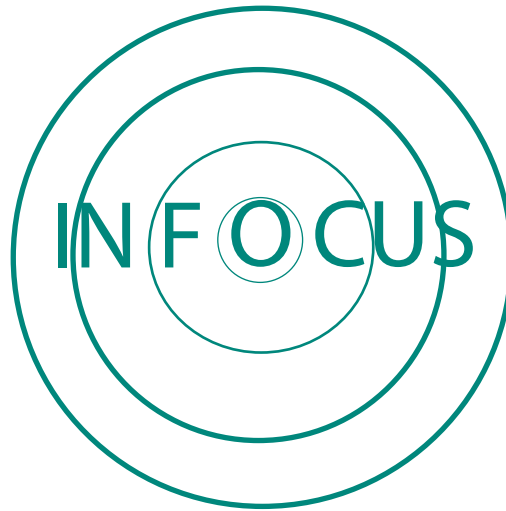


“A father to the fatherless...God sets the lonely in families.” (Psalm 68:5-6)



The number of lonely children worldwide without families to love and care for them is staggering. More than 15 million children around the world are orphans because of HIV/AIDS with 6,000 more added to that number every day (World Vision). Global estimates of children living on danger-filled city streets run as high as 200 million. Wars, poverty, abuse, exploitation and natural disasters daily add to these numbers.

Throughout Scripture God’s response to the orphan is described as being a “helper to the fatherless” (Psalm 10:14). Surely He expects us to be helpers, too. But how can we follow God’s example?

One way is by engaging in what is on His heart—setting children in families. The loss that most poignantly reflects the sum total of a child’s loneliness is the loss of home and family. Yet one of our biggest failures in ministries

labeled “holistic” is the restoration of home and family to orphaned or exploited children. Without a family to provide protection and daily needs, children are left defenseless, vulnerable and open to all sorts of exploitation.

James 2:15-16 poses a question that incorporates a vast range of children’s needs—needs that according to God’s plan would be supplied through a child’s home and family. James asks, “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” We could reply to James’ question by stating the obvious: without a loving family to nurture and protect them, children are stripped of the “hope and future” promised to them by their heavenly Father.

This issue of Barnabas highlights some of the ways we can set lonely children in families. Darla Calhoun, founder of Agape Children’s Ministry, set up group homes (sometimes called cluster homes) in Kenya for street children. She simply could not leave the street children to face

cold, lonely nights on danger-filled city streets. Yes, it took a lot of resources and personnel and, yes, it took a long-term commitment. And, yes, she faced problems, especially behavioral. But, wouldn’t Jesus have done the same? He is the one who challenged James to respond with action when a need was present.

Jenny Woods, founder of Alliance for Children Everywhere, writes about the three nurseries they have opened in Zambia for orphaned babies and toddlers in severe crisis. ACE focuses on local adoptions, foster homes and occasionally foreign adoptions to “set children in families.”

Diane Olson (*Out of the Basement: A Holistic Approach to Children’s Ministry*) provides a measuring stick to evaluate the validity of a holistic project. She says, “Holistic ministry with, by and for children is somewhat like a rainbow. The entire rainbow is a gift from God. While there are distinct color bands, the colors mesh; and sometimes we can’t tell where one ends and another begins. At times, one color is more vivid than the others; at other times, the whole rainbow is quite bright; and sometimes the colors are pale. But what if a color were missing? A holistic ministry is a broad spectrum of opportunities, learning, growing, sharing, and believing, while being and becoming disciples of Jesus Christ.”

Part of the broad spectrum of opportunities for any orphaned or homeless child is living in a safe, supportive and loving family environment. My prayer is that the “color” of home will not be missing from your rainbow.

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Providing A Loving Home for Street Children

—Darla Calhoun

An African man once told me, “To work with street children one must have the skin of a rhino, the heart of a dove, and the patience of a Tibetan monk.” While that thought still makes me smile, I have to admit his advice has been comforting many times.

Agape Children’s Ministry was born in Kisumu, Kenya in 1993 out of a desire to help a few kids off the street. At that time very few girls lived in the street, so we focused on the boys. We truthfully had no idea what we were getting into, and we are still learning as we go along. However, after 13 years living among the street boys, we recognize some common threads that have been woven into the fabric of our work.

◆ Street children lead desperate lives and have been forced to take on adult responsibilities prematurely, giving up whatever remains of their childhood.

◆ They have little reason to trust adults. They have been let down too many times so they live in survival mode, manipulating and conning whenever necessary.

◆ They desperately need love, but sometimes feel unworthy of it. They have been treated like modern day lepers, and some kids eventually believe they deserve that kind of life.

Darla Calhoun is founder and director of Agape Children’s Ministry.

◆ Any one can give a child a clean shirt and a haircut, but only the transforming power of God’s love can make their eyes shine so brightly you’d think they had been plugged in!

Challenges and Victories

Working with street children requires a call of God on the caretaker’s life. With that cornerstone in place, you’ll have the strength to go on when things seem to be crumbling around your feet. One must accept the built-in heartache that comes with this work. No matter how hard you try, a few children will not respond. Perhaps a child who seems to be making good progress suddenly leaves, goes back to sniffing glue and refuses any further help. I’ve had to struggle with the lesson that God only requires my obedience. He does not hold me responsible for the choices others make. I like to fix things, especially unhappy children.

But sadly, fixing

is not always possible for me in this work.

One of the first boys in our home was named Patrick. He was one of eleven children, all by different fathers. We found his mother working in the tea fields, but she could not remember his father’s last name. We later realized Patrick had a personality disorder, which is not surprising given his situation. He often lost his temper and became violent. Yet, no matter what kind

of havoc he started, he could never accept responsibility for his actions. Eventually his behavior became so unruly and disruptive we had to let him go for the sake of the other children. I can still shed tears of sadness and feel the sense of failure. However, we now have 123 other young men at Agape who are doing very well.

In 2004, for example, our Agape Boy Scout Troop took first place in the national campsite competition. This fete was truly amazing when you think of what it represents. These same boys had been called scavenger rats and were actually forced to live that lifestyle. But now their love for the Lord, their discipline and diligence has set an example for the other boys in our home, and their accomplishments have stunned members of the community.

Creating awareness in the community is also very important. People get used to what they see every day, and in many cities around the world, street children have become a common sight. Most businessmen don’t want these kids near their shops and women see them as little thieves. They are abandoned, rejected and neglected. The most likely place to begin is with the church, but even there it may be difficult to change the attitudes of people who are afraid the street children will be a bad influence on their own children. So rescuing these children is an uphill climb!

The good news is the Lord loves these children more than any of us can imagine. The boys have told me that the very fact they are still alive proves God’s love for them. The Bible tells us the angels

Working with
street children
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taker’s life.

of these children always see the face of the Father (Matthew 18:10). We have been holding church services in the park for the last two years with 70-100 street boys attending each Sunday. We also have weekly soccer games for those remaining in the street. Meals are provided on both occasions. These activities help keep us close to them and build

The return of
a child's love
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ever
imagine.

their trust. A number of these boys have now prayed to receive Christ. We are currently working behind the scenes to set up a micro-enterprise using locally available materials. The goal is to help the street boys earn an honest living and to equip them for life through discipleship in the Word of God and mentoring in life skills.

The heart of a dove plus the return of a child's love equals more joy than you can ever imagine and is worth all the hard work and energy it takes. Someday you may find yourself wondering why God chose you to receive such an enormous blessing.

Workers for the Harvest

If the Bible were written today, what would it say about street children? Most likely it would repeat what Matthew 9:36 already says. In fact, I often refer to that as my "street kids verse" because it is a perfect description:

"When (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shep-

herd." Jesus went on to say, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." Today, over 150 million children desperately struggle to survive in virtually every city in the developing world!

Why are so few working with street children? Yes, it's hard work and it is expensive. But in setting up Agape, one of the most difficult things I encountered was finding reliable staff. I was amazed at how many people wanted to work with street children. I soon realized how many were unemployed and just needed a job! While I thought they truly wanted to help the children, they assumed I had a lot of money to pay. So a huge disappointment resulted on both sides. When I later visited the Labor Office to see what the government rules were, I learned it was a lot easier to hire than fire! Dismissing someone required documentation, warning letters, and severance pay.

About that time, Romans 8:31 jumped off the page: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" And Revelation 3:8 was a gift from God, "See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut..." The answer for Agape was to hire Christian Bible school graduates who love the Lord and feel called to this work. We also instituted a probation period for new staff members which worked for everyone's benefit.

Agape Children's Ministry currently has an outstanding national staff. The boys frequently refer to Agape as their family. To provide them with that security, the adults are referred to as "aunties" and "uncles." We have an open door

Hear these boys sing!
Order their CD
"He Knows My Name"
from Agape Children's Ministry
www.agapechildren.org
email agapekids@med-amb.org

policy in our offices so the boys feel free to stop by and chat. Even the guards at our gate have a jovial rapport with the boys.

Internship Program

Jesus continues in Matthew 9:38 with this instruction: "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." One day, as I read that passage, I had a strong sense we should be doing more to duplicate our efforts. "But how, Lord?" I wondered. Then He gently whispered to me, "Use what you have."

Over the years Agape has grown from five boys to 123. So we've gained a little knowledge along the way. Our hearts ache for every single boy we have to leave in the street due to lack of funds and space. One painful memory is a boy looking at me fervently saying, "Mama, when are you coming to collect me?" Without doubt we have the *desire!* Now we have leadership in place to begin a new internship program, so we also have the *opportunity!* God is giving us the vision to start small and give university students a variety of hands-on experiences. For example, they can spend time with:

- the boys at Agape
- boys who still live in the streets
- our secondary students living in boarding schools
- our farm and vocational training project
- our missionaries, house-parents, teachers and cooks
- the Children's Department officer
- pastors and other leaders in the community

Serving the Lord through loving street children is an awesome privilege and must be shared. Just imagine how wonderful heaven will be when we're surrounded by a sea of radiant former street children!

Adoption— The First Option

—Jenny Woods

God created the family to be the first institution of government, and within this nuclear matrix children receive the nurture and training they need to become stable, productive adults. Children who grow up in other forms of care such as orphanages, no matter how excellent these institutions may be, lack basic coping skills for “normal” life and may have serious difficulty fitting into culture and society outside the controlled institutional environment. For a child who has lost mother, father and extended family, the best alternative is, almost without exception, a new family. Psalm 68:5, 6 tells us that God is a Father of the fatherless. God sets the solitary in families.

Adoption is shown favorably throughout Scripture as a way that God uses people to do His will and nurture the orphan and the outcast. Moreover, we are told in Romans 8:15 that when we come to Him for salvation *He adopts us* into His Heavenly family (Romans 8:15).

There are two reasons a couple or a single adult may consider adopting a child. The first reason has to do with the *needs of the person who is adopting*; a child is needed to complete the family. Today's infertility rates are higher than ever before, causing couples to see adoption as the only way they can have children. In this case the child desired is usually a healthy infant.

We are familiar with the challenges of finding a baby faced by infertile couples. In developed countries dozens of potential adopters contend for every adoptable infant. But most of us don't give much thought to the problems that may be encountered by childless couples in developing countries where the numbers of orphans far outnumber the families applying for them.

We would not expect countries with high orphan populations to have couples or families who *needed* a child. The perceived problem in these countries is too many, certainly not too few, infants. In 1998 when we first began talking about a crisis home for premature and high risk infants in Zambia I was shocked to hear the now all too familiar response, “Why should we put

Jenny Woods is the founder of Alliance for Children Everywhere (ACE). ACE has established three crisis care nurseries or rescue homes in Zambia to provide a safety net for infants and young children in severe crisis.

so much effort into saving an infant's life? Who will raise these babies? Is it not kinder to just let nature take its course?”

“What about adoption?” I would ask. “Surely there are families who would gladly adopt healthy infants.”

Not in Africa, I was assured. No, the extended family would never allow outside blood into the circle. Any adopted child would be discriminated against, used only as a servant.

We opened the home anyway. To date *every* healthy infant that is free for adoption is adopted, nearly all of them by African families. It quickly became clear that before we opened our home there was no safety net to care for the babies while the adoption arrangements could be made, hence there were very few surviving adoptable infants. In follow-up visits to the home, we have found exactly the same dynamics in Africa that we find anywhere else. The only danger our adopted children may face is being overly protected, excessively cherished or exceptionally spoiled!

Sadly, the same is not true for older children, sibling groups or for children who are handicapped or unwell. This brings us to the second reason for adoption, *the needs of the child*. It is harder to find families for these children, but when we are successful it is well worth the extra effort.

A significant number of American or European couples want to share their love and lives with a needy child. Many of these families are Christians who pursue adoption of a child with special needs or international adoption as a distinct ministry. These adoptive parents usually have other children. Often their children are older or grown. They have no personal “need” to have another child, but the fact that God could use them to give life to a child who would otherwise be discarded motivates them to press through the paperwork, red tape and inevitable delays that are a part of any adoption, but especially of international adoption.

In the United States more than 500,000 adoptable children are “waiting” for families. Most of them are handicapped or have experienced abuse and neglect, and many of them have behavioral problems. In an effort to find appropriate homes for as many of these children as possible a national adoption subsidy program helps pay for medical needs, counseling and even ongoing financial help with food, clothing and education. Because of this financial help no family is disqualified for financial reasons alone, more children find families and, since subsidized adoption is significantly cheaper than foster or institutional care, the public saves money. Everyone wins.

A similar approach is critically needed in developing countries where the number of orphans is skyrocketing and poverty prevents the general

(Please turn to page 6 for the conclusion)

NEWS & EVENTS



Upcoming Training Seminar to Focus on Street Children

Crisis Care Training International (CCTI) will present a training seminar for workers among street children from May 17–20, 2006 in Fort Mill, South Carolina.

Featured presenter will be Andy Sexton, Oasis International's Director for Children at Risk. Sexton has spent 20 years working with street children and is currently based in Uganda.

Dr. Phyllis Kilbourn, founder and director of CCTI, will also address the seminar and present CCTI's brand new training curriculum *Offering Healing and Hope for Children in Crisis: Street Children*. Copies of the training tool will be available at the seminar.

Seminar attendees will also hear from Alison Johnston. Nurse Johnston, serving with SIM International, has assisted in the establishment of an HIV / AIDS project in Ethiopia that provides homecare for children displaced by and terminally ill with the virus.

The seminar will be held in the Plaza Hotel in Fort Mill, South Carolina. Room rates of \$89 (plus tax) includes transportation from the Charlotte Douglas airport in North Carolina. Seminar registrants will make their own hotel reservations.

Seminar cost of \$225 per person includes training costs, lunches Thursday through Saturday and refreshment breaks.

CCTI is a ministry of WEC International. You may view our Web site at www.wec-int.org/rainbows. and click on Training.

Contact CCTI at 803-548-2811 e-mail <crisiscare@comporium.net>

VIVA Network Celebrates 10th Anniversary

We congratulate the Viva Network for ten years of fruitful ministry through forming networks of children's projects around the globe!

With perhaps more children at risk in India than any other country in the world, it is encouraging to learn that a new Christian network for children at risk in India is being developed by Viva Network and the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI). This new network will help to develop quality Christian child development by inspiring, encouraging and equipping those already working with children. The network will also mobilize local churches to work with children at risk and will help them develop programs that are based on both kingdom values and professional best practice.

Strategy for Holistic Discipleship

Rainbows of Hope in Brakpan, South Africa announces plans to begin a discipleship club for the older children among whom they work and who have made a commitment to the Lord. Each Saturday morning a van will bring these children from the informal settlement (sometimes called a squatter camp) to the Rainbows property where they'll first of all be provided with breakfast. The group will then dig into the Word of God with resident local worker, Samson, helping with translation. The rest of the day will cover a variety of activities.

God has put on the hearts of the team to provide a holistic ministry that will be spiritual (Bible

and prayer), physical (nourishing breakfast and lunch plus help with clothing needs), emotional (counseling for emotional healing), mental (literacy and possibly help with school work), social (team building activities and learning to care for one another) and vocational (learning job skills and self-sufficiency, sewing, horticulture, etc.).

"We would appreciate your prayers," say project directors Keith and Pauline Whiting, "as we work on the exact format to use and begin this new ministry."

World Weekend of Prayer

The World Weekend of Prayer for Children at Risk will take place June 3 and 4 this year. UNICEF has said that 2005 was "an unprecedented year of emergencies for children." Join with us to pray that this year is one of restoration, hope and healing for vulnerable children all around the world.

We are mobilizing increasing numbers of people to pray through our partnership with the Global Day of Prayer, which falls on the same weekend as our weekend of prayer. Millions of Christians will stand together to pray for transformation in their communities and nations, as well as for children at risk. More details are available at

www.globaldayofprayer.com

Children's Spirituality Conference

Christian Perspectives second triennial conference examining children's spiritual development and formation will be held June 4, hosted at Concordia University, River Forest, (Chicago) Illinois.

Christian researchers and ministry leaders who care about the spiritual lives of children should attend. For more information see [// www.childspirituality.org](http://www.childspirituality.org) // or call Holly Allen at (479) 524-7298.

Caregiver's Time Out



Taking a Zigzag Journey

—Jenny Kallmier

After covering thousands of air miles, thinking my flights were going straight “as the crow flies” from one destination to the next, I discovered that my flights were actually off track 90 percent of the time. Apparently the function of a particular console keeps correcting the flight course. Any time the plane veers off course, the system corrects it, and the only time we are truly on course is at the point in the zigzag where we actually cross the path.

I find great encouragement in the thought of that meandering flight that always manages to reach its destination. I also find great encouragement in David’s psalms—David who loved God so much, but had a bias to sin and despair. Here was “a man after God’s heart” who kept veering off course.

In Psalm 57, after fleeing once again from Saul, David seems to teeter between desperation and confidence. He feels desperation as he looks around the cave of his situation and confidence as he reflects on the majesty and mercy of his God. “Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me ... I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings.” “I lie in the midst of lions ... among

Jenny Kallmier works alongside her husband, Trevor, serving WEC International as international office leaders in England. The Kallmiers, in missions since 1976, served first in Java, Indonesia, then at their sending base in Australia and later as Asian regional directors, with a few years also in pastoral ministry—a varied journey,

ravenous beasts Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.”

If David in his fear, spilled out all his frustration and confusion before God, then a few minutes later extolled the greatness of God, there’s something here for me to learn. I can “pour it all out”—the frustration, disappointment, hurt, pain—as long as I leave it there and grab hold of all that God IS: my redeemer, Lord, master and friend, the great Creator, the beginning and the end, lover of my soul. I want to love God the way David loved God.

That zigzagging flight also reminds me of the bias to sin that the apostle Paul refers to in Romans 7. He says, “For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.” I want to stay on course, but something inside keeps dragging me off the flight path.

Occasionally, God does bring a Nathan (see 2 Samuel 12) into our lives to help us recognize what we need to deal with. The real challenge then is to accept that input and come humbly to God, asking for forgiveness and help. Some people never get across that line. David, when faced with his sin said, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

Straight after Romans 7 comes the promise that “there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” How freeing is that? The only thing that keeps me heading off course is an unwillingness to admit when I’ve been wrong, or when I’ve held onto negative attitudes, or pride.

In spite of this bias to sin, Paul still saw himself as someone who

intrinsically wanted to do God’s will. In his inward man Paul says, “I delight in the law of God.” That phrase describes the real Paul and the *real* you and me. Because of the new nature that God has given us, we really do delight to do His will. And the Spirit of God within us, like a homing device “seeking the face of Jesus,” keeps bringing us back on course.

Adoption (continued from page 4)

population from parenting additional children. In many of these countries large families are the norm and having many children is considered a blessing. The barrier to adoption is lack of money. Families struggle to feed and educate their natural born children. If they were to take on another child their own children would suffer. At the same time relief organizations typically open orphanages, which cost far more than it would cost to sponsor a child within an adoptive or foster family. Coordinating such an international program of adoption subsidies does not have to be as difficult as it may seem. By using indigenous local church networks to recruit, train and supervise foster and adoptive families from their congregations the professional social work can be cut to a minimum, an excellent standard of care can be maintained and the local church can be empowered in yet another way to show the practical love of God.

Adoption should be our first response for orphaned or outcast children. The child is set into a family—a blessing for both the child and the family. The Church is elevated and individual families within the congregation are given a practical way to minister in their own homes. The costs for child care are reduced, enabling more to be reached with less. And it works. Which really isn’t surprising since adoption was God’s idea in the beginning.



Crisis Care Training International is a ministry of WEC International. Phyllis Kilbourn, Director <crisiscare@comporium.net> Marjorie McDermid, copy editing and layout <marjmcd@cs.com>