

As many of you know, I spent this past winter in Tanzania, including five weeks in Mugumu, the district town adjacent to which the Kisangura Friends Schools are located. I was there, on January 22nd, when the school supplies, that generous contributions from many in the Quarter enable our committee to provide, were distributed to one hundred twenty-five primary and secondary school students orphaned by AIDS. That process, managed there by Okoa Project, is amazingly efficient and useful. This opportunity to work with school administrators, teachers, and government officials as well as with Okoa's board and leadership was productive and rewarding. All of the money raised in 2009-10 has now been invested in projects described in the fundraising brochure; if anything, we will deliver more than we promised at the time. Our relationship with those involved in the Kisangura schools has never been stronger. New York Quarterly Meeting's African Education Committee looks forward to ten more years of service.

For the past five or six years I have also been nurturing a connection between Brooklyn Monthly Meeting and Mugumu Monthly Meeting. Their practices and beliefs are substantially different from ours but by worshipping each week with them, I kept my own spiritual focus refreshed. I helped them plant one hundred trees around their meeting house, a project they'd contemplated for many years. I've also promised to find the money, six hundred dollars, that will allow them to install windows in their building.

Tanzania is a beautiful place and the people gentle and warmly responsive. Yet, over time, one's spirit is overwhelmed by ubiquitous poverty: it's everywhere and burdens at least three-quarters of Tanzania's citizens. I bring that awareness back with me, struggling with it as I immerse myself into our affluence. By chance, my first Sunday back, I found a copy of New York Quarterly Meeting's 2011 budget lying on top of the clerk's file drawer at Brooklyn Meeting. I noticed there is still no line in it for "Witness." Does the "Witness Committee even exist? What really startled me was to see that last year's surplus was nearly half-a-million dollars and that for 2011, what's left over is expected to be almost \$230,000. That means the Quarter realized a "profit" of twenty-eight percent on its income for 2010.

Needless to say, I can't help thinking about how that money might be invested in African Quaker schools. As it happens, I come back seeking eighty thousand dollars: sixty thousand dollars for two large rainwater tanks desperately needed at the secondary school and twenty thousand dollars to enable Margaret Mulindi to finish the primary school she's gotten built at Davanga in Kenya. Yes, if I work very hard maybe I can secure the necessary funds from non-Quaker sources. But can you imagine how I feel when I realize that projected NYQM income for 2011, three times what's needed for Africa, will be used for nothing but to make us still more money?

I do not raise this question lightly. Our struggle two years ago over NYQM's direct support of our committee's African work was painful indeed. Yet I must ask once again: would the Quarter please reconsider investing a fraction of its surplus wealth to help those schools develop as Friends schools ought to?