

The Kenya Connection

The Kenya Connection's purpose is to inform the people of the Diocese of Bismarck about the activity of our mission in Kenya.

Our logo, of a black and white hand embracing, symbolizes the call of Christ to reach out and assist those in need. Our team will both assist and learn from the people of Kenya.

All correspondence regarding the mission should be addressed to:

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Center for Pastoral Ministry
PO Box 1137
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Address corrections should be sent to: Marge Grosz, editor, at the above-mentioned address.

African Mission Prayer

Almighty God, our love for you and our faith in the teachings of our Lord, Jesus Christ, have inspired us to take a giant step to establish a mission in Kenya. May your Holy Spirit support us, guide us, give us wisdom and bless our endeavors. Bless especially and provide guidance to those you have chosen to carry the gospel of your love and hope to the people of a distant land. May we experience the joy and peace you provide, as we reach out and generously share our gifts with others. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, your son and our Lord.

AMEN.

You may write to Evan at:

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or e-mail him at:
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LORD, GIVE ME AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

By Evan Beauchamp

Sitting quietly on my porch I can see something building a nest in the tree opposite where I sit. These dim eyes can't make out the kind of bird. I only see the movement and the long strands of bearded grass being pulled up and woven into something. The "something" I can't see either.

A pair of raucous Egyptian ibis flap noisily across the clean morning sky. Their loud, unpleasant calling breaks the peace. The normally still river at the bottom of the path rumbles a little this morning, with a full belly from last night's rain.

This is as it has always been. The river flows, sometimes thin, sometimes fat. Trees grow, fall or are cut. Wherever trees grow birds come to stay and build. Bird eggs laid, hatched and the chicks taught to fly. They leave nest and home, losing their way in the world. Season after season the same cycles repeat themselves with the same rhythm

And man is part of those seasonal cycles. Men, women and children cut the trees and clear the land. They dig the fields by their own strength and sweat. They till and plant seeds. Then they harvest. If the harvest is good they give thanks to God. If it is a poor harvest they humbly accept it as part of the natural cycle of things.

Recently there was a bad hail storm. Hail stones the size of moth balls fell for fifteen minutes, covering the ground completely. The hail shredded the corn plants, and completely destroyed the collard greens, the two basic staples of nearly every African meal. I never heard anyone complain. I am told the corn will be okay, but the collard greens are completely lost. Normally, collard greens can be replanted and grow quickly, but now the rains have stopped so the replanting can't be done. No one grumbled at the loss, at the hard work for nothing. The loss was just humbly accepted. The loss of the sucuma wiki, the collard greens, will mean more hunger.

Sometimes the harvest is not enough and the "snake is on the roof". Now is such a time. "The snake is on the roof", is a local expression meaning it is a time of hunger, that there is hunger in the land. It happens each year, the time between one harvest and another.

In some parts of Kisii, where the weather and the rains are favorable, it is possible to have two plantings and two harvests a year. Imagine what a wonderful blessing this is for the poor. Unfortunately, because the land is so intensively used, it is depleted and to get a good harvest a lot of fertilizer needs to be applied. Like the cost of everything else the cost of fertilizer has increased dramatically. The price has more than doubled since last year and farmers cannot afford it. So the fields have been planted without fertilizer. It is certain the harvest will be greatly reduced.

A reduced harvest will be a serious problem for all the people of Kenya this year. The post election violence in January and February meant that many of the displaced families, most of whom were farmers from the Rift Valley, were not on their land to plant crops this

year. Because of this there will be no harvest at all in much of the Rift Valley, the most fertile part of Kenya and the area referred to as Kenya's "bread basket".

The future looks grim.

All of this has a major effect on the Bismarck Mission program. The cost of corn has doubled just since March. The Bismarck Mission needs 20, 80-kilo bags, of maize for its programs each month. I am most thankful to all of you for your continuing generous support which makes it possible for me to maintain the support of the orphans. Without the food and help the orphans get from the Mission, they would be among the folks seeing the "snake on the roof". With all the difficulties these orphans face daily, we are making a big difference in helping them avoid the worry of going without food. Your generosity has made my presence and my work here both possible and meaningful in getting important help to these kids. So I thank you.

And the orphans thank you. They are always expressing their thanks to me. In this newsletter I am printing some of the notes of thanks that have been given to me over the months. The letters are in the orphans own writing, as they were given to me. The children's expressions of thanks are not in perfect English. Please understand that for all of them English is their third language, after their tribal language, then their second language of Swahili.

The following letter was written by a Catechist and chairman of a Small Christian Community which referred the children to the Mission..

To Mr. Evan,

Ref: The help of the orphans of the late sister Lilian Bosibori who died on 15/7/2002. From her five years has gone.

But now the orphans are getting assistance from you always, through

Bismarck Mission. As you started helping them from April 2006, you gave them maize and money.

(The letter then itemizes in detail each donation, including clothing and shoes, the mission gave the children to date.)

We have thanked you so much for what you have done to these orphans of the late Lilian Bosibori. These orphans came to the Bismarck Mission through the guidance of our Catechist Samuel Mose, and I Apolo Osoro, as the chairman of the St. Mary's Small Christian Community. We have thanked you so much for your assistance of these orphans.

Orphans are referred to the mission through several channels. Some find their way to our doors on their own, having heard about us from others in the village. Some are brought to the Mission by people in the community. Some come to us from the Chief. Most are sent to us from different churches of all denominations.

Recently a young man, Cosmas, came to the office seeking assistance. He had just moved back into this area and was staying with a friend. He had been living with his uncle in Eldoret, an area near Lake Victoria which had been seriously, brutally affected by the post election violence in January. During this violence in Eldoret, families were expelled with only what they could carry, their homes and all their possessions then burned. His uncle is now living in a displaced person camp. Cosmas came to live here with his friend so he could finish his Form Four education and take the National School Leaving Certificate exam in November.

When he came to the office Cosmas had to explain his situation to me. He is a small, slight young man, with a continuous smile. He was so nervous his hands trembled the whole time he spoke. I wanted to ask him about the violence he had witnessed when he was

chased from Eldoret, but I really didn't want to know. The misery I witness daily is enough and I know it would have been painful for Cosmas to talk about it.

Later Cosmas wrote this letter.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to sincerely thank you and express my deepest gratitude for your vital support. Through it I was able to attend holiday teaching and most importantly I was registered for the Kenya National examination.

I once more and further request you to help me clear the school fees arrears amounting to 3,400 shillings. I am also in need of material support, a Scientific calculator, a pair of shoes, a pair of trousers and a shirt.

I thank you for your kind concern. I promise to work very hard to achieve my goals.

Yours faithfully,
Cosmas Ondiba

Secondary education is now "free" in Kenya. There are still many hidden fees and expenses but the "Free" education is actually a big help. The way it is set up is, a secondary school is allotted ten thousand shillings by the government for each student in the school. Ten thousand shillings amounts to about \$150. Making secondary education "free" has encouraged many more students to attend secondary school. It is a start, and it is my hope that eventually the free part will be extended to cover most if not all the expenses of secondary education.

One of the major expenses of secondary education is the exams. At the end of Form Four, 12th grade, there is a major national examination covering the whole four years of secondary school. Each student must register to take this exam, called the Kenya Certificate of Secondary

Education exam (KCSE). It costs about \$68. It doesn't seem like much to us, but this amount of money is beyond the reach of the poor. These exams are among the major expenses of the Bismarck Mission. The fact that the mission pays for these exams is a great help to the students. One of my orphan families is a family of triplets, all in Form Four. I have another family of three, each a year apart in age, and all of them are in Form Four. It would be absolutely impossible for most families to afford three KCPE exams in one year.

Another Thank you letter:

Dear Father,

(I am often called "Father" or "Brother".)

Truly, I take this time to thank you father, for having looked forward and remembered us orphans and eventually assisted us in all everything that we are supposed to have as basic needs. I have taken this opportunity to thank for the maize and money that you give us every month.

I take this time to thank you mostly for the money that you paid for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education exam and also for the KCSE Mock exam fee. The same applies to the money you gave for Lunch and tuition. For this thank you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Again, I also thank you for the party that you organized on last year on 24th December 2007 which we really enjoyed up to the climax. So I say thank you also for what you gave us during that time.

I wish you nice year. Thanks.

Yours faithfully,
Johnson Magoka

It is hard to give meaning to these letters, beyond just the words written on the page. These kids are so humble and sincere in their expressions of

appreciation, which I am blessed to be able to see in person. I wish there was a way I could help you see their humble appreciation.

Dear Bismarck Mission

Ref: Thanks Note

I am grateful to have this moment to congratulate you and the entire mission of Bismarck for the great aid you are giving to me. I cannot forget to inform you that this has been a miracle for me. I did not know whether I was to go to Secondary School but with mission assistance it has happened. So I cannot forget to thank you abundantly praying that you continue with the same spirit.

In connection with that, I pray hard that our Almighty Father continue to care for you. I hope as you have assisted in all ways, I'm going to motivate you by excelling better in my final exams.

Thank you for your aid. May the Lord be with you always.

Yours sincerely
Linnet Nyaang

Sir Evan
Bismarck Mission

Dear Sir,

Ref: Appreciation for Assistance

In a very special way, I am grateful to express my appreciation and thanks to you. I feel indebted to you for the spiritual, moral, material and financial assistance you have rendered to my sisters and brother and to me in particular.

Indeed no words will do justice for the responsibility and the important role you play in our family and all our community. Through your support I'm hopeful about completing my studies, a big dream that will come true without doubt.

You have not only been of such help to us but personally you also are my model. You have inspired me a great deal. I am therefore working hard to

uphold admirable qualities and achieve nothing but best results.

Being the eldest son I am devoted and committed to guiding and nurturing my sisters and brothers strongly believe that they will grow to be God fearing and responsible.

With God everything is possible and time spent serving others and God is not time wasted. I promise to always remember you and the Bismarck Mission at large for your credit worthy support. It is a big concern, Mr. Evan.

It was a timely support and I have no doubt you will continue extending the favor to us. Blessings to further paraphrase the Bible; Proverbs 19:17; 2:13; 22:9; 24:19;. I'm optimistic that you will remember the least fortunate amongst us.

I'm made to understand all the efforts and sacrifices you make to be at service to us oblivious of this fact that you have other appointments. Many thanks once more.

Last but not least in any way, I pray to God to grant you with good health, wisdom and direct all your missions to prosperity.

Have a peaceful day, won't you?

Yours sincerely,
Eric

Eric is from a wonderful family of three girls and two boys. His parents were both educated through secondary school, and they were farmers. The family was comfortable, neither poor nor rich. They lived in mud houses but their furnishings were better than most. In the manner the children treat each other one can see it was a loving family. The children have strong support from the extended family and they will be okay. But from Eric's letter it is obvious how important the Bismarck Mission is to their well being.

Dear supporters of the Bismarck Mission,

It is a high time for me to thank Bismarck Mission for the great help you have offered to me and the rest of the orphans of Kenya.

I never knew that I was going to have a future but thanks to God for sending Evan to Kenya, who has shown us a bright future. I really thank you for helping me to join the secondary school which had already been shuttered but now I am in Secondary School Form III. Only one more year to go for me to finish the school.

I will also not forget the great help of food you have been donating to us in the past few years which you have been with us. I think God had a purpose for you to be here and not anywhere else because if you were going to be in your home I don't see how we were going to be.

God is really good. Sometimes I ask myself why it is that we are orphans? But, I find the answer that we are not orphans when we are with God because He has sent a person to relieve our problems.

Thank you very much for the great mission you are doing and may the Almighty grant you strength and energy to go everywhere and help the needy.

God bless,
Nyaberi

It is heart warming to hear these sincere expressions of deep gratitude. Reading these letters makes it clear that the children value education as a means out of their poverty.

All these "thanks" go to you. You make possible the means by which these children can realize a meaningful future.

I also thank you for making my presence here possible, and my work meaningful.

I hope the appreciation express here might move one of you to consider coming to the Mission to continue this

work. I was supposed to return home in September but have agreed to stay on for another year. I will take it month by month. I love being here working with these noble orphan children. They are awesome and inspiring. But home calls.

There is a work team coming from Bismarck in January. If you have any inkling that this might be work you would like to do, come on the work team and get a taste of mission. January is a good time to get away from Bismarck, and what better place to visit than Kenya. You will be most welcome.

HIM let us love and serve,
Evan