

21 May 2007

Dear friends,

It is time for us to write to you and share with you again. First of all, thank you for giving us the privilege of being here. As I think of the partnership we have together here in Maasailand, I am immensely grateful that our family was sent here. We have been partners with other missionaries as you are with us and have shared in the work of the kingdom. Now, we are able to see this work of God first hand, and to meet our brothers and sisters in Christ in person. That is a blessing! We thank you, and I will endeavor to share this privilege with you on paper.

During the upheaval of the post-election crisis in Kenya, when we were far from family and friends, I remembered the promise of God that when we leave our families for the sake of the gospel, we will be given new families. I prayed and asked God to fulfill that promise for us. I prayed specifically for our children that they would be given grandparents among the Maasai. As I thought about who God might give us to be grandparents, I pictured my friend Ng'oto (mother of) Tiwai.

I prayed on Thursday. Sunday was a special day at the church. All the previous weeks the Christian brothers and sisters had been going out in teams to evangelize the community both near and far. They would send three teams a day in different directions to share the gospel in the many different villages and to invite them to church on Sunday. Joshua went with them one of the days and was blessed to see the church at work. On Sunday we had a celebration with sheep roast and other food. Many new people came.

Church services are several hours long in Maasailand, but the children only stay for two or two and a half hours. Then they are sent home with older siblings or cousins to their dinners. The adults stay to listen to the sermon. Joshua and I take turns going home with the children to feed and nap them. It was my turn with the children, but as I left my friends, Ng'oto Tiwai and Naomi, reminded me of the meal, and I promised to return as soon as the children awoke.

The children slept longer than sometimes that day, so the meal had already ended when I arrived. The first person I met was Menye (father of) Tiwai. When he saw me approaching with the children, he called out "kakuiya" (grandfather). The Maasai call each other by the relationship. He was claiming our children as grandchildren, naming the relationship as that of grandfather. I shared with him that I had prayed for grandparents for the children and that he was an answer to prayer. Then I stated that if he is the grandfather of my children, he must also be my father and Ng'oto Tiwai, my mother.



Menye Tiwai (our daughters' Maasai grandpa), with Eliana

Ng'oto Tiwai is a beautiful woman of God. She always has a smile and a look of inner peace on her face. She has told me that it is God who has transformed her from a woman who would become easily angered to a woman of peace. She is a leader in the ministry of the church. She participates in prayer, children's Sunday School, women's ministry, and the teaching of the adults.



Ng'oto Tiwai (our daughters' Maasai grandma) with youngest child

Over Easter, the church held a time of prayer and fasting for a Christian couple who had been fighting and were no longer speaking with one another. After three days of prayer, some of the church members visited the couple and exhorted them to be at peace. The next week, Ng'oto Tiwai invited me to go with her and my friend Naomi on another visit. There we enjoyed a time of "chewing the news" and learned that the couple were now at peace.

I have also had the privilege of watching Ng'oto Tiwai teach Sunday School. She shows the children love in all her interactions with them. One day, I shared with her and Naomi that I had taught our children the story of creation by having them make playdough people and blow on them to see if they would come alive. The next Sunday, they requested the children to bring mud children to Sunday School with

them. Eight children did. Ng'oto Tiwai held each of them up for all the children to see and praised them, making the children who brought them feel special. Then she talked about God creating and breathing life into man. After that, she counted them and pointed out that there were eight and reminded the children of the story of Noah, with the eight people in the Ark. Then two more children came with mud children. Now there were ten, so she quickly opened her Bible to the story the ten virgins and read it to the children.

Two weeks ago, it was my turn to stay at church for the sermon. I sat with Ng'oto Tiwai. I could see that she had been weeping during the prayer time. I suspect that she had been pouring out to God the need of her family. She had a job at the local school, cooking for the children, but she has not had a salary in five months. Between the post-election crisis which dried up the tourist industry and then the grossly inflated number of ministers in the new "grand coalition" government, who are much higher paid than elected politicians in America, the government can no longer afford her salary. Losing her job at a time when inflation is 26% and when she has a son who is wanting to begin secondary, which is not free, is hard.

But after the service, she showed me a kumi (ten shilling piece). A day's wage is about 200 shillings. She explained to me that besides the tithes and offerings, every Sunday each woman was putting a kumi in a bag kept by one of the ladies. There is a woman's conference at the end of June, so they are collecting money. When the time of the conference arrives, the ladies will count the money and send as many women as they can afford. The ladies know that they may not be chosen to go, but still they give.

Later that week, the Maasai-wide women's ministry leaders asked to meet with the women missionaries. They introduced themselves to us, and I learned that Ng'oto Tiwai is the secretary. They told us that although she has learned to read, she was chosen not to write but rather to remember. They testified that she can remember everything that was said at a meeting.

They told us about how, several years ago, they were inspired to start a women's ministry. They described how it was hard for women to find an opportunity to attend a conference because of the work at home and the husbands refusing to allow them to go. They said money is also an issue because the women do not have access to money. All property belongs to men. With the church having a much higher percentage of women than men, this is a real problem. They described how they have attempted to address the issue by sending representatives to the conference to learn and then go home to teach. But as the women's ministry has grown, they said it has become "keiroshi" (heavy).

The leaders are being asked to attend seminars in all the home churches. Women are coming to them with all of their needs and are asking for help, and they don't know how to help them all. They told us how the women are asking them to teach them to garden and to care for the health of the family and to generate income. They told us that the traveling they've been asked to do is taxing their finances

beyond their capacity. They told us that they don't know gardening and health-care and income-generation. They said they have been praying about this and God led them to seek our help.

As I listened to their story and thought about the ministry of Ng'oto Tiwai, whom I know best, I was struck by how much the church has grown. They began this ministry themselves, and God has blessed it. They are living out the gospel of Christ, taking the gospel everywhere. They are eager to visit the Turkana to learn whether they can help them. But like a young mother, who calls up her own mother for advice, they still want help.

Please pray that God would raise up people to help in a way God leads.

In Christ,

Ruth for the Barron Family

Joshua & Ruth Barron, with Alitzah & Hannah & Eliana

Christian Missionary Fellowship

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