



A Poverty of Celebration

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

Poor Africa! So much suffering, hunger, drought, corruption, HIV and AIDS and the list goes on. Poor Africa!

We may have pictures of exotic safaris to the Serengeti, romantic evenings in Zanzibar or the majestic snows of Kilimanjaro. Yet, it is difficult to visualize Africa without a vivid reminder of poverty. Poor Africa.

And poverty there is; the per capita income in Kenya is a few dollars a day, and that is only for the fortunate who find work. Poverty is on a scale that most in the so-called developed world cannot imagine. It is ugly poverty that destroys both body and spirit.

However, there is another kind of poverty in Africa. Matthew refers to it as the "poor in spirit." This is not poverty of the purse, but poverty of the being. This is the kind of poor that involves an anxious need for God. It calls for simplicity of life, which leads to a confidence in God. It is an absence of pride and the constant need of possession or place. It is the kind of poverty that does not destroy nor deprive, but builds up and brings abundance of life. This is a poverty that uplifts both body and spirit. It is a poverty of celebration. This is a beautiful poverty.



These are not just words, for daily we see the richness of this poverty in the songs of the women, the smiles of the children, the devotion of men and the faith of all.

As missionaries we are called to do all we can to ease the ugly poverty but we are truly blessed and enriched to witness the beautiful poor.

Pastor Sam and Cindy Wolff, ELCA missionaries in Kenya, meet with Masai church elders. The Masai community, dependent on its cattle, has been particularly impacted by devastating drought, as cattle have perished by the masses.

For Slaves and Kings

Phil and June Nelson, ELCA missionaries, walk alongside members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon in their ministry. Phil reflects on the richness and diversity of Cameroonian culture.

As a pilot, I learned the words of another anonymous pilot: "Slip the surly bonds of earth and touch the face of God." These words sent shivers down my spine. As a missionary, I get to touch the face of God both in slaves and in kings.

In Cameroon, having family is everything. It defines who, and what, you are and can be. Tobi Pauline was born into slavery and, because her owner abused her as a young girl, she is barren. At about the age of 13, as Tobi doesn't really know her exact age, she fled and found refuge at the Lutheran mission in Ngaoundéré. She worked, first, for the hospital cleaning soiled laundry and, later, as cook and washer woman for Norwegian and American missionaries. The many missionary children she took care of became her family. Some of them support her in her old age. I have touched the face of God in Tobi, the daughter of a slave.

Aboubakari's family owned many slaves like Tobi. Aboubakari was born into royalty. His father, one of the most powerful kings in northern Cameroon, believed that royalty must not be corrupted by western influences such as education. Despite this, Lutheran missionaries living in his father's kingdom assisted him in obtaining an education. With Aboubakari's education, he rose to

the ministerial level in Cameroonian government. After his older brother became sick, and died, Aboubakari was chosen to be the Lamiido of Rey Bouba. He is bringing his kingdom into the modern age. For his subjects, this is a new day with many possibilities.

We humans are created in the image of God; both slaves and kings are God's children. We touch the face of God when we touch our neighbor.



ELCA missionaries, Phil and June Nelson, serve in Cameroon. Phil assists the church in business administration; June works as a nurse.

Barbara and the "Garage Boys"



Barbara Robertson, ELCA missionary in Tanzania, meets with the "garage boys."

An ELCA missionary in Morogoro, Tanzania, Barbara Robertson serves as part of a team establishing a Primary Health Care program in the local diocese. Barbara shares how her ministry touches the lives of young men.

"It was my great privilege to spend a morning with a group of young men I fondly refer to as my garage boys. Over the years, I have come to know quite a few of these young men and have watched them grow and mature. Because I had done a HIV and AIDS seminar before, the older fellows have hounded me to have another session for the new boys who have joined the garage. Seventy young men attended the session!

"The main themes were 'have long-term life goals, be responsible, and get tested.' Joseph, the owner of the garage, told me, 'It matters that you come. They have changed because of you.' And, I've changed because of them. How honored I am that they should listen to what I have to say."

ELCA missionaries change lives! ELCA missionaries, alongside our global neighbors, strengthen medical ministries, preach the gospel, train

pastors, teach, help build churches, advocate for the poor, help develop communities, and—through word and service—share the good news of Christ to restore people's lives.

Through your support of ELCA missionaries, you help to change lives! Thank you! Your gifts make a lasting world of difference.

The Rev. Twila Schock is director for ELCA Global Mission Support.

A HANDY IDEA

The "2011 Hand in Hand Annual" is a wonderful tool for your ministry.

- Hear what the ELCA has been doing together with global companion churches
- Learn how you can become a missionary
- See what ELCA missionaries are doing in 48 countries
- Discover how you can support one of the ELCA's 233 missionaries
- Find handy resources to order to augment your congregation's global mission ministry



Get your copy by contacting globalmissionsupport@elca.org or calling 800-638-3522, ext. 2580. Order Code: ELCADS1033. You pay only handling and shipping for this free resource.

Sponsors needed

Sponsors are needed for **Kristen Opalinski**, ELCA missionary in South Africa. Kristen is a communications specialist serving with the Lutheran Communion in South Africa (LUCSA). Her work involves developing and maintaining a Web site that shares LUCSA's ministries and designing communications material to



promote programs and ministries sponsored by LUCSA and its member churches. To minimize travel time and maximize effectiveness when Kristen makes visits, sponsors are especially needed from Minnesota or Pennsylvania. For more information about missionary sponsorship, e-mail globalmissionsupport@elca.org or call 800-638-3522, ext. 2657.

HOW TO GIVE

1. To give through your congregation, write "ELCA Missionary Sponsorship" on the check's memo line.
2. To give online, visit www.elca.org/4missionaries.
3. To donate directly, make your check out to "ELCA Missionary Sponsorship" and mail to: **ELCA Global Mission Support, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4101.**
4. Give a gift that says "you mean the world to me." Call 800-638-3522 to donate and to request a Global Mission Support gift card ("Thanking," "Celebrating," "Honoring" or "Remembering").
5. For assistance including ELCA Missionary Sponsorship in your will or estate plan, contact the Rev. Twila Schock by e-mailing globalmissionsupport@elca.org or calling 800-638-3522, ext. 2641.

