

Dear Friends of St. Anthony's Nursery School, Malawi ☺ Dec 2010

In Memory of Priscilla

2010 has been a really positive and successful year for St. Anthony's Nursery School, Malawi. For the first time in the last 8 years I took a year off from making the trip over and it genuinely seems to have helped establish the staff and local communities' ownership and governance of the school. My Head Teacher, Noel PonsePonse, has really stepped up to the mark and been impressive dealing with the day to day duties alongside paying the staff wages, ordering the new school books, renewing the school insurance etc. He now regularly emails me and has effectively picked up most of the jobs I would complete on my visits to the school. I am confident in Noel's abilities to keep the school running smoothly, with my support when and where he needs it.

I partly made the decision to have a year off from travelling over as I was very fortunate to have two sets of friends spend time at the school this year. I am extremely grateful to Scott and Christina who spent a couple of months in Malawi in the middle of the year and then a former Africa Venture volunteer, Becky, travelled over to Malawi in October. It was invaluable to have their eyes and ears on the ground and I am pleased to say they all found things to be going really well and the staff working hard. Mariam is doing well health-wise following her stroke and is happily carrying out her duties as the 'Child Care Officer'. To make her journey easier we have invested in a school bicycle so the staff can take it in turns to collect Mariam from her home each day. Zomba Catholic Diocese are still involved in the overall supervision of the school and although they are not always actively involved, they have stepped in when Noel has needed their help in dealing with staff conduct issues. Cornelius (the government- appointed Head Teacher of the local boy's primary school), who acts as the nursery Supervisor is proving a useful appointment as he is always on hand to support Noel and the team. I received full de-briefs on all the issues when both sets of friends returned to the UK and I caught up on all the news. Becky also very kindly donated money to ensure the school aprons were all fixed and new elastic attached where necessary. I know the staff were all really pleased to have visitors and thoroughly enjoyed hosting the guest teachers.

The decision not to return to Malawi this year was also partly due to my busy and exciting personal life – Mark and I are now proud home owners of our first house and I am delighted to say Mark proposed in September and we are getting married in March next year! All very exciting ☺ Please note my new home address in Hampshire below (I now commute into London to my job at Save the Children).

So as 2010 draws to a close, I really do feel the staff, Cornelius, the school committee and the church are all fulfilling their roles and taking good care of the school and the children. This has allowed me to concentrate on fundraising here in the UK, whilst leaving the team in Malawi to provide first class early years education for the ever-smiling 80 pupils.

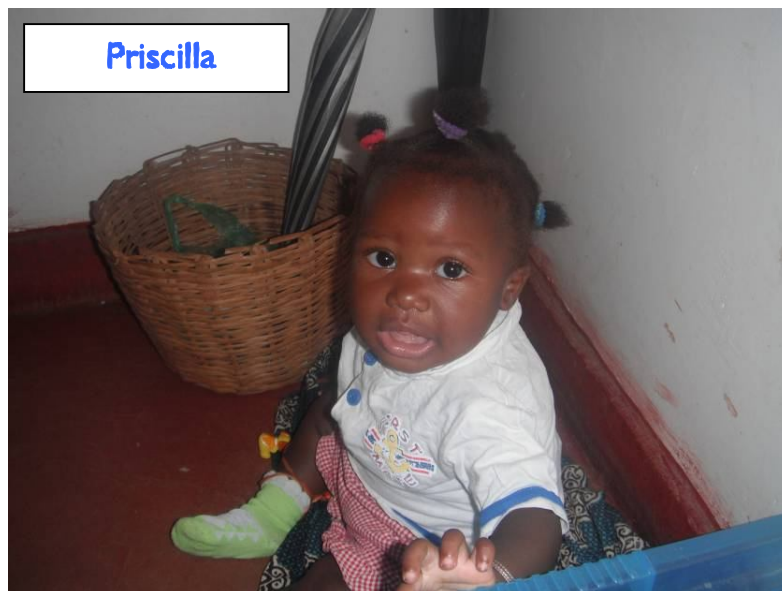


As you will know with my past newsletters there are always unexpected challenges and upsets in Malawi and sadly this year is no exception. Although all is well at the school I wanted to finish by sharing the story of Priscilla. During my visit to the nursery school last year I was really excited to discover one of the teachers, the lovely Martha, was pregnant. I knew Martha already had a young boy so was really happy to learn she was having a second child to add to her family. In March of this year Martha gave birth to Priscilla, her precious baby girl.

At the end of last month during a normal Sunday evening in front of the TV relaxing I received a text from Noel. It simply said 'Martha's daughter died today'.

Priscilla Gunde, aged just 8 months died of malaria. I never got to meet Martha's baby girl and Martha never got to enrol her in the nursery school. Tragically over 8 million children around the world die every year from preventable illnesses such as malaria, pneumonia, measles and diarrhoea. Priscilla's death has made me stop and realise that every single child has a name, has a loving mother and has a unique story and there is still more we need to do.

So I have decided to ensure that every child that enrolls at St. Anthony's Nursery School receives a mosquito net to help prevent the unnecessary deaths to malaria. A net in Malawi costs just £3.30, its such a small amount and I am determined to ensure the children at the school are all sleeping under nets, it's a very small way to ensure we learn from the tragic loss of Priscilla.



Although this year has ended on a terribly sad note I am overwhelmed with the continued support and gifts from you all. I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone for their donations throughout 2010.

Your kindness really is making a difference to the children of St. Anthony's Nursery School.

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and a peaceful New Year!

Gina x



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Please send any donations by cheque payable to 'The Nursery School'. Thank you ☺