



Breaking Ground Plantings

This month's newsletter features reflections from Breaking Ground staff's recent trip to Africa, where we visited missional business partners in Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia. While we could fill a book with our observations and experiences, we chose to highlight a few personal stories here that share the spirit of the time together and highlight some surprise blessings we found along the way that have worked their way into our new year's "resolutions..."

We thank you for your faithful partnership in 2007, and invite you to continue on the journey with us in 2008, as we "resolve" to...

Find more joy in Christ...and share it!

...the impact Africa had on me is that it is an experience I will never forget. One of the most memorable moments for me was when we visited orphans – these were young children raising their younger siblings due to the death of both parents to HIV Aids. They weren't in orphanages with adults caring for them; these orphans were living alone, in the small huts they had once shared with their parents. When visiting their tiny living spaces, I was amazed at how many individuals will fit into a small tent and use the same space for living, sleeping, and eating, with little more than mats on the floor.



Despite their challenges and suffering, I saw a **joy and happiness they have in Christ reflected much more openly** than I see here in America. I couldn't help thinking that we as Americans need to take a course in how to appreciate the little things more than the "big things" in life. Also, since I love to dance, learning their way of worship and movement was a great experience. The women and children tried so hard to help me learn to move every inch of my body freely, creatively, joyfully...now that I'm home, I'm still trying!

One of my other most memorable moments is when we visited Pastor Bill's church. It was an area they called "Dandora" where they dump all kinds of garbage, used needles, contaminated food, dead animals etc. I could not believe the government or local leadership would let this happen. There were hungry children and adults searching for food in these garbage dumps, and watching them pick through filthy garbage with their hands has left an impression on my heart I will not forget.

I could write volumes about what I have learned and seen here in Africa. I will never forget this trip with my Breaking Ground family. Jeff and Jessica Dennis are very special to me, and I love everyone here very much and enjoy being with them as colleagues, friends, and family. It was such a bonding experience for all of us, and I hope God permits us to return to Africa together.

~Gloria Williams—Job Development Coordinator for the Teaching Factory

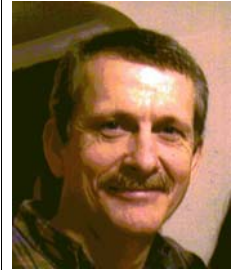
Praise Him in all things...and share more of His heart!

The African people...**with all their heart, with what little that they have...they are grateful and content**, even those that have nothing. Regardless of the challenging circumstances that they face daily – not knowing where their next meal is coming from and turning to the garbage dumps for food for their family. They carry water for many miles when all we have to do is turn on a faucet and yet we complain that the water is not cold when we are thirsty. America is one of the most blessed and wealthiest nations in the world. God has blessed and is blessing America in every way. We have everything compared to what little they have. Some work for a dollar a day to feed their families and yet they are very hospitable and happy people.

We are very fortunate to have what we have. We fight bicker and kill one another over little or nothing. We complain and disrespect and show no love for one another. **We're never satisfied**, it is often shameful - the way we live and act in America before God. In Africa, it had a profound effect on me to see the joy that these people have. **They are on their faces every day praying and praising God.** I am never going to forget Africa. I can still see the animals walking up and down the street like people. I am very thankful for having the opportunity to see how another part of the world lives. **And I'm grateful to God for showing me how very, very blessed that I am. We are all so blessed.**

~Connie Milton—Case Manager in the Teaching Factory

Executive Director Brief



Jeff Dennis

The beginning of a new year offers a time of reflection and promise, as we consider the changes we want (or need) to make and resolve to follow through on those changes. How will we love one another better, as Christ loves us? How will we help bring the Kingdom of God here, on earth - one neighborhood, one home, one life - at a time? Yet most importantly, the new year offers limitless possibilities for us to challenge ourselves to **dream big, to raise our expectations of God** to experience greater things than we have seen in the previous year. For us at Breaking Ground, this means new opportunities to share Christ's love to Lawndale (and beyond) and expecting more lives transformed as a result of experiencing this love.





Kenya Poem

...To learn a lesson in greed and faith,
Find more contentment in grateful hearts.

Take a trip to Kenya
 You'll never be the same.
 The kids that live there,
 I must salute, they grow up in pain
 That you and me will never hope to compute.
 Their parents die when they are just three,

Why then do they smile? It seems impossible to me.

Why should they be grateful for the one shirt they have?

I couldn't live the way they do.
 But that's just me... or is it you too?

All they need is what they have. And they're grateful for that.

So why does it make me sad?
 In the hour I saw them, they already had smiled more than I ever have.
 I do feel bad for them, don't get me wrong.

But I stand conflicted,
 Because I also envy them
 With their contentment and pure joy
 And now that I'm back, **I hope to be grateful for what I have.**

The pain I felt a little earlier, is all just a blur.

There is no reason to be mad at my life, that's just absurd
 To calm myself down from now on I will just recap on Kenya
 And the breathtaking experiences that I was spoiled enough to have beheld.

... excerpted from a poem written by Jessica Dennis, age 15

What's Happening:

Affordable Housing – 42 new homes in 2008!

Breaking Ground's Affordable Housing Program helps low to moderate income individuals and families become homeowners. We have been a catalyst for the revitalization of more than 75 homes within Chicago's West Side, and plan to construct another 42 homes in 2008. Coming in April 2008's newsletter, we'll take a closer look at this exciting enterprise and the construction team that makes it all happen onsite.

Breaking New Ground...ONLINE!

Along with the new year comes a new website! Visit our new "virtual" home at www.breakingground.net, where you can browse our various programs and services, as well as view architectural floor plans for new construction and finished homes. Additionally, users may download forms to apply for homeownership, utilize an online directory of affordable housing resources, apply for residence at Discipleship House, and make secure online donations to support Breaking Ground's work. Website updates will be ongoing, with new features and resources already planned for phase two of the site's development after the initial launch. Keep checking back often!

Our programs:

- Teaching Factory
- Manufacturing Training Center
- Men and Women's Valid Concern
- Teaching Affordable Housing
- Clean Streets
- Minority Contractor's Coop
- Discipleship House



Teaching Factory Graduates Class of December 2007



Breaking Ground Family Christmas Party December 2007

Partnering with us

Contribute financially online at
www.breakingground.net

or via mail by making your check payable to:

Breaking Ground
 3501 West Fillmore Street,
 Chicago, IL, 60624

All contributions are tax-deductible.

Pray and sign up:

For our monthly prayer letter via e-mail, contact Jeff at jdennis@breakingground.net