



**Darla's Corner**

"Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good." Psalm 106:1

Perhaps it was the opportunity to meet our new missionary couples in person...perhaps it was the joy of seeing our friends Steve, Dianne, Blake, and Esther again...perhaps it was the elation of having all of us, including two new Board Members, under the roof of our new Modesto Agape headquarters...but this Board meeting was one of the most special we have ever had!

John Britton, our newest Board Member, was in Kisumu in January to help construct the dining hall and do roof repairs. He commented on what a blessing it was to be with the boys and that they had captured his heart. He is also excited about the direction Agape is taking.



Eric and Lisa Kjeldgaard currently live with their eight children in Oakdale, California—a short distance from headquarters. They have already lifted some administrative duties from Blake's shoulders, and Lisa will be taking on speaking engagements this summer. They plan to spend 10 months in Kisumu and are scheduled to fly out December this year. Lisa will be homeschooling their children while Eric will be assisting Blake and working with our staff.



Chris and Tammy Page, who have also been introduced in previous letters, are happy to report they are nearing their goal in support raising and have purchased airline tickets for their August departure. During the meeting Tammy spoke up to say they feel so privileged to be able to share this mission experience with their children. It will be exciting to have 12

more American children to play with each other and to interact with our Agape boys. The word "privileged" came up frequently as several in the room characterized their opportunity to work with our street children. We so appreciate the long-term commitment of these couples and their combined experience will definitely help Agape reach the next level of development. (Note: We are praying for an American teacher to volunteer for a year teaching classes in an old-fashioned one room school house setting...wish I were younger!)

It was more than heartwarming to hear Blake relate that so far over 250 children have been reintegrated back into their villages with extended family members. What is even more exciting is the fact that nine of these children are young girls rescued from the Remand Center, a Kenyan version of our Juvenile Hall. The tragic fact is that without intervention, these young women are destined to be passed on from the Remand Center to a women's prison at the age of 18. For some, their only crime is being homeless. The Children's Department has given us the liberty of visiting the Remand Center every day to counsel and teach these young ladies. Information is gathered and home visits are made with the hope of returning many of them to their villages. How we thank God for this privilege! Our work with the girls is a new focus that God has opened for us. I remember so vividly the heart-stabbing question asked during a community club meeting in Kisumu. A gentleman rose and asked in a passionate tone, "**Madam, don't you care about the girls?**" Now we are one of the only organizations in Kisumu to be able to intervene for homeless girls. God is good and He is providing for these girls as we continue to grow and seek His will for this ministry.

Because He cares, *Darla*



We thank the Lord for a wonderful time at home, filled with lots of fun and enjoyment with

family and friends. We have relished every minute of it. Special thanks to all of you who have made us feel so welcomed and so loved.

We want to thank Lisa Kjeldgaard for giving us extra time with friends and family by taking on a couple of visits for us. She volunteered to take our place and to travel to Frontier School of the Bible in La Grange, Wyoming, to share about Agape with the students and faculty. A great many Frontier graduates become full-time missionaries, including two young couples who are ministering in Kisumu. We felt it would be a good idea for the school and students to know about Agape and to present the needs of street children to them. Lisa was perfect for the job! Many of the students and faculty members expressed interest in Agape's ministry. We are exploring the possibility of establishing an internship program with Frontier for their students to spend up to a year at Agape as part of their education and training.

From La Grange, Lisa and her son Nick, who accompanied her, drove to Scottsbluff, Nebraska to meet with David Brunner, the Youth Pastor of Grace Chapel, and with members of a missions team David will be bringing to Agape in Kisumu this July. Again, Lisa was perfect for the job! She was able to tell them about Agape and to answer their questions about preparing for coming to Agape and ministering to our boys. Thanks, Lisa!

We are grateful to the Lord for bringing Eric and Lisa to our Agape team. They bring wonderful hearts for serving the Lord, extraordinary skills and talents, and boundless enthusiasm to see Agape become all that it can be. It is a joy to be

working with them. We are excited about the impact they are already having on the scope and effectiveness of the ministry and anticipate an even greater impact as we look to Agape's future.

One of the important events of our time at home was a meeting of the Agape Board of Directors on April 11. It was such a blessing to share with the Board all that the Lord is doing in and through Agape. Our original three Board members were Darla Calhoun, Agape's Founder; Blake as Agape's President and CEO; and Joel Midthun, Pastor of Living Water Church in Elk Grove, California. Last year, we expanded the Board to four members and added Jeff Alger. This year we added a fifth member, John Britton. Both Jeff and John are dedicated Christian businessmen who have been to Agape and experienced the ministry first-hand. Their insight, judgment, and wisdom bring a great deal to the Board in guiding and overseeing the ministry. We are grateful to the Lord for providing such a dedicated and committed Board of Directors for Agape.

Another important event for the two of us was a week's vacation in Hawaii with our kids, their spouses, and all five of our grandkids. What a special treat! Thank you Lord!



We went snorkeling several times. The beauty of the coral reefs, the remarkable variety and stunning colors of the fish, and the majesty and grace of the swimming sea turtles are truly amazing. We have enjoyed and marveled at the wonders of God's creation on the game preserves of East Africa. In Maui we got to experience wonders just as fabulous, but underwater! God is good!



We also had the thrill of zip-lining for the first time. (No, we're not too old for that sort of thing...at least not yet!) It was so much fun flying down the zip-line above the trees and bushes while looking off to the side to the beautiful blue Pacific and the other islands in the distance.



Now it's time for us to return to Africa. We're sorry we didn't have more time and weren't able to meet with everyone we would have liked to. But we are anxious to get back to the boys and our staff and to dive into the many projects waiting for us. We are scheduled to depart from San Francisco

on an over-night flight for London on May 18. We will spend the following night in London (can't connect without a

layover), and then fly on to Nairobi on May 20. It will be good to be back.

A great deal awaits us this time in Kenya. We need to prepare to host an 18-member short-term missions team from Shelter Cove Community Church here in Modesto in June. Most of the team members are High School students. They will be assisting with some of our facilities projects on the Kisumu campus and will be ministering to our boys.

In July, the Grace Chapel team from Nebraska will be with us. They will have 10 members and will be helping with some of our projects. They will also be conducting a sports VBS for our boys. We are really looking forward to that. Our boys will love it!

Then in August, Chris and Tammy Page and their children, Sutton, Connor, Seth, and Lyla, will arrive to take on the responsibilities of Directors of Agape Kisumu. Chris and Tammy were able to be with us during our Agape Board meeting. It was so nice to have more time with them and for them to be able to meet and interact with our Board members. Please be praying for Chris and Tammy and the children. They are laying it all on the line for Jesus. They need our prayers as they adapt to entirely new lives in an entirely new environment. Pray, too, that the last of their needed monthly financial support will come in.

As we prepare to return to Kenya we want to thank you for your love. We are so grateful to you and to the Lord for your faithful prayers and generous financial support. We couldn't be missionaries without you. Thank you.

We love you,

*Blake & Esther Gibbs*

**Join us in Praising the Lord for:**

- Such a wonderful time with our family in Hawaii.
- His protection as we travel and for keeping us well and healthy.
- Meeting our needs so generously.

**Please Join us in Praying for:**

- Traveling mercies as we head back to Africa.
- Financial provision for the Page and Kjeldgaard families as they raise their support to minister full-time with Agape.
- The Shelter Cove and Grace Chapel teams as they prepare for their trips to Agape.

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