

St Simon's Parish, Kikombo Village
The Blessing and Dedication of a Wheelchair, 8 March 2009

“*God is good, God is good for everybody!*” Playing traditional instruments, the choir of St Simon's Parish danced, sang and raised their arms repeating the refrain that God loves everybody – the disabled, the sick and the suffering.



Those were the words that greeted visitors from DCT's Carpenter's Kids at a special Sunday morning praise, prayer and dedication service at Kikombo village parish. The Rev Baraka Y Mdoma, catechists, elders and a church filled with worshippers, welcomed CK Director, Rev Noah Masima, staff members Sarah Dailey, Liz Boe, and Bishop Advisor, Magi Griffin. The event was to dedicate a wheelchair to be given to a little girl, unable to walk and hear from birth.

Her name was Rehele (Rachel), and even her exact age is uncertain – maybe six. Her mother, Mary, who is also deaf, entered the church carrying Rehele on her back. Anaya, her eleven year-old brother, is in the Carpenter's Kids Programme that is sponsored and linked with EDNY's St Barnabas Church.

On a 2008 Pilgrimage to their extremely impoverished Kikombo parish, St Barnabas Church team members had entered Anaya's mud constructed house. In the dim lighting, they met his family. Rehele was immediately noticed on the dirt floor, babbling incoherently. Her haunting image never left the Pilgrims' minds.

Several days later at the wrap-up Round Table meeting, Pilgrim Janet Arms talked about that family's special needs, and wondered aloud their thoughts “if it might be possible a wheelchair allow the child to go outside in the sunshine and be a part of the community life of the village.” Those thoughts became a collective prayer and discernment decision of St Barnabas parish to pursue, and gift, a wheelchair for Rehele.

The rest, as they say, is history! Janet contacted Magi Griffin who, after a long search, found a small-sized wheelchair in Dar es Salaam - that there was one available is a miracle in itself.

The Gospel reading for the service was from Matthew 15:21-28. Pastor Noah preached on the words that nothing is impossible with our loving God, and that God hears us, loves us and listens to the supplications of his people.

Reiterating the Canaanite woman's *Bwana nisaidie*, “Help me, Lord,” Magi continued the message. Do we help each other? How do we show God's love for another? She read from Acts 10:34-35, *God shows no partiality*. For everyone – the physically challenged, those with AIDS, people of all races and nations who follow him, Jesus Christ, *he is Lord of all*.

The story of how Bishop's Mhogolo and Roskam formed the CK Primary School Education Program was re-told, and how their visits to NY and DCT have continued that partnership in their respective dioceses. However, it is in the parish-link *relationships* that form and grow that are the crux of the program.

At the dedication service, heads nodded excitedly when those present were asked if they remembered St Barnabas' Pilgrimage visit. That visit, and all that parish link means to the children and village, as well as to the NY church, was embraced. Thanksgivings were voiced again and again. It was seen in the eyes of the children who gathered around Rehele at the altar, and felt as everyone paraded to her home after the service.



And most certainly, God's great love and mercy will be known and blessed every time Rehele is seen out in the brand new, bright red wheel chair.

Tumshukuru Mungu. Thanks be to God.

Magi Griffin
11 March 2009

