



# BETHEL RAYS OF HOPE

DECEMBER 2014 NEWSLETTER

Dear Supporters,

We hope we find you and your family well and ready to enjoy the family gatherings at Christmas time. As the cold and snow gathers around us, forcing us more indoors, we hope that you have the joy of a warm fire and family.

It is time to sit down and write a letter of appreciation to each and every one who has contributed by financial gifts or by supporting us in prayer. So please excuse us for doing the "group" approach to writing this Christmas letter. We want to let you know how the events of this year have transpired. Let me just list a few highlights of this year in case you have missed some important news from us:

In *January* there was a work party of 8 that went over to Kisumu, Kenya to build the main building. What would normally take almost a year to complete, the team of workers, both Canadian and Kenyan, got it three quarters done in 10 weeks. The finishing details were completed, a gate was installed with the logo on the fence and then the attention turned to acquiring the names and interviewing the children who were truly in need.



*September 28<sup>th</sup>*, Sunday, was the official opening of the home. Leaders and community gathered to cut the ribbon and pronounce their good wishes. Most notable was the village leader of our community who said that previously this community had been only "known for prostitution, stealing and a place to come and die. But now, with this building here in the community, it has given hope – hope for the future for their children". And indeed it has given hope; for changes will occur as children are educated and realize that they are loved and cared for and have value.

*"And you have 17 boys & 13 girls!"* Wow! And we had thought we would start out with 20 but our numbers quickly became 30! We are proud "parents" yet the job is huge, tiring both physically and emotionally as many of these children need to be just held and loved on. From top to toe, attention has been given to all. Teaching needed to train them to eat, what to do with their plate and spoon, how to brush their teeth and the process of what to do when someone is hurt and there is blood. Moments that they will always remember include seeing their own bed and mattress for the first time and how the lights would go on and off by a switch! Those were the "baby moments".



*School* began on Sept 29<sup>th</sup>. Many children came in with their own idea of where they belonged in class but the teachers evaluated each one and the classes began. We also have 9 girls and 3 boys (12) coming to school as part of our *Community Based* program.

These children still live with a family member but come to Bethel for 2 meals each day, education, clothing and medical attention. They either have no parent or sometimes the parent (usually the mother) is already ill but is trying to keep her family together and needs help with food and education for her children. Mid-December the teachers will grade the children once more with the government standard tests to assess where they should be for the new school year that begins in January 2015.



How in the world do you teach everything to all these children and *maintain order and peace in the home?* We struggle with our families of 2-5 children. Think about 30! It was decided to teach the older children to become the leaders so that they could teach the younger children they were “given” to be within their oversight. So the older are helping the younger with getting ready in the morning and at meal time and there is becoming a bond between the children – one we will soon be able to say is like a family – it’s being knitted right now.

Can you imagine shopping for: 20 pairs of used shoes of various sizes! - \$130 sweaters/vests for school - \$125  
2<sup>nd</sup> hand clothes for the children all 30 - \$282

But along with that came the reality of the wet season and the water table level rising so much that it filled the latrine and what we had hoped would have been a “sealed tank” became one that ground water seeped into. The “sucker truck” (septic truck) charged \$156 for a pump out.

However we cannot forget our older children who have been with us for many years. Sheila is in nursing at a university, Sharon is waiting to be accepted for teaching at a university, Felix has just completed his Grade 12 and is waiting to hear how he placed and the other children, Derrick, Verah, Lucky Jeff, Lavenda, Gordon & Lonor all have school or training fees due for January as well. Winnie has graduated her culinary cooking classes and Elizabeth has completed her hair dressing course. They are in the process of job hunting. Pray for open doors for them.



Come *January 8<sup>th</sup> 2015*, some of the Board members will be travelling to the Children’s Home. Many things have changed and the bookkeeper there has been overwhelmed by the amount of work. So it’s time to come alongside and get back on track as Mrs. Chamah cannot handle these responsibilities as well. If you have spare, used or new school supplies, plastic shapes for play dough, white or grey socks please let us know so that we can pack our suitcases. We will also take vitamins for children and latex gloves for HIV prevention. We would like to take a very small gently used stuffed toy to give to each child. Please bring to one of the

Board members for us to pack by Christmas. We would like to take 50 & we already have 10. (remember: small & gently used). There is also a young woman also coming later in February for 2 weeks. If you are interested in coming, please contact someone on the Board.

*You ask about the future?* It’s always hard to know just exactly when and how to move ahead but we are going to fill up the current teachers’ classes to 20 children in each giving us about 100 students. The new students will come from the surrounding communities and will be given the opportunity to attend the Bethel Learning Centre (similar to a school but not quite the same) for approximately \$7.00 per month. This will help Bethel because the teacher’s salaries (equal to about \$80/mth) will be shared by not only Bethel students but the other students. This will be a win/win situation for all. There are always children coming to Bethel Home and asking if they can attend our school. We currently have 5 classrooms and the open area in the dining hall.



## **The Hard Facts:**

This has been a ministry that has never had money sitting in the bank account! At this time, we still have **29** children who are in need of sponsorship but with our dollar falling compared to the Kenyan currency, we need your help. For Christmas this year they will have a nice meal and time around the camp fire. There will be a small stuffed toy for the younger children that we bring and the older will get some clothes that they may be in need of. The younger children have already received many things. Hopefully, friends, this is not surprising you too much as we all know that we must tighten our belts when we are short. As a ministry, we are committed to doing the same thing.



# You can help

Will you be our voice to others that you know to share with them what Bethel is doing? Maybe they will join in, helping those who are not as fortunate as we are in our country. We are growing ourselves, as a Board of Directors, and learning to do more all the time. But we all know that it takes more than just a few people to make a difference in these children's lives – but what a difference it makes!

Just like proud parents, we have some pictures that we want to share with you about the family.



Here they are one Sunday morning singing in church.



This is June. There has been no father in her life and her mother has abandoned her.



Here is Rael and Victorina, sisters. (2 ½ & 3 ½ yrs old) Their mother is ill with AIDs and wanted someone to care for her little girls. The father has already passed away. How hard is it to know that you will soon die and have no one to care for your daughters?

Well, we have rambled on. Hopefully, it has not been boring to you. We thought that it would be good to touch base again with you and recap what we have done and let you know how things are going. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact one of us on the Board. If you know of anyone who we can talk to, please let us know or have them contact us. We are always looking for new members to add to our family on this side of the ocean.

We have included at the end a gift acknowledgement card so that if you would like to give a Christmas gift to Bethel and put the gift card under the tree it's there for you. This can also be used for Birthday or retirement parties, etc. Look at our website for new photos and follow our daily posts in January to see what's happening. We also now have pre-authorized withdrawals or credit card donations for your convenience. Contact the treasurer for further information.

Now from our home to yours, we would wish you a very blessed Christmas and may you know the peace and joy in the giving of the special gift, the baby Jesus, the Christ.

*The Board of Bethel Rays of Hope Ministries*

Check out our website for the children to be sponsored and the ones that have already been "welcomed" or sponsored. We are trying to keep you updated as much as possible on the website so refer to it often. [www.BethelRaysOfHope.com](http://www.BethelRaysOfHope.com) or call Joan: 204-467-8033 for questions.