

MISSION TO KENYA – 2010

by Kathleen Lifsey, member First Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, VA, and student at Presbyterian College, Clinton, S.C.

On June 25, 2010, I will leave for travel to Nairobi, Kenya, in Africa, returning to USA on July 9th. I will specifically be venturing to the Mathare Valley, in one of the oldest, most congested and poverty-stricken slums in Africa, the home of about 500,000 people just in a two square mile area. In Nairobi is the Mercy Care Centre, a school founded by Dorna Amimo, a Kenya native, and her husband in 1989. After her death, her son-in-law, Patrick Lumumba became the headmaster of the school and is still fulfilling his duty there. Through Lumumba's leadership, the school has expanded to over 400 students. It was initially founded as just a primary school, but in 2007, through a pledged support by the newly-formed American foundation, a secondary school was established and various vocational programs. The Mercy Care Centre Foundation, the American organization, mission statement reads as follows: "to support the Mercy Care Centre, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya by: providing moral, financial, and spiritual support; advocating for the Mercy Care Centre by 'telling the story' of the school's impact on the Mathare Valley slums; encouraging the teachers and staff of the Centre in their work through visits and communication, overseeing fund raising activities; and sponsoring key needs for the operations of the Mercy Care Centre and Vocational School."

This foundation keeps all of its members and donors well informed with updated news on MCCF in three or four newsletters a year. This is the foundation through which I personally became involved through a branch of the foundation, the Mercy Care Council at E. C. Glass High School (Lynchburg, VA), led by Mrs. Patty Worsham and Mrs. Betsy Garrard for students interested in this philanthropic program. As I made my way through high school, I became more and more active in this council. Through this club we continually raised money throughout the entire school year to donate to the upkeep of Mercy Care Centre as well as buying supplies for the school.

On my trip this upcoming summer, our team of ten students and eleven adults are each encouraged to pack all personal clothes and personal items in a carry-on and the other two suitcases that we are permitted will be filled with donated books and school supplies for the students. The traveling group will divide into smaller groups and each one will be responsible for teaching a series of lessons to a specific age group of its' choice. In my assignment I will work with one of the adult travelers and a close friend of mine, Will Ruehle, to facilitate lessons for the high school age students. We will help the students to write a short personal memoir, and then with that, to be able to present it in various ways, mainly through theatrical performances. We plan to photograph scenes from our adventure and share them with you later. Our work at the school will last for 9-10 days. During this mission to Kenya, the team will be staying at a monastery.

I am overjoyed at the thought that I will be able to go on this mission. This is one of the things I have desired most to do for several years and I could never be thankful enough for all those who made it possible for me to go. For further information, visit the Mercy Care Centre website at <http://www.mercycarecentre.com/> or an informational video put together by those that went on the mission in July of 2008 at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3mMmeoogCI>.

Footnote: In December 2009, Kathleen wrote a beautiful message of thanks to the First Presbyterian Church (National and World Mission Group) which provided funds for her airfare. Here is part of her message: "In a time of season for Thanksgiving, I am eternally grateful for your gracious donation to help me achieve one of my biggest goals. I am not sure I could ever give enough thanks to each and every one of you.... Thank you again so much."

