



"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better."  
Ephesians 1:17 (NIV)

Greeting! We hope you are doing well and that the Lord has gotten the first couple of months of the New Year off to a good start for you and your loved ones.

February was a month of major transition for us. It began in Kenya with us scurrying around like crazy trying to finish (or at least move along) some of the many projects we have going on the main campus in Kisumu. Work on some of the projects will continue in our absence. Other projects we had to put on hold until we return. We are grateful to the Lord for all of the work that has been accomplished over the past several months, but are already anxious to return so we can get back at it.

The week before we left Kenya we made a quick two-day trip to The Farm, Agape's Vocational Training Center in Matoso. Matoso is about a four-and-a-half-hour drive from Kisumu. We wanted to be able to spend a little time with Don and Hughena Brennemen and with our good friends Steve and Betty Bishop.

The Brennemens are doing an excellent job picking up the reigns from Tom and Marg Tucker and taking over as The Farm's Directors. They love being there and have wonderful hearts for our boys. We are delighted they are there and are grateful to the Lord for the work they are doing and for the blessing they are to us, the staff, and the students.

Steve and Betty Bishop and their grandson, Dalton, arrived in Kenya just before New Years and are staying until the first part of April. They are at The Farm to help and assist Don and Hughena and to minister to the spiritual needs of our boys and staff. The Lord is also giving them many opportunities to minister to people in the surrounding community.

It is amazing to see how God prepares and equips people like the Brennemens and the Bishops and then places them in ministry with just the skills and experience needed for the job. We thank the Lord for these dedicated couples.

### Darla's Corner

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine...I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit."  
John 15:4-5a (NIV)

Christ's Church of the Valley, here in Arizona, is having an emphasis called 28 Days of Prayer. Our creative staff even constructed a "Wailing Wall" similar to the one in Israel. That wall is the only remaining fragment of the original Jewish Temple and has become a sacred place where people of differing faiths go to pray. We know God answers prayer because Agape has made tremendous strides in the last 17 years in spite of many challenges.



Occasionally someone will ask, "What made you decide to go to Kenya to work with street boys?" I always have to smile because I had no intention of doing that! Instead, I thought I was going to Kenya to teach preventative health care in a rural village as part of a team needing a nurse. However, as I met with street boys and saw firsthand how they were being chased around

town like little stray dogs, I had to do some deep soul searching. I knew this was not the way God intended children to live and it was heartbreaking to watch. At one point, I even told the Lord if He would let me help get a few of them out of the street, I'd be the happiest missionary He ever had. However, changing directions in Kenya was a very difficult decision to make. Friends and relatives prayed for me though some wondered if I'd had too much African sun! It eventually became clear that reaching out to these neglected and abandoned children was something I needed to act upon. They needed to know they had a Heavenly Father who loved and cared for them. They were like an "unreached people group." But I could only take the risk if I knew God was in my corner. "No branch standing by itself can bear fruit" (translation mine). I read John 15 several times and was grateful not to be alone. Later, a friend said, "Darla, if you're not careful, you're going to have an organization here." At that point, I hadn't even given the idea a thought. I'm sharing this personal story to let you know that God is the real founder of Agape! I just had a part to play and will always count it a tremendous privilege to be part of such a wonderful ministry!

Over the years, there has been much prayer for Agape. This includes the boys and staff, our missionaries, administrators, and financial supporters. The Lord has kept this ministry growing and I believe it's because of people who care enough to pray. I know everyone associated with Agape, especially the children, would love to thank you personally. In fact they also pray for you! The prayers of these boys are fervent and sincere and must make the angels rejoice! So please know we do appreciate your sacrifice of time and energy. And remember God always honors our obedience! So thank you again, and may the Lord richly bless you for blessing Agape.

In His love, *Darla*



Within a few days of returning to Kisumu from The Farm, it was time to pack up and say our good-byes. Even though we look forward to coming home to family and friends, it is always difficult for us to leave the boys and our staff. We love them and they are an important part of our lives. We already miss them, but know we will be heading back before long, so that helps.

Our trip home was much different than usual. Rather than flying from Nairobi to London and then on to San Francisco, instead we flew from Kisumu to Nairobi, and then on to Mumbai (formerly Bombay), India. From Mumbai we flew all the way across India to the east coast, along the Bay of Bengal, to the city of Vizag.



We travelled to Vizag for the wedding of Kara Shackett, the daughter of our dear, long time friends Jeff and Vickie Shackett. We were honored to be invited to this very special occasion. Kara married a remarkable



young Indian man who is a church pastor. It was so much fun meeting and getting to know Sukumar and his family; dashing around this crowded, bustling city on a number of errands in preparation for the wedding; and, of course, attending the wedding itself.

After nearly a week in India, we flew back to Mumbai, arriving in time for our 2:15 a.m. (yes, 2:15 in the morning!) flight to London. We coordinated our flights with Jeff and Vickie's return to the States so we could fly together. The four of us spent a very enjoyable afternoon and overnight in London and then flew to Los Angeles the next day.

As we are writing this newsletter, we have not yet gotten home to Modesto. We are spending a few days with Tyler and Kris and the kids in southern California before we head home on the train.

We have to admit it has been a bit of a challenge for us as we begin adjusting to life back here in America. We have been in Africa long enough that life there seems much more "normal" than it does here. We are really looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible while we are here, but please forgive us if we sometimes act a little like we don't quite belong here.

Our stay in the States will be short and very, very busy. Not only will we be trying to get caught up with friends and family, but we may be traveling to Hawaii, Wyoming, and Nebraska as well. We'll have time with our new missionary couples Chris and Tammy Page and Eric and Lisa Kjeldgaard; hold an Agape Board Meeting; and meet with a number of Agape's financial supporters.

Please pray for us as we settle in and as we squeeze so many things into our schedule. We need wisdom from the Lord to know what we should do and what should wait for another time. We need energy and strength to relish and enjoy each encounter He has for us while we are here.

Thank you for praying for us, for encouraging us, and for supporting us with your finances. Without them we wouldn't have the joy and privilege of being missionaries. Thank you!

Blessings to you,

*Blake & Esther Gibbs*

#### **Praise Reports:**

- The Lord's protection during our travels in Africa and to India, England, and home to the States.
- The boys at Agape continue to do well.
- For our dedicated, talented missionaries and national staff.

#### **Prayer Requests:**

- Travelling mercies while we are here in the United States.
- The Page and Kjeldgaard families as they raise their support and prepare for full-time ministry with Agape.
- Increased opportunities to share about Agape with individuals and churches.
- Help for the teams planning on coming to Agape this year.
- The financial needs of the ministry and all of our missionaries.

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