

*The Scholarship Fund for the Young Adult Mercy Experience is named in honor and memory of Deaconess Mary Okeyo.*

## **Deaconess Mary Okeyo – Requiescat in Pace**

Those of us involved with Project 24 are, and anyone who has visited Kenya and the ELCK must be impressed with the Deaconess'. They are the embodiment of the churches life of mercy and care for others. I was privileged to be able to present many of them with a certificate as they completed an AIDS training curricula and were preparing to go back to their areas and care for AIDS victims in their parishes. Any one impressed with deaconesses had to be impressed with Mary Okeyo. Mary was a tireless worker for the Gospel. Presidents Fondow and Baneck went on home visits with Mary and were so impressed that they want some of our young people to have the opportunity to work with and learn from these remarkable women.

Mary passed away on Friday and those who knew her have lost a friend and the ELCK has lost a dedicated and remarkable worker.

Mary Akoth Okeyo was born on 27th October 1970. The father is the late Peterlis Ojowi who died August 1995 and her mother is Pheobe Ojowi. Mary was born in Kamgan Village in Nyakach District. She attended Nyabondo Primary School, and then proceeded to Naki Secondary School.

Mary attended her deaconess training at Ogango Deaconess training College in 1994 to 1996.

Mary joined the work with Diakonia Compassionate Ministry (DCM) in 2004 and was very instrumental in helping the families that were displaced with floods focusing mainly on the orphans, widows and the elderly. She led the formation of East Kano Joint Christian Disaster Response Group. Mary was a living example of bringing Christ's mercy to her communities. She was one of the most experienced and hard working deaconesses in serving the orphans and the needy in ELCK.

Mary was married on Dec 26, 1988 to Mr Evans Okeyo and they are blessed with four children: Jessica 20, Luke 17, Geoffrey 12, and Shadrack 10.

Rev. David Chuchu writes, "We were attending a conflict transformation workshop organized by ELCK in Nairobi. As I was taking my breakfast, a lady from Nairobi (Jane) who was Mary's roommate told me that Mary is not feeling well in her room. I immediately called her and she told me "Pastor come, I am not feeling well." I

quickly went to her room with pastor Jospheh Osumba and we tried to help her walk out of his bed and she was too weak. We had her sleep in her mattress and used that to carry her out of the room to the car. Rev John Halakhe drove the car as fast as he could. We rushed to the hospital and on the way she told us “let me sleep well, I am dying” We reached the hospital and as the doctors were attending her, she screamed a loud and said, I am dying. I called Bishop Obare to come and he immediately came. I walked him to the room where Mary was being attended. The Bishop said, Let us pray. He prayed and as he finished Mary breathed her last as we watched. The Lord called her home. It was very traumatic to see one of the hardest deaconesses I work with die in our hands. I am still with her in Nairobi as autopsy is being done at Chiromo Funeral Home. I will share with you later the cost of her death after the postmortem is done. Mary’s body will be here in Nairobi, as we work on logistics on how to transport the body back to Kisumu possibly early next week and then organize the funeral. I have called her husband and he is on the way coming to Nairobi today. “



Deaconess Mary and Unita

This is Mary and Unita. Mary is taking charge as she usually did and pointing the way as always. We will have more on Mary and all of these remarkable women in future blogs.

## **The Deaconess Example more thoughts on Mary Okeyo**

This blog site is about connections and how we interweave and intersect in our life

of faith. We wrote about Mary Okeyo and the effect that she has had on Project 24, 1001 Orphans etc. Here are some more remarks.

Deaconess Pamela Boehle-Silva, RN, wrote -

I first met Mary in 2006, my first trip to Kenya, traveling with Dr. Arthur Just, Lorna Meeker and Rachel Thompson (deaconess interns at the time). I, too, was struck by the deaconesses unwavering desire to bring Christ's mercy to those in need. In fact, their amazing joy, despite the suffering they witnessed on a daily basis, was life changing for me. As a nurse, and a parish nurse, I was humbled by the dedication of these women. Because of women like Mary, I wanted to be like them—and entered the deaconess program at CTSFW and just graduated in May 2011. I am called to Holy Cross LCMS in Rocklin, CA, and was installed there, but I had the honor of being consecrated in the cathedral in Kisumu with many of my deaconess sisters surrounding me. Mary was one of them.

As you have witnessed, these deaconesses do wonderful works of mercy. Many of them have very little means of support and struggle to make ends meet. My passion has been to help these women. This past June, Dr. Just and I, along with the support of David Chuchu, introduced the start of the micro-loan project for the deaconesses. It is our desire to provide a way for the deaconesses to support themselves. To restore their honor and dignity and give them hope as they themselves bring hope to the hopeless. I consider these women my family—as you know, once you go to Kenya, it is “home”.

President Fondow of the Minnesota North District wrote,  
“When a humble servant of the Lord faithfully shares the grace of God, their life and death has an impact upon the life and death of those they loved and cared for. Christ in us and through us!”

President Baneck of the North Dakota District wrote,  
Mary is an example of Galatians 2:20! Christ indeed lived in and through Mary Okeyo. She was a gift to her people in Kenya and a gift to all who have met her. She will be greatly missed for her mercy work in the ELCK. We will all rejoice to see her again in heaven.”

Prof Arthur Just of Concordia Theological Seminary wrote,  
“Our thoughts and prayers are with the Okeyo family and the saints in the ELCK. We came to love Mary through her deep Christian piety that she expressed through her mercy and love and care for Christ's saints. What a loss to the ELCK and all who came to know her and love her, and all those she served so faithfully. We will remember her this Sunday at the Lord's Table as we join her with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven in singing songs to the Lamb.”