

Hello Friends,

I know I could fill pages about all of the wonderful things we got to experience in Africa because of your generous support. First of all from the bottom of our hearts we just want to say thank you for being a partner on this journey. It means so much that each of you took your personal resources to help us make our dream a reality.

We started off with a 16 hour plane ride to Johannesburg, South Africa and then the next day took the 5 hour bus ride to the country of Swaziland. Swaziland has the highest AIDS population in the entire world. It is speculated that 46% of the residents are HIV positive and that means children are being orphaned at an alarming rate. The organization we went with is called www.heartforafrica.org and the videos on their site show more of the places we visited. After arriving at our hotel, the next morning we split up into 3 teams to go serve at 3 orphanages. Ours was called Emmanuel and it was the least developed of the 3. They recently just got running water. They house over 65 children, many of which have Tuberculosis, AIDS and other physical and emotional issues. Most of them were abandoned or were victims of other unspeakable crimes before they got rescued. Our job was just to go and serve the staff and help in any way we could. We took a van for the 1 1/2hr. bus ride every day.

The first day we met Sonya who runs the orphanage and met the kids who were so excited to greet us with big hugs and smiles. We were literally bombarded by the kids when we walked in. They wanted to play right away. They had fun trying to pronounce our names on our name tags. The home is very very rustic to put it lightly, but every child has clothes and a place to sleep. They have dormer rooms and kids share a bed. The nursery has 9 babies and that is where I spent a lot of my time. I thought chasing Lucy was tough but having 9 babies from 6 months to 2 years old was a whole new ball game. We had to make sure they all got fed, clothed, bottles, and other things to help out "Auntie Cindi" who is in charge of the babies. She and the other ladies live there on the premises. They get paid very little and only get 4 days off a month. They work so hard getting up at wee hours of the morning to get the kids dressed and ready for the day. On the day of Church they literally get up at 3:00am to get the kids all fed and ready for the bus at 8:00am.

One of my favorite things about my experience was bonding with the "Aunties." What I came to realize is that they were moms and wives just like us, doing their best to make a living for their families back home. They send their paychecks to their kids to help pay for their needs. Every single person I talked to said they were so grateful for the Americans who prayed for them and came to help. They didn't understand why we'd come all that way on a plane just to help them. Of course they told me they had dreams of someday seeing what America is like. Ron and I got a chance to pray one on one with a couple of the ladies and that was real blessing. They have tons of laundry and it all has to be done by hand. I tried my hand at doing laundry the way they do with freezing cold water and a bar of soap. Then it has to be wrung out to dry on the clothes line. I was amazed at how physically strong the women are because it was exhausting for me after one or two loads. They even were laughing at how "weak my muscles were." My mom would have been so proud. Ron spent a lot of time planting in their huge garden all sorts of vegetables. He had the kids to help him and some days I went out there too. I even used a thing called a "rake" to take down all these huge weeds. Ron was using the weedwacker, and we're quite a team. I couldn't believe I was standing in Africa doing manual labor...God had to be laughing! I gave it my best shot. We had one little boy, Sibosisu, who helped us wherever we went. He loved to garden and pull weeds, and became quite attached to Ron and me. He was especially attached to my video camera. He kept begging me to borrow it saying "Teacher, I'll take a good picture for you!" He is now our sponsored child. The kids were absolutely obsessed with my camera and video. They had hours of fun taping each other and then watching the playbacks.

The kids have this spirit of Joy that was beyond what we expected. They danced for us and Ron showed them some of "his moves." One day we had a special treat because the US Military surprised the orphans with gifts of food and toys. The kids don't have many toys so this was like Christmas. They got soccer balls and dolls and it was awesome to watch.

We saw this little boy Suffice, who was paralyzed and could not walk, get healed and start walking by himself. We prayed for a little baby who was very sick and she was better the next day. The kids that were very sick when they came to the orphanage are all doing much better

now. We see how God heals supernaturally over there. They were in a drought for 7 months. and we prayed for rain, it rained that night. I think the best part of the trip for us was the opportunity we had to pray for so many people while we were there. We prayed for healing of women in the market from Diabetes and other ailments. We attended a wonderful church service and were blessed by the people and their joyful spirits. We saw the land that has been purchased to build a hospital and more homes for children. I'm running out of room but please check out our videos at www.kerripom.com. Our hope is to return again next summer if God is willing. Maybe you can pray about joining us? We are so grateful you sent us and hope we can continue to share what God is doing in Africa at our shows for thousands of people this coming year. I know now no matter what God calls us to do. We can do it through Him who gives us the strength!

With great love and thankfulness,

Kerri