

Habari za nyumbani? (What's the news in the home?)

July and August have continued to be busy months for us here on the mission. We sadly said our goodbyes to the Harding group off in the beginning of July, and welcomed the New York Avenue Church of Christ youth group from Arlington, Texas.

#### NYA Youth Group and Kristin Hall

The New York Avenue Church of Christ sends a group of their high school juniors and seniors to Chimala for a 3 week mission trip every two years. This year, they held several VBS programs for neighboring village churches, hosted two basketball camps, and painted several rooms in the primary school. They did a great job- practically working all day everyday from the moment they stepped foot on the mission. It was nice to have the extra energy on the mission that the teens brought with them.

Kristin Hall, a member of my (Melissa's) home congregation in Lancaster, OH was able to accompany the NYA group to Chimala. Kristin is in the process of finishing high school and choosing a college. She is very interested in medical missions, so she spent much of her time at the hospital with Kyle and me. It was very nice having her with us for a few weeks.

#### Baby Daudi's Story

We received a phone call from a Canadian working out in Mahongo Mswiswi, the remote village where we worship each Sunday. She called and told me that she was sending an HIV-positive mother and her 6 week-old child who were both critically ill. A few hours later, we walked into the children's ward to check on the baby. Nestled beneath the colorful kitenges we found a small child with the appearance of a very old man. The little baby could have been the poster child for a UNICEF or "Save the Children" campaign. Wrinkled skin hanging off his tiny little bones, badly sunken eyes, internal organs bulging, clearly defined under a thin, rubbery abdominal skin. Little Daudi had been unable to breastfeed for weeks due to his mother's advanced illness and he was continuing to waste away before our eyes. Kristin Hall (from Lancaster, OH), Allison (one of the NYA high school students), Jennifer Gray (a PhD nurse and HIV specialist from the NYA church) and Melissa and me, decided to take him on as our "special project." I got out my "WHO Pediatric Care" book and we began to lay-out a care plan for little Daudi. We wrote down our intensive feeding schedule and mixed up the nutritional resuscitation formula. Over the next 3 days, we all took turns feeding Daudi every 30 minutes for 12 hours, then every hour, then every 2 hours...and so on. Daudi began to open his eyes a little and was becoming more alert.

Four-days-out, Daudi developed a fever. We started him on antibiotics and I searched hard to find any "meat" on his small frame to give him his every-six-hour intramuscular injections. Daudi's mother had discharged herself, had given up hope for her child and for her own life, and had left the small baby in the care of the old Bibi (grandmother). Even the grandmother begged us to discharge the baby so that they could go and "die at home." They felt that we were wasting resources on this small, and most-likely HIV+ baby. We wrestled with the decision and the many different thoughts that came with the

difficult discussions. It really seems like these extremely difficult questions always arise when dealing with HIV. It is a complex disease that is tightly intertwined with numerous and even more complex social, cultural, spiritual, and even economic considerations.

HIV really is Satan's perfect masterpiece. As Dr. Frank Black, a long-term medical missionary at Chimala once said: "HIV is the perfect disease in which it takes away all of God's natural protection that he created." When you combine this fact with the most common methods of transmission...absolutely mind-boggling. I spent a great deal of time with Dr. Danny Smelser (also a long-term medical missionary in Tanzania) when he was here, leaning against the wall just outside the female ward, scratching our chins and asking questions like, "how many liters of fluid do we use for this HIV positive lady before we say 'that's enough.'" Or, "since we have such limited resources, who do we invest them in? The HIV positive, terminally-ill 20 year-old hospice patient or 20 year-old malaria patient?" "Are we limiting God when we 'give up' on someone clinically?" As we stood outside the female ward where 75% of its inhabitants were HIV positive, we never came up with easy answers. Just more questions and a constant feeling of needing more help from somewhere or someone or something. As our good friend Janice Bingham calls it, these are "God-sized problems." Problems that are way to big for any one person, one team, one country, or even one planet. The Bill Gates Foundation, UNICEF, the WHO, USAID and other NGOs are making progress in the fighting of this horrible pandemic. But work in the Chimala Mission Hospital female ward for one week and you quickly see how all of these efforts are but a drop in a huge ocean.

I wish I had a good ending to this story-but I don't. Though we told the family we would take care of the bill, we arrived on the fifth morning to find Daudi's bed empty. The apathetic grandmother had left the hospital and took little Daudi with her. I received a call later that evening from the Canadian in Mahongo Mswiswi telling me that Daudi had died before they even reached home.

So how do we keep going? How do we avoid total burn-out? The important thing to remember is that these problems *are* God-sized problems and we are totally incapable of conquering them ourselves. Boy, this is great, pick-me-up newsletter material isn't it?! I found a verse the other day that hit me hard and has become my new "theme verse."

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."

If you were old enough in the 1980s, you will remember that before HIV/AIDS had its name, the syndrome was being called "Slims Disease" or "Wasting Syndrome." Look at 2 Corinthians 4:16 again. In that light it takes on a new meaning, doesn't it?

I don't write this article to discourage you in any way. I know many of our stories have been exciting, uplifting, or encouraging. We are certainly filled-up every time we see God at work in the lives of the people here. But since you are beginning to "get to know" us better and have been keeping up with us for a few months now, we felt it would be

good to share with you some of the not-so-encouraging stories as well. It all comes as a package here and we think it is important for you to have an accurate picture of the work we are doing.

There is no cure for this terminal disease we face daily. All we have are a few expensive medications with some horrible side effects. But what an incredible privilege to be a part of "the daily renewal" mentioned in 2 Corinthians! What an honor and responsibility we have been given as God's people.

### New Hospital Truck

We had an incredible donation this month. Three donors (I will withhold their names as to not embarrass them) generously donated a sum of money for us to use "for whatever the hospital needed most." After much thought, we decided to purchase a small truck for medicine and supply procurement. Since we arrived, we have had to make multiple trips into Mbeya to pick-up supplies since we could not fit them all into the back of the Land Cruiser. This vehicle will help us greatly and will assist us in decreasing unnecessary travel and fuel expenses. Thank you so very much for your incredible donations!

### A Seat Next to the President

I (Kyle) had gone to a nursing school in Ilambula (a small town about an hour away) to recruit nurses to come and work at our hospital. We walked up to the administrator's office and immediately felt a "buzz" in the air. The head doctor came rushing out of his office and apologized over and over. "I am so sorry" he said. "We have had to call an emergency meeting with our staff and I am so sorry we cannot spend more time with you, but we have just learned that our president is coming." "Oh," we said, "that's a big deal that the president of the Lutheran Diocese is coming-..." "NO!" he said. "the president of TANZANIA is COMING!" The administrators rushed off and Timothy (the head accountant who had come with me) walked around handing out my business cards to whoever would take them. We waited around a little and learned that the president would be speaking just down the road in a little over an hour. Since we had a little time to kill, we strolled over to a small hotel with a restaurant and barely stepped up onto the steps and 4 men in coats and ties with a short little man with sunglasses and an ear bud came rushing out at us. "You can't come in here. Our president is going to be coming into this hotel! Get out of here!" An administrator of the hospital whom we had met earlier was in the group and seemed embarrassed at the way we were just treated. He quickly stepped up to us and apologized, smoothing things over nicely. "No, it's ok, the president is coming here but please, let me take you to the seating for the guests of honor." Timothy and I looked at each other and darted a look of "Does he have us confused with somebody else? Are we going to somehow get in trouble for this?" He asked some of the military guards to escort us to our seats - seats 15 feet just to the right. An hour later, the crowd had grown and we were continuing to question why we were sitting so close to the president. The bomb dogs were being led around the area and big guys with dark sunglasses were swaggering around looking tough. The dancers near the stage dressed in yellow and green (the colors of the ruling government party) intensified their dancing and became more animated singing, "Karibu Kikwete"

(Welcome Kikwete). The loud speakers and music could be heard in the distance coming closer and closer. Soon, the motorcade quickly rounded the corner led by military trucks with their beds filled with soldiers wearing dust masks and covered with dust from head to toe. Following them were 4 black land cruisers also covered with a thick layer of dust. The body guards jumped out of the surrounding vehicles and swarmed the president's Land Cruiser. After everyone was in position, the repetitive Tanzania music was cranked up even louder and the cheers became deafening. He stepped out of the car and began walking to the podium, shaking the hands of children and adults alike. For the next 20 minutes, President Kikwete spoke about removing corruption, improving health care, developing roads, and tackling HIV. After his speech was complete, he jumped back into his car and sped off, the dust cloud lingering and causing everyone to cough and rub their eyes. Pretty neat day.

### Pictures

- 1.) Part of the NYA Youth Group getting ready for their VBS Good Samaritan Skit
- 2.) The kids at the VBS holding up their "Love your neighbor as yourself" crafts
- 3.) Jennifer Gray and Kristin Hall with Daudi and his grandmother
- 4.) The Hospital Truck
- 5.) Kyle giving blood for one of the hospital patients