



The Rafiki Foundation, Inc.

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"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil"
(Psalms 23:4).

Dear family and friends,



ED COMFORTS A CRYING CHILD AT LOCAL ORPHANAGE

As the congregation sang the familiar words above during the worship service we attended this morning, the voices were especially fervent. We have always enjoyed the heartfelt singing in all the African churches, but here in Liberia singing the old familiar words takes on new meaning. These people truly have walked through "the valley." Years and years of civil war with all its terror and its atrocities give the songs of trust and comfort extra importance for the believers.

They have their favorites. *"Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,"* the voices swell, *"because He lives, all fear is gone."* Perhaps they are remembering that time in 2003 when hundreds and hundreds of people crowded into their church and the courtyard around it, seeking sanctuary from the gunshots and the rockets fired between rebel and government troops in their humble neighborhood. The pastor and his wife, as they sing today, perhaps are remembering the agonies of that awful time. Faced with the opportunity to escape, they chose to stay with the people. It wasn't a decision to take lightly. Earlier in the war, over 600 men, women, and children taking shelter in a nearby Lutheran church had been hacked to death. The massacres, the losses, and the hurts in this country are many.



CAMOUFLAGED TANK IN FRONT OF OUR HOME

With a new peace and a new government in Liberia, hope is growing. A large United Nations force is here to help keep the peace. (The camouflaged tank and sandbagged guard post outside the place where we live remind us of the peacekeepers daily.) A Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been formed, based on the one in South Africa. The former president of this country is in custody, pending a war crimes trial. The horrors of what happened here are being confronted.



"GOOD" LOCAL CLASSROOM

Bullet holes can be patched over quickly, but "holes" in the hearts of the people need time. Forgiveness and unity won't come easily. Believers here have to live out what they read in their Bibles. Responding to the first notes, the congregation with strong voices sings out the words from the old hymn. It's "their" song.

*Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish,
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.
Here bring your wounded hearts;
here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot heal.*

Thomas Moore, 1816



PROGRESS! RAFIKI VILLAGE WALL JUST BEFORE COMPLETION

Into all this, our work with Rafiki comes. War, combined with the more usual causes of poverty and disease, has left many children orphaned. We are so eager to help and, praise God, the help is underway! The Rafiki Village site is now enclosed with fencing and an entrance gate and wall. The well is producing water. Soon the foundations for the buildings will begin. We can hardly wait!



TYPICAL CROWDED SCHOOL CLASSROOM

As we watch the progress, we continue to meet with Liberian officials and others who are helping here so that Rafiki's mission might be successful. We continue to visit and try to help in some of the existing orphanages and schools. Conditions are grim. The need is great.

Thank you for all your encouragement, support, and prayers. We love hearing from you! It is such a blessing to have you with us in this effort.

Praises:

- Progress in construction!
- God's provision of a place to live during the construction time

Prayer requests:

- Health and safety
- Peace and good governance in Liberia
- Continued good progress at the Rafiki Village (despite the beginning of the rainy season. Monrovia gets over 200 inches of rain each year!)
- Good relationships with our neighbors around the Village site
- Safe arrival of our container from Zambia

He is able,

Donna and Ed Bland

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LUNCHTIME AT A LOCAL SCHOOL—WAITING FOR A BOWL OF RICE

NOTE: Please visit www.rafiki-foundation.org to find information on your ROS, what *Rafiki* is doing, the centers, and the Exchange.