

Painting Murals, changing lives



What happens when five women, four of them college students and one a newly-retired teacher, hear a call from the Holy Spirit that they need to go to Kenya? What happens when these five women not only listen to the Holy Spirit, but choose to step out in faith and obey?

Pictured: Erin Dresher, Hanna Guenther, Eunice, Adrienne Constance, Eileen Dekker, and Billie Olin.

What happens is that their lives are forever transformed and their hearts are forever imprinted with the country, the people and the voices of Kenya.

We are those five women. Billie recently retired from teaching physical education to elementary students for 30+ years, the four others, Eileen, Hanna, Erin and Adrienne are students at Colorado State University. Each of us are on our own walk and involved in our own stories, but we each received the same calling, "there's work in Kenya that you need to be a part of." So with a lot of prayers, receiving sponsorship and stepping out in pure faith, we obeyed and were led to Tumaini, and we will never be the same.

So what do you do when you get a call from the Holy Spirit to travel to a different country and you obey and end up in this crazy beautiful place with 53 beautiful children hanging on you? You immerse yourself. From day one we each agreed that we would do our best to truly understand and be a part of Kenya and Tumaini. This meant that we would not be visitors or guests, but rather family. We would not let others put us on a pedestal, but we would learn as much as we could about the Kenyan way. Yes, that included helping with laundry and dishes, learning to make chapatis, cleaning up messes, slaughtering goats, separating rice, thrashing beans, wiping runny noses, going to market, worshipping in the slums, falling in the slums, dancing, singing, and walking with Massai in their village. To truly do work, you can't look at the world from the outside; you must walk in the midst of it. Form bonds with the people, get to know the land and allow it to imprint on your heart.

The reward of following the call of the Holy Spirit is indescribable. From the minute our feet hit the dirt road leading into the shamba, to our first interaction with the kids pulling us into games at school, we fell in love with Kenya and became a part of Tumaini. Tumaini has provided kids that otherwise would have nowhere else to turn, not only with a home, but with a family. These kids love each other more than words can express. They are siblings. They take care of each other, they fight with each other, they tease and torment each other, but they look out for each other and belong together. And they are surrounded with aunties, uncles, babas, grandpas and an amazing mother who embrace them and shower them with love. If that is not enough, they welcome you into their family. They tease you and protect you, teach you and learn from you. They love you like you have always been there, always been a part of the family. Tumaini is truly unique. The love this family shared with one another and with us keeps you longing for more.

This is just a snapshot of our journey, but there is so much more. If you feel like you are being pushed to go to Kenya and visit Tumaini, do it. See the dirt roads, the shanties, the kids, the women, the men, the babies, the animals, the slums, the wealthy, the poor, the hope, the love, the need for change. You need to see it, experience it, be a part of it. This is our story, but it is also your story, because if you are reading this, you've chosen to take some part of this. And more importantly, this is a part of a bigger story...God's story. Our God trusts us to help him do his work. He allows us to be a part of creation. It is so easy to say no, to turn our heads and pretend that this does not exist. But it does. It's easy when we are comfortable, in our warm beds to think that it's not our problem, not our responsibility, that someone else will go. Instead, step up and step out. Be scared. Be uncomfortable, but go...because that's when God can work on you and with you, when you don't know the answer and when you are dependent on Him. It's worth it. We are hooked. Part of our family lives in Kenya, part of us lives in Kenya. This is just as much our story, as it is yours. So go to Tumaini, write another chapter of the story, leave a picture and have lunch with the family. Just like us, you will be forever changed.