



"Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unending love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things."

Psalm 107:8,9 (NIV)

Life has been a whirlwind for us this past month, catching as much time as we can with family and friends. Our heartfelt thanks to all of you who have gone out of your way to make us feel welcome and at home. Your friendly smiles, warm hugs, and words of welcome and encouragement have blessed us more than you will ever know. We are grateful to you and to the Lord for your part in our lives.



Being away from all that is happening at Agape in Kenya has heightened our awareness of how wonderfully the Lord has blessed Agape with a remarkable national staff. We

currently have more than 60 full-time national workers. (We need that many because we operate 24/7.) They are dedicated, talented people who use their knowledge and skills each day to minister to the children God has placed in our care. They are teachers, cooks, guards, house parents, outreach workers, and members of our Reintegration Team. They are bookkeepers, maintenance workers, office staff, and a nurse.

On our main campus in Kisumu, the staff is led by an exceptional Management Team—five individuals we have come to greatly love, admire, and respect. They are Lebaus Onyango, our Project Manager; Raymond Nyakiti, our Home Administrator; Johnstone Endekwa, Head Master of our Primary School; Njeri Margaret, our Bookkeeper and Manager of the Office and Kitchen; and John Mwalo, Manager of our Reintegration Team. We are grateful to

Darla's Corner

The song, "Find Us Faithful," written by Steve Green, is amazingly powerful and reminds me of our Canadian missionaries, Tom and Marg Tucker. Their lives of devotion and commitment exemplify the words of the chorus:

"Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful; May the fire of our devotion light their way; May the footprints that we leave; Lead them to believe; And the lives we live inspire them to obey; Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful."

Tom, a seasoned truck driver, and his wife Marg, an emergency room nurse, felt God calling them into missions. In 1991, despite the fact that they had just built a new home, they answered that call by going to Kenya to do church planting and evangelism under Elim Mission. They were well established by the time I met them in 1997. Agape needed another missionary couple to head up some vocational training for our older boys, and I had heard there was nothing Tom could not do! Tom and Marg weren't able to move to Kisumu, but they knew "just the place" in Matoso. They had been working in the fishing village there and knew of beautiful acreage right on the edge of Lake Victoria.

The Elim Mission graciously seconded the Tuckers to us and we were able to purchase 17 acres of land very reasonably. Then, in the year 2000, Tom and Marg began building the first house. This house became their home/office and a guest house for visitors. But money and materials were in short supply, so Tom organized a crew of locals to help make clay bricks. Over the next year, they handmade 12,000 bricks. Of these bricks, 7,000 were used to build the house. The men worked and everything was carefully designed for practicality and conservation. By 2001, the Tuckers were ready to move in and take the first boy for training.

During this time they also did ministry and often showed the Jesus Film in the local language to various villages. Tom would use his truck to carry the generator and hung a sheet from poles to provide a screen. Many Kenyans came to Christ as a result.



People may wonder why anyone would want to live in such primitive conditions with all the bugs and snakes. But Tom tells a story that fully demonstrates God's protection. One day, he was moving a stack of 40 wooden pallets and could only lift one at a time. When he came to the last pallet, something dark caught his attention. He soon realized a good-sized black mamba had been curled up right next to where his sandaled feet stood each time he lifted the other 39 trays! First came shock, then relief, then thankfulness for a personal miracle. That poisonous snake could have struck at any time, but it didn't! Tom concluded his story by pointing out the safest place to be is in the center of God's will!

Since those early days, the Lord has been faithful and the work has grown. We now have 25-30 young men training in masonry, carpentry, mechanics, and agriculture. These former street boys, as well as young men from the community, have assisted in building and furnishing the other cottages on the compound. They are trained in life skills and Bible study as they prepare for national trade exams. To date, every young man from our center who has taken these difficult exams has passed. We have a wonderful staff and a great God!

A few months ago, Tom and Marg felt they needed to go back to their original Suna Mission in Migori, about an hour away from The Farm. Elim has appointed Tom the Project Coordinator there. Marg has a gift for hospitality like few other women, and part of her job will involve preparing for visiting teams. It was difficult to read their resignation letter, but we know we will always share the joy of their years working with Agape. And we are thankful for the way they have developed The Farm and vocational training center. They were uniquely qualified for this job and we have ultimate respect and admiration for their example. They have clearly been faithful to the work God called them there to do.

"Oh, may all who come behind us find us faithful!" *Darla*



have them as our co-laborers for Christ at Agape.

The Management Team meets regularly, usually once each week, to share the status of the various departments operating on the campus, to discuss how we can better minister to our boys, and to outline plans for the coming weeks and months. When we are in Kisumu, we attend the Management Meetings.

At a Management Meeting not long before we left, John Mwalo told a wonderful story as he reported on the activities of his Reintegration Team for the prior week. We want to share portions of that story with you with the hope it will bless you as much as it did us. It is so exciting to see God's hand working to bring help and hope where there is none.

Agape had rescued twin brothers from the streets and brought them to live on our main campus. As is our normal procedure, not long after they arrived the Reintegration Team scheduled a visit to the boys' family in their rural village.



Upon reaching the home, John saw immediately that the family was extremely impoverished. The hut the family lived in was falling down and large portions of the roof had simply collapsed. The two boys had run to the streets because the family didn't have enough food to feed them and

their younger brothers and sisters.

Though they had a family who loved them, and even though the boys wanted to stay, John was unwilling to leave them in an environment where they could not receive proper care. He returned the boys to live at Agape.

However, after that initial visit, John went back to the family. He shared the Gospel with them and began discussing with the father how he could improve the family's living conditions. One of John's biggest concerns was the dilapidated hut in which the family was living. When it rained, there was no way for the family to stay dry and warm.

On one of his visits, John told the father to begin making a new hut with sticks and mud. The father said he was willing, but he didn't have money to pay for a roof. John told him to build the walls and to trust in the Lord for the roof.

Subsequent visits showed that the father was true to his word. He built the walls of a new hut. When he pointed out to John that it didn't have a roof, John again told him to trust the Lord.

(This is where the fun part comes in as the Lord works in ways we can't begin to fully understand or appreciate!)



When the work team with members from Shelter Cove Community Church and Calvary Chapel in Modesto, CA came last October, one of their projects was putting new roofs on the two dorms on our main campus. To do that, they had to first remove the existing mabati (corrugated metal) roofs, leaving us with a pile of used sheets of mabati.

In Kenya, mabati, new or used, is a little like gold. Many of our staff members

begged us to sell some of the sheets to them. And we did so. However, John asked if he could have some of the sheets for the family he had been working with. Yes!

John tied the mabati sheets to the top of our Agape Land Rover and took them to the family's village. When he arrived and presented the mabati to the family, the father wept with joy and gratitude. He said he now knew how much he could trust God to care and provide for his family.

In the meantime, the boys had been lobbying with John almost every time they saw him on the campus. They wanted to go home despite the family's poverty. They explained that they had decided it wasn't fair for them to be at Agape, getting food, clothing, medical care, and schooling while their brothers and sisters didn't have these things. They wanted to go home to be with their family so they could help.

Today, the boys are living with their family. They are attending a local school and Agape is helping with uniforms, books, and school fees for them and for the other children in the family. The Reintegration Team continues to follow-up to see how the entire family is doing and to mentor and disciple them in their walk with the Lord.

We are so grateful the Lord is writing stories like this one in the lives of so many of our Agape children and their families. And we thank Him every day for letting us be part of it. Because of your faithful prayers and financial support you are a part of it, too.

Thanks for praying for us and for giving to help support our ministry with Agape.

We love you,

Blake & Esther Gibbs

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