

Hujambo from Nairobi!

I can't believe that a whole month has gone by since I left New Zealand on my adventure, but here I am, settled in Nairobi, and enjoying being in Africa. I have a few problems with my stomach but overall I am well and enjoying every minute of being in Kenya.

I have been working at a primary school in Kibera, where I have been teaching English to a class of students who are between the ages of 8 to 13 years old. Where the school is situated and what it achieves is outstanding and I have really enjoyed being there.

Kibera is a slum, for those who do not know what a slum is; a slum is generally a thickly populated, run-down, squalid part of a city, inhabited by poor people. Yes these People may be poor in material wealth but not lacking in spirit.

"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Luke 12:15b

The sea of corrugated iron roofs stretches over a 630 acre area, with a population of about 1.3 million people staying in what is now Africa's biggest slum. Auckland, New Zealand's largest city has a population of about 1.4 million and an area space of 1,086 km². This puts things in portion, lots of people, not much space.

For the people of Kibera there are no roads, no sewerage pipes and few services of any kind. Kibera remains unofficial – it's not marked on any maps, and is still considered illegal.

I have to walk about 20 minutes each morning to Kibera with my escort, which I meet outside Kibera. I found that my escort is the only Kenyan on time. I refer to real time on a watch but I have found Kenyan's operate on there own time. As we reach the outskirts of the slum, you need to slow down as the paths become trickier to navigate. Our pathway consists of a mixture of red mud packed together with all the mixture of human habitation – plastic packets, cardboard, bits of metal, discarded items of clothing. Many of the paths are divided down the middle with a trench which carries away waste and rain water.

All along the way, we are greeted by choruses of children – "Howareyou? Howareyou?" Who I believe do not actually know what it means but it is there response to any white face individual they see.

We arrive at New Adventures Primary School, I get greeted by a class of 30 – 35 students – "Good morning Madam Christine" which after 4 weeks I have trained them out of this habit. They pull out tattered English exercise books for the day's lesson. They cluster around the few desks and benches to copy work, leaning on each others backs to write and sometimes arguing about pens or books. I found it hard to know the right response or action when I am trying to teach them to write stories and they don't even have paper and a pen to use. They are all students whose families cannot afford to pay for the uniforms and books required by government schools, so the school relies on donations of food, uniforms and money to feed clothe and teach all 350 of them.

My class is a some what of a special class, the students have chosen to be there to become better at writing English, offer English is their third language. I had been told that the students needed to practice there English writing, so every morning we do exercises and learn a bible story. I get a student to read the story from the bible in front of the class and then the students get to write the story in their own words. In the midst of this, it's easy to feel discouraged, but the students at the school have a real "go for life" attitude, even thou these circumstances would leave most of us feeling hopeless.

The principal of the school, George, is praying for materials to build a new class room for the year 8 students next year. The school building is separated into two different areas, the first building, which is one big open room, no walls for 4 classes (Year 1 to 4). The other classes for students in year 5 to 7 are in a separate building with 3 classrooms. These buildings are separated with a 5 minute walk between them. George loves to show his plans about the school to anyone who will listen. His first priority is to the students, equipping them with the knowledge to get into a secondary school. This is why he is determined to get another classroom for his year 8 students next

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year, as they will be sitting the exams this time next year for this, he doesn't get down but instead he's thinking of new plans to get donations.

After 4 weeks of teaching every weekday, I feel opposite emotions. I feel completely exhausted, not from hard work or lack of sleep, but by the situation that is around me. I feel very insignificant in this BIG problem of poverty in Kenya which steers me in the face everyday. Crawling into a hole would be my solution some days, to try not care. But at the same time it feels great to be a very small part of a solution, to be doing something that benefits the students and has no personal gain for me except the satisfaction of seeing some of the students improving their writing. It's hard to let go after even 4 weeks of teaching, to build relationships with these awesome students and to know that it is not likely that you will see them again. But at this moment all I can do is trust in God, God has created these students for a reason and that even though they live in hard circumstances, God is there.

"For I know the plans for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you a HOPE and a FUTURE" Jeremiah 29:11

So now I am onto a new adventure, for the next month Trish Cox and I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve at St Nicholas Orphanage in Karen. This is very exciting for me as I have always had the desire to work at an orphanage.

Thank you all for your constant prayers and support for me. I feel so blessed to have this opportunity.

I am thanking God for:

- The time I had at New Adventure School to teach and learning that I shouldn't limit myself by what I think are my limitations.
- The students that I have got to know and build friendships with. For God showing through them that your circumstances do not define you.
- For opening the opportunity to work in an orphanage for the next month.

Please pray specifically for:

- The students and teachers at New Adventures Primary school. That God provides them with the resources to equip the students for the future.
- St Nicholas Orphanage, for the children that live there, that they would have a nice Christmas and that I would be effectively serving God there.
- My trip in a month to see my family and back home to New Zealand.

Luv ya
Mungu awa bariki (God bless),
Christine

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