



St Peter's Life-Line



*With love and wishes for a Blessed and Joyful Christmas and a bright New Year, David and Susie*

The 29<sup>th</sup> of November this year saw a huge day of celebration at St Peter's Primary School, marking the end of their academic year with their Graduation Day – a day full of thanksgiving, worship, singing, dancing, speechifying and prize-giving, ending in a feast (complete with slaughtered bull!) being served to about 1,000 parents, families, pupils and staff. But as well as celebrating the children's great achievements, it was also, for all of us, a day of reflection, and one not without a tinge of sadness.

*"If you deprive yourself for the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, your light will rise in the darkness, and your darkest hour will be like noon". Isaiah 58:10*

*This old lady, below, receiving food aid from St Peter's, is over 80 years old*



## **ST PETER'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, KAJUKI, KENYA – HIGHLIGHTS OF 2011: A VERY TOUGH YEAR**

### **For 2011 has been a very turbulent and testing year at the school.**

The year dawned seeing the worst drought conditions affecting the area for many years, with a failure for the second time in succession of the rains, with no harvest, and consequent food shortages and rocketing prices. But it also dawned with hope, seeing the formation of St Peter's second satellite nursery school at the nearby town of Kathwana.

As the year progressed, we linked up with 'Friends of Kajuki', the organisation formed by Dale and Louisa Inglis, that helped build the bridge over the river which physically divided the community; they brought many of their friends and supporters with them. The small charity, Pocket Money Fights Poverty, also weighed in with their support, attracting children's pocket money offerings from local primary schools, over Lent. Back in Kajuki Fr Joe was exercising great moral courage in the face of opposition from the local community, by taking the perpetrators of the brutal tribal ritual of female circumcision to court.

### **The Drought**

The rains due in April made a brief, tantalising appearance, only to fail again, with quarter-grown crops dying in their fields. Fr Joe kept the school open during the holidays to feed the 190 of the poorest children, and appealed to the government for food aid for this arid, forgotten area. Four Franciscan nuns joined to help with all aspects of running this very busy and demanding school. Fr Joe opened celebrations for the not only the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the parish of St Peter's, but also for the 10<sup>th</sup> year of his ordination.

In response to the ongoing drought we opened our 'Dosh4Nosh' campaign for which we received an outstanding response through many generous donations, small and large. Much of our financial support for the rest of the year was given for food aid. The school remained open again throughout the summer holidays to feed the hungry children, and those in need in the community.

### **Tragedy strikes**

Then tragedy struck: on 18 August, Fr Joe, driving to Nairobi in advance of what was to be a joyful school outing, died in a road traffic accident. The community was shocked and devastated, as we were. Fr Joe was the inspiring, visionary power-house, that founded this school from nothing, to serve the poorest of the poor from his parish, and ran it with total trust in God's Providence – no assistance from state or church. Fr Joe's funeral at St Peter's was a massive affair, attended by the Prime Minister of Kenya and some MPs. At the funeral the PM pledged food aid to the area, ironically fulfilling Fr Joe's urgent, former appeals.

### **Fr Frankline**

Providentially, Fr Joe's Assistant Priest, Fr Frankline, had been with him for some months in the parish, and whilst not directly involved in running the school, was certainly immersed and imbued with Fr Joe's vision. On appointment by the Bishop as parish priest of St Peter's, Fr Frankline courageously and willingly shouldered the burden of running St Peter's school.



*Fr Frankline, taking the load*

We give thanks to God's Providence in giving this precious, resilient and faithful community, what they need, when they need it

We give a heartfelt thanks to all our donors and supporters, and those who give of their expertise, time and above all, prayer.



*These young women are candidates for circumcision in the next couple of years. Their dignity will be grossly violated. They will all suffer physical mutilation by unsterile, common, primitive instruments, with the danger of passing on HIV/Aids infection, and without any anaesthesia, pain killing drugs or antibiotics. They are isolated for six weeks to 'recover'. Some will suffer mental trauma, a few will die of infection, and in this remote area, far from police or coroners' courts, they will be quietly buried in the bush.*

But by his own admission, the period immediately after Fr Joe's death was very dark, confusing and testing – with the assumption being made by most that the school would have to close. Fr Frankline has often stated in public, and would wish to continue to make it widely known, that the school would have closed had it not been for the intervention of St Peter's Life-Line to provide immediate and emergency funding (all school bank accounts had been frozen on Fr Joe's death) as well as ongoing prayer support and much encouragement to keep going.

### Supporting the community

David, and Dale Inglis, a Trustee, visited St Peter's in October, to assess, support and encourage. Much was achieved, including visiting Fr Joe's Mum, meeting the Bishop of Meru, mourning at the Fr Joe's graveside, meeting Rita, the inspirational Italian lady who runs an orphanage for 18 children. We learned of the details of involvement by two US charities, Youthlinc and Rotary Community Corps, who will be building two 40 bed dormitories and a kitchen/dining block for use by them when they visit with their young people for two weeks in June over the next five years, but of which will be for use by the school in between and beyond.

### Alternative Rights of Passage

We also learned, quite accidentally, that funding for the vital and very successful Alternative Rite of Passage (ARP) programme, which educates young women to refuse the brutal tribal custom of circumcision, and which culminates every year in a residential seminar of young women at St Peter's to escape the circumcision 'season', had ceased in September. Thankfully we had (most

unusually!) sufficient funds to be able to support the ARP seminar this December. As this is being written, 230 (of a planned 200!) young women are attending the seminar – some, in the words of the lady running the seminar, "have run from home so as not to be cut..". There is a huge demand for this vital programme and we are very concerned about lack of funds for next year, and urgently seek grants/sponsors.

### Graduation visit

In November, Susie and David visited for a week, on a planned visit to attend and share Graduation Day. We also took out a team of three professional guys who kindly gave of their time and expertise to do some minor projects and major surveys round the compound – Mike, in construction, Paul an engineer, and Nick a media producer. We were able to take out 13 suitcases of clothes, shoes, games, balls, skipping ropes and essential tools. The team were able to provide support and advice to the school on some maintenance projects, as well as providing expertise for some major capital works projects for the future. Nick recorded the church and school choirs of which any minute a CD will be hitting an unsuspecting public for Christmas. It was a very successful trip,

In the meantime, the rains now continue to fall, and hopes for a bountiful harvest abound, the school crops were looking well on the way. There is also a community of hens and goats, as well as the newly established trout farm, the school is well on its way to becoming more self sustainable. The school continues to grow, as a new classroom, funded by us, will be ready for use at the start of next term, to accommodate the new Class 7. We hope to grow our Transforming Lives Programme, funded by donors who give regularly every month, so that we can offer more numbers of orphan/very poor children a chance to receive an education.

