Report from Makang'wa

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February 2010

Dear Friends,

"But you can see me!" This was spoken to me two weeks ago by a young woman who came seeking help. Apparently about two years ago she had suddenly lost her ability to speak clearly and her ability to swallow anything except porridge and very soft food. I could not understand her but a friend who came with her could tell us what she was trying to say. She had been convinced by some people that she was possessed by demons and needed deliverance. She did not have a letter from her village office. We normally require that. She was weeping. When it was explained to her that the letter was needed she looked to me with tears streaming and said (through her friend), "You can see me! Why do I need a letter? You can SEE me." I instantly thought of Dives and Lazarus. That was the heart of the problem there. Dives could see Lazarus, and yet did nothing.

"But <u>you</u> can see me!"

Maybe I have to be the eyes through which you can 'see' the people and situation here. The question is "Do you trust these 'eyes'? That is the burden I have to bear and the decision you have to make. *I do thank God for the trust which flows and the love which assists so many people*. To conclude, I believe the young woman suffered a stroke. It seems to be a permanent condition. We did suggest to her mother who later came with her that steady and deliberate speech therapy may help her but the delay has been long.

Some time ago I wrote an article titled, **The Deception of the Color Green.** That is so very relevant for the present time here. Tomorrow is the 1st February, 2010. January is history! This historical record is complex, a strange mix of hope, rejoicing, dismay and grinding need. In this society poverty is different from grinding need! Yet, for the most part the people remain hopeful; so many have this absolutely persistent faith in God. So often I hear "Fr John, God loves us. Something good will happen!"

The rain came at Christmas and during Christmas week – and then disappeared until late last week. In between the days were incredibly hot, baking the ground. But last week we received storm rain, heavy rain with some strong winds. It did refresh the crops and gave renewed hope.

However two weeks before the rain came the **army worms (caterpillars)** arrived! They came by the trillion! Many people lost their entire planting of maize and millet. Some replanting has taken place where people had the money to buy more seed. So many are between a rock and a hard place:

Do I put the little money I have into seed for planting or food for the family!

Well, the heavy rain did wash the worms away for a few days but they are back again. The Government does supply a pesticide free of charge but the farmer must hire the sprayer! That is not free and again many have the same immediate problem….spray machine or food for tomorrow? Moreover if farmer **A** does spray and around him farmers **B, C and D**. do not he has wasted his time and money. The critters are back in two days. It is pitiful to see this. Of course at the Center we share the same problem but I have managed to get our men to spray widely around our maize. We will still lose about 25% of the crop. A farmer's life……. !

The food situation has become more critical, compounded by the fact that the school year has commenced. Secondary School fees must be paid, plus other expenses. Even at Primary School the meal fee must be paid or the child goes without the food, sitting by watching the fortunate ones eat their meal. Yes, there IS no free lunch! We all understand that <u>someone</u> pays.

Daily people arrive at the office door or my bedroom door if the office is closed and the hour is late. A man arrived from Chiwona village, south of here. He has a family of nine. Food has run out <u>and</u> school is in. Double trouble! I have often been asked why 12 and 13 year old children are in grades 2, 3 or 4. This man's situation illustrates the problem. Grinding need drives the children from school. Maybe in a year or two or three all will be better and the child can return. This is desperate stuff in a society which now greatly values education. Our Sponsorship Program is a great help for some local children but currently only 26 Pre School and Primary and 11 Secondary students are sponsored. Believe me those children are greatly blessed.

A key need of the man I mentioned, and there are many in this situation, is Relief Work. That will help with food for the family and will also provide the couple of dollars needed for the Primary School food program. This last Saturday morning I gave a morning's relief work to 39 women. That comes under the theme 'Give us this day our daily bread' for that is about all it will provide. Yet they are so THANKFUL. I know most of these women, at least by sight. The strain shows in their eyes – and they want to kiss my hand when they receive work opportunity – and that just crushes me!

Yesterday a man came asking for work opportunity so that he can access medical help – and also provide for his family. He walked many miles to get here. His village is far to the east. He carried medical documentation with him. He has TB but through lack of money has not been able to access medication for some time now. I viewed the hospital medical record. What can one do? Say, "God bless you. There is nothing can I do!" And then go to my table and eat my rice, beans, and tomato with a cup of tea or a glass of cool, clean water. **NO!** Even when the meal jar and the oil flask seem near empty yet we must offer the compassionate response AND IN DOING THAT offer God opportunity to use us as a channel of His mercy. That, I do believe, is the Christian way, the Gospel Way.

I therefore ask you to pray God's blessing upon the people here and to offer what you may to assist. Pray also for me that God's peace may rule my heart and mind. Stress does amazing things to one's patience – or impatience! I am frequently repenting these days. I must add that there are

times when I feel far away. This is one of those times as one of my dearest friends, Nora St. John, of Billings, Montana died this past week. Her late husband was Canon St. John, a man who assisted me greatly in my early days in Billings and in more ways than he would know helped to set the course of my ministry there. His devotion was an inspiration to me. Nora was a warm CHRISTIAN FRIEND and a constant example to true Christian humility, love and dedication. The joy of simplicity radiated from her. She 'rests' in peace and delights in eternal LOVE.

Every blessing.

In thanksgiving,

John Naumann

Amani Development Center, Makang'wa

Tanzania.

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Donations may be made through:

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February Report - Part Two

Amani Development Center, Makang'wa, Tanzania

Dear Friends,

Firstly, thank you for many kind and prayerful responses to the initial Report. We are all encouraged here. So many parts of Africa have 'quiet disasters'. There is no revolution nor any external oppression. There seems to be nothing to grab the headlines and yet the need is so great. The price of maize is now 10,000/= Tz shillings per 'tin'. That is now beyond the reach of village people unless there is some help at hand. I praise God for the supporters of the presence of Amani in this village region. A visitor asked, "What happened before Amani arrived?" The answer is stark. "People died." Of course our aim is to build up the capacity of local people so that they are not so openly at the mercy of seasonal variations and greedy opportunists. But that does take time and we have been here only a few short years. Yet the change in the surrounding community is clearly evident. Again, thank you for your care and prayers.

The Tuition Program is now under way for this year. This is the first week. To date 143 grades five and six children are enrolled. This afternoon (Thursday) 127 children were present. Our four teachers are excellent and so very caring in their relationship with the children. The local Children of Peace Committee are 'hands-on involved' which is how it must be. One vital aspect of the program is that the children receive a meal of ugali and beans on arrival. That is blessing for the child and of course a help to the household. It means that in some households two of the children receive a daily meal thereby relieving some pressure on the home. Thank to those who have contributed to this food program.

(Left) Grade five students gathered on the second afternoon of tuition. Below is the crowd of grade six gathered in the new multipurpose area. Of course this is far too many for effective teaching. Next week there will be a division into four classes. People are so very thankful for this program and the care offered to these children plus the fact that 130 little one have already received porridge in the morning. Our Sponsorship program combined with Relief Work ensures that a further 130 receive food in the Primary School Food Program. Additionally grades 1 through 4 receive porridge every Saturday. (Many of the Tuition Children are from a second local Primary School which does not have this food program.)

Every blessing and heartfelt thanks. John Naumann.