

# DEAR FRIENDS...



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# HAPPY NEW MILLENNIUM!

“Let me begin by wishing you all a special Christmas and a blessed New Year. I'll celebrate with friends here in Mekelle. I arrived in Ethiopia to celebrate Ethiopian New Year and the New Millennium on 10 September! Thank you for all your prayers; it has been an easy transition back to Mekelle despite having to move house. I am happy I had everything packed in boxes just ready to lift from the one room where my things were stored. Six big orphans from Operation Rescue together with Jon, the youth centre director, helped with the move. Thank you so much for your prayerful support and faithful encouragement. I am very conscious of God's intervention and provision of a house and a cute dog, Kim Wa in response to your prayers.



**“We began by training 54 p4 students and the teachers asked us to teach them too.”**

HIV work at Mekelle Youth Centre continues to keep Rufael and me busy. The older Anti AIDS club girls continue to mature and our Anti AIDS club for boys just celebrated two years together with a community outreach programme using drama, gymnastics, lots of music and a quiz. We are in the process of recruiting

a church intern to work alongside us for six months, and are prayerfully considering a lady called Heiwan. *Please pray we will make a wise choice.* We plan to train four interns from the four main churches in Mekelle over the next two years. The Bible study groups for youth centre girls (13-14 and 15 years +) are going well on Saturday afternoons. Also, Jon wants to begin a Bible study group with youth centre boys, so *pray for doors to open for him.* The study he does with our male staff is an encouragement. *Do ask God to mature the girls and guys in their understanding and knowledge of Him.* Also, for Rufael and me as we lead the HIV work and for the many now involved in teaching their peers.

God has opened doors for us to teach Faith-Based HIV/AIDS Awareness in the rural area. We are currently training 33 teachers as HIV Trainers in a wee school an hour west of Mekelle. We began by training 54 p4 students and the teachers asked us to teach them too. We teach every Tuesday and Thursday during the morning break time. Jon will do some



youth leadership talks and our sports coach, Estefanos, will do some football training too. We would love others to join us in the work here and are very grateful to have Joel teaching English with us for six months and Anne and Chris who plan to join us in January. **Please continue to ask God to send us Computer, English and Sports teachers/ programme leaders.**

Our Girls' Anti AIDS Club members have chosen a unique form of community service. On Friday mornings we visit the Boarding School for Blind children to play games during their break time. The children love to run using a rope tied between a tree and the gate as a guide! Some of the children are not too sure if we really have cleared their path of stones, or if when we count to three we really have made sure there's no one in their way. Hence they run as if they are climbing steps, hesitantly and with caution. Others are totally trusting and run like the wind



**"The children love to run using a rope tied between a tree and the gate as a guide!"**

their faces full of joy and pleasure in the run. I used this as an illustration for the older blind children at their Bible study group one Friday evening to speak of our need for faith and to remember whom our faith is in. I so want to be totally trusting and to never let go of my guide rope – God. **Please pray for us as we work with the blind children in games (7-15s) and Bible studies (16+) that God would encourage and bless them with His love.**

Some of you know of Yonas, a young prisoner living with HIV who has attended our weekly Bible study/living positively group for several years now and is a young Christian. Last October I shared how he asked Gabe and I to mediate with his in-laws asking their forgiveness for his murder of their daughter. During the summer Yonas' two sisters in-law visited him in prison. Quite independently God had pushed them to see him from AddisAbaba and the USA to tell him they had forgiven him. He is bubbling over at God's goodness and the miracle of what God has been doing in his late wife's family and in his own life. **Do pray for him as he continues to serve his life sentence and grows in his faith in Jesus Christ.**

Since the start of the new semester I am back teaching at St. Frumentius Orthodox Seminary. The students are deacons, priests and monks from all over Ethiopia and are such a good target group for HIV and Christian Counselling training. Jon

and I have also been involved in supporting an accredited 'HIV and the Church' course at the Seminary. **I do value your prayers as I teach and build relationships there.** On Monday mornings I'm teaching English at an Orthodox orphanage for girls near the Seminary. They really are great girls and I'd love the opportunity to study the Bible with them. **Do pray for us as we get to know each other better that God would build strong relationships.**

Finally, political unrest out east and at the northern border remains an urgent issue for prayer. The Ethiopian army are heavily involved in Somalia, and troops in the north continue to engage with Eritrean forces! Again this very poor country does not need war, so **please keep praying for peace and wise, just government.**

This comes with much love in Christ,

*Keren*

Karen

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