

**01-20-13 – Sunday – Report from Missions of Hope International & Drive to Meru (I finally have had time to finish this report so am sending this out 01-23-13.)**



Yesterday we visited with students from the Missions of Hope International. (MOHI). This is a school of 1100 students who come from the Mathare slums. The children wear uniforms and arrive at school as early as 6:30 am and stay until 4:14 pm. When they arrive they first say prayers and then they get porridge. The students are ages 5 – 13 and they invited 220 children ages 10 – 13 to come and meet us and find out about Wings. After the children complete 6<sup>th</sup> grade, then students who qualify can then transfer to their boarding school outside Nairobi.

We arrived and were greeted by William, the head teacher for the Mission. The visit started with meeting in a conference room and we were treated to hot chai – Kenyan tea with a lot of milk and raw brown sugar. It was delicious. They also had made a pastry for us, like a heavy donut, but cut in triangles.

The children (80 at one count) were in one room. The classrooms were part of a 10-story building. Each classroom was filled with desks for the children to sit on. The “desk” was a solid top like a half of a picnic table, where 4 children could sit together on one bench and share the desk.

We greeted the children, started singing with them, and I don’t think I’ve ever met a more engaged group of singers. Immediately they started shouting, Praise Ye the Lord and Alleluia, and loved standing up and down. We were so crowded in the room I wasn’t sure we should try to teach “Shake a neighbor’s hand”, but we decided to try it and they loved it. The kids were all around the room, and especially loved the “legal hugs” of pat a neighbor’s back and “Jesus is the friend”, he’s a friend next to you. They put their fingers in the middle of their cheeks, look each other in the eyes, and see Jesus in one another.

With one group we did “Love I Lift Your Name on High”, and again the kids were so receptive, knew the words, and obviously many people had come and shared many songs, lessons, and bible stories with them.

Next the children were served lunch. Huge 5 gallons buckets of rice, beans, and cage were brought into each room. Servers were picked and dished out the food into metal plates. They heaped the plates with food and although some rice spilled on the floor while they were serving, I don’t think a grain of rice was spilled while the children ate the food. They ate with their fingers and the plates were totally clean by the time they finished. No beverages were served with the meal.

The each team member went into a room to talk with the children while they ate. Here are some of their comments:

Today we are driving to Meru. It is a brand new highway with was a divided 4 lane highway which we drove on for about an hour. We passed the Dole Pineapple Plantation, fields of coffee bushes, corn, banana fields, and papyrus which they bundled into sheaves and then sold by the side of the road. There were huge piles of pineapples for sale on the side of the road.

It was fun to see so many of the people on the sides of the roads catching matatus (vans) to go to church. One little girl had the sparkling white ruffled dress and looked like she should be in a wedding.

James is our driver for the journey. When I asked him if he had ever done a trip like ours, he said NO – as he had never been in a prison. Normally he only does safari parks, so he sees our trip as a new adventure too.

William had found old newspapers for us, and we like to use recycled products so they will be able to do similar crafts at a later time. He children loved making the butterflies. We distributed I do believe they did enjoy the Bible story we did. We had everyone dramatize Jesus in the boat with the disciples, calming the storm. William was Jesus and another teacher names Jeff was the “cushion or pillow”. Children were chosen to be disciples and everyone else was the wind and the waves. Everyone being part of this drama and laughed and enjoyed it very much. William even asked me to email him a copy of it, as he had never seen anything and Jess was another teacher

### **The Vest**

Nancy Bryant, one of our Wings Board members, brought a special gift to our Board meeting the day before we left on the trip. She had visited Kenya with her family in 1982. There had been a coup while she was visiting, and for 3 days they had been sequestered in their hotel. But then they met a deaf woman who embroidered a vest for her. On it she had written hello, put a lion on the back and wrote Kweheri – which means goodbye and until we meet again.

So we actually have brought that vest back to Kenya, and are asking everyone we meet to sign the vest. Already the vest is filling with signatures. I can't imagine what it will look like at the end of this trip. Everyone loved signing the vest.

It was interesting that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat. of each month the teacher, around 400 of them in total, meet at the school, in their sanctuary are, and hold worship services 8:30 – 12:30. So when we arrived we heard their joyous singing echoing throughout the area.

After the bible story we had everyone make butterflies. William found old recycled newspapers, and we always like to use newspaper because that is one item that every country seems to have that can be used for crafts and otherwise would be thrown out. We gave the children crayons and markers to decorate their paper and they had so much fun getting creative with their papers. Then they accordion-folded the two pieces, put them together, and then held them together with pipe cleaners we had brought from the U.S. Soon the butterflies were in the girls' hair, and everyone loved showing us their beautiful. We reminded them that the butterfly is the symbol for resurrection and that as each butterfly was unique and special, so too were they a unique and special creation of God's.

I then told them my story, of a husband who went to prison, and how I raised 4 boys at poverty level. Since these children all came from the slums I think they paid close attention to what I said. They probably don't get many white women from America who they can identify in some ways with this situation. In fact one girl told me later what she would always remember from our visit that with God in our lives, He could take all situations and bring good to them. I was so moved I teared up, thinking that perhaps we could have given such encouragement to her.

William was so pleased with everything and thought the children would want to do some of our Wings activities for their parents and the other students in the school the next time they did a program.