



# The Gweimen Centre Newsletter

A Self Sufficiency Center for Widows and Orphans of HIV/AIDS

Fall 2012

## SAVE THE DATE

Dessert and

# Auction

to benefit the Gweimen Centre in  
Kwoi, Nigeria

Oct 13, 7:30 p.m.

Crossroads Community Church  
1N100 Gary Ave  
Carol Stream, IL 60188

**The board is busily collecting items to be auctioned. If you would like to contribute any goods or services, please call Mary Sytsma 630-665-7383.**



Board member and professional artist, Richard S. Johnson, is including an original painting.  
***richardjohnsonfineart.com***

Hand-crafted items from Thai markets including raw silk scarves, jewelry

Catered dinner for up to 12

Condo stays in Florida and Texas

Themed gift baskets for musicians, babies, sports enthusiasts, epicureans, gardeners, readers, etc.

Tickets, services, gift certificates

And much more!



Jop is a child of Gweimen. Your support helps him and his mother, Gloria, stay healthy. Jop's older brothers are HIV positive, but Jop is not, in part because of the help Gloria received from the Gweimen Centre when Jop was born. Jop's mother is a widow, employed by Gweimen to cook and care for the forty orphans and at risk children who come every day. Without the Gweimen Centre, widows like Gloria and children like Jop would have nowhere to turn and would have little hope for the future.

*Thank you for your support for the widows and orphans in Kwoi, Nigeria. Because of your donation, children like Jop can receive nutritious meals, adequate healthcare, and loving support, all in the name of Jesus.*

[www.gweimencentre.org](http://www.gweimencentre.org)

## **Matching Funds Results!**

Thank you for the overwhelmingly positive response to the Matching Fund Drive.

During April and May, board members and friends matched donations and raised a total of \$11,490!

### **The Imam and the Pastor**

by Vern Geurkink

Pastor James' left arm ends in a stump that protrudes from his sleeve. He lost his hand a number of years ago. It happened while he was leading his young Christian militia against their mortal enemies, young Muslim men, who were also organized into paramilitary units led by Imam Ashaffa.

This religious strife raged in Kaduna, a city in Nigeria about 110 miles north of Kwoi, where the Gweimen Centre is located. Kaduna's population is evenly divided between Muslims and Christians. It is so divided, in fact, that they even live on opposite sides of the river from each other.

Throughout the 1990's both sides taught thousands of young men to kill in defense of their faith. Those who died were considered to be martyrs. To justify his "Christian" war on Muslims Pastor James had argued: "we have no other cheek to turn." It was in one of their losing battles that the victors chopped off his hand with a machete. As for Imam Ashaffa, he was bitter because two of his close relatives were killed.

But the real story only begins there. In a remarkable turn of events one day Imam Ashaffa reached out to Pastor James to put an end to the carnage. Only when these tentative overtures found a hesitant response did the two "blood enemies" begin a dialogue that has led to an "astonishing reconciliation."

They began to work together slowly rebuilding peace in Kaduna, each from a renewed understanding of his own faith, and an emerging respect for each

other. A major focus of their mediation efforts was to retrain their young militia members to become civic peace activists.

Two of their concrete achievements as peacemakers further promote the impact of this unlikely partnership:

1) They have established the Interfaith Mediation Centre which is introduced with a sign on the door of their office that reads "Peace Hall."

2) Their mission has since been celebrated in a film called "The Imam and the Pastor."

We like to believe with thanks to God that in a country torn by religious war we are seeing at least one small sign of an answer to the brief but eloquent prayer: "Give us peace in our time."

**Welcome new board members: Steve Van Zee, Janna Piersma, and Rachel Vanderhill.**

**We are grateful for the work of retiring board members: Mike Richardson, Nancy Richardson, Linda Palmer, and Vern Geurkink.**

New mailing address:

Gweimen Centre  
P.O. Box 1517  
Wheaton, IL 60187

[www.gweimencentre.org](http://www.gweimencentre.org)

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