



Margaret Evans with her co-worker and good friend Agnes.

Discovering the gift of time

Your gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing* supported Margaret Evans, a youth intern who spent the past year serving the Shauri Yako Youth Support Centre in Nyeri, Kenya. Margaret spent the year teaching and leading Bible studies, counselling and training street youth in life skills, and organizing educational activities such as art, music, drawing, sports and outdoor expeditions. Back home at the end of November, Margaret will adjust back to Canadian winters speaking with congregations.

It has taken some time to adjust to the slower pace of life here in Kenya. As temperatures rise the work pace decreases to a crawl as people try to beat the unkindness of the heat.

I come from a fast paced family. Being one of five we were constantly on the move, dropping one off and picking another up. The older my siblings and I got the harder it was for my mother to get us all at the same dinner table. One was working or at a friend's house, and in later years we were all at different universities. Life was a constant movement.

It is interesting how I learned to equate the idea of success with a sense of how busy one's day is. I have often felt I have wasted a day if I have simply relaxed or taken a day of rest. Our western culture, in many ways, is structured around the idea that work is money and time is a commodity to be spent.

I remember during one of my first months in Kenya I was invited over to a friend's house. She lives in the slums, and survives on very little every day. The day I went to visit her she was seven months pregnant, so any physical labour was a chore. I arrived sometime around lunch. She greeted me warmly and promptly told me I was late. I was surprised, since I felt that I had come too early. She told me that she had expected me around 9 am. I chuckled to myself. Never in my entire life had anyone come to visit me or my parents that early unless they were dropping something off or picking something up; most visits happened in the early afternoon, rarely going beyond 8 or 9 pm. I told her that I would know better for next time.

After a cup of chai (tea) she and I talked about life and love and everything in between. She had obviously been working most of the night preparing food, making a Kenyan dish of githeri: dried

Presbyterians Sharing

Goal for 2010: \$8,675,000

Given by October 31, 2010: \$5,185,518

Given by October 31, 2009: \$5,425,602

Thank you for your faithful support of *Presbyterians Sharing*. Let us continue to work and pray together as we encourage congregations to reach and surpass their commitments in 2010. We are currently 4.42% below what was given at this time last year.



Margaret at one of her music programs.

corn and beans, mixed with other vegetables when available. I quite like it, so I was happy for this welcome meal. After lunch I waited what I thought was an appropriate amount of time before I asked to be excused to go home. She looked at me with shock and said 'you're leaving so soon?' At this point the visit had already been about 3 hours. My mother raised me to never overstay my welcome, so I was just following what I knew.

More chai came out and we talked longer. After a while there was nothing else to talk about so we sat there. I felt awkwardness set in and frantically searched for something to discuss. Finally I stopped and looked at my friend. She was quietly sitting with a content look on her face. Throughout the afternoon she got up to continue her washing and cleaning, all while I sat there, just being a part of her life.

When I began to realize that much of being in Kenya would be about just simply 'being' with the people, a huge weight lifted off my shoulders. I did not have to struggle to find common ground or conversation topics, but simply spend my time with them. They did not expect me to effect monumental changes in their society, they simply asked me to be with them.

Many of the Kenyans I see struggle everyday to find enough, yet they still seem to have time to be with each other. I have seen many people from the West find this frustrating as they try to help people create income or programs. They come to see people as lazy and apathetic, but maybe it is our money-hungry definition that needs to be put under the microscope; maybe it has nothing to do with money at all.

I've spent a great deal of time thinking about giving money. As I have watched the people in my community, who have very little themselves, come together to raise money to transport a sick, dying man to the hospital. I've seen groups of women come together to feed and care for bed-ridden patients, regardless of whether or not they know them. Money is important here, but it is second to relationships. Money is given, but it is given with the spirit of love that comes first.

At home we often groan when we hear ministers talk about tithing and giving to the church. We count every single penny we earn and can turn vicious if anyone crosses our funds; all in a nation filled with money. Perhaps the focus on income generating activities in developing countries is not where the focus should lie. The focus, which Kenyans seem to have figured out, is relationships. Develop those, and the money seems to flow freely.

Why is it then that it seems to be the poverty-stricken people who have figured this out? Money is just as much needed if not more so. Could it be that they have come to conclude that there will never be enough of what is wanted, but that you can always have more love? I think they have figured out we all struggle and suffer in life; we might as well do it together, in strong relationships. The rest will then fall into place.

My one year mark in Kenya is just around the corner. Hard to believe. I am starting to say my goodbyes.

The process of saying goodbye is made so much easier by the fact that I have a wonderful support network to greet me when I come home. I am so grateful for the experiences I have had this year and, even with the hardships, I would not replace any of it because it has made me into a better person. I am still not sure what is ahead for me, but I know that this journey to Kenya has opened a new realm of possibilities and passions and I look forward to whatever it is.



Margaret at spending time with youth.



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