

Water for Africa

By Kaylee Zoeteman

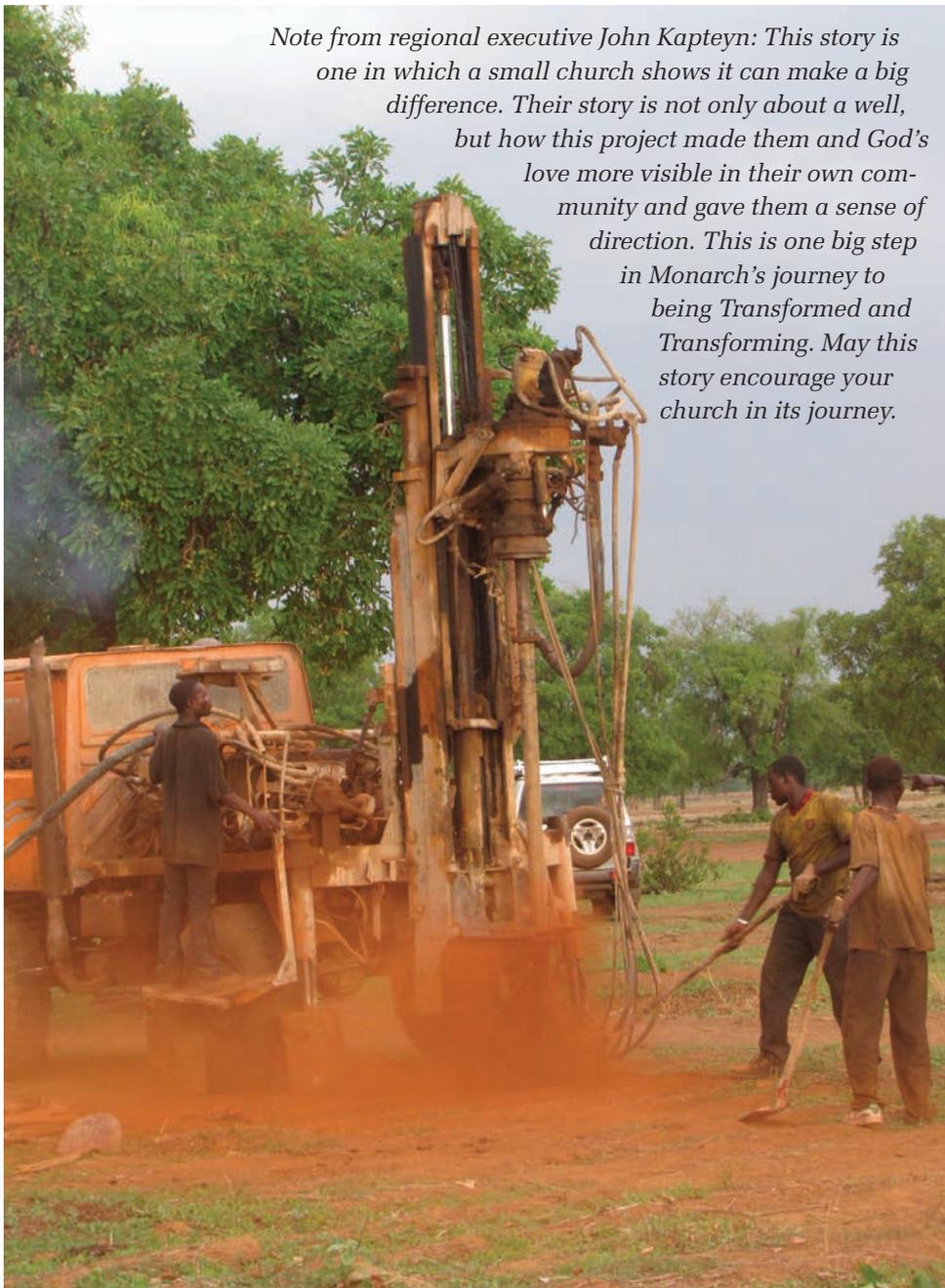
Note from regional executive John Kapteyn: This story is one in which a small church shows it can make a big difference. Their story is not only about a well, but how this project made them and God's love more visible in their own community and gave them a sense of direction. This is one big step in Monarch's journey to being Transformed and Transforming. May this story encourage your church in its journey.

In August 2009, Monarch Reformed Church celebrated its centennial anniversary. Following the celebration the congregation wanted to keep the momentum going. That November, Daniel Zopoula from the organization Bridges of Hope came to the church to give an update. Bridges of Hope is a local (Lethbridge) organization whose mission is to “promote poverty relief and community empowerment amongst the poorest nations of the earth.” With a desire to keep our now hundred-year-old congregation focused and moving forward, the idea of partnering with Bridges of Hope resonated with the members.

By the end of the presentation a missions committee was created, with six (later growing to eight) integral members. A goal of \$25,000 was set—\$18,000 for a well, \$3,500 for a latrine, and \$3,500 for youth group missions. All the money was to be raised by November 30, 2011.

The missions committee was charged with organizing

Kaylee Zoeteman is a member of Monarch Reformed Church in Monarch, Alberta.



fundraisers that would help us meet our goal. Throughout the two years, the church put on numerous fundraisers, including a chicken supper and gospel concert, donation letters, homemade apple pie, ornamental/garden produce and garage sales, concessions, penny well, pop bottle collection, silent auctions, and church offerings.

On November 27, 2011—three days before our deadline—\$25,000 had been raised and a cheque was presented to Bridges of Hope.

During the two years of fundraising, I learned about a medical outreach trip through Bridges of Hope. At the time I was going to school to be a respiratory therapist, and I'd wanted to go to Africa to help other people since I was a child; I didn't hesitate to jump at this opportunity. In February 2012, I booked a plane ticket to Burkina Faso for the upcoming May.

In May 2012, I arrived in Burkina Faso with 17 others. We spent time in the hospitals and clinics in Ouagadougou, Lèò, and Boura, and also in the Children's Center in Boura.

At the beginning of my trip I asked if it was possible to see the well that we had fundraised for. I was told as it had yet to be drilled, I probably would not see it. On May 28, my last day in



Monarch Reformed Church raised \$25,000 for community empowerment and poverty relief in Burkina Faso. The money paid for a well, a latrine, and youth group missions.

Africa before flying home, I was asked if I would like to go and see the Monarch Reformed Church well, as drilling was to start that day. We journeyed to the village



of Dakayes, two hours from where I was staying. When we arrived there was a crowd and a drilling truck.

I was so blessed to be able to see the drill bit begin to turn in that soil, drilling our well. A week after I arrived home, we found out the well was finished and that it was producing three cubic feet of water a minute—enough to supply the entire village and the surrounding area.

This past August we found out that the chief of the Dakayes village gave his tribe to Christ, in turn converting the entire village to Christianity. Little did we know the well was only the beginning. ■

Lost, then Found and Saved!

By Sandra Dancer



Note from regional executive John Kapteyn: Matthew 25 House was an intentional community in the north end of Hamilton, Ontario, where a group of young people dedicated themselves to showing Christ's love to the people in their community. After nearly five years, Matthew 25 House closed, but the fruit of ministry goes on.

One area of involvement was with Place of Grace, a ministry of Helping Hands Mission. Place of Grace is a Christian-based peer group for women in the sex trade, offering support, friendship, and assistance.

It was here that a couple of women from Matthew 25 House met Sandra. The people involved in Sandra's life are ordinary people who have taken the time to help others around them. I hope Sandra's testimony will encourage us to get involved in the lives of people who are struggling.

My name is Sandra Dancer. On January 15, 1961, I was born into a dysfunctional family. I was to be the third daughter. My mother was a factory worker. My father worked for my grandfather in the sanitation department and was a practicing alcoholic, so I was quite familiar with yelling, screaming, and violence. As I got older my father's violence was turned toward me. My self-esteem was quite low so I also became a bully at a very young age. I started smoking cigarettes and hanging around people who didn't judge me. I would run away from home, scared to return home knowing that I would be beaten.

I became a ward of the court and was sent to training school, which would become my home until I was 16. I would see things that no child should ever see; sexual and physical abuse would become normal experience. At 16 I was placed in a home with a group of woman from the penitentiary. I was quick to learn that drugs would numb my pain.

In my mid-twenties I had guys in and out of my life, had two kids with my first husband, who over-

dosed, then remarried an alcoholic and had my third child and later divorced. I then started to hang out with a man who I met at an NA [Narcotics Anonymous] meeting. Life went downhill. We lost our house, and I started prostituting and used drugs at age 38. I never thought I would end up there.

I started to attend a program at Helping Hands Street Mission (a free clothing store, and more!) called Place of Grace. It was organized by women from Matthew 25 House. They accepted me as a friend, and they took me to church and helped me out in many different ways. I had enough of my life and wanted something more! I am now no longer working the streets or



Hope to Freedom is an initiative of the Reformed Church in America and Regional Synod of Canada, facilitated by Jennifer Lucking, coordinator for human trafficking outreach.

Hope to Freedom resources congregations, groups, and individuals that want to channel their concerns for human trafficking in direct ways: learning, justice, advocacy, and engagement.

Share events, stories, and resources at www.facebook.com/RCAHopetoFreedom.

doing drugs. I have my own place, a cat, and a dog.

Today I live each day trying to give back by volunteering at dif-

ferent places and living my life for the Lord! I give thanks every day and ask him to watch over me as I continue this journey he has for me. ■

Get news from other regions at www.rca.org/synods. Here's a glimpse of what's happening:



Classis churches committed to supporting a Habitat house in Newburgh, New York.

