

ACTS SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2012

Much has happened in the life of the ACTS ministry since our last report in early spring. God continues to provide both in terms of resources and surprises as only He can.

A team of nine visited Ethiopia in May and spent ten days in the villages of Koshe and Woja where most of our work is being done. As a result, we have much first hand information and many updates to report.

The Koshe school is complete and is being used by 256 kids in three classrooms. Except during the rainy season which coincides with summer break for students in the USA, the children are in school five days a week and a hot lunch is being served everyday. The appearance of the kids attests to the fact that the meals alone are making a huge difference in their lives. The number of little ones suffering from signs of malnutrition has decreased to a very few. Even such ailments as head fungus and facial sores have nearly disappeared. Praise God for each of you and your support that has made such a tremendous difference in only a year! As a side note, it continues to amaze us how 401 meals can be prepared in the two kitchens that are in such need of upgrading.

The Woja school is nearly finished. We watched the local construction crew use their donkey cart and 55 gallon drum to bring water to the site so that they could finish the exterior stuccoing of the building. When the classes resume after the break for the rainy season, the 145 Woja kids will be returning to school in a brand new school house.



Highlights of the May visit

Our team prayed prior to our departure that God would delay the start of the rainy season until our work on the ground was finished. A year earlier, the US visitors had to walk into the Woja village because rain had made the road impassable, and all the work we had planned for this year's visit would have been nearly impossible if we didn't have better access this time. Upon our arrival, our in country friends and partners confirmed that they had likewise been praying for good weather. The only heavy rain storm to hit the area while we were there circumvented our villages altogether. As we left the villages for the last time, we prayed in the vans that the rain needed for the growing season would commence. God has been abundantly providing for the area farmers this season.

When a team from ACTS visits the villages, we try to be very intentional in what we plan to accomplish. The primary focus of a trip is on building relationships through sharing Christ's love. Any project or work that is done is at the request of the local school board using a priority list that they have provided. We have made it clear that we will not do for them what they can do for themselves, rather that we will work along side of them in the community transformation efforts. Financial resources are scarce so the locals rely on us to provide most of what is needed. Manpower, on the other hand, is readily available. We built a nine course barbed wire fence measuring 70 meters by 70 meters around the Woja school to protect the kids from stray animals. It was a blessing to see Muslims in their robes and head gear lying on the ground pulling wire alongside the head of the denomination of 420 Christian churches in the area alongside the Mission Elder of Trinity Community Church. All were working together to better the environment for the kids. More than once we heard reports of a local man deciding that he needed to leave the work site to go, for example, to market only to be chastised by his fellow workers. He was asked how he could leave when men who had no children at the school and had come from half way around the world were there to better his child's life. So the fence was completed, relationships were built, and our love for God's children was demonstrated.



A second project that was completed was the construction of hand washing stations for each school. The children play at school, use the latrine where toilet paper is unheard of, and then sit down to eat

their lunch. Thanks to our very own “MacGyver” Tom Owen, and his resourcefulness, the kids can now make a stop at a hand washing station to clean up before eating. We taught the kids how to use the foot pump operated faucets along with the soap in an effort to improve the overall sanitation and reduce disease. Thanks to ACTS supporter Sean Anderson and to the Tooth Fairy Foundation, who each supplied 400 toothbrushes, we were also able to teach the kids to use the hand washing stations as a resource for brushing their new little teeth. Fundamental for us, brand new to them!

The Woja school has no power or water. One day we took a walk to see the site of a well that was no longer functioning. It was adjacent to the small church where the Christians worshipped. Our friend Chemdessa, who is the leader of the denomination, led us inside to take a look at the primitive structure. Once inside, our team began to spontaneously worship in song. We were soon joined by fifteen or twenty locals and our English songs morphed into Amharic hymns complete with drums and dancing. Reflecting back at the end of the trip, we agreed that the time spent in that church was one of the highlights of the whole journey.

Another amazing sign of God’s blessing upon ACTS’ efforts happened the very first day that we were at the Woja school. The next thing on the aforementioned priority list of projects that we hope to address is a well for the Woja village. Finding the necessary source of capital for the drilling has been an ongoing effort. But that very first day, we got word that an anonymous donor had pledged to fund whatever balance we needed to go ahead with the project! Site surveys have been done and the well will be drilled in October. Praise God!

Thanks to Mothers in Christ, various Bible study groups, and an eclectic mix of other goodhearted friends of ACTS, each child received a “new” outfit which they proudly displayed throughout the duration of our visit. We also worked in the classrooms telling Bible stories and helping the kids write thank you notes to the sponsors. If you sponsor a child, you should find a note with this mailing.



While so much more happened than can be reported here, one final blessing for the team was the Sunday worship service. While we were there, the service was held on the banks of a muddy river where we witnessed 55 new believers being baptized. The Muslims and Orthodox Christians still far outnumber the Evangelical Christians in the area, but we have watched and had a role as the people group in which we are working has moved from being classified as an unreached group to a marginally reached people group.

What's next?

Just as ACTS was being birthed, the local government had given the local church land on which to build a school and the site work had been started. Mysteriously, the government had a change of heart, the community tore down the fence and the government reclaimed the land. The church with which we work then donated land next to the pastor's house for construction of the Koshe school, but relations with the local governmental administrators remained strained. Recently, because of the good that has come out of the schools, local administrators have been replaced by a group which is fully supportive of ACTS' efforts in the community. One of the new administrators is now serving on the Koshe school board and they have encouraged us to expand the grade offerings beyond the three kindergarten levels. Through our local employee, Abenezzer, we are going to work hard to continue to foster this favorable relationship and the plans to add first grade this fall are already in motion.

We have seen the need for teacher training and are working to arrange training opportunities for our eight teachers through a school we visited in the capitol, Addis Ababa.

The government has strongly encouraged us to address the kitchen situation at both schools. Trinity Community Church blessed ACTS by naming it as their focus ministry for this year's Vacation Bible School. Team members presented stories about the ACTS kids' each day and children were encouraged to find ways to help ACTS and its efforts to better the Ethiopian kids' lives. Again, our great God provided all the funds necessary to build one of the kitchens through the generosity of the VBS attendees. Thanks to Trinity and to the families who donated.

At this point it looks like a small team will be spending much of the first quarter of 2013 working in the villages. Beyond continuing to build relationships, strengthening the curriculum and coaching the teachers will be the primary focus of the trip. Your prayers for these plans and for the prospective team members are both needed and appreciated.

Welcome!

The ACTS Board of Directors would like to welcome Mary Bergdahl to the administrative team. Mary, who has valuable experience working in non-profits, has agreed to volunteer her talents and time in assisting CEO, Karen Cornell, with the accounting and administration functions of the organization. Thanks, Mary, for your much needed help!