

OPEN HANDS

Christ-Centered Economic Opportunities for the Poor



If there be among you a poor man... thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need. DEUTERONOMY 15:7-8



INTRODUCING OUR NEW STAFF FAMILY

Joe Kueper

On July 2nd, my wife, daughter and I are planning to head to Miragoane, Haiti for 5 and ½ months, where we will begin our three year term with **Open Hands**. We are happy to have this opportunity to serve God as we work cross-culturally to help the poor. I was born in Canada, lived in Virginia for 7 years, in Kenya for 9 years, and spent the past 8 years in Kansas, where I met my

sweet wife, Marilyn. Our daughter Zora is just over a year old, and brings a lot of joy to our family. I'm excited that she has the chance to experience growing up in foreign countries, as I found my experience growing up in Kenya to be very positive.

While living in Kenya, I developed a burden for the people there, and wanted to be involved in something that would help them out of poverty. At the age of 20, I left Kenya and decided to head back to the States to pursue a university degree in hopes of returning to either Africa or Asia to work cross-culturally again at some point. I believe this burden was given to me by God, and even though the big picture has not always been clear, I'm really excited to see how God has led just one step at a time. I really enjoyed my college experience, and graduated during the summer of 2012 from Wichita State University with a degree in International Business. I believe God can use this degree to open doors to acquire work permits in foreign countries, and to help

others with business training. There are many opportunities to serve God and be a witness through business, and I would like to see believers in foreign countries bless those around them through their business interactions.

I have been told that often people entering **Open Hands** savings groups are initially not that optimistic about the program, but after seeing the program in motion for a while, they become very enthused about it's effectiveness. In March of this year, I had the opportunity to visit the area in Haiti where my family and I plan to live. I recall incredible enthusiasm and cohesion in one of the groups that we visited, one which was mature and well established. But in a newer group, I noticed a lesser degree of enthusiasm. I love to see that people's expectations are being exceeded through the work of **Open Hands** as they are empowered to save in order to take care of their families and give to their churches and communities. I was also impressed by the warmth and liveliness

CONTINUED ON 4



LEARNING TO WORK WITH OTHERS

Lyndon Swarey

Having spent over 4 years working with **Open Hands** in Haiti and helping to start the project in Kenya, I believe one of the biggest contribution to my life has been learning to work with others. If a person does not learn to work with people, his ability to influence and lead diminishes. This has not been only my experience, but has also been the experience of the facilitators and group leaders. Wherever there are people, there is conflict and being able to manage conflict makes the difference as to whether the conflict builds people up or tears them down and ends in broken relationships. Here are a few very basic, but extremely important things I have learned.

It is important to try to understand the other person and where they are coming from. When something comes up that I don't like, my first tendency is to think negatively about whatever is happening and start assuming that the person has bad motives for what they are doing. To help diffuse this situation it becomes important to talk to them and understand exactly what is going on. Let them talk first and seek to understand the situation rather than talking first and failing to speak to the situation. Sometimes all a person needs is a little advice or encouragement.

Don't get frustrated or upset when people don't understand things your way. The world is composed of people from different backgrounds and experiences and each person acts out of how they believe the world functions. If you get upset in the heat of the moment, it is difficult to hear what the other person is trying to say. You are also more

likely to say something you should not say and later regret it or maybe it should be said, but you say it without love. Sometimes this can also mean laying down the way you think things should be for a method that is more acceptable to the person you are working with and that will accomplish the same goal.

For me, it can become easy to micro manage people and situations when things are not going as I believe they should or I think I could do a better job. This results in people being only puppets. They never learn from their experiences or develop the confidence they need to make decisions. Micro managing a person will never let a person develop into a leader and, in turn, influence others. It also limits your capacity and ability to accomplish tasks since you can only do so many things at the same time. You can never be in multiple places at the same time and being able to develop others to take on responsibility becomes important.

Being willing to listen and to try to understand the other person builds dignity and opens the door to influencing them. Humans are creatures of choice and not giving them the option to choose diminishes their ability to learn from experience which is more likely to impact them than a sermon. Living and working with others is one of the biggest things a person can learn and if a person does not learn to work with people, he will not be successful.

♦♦♦



Lyndon Swarey with Naveen and Rajesh, two of the staff program leaders in the savings group program in Vijayawada, India.



FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

Merle Burkholder

According to the Scriptures in I Corinthians 13 there are three abiding things, faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these is love.

Open Hands utilizes all three of these things in order to help people be successful through savings groups.

The first factor that brings success is faith. Ultimately, it is faith in God that makes a fundamental difference in the lives of the savings group participants. We believe that in order for people to find freedom from poverty, they need to experience reconciliation between themselves and God. This comes by restoring their relationships with themselves, with others, and with nature.

While not all the members of savings groups are Christians, we present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the savings group meetings. The curriculum material that **Open Hands** has prepared for use in the groups in Haiti presents the plan of salvation at least once in every booklet.

We believe that faith in each other is important for there to be progress out of

poverty. Trust is basic to any group that wants to work together for the greater good of all involved.

Secondly, hope is crucial for there to be progress. We need to believe that things can improve and that we can do something about our situation if things are going to change. We bring a strong message of hope to the savings group members. We encourage them in what they can do if they work together and pool their funds to help one another.

In March when I was in Haiti, it was encouraging to hear stories from savings group members of how being in a savings group has helped them. One young man said he is a mechanic. He saves money every week in his savings group. When the savings group pays out the money, he uses it to buy more tools which helps him to increase his income.

Another lady said that she wanted to buy a large cast iron kettle. She said before she was in a savings group she could never accumulate enough funds to buy the kettle. After she was in the savings group she was able to save enough money to buy the kettle. She has been reaching her goals through the accountability and encouragement of her savings group.

I asked one of the pastors how he sees the savings groups working out in his church. He said it has been good for them to have the savings groups in

the church. He said it is not only good for his church members, but also for himself. He said, "I used to try to save money at my house, but it would always be talking to me. My money always said the same thing, "Spend me! Spend me!" and so I would spend it. But now that I am putting my money into the savings group I am able to save for bigger purchases that I couldn't save money for before."

Open Hands brings hope. Hope that people can reach their goals. Hope that people can work together to help each other and see others make progress. Hope that things can improve and life can change.

Open Hands also teaches love. A church or a community will progress when people love one another and help each other by working together. Sometimes that means making our resources available to others.

One person in a savings group talked about how they wanted to start a small business selling things at market. They didn't have the money to buy inventory to get started. They tried to save money but realized that it would take many years to save enough to buy what they needed. They were able to save some funds and then made a loan from their savings group and were able to buy what they needed to start a small business. With that business they were

CONTINUED ON 4

CONTINUED FROM 1

of the people I met in Haiti and I'm really looking forward to getting to know them better.

We appreciate your interest in this work. When Jesus was on earth, He really cared for those He met, and He taught us to help those who are in need. As a family, we need your prayers as we face the challenges of cross-cultural work, frequent travel, and distance from our extended family. God has really been good to us and we desire that He would use us to further His Kingdom. Thank you for blessing us and this work through your prayers. ♦♦♦

CONTINUED FROM 3

able to increase their income and repay the loan to their savings group.

We also encourage group members to help each other in times of special need. Last year I was in a savings group meeting in Haiti. The spouse of one of the group members had died. The funeral was going to be held the next day. The savings group took up a collection of funds to help the widow.

We believe that faith is important and an abiding quality. We believe that hope is essential in order for people to make progress. However, if people believe and they have hope and they

also love each other enough to care for one another and help each other, that will make a huge difference in the lives of the people involved.

Open Hands brings a message of faith, hope and love through the savings group programs in Haiti, India, and Kenya. ♦♦♦

OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT THE WORK...

Open Hands supports conservative Anabaptist mission work by providing a Christ-based curriculum, financial teaching, and savings groups. While **Open Hands** does not provide money for loans, there are expenses for curriculum, paying the facilitators, and overseeing the program. If you endorse the work and vision of **Open Hands**, we invite you to partner with us. Your gift will help us expand the program and reach more people. Contributions are tax-deductible. Please make your check payable to **Open Hands**.

For more information, please contact:

Open Hands

1245 Old Route 15, New Columbia PA 17856
Phone: (800) 653-9817 | Fax: (866) 230-6253

OR

Merle Burkholder

Open Hands Administrator
Phone: (800) 653-9817, ext. 212
Email: openhands@afweb.org

OPEN HANDS COMMITTEE

Ken Burkholder (*Gordonville, PA*)

Merle Burkholder (*Sioux Lookout, ONT*)

Merle Herr, (*Guys Mills, PA*)

John Omar Lapp (*Ronks, PA*)

Marvin Mast (*Hutchinson, KS*)

John R. Sensenig (*Watsonstown, PA*)

Tim Stoltzfus, (*Watsonstown, PA*)

Lester Weiler (*New Holland, PA*)

