

Dear <<First Name>>,

February 2009

In just a few days we will celebrate Valentine's Day. While Hallmark cards and other expressions of love will dominate this occasion, I am compelled to pause for just a moment and think of love in the terms described so well by the Apostle Paul.

Paul says:

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong ... If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

I Corinthians 13:1-3 (NLT)

Recently I visited Kigali, Rwanda. I had come to see ERDO's work and explore opportunities in East Africa. But I was unsure of what I would see in this country – while the genocide happened almost 15 years ago, the people still bear the scars of the atrocities and the violence of that dark period.

But I was deeply moved. There in Kigali I encountered authentic love in action.

I sat in a small, simple room with an unlikely group of people. My friends, missionaries Elmer and Sherry Komant, introduced me to Pastor Andrew and Prisca of Christian Life Assembly church. They in turn invited me to come and visit 'Mercy Homes' – safe homes for people who are affected by HIV/AIDS. Many of these people are women and children. They have been stigmatized and forsaken, left without support and care... struggling to live without the light of hope.

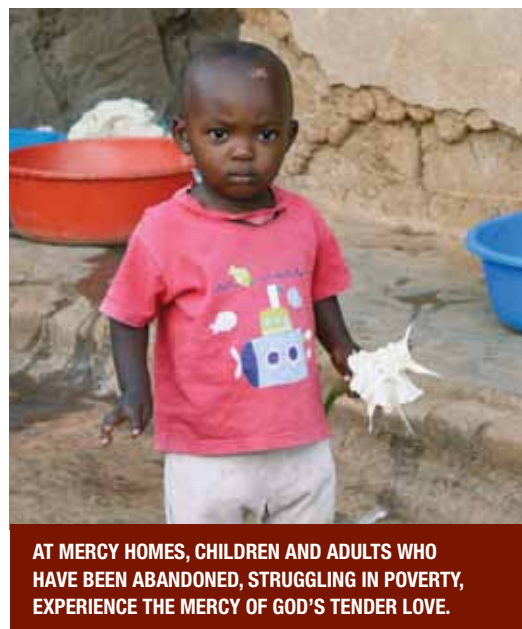
While I can't possibly fully describe the experience of these visits, I hope I can give you just a glimpse.

One home we visited was simple; equipped with bare necessities. I was invited to sit on the couch. It was limp, tired, stained with use. But it offered an honest place to join this circle where a group of strangers had found a home and unexpected 'family'. All of them live with the pain of their past and an uncertain future. We began to share our stories. I hesitated – for what could I share with these people whose past is riveted with such trauma, violence and physical desperation?

I smiled and told them about my family; about Canada and our icy winter winds and frost. As I spoke, sweat poured down my back. A few smiled shyly, then hesitantly they began telling me their stories.

Brandine is only 17 years old. As the mercy workers attended to HIV/AIDS victims in the local hospital they discovered her, confined to a bed, in a fetal position. Prolonged illness had left her immobilized; her family had given up hope. No one came to see her and no one cared. But love found her. She was released to the caring environment of the Mercy Home. Patiently, sacrificially,

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PLEASE USE THIS GIFT TO CARE FOR THE POOR AND THOSE IN NEED...

Here is my gift of:

\$50 \$100 \$250 Other \$ _____

I'd like to support ERDO on a monthly basis.
Here is my first monthly gift of: \$ _____

I commit to support ERDO with my prayers.

<Constituent Number>
<Name>
<Address 1>
<Address 2>
<City>, <Prov> <Postal Code> <country>

Payment options:

VISA MasterCard

Card #: _____

Expiry Date: _____

Signature: _____

Telephone: () _____

Email: _____

I have enclosed a cheque made payable to ERDO.

the caregivers have fed her, counselled her, prayed with her. Countless hours have been spent at physiotherapy sessions so she can walk again. Miraculously, today she is vibrant, healthy and grateful for all the care she's been given.

This is mercy. Love in action. Gently the workers in the home are helping Brandine become whole again.

I also met Cedric, a ten-year-old boy who sat next to me quietly, never fidgeting. I was moved by his sincerity and thought there must be something I can do for him. I looked in my backpack. The only thing I had was a pack of chewing gum. I reached for it, wanting to share a piece with the young boy. As I opened the package, I became aware of the silence. I looked up to see the entire group watching me.

Once Cedric had a piece of gum, I moved to the next person and then the next. In ceremonial silence, each person pushed the little white squares through the foil. Amazingly, when I came full circle, I realized there was just enough gum for each person. I took the last piece and joined the circle again.

We sat silent, chewing methodically, savouring the moment. I looked up and saw gentle, comfortable smiles wash over each face. We had shared a very small but poignant moment of community – the doors were opened and we could relate with each other on a deeper level.

And as I came home, I thought of mercy. And I thought of love.

What is our role in places like Rwanda? What can ERDO offer in countries where we are privileged to be “doing good”?

Through the support of Canadian friends, ERDO is able to come alongside efforts just like this, reaching out to those who face poverty, hunger, crisis and despair. With your gifts ERDO is able to establish places of dignity for men, women and children with immense needs, bringing them into community – here lives are transformed.

God chooses to work within the miracle of mercy and love. It looks little like the love of our world. It goes far beyond a gift or a card. God's love is relationship – the gift of unreasonable love and sacrifice.

As I write, I pray that God would give you a heart of mercy and love. For even though we live in a nation of much wealth – we have great need of mercy. And even though we have everything money can buy – we have great need of God's love.

Continue to pray for ERDO. God has given us a great work. I believe that He will continue to bless it. Yes, we need finances to continue, but more than that we need men and women of prayer and faith, of mercy and love, to walk alongside us. I pray that you are one of those people.

I also pray that you will share our need with others and the story of what even a little support can do. If you are able to give of your financial resources, we accept your gift with humble gratitude – for each gift helps us to accomplish our work.

I am grateful for your support. As one man, there is little I can contribute. But together with a community of faithful supporters, there is unlimited potential!

Thank you for joining me in such a great work as this.

In God's Love,



Kelvin Honsinger
Executive Director, ERDO

PS: Mother Teresa said, “Homelessness is not only for a home made of bricks. Homelessness is being rejected, unwanted, having no one to call your own... There is hunger not only for a piece of bread, but a terrible hunger for love.” By the grace of God may we reach out in mercy to bring the love of Jesus to those who are homeless.

...doing good