



# Living Waters International, Inc.

- Aid for African Catholic Missions -

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Spring Newsletter

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*Living Waters' mission is the support of Roman Catholic missionary and international development projects in Africa.*

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## Soldiers for Christ in the Church Militant

**A Parting Tribute to Karen & Brian Prunty, Cofounders of Living Waters International**

Their hearts, *"Strong in the grace that is Christ Jesus"* (2 Tim 2:1), heard the "soldier's call" during a Mission Sunday Mass at their parish, St. Mary's in Antigo in August 1993. This was God's guiding hand leading Karen and Brian into the heart of Africa, *"prevailing in adversity, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ"* (cf. 2 Tim 2:3).

With Brian's expertise as CEO for CoVantage Credit Union, and Karen's organizational and secretarial skills, this ultimately led to the formation of Living Waters International (LWI), a non-profit charitable organization, officially established in February of 1996.

From that day going forward and for the next 28 plus years, these true soldiers for Christ, carved out a soldier's rugged, but solid path of mercy and love as part of LWI's mission to do their part to "alleviate human suffering among the poor and marginalized of this world."

**"...these true soldiers for Christ, carved out a soldier's rugged, but solid path of mercy and love ..."**

In 2000, our organization began its student sponsorship program supporting the education of children from poor families in Africa. Karen has been the lead person administering this program in frequent contact with the missionaries in Africa dedicating countless volunteer hours to keeping the program running smoothly.

Karen and Brian's conviction led them to enlist support beginning with family, friends, and individuals from other charitable groups they were involved with in their parish, their hometown, and the wider Antigo community. It is astounding the number of benefactors supporting LWI well known by them, and a testament to the trustworthiness of their character.

The greatest gift from God is our families; next to that is our friendships. Over the years, Karen and Brian have proven to be most loyal and trustworthy. And as volunteers, the professionalism they maintained as cofounders, board secretary and treasurer, went far above the call of duty. Their spiritual

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leadership gave life and breath to Living Waters. Their fervent prayers, humility, and their sought-after guidance from the Holy Spirit gave flesh and blood to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy for thirty plus years. Countless moments spent working with them have left us all in awe and gratitude.

*Karen and Brian, you will forever be remembered as the leading scouts in this "patrol" we call Living Waters ... soldiers in the march for human dignity. Our hope is that you feel the love that we have for you, and as we march on the path of mercy ... the greatest form of love, pray God, may we forever be a source of great pride and joy in your hearts. In the love and friendship of Christ, we thank you with all our hearts.*



## Over One Million Dollars Sent to Missions in 2023

By Jeff Brigman, Treasurer

Last year we transferred \$1.156 million to religious congregations working in 14 underdeveloped countries, primarily in Africa, but also Ukraine, Venezuela, India, and Pakistan. This was a 4% increase from the previous year. The money sent was used to support several initiatives including school and church construction, tuition assistance, medical clinic supplies, seminarian and women religious support, and food

**"We are so incredibly grateful to our 275 benefactors who provided \$1.211 million in gifts to LWI in 2023."**

assistance to the poor. We funded several clean water and solar energy projects as well as sustainable agricultural and community development initiatives. Our student sponsorship program, which matches a benefactor with an impoverished child had 225 children being supported.

We are so incredibly grateful to our 275 benefactors who provided \$1.211 million in gifts to LWI in 2023. This was a 7% increase from 2022. We are pleased to report that in 2023, 95.5% of all revenue we received from benefactors was sent overseas to support missionary initiatives.

Our overhead burden, which is the money we need to keep LWI operating, was \$61 thousand; up just 2% from the previous year. For every dollar we get from benefactors, we retain less than five cents for operating expenses. We can keep operating costs low because of the hundreds of hours volunteered by team members each year, for which we are also incredibly grateful.

Additional information can be found on our website, including our most recent IRS 990 return and annual financial audit.



## Goretti Update

## Growing in Good Health & Happiness

We are very happy to report that Goretti is doing well both at home and at school. Presently, she is in grade two. Last year she missed an entire month of school during her surgery, but she managed to pick up on her work quickly and positioned herself as second best in her class. She is also growing into a very caring and responsible girl by assisting her mother in the kitchen and caring for her when she is sick. Goretti can make a phone call to either her sister Yvonne, or to her Aunt Feliciana with all the pertinent information. They call her Mama's "Guardian Angel".



Goretti ready for school

**"Goretti is a miracle child, and her story is the most successful story that I have witnessed in my life ... all made possible by your support! "**

Goretti has been attending monthly clinics for her physiotherapy sessions, and the doctor said he is happy with her progress. It is much easier for her to walk now; before her legs seemed to be bowed and now that is not so obvious. The sessions have ended, although she is continuing with her calcium.

Urine incontinence continues to be a challenge and the doctor said she might not be able to achieve complete continence; however, it will improve.

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# Spotlight

By Eileen Hartl

Today we shine the spotlight on newly ordained Father Paul Sunday, Uganda, and his sponsor, Irene Mehlos of Merrill, WI; she who “refused no kindness to those who have a right to it when it was in her power to do so. (cf. Prv 3:27).

As an orphan at the tender age of thirteen, young Paul was featured in our 2004 newsletter as a student in need of sponsorship. “His look of grave concern, bare feet, and surviving on \$20/month in a family of six was the catalyst for my family to unite with Paul and change his dire circumstances into a new way of life for him.”

Father Paul regards that time as being a great opportunity that gave him hope for his future. “Sometimes my brother could not afford to pay my school fees, so the debt would be pushed ahead to the next term.” Learning about the Mehlos and the assurance of their financial support, Paul was inspired to study well: to make “Mum Irene” and her family proud as he navigated through his formal years of education.

From the onset of their relationship, the Mehlos family, without fail, motivated Paul through letter writing, and Paul in kind to them. Irene shares, “His letters were truly heartwarming, handwritten in English, filled with appreciation, and decorated with his drawings.” With every passing year, their fondness for one another grew. “In 2013, another opportunity came when Paul was accepted into the Major Seminary, and we decided to increase our sponsorship so he could pursue his call to the priesthood.”

His day of ordination in January of 2023 did not disappoint when yet another opportunity came along for Irene, “It was an unexpected dream come true to attend Fr. Paul’s ordination. What joy it was for me to hug this son who we carried in our hearts for 18 years.” And for Father Paul, “There was more joy because of her presence that day than the actual ordination.” The following day, Fr. Paul celebrated his first Mass behind a mud brick hut, his childhood home. “The entire village and beyond gath-

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Left to right: Frieda, Sr. Lisa, Father Paul, and Irene.  
Back row: Sr. Margaret & Miss Alexandra

ered for the outdoor Mass ... hundreds of guests, dressed in their finest, sat in folding chairs under rectangular tents, children sat on tarps, while the choir filled the air with jubilant singing. Parents brought their children for baptism, having waited for Fr. Paul to do the honors, twenty-three children in all!” said Irene.

While Father’s ordination was the culmination of intentional dedication to his studies, and the Mehlos’ moral and financial support, Irene shared this experience of life in Africa with Frieda Swanson of Merrill, who also sponsors students in Uganda. Their time was filled with ... “the warmest welcome imaginable, which never dimmed over four outpost visits in 10-days’ time.”

Both Irene and Frieda are happy to support the work of Living Waters: “One hundred percent of the student sponsorship goes directly to help the students. This is due to the efficiency of the directors and the countless volunteer hours given by many. The regular progress reports of the directors of student sponsorship both in Uganda and in Antigo have been exceptional. We would encourage anyone to experience the joy of giving and being able to make a difference in the world, even if it is just for one child.”

The problem of being orphaned, of living in poverty, of not knowing if he could keep up with his school fees became an opportunity for Father Paul because the right family came along and refused him no kindness. Congratulations Father Paul, Irene, and family; you serve the Lord so faithfully!



Gorette in back bend

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He proposed that a new form of therapy be introduced sometime in July. He also wants to perform another surgery later in the year to remove the exstrophied bladder since it is not useful to her anymore. Her family feels hesitant, but also trusts in the Lord's will.

Lastly, a note of gratitude: *"Gorette is a miracle child, and her story is the most successful story that I have witnessed in my life ... all made possible by your support! May God who sees the secret of the human heart bless you and grant you at the point of your needs. With love – United in the Eucharistic Lord!"*

- Feliciano Njagi



Ready for sporting activity



## Gorette Fundraiser

### MUSIC IN THE PARK FUNDRAISING EVENT FOR GORETTE

**When:** Thursday, August 1, 2024 - Concert begins at 6:00 PM

**Where:** City Park, Antigo – 230 Aurora Street

**Back by Popular Demand:** Max Koepke

**5:30 PM:** Gina's Pizza, Culver's Custard, pie, & other desserts will be served

*Mark your calendars and join us for an evening of good food, fun, & music!*

## Students In Need



**Name:** Elgibber Ezekiel Mwasongela

**Gender:** Male **Birthday:** October 31, 2017 **Country:** Tanzania

**Favorite Subject:** Writing

**Favorite Pastime:** Playing with friends.

**Other Remarks:** Elgibber's mother died from postpartum hemorrhage. Now, he and two of his siblings are under the care of his aunt who cannot afford to pay his school fees.



**Name:** Alice Adikini

**Gender:** Female **Birthday:** February 20, 2019 **Country:** Uganda

**Favorite Subject:** Alphabet & Numerals

**Favorite Pastime:** Playing with friends.

**Other Remarks:** The father is a committed catechist and wedded in the church 2 years before. Financially they are very poor; they keep some chickens and cultivate their small piece of land for their livelihood. There are five people in her household living on a monthly income of \$20.



**Name:** Esther Frank Mbena

**Gender:** Female **Birthday:** August 2, 2017 **Country:** Tanzania

**Favorite Subject:** English

**Favorite Pastime:** Singing & Dancing

**Other Remarks:** Esther's father abandoned the family and remarried another woman. Her mother does not have a job currently. They live in a one-room hut with no electricity or running water. Your help could make a huge difference for this little girl!

## Student Sponsorship

\$30 a month provides help for:

- Tuition
- Books
- School Supplies
- School Uniforms
- Shelter
- Food
- Health Care

Payments can be made:

- Monthly ..... \$30
- Quarterly ..... \$90
- Semi-annually .... \$180
- Annually ..... \$360

100% of your tax-deductible donation goes directly to your child's sponsorship.

See more children waiting for sponsorship at: [www.livingwatersinternational.org](http://www.livingwatersinternational.org).