



Special Issue

"Committed to sharing God's gifts among all peoples of the world"

Africa 2014

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*"For my thoughts are
not your thoughts,
neither are your ways
my ways," declares the
Lord.*

*"As the heavens are
higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher
than your ways and
my thoughts than your
thoughts.*

~ Isaiah 55:8-9

From the President

Dear Friends,

We were not supposed to go. There were no funds and there was no team. There was no plan of action. But one thing I have learned through the years - when God directs, you don't question, you simply follow. And His blessings flow all around you.

Let me explain how this mission trip happened. In August of 2012 Tom and I began attending Grace Baptist Church, the fifth and final church we visited in our search for a new place to worship closer to home. I immediately felt a sense of this is where the Lord wanted us to be on our first visit there.

In January we began working with a group of students in our church preparing for a mission trip to Kenya with a local group, "The Benjamin Wellness Center, Inc." It was not until I attended a program in March where the families that went on the trip reported on their activities, that I found out who was in charge of this group. Believe it or not, I had met this gentleman in 2005 while preparing for our very first mission trip to Kenya. Peter Mbugua,

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The Benjamin Wellness Center, Inc.

Some Words From Our Friends at the Benjamin Wellness Center

As part of our efforts to establish a permanent medical clinic in the forest village of Gatamaiyu, Kenya, a team of 29 people traveled from January 2-19, 2014 to that region. We conducted a medical camp, which included medical, dental, vision, and physical therapy services. Construction on the site continued with the floors being poured, cabinets being framed and built, and the steps being refinished. Bible programs were conducted in the local primary school daily, and programs were also conducted at three schools in other areas.



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a native born Kenyan, was interested in bringing medical care to his home village and the surrounding area. He was hoping to learn from our team leader, Pastor Panicker, who had been working in Kenya for more than 20 years but circumstances prohibited him from joining us.

For the past 5 years Peter and his wife Gail, while working with a local Kenyan church, have been bringing free medical and dental care to the people of Gatamaiyu, a remote village in the interior forests of East Africa.

After the mission trip report program I spoke briefly with Gail about the work of "We're All God's Children" and mentioned that I had met Peter eight years ago. A few weeks later, at their request, Tom and I visited with the Mbuguas to learn more about their work. It seems they have been providing medical and dental care in Kenya for several years but were never able to provide any sort of vision care. Had God brought us together again for that purpose?

After much prayer we decided we would depend on the Lord to open doors and lead the way. And lead the way He did. Our financial needs, which seemed insurmountable in the beginning, were not only met but there was enough left over to help a young girl in need. (See "Meet Peace" on the back page.) Several Lions clubs and sponsors helped us gather and transport more than 3,000 pairs of prescription eyeglasses and 500 pairs of reading glasses.

Our initial team of 4 volunteers plus Tom and I dwindled to two but several of the dedicated students of Cairn University and other team members stepped up to fill our needs and with their help we were able to see every person who waited patiently in line. In Gatamaiyu we distributed more than 850 pairs of eyeglasses!

We were able to meet up with an old friend from our first visit to Kenya. We had attended Pastor Andrew Guya's ordination ceremony in 2006 and kept in touch through the years. Pastor Guya and his family choose to live and work in one of the poorest areas of Nairobi city. He offered his home and volunteers from his church so we were able to conduct two days of Vision Clinics at his church serving almost 300 people in need. Many people were brought to the Lord during our visit.



We are especially grateful to our faithful prayer partners who surrounded us with prayer every day. It was so comforting

to know our needs were being prayed for specifically. We traveled in safety, our supplies were enough for our needs, God provided just enough strength for every day, and our health held up. We were blessed to work with a wonderful team and meet so many precious people. God surely walked among us.

We were not supposed to go. Or were we?

In His Peace,

Carol Fanelli
Carol Fanelli

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Benjamin Wellness Center

To see other ministries at work in Kenya, the team visited two children's homes, a ministry to the HIV population, and a missionary school. The team participated in community life, as well, including attending the local church services, visiting homes, and the moving of a home. Rounding out the trip were a hike through the Gatamaiyu forest to see the waterfall and a short safari at Maasai Mara. Each evening the team met to digest the day, plan for the next day, and pray. This was the fifth trip of its kind to Gatamaiyu, Kenya, for the Benjamin Wellness Center, and future trips are currently being planned.



Our team this year was one of the largest teams we have taken. We were very thankful for Tom and Carol Fanelli and the ministry of We're All God's Children for joining with us to conduct the vision clinic as part of the medical ministry. The team of students from Cairn University was also very helpful and kept the team lively. Everyone appreciated Blair's CD of African music played on the bus each day.

The trip was very successful, having treated nearly 1,600 patients, giving 850 pairs of eyeglasses, and extracting fewer teeth than in the past because Michele, our dentist, was able to save more teeth by doing more fillings and bondings. We greatly appreciated her efforts in getting materials and equipment donated for the dental clinic. Each team member made a significant contribution and we are so thankful for each one.

Peter and Gail Mbugua
BWC Founders

For more info on BWC visit:
www.benjaminwellness.org



INSPIRATION AND HOPE - *Glenn Mahoney*

What impacted me most was the people I met. The villagers were all so welcoming and happy even though they had so little. The Senior Saints on the trip inspired me to keep running the race and finish strong. The youth gave me hope that not all the next generation are like the kids who make the headlines for all the wrong reasons. It was truly a pleasure to get to know each person on the team and consider them all good friends.

I admit I did not want to go to Africa. We always supported the mission of The Benjamin Wellness Center, and we gave financially, but I never thought I would actually go there. God, however, had other ideas for our family. Through encouragement from Peter and Gail and the need they expressed, we felt God calling us to go and put feet to our faith and “do something”. God is so faithful and He knows when we need to be pushed to grow.

During my two weeks in Kenya I saw God’s love for the Kenyan people and how He is working in Africa. I saw God’s love for us in allowing us to be a part of His work, and in His protection and provision and the multitude of blessings we received from the gracious people of Peter’s village and the area around it.

I SAW GOD’S LOVE - *Bev Mohney*

I have felt very tired and stretched, but I have felt useful in God’s hands and enjoyed the great blessing of being part of an exciting team that loves and cares for each other and the people they have come to help. I have felt part of the body of Christ as it was meant to be these past two weeks, and for that I am very grateful. So if you are reading this and think, “What a great mission trip, but I could never go... don’t be so sure!”



CORRECTED - *Carol Harker*

I really wasn’t planning on going to Africa this year. One of our team members had asked me to go again because they really needed more nurses. My response was, “Absolutely not, I don’t want to go this time.”

Then during one Worship Service, as I cried, God corrected me to say, “Yes!” I thought to myself, OK, God, if that’s where you want me, I’ll go. I raised the funding needed in a miraculous amount of time.

Our trip here has been very rewarding – helping so many in need and also getting to know the team that has become family forever. I was fortunate to make new Kenyan friends and greet those I’ve met before. The one case that stands out was a little boy who ate a chameleon and was still alive. I gave his mom medicine for the infection in his stomach and he began to improve. By the grace of God he is still here. Kenya stays in your heart forever and a smile comes with every memory, even the hard days.

BEAUTIFUL GIRAFFES! *Quinn Mohney*

My favorite new thing was feeding the giraffes. Africa is so beautiful!



JOINING TOGETHER AS ONE - Michele Gladstone, DDS

Becoming involved with the Benjamin Wellness Center and providing dental care for the people of Gatamaiyu has brought so many wonderful changes to my life and to many others who are a part of my life. To be able to help the too many people in desperate need of dental care through the generosity of the dental community in the Philadelphia area joins the two very faraway places as one. What seems like such a simple lifestyle has so much wealth and substance. The whole experience brings new meanings to our daily lives.



Above: Michele (in red) works on a patient with assistance from Tiffany while Ben looks on.



BONDS OF FRIENDSHIP *Neil Gordon*

As I reflect on the trip to Gatamaiyu, I am warmed with feelings of great personal satisfaction and friendship. Bring part of a team that was able to provide much needed medical services to so many is personally rewarding. Through the warmth and hospitality of the Kenyans, bonds were established that will hopefully last for a lifetime.

FORMING TIGHT BONDS - Natalie Crooke

This was my third trip to Gatamaiyu, and I am hopeful that it was not my last. Every time I go my friendships with those in the village grow deeper. I am especially thankful for the relationships I have been able to develop with the women in the village - both my peers in their early 20's and the mothers' and grandmothers' of the village. It encourages my heart to see how Jesus Christ can so tightly bond myself and women of a different ethnicity, culture, and language. It encourages me that God would see fit to allow these friendships to take place in His perfect timing and for the added bonus of allowing me to help serve my dear friends in Gatamaiyu in their physical needs with the Benjamin Wellness Center!



A HUMBLING EXPERIENCE - *Jennifer VanBlargan*

This was a return trip to Kenya for me; I went to reclaim the piece of my heart I left there last year. Instead I traded it in for a piece of Kenya to bring back with me.

Each time I go I am forced to realize I can do nothing without God's strength and grace. Without Him I am ill-equipped; with Him I can do all things. It is truly a humbling, life-changing experience. As a health care provider, it takes me 24 hours to work through the frustration of having limited resources to work with. Then I realize, it is not physical resources I need to rely on, but only the ones God can supply. It is all about stepping out of my comfort zone and into the throne of grace – where all things are possible.

I was able to share this experience with my husband, John, and my youngest daughter, Rachel. It is so interesting seeing things through their eyes. At first I did not want to share the experience with them – after all it was my Kenya. I then realized how much I would miss from the experience. It was an exhausting, wonderful, humbling experience. I went to Kenya to make an impact, but I was the one impacted the most.



I WAS STRETCHED - *John VanBlargan*



This was my first trip to Kenya. I was very excited to go and even more excited to be able to share the experience with my wife and one daughter. I went to help with the construction of the clinic. I was able to use my talents in that area but I was stretched in the area where I am most uncomfortable – communication.

From going to the orphanage to simply talking with the village people, I was amazed at what God did through me just by talking with the Kenyans. This was a great trip with great people who all worked together to serve God and His people.

THERE FOR A REASON - *Rachel VanBlargan*



This was my first time, not only traveling to Kenya, but also traveling by airplane so I was a little nervous. I did not know what God had planned for me on this trip but I know now that I went there for a reason. It has changed my life tremendously and hopefully others' lives as well.



A PROMISE TO KEEP - Zach Mahon

This trip was the fulfillment of a promise I made two years ago. At the end of my previous visit my Kenyan family asked me if I would return to them. They explained to me that my work there was pointless if our relationships were not real. I promised them that our relationships were important to me and that I would do everything in my power to return to them.

Flash forward two years and I have now followed through on that promise. I have come back to see and to serve my family in Kenya. I am continually amazed at the working out of the church unity which Paul demanded of us so long ago. These are my brothers and sisters in Christ and they desire only to grow with us and to encourage us in growth.

We do this clinic each year to help meet their physical, spiritual, and emotional needs, while also taking time to fellowship with them. I praise God that He allows us to have such a large family and I am thankful to have seen them again.



WATCHING AND LEARNING - Connor Williams

I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of my trip to Kenya, but one of the most impressive things as a college student, was watching all of the other professionals on the team come together to use their skills to help the people in the village. It was really neat to see them work, learn from them, and help them in everything from construction to dental, medical, and vision. I'll never forget my time in Africa.



MEMORIES MADE TO LAST - Ben Cordillo

I had no idea what to expect, however I would say that the experiences - from the orphanage, to the village, and many other new and exciting adventures - far exceeded my expectations. I would say that the one thing I had hoped to happen - did; my eyes were opened and my heart softened. The things I saw and the people I met will never be forgotten. I do not know if I will



get back, but the memories I have will last forever. My prayers will be with Kenya, the people of Gatamaiyu, and the people I met. God is good, all the time.



MY AFRICA - Ally Mahon



Africa did much more for me than I could ever do for it. It took a piece of my heart and kept it there among the generous, happy people, next to the banana trees and tea fields. I don't know how

long I will be able to stay away from my Africa. I just pray that we made more than just a physical difference in their lives, and pushed them towards the love of God.

THE BLESSING OF CHILDREN - Erica Meyer

As an Education Major at Cairn University, I was thrilled to have the chance to visit some schools while on the trip. We visited four schools in total and taught Bible stories and played games with the children. Even if we had to squeeze 140 students in one room or have class out in the hot sun, the children were very excited to have us visit and play with them. It was such a blessing.



EXPECTATIONS - Katrina Haase

I expected to be frightened, humbled, pushed out of my comfort zone, and brought to tears. I wanted God to break me down. I expected to have to rely on God completely and totally. I expected to learn just as much as I was teaching. I expected to come back a changed person.

Expectations met. Mission accomplished.



A LOT TO LEARN - *Denae Lind*

My second trip to Kenya was great! It was very different from the first for many reasons. One of the most important reasons was that my family was not with me this time. Before this trip I had never been away from my family for more than a week, so it was a whole new learning experience for me.

Even though I was stretched I had a great time and learned a lot. The team was great and helped me in areas that I struggled in. God definitely used this trip to teach me about Him and to help me grow closer to Him.



THANKFUL TO SERVE - *Jenn LaRue*

I wasn't sure what to expect when I left for Kenya. I had been to Kenya before but I had no experience with providing eye care. However, finding glasses soon became second nature to me. It was such a privilege to be able to give people something tangible to show them how much God loves them. The look of joy and gratitude on the faces of the people who thanked us because they could now read their Bibles was truly humbling. I am thankful to have been allowed to serve.

MORE THAN I EXPECTED - *Jan Milles*

I am thanking and praising God that I was able to go to Kenya. I praise God that He gave me the health and strength to get through each day. It was an awesome trip. Being able to help the people see surely was a blessing. The people really appreciated us and gave back to us more than I expected. I will never forget the little 6 year old girl we are trying to help by getting care for her eyes. Her mother had no funds to get her treatment and the girl has had to remain at home the past four years because she could barely see. The mother was overcome with joy and tears which really touched me.



“KARIBU KENYA!” - *Athalie Tamez*



There has never been a time when someone who I had never met ran up to me, eyes and arms wide open, and took me into their arms with a big wide smile saying, “Karibu Kenya!” meaning, “Welcome to Kenya!” The people were extremely hospitable, and we immediately became a part of their family. They welcomed us into their homes, and even though they did not have much to offer they always made sure we were well fed.

At the medical clinic, I worked with the vision team helping the Kenyans as they tried on pair after pair of glasses, looking for a good fit. Some of them tried on the first pair of glasses, and by their reactions we knew it was the perfect fit. Unfortunately, we were unable to help some of them because we did not have glasses that fit their specific prescription, or because they had cataracts and needed to undergo a surgical procedure that we were unable to provide. Despite this fact, they were very understanding and thanked us anyway for the help we were able to give. Seeing their reactions and excitement because they could now read their Bibles for the first time in years is something I will never forget. I continue to hope and pray for the people in Africa, and I pray that one day I can return to visit my new friends and family there in Gatamaiyu, Kenya.

YOU CHANGED ME - *Jess Schnittjer*



“Africa, I came to change you, but instead you changed me.” This is the line from one of the songs my team and I listened to while on our trip, and while we joked about how corny it was, it was also very true for me. I am a Missions major, and I wanted to go on the trip to expose myself to other countries but in the process my heart was totally changed. I formed so many relationships there and am looking forward to seeing how God continues to develop those relationships.

COMPLETELY CHANGED - *Haley Ruhl*



This trip to Kenya could not have been a more perfect start to 2014. The friendships I made with the team members, with the people at the clinic, and especially with the children at the schools, orphanages and clinic - I will never forget. I went on this trip thinking it wouldn't change me that much, but I came home a completely changed person. The Lord really worked in my life through those special people in Africa and I am so grateful for the opportunity I had to go and not only spread the love of Christ, but also make new friendships that will last a lifetime. The scenery is beautiful and the people are just phenomenal. It's incredible what the Lord can do through someone, as long as they're willing to allow Him to work. This trip was truly a blessing and I'm looking forward to going back!

AN ANSWERED PRAYER - *Peter Mbugua*



I feel so privileged to have the opportunity to go back to my village and spend time with those I grew up with, whether helping them, praying with them, or drinking a cup of chai with them. When I was a little boy, I always wondered why

no one brought

people to my village and I always prayed that God would give me a chance to do so. This being the fifth trip helps me be thankful to God for the way he has continued answering my simple prayer and desire.

When we are in the village working with my people, my cup overflows with joy, gratitude, and a fulfillment I cannot explain. I am thankful that not only do I get to go and help where I can, I get the chance to bring all of you who have come with us to enable me do what I cannot do by myself. Each of your contributions are greatly appreciated not only by me but also by all those whom you served. I look forward to many more trips with any of you who are able and willing to do this again.

TESTED AND TRIED - *Gail Mbugua*

The trip was very busy because of the variety of activities that were taking place simultaneously each day. Overall, everything went very well and we consider it a success. We definitely know God was at work, as we were either tested or tried in so many ways leading up to the trip, during our time in Kenya, and even getting home.

On this trip, I think we learned more about having to work together as a team and to depend on one another, which can be very difficult for some of us. This dependency also forced us to be more flexible, a hard lesson for many, especially their first time in Africa. I, personally, was very blessed by the helpfulness of others in so many ways both before and after my accident. Every day brought new challenges and at the end of each day, God brought us through, or at least gave us strength to continue on. Many days our strength was waning, but He sustained us, and we found great fulfillment in being poured out like a drink offering for the Lord. We eagerly look forward to the next trip.



SHARING THE BLESSINGS - *Blair Benjamin*



Kenya has always held a very special place in my heart since my family served as missionaries there from 1989-1991. I have been blessed with several opportunities to return and introduce others to the blessing of serving and visiting there. My greatest joy comes from seeing others' lives changed by their time there as well as the subsequent impact they make in the lives of the Kenyan people.

IT WAS GOOD! - *Candace Mbugua*

I was excited when I heard Quinn was coming. The trip was good and I had fun. It was good that I got to see my cousins. The work was good because they made progress on the shelves and a lot of people got glasses. I had fun playing in the dirt with Quinn. I'm looking forward to the next trip.





LEARNING TO TRUST - Carol Fanelli

For me, the trip this year, was all about learning to trust. It started with the realization that Tom and I were totally dependant on God to provide the finances needed for both of us to go. Not only did we not have the money needed for trip expenses but we also did not have enough to cover our household expenses while we were not working. Add to that the fact that we did not have enough time to gather the number of team members needed to provide the vision services we offer. And finally, one of the toughest aspects for me, I would be dependant on strangers to make all of the many detailed arrangements necessary to assure

the adequate travel, housing, and clinic needs for the team were met. Once again God has proven to be more than generous in not only providing for our financial and physical needs but also in loving patience, teaching me to rely on those He put in our paths - our generous financial supporters, Gail and Peter, founders of the BWC, the wonderful and energetic group of college students and others who helped in the clinic, and those who faithfully prayed for us every day. Lessons learned!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE - Tom Fanelli

This was my third trip to Africa but my first visit to Kenya. On Tuesday of the first week of Vision Clinics I met Joseph. He came to me at my station and told me he was having trouble seeing. After reading his script I fitted him with regular glasses and a pair of reading glasses.

From this time on, Joseph and I would meet for the rest of the week. At lunch time he would come over just to talk and tell me how thankful he was that he could now see clearly. Little did he know how thankful I was to be able to help someone else who lived so far away. With the help of the Lord, I was able to make a real difference in the life of another person.



UNDER MY SKIN - Tiffany Gower

It is amazing how one thing can impact you so much that 5 years later it feels like just yesterday that you were there. This was my second time going to Kenya and I've always said that I left my heart there. This trip just reinforced that. Landing in Nairobi on that first night I felt like I was home. With already going to Kenya before I wanted to make sure that I was not setting any expectations. The only expectation for this trip was that it was going to be much different than the last... And it was.

One thing that was so different this time than last was the fact that we were in the village for so many days in a row that we really got to build relationships with the people there. I really loved the fact that we were able to get to know them as friends rather than "the village we were serving." It never gets old seeing the love these people have for others. By building such great relationships with them it was that much harder to leave them at the end of the trip...I think a good way to put the trip into words is from a quote that stuck with me after my first time going to Kenya. It goes like this, "Africa gets under your skin in a thousand different ways" and it's not going anywhere anytime soon. God has shown me a thousand different ways for Kenya to get under my skin on my first trip and a thousand different ways on this trip. I can't wait for the time he gives me to experience another thousand different ways.





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and especially the many, many individuals who stepped up to support our team members.*

AND NOW THE REST OF THE STORY...

MEET PEACE CATHERINE

While we were hosting our Vision Clinic in inner city Nairobi we met a young girl who was unable to read the eye chart. Tears streamed down her face as she attempted to strain and open her eyes wide enough to make out the letters. It quickly became apparent she could not do this, so we moved her over to the refractor station. Unfortunately it was also determined that her eyes were in such bad shape we were unable to get a reading. After speaking with her mother we learned that Peace was now 6 years old and her eyes had been in this condition since she was 2 years old! Widowed and with 5 other children to support, her mother simply could not afford to pay for medical care. Peace now spent all her days at home near their hut as she could not see well enough to go to school.

Through the support of our generous sponsors we arranged for transport and a consultation with a local Lions SightFirst Hospital. Doctors found her eyes were so badly infected it will take months of treatment with antibiotics before they can begin to determine what treatment will be needed to attempt to restore her sight. WAGC has committed to providing the necessary funds to continue her care no matter how long that takes. We thank God for this opportunity to make a difference!



Peace Catherine