



STARCROSS community

34500 Annapolis Road
Annapolis, California 95412
(707) 886-1919 • Fax (707) 886-1921

email: community@starcross.org
Website: www.starcross.org

Sharings

Summer 2005

FOREVER SACRED SPACE

Once again nature's great wheel is turning from summer to autumn. Here at Starcross the birds remind us. The swallows, who came in March to nest, made a great parade a few days ago. They circled until it was clear that all the young ones could fly. But we like to think maybe they were also saying good-bye and "See you next March." Then they were off on the long trip to South America. The very next day the first Snowbird arrived from Oregon's Cascade mountains. Soon she was joined by many hungry friends and relatives who have settled down here until spring.

There have been great meteor showers at night and during the day we have harvested the fruit trees—the apples are finished, the pears are just coming on. At this time of year it is natural to be aware that all of life is in a process of constant change, an ever-flowing river.

As the first leaves turn, it brings home the specialness of the land on which any of us live. There is a sense of the sacred in the land that is our home. At Starcross that is marked by memories of spots where beautiful things happened and are happening. There are also the chapel, the cemeteries, and the olive groves which invite reflection; the places where the children play—and sometimes pray.

Part of our land is planted to olives which will support us in the future. But half of the land is a forest community and will remain forever-wild. As forests around us are cut to provide for homes or vineyards it becomes increasingly important for us to make a sanctuary of our land for future generations.

To some extent times are often uncertain, but we are confident Starcross will always remain a sacred space.



BECOMING SOMEBODY

How would it be to feel as if I didn't matter at all? What if I were hungry and afraid and small and alone? What if I didn't know when or if I would eat again? Or where I would sleep? What if I couldn't go to school or do anything else to change my situation? What if no one knew my name? What if no one helped when I was sick? What if no one cared if I lived or died?

In South Africa, Phumlani (16) knows how that feels. Nosihle (12) knows how that feels. Nana (10) knows. Themba (7) knows. Thabiso is only four. He shouldn't have to know but he knows.

In California our adopted daughter Holly (15) has faced some challenges of her own. Originally thought to be HIV+, she has struggled all her life with learning problems. She was excited to accompany sister Julie to Africa in July to help out and then to speak to American teens about the need to reach out to AIDS orphans. The 40 orphans living in our homes responded instantly to Holly's open smile and eagerness to learn their Zulu names.

(Continued on page 3)

A LETTER FROM A CHILD'S SPONSOR

I became a sponsor for a child in South Africa in memory of my parents, and especially my mother. A few years back my mother was diagnosed with a quick moving terminal cancer, six weeks later my father was also diagnosed with an advanced cancer. Within a short period of time, I lost both of my parents. After they died, I began to think and reflect about who they were as parents and as people. I decided to make donations to organizations that would honor what they felt was important in their lives. For my mother, that was children. As my sister and I grew up and moved out of the house, my mother became the neighborhood Grandma – always ready to babysit in an emergency, have a pool party for kids in her backyard on the hottest day of the summer, to drop that special piece of candy in their Halloween bags.

While she was angry, disappointed and sad when she was diagnosed with cancer, she also said on numerous occasions, 'Better me than some child who never had a chance. I've had a full life and have seen my children grow'. It troubled her deeply that there were unloved and uncared for children in the world. In fact, I remember her calling me several years before she died and telling me about this amazing organization, Starcross, who went to Romania and helped AIDS children and orphans in Africa. So when after she died, I saw an ad for Starcross wreaths, and checked out their website, I was glad to see that it was the same organization my mother had talked about. They were selling wreaths, but they were also looking for sponsors for children in Africa. I knew that by sponsoring a child, I would be honoring my memory of her as a parent and everything that a parent does for a child.

When I'm in bed at night, thinking about the world, the situation of AIDS orphans seems overwhelming. The public health officials talk in terms of millions of children left without not only parents, but that entire parent generation of people such as aunts and uncles that could have taken over in normal circumstances. The lucky children are left with aging grandparents, especially grandmothers, the unlucky ones are left with no one. In light of this huge catastrophe, how can sponsoring a child make a difference? The answer for me is focusing on the

child. Will that child 'have a chance' as my mother would say, in life? For the 124 children Starcross is now caring for in Africa, the sad truth is that they know how lucky they are to have sponsors. When sister Julie was there in July, a 12-year-old girl named Noshile gave her this letter:

"To the One and Only—hi juli this is nosihle. I am so glad to see you. In this letter I am trying to show you how I feel about you. When I see your face I see stars. When you speak it is like the birds are singing. I feel bad in writing this. I wish I had more to show you how I feel. Thank you for giving me a life. If I didn't have this home I would be begging for food. I don't know what to say, but thanks. If I didn't have you I will be nothing but a piece of paper. Thanks"

There is currently a dire need for sponsors to help these and additional orphaned children. Specifically, fifty more sponsors are needed to keep the program going and growing. Think about what your parents mean to you. Think about your own children if they were in the same situation. Wouldn't you hope that someone would help them 'have a chance' in life?

I invite you to join with other sponsors in providing a future for Nosihle and her brothers and sisters at Starcross Kin Worldwide Houses of Hope. The cost is \$65 per month which figures out to be slightly more than \$2 a day. We can charge your credit card quarterly. To sponsor an orphan or make a one time donation, send a check or your credit card number for \$200 (1 quarter) or \$800 (1 year) or whatever amount you wish, to: **Starcross, 34500 Annapolis Road, Annapolis, Ca. 95412.** Or send an email with the credit card number and amount to community@starcross.org. Or there is a form on our web site: <http://www.starcross.org/> Tel. 707-886-1919 Fax 707-886-1921.

Noshile and I thank you.
Sharon O'Reilly

Sharon is a financial analyst in Northern California and Vice-Chair of Starcross Kin Worldwide, which helps facilitate the international activities of Starcross for African AIDS orphans.

QUARTERLY GATHERINGS



On August 5-7 we had a Summer Meeting, where a group of friends gathered to spruce up the 100-year-old farmhouse. We painted, wrote haiku, visited the chapel, and generally had a productive and satisfying time.

On October 23rd, an Autumn Meeting will be held in Santa Rosa. In

these quarterly meetings we share some aspects of our life and get to know some of our friends better. Everyone is welcome. Please call us if you would like to attend, and we will send details.

(BECOMING SOMEBODY continued from page 1)

Through jumprope and soccer, through teaching card tricks and learning traditional dances, through planning a wonderful party together, Holly became a close friend of every single child.

Shortly before leaving, Holly visited a squalid township area where some of the children had come from. Many homes consisted of cardboard or plastic taped to rusty corrugated tin. There was no electricity. People had to walk long distances to fetch water. Almost in tears Holly realized that her special friend Andiswa had lived out here. Beautiful, kind Andiswa (age 14)

who could be student council president at any high school in the US, had come from such a place. A few years ago Andiswa was a homeless orphan. She had no food, no bed, no money for school, no help when she was sick, no one to care if she lived or died. How could the world be so unfair? But now she has a home and security. With the help of friends in another country, she will make it.



STARCROSS E-MAIL LIST

We are finding that communicating by e-mail is a wonderful way to keep in touch with our friends. When sister Julie and Holly were in Africa, we were able to share some of their experiences and communications as they happened. Sometimes we share something that inspired us. If you would like to receive e-mails from us please send us your e-mail address. Or you can go to our website (www.starcross.org) and send it from there.

OUR CHRISTMAS WREATHS

Getting ready for Christmas is always a part of summer here. Laying out brochures and making bows are interspersed with harvesting corn, tomatoes and blackberries. Since this is the main income that sustains us, we hope you will also plan ahead to buy wreaths or fruit for yourselves and your friends. They are gifts that people love because they are so good (the fruit) and so beautiful (the wreaths), and they help make a difference in the world.

On September 23, we will have a meeting in Santa Rosa to plan wreath promotion and to celebrate sister Marti's birthday with a pot luck lunch. If you can't come, we hope you will send us ideas on how you can help with the wreath sales.

Over and over, Holly and Julie heard the children expressing gratitude and relief. It was not just for the material things provided by the American sponsors. As Mkhumbuleni (16) said, "I grateful you help me be somebody." This is the story Holly will tell to groups of teen-agers, and their parents, in Northern California this autumn.

And Holly felt thankful, too. From her diary:

"Today was the last day I spent with the kids. During the whole day I was mentally saying goodbye to this beautiful place I have called home. This place was so amazing. Every night I lay in bed thinking how could I leave here. I think I have fallen in love with these kids and the country. It's amazing these kids have survived what they have gone through and I'm amazed that God let them be saved and I think God chose them very carefully because each one has an amazing personality that stands out and makes them shine. Every single one of them."

STARCROSS

STARCROSS MONASTIC COMMUNITY
34500 Annapolis Road
Annapolis, Ca. 95412

U.S. Postage
PAID
Non-profit Org.
Permit #20
Santa Rosa, CA



SUMMER 2005

One of brother Toby's most popular books has become a classic. NOTES FROM THE SONG OF LIFE: A SPIRITUAL COMPANION was first published in 1977. It came from the experience he facilitated of a very intense group of people exploring spiritual growth. The sections in the book were written after each of these sessions and were gleanings from many paths of East and West, spirituality and psychology. The book has a very devoted following and has appeared in many places over the years. It can be obtained from Starcross, and we are considering bringing out an Anniversary Edition. The following is an excerpt from the section "Seasons."

A tree knows where it is on nature's wheel. Whatever the position—budding, in full leaf, with ripe fruit — it is all part of being a tree.

There are seasons in your life. Do not try to escape a season. If you try to bear fruit when it is time to bud, you may never bud.

Listen to the song of nature. Every year is a cycle. There is a time for activity and a time for quiet. There are moments of beginning and moments of ending. There are seasons for moving and seasons for renewal. Be still and learn. See nature's story unfold. Watch a bird and a tree. Learn about the commonness between you and the bird. Let the tree help you find your place.

Be aware of the day. There are seasons to a day. The dawn is the spring. Summer is at midday. The afternoon is autumn. Winter comes at night. You were made to experience this cycle each day. Remove your walls of protection. Move in rhythm with the day. Always remember that tomorrow there is another cycle, another turn of the wheel.

Every breath is a cycle of life. Take in the sweet spring of your breath. Fill up your lungs with the summer of the cycle. Experience the autumn joy of letting go. Be empty and still in the winter of your breath. Now breathe again, for there is always a new beginning and a new ending.

You will never take a breath more or less important than the one you are taking now. You will never be in a day or year more or less important than the one you are in now.

Every single moment is a new beginning for all life. This present second could see the end of all. This instant is a new beginning for all. If you really jump into a now-moment you will be completely renewed.

Life, like an ocean, is made up of many waves. There are waves for each moment, each day, each year, each life. If you hunger after a sense of completeness, be in harmony with the waves.

Brother Toby's next book, IN A SEASON SUCH AS THIS: FOOTSTEPS ON A JOURNEY INTO WINTER, will be published by The Crossroad Publishing Company in 2006.