



# Capstone Ministries

## Child and Family Restoration Outreach

*"The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone" Psalm 118:22*

A prayer letter from Dan and Patty Schmelzer, Kisumu, Kenya

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### **"Beyond the offering plate..."**

*"Stop bringing meaningless offerings!...Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." Isaiah 1:13,17*

What would you do if, this Sunday, your pastor announced that there would be no offering. "Instead," he explains, "During the course of the week, I want you to find one person who has been abused, neglected by society or family and do for that person according to his/her need. Then come back next Sunday and give your testimony."

That is the pleasant version of what the Lord told his prophet Isaiah in a vision about the congregation in Judah and Jerusalem.

Judah had become faithless, despite a miraculous deliverance from the ruthless King Sennacherib of Assyria in 701 BC. and the entire Assyrian army wiped out by an angel of the Lord in one night.

Still the Lord calls his people rebellious children, a brood of evil doers; what was once silver has become dross, like one big open sore from the top of your head to the sole of your feet. Not a pretty picture.

The expression of Judah's faithlessness lay in her failure to DO, TO ACT righteously, TO DEFEND the fatherless, TO ENCOURAGE the oppressed. And this failure made their offerings and incense a stinking, detestable odor in the nostrils of the Lord God.

God cannot be bought. Still today, our offerings—without righteous action in our life—have no value. In fact the Lord takes it one step further and says that Judah's worship activities without doing right, "...*my soul hates...they have become a burden to me...I will not listen*" vs. 14,15.

On the surface this vision of Isaiah may appear to be more about what God's people did not do than what they did not believe. There was evil of every sort: corruption, justice for sale, sorcery, neglect of the poor, murder. Name the sin; Judah did it.

Let me illustrate: I have several orange trees on my compound. One of them is so afflicted with pests that the leaves, branches and trunk are almost black. It is no wonder, there are no oranges on the tree. Infestation inhibits fruit. Sin can kill faith and fruit production too. When God's people forget "whose" they are, they stop doing what God's people do.

In His plea with his people for change, the Lord lists one specific activity he would like to see in their lives: **"Defend the cause of the fatherless."**

Orphans and vulnerable children without a voice in society are a sign of a decaying social structure. Kenya is a country of millions of vulnerable children. Yet there remains a vibrant, faith-filled segment of the population defending and caring for these children: uncles, grandparents, cousins and community members. In fact, estimates are that 95% of the vulnerable children in Kenya are being cared for by community and family members. There are many, countless thousands who sacrifice daily so that their relative's children will eat and go to school. That is a good thing! That is in fact a wonderful sign that God's people in Kenya do know the connection between faith filled hearts and loving action. It is this family centered solution to the issue of street children that Capstone Ministries is based upon. It is not our intent to defend the fatherless by replacing the family with institutionalized parenting. That is not defending the fatherless. Defending the fatherless means standing beside, encouraging, empowering, instructing, correcting, training.

Last week a boy at the Transition Center found out his sister had died. The father had been drinking away his small income instead of providing food for the family. A very sad story! The boy is, understandably, heartbroken. Eventually the boy will be reintegrated into this family. Our pastor on staff has visited the home twice in the last week. We will help where we can. There will be correction, instruction, and encouragement given to the father and family. These are the daily challenges of Capstone Ministries: Defending the Fatherless by ministering to the family.

And now....time for the offering!

## Praises, Prayers and Recent News

1. Praise God! Pray for the 8 boys at the Transition Center: Steven, Jackton, Kevin, Dixon and Dennis, Silas, James and Ivan
2. Pray for Bobby (friend of a friend) from Michigan who is battling cancer for the second time.
3. Praise for the team of four from California who have returned home after two weeks of service through The Sending Place.
4. Thanks for Chuck and Ann Jedele who are here volunteering with Capstone and the Lutheran Special School.
5. Praise for the completed construction of the moringa house. It is fully operational and painted.
6. Pray for us as we make our plans for our fall trip to the states. Rough outline: Late August: S. Wisconsin, September in New England, October/Nov. in California. You are welcome to write to us and reserve a Sunday for your church or club. Several churches have already contacted us and reserved a weekend. Praise God.



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## More Information!

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**Donations are tax deductible.**

**Make checks payable to: [Key Ministries](#), Kenya Mission**

**As our partners we encourage you to spread the word about this ministry. Feel free to share this newsletter or write to Dan and Patty to add a friend to this mailing.**

## This and that...

### Negotiating Kenyan style

Sometimes it pays to know how to negotiate in this culture. During the past few weeks we have been buying materials for the construction of our moringa drying house. Aggregate and sand is obtained locally. There are laborers who spend their day cracking stones into ballast for those who are building. Others dredge the river for river sand and sell it. The price depends on one's ability to negotiate and your perceived ability to pay. In my case, my skin color also translates into unlimited resources. Frequently white people—who are not used to constant negotiation for everything in the informal market—will simply pay the price asked for. A pick-up full of aggregate stones may sell for anywhere from \$7 to \$20 depending on negotiation. Understanding that negotiation takes place at every stage of the purchase is also important to know.

The other day when Dennis and I went to buy some of these stones. We agreed on a price. As they loaded the stones in the pickup, the sellers tried to double the price. Again when they came to about 3 inches from the top of a level pickup they said again: "That's ok, right?" Then after filling the entire pick up, another stage of negotiation came: "Just add us an extra 100 shillings"

It can be annoying if you don't understand that this is just the way things are in the informal market for goods. It is as much a battle of wills as an attempt to get the maximum price. Interestingly I found out after the fact that those who were loading the truck had been talking all the while about who this "Jarachar" (white guy) is who doesn't just pay what we ask. "This is really a Jarate'ng (black man)," they commented to Dennis. Oh, by the way, I paid just under \$7 for the pickup of stones but as I drove away, I gave them an extra 100 shillings for their trouble.

One even has opportunities to witness during this whole process. Being white in this culture makes everything one does highly visible. Words and actions are remembered for a long time. The sand dealers knew in advance who I was when I came for sand. "You are the Lutheran pastor who really helped us during the post-election violence," was their comment. No candles under bushels here!!

### VISIT TO THE USA THIS FALL

Patty and I will be visiting the states and Canada this fall beginning in mid-August. We will be in the Midwest (Wisconsin and Minnesota) until around Sept. 7, then in New England until around Oct. 5, then in California and Canada until early December. If you would like us to visit your church, please contact us soon.