

1 June 2009

## Madaraka Day

Dear Friends and Family,

8”We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” 2 Corinthians 4: 8 - 9

Today is Madaraka Day which commemorates the day that Kenya attained internal self-rule in 1963, preceding full independence from the United Kingdom on 12 December 1963. Kenya spans an area about 85% the size of France or Texas. The population has grown rapidly in recent decades to nearly 38 million.

In Maua that means there will be a celebration in our stadium. It is 12:00noon and I decided I would walk to the stadium to see what was happening. However, on my way I met some hospital friends who told me nothing was happening at the stadium, everyone was waiting for the Minister of Parliament (MP) to arrive to begin the festivities. There are several groups that will perform traditional dances, songs and poems. There are three school groups that will be singing, one of which is the MP’s school as he was a teacher before he became a MP. There will of course be speeches and our local leaders will introduce each other until they reach the person who can introduce the MP.

There are a few women selling fruit and vegetables at the market across the street and a few people in the street but not many. Often this is a day to visit family or friends. Though there aren’t backyard cookouts there will be ireo and stew, goat meat, chapatti and ugali, the traditional Kenyan foods that mark celebrations.

The hospital is building a stone security fence that will circle most of the hospital when complete. It will not be completed immediately but in steps and stages. A large truck delivers stones to the area that is being worked on every week or two. One of the current delivery points is difficult to reach and so the truck has to go through a small area between a storage room and a shamba. The first time the truck delivered stones it hit a relatively small greveria tree with its rear view mirror knocking the tree over. The greveria tree is one of approximately 700 trees Bill has planted around the hospital compound. He has been planting indigenous Kenyan tress that include Meru oak, greveria, murungah, mwuiria, Nandi flame and jacaranda since mid-2007. Bill was sorry to lose the tree but the truck had to reach the delivery point and the greveria was in its way. After the truck left Bill noticed that the greveria was standing tall once again.

The next time the delivery truck went through the small space it literally ran over the greveria tree both entering and leaving the area. Bill was certain that was the end of the tree but the next day Bill found the tree standing tall, not totally upright but very good for a tree that had been run over by a large truck delivering stones. The third time the truck delivered the stones; the driver ran over the tree knocking it to the ground and then stopped with its wheels on the tree and sat while the stones were unloaded. When the truck left, Bill found the tree on the ground. When he lifted the tree slightly he could see

the greveria's imprint on the ground. This was the end, he assumed. But that greveria has no intention of giving up and is standing, no not at a 900 angle from the ground but better than a 450 angle.



The greveria standing at a 450 angle



The greveria with its branches reaching for the son!

That greveria reminds me that we don't have to stay down when we are knocked over, run over, or even sat upon. As Christians we are centered, focused on Jesus Christ and as the greveria we can bounce back or slowly move back seeking the sun (son) and though we may not be exactly what we were when we were flattened, we usually find we are stronger, our roots have gone deeper and we are walking closer to God.

It also reminds me of many people I work with and serve who don't give up in the face of adversity. Like Christopher, a 17 year old, who fell from a very tall tree and suffered a severe head injury. When he was admitted to the hospital on 4 April 09, he was unconscious with no response to pain or any stimuli. He was cared for daily with hope and loving care. For the first 33 days we saw no progress. However, on day 34 his nurse noticed that he moved his left leg. We all rejoiced and our hope increased. In a few days Christopher could move both legs and then his hands. To make a long story short, I went to visit him today. He was sitting up in a chair with his mom next to him and he was eating bread and drinking tea. He was holding the cup of tea and taking the bread away from his mom's hand so he could feed himself as he was hungry. When I greeted him his hand came out so we could shake hands. When I said good-bye he waved happily and smiled. His eyes are open but so far he doesn't see or talk. He is being prepared to go home with his family. We are all hopeful that day by day he will be able to do more and more. Our surgical staff never gave up one minute on Christopher and Christopher gains ground daily. Please pray with us that he continues to improve. He and his loving, caring mother have inspired all of us.



Christopher as he began to wave good-bye



Christopher and his mom

Last Tuesday, 19 June, we had a Hospital Self-Assessment done by the Hospital Quality Improvement Team. I have been leading these assessments for the last two plus years and am thankful to say that this one was the best I have seen. Every unit worked so hard to meet all the standards, to improve any area they had problems with in the past and to shine. We always choose two winners after an assessment: Most Improved and Best Unit. Both winners were difficult to choose as it seemed we had 33 winners. What a joy it is for me to see the hospital continually raise its standards of care and service.

The rain has continued. Our last rain was Thursday. The corn needs a bit more rain so we continue to pray that it will go another week or two. The sun has been out for 4 days and the weather is lovely. We are grateful beyond words for your continued prayers. YOU make such a difference in our lives.

Reaching for the Son,

Jerri & Bill Savuto  
savuto@maf.or.ke  
Maua Methodist Hospital  
Box 63, Maua 60600  
Igembe, Kenya

"I reckon on you for extreme service, with no complaining on your part and no explanation on Mine." (God speaks to us) Oswald Chambers