



June 25, 2010

To All the Saints at Westminster,

Thank you! What a difference your congregation has made this year for children at New Life Homes in Nyeri, Kenya. You have used your many gifts – creative, financial and personal – to make a difference in the lives of 20 children who will, as a direct result of your faithfulness, grow up and grow up in the abundant life that being a part of a family allows. Even now they are learning to love and be loved by Kenyan volunteers and staff at the Nyeri home on the slopes of Mt. Kenya. And with God's help, they will find their forever families before the year is out. What better way to spend our gifts than investing in the lives of these children who will live past the span of our own lives.

The Nyeri home was in real danger of closing last April as a result of the impact that the worldwide recession was having on donations to New Life Home. Late one night I received an email from Mary Beckenham, the director of the home, asking for prayer for the Nyeri home as the Kenyan New Life Home Board was meeting the next afternoon to consider its financial viability. New Life Home had six baby homes at that time. All of the numbers made it clear that the Mombasa and Nyeri home would have to close by the end of the summer. The Mombasa home did close last fall, and the children remaining in the home were divided up into the other homes. Since that time, they have all been adopted by Kenyan parents, but the refuge of New Life Home will not be there for the babies abandoned in Mombasa this year.

Not so with Nyeri. After I read Mary's email, I went to prayer. I think sending an email is its own miracle in Mary's case. She's nearly 70 and tends to the staff and 180 babies in New Life Homes. The first time I asked her for a list of all the babies in the home, it came a few minutes later, in long-hand from memory. (And she complained the rest of the afternoon about how bad it was getting!) I can just imagine the sense of urgency that would have induced her to take on the task of typing and cyberspace.

I sent Mary's prayer on to a Westminster member and she went on to work. When I met with her a week later, she made a remarkable pledge on behalf of your church. The Session had agreed to promise the best of their "outside the box and line item" creativity, Kenyan beads, elbow grease, and a truly faith-based stretch to provide 40 percent of the funding for the following year for all the babies in the Nyeri home. \$15,000: enough to feed all of the babies for 12 months. To feed them with the kind of protein-rich formula and healthy local foods that would allow them not just to survive, but to thrive.

Rarely have I seen as clear of rendering of New Testament action – based on prayer, responding to need, considered in community, and finished with humility and fullness. Last week, we received Westminster's final check for this year's miracle. It gave me a pang of wonder that I know that many of you have felt as you've worked so hard to send these checks throughout the year. It was a pang that I might be akin to

glory. As Presbyterians, I don't think we linger in glory very long or very comfortably. But on that day, I did. And I hope your will as well:

The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible, and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses ... shall please God. To please God, to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness ... not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son – it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But, so it is ...

- C.S. Lewis, *"The Weight of Glory"*

I'm including pictures of some of the children cared for by your gifts this year – Seth, Claire, and Precious.

Precious was found in a rock quarry by a worker who had returned to the quarry late on a Saturday afternoon to look for the lunch pail he had forgotten the day before. Because the usually bustling quarry was closed for the weekend, the man was able to hear the faint cry of a baby coming from a deep hole in the ground. He ran back to his home to get help and a large group of people gathered to help him remove the rubble and earth around the shaft, so that they could reach the baby without dropping rocks and debris on her. The shaft had become a de-facto trash-pit and outhouse for animals and humans, so the possibility of getting a newborn from its 30-foot bottom with no machinery or special force team seemed impossible. You can imagine the cheering and tears as the crowd saw this "good Samaritan" emerge with a tiny baby girl – still alive and unharmed.

The local children's officer asked that she be taken to New Life Home. Monica, the director of the home, named her Precious Mzuir. When she arrived at the home, she weighed 2.2 kg (4-1/2 lbs). In Swahili, Mzui means she who has great beauty.

When I met her this spring, Precious had doubled her weight and was beginning to smile and coo. She'd been moved to the Nairobi home to begin meeting with a Kenya family that will adopt her at the end of this month. And, in the last few weeks, Seth and Claire have found Kenyan parents as well. And new babies have filled their beds at the Nyeri home. Come July, Westminster's Kenyan team will get to meet the Nyeri babies and the staff and volunteers that care for them – and to bask in the joy and peace that radiates throughout the home. It's been a true gift exchange – the best gift exchange I can imagine. I can't wait to see what gifts the Westminster group returns with.

By all financial measures, these things seem impossible. Your church made this promise in the challenging months when you were without a pastor and in the nadir of our national recession.

Thank you for your faithfulness in making it possible.

Yours,

Jane Stephens

For the Amani Board