

“SEEDLINGS”

Vol 1, No 8

Oct 2013



MUSTARD SEED PROJECT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Celebrating 20 YEARS of
Providing Acts of Mercy and
Mission in East and Central Africa**

**The Mustard Seed
Project's
Monthly Newsletter
Supporting:**

**The Mustard Seed
Babies' Home
*Hoima, Uganda***

**The Sonrise Schools
*Musanze, Rwanda***

**Pastor Deo's Street
Children's Ministry
*Kigali, Rwanda***

The Mustard Seed Project is a 501 (c) 3 Non-Profit Corporation, whose purpose is to provide Acts of Mercy and Acts of Mission in East and Central Africa. Mustard Seed Project was incorporated in January of 1997 and currently has three active ministries in Uganda and Rwanda.

Our three primary African missions include: The Mustard Seed Babies Home in Hoima, Uganda, The Sonrise Primary and High Schools in Musanze, Rwanda and Pastor Deo's Street Children's Ministry in Rwanda's capital city of Kigali.



Front Row: Robert Dwyer, Kathy LaLonde, Sheila Skiles, Donna Payne, Dean Payne, Joyce Wingett
Back Row: Stacey Halota, Dorene Freese, Richard Fossum, Jay Greener, Terry Thornton, Laurent Mbanda

The 2013 Mustard Seed Board of Directors Meeting was held on September 15-16 2013 at the Settlers Ridge Courtyard by Marriott Hotel in Pittsburgh PA. This is the third consecutive year of hosting our meeting at this venue.

On Sunday evening board members gathered together for a

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CELEBRATING 20 YEARS.....

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time of prayer, praise, fellowship and a light meal. Lynn Bailey and her daughter Ashley led us in song and worship to the Lord. Lynn also shared a scriptural teaching from the book of Hebrews. We were blessed to have special guests Chantal Mbanda, Lynne Labasik and Wally LaLonde joining us for the Sunday evening fellowship.

Prior to the start of our Monday business meeting we welcomed new board members Dean and Donna Payne of Columbia MD. Other attending member included Chairman – Terry Thornton, Executive Director – Robert Dwyer, Director of International Missions – Joyce Wingett, Treasurer

– Richard Fossum, Kathy LaLonde, Jay Greener, Sheila Skiles, Stacey Halota, Dorene Freese, Laurent Mbanda and Emeritus Board Member, Joan Fossum.

The all-day business meeting, in which several agenda items were addressed, was followed by Holy Eucharist and a celebration dinner in thanksgiving to the Lord!

SABBATICAL MISSION

The Rev. Jan Dantone

“Hold this.” I thrust my camera into my son Joseph’s hands. “You’re about to see your mom be a fool for Christ.” I turned to face 70 eager faces and sang, “I’ve got joy, down in my heart, deep deep down in my heart....”

Of all the things I anticipated in visiting Shyira Diocese on my sabbatical, singing a song (complete with hand motions!) that I usually sing only when in the weekly chapel service at the pre-school in my Texas parish was not one of them. Yet there I was, singing with gusto while my 16-year-old son remembered that the camera has a video function. Bishop Mbanda had invited me to come to Shyira and teach some recently ordained clergy and ordinands. And so my husband Hal, our son Joseph, and I went to Rwanda for three weeks in July.



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Between the three of us, we were introduced to a broad swath of ministry in Shyira Diocese. I taught a week-long class on Old Testament covenants through the Muhabura Study Center, the program for modular learning which Bishop

Mbanda has established for pastoral leaders. Hal and I especially enjoyed learning about these leaders' lives and ministries during our breaks and lunch times. While Hal and I were learning with adults, Joseph spent time with the children of Peace Academy preschool on the cathedral grounds.

During our second full week in Musanze, Joseph and I visited rural preschools with Pastor Cyprien and Doro, a German missionary to the diocese with expertise in early childhood education. The children at the first preschool greeted me with a song and I reciprocated with the lively tune that always delights Texas three-year-olds. The schools we visited all participate in One Egg, a nutrition program that gives children at risk of malnutrition a hard-boiled egg at the end of each school day. After a full morning of learning, they wash their hands, pray the Lord's Prayer in English, and receive an egg to peel and eat on the spot. Hal assisted a separate team from our parish who visited Shyira to share a sexual abstinence program with students and teachers of Sonrise School and other diocesan pastors.

We watched with amazement at the flurry of final preparations for the Marriage conference hosted by the Mothers Union at the end of July. Many organizing hands came together so that the large number of people attending the conference would have places to eat, sleep, and feast on the riches of God's Word in Genesis 2:18. During the

Thursday-Sunday conference, we delighted in the many choirs who led worship in music and dance. Each choir sang their own composition based on the conference theme: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." While we needed translators to help us understand the speakers' messages, the enthusiasm and joy of the choirs transcended language and truly gave glory to God.

The only regret that we have from our visit is that we were not able to spend time with the students at Sonrise School. During the first week of our visit, the students were taking the national exams required across Rwanda. Then they were enjoying their two-week holiday. We did meet two engaging young men who translated for us during the marriage conference. We hope to expand our circle of Shyira relationships to include more of the students from Sonrise when we return.

Hal, Joseph, and I give thanks to Bishop Mbanda and Chantal for giving us the opportunity to visit and learn from what our Lord is doing in Shyira Diocese, and for the hospitality of their home. Lord willing, we will have another opportunity to learn in Shyira soon.

The Rev. Jan Wiley Dantone
Associate Rector, St John the Divine, Houston



Rwanda

2013 Global Engagement Trip

A Lesson in Faith

The Rwanda 2013 GET Team consisted of twelve members from TFCA and All Saints Church in Chevy Chase, MD. The two weeks were filled with meeting our Rwandan partners, experiencing the culture, seeing the sites, visiting genocide memorials, experiencing the reconciliation villages, visiting Sonrise School, seeing our sponsored children, spending time with Pastor Deo and falling in love with all of the children.

Being my third trip to Rwanda, I expected introducing the six first timers to a country and people I love would be the best part of the trip. However, God did not plan on this being just an average trip for me – I had a lesson in faith to learn.

Do we really believe when we pray that God will answer? Does God really care about delighting us?

To see elephants up close and personal in Rwanda would just thrill me. On my first trip three years ago, we saw one elephant far off in the distance, but none last year. I really wanted to see a number of them right in front of me this year. I wanted to see their size, majesty and power. So, I prayed to see elephants for months. Not only did I pray for elephants, but I told everyone that I was praying for them.

During our 12-hour safari ride, we were seeing some animals but no giraffes or elephants. As the day progressed, I asked God why He



wasn't giving me the desire of my heart. Late in the day, we talked with our guide and decided to reschedule our boat ride until the next morning and just head back to the lodge. The decision was made, but not long afterward the guide said he was taking us to the boats. Communication can be challenging between the languages – I tried again to explain our change in plans. But he explained - some elephants were spotted near the water. So, to the boats we went with renewed energy. As we slowly coasted along the shore, we heard them but I still doubted we would actually see them. Then our guide drove toward the shore, and standing there were three magnificent elephants. The driver repositioned the boat and got us even closer. I was humbled to be so close to these wonderful animals. God answered my prayer despite my doubts.

I had doubted God's desire to delight me. I tried to fool myself during the day that it would be ok if I didn't see an elephant - that God must have a reason. But I was fooling myself. I just wanted an elephant. I think God purposely waited until the end to teach me. If it had been first sighting of the day, would I have appreciated it so much?

God wasn't done with me yet, though. After our boat ride, we headed for the lodge but we were delayed by more than 1/2 hour because more than 12 elephants were crossing the road! I believe God wanted me to see in all His glory that He not only heard me but He delights in His creation and delights in our joy.

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If elephants weren't enough, God was going to build on this experience to teach me the real lesson He needed me to learn – what real faith is about and He was going to use Pastor Deo's heart-stealing street kids to teach me.

The day before the team came back, we spent time talking with Pastor Deo. He shared his concern about the sustainability of the feeding program. They were receiving gifts but did not have near enough. He is faced with the possibility of not being able to provide these meals long term.



In an action I'm not sure I would have done, he told the kids. I would have expected great concern about food and what would they do? Pastor Deo has been providing food for years (and often out of his own pocket). What would they do now that they rely on this? I'm sure there must have been concern but their answer showed me a lesson in faith that was beyond where I was a few weeks ago. They understood and asked that they please still be allowed to come to the PFR grounds each week as they do now. Pastor Deo, Christine (his wife) and staff have taught these children about God. This is where they are loved, have a family and learn about God. The love of God in these young children with so little was so much more powerful than mere food.

As I have reflected over this and their answer since I left Rwanda, I was reminded of Matthew 4:1-4: "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came to Him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

These kids showed me faith - faith in a God powerful and loving. They believed in a God who knows what they need - and they have faith that He will deliver what they need more than what they want.

Stacey Halota through Mustard Seed Project is putting together a campaign to obtain sustained, repeated contributions for the feeding program. Is it possible to get 300 people to donate \$10 a month for several years to provide for the food costs? God showed me that He delights granting the desires of our heart when He showed me elephants in Rwanda this year. I believe God hears the desires of Pastor Deo's children to not only know and learn to love Him but to be fed and provided much needed nutrition.

Thank you all for your support of the 2013 Rwanda Team and our partners.
Blessings, Kathleen Dillon



MOTHERS UNION MARRIAGE CONFERENCE UPDATE

Dear Friends,

On the morning of Thursday, July 25th overwhelming feelings of excitement, fear and anxiety welled up in me as I started playing out the weekend. This was the start of Rwanda's very first marriage conference. It was a four-day event that was taking place in the Shyira Diocese of Musanze District. Would people really show up? How would they receive the conference? You see, speaking on marriage in Rwanda is a taboo and I wasn't sure how this was going to work. However, I knew that God placed this specific conference on our hearts and charged us with the task to organize it.



My heart has been saddened by the many broken homes in Rwanda, and yet, traditionally we don't talk about healthy homes or marriage. However, people now more than ever, are open to hearing about it because of what's going on in the homes. Husbands killing their wives, wives killing their husbands, and even children killing their parents.

The conference began with an amazing, powerful time of worship. Over 3,000 people attended the first day, eager and ready for what God had for them. The scripture around the conference came from Genesis 2:18... "The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.""

Different guest speakers from Kigali, Burundi and Uganda, lead by The Rt. Rev. Dr. Laurent Mbanda and myself, blessed the attendees with topics ranging from; the biblical model of marriage, healthy ways of living, communication, and the five love languages. We also separated men and women into same sex groups to facilitate conversations freely and openly around some of the taboo topics. We were shocked at the openness of people during this time. You could tell this was something people yearned for and wanted to talk about.



People were very open and received the teachings well. We heard so many testimonies of homes and marriages being restored through this conference, and we give thanks to God for that. We hope to continue teaching and having opportunities to go into the villages and meet people that wouldn't have the opportunity to come to a conference like this. Due to the huge demand that

emerged during the conference, Bishop and the Mother's Union team have vowed to extend the teachings and develop materials to help rebuild Rwandan marriages and save families.

We thank God for the incredible opportunity to host the first marriage conference in Rwanda. We also want to thank everyone who supported us financially and prayerfully for the conference. Please continue to pray that God will use us (and YOU) to change and save many marriages and families in Rwanda.

On behalf of Mothers union and the Shyira Diocese, WE thank you.
Chantal Mbanda

Dear Friends of Mustard Seed Project:

The following is our 2013 "Christmas Gift Appeal Letter" which was sent to the sponsors of children at the Sonrise Schools in Musanze Rwanda. As you read the letter you will see that the gifts which are requested are those of a practical nature, reasonably priced cost and are geared to improve the well-being of the children.

As a reader of "SEEDLINGS", if you feel led to do so, you are also invited to become a part of the "Sonrise Christmas Gift Program," by donating a gift to a child who may not otherwise receive one from a sponsor.

Thank you

A request for our Babies' Home Christmas project will be in the next issue of "Seedlings".



Dear Sponsor,

October 03, 2013

Every year since Sonrise first opened its doors in 2001, we have asked you, our devoted sponsors, to make a donation which has allowed us to purchase a Christmas gift for your sponsored child at the Sonrise School in Rwanda. In most years the gifts have been articles of clothing or clothing accessories to supplement their uniforms and in every case the purchases we have made on your behalf have been items of the greatest need. You may recall last year our request was to replace badly worn uniform pieces as well as a "school supply pack" for each student and in 2011 our request was to replace the mattresses on the student's bunk beds.

This year we are seeking a gift of \$35 or \$40 which would allow us to purchase socks, underwear and a kit containing various personal hygiene products for each student.

Also, if you feel led and able to do so, you may send an additional gift in the same amount to provide these items for another student who may not otherwise receive one from a sponsor.

If you wish to participate in the 2013 Christmas Program kindly make your check payable to Mustard Seed Project and note "2013 Christmas Project" in the memo section and return it in the enclosed envelope by December 15, 2013. An alternate payment option is to visit the DONATIONS section of our web-site at www.mustardseedproject.org.

I thank you for your continued love and support of these lovely children.

Robert M. Dwyer – Executive Director
Mustard Seed Project



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The Mustard Seed Project Is A US Not-For-Profit Corporation Formed In 1993 To Provide Acts Of Mercy And Mission In East And Central Africa.

The Ministry of The Mustard Seed Project is to; LOVE THE CHILDREN - REACH THE SOCIETY AND PREACH THE GOSPEL!



**STREET CHILDREN
OF KIGALI**

PRODUCED BY
NATE HEIDENGREN

OUR GREATEST NEEDS!

• **Pastor Deo's Street Children's Ministry**

We need a great deal of help with funds to buy food for the children. Lately, we have struggled even to provide 3 meals per week when our goal is to feed five days and ultimately everyday.

There are currently 100 children enrolled in Deo's Ministry and it cost less than \$3.00 per meal per day to feed a child. Please help us feed the children by sending a check to:

Mustard Seed Project
1305 Merchant St.
Ambridge PA 15003

or: you may make an electronic donation via our web-site:
www.mustardseedproject click on **DONATIONS** and follow the prompts to give a gift to feed Pastor Deo Gashagaza's Street Children's Ministry in Kigali Rwanda. On behalf of the children, **THANK YOU!**

Kindly **remember to pray** for Sonrise Primary 6 and Senior 3, 5 & 6 as they study for their final exams which will be taken as follows:

Primary Grade 6 = Oct 22 through October 24, 2013
Senior Grades 3, 5 & 6 = Oct 29, through November 07, 2013

- **Sonrise Primary and High School**
- Sponsorship - Sponsorship - Sponsorship
- **Mustard Seed Babies Home**
- Sponsorship - Sponsorship - Sponsorship