date)
- Fund remodel and fencing for our proposed new Transition Center. Labor and materials \$15,000 (\$250 given to-date)

If any item is over-funded, excess funds will be directed towards one of the other items or to the General Fund.



In Closing

~Blake Gibbs, Director

Moving back and forth between America and Kenya as often and for the lengths of time that we do, can present some interesting challenges adjusting each time we transition from one "home" to the other. After nearly eight months in Kenya, we have to admit that

life there seems more "normal" than life here in Modesto does.

However, one of the blessings of those transitions is the perspective we often gain. When we are in Kenya, we are able to look at our lives in America with a different point of view and to better see how the Lord is changing our priorities and how He is gently drawing us closer to Himself.

Coming back to the United States this time has helped us to reflect more fully on the amazing things the Lord has done and is doing in and through Agape. We give Him honor and glory and praise for all He is accomplishing.

On a spiritual level, both on our main campus in Kisumu and at Agape's Vocational Training Center in Matoso, we see God opening hearts, bringing forgiveness and healing. We see a greater interest in His Word. We see concern for others and a growing willingness to help. Thank you, Lord!

The Lord is blessing our Outreach Ministry to children remaining on the streets and to those held at the Remand Center (Juvenile Hall). In the month of February alone, 22 boys were brought into Agape. God is good!

The Lord has enabled our Reintegration Team to successfully reintegrate nearly 250 children back into their families, including nine girls from the Remand Center. Praise the Lord!

Physically, our Kisumu campus is being literally transformed through the efforts of hard working short-term teams and a group of dedicated laborers on site. The interiors of both of our dorms are freshly painted. New curtains have been hung. Our new Dining Hall has been erected. The rain water collection system is partially operational. A new shamba (vegetable garden) has been planted and our boys are learning agriculture. The new guard house has been completed. Painting of our Primary School building is nearly finished. And the list goes on.

Thank you, Lord, for all you are doing and for allowing us the privilege of seeing it happen and of being in the midst of it all.

Coming in the Summer 2011 Update:

- Lesson Two of Ministry from Darla Calhoun, our Founder
- Agape missionary highlight featuring Steve and Betty Bishop
- An interview with John Mwalo, a member of our Kenyan staff
- Insights from an Agape Board Member

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Mailing Address:

Name: _____

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I am interested in learning more about Agape's Child Sponsorship Program. Please send me more information.

Ministry Support For:

Reintegration Team \$ _____

Primary Teacher \$ _____

Rain Water Collection \$ _____

Retaining Wall \$ _____

Remodel \$ _____

Bibles \$ _____

Transition Center \$ _____

General Fund \$ _____

Total \$ _____

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