

CHURCH ON THE BUS

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2014



An African Adventure

Shearer and Dawn are two North Derbyshire mothers who met just over a year ago and shortly afterwards began working as volunteers on 'Church on the Bus' in Chesterfield. They were immediately popular with visitors and volunteers alike; not only for their warm and caring natures, but also for the wonderful home baking they bring to the bus on a regular basis. For some of our visitors it is the only home baking they have ever experienced.

In 2014 Shearer was given the chance to realise a long-held dream to do charity work in Africa and Dawn immediately said she would like to join her. Financing the trip themselves, they had their inoculations against Typhoid, Hepatitis A and B, Cholera and Malaria and left on 24th June. They flew from Manchester to Mombasa in Kenya – a 36 hour trip which meant changing planes in Istanbul and touching down in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. This was followed by a car journey, including a ferry crossing, to get to Tumaini Orphanage. Arriving at 4 am they were taken to their accommodation, had a few hours sleep, went to meet the children, staff and adults and were taken on a tour of the orphanage, then plunged straight into work, teaching a class of children.

The Orphanage is managed by an organisation known as 'Education For Life Mombasa' which was started and is run by three people from the Yorkshire and Derbyshire areas

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who have devoted their lives to this on-going project. They are helped by a lot of adults from the village, who carry out tasks such as cooking and maintenance and for whom it is generally their only source of income. There are around 700 children in the local school with 22 children in the orphanage and it is in an area where disease, malnutrition and scarcity of resources have caused many problems. The village consists mainly of corrugated steel huts which are generally without electricity, running water and proper toilet facilities. The orphanage has to buy a tank of water each day for all their needs and gives all the village children one meal a day, plus three meals a day for the children in the orphanage.

Shearer and Dawn carried out a variety of tasks while they were there, but on asking advice on which teaching methods they should use, were told simply 'we teach with love and we teach love'. The Kenyan teachers involved have to supply their own books and teaching aids and Shearer and Dawn helped with the cooking, teaching and, in Dawn's words, 'just holding them in our arms and loving them'. They found the children 'inspirational', with a zest for life which made their days 'magical' and felt their best moments were 'seeing the children eventually smile and laugh and play - and grow in confidence, as they were so eager to please'. They saw no toys, bicycles or other luxuries we take for granted in this country, but did see lots of poverty, pain, illness and loneliness in the area. They also saw lots of true faith and joy resulting from that faith, and felt the strength that this gives, even on the darkest of days.

When asked about any similarities between their work in Kenya and on 'The Bus', Shearer said the prayers were similar, asking for help with every-day problems – a basic level of prayer which the homeless and needy of Chesterfield experience with us and which the children of the village also experience on a daily basis. She also said the attitudes of the people of the village reflected the attitude of our volunteers here – seeing the whole person, ignoring their faults and frailties and helping to give them self respect and a feeling of belonging.

Let's give the last words to Dawn – 'For 2 weeks we were left in awesome wonder and had the privilege of working alongside some simply extraordinary people and of being part of the day-to-day life of such inspirational children and young adults'. And Shearer – 'the joy and their true faith in God gave us a light, an insight and an even stronger faith'.



Keeping the bus running

Church on the Bus has been in operation for 10 years and in that time has, incredibly, served around 50,000 meals to the homeless and needy of North Derbyshire. It has been kept alive by the vision and robust on-going efforts of Captain Alan Park, by the various volunteers who work on each of the buses and by the volunteers who provide the food-making time and effort before each session, to ensure there is sufficient food and drink to feed up to 40 people at a time. Recent funding changes due to the recession have meant that some regular supplies of funds have ceased to exist and we are now appealing for regular donations to allow the 2 buses in Chesterfield and Matlock to keep running. We have produced some direct debit forms and would ask everyone reading this newsletter to consider giving a small regular donation by direct debit. £10 per month from 100 people would fill our annual funding 'gap'. So please have a think about this and help us if you can. Smaller regular amounts by direct debit would be equally welcome and would help us to continue giving a lot of comfort to a lot of needy people in this area. Forms are available from Alan Park, who can be reached on 07792 646569 or at captain@churchonthebus.com.



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