

**Interview with Dr. David Mwangi (MA 1977) Executive Director of Orphan Concern International**

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Written for the Wheaton Magazine, Wheaton College, 501 College Avenue, Wheaton, Illinois 60187

**Question:** Dr. Mwangi, explain briefly how the Lord led you from Kenya, Africa, to Wheaton College.

**Answer:** I was born and raised in Kenya, Africa. As a child I joined the Kenya School System and completed my secondary school diploma in 1968. After high school, the Lord God called me to prepare myself as a pastor/teacher. I joined Scott Theological College in Kenya. After four years of education there, God opened a door for me to study at Ontario Bible College in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. I graduated from there with a Bachelor of Theology degree. Then I attended Wheaton College Graduate School and graduated with the Masters of Arts degree. Later in 1977 I joined Jackson State University to obtain the Master of Science in Education degree.

**Question:** How has the Lord prepared you over the years for your position as Director of Orphan Concern?

**Answer:** I went back to Kenya, East Africa, in the fall of 1978 and became a church minister in Nakuru town. It was at that time I developed a passion for working with orphan and destitute children. The church in Nakuru could not minister to these children. It was a young church that needed teaching and needed to have its passion for the ministry aroused. I saw children that had no food, clothes, education, medical care or shelter. Many children were in distress and could not face the future in confidence. The Lord talked to me and asked me to help them to realize their potential.

After 20 years of ministry in the Nakuru church, I came back to the United States in 1998. My aim was to study for the Doctor of Ministry degree and be better equipped to minister to the orphaned children of Kenya. I attended Luther Rice Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, hoping to return to Kenya after the completion of this degree. While I was completing my degree work, I joined Eastside Baptist Church, Marietta, Georgia. Dr. Gerald Harris, the Pastor at Eastside, sent me to Kenya to work out modalities for the Nakuru church to receive short-term mission teams from Eastside Baptist Church. It was at that time God convinced me to start Orphan Concern International with its base in Marietta, Georgia.

**Question:** Dr. Mwangi, what exactly is Orphan Concern International all about?

**Answer:** The goal of Orphan Concern is to help orphaned and destitute children to achieve self-actualization. It is to assist them in their distress so that they would experience a normal childhood. The base of this action and passion is James 1:27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

**Question:** Dr. Mwangi, how many orphans are in your program at the moment?

**Answer:** Orphan Concern International was started in 2002. To date there are 215 orphans and destitute children in the program. Originally we identified 300 children, so some children out of this group are not yet sponsored. They await sponsorship as the program grows. There are currently 85 children in our program waiting for sponsorship and the government of Kenya has identified 2 million orphans in Kenya alone.

**Question:** Dr. Mwangi, what does it cost for an individual to support an orphan for one year?

**Answer:** To sponsor one child, the sponsor has to commit to give thirty-five dollars per month, which will be used to take care of the child's needs. These needs include food, medical care, clothing, school uniforms, spiritual nourishment, shoes, books, blanket and some shelter.

**Question:** Dr. Mwangi, there are many good programs in Kenya helping orphans. What sets your program, Orphan Concern, apart from the others?

**Answer:** This program is different from other children's programs in Kenya in its operations and relationships. We believe that, for us to succeed, we have to be sold out to the Lord Jesus and to this ministry. The time we put into it is twenty-four hours a day when the duty demands. We realize that we are called by Our Lord Jesus to dedicate our lives to serve him as we serve these children.

We realize that childhood is a very important stage of life. A child needs to be loved, educated and brought to Jesus as early as possible. The child needs Jesus and should understand that he/she is loved by Jesus and other Christians in the body of Christ. We care for the whole child; body, soul, and spirit.

Then Orphan Concern goes even further. It looks at the community where the child lives. It seeks to address the hardships the community faces. We provide clean water, medical dispensaries, and teachings on better methods in farming. This improves the livelihood of the whole community and, therefore, improves the lives of the orphans and destitute children who live there.

Recently, with funds from a generous donor, we installed a well in the village of Solai where many of the orphans live. This well means that our children now have clean drinking water, which greatly improves their health. The well then also benefits the health of the entire community and, additionally, provides irrigation for the crops.

**Question:** What is your role as Administrator of the program?

**Answer:** I am the Executive Director of Orphan Concern and my role is to execute all facets of this program. I am accountable to the Board of Directors in Marietta, Georgia. I am in Nakuru, Kenya most of the year to ensure that the children's needs are satisfactorily met. I inform sponsors of any new situation affecting their sponsored children. Regularly, I prepare and submit financial reports as required by the Kenyan government and the Board of Directors of Orphan Concern International. I also coordinate the field officer, pastors, and cooks to function in harmony.

**Question:** Do you staff there in Kenya to help you with the daily needs of the children?

**Answer:** There are nine workers who help these children.

**Question:** Dr. Mwangi, what is your vision for the future of Orphan Concern?

**Answer:** My vision for the future of Orphan Concern International is to continue supporting these children and helping them to get formal education. Education is the key to a good life in Kenya. Without it, it is hard to secure good jobs. It is for this reason that Orphan Concern shall continue to support nursery, primary, secondary, and college and university education. After the primary education, we aim to put these children in secondary school. The thirty-five dollars per month will help us to pay the government levies there. After secondary school, those who pass selective national examinations shall be admitted to colleges and universities. Orphan Concern's vision is to establish a trade school for those children who do not continue with college and university training. In the trade school we propose to teach such courses as computer, secretarial skills, hairdressing, tailoring, mechanics, carpentry, business administration and general administration. We hope that when our children graduate, the orphans will be able to get good jobs and be able to help themselves as well as members of their community.

Of course, we will continue to feed these children. At present we give them tea at 10:00am and 3:30pm. We feed them lunch and supper. By giving them these meals, they have improved in their health and are able to fight sickness and build their bodies. They have been able to fight short-term hunger and are able now to remain in school and concentrate on their studies.

School uniforms and home clothes will continue to be given to them. It is mandatory in Kenya that all school children are in uniform. Failure to have uniforms results in being sent home for good. We will continue to do this so long as the funds are available.

Medical care will continue to be administered to our children. We anticipate starting dispensaries in areas where we have feeding centers. Hopefully, these dispensaries will help the children to remain healthy as they continue to grow.

Moral and spiritual nurturing is essential to growing children. Our pastors in Kenya will continue to take care of that. The children will be taught the Word of God and be helped faithfully to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. Our pastors will continue to unite these children with the local churches in order that they can participate fully in the church activities.

It has been found that some of these children are molested and misused by their guardians. They are dehumanized and they feel hated, neglected and lonely. Orphan Concern is planning to build orphanages in the country to help them out of these predicaments. One orphanage will cost on average \$90,000 to build and furnish it.

My vision for the future encompasses the total well-being of our children. Once these children go through education and training, they will hopefully go back to their communities and secure jobs. We anticipate that they will be spiritual mentors to the next generation of Kenya's children. With the Lord's help their lives will be redeemed for His Kingdom and these children will eventually contribute to the spiritual and physical well being of their communities.

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