

A letter from Barbara Nagy in Malawi

October 20, 2008

Dear Friends,

We have been back at Nkhoma for close to two months after visiting many of you this summer. Due to staffing changes at Nkhoma Hospital I am no longer primarily responsible for the pediatrics ward, although I am available to them for consultation on a daily basis. Instead, I am supervising care and teaching in the adult male and female wards.



Our first three patients on the female ward were surprising. All three were young women with malaria and life threatening anemia who required emergency blood transfusions. Since it is unusual for an adult to suffer from such a severe attack of malaria, we looked further for provocative factors. All were HIV negative, meaning they weren't sick because of AIDS. All, however, had babies less than three months of age, all had attended antenatal clinic and in each case iron was marked in the patients' health passports as being "out of stock" for the duration of their antenatal visits. This simple medicine should be available to every pregnant woman free of charge, and its absence has a significant impact on maternal mortality.

If any of these young women had died, she would not have been counted as part of the astronomically high maternal mortality in Malawi, but surely her death would have been related to pregnancy. Her death would have resulted in the death of her young infant due to malnutrition a few weeks later, as infant formula is unobtainable for the vast majority of Malawians: two deaths preventable with a medicine that would cost less than one dollar for the duration of the woman's pregnancy.

Although at Nkhoma we have daily struggles to buy most basic medicines, we have prioritized buying medicines for antenatal mothers even if government sources falter. This is possible only because of the faithful support by the many people who donated medicines, and we send our sincere thanks for your support.

Now we hope that these young mothers recover completely from their anemia and are protected from malaria in every way possible, so that with their next pregnancies they may not come so close to losing their lives. The tools to accomplish this are very inexpensive and straightforward: iron tablets, insecticide-treated mosquito nets, malaria prophylaxis, family planning tools that enable a family to choose the timing of the next pregnancy, and often, supplementary food.

Many of you have followed the construction of the first building of the Ebenezer Education Institute, a primary school just beginning at Nkhoma. The first building is speeding to completion, and the first preschool class, now housed in an older building, will soon take up residence. It will be a great joy to hear rain beating down on that new roof! Already many staff members have benefitted from the new school, and many more are eagerly anticipating having their children benefit. Organizers continue to put in place the "teaching of the teachers" aspect of the school that will mentor and equip volunteer nursery school teachers from all around the Nkhoma area, and scholarships are being planned as funds permit, to make the impact of the school on the children in our area as great as possible.



Today (Monday, October 20) was the first day of occupancy of the newly renovated male and female wards. Work is still progressing on the children's ward. It is wonderful to be able to access sinks and electrical outlets, have screens on the windows, be able to hang up bednets, and give patients access to oxygen concentrators without having to ship them to other wards or hospitals. For all this, we say thank you, because your involvement and support have meant a lot to these projects.

Blessings and peace as you enter the Advent season!

Barbara Nagy

RECLAIMING CHRISTMAS GIFT OPTIONS

Every Christmas the Presbytery of Western North Carolina offers "gifts that give twice" that both honor your family members and friends and help those with specific needs.

By supporting the mission programs of our Presbytery, you are, in fact, honoring the birth of Jesus, who came that all may have life, and have it abundantly.

The following cards and card inserts supporting the stated ministry are available for 2008:

Cards are available for a minimum contribution of \$20.

Nkhoma Hospital ~ Malawi, Africa

In your honor a gift has been made to Nkhoma Hospital in Malawi, Africa.

Nkhoma Hospital in Nkhoma is a large, regional hospital of the Church of Central Africa-Presbyterian. It provides services in pediatrics, maternity, general medicine, surgery, and ophthalmology. The hospital also serves as a referral center for an extensive satellite system of smaller hospitals and clinics. Although it has vast responsibilities, it has extremely limited resources. This gift will help Nkhoma Hospital in its ministry.

Inside Right: May your Christmas be a time to reflect on the simplicity of His birth and the magnitude of His purpose.
Luke 2:11-12 Christmas Blessings.

Ebenezer Education Institute for Children ~ Malawi, Africa

In your honor a gift has been made to the Ebenezer Education Institute for Children in Malawi, Africa.

Primary school in Malawi is of very poor quality due to lack of resources and teachers and the poor status of students as they enter crowded classrooms. It is customary for a primary classroom to have over 100 students, no desks, no books, and no supplies. The Nkhoma Hospital staff values education for their children so highly that many make long daily trips to Lilongwe or leave the hospital for jobs closer to better schools. Ebenezer Education Institute for Children was founded to offer quality education to children in the Malawi community. Work on the first classroom has begun and this gift will help bring this dream of a quality school to reality.

Inside Right: May your Christmas be a time to reflect on the simplicity of His birth and the magnitude of His purpose.
Luke 2:11-12 Christmas Blessings.
