

# A Call to Childermas

Guard our children  
Guide our leaders

by C Stephens

2006

# Preamble

Every year unfolds differently, and 2006 was no exception. In 2005, Orchard Camp was built and opened on the campus of the Desmond Tutu Centre for Leadership (C4L). With the help of two teams of Canadian volunteers, three summer camps were run in December 2005. These camps are designed to offer psycho-social support to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The impact on the lives of youth and children has been amazing! A grant from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) financed these camps, except for the capital costs of construction. These were raised through private donations in Canada.

C4L tried to renew donor funding for 2006. Even though there were good prospects from several donors in the proverbial pipeline, C4L was becalmed by the end of April. By this time, it sensed that continuing the OVC programme with winter camps, scheduled for late June and July, was an imperative. So it decided to launch a special appeal for this purpose.

In its seven-year history, C4L had launched 3 other appeals, even though fundraising is an on-going feature of every charity. Its first appeal was in 1999 – to open its doors. That came to be called Phase 1 when, three years later, it was decided to launch a second appeal - to expand. Response to the second appeal enabled C4L to cross the Jordan into the promised land of Phase 2. Both these facilities are in use today. The camp facility for young people was built in 2005 in the orchard at Phase 2.

A year later, C4L launched its third appeal - to start populating the rental homes at the back of the campus with resource people. In the meanwhile, these has served as a “cash cow” to generate revenue. Today, all four of those faculty residences are occupied by people who are involved in the work at C4L in one form or another.

The first two appeals were mainly related to infrastructure. The third was more related to “human infrastructure”. *The fourth appeal was related to programme.* C4L was sure that missing the beat in terms of the next holiday camps would not only be a setback for the overall OVC initiative, but that it could be double jeopardy in terms of sustaining overall utilization levels on campus.

So it was decided to go ahead with plans to mobilize another team of Canadian volunteers for mid-June to mid-July. The project manager reved up project operations – more training for the youth corps who serve as counselors, technical leaders for the camp programme, target schools and all, on the basis that C4L was going ahead. *This was a step of faith...*

This explains the setting of the following reflections, which have been purged of the immediate appeal message and conserved for the deeper content that emerged. Each of the nine chapters was a weekly message sent out over email to “friends of C4L”. It is hoped that as a set, these reflections are powerful enough to make more friends, and to attract other individuals, families, churches and agencies – not to support C4L specifically, but generically to support Childermas.

Like another theme – Jubilee – Childermas is not well known in our time. That was not true of the Hebrews in the hometown of Jesus. When he stood up in the local synagogue and announced “the acceptable year of our Lord” he was surely calling for a return to Jubilee principles. Just as Bono and Geldorf have done in our time – with more success it seems than Jesus. He got nailed to a cross, whereas they got Man of the Year. Hopefully the seeds scattered in the following pages will fall on fertile ground?

# 1. Psycho-Social Support & Capacity Replenishment

Kofi Annan's special envoy for HIV/AIDS – Stephen Lewis – wrote a book last year called Race Against Time. The following clips from pages 170 – 175 of his book help to illuminate some realities about psycho-social support for orphans. Finding effective ways to provide such support is vital, and more especially, establishing best practice models like Orchard Camp can point the way for others to follow. This is one way in which a centre for leadership can assert influence...

*"... we come to the question of orphans. As I've moved from country to country over the last four years, it's been clear, inescapably clear, that as the pandemic evolves, children orphaned by AIDS are becoming the single most intractable and painful legacy. There are no equivalent precedents. Nothing in historical experience has prepared us for two generations of children rendered desperate, lonely, sad and bewildered by sheer circumstance. And it leads to bizarre permutations.*

*"... the pandemic has been going on so long that the orphans are now adults, and a burgeoning population of parentless children adolescents, and rootless youth is simply overwhelming for every state. Governments haven't the faintest idea what to do. The policies for orphans, more often than not, are a grab-bag of frantic interventions, where faith-based groups and community-based groups try desperately to cope with the numbers, but rarely have the capacity or the resources."*

*"Everyone speaks, with passing ease, about "psycho-social support". That's the term of art. It's meant to convey the therapeutic response to profound emotional distress. In Africa, for children affected by AIDS, except in the rarest of cases, it doesn't exist. I shall never know why we throw it around with such abandon; in fact, it's entirely irresponsible to imply that there's a battalion of social workers and psychologists out there just waiting to intervene. What, for a million orphans?*

*"What is meant by "psycho-social support" are the sustaining networks of family and friends, which may or may not be adequate. For the child, wrenched from the bosom of the family after a death-watch of months or even years, the informal counseling apparatus leaves much to be desired. There is no question that amongst the responses we must explore is how to handle the psychological lives of children whose emotional equanimity is hanging by a thread."*

C4L's project manager is a founding member of CASNET – the caring schools network. This is one way that we are trying to disseminate our schools-based approach to other provinces of South Africa. Other linkages like PECAN (Pan East Coast AIDS Network) are opening doors in other countries as well - like Swaziland.

Schools are the entry point. C4L's project trains one teacher in each school, who in turns trains colleagues at the school, using training materials generated by C4L. (90 schools have been reached thus far.) Even though schools are open all day, and orphans spend more than half the number of days each year at school, they are not always open, like on week-ends or school holidays. Thus C4L promotes support groups called Kids Clubs which involve both the teacher/advisor during school hours, and others from the vicinity as well. Volunteer caregivers from the community are also trained – one per school. Youth leaders are also mobilized, often from local churches. To date the youth corps numbers about 30. Combining forces, these three strands create a strong and supple safety net to identify the needs of orphans and respond to them – at community level.

Each school can only send one boy and one girl for extra “resilience building” at Orchard Camp. So the ones who come really can use the extra support. While camps are not the centre of C4L's strategy, they are an important facet. They add huge value to the overall effort. Like the adult and youth training, the camps occur on the C4L campus. Orchard Camp is not C4L's main focus, important as it is. The main emphasis is rather on training – teachers, caregivers and youth leaders (for which donor funding is expected, in due course). Which leads to some more comments from Stephen Lewis that are a propos:

*“For as long as I can remember, the term "capacity building" has been used in the developing world. But in the presence of the pandemic, capacity-building is a palpable misnomer. When so much of your human capacity is dead or ill, it's necessary to talk about capacity replacement or capacity replenishment. Training becomes an imperative part of the process – training of those who are left to be trained, and in the interim, help from abroad to bridge the gap until human capacity is, at least in part, restored.”*

## 2. Follow the Trend

Last week I enjoyed reading the address given by Ambassador Tobias as he assumed the post of U.S. Director of Foreign Assistance and Administrator of USAID, leaving the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) behind. His address was delivered on the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Harry Truman signing the Marshall Plan into law.

One comment that really intrigues me was this: *“The time when only a handful of people recognized the value of development has passed. From world leaders to rock stars to elementary school children, people are aware like never before of the challenges facing the developing world - and the way those challenges affect not just those suffering, but the entire global economy and the security and prosperity we seek.”*

He used a good strategy- he started with a litany of successes. There is nothing like reminding people of what good “social investment” has done, since the post-war Marshall Plan was institutionalized into USAID:

- *In 1950, fifty-five percent of the world population was living on \$1 a day or less. Only 20 percent are so impoverished today.*
- *Life expectancy is longer, mostly because infant mortality fell from 158 per 1,000 in 1970 to 63 per 1,000 in 1999, and it is still on the decline.*
- *Barely 35 years ago, 12-15 million people worldwide were infected with smallpox and 2 million of them died each year. Today... smallpox has been largely eradicated.*
- *People are eating more and better. The share of people below nutritional adequacy has fallen from 57 to 7 percent since 1961.*
- *More boys and girls are in school. In 1950, there were about 100 million. Today, there are about 1 billion. This means that literacy and numeracy are no longer reserved for the elite.*
- *Most important of all, in the 1960s there were around 90 countries where development efforts were focused. Now, about 25 of those have graduated. Another 15 or so countries that are at or near middle-income country level are close to graduation.*

It certainly is motivational to look back and see what has been accomplished. Then he turns to the present and future:

*“But many of the problems we face today are different. Many did not exist even a generation ago... I think of AIDS and the threat of Avian Flu. I think of the explosion of local conflicts that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall. I also think, of course, of the rise of new enemies who exploit poverty, oppression, injustice and state indifference in order to destroy hope, and thereby provide haven for criminals and the planning of criminal acts.”*

The logic is sound. Those who sow good social investments will reap better global conditions for their children and grandchildren... Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy.

So there is some pride in Ambassador Tobias observation: *“From the highest levels, this Administration has made an enormous commitment to development and transformation. President Bush has made - and is keeping - that commitment. In fact, the total official development assistance (ODA) provided by the United States for 2005 came to \$27.5 billion - a near tripling of ODA since 2001.”*

In 2005, at Gleneagles in the UK, the G8 leaders not only erased the third world debt that they still held, but promised to double development assistance by 2010. I wonder about one thing – do all these pronouncements make ordinary people like you and me *more* inclined to give, too, or less likely? Do we sense that as our development agencies are re-doubling their efforts, out of the public purse, we can coast? Or are we ready to increase our level sacrifice as well, to make the world a better place for generations to come?

New needs like “the deluge of orphans” are presenting challenges never before imagined. One high school about 30 kilometers from C4L, with a student population of about 1000, has almost 500 orphans. While some of these are “single orphans” (not all are “double orphans”) the point is that such proportions are unprecedented. New problems keep cropping up, in a world whose population has probably doubled in those 58 years since Truman signed the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe (the beginning of foreign aid as we know it today).

The phrase “widows and orphans” is quite common in scripture. But through most of human history, these were the exception, the marginalized. Now, in parts of southern Africa, “mainstreaming” is taking on a whole new meaning.

So it was cause for optimism that Bush pledged 15 billion dollars from the USA to the AIDS emergency in Africa (i.e. PEPFAR). Wasn't that the biggest envelope ever pledged for aid? Not one to be upstaged, Chirac responded soon after by pledging the same amount from Europe. This must have started a trend – for before long the British Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister), Gordon Brown, pledged 15 billion dollars of British aid to education in developing countries over the next ten years.

I am intrigued about the increments of 15. Can any one explain to me the significance of that number? Is 10 billion not enough? Is 20 billion too much? Is 15 just easier to remember, or what? There has to be a reason for this!

C4L has pioneered a good approach to orphan care in its vicinity, that avoids institutionalizing them while ensuring at the same time that they do not remain marginalized. This approach is community based and schools centred. It involves educators, community volunteers and youth leaders. It forms Kids Clubs that fill the after-school gaps and also identify those OVC who will benefit most from “resilience building” camps on the school holidays. Only 2 orphans from each school can attend an inter-school camp, so those who come tend to be the most marginalized of the marginalized. This model is scalable and replicable. But right now it is running on empty, until the next block of grant funding comes through.

Are we ready to follow the trend set by world leaders? Don't assume from their pledges that ministries like C4L are awash in a rising tide of resources. Nothing could be further from the truth. (We will be delighted if this changes!)

Are you prepared to give more than ever before? Perhaps it's more difficult when you're not giving away other people's money?!

*“Pure, unspoiled religion, in the eyes of God our Father is this: coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it...”* (James 1:27)

### 3. The Inside Story

This week has been a heavy one for me personally, so I am keeping this message light. Let me just explain two things:

- How a centre whose core business is adult learning connects with youth and orphans
- Why a schools-based approach to care and support for OVC (orphans and vulnerable children)?

I'll have to explain the second point first, to better understand the first. For over a decade the AIDS pandemic has been evolving. At first, the focus was on Prevention. That has now shifted to Treatment and Care. But as the number of orphans began to rise (it is far from peaking yet), we as development practitioners became aware that there are two extremes. On the one hand, institutionalizing children is not the preferred way to go. This is not to say that there is not a place for orphanages. Historically, they have played an important role, and before long we are going to have to combine all known strategies, including institutions - and probably invent some new ones as well! One of the best known Christian responses to orphans was the ministry of George Muller in Bristol, UK. What a faith he had!

On the other hand, absorbing orphans into surrogate families is a huge challenge. Especially in the context of South Africa's social fragmentation. We are admirers of ministries (like *Give a Child a Family* in Port Shepstone) that train families how to accept orphans into their homes.

The middle ground between these extremes includes various strategies. For example, mentoring... Namely, assuming the *Big Brother* role - taking on a periodic role of influence in the life of an orphan. Or “half-way houses” that take in abandoned children until permanent placements can be found. These are strategic, assuming that “*pre-orphans*” are identified early enough, lest they end up as street children or worse yet in prostitution or crime. In more traditional, rural African societies, extended family would have a rescue plan in place before both parents die. Too often, though, in urban settings,

this responsibility has been abused and the children end up exploited or marginalized.

Due to the strong human rights ethos in South Africa, a legacy of the apartheid era, the fact is that many children remain *home alone*, without guardians. They have to fend for themselves. In some cases there may be an income stream from life insurance or social welfare. But more often than not, they are adrift. The term “Child Head of Household” has become so common that it is no longer shocking, to our shame. God forbid that we should ever get used to it.

In this middle ground, with the prospect of a rising tide of orphans in the years to come, C4L found a niche. The original idea was to help them in school, which is important. But too many of them either can't get to school, or can't cope after school, on week-ends, holidays and school breaks. The out-of-school needs are just as critical. So the strategy broadened to weave a safety net that stretches over the community, involving youth leaders (mainly from churches in the same community) and volunteer child care givers (adults, often parents of other children at the school). These are the ones who form *Kids Clubs* – where public infrastructure already exists. Information is shared, pre-orphans are identified in time, care and support are arranged. As the slogan says: “Organize, don't agonize!”

Another middle ground strategy came to our attention through the Salvation Army in Zimbabwe – psycho-social support camps for OVC, held during school holidays. *Orchard Camp* was inspired by this, as a value-added component to the overall initiative, situated on the C4L campus.

Now back to the first question above. It is true that C4L was established for adults, not orphans. In fact, for a fairly select group of adults – “managers and leaders in the human services”. Educators are among the most esteemed and educated people in any African community. Education is certainly one of the key human services. That's how we entered the original phase – by training teachers. Broadening this to training other concerned volunteers from the same communities where the schools are located, as child care givers, was a no-brainer.

A majority of these adults are women. An African proverb says: *Train a man and you train a person; train a woman and you train a generation.* This strategy has to be replicable and scalable.

Becoming a youth organization, though, has raised some eyebrows. Until one points out that over half the population of South Africa is under 18 years of age, and how well peer-education and peer-counseling work. The youth corps that C4L has mobilized has a dual role. First, at community level, they are one of the important strands in the OVC safety net. They are vital to the Kids Clubs, for example. In this role, they are volunteers.

Second, as camp counselors. Orchard Camp only pays an honorarium, not full wages. It cannot expect young adults to work 3 weeks at a time, long hours, strictly as volunteers. In a country with a history of exploitation, this is not on (perhaps even in a country without one?!).

Especially for their involvement at Orchard Camp, the youth corps needs preparation. Not only training, but first to deal with the issues themselves, personally, before trying to help their peers. So a structured youth leadership development programme has been launched. Call it discipleship.

*The via media between two extremes is often the best way to go.*

## 4. Childermas

We do not take you for granted...

We did not presume, when we launched this appeal, that the target would be reached. While we made the operational decision to go ahead with the winter camps - even without donor funding in place - we recognized that in doing so, we were walking by faith, not by sight.

I want to assure you that we have worked hard during this period, in terms of wider resource mobilization. The project manager has submitted her report to CIDA for the past year (a huge job in itself) and then prepared the new submission for the next year. It has been submitted, with all the required attachments. Another huge job.

Next week she is hosting a visit to C4L by another donor, the ABSA foundation, which has been funding one segment of the work - training community volunteers who are the child care givers. More preparation and another shift of focus. During the past month she has been actively following up contacts with several other corporate and government donors in South Africa as well.

Meanwhile, I have been in Canada, and have made some headway in the limited time available to me. At Christchurch about 50 people attended an special evening on AIDS and all contributed generously. I visited the Stephen Lewis Foundation in downtown Toronto and received a very warm welcome. (I had already prepared a submission, which is still being processed.)

I have personally delivered or sent presentations to a dozen other foundations as well – all across Canada. All this time I have been preparing for a workshop in the USA for the New Partners Initiative of PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief). One cannot apply to this envelope of funding without attending such a workshop, so we are complying. But it takes time, energy, considerable skill and experience to mobilize resources. This is to assure you that we do not just assume that when ever C4L is short of funding, it will simply launch another appeal. Not at all.

Responses have been heart-warming:

- C4L-Canada indicated a month ago that there would probably be only 7 volunteers on the next team in June & July. Yesterday Nick Short informed me that there could now be 14! We do not take all the credit for this, by the way, as C4L-Canada has its own momentum as well. But it is an indicator that people are listening to what we are saying, and taking action.
- one pledge came with a cheque for half the amount, and a note saying that the remainder would come "when we save it up". There is a level of commitment in that message that is worth noting...
- one message said that a cheque had been written and placed in an envelope. But on the way to the post box, they got to thinking about it... So they tore up the envelope and wrote another cheque out for twice the amount. In the light of the theme of the appeal letter that week - "are you prepared to give more than ever before?" - that was quite something

During all this activity, I came across a term that I had never met before - *Childermas*. It is a feast on the church calendar, that remembers the slaughter of the innocents by King Herod. It is celebrated on

December 28th every year, and also weekly - on the day of the week that Dec 28th falls on, in any given year. In 2006, that is on Thursdays.

Recently a painting by one of the Dutch masters called Slaughter of the Innocents was sold for a record-breaking price at an art auction. When I saw this in the press, it puzzled me why a painting of dead babies heaped up in a pile on a street in Bethlehem would fetch such a premium? Especially in a world where innocents are dying in their millions of AIDS! Of the 26 million people who have already died of AIDS (more than all the wars of the 20th century combined), 5 million were children. If we put our treasure where our heart is, then something has gone desperately wrong, somewhere...

When God pitched his tents and dwelt among us, he became a baby - fragile and vulnerable. Escaping Herod's despotic regime, he grew up as a refugee - in Africa. "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

I am going to be bold, and make an unprecedented suggestion. Especially for those of us who are protestants and have a tendency to steer away from the "bells and smells" of high church tradition. Just out of solidarity, then, couldn't we set aside Thursdays in some special way, between now and December 28th? Not just to remember the dozens who were slain in Bethlehem by a despot, but to remember millions who are dying in our time because of various factors - including state indifference and recalcitrant leaders who do not role-model what it takes to stop the spread of infection. Here are some ways that you might do this:

- pray on Thursdays for children, orphans, and especially infants dying of AIDS
- every Thursday, do some special reading about this (start with Googling "Orphans" and "Africa" and you get quite a few items from CNN, BBC, the World Bank, etc.)
- make every Thursday the day that you engage at least one other person to raise awareness about this issue
- go without lunch and instead make a gift to a ministry for OVC (orphans and vulnerable children) like C4L's
- dare I say it? What about fasting on Thursdays? This is more than solidarity - it engages the powers

Volunteering is a mode of giving that C4L is encouraging more and more, in the light of "capacity shrinkage" in Africa, and the increasing need for "capacity replenishment". But it is concentrated intensely around a trip overseas, at a particular season.

Observing Childermas could be a complementary strategy; a "long war" to borrow an all-too-familiar phrase. Are you ready to take action that is on-going and proactive? In favour of innocents who are either orphaned when their parents are taken by a pandemic through no fault of their own, or worse yet, born with AIDS? I sense that there are more and more people who want to do something more substantial than just making a donation, but they don't know how. Here is one suggestion - choose a way to observe Childermas, and stick with it.

*Wouldn't it be great if this became a mass movement!*

## 5. Leadership Matters

I recently encountered an illustration that is even better than Fortune magazine's saying: "Managers do things right; leaders do the right thing". It says that management is about the efficiencies of climbing up the ladder of success; whereas leadership is about deciding which wall to lean the ladder against.

In the last appeal letter, the theme of Childermas was introduced, but the emphasis was put on what each of us might do, to act in solidarity with "innocents" who are dying or orphaned from the AIDS pandemic. That was the easy part. It had more to do with the efficiencies of climbing the ladder of success – that is, with executive action. Important as that is, it is not the whole story. For there is always the larger question – on which wall should the ladder be leaned against?

The other side of the coin in the Childermas theme is the leadership crisis. King Herod was not unlike so many African rulers of today, in trying to remove any trace of emerging contenders. So the question is, to what extent are these leaders responsible for what is happening to the "innocents"? Obviously I have to be cautious in my commentary. While it is unlikely that my head will be served up on a platter, there are certainly other ways in which – once provoked – African leaders can make life miserable for those who challenge them when they lean the ladder against the wrong wall.

Mentioning the term "state indifference" is not enough, one has to look at some particulars. Let's take Jacob Zuma, whose intentions to take over as president of South Africa have been clear for a long time. Aside from the corruption charges that he soon faces in court, because of which he was dismissed as Deputy President last year, and aside from the fact that he was not convicted of the rape charge that has occupied him in another court of late, one has to observe his leadership on the AIDS issue. (Remembering that up until his dismissal, he was chairman of the country's coordinating body for HIV/AIDS.) He confessed to having what he calls consensual sex with an AIDS activist who he knew to be HIV-positive – without wearing a condom. He testified that he took a shower shortly thereafter, to diminish the risk of contracting the virus. Some one said that after his trials for rape and corruption, he should then be tried for stupidity! These are harsh words, but people in power must be held to the highest ethical standards, as they are role models – including for the "innocents". They are the elders that African people look up to. They are the ones who decide which wall to lean the ladder against. In this case, the accuser may have to leave the country under a witness protection programme!

Or what about the king of Swaziland? He practices polygamy, in a world that knows that having multiple partners hugely increases the risk of HIV-infection. Last year he took another wife, who was only 16 years old at the time. Even though his country, in which he has the highest executive power, is a signatory of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Women - which prohibits marriage before the age of 18. This is the dark side of Childermas.

Africans simply have to change some cherished behaviours. It is a matter of survival. Unless they put the ladder on another wall, there will eventually be no more managers or executives left to climb up it, and therefore no success. The dream of an African Renaissance will be traded for the nightmare of a Great Plague. HIV-prevalence in Swaziland has already reached 43 per cent, and there are more infected people - in absolute terms - than any country on earth, in Jacob Zuma's homeland. Is there no connection between these facts and the behaviours of such top people?

What about the Thomson family in Canada? They recently spent \$116 million on a painting of dead

babies heaped up in the streets of Bethlehem by King Herod's order. What message does that send out? The world is not awash in surpluses, as long as there continue to be deficits. Nowhere is disparity more vivid than in the contrast between rulers who command unbridled power and wealth and innocent children who live in trauma, poverty and hunger, on their watch. This is the meaning of Childermas.

The story of the Magi is about well-to-do foreigners encountering a local leader driven by self-interest. They are such a contrast to Herod! They have sacrificed their time and resources to come a long way, to celebrate the birth of a new leader. They even bring gifts. They show respect for the existing ruler, to the extent that Herod enlists them to locate the new contender. Off they go to Bethlehem, not realizing how threatened King Herod is. His true intentions only come to light after they locate the birthplace – not just of a new leader, but of a new way of leading. So they withdraw their support from the incumbent, and make themselves scarce...

There are lessons here about how to engage leaders who put self-perpetuation ahead of the survival of their subjects:

- Approach them with caution
- Avoid getting enlisted
- Resource the contenders
- Vote with your feet if you have to

Stephen Lewis raises the question of the “right to protect”. In the last analysis, foreign aid of any description is really part of a broader strategy for “homeland security”. Are we safe in a world that celebrates the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of HIV/AIDS on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006, when already 40 million people are infected with HIV and living positively?

It won't be any easier to step into the not so fanciful scenario of failed African states (as a result of capacity shrinkage caused by the pandemic, thus meltdown). Better an ounce of prevention... to tackle the leadership crisis - the dark side of Childermas - without losing sight of the “innocents” and their needs.

Out of 54 countries in Africa, only 12 have HIV/AIDS legislation today. Even though only 7 of the 153 heads-of-state since independent African countries started to emerge in the late 1950s have stepped down voluntarily. Ostensibly Africa has a preference to perpetuate leadership, as opposed to the rotation of leadership. Why people who articulate that view are called “pro-African” beats me!?

Well, if they are going to stay in power, can they be held to minimum standards? Who can insist on there being HIV/AIDS legislation? Is there any way to enforce compliance? Or is Canada's number coming up next, in terms of the spread of infection, whether we like it or not?

Changing cultural behaviour is not unthinkable. What about smoking? Seat belts? Single-use injections? Racial and gender discrimination? Above all, it takes leaders – who are role models, trend setters, protest marchers, attitude shapers, wise men. Helping Africa means more than providing quality services in prevention, treatment and care for those who are “at risk, infected or affected”. It means engaging the powers. Holding its leaders to high ethical standards. Becoming change agents.

One thing can be said for Jacob Zuma. He apologized publicly for his behaviour, on a continent where so many leaders, like King Herod, have been recalcitrant. Not just new leaders are needed, but a new way of leading.

## 6. You Are Only A Boy

A mere youth. From a peri-urban area called Bethlehem. A country bumpkin. The youngest sibling, but not a “late lamb” like Joseph, which finds special favour with his parents. (When the prophet dropped by for a visit, they forgot about him as he was out tending the flocks... like so many young boys in Africa.)

Meanwhile the older brothers go off to school, or to the city, or to the mines. In David's case, the oldest three brothers went off to war. Heroic intentions, that met the indomitable defiance of Goliath. Taller than even a basket-ball player, his sport was insulting the Israelites and their God. Day after day this scenario was repeated – military gridlock. An unwinnable war.

What impresses me most as I read I Samuel 17 is that for 40 days, neither army advances. The battle lines never change. Goliath's defiance strikes paralyzing fear into the adult males who comprise the armies of Israel. Women are not mentioned among the troops... I note this because this week, for the first time ever, a Canadian woman was killed in combat, in Afghanistan. Long wars with slow resolutions are not just an Old Testament phenomenon!

David's innocence is refreshing. His faith is so pristine and uncluttered that he takes offense at a Philistine who dares to defy the armies of the living God. The adult stalemate begins to look cynical... the army, an Angolan soldier once told me, is a way of life – not a way of death! David is provoked, but not reckless. He volunteers...

King Saul offers him full regalia. Intrigued, David tries on the armor. But then his faith combines with his innocence: “I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.” (v. 38) No cloak and dagger solutions for this youth! Not only is a new leader emerging, but a new way of leading. He just carries a staff and a sling, which only intensifies the defiance of Goliath: “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” (v. 43)

David's response to the Philistine should be used as a yardstick for those who want to join the fight against the forces of evil, and above all those who emerge as the leaders among them: “You came against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” (v. 45) Values, not methodology. Convictions, not shock and awe. Attitudes, not assets. Good behaviour, not good equipment. Abstinence and fidelity, not condoms.

Leadership has to change, if we want to defeat HIV/AIDS, or poverty, or injustice. Leadership style will have to make room for new people, and for new approaches. This explains why C4L is shifting its focus from refresher courses for incumbent leaders and managers, to youth leadership development. The practicums for these youth leaders revolve around community service in school-based support groups for OVC and involvement in psycho-support camps at C4L. In resilience building for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) – who look up to them as role models. So values, convictions, attitudes, good behaviour, abstinence and fidelity are emphasized.

Too many leaders - like Eliab, David's older brother - are cynical: “Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert?” (v. 28) Total rejection. Hardened disbelief. Like King Herod in a later era, the Eliabs and Sauls of David's time would rather have

eliminated him. But he emerged unscathed, victorious, even triumphant and hugely influential.

Last month, the 2006 cycle of youth leadership training began at C4L. This “youth corps” has a lot of new faces this year – as many from last year have found jobs (PTL!) or moved on. These cadres are being prepared to host the OVC camps in the next school holidays. We also look forward to the arrival of the third team of Canadian volunteers next month – many of whom are young leaders.

This past week-end, the youth leaders of the new Anglican diocese in which C4L finds itself, attended a retreat on campus. While this was not related to the OVC camps per se, it is another activity contributing toward the same outcome. Another one of the Lord's armies fighting the same foe! Here is some fresh and reliable intelligence about that common enemy, gathered this week – since the last appeal letter:

“At Khumbula High School the teacher (who took our training) took out a book for us to see in which she had written all the names of all the orphans in the school. There were 181 of them listed there! That is out of 1200 kids at the school – so 15% are orphans. That does not include the kids whose parents are sick or infected by HIV. Dorcas just looked at me and said 'I don't even think I could see all those kids in a term if I wanted to counsel them, because I also have classes, marking, etc. to do'. She said the Department of Education came to visit them last week, because that school has one of the lowest matric pass rates in the region and they are putting pressure on them to bring up their averages. They asked her what she was doing to help and support the orphans because orphans tend to do poorly in school. She showed them her book and told them she had learned at C4L that the first thing she had to do was identify the orphans in the school. So she collected information about them in her book and even she was shocked to find so many children without parents. She also had a column for gender, age and the name of the caregiver. So many children were alone, with no caregiver (child heads of household). I suggested she send some of them to camp. One boy, 15 years old, a double orphan, Justice is his name, will be coming to Orchard Camp in July. He lives completely alone. To add to their problems, most of these kids have no documents and so they don't get the child grant, thus no income.”

Goliath was an experienced fighter, as Saul warned David. Perhaps there are times when it is better to go with what you've got, and who you've got - however improbable - than to wait around for top-down solutions?

On this note, check out a new website <[www.childermas.org](http://www.childermas.org)>. Referrals to this site are welcome, to enlist others! Like “Jubilee”, *Childermas* is thematic and belongs to every one who practices it.

A special vote of thanks to those who have contributed! You are like Jesse, who sent his youngest son David up to the front lines to deliver an ephaph of roasted grain, ten loaves of bread, and ten cheeses... No inputs, no activities; no activities, no outputs! Thank you for your gifts which help us to engage the powers...

## 7. Childermas is a verb

*I childermas you.*

*In fact, I childermas you more than I have ever childermassed anyone before.*

*I childermas you to not only use the directive style of leadership, but to also use the participative style.*

*I childermas on Thursdays.*

*I childermas on Dec 28<sup>th</sup> every year.*

There are two sides to the Childermas coin. First, innocents are dying – in this case of a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Please note the oxymoron. About 5 million children so far, many of whom never reached the age of puberty, have already died of AIDS – an STD. Second, adults who are more concerned about satisfying their own interests than about the welfare of children in their vicinity are ultimately responsible. These are not all slaughtering babies in the streets, mind you. They are teachers who withhold advancements from students pending sexual favours. They are politicians who sleep with multiple partners and don't condomize. They are agency personnel who spend more on their own benefits than on the beneficiaries. These are the King Herods of our time...

I received this message recently: *“Last week a 3 year old girl (in South Africa) was beaten and raped. She is still alive. The man responsible was released on bail yesterday. He is walking the streets. If you are too busy to read this then just sign your name and forward this on. The Government is planning to close the child protection unit and this is a petition against it. This is a very important petition. It is an essential part of the justice system for children.”* When I pursued this further, I found the source of this message to be suspect. Nevertheless, it makes a good point - that protection is weakening at the very time when it needs to be strengthened.

Canada is not without this either. For example, what are its leaders doing about street-racing? This week, a child was orphaned in Toronto, when both her parents were killed by two reckless cars in a street-race up Yonge Street. Legislation and law enforcement about this are long overdue. It is ultimately leaders who are responsible for providing protection for people at risk. Leaders have to use their influence to change some people's behaviours.

While some orphans are infected by HIV/AIDS, most of them fall into the “affected” category. Within a decade or two, Africa is expected to be awash on orphans – perhaps as many as 40 million. In a context of mass emigration over the preceding decades, coupled with the death phase of the pandemic – which will only peak in about a decade – these orphans will become prominent, demographically speaking. Their heroic grandmothers will not live forever, then what?

How will they behave? How will they vote? Will they be bitter and prone to crime? Will they destabilize Africa? Or - remembering their own hardships - will they strive to build a better world? That is the legacy of “Holy Joe” Atkinson of Toronto. For decades, he used his power as editor of the *Toronto Star*, and his personal fortune, to better conditions for the destitute. *He was an orphan.*

Human rights are only “rights” if they apply to all people everywhere. If children have a right to education, this implies that they have this right not only in Canada but in Africa too. Otherwise – if education is not justly distributed – then it is really not a right, but a privilege. I learned today of a high school in Canada that has an electron microscope. In the previous section there was a description of another high school, in Africa mind you, of 1200 children - 181 of whom are orphans. Those who are privileged have a responsibility to the underprivileged. Let me childermas you at this point – *if you are not a part of the solution, you are part of the problem.* The Bible is clear that those who are privileged have a social, material and spiritual responsibility to help orphans. Here are a few creative new ideas on how to do this, that have come to my attention recently:

- **Annuity** – You have some spare capital that you don't need at the moment, although you will need it later. Don't give away the capital – give the increase. Invest it for a period, let's say ten years. Your broker will know how much of the capital should be invested, in order to return the same amount to you in ten years. The balance of the capital (i.e. the increase) can be donated up front.
- 2. **Endowment** – At the moment, you give \$50 per year to orphan work. If you endow \$1200 today, it will generate \$50 per year – not just for your whole life, but in perpetuity.
- 3. **Activism** – Step out of your position of privilege for a short time and take on some social responsibility. Volunteer to assist one of the faith-based organizations that are struggling to cope with the “deluge of orphans”.
- 4. **Planned giving** – Prepare a special year-end gift on Dec 28<sup>th</sup> – Childermas. That means forward planning. No doubt you plan your investment portfolio – into 30 day accounts, 60-day, 90-day, etc., or into bonds of 5 years or 10 years. So plan your “social investments” as well. The end of the year, like Dec 28<sup>th</sup>, is a good time to look for tax advantages. What about planning to give away some stocks? I hear that this is a very tax-friendly way to make charitable donations. Check with your broker.
- 5. Have you included a charitable organization in your will?

Zacchaeus was short in more ways than one... He was short on cultural sensitivity, for one thing, having taken on a role as tax collector for the Romans among the Jews. So he was short on friends, too. To the extent that Jesus even had to invite himself to dinner! They broke bread together, and suddenly Zach became long on paying his dues: “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Better to err on the side of generosity and restitution, lest we end up on the shadowy side of Childermas. In positions of leadership, we need to be long on equity and balance. Does it seem right to you that a high school (and a Christian school, at that) has an electron microscope in a world where there are glaring needs in high schools far and near? To me, this is short on logic and long, too long, on privilege. To hear the words that Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus - “Today salvation has come to this house” - one has to be sharing, not accumulating.

Speaking of long and short, my favorite editor recently quoted an American writer: “*I didn't have time to write you a short letter, so I wrote you a long one.*” A special thanks and blessing to those of you who have kept reading these reflections right through to the end. God be with you.

## 8. Cracking the Codes

First came a book called *the Bible Code*, about 5 years ago, with some startling revelations about codes embedded in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. This might have overstated the case for the authenticity of Scripture, although I even heard a sermon from a Baptist pulpit endorsing it. Now we are awash in *the Da Vinci Code*, in which the Holy Grail becomes a code name for a child fathered by Jesus and mothered by Mary of Magdela. Just note one thing – if you go to a library to find the book

(which I am not recommending, by the way), you will find it in the Fiction section. That says it all.

Around Easter this year there was a lot of hype about the *Gospel of Judas*, which may cast his role in a different light. I suppose it was in the context of all this foment of re-thinking old icons that I latched onto the theme of Childermas. People seem to be intrigued by revisiting and re-cycling old figures and themes. So a theme that connects leadership and innocent children was just too much to resist.

Digging deeper into the history of orphans, from the Old Testament poor laws right through to modern times, I became aware of the fact that we, in our enlightened post-modern context, may miss an important point. Infanticide was common practice. (As was crucifixion.) The Hebrews lived in a cruel world, and their notion of protecting the orphan and the stranger must be understood in that light.

When Pope Innocent III came to Rome over a thousand years after King Herod's slaughter of the innocents, he found so many dead babies floating in the Tiber River that he summoned Guy de Montpellier to come from France. Guy was founder of the Order of the Holy Spirit, established to look after orphans. Infanticide was only outlawed after the emperor Constantine's conversion, but it continued to be practiced long after that. Some would say that it continues today - among the unborn.

Maybe this offers some perspective – as to why such a feast as Childermas continued to be practiced in the Middle Ages?. And why it no longer appears on church calendars. In some churches, they even omit the reading about King Herod during Christmas worship services, as noted in an article by the editor of Christian Week – “Put Herod Back Into Christmas”. I second the motion! We will not be able to make Africa a safer place for its children unless we can openly critique African realities. Why is ARV treatment only available to 5 per cent of children who are infected? This is unacceptable.

It was so good to hear Kenneth Kaunda quoted this week by Reuters. He called Jacob Zuma's admission to having sex with someone he knew was sero-positive – without condomizing – and showering thereafter to cut his risk of infection: “one of the saddest things to happen in Africa over the question of AIDS... because he was chairman of the government team that was fighting AIDS in South Africa.”

Stephen Lewis, the UN special envoy on AIDS, said recently that Zuma's behaviour was “appallingly uninformed in a country that is wrestling with the highest [rate of infection] in the world.”

On the Canadian end of it, we also have to hold leaders accountable. Because AIDS is not just an African problem. It's global. Just this week, India overtook South Africa as the country with the highest number of people infected – in absolute terms. (Although this number is still tiny as a percentage. The highest prevalence remains in southern Africa.) Canada has pledged to raise its overseas development assistance to the benchmark of 0.7% of GNP. Lester Pearson was in on pegging that benchmark. But Canada has set no timeline for ramping it up to that level. The new prime minister seems to have his eye on the ball, so to speak. So maybe on Thursdays you could do some lobbying, as you Childermas? Make some noise about this with Canadian leaders. Your vote counts. The aid budget is notorious for having no constituency to lobby for an increase. That's your cue!

There is another code that we may not have cracked...

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why the highest HIV prevalence in the world is in Swaziland. The scientific answer is “multiple concurrent partners”. In anthropological speak it's called polygamy. From the king on down, it's common practice. But what is at the root of it? Here's a clue:

women in Swaziland - an executive monarchy that is not as democratic as some would like it to be – cannot own property. In Swazi law, women are basically minors. Men regard themselves as their superiors. Figure it out. Is it any wonder that less than 10% of women giving birth have access to the wonder drugs that can and do prevent mother-to-child transmission? Over ten percent of Swaziland's shrinking population are orphans.

Swaziland's life expectancy is declining, but it doesn't hold that record too. In Botswana – it's down to 29 years of age. What does that give children to look forward to? Why should they sacrifice and strive to succeed in school? Does this not become a vicious circle, a self-fulfilling prophecy? God help us.

What really sends shivers up my spine is that 60% of those who die from AIDS in South Africa are female. Whereas 52% of births are female, perhaps a natural phenomenon to protect the future of the species? So what will happen if we end up with more males than females? The mind boggles.

Like King Herod, men have a way of looking out for their own interests. This has often meant that they take the front seat and let the women occupy the back seat. The code that needs to be cracked is one that unlocks the door to apostleship. Let me share a new perspective from Romans chapter 16, verse 7: “Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.” By the time he wrote this, St Paul was a veteran apostle. So his esteem for Junias is significant; *she was an apostle*. Long before Paul's conversion, she was one of the prominent women who were numbered among the closest colleagues of the Lord, Jesus.

St. Paul sends greetings to 29 people in that chapter, in all, and alludes to many others. But only Andronicus and Junias are called apostles. I discovered this in Newsweek magazine! Last month it ran a cover story called *the Mystery of Mary Magdalene*. For me, it was like finding a missing piece to a jigsaw puzzle. Some of you have heard me analyse the way Jesus organized his movement. My fascination for him has only been enhanced by exploring this. I had previously found eleven women mentioned by name as being activists in the early Christian movement. This starts with sorting out the 5 Marys (the mother of Jesus, the Magdalene, the wife of Alphaeus, the mother of James, and the sister of Barnabas – all had the same name). No wonder there was confusion about which Mary poured the expensive lotion on the feet of Jesus! Then there are other key figures like Elizabeth, Salome, Martha, Joanna, Claudia, and Suzanna. All in the Gospels. I was sure that there had to be a number 12 in there, somewhere – and now I found her. Junias. *An apostle*, like all the others. The term “twelve apostles” takes on a whole new meaning! Another code has been cracked...

I also note some youths among the apostles. Young John Mark, for example, was the son of Mary and nephew of Barnabas. One can understand why Barnabas takes Mark's side in the dispute with St Paul – he was family! There is not space here to explain why, on close analysis, one cannot escape the conclusion that there was a father and son combination among the Twelve (not the above 12, but the ones in the front seat!). So Jesus not only bridged sibling rivalry (Matthew was a tax collector/collaborator and his brother Simon was a Zealot/terrorist) – but the generation gap as well.

Proportionally, I think that Childermas is getting better reviews than the Da Vinci Code! Responses to C4L's special appeal have been more favourable than reviews of the movie.

## 9. A Closing Prayer

Many of you, but not all, will be familiar with the following prayer, which is often recited as part of liturgical worship in Africa. It is the closing prayer for our 2006 appeal as well:

*God,  
Bless Africa  
Guard her children  
Guide her leaders  
And grant her peace  
For Jesus Christ's sake  
Amen*

This could be called the Childermas prayer, as it approaches the ultimate intercession for peace (i.e. shalom) along a double carriageway – children and rulers.

You guessed it... at a minimum, I am asking you to recite this prayer every Thursday – remembering the innocents who are dying in their millions; and their rulers, who seem to be far more interested in self-perpetuation than in what is happening to children on their watch.

I recently heard Stephen Lewis, the UN's special envoy for HIV/AIDS, speak at Convocation Hall at the University of Toronto. He noted with some frustration that half a million women die every year in childbirth. Year after year. He said that this number has remained about the same for years – no matter how hard all the world's health agencies work at combining their efforts to reduce it, success eludes them. To me, this speaks volumes...

First of all, the big multi-lateral agencies and government ministries of health are caught up in so many cross-currents that I cannot see the welfare of children ever being their prime focus. For example, Mozambique's new health minister has stated that malaria is a bigger issue, in his view, than HIV/AIDS. Maybe that is true in Mozambique, in 2006? But malaria has been around for centuries, and AIDS for only 25 years as of last week - during which it has become (according to Colin Powell) a bigger threat to our planet than even weapons of mass destruction! So one can and does tend to get caught up in differences of opinion among grown-ups. Meanwhile, the front-line realities aren't changing – the same number of women still die every year in childbirth.

Then there is the question of adult priorities. I hear a rumour that the above-mentioned minister has not been at work for 4 months, because he was not being paid. Well, in a way one can hardly blame him. After all, he could do better for himself by leaving government and entering the private sector. Better still by emigrating. Meanwhile, the wheels of a country's health machinery are grinding to a halt. How can we expect child mortality rate to improve when adults regard their own issues as a higher priority?

I am going to make some comments now that are not politically correct, so brace yourselves. I am going to suggest that the Millennium Goals are not goals at all, but Objectives. For one thing, there are 8 of them, and that's just too many at Goal level. One or two is quite enough. Can you imagine a World Cup soccer game with 8 goaltenders on the field? Seriously. In a game like golf, there is only one goal that everyone shoots for. That kind of focus is lacking, and world leaders are to blame.

Subordinate to goals are objectives, and below that is a logic of results, activities, inputs, and plans.

This hierarchy should be getting narrower towards the top. Having eight goals at the top simply dis-integrates the diverse efforts to manage change.

I think that the 8 Millennium Goals are unlikely to be achieved, unless they could be downgraded to Objectives and subordinated to 2 higher goals. This kind of streamlining could make them attainable just by strategic focusing. This focus would also make ordinary people relate better to the agenda for change. Most people on the street cannot remember all 8 millennium goals any more than they can recite ten commandments! Can you? Philanthropy is on everyone's mind from Bono to youth volunteers ready to spend a month of their Canadian summer at C4L. But all that goodwill gets dispersed into a proliferation of causes that is so diverse, that one can hardly comprehend it. It is like the Nile, this mighty river rising in the mountains of East Africa, that suddenly broadens out in Sudan, into a swamp the size of England. Those waters are basically unnavigable. Steam boats have entered there, never to be seen again. Leadership needs to tighten up the 8 Millennium Goals and provide a compass that is user-friendly.

Furthermore, the Millennium Goals are about results, not about relationships. That makes them cold and detached. When what you want is to get people heated up and engaged. So the two super-goals that I propose are:

1. Adequate conditions for all children by 2015 (the right to protect)
2. Mechanisms to hold leaders accountable by 2015 (the right to impeach)

These are both about relationships. The adults of our species have a biological responsibility to look out for the welfare of their young. This is natural, not in terms of survival of the fittest, but in terms of *Ubuntu* – one cannot exist in isolation. Community has been part of humanity ever since God decided that it was not good for man to be alone, created woman, and institutionalized marriage. So not only are parents responsible for their own children, but all adults are entrusted with the welfare of all children. In Africa, this translates into a child calling not only his biological male parent Father, but the father's brothers and their father as well. So it is that scripture teaches us all to defend the fatherless.

The proportions of this increase with the appointment of community leaders. Whether political leaders, spiritual fathers, cultural heroes, economic tycoons, physical healers or intellectual authorities – all are role models for children and thus accountable to the community for their behaviour. Not just for their performance, but for their behaviour. That is why the Democrats were turfed out after Clinton's second term, in spite of the fiscal responsibility that he had displayed. It was rather his moral irresponsibility that cost his party another term in the White House. He was impeached, but not forced out of office. Africa is in dire need of mechanisms that allow for public participation of citizens and a robust free press. The right to impeach is part of the right to protect.

Just as in the Childermas prayer, I believe that holding up these two issues as paramount would point all actors in the right direction, instead of the confusing signals sent out by the Millennium Goals.

One last word about resistance to change. Some strange cross-overs are evident in recent times. Some one said that Bill Clinton ran the best Republican presidency of the 20<sup>th</sup> century! And a Labour leader, Tony Blair, is engaged in the UK's fourth war since he became Prime Minister. Not to mention the spending spree that George Bush has been on! As time passes, we all tend to cherish our views and cling to them. Good leaders don't do that, they adapt. I am noticing a tendency in Africa that is ironic

– conserving radicalism. People who see themselves as “liberal” because they helped to shake off the old ways of colonialism and apartheid are now being overtaken by events. History is marching on and they are becoming relics. One worries that people like this will cling to the Millennium Goals right until 2015, although it is becoming evident already that they are too many and probably unattainable. So instead of scrapping them, it would be best to strategically focus on a higher level of two super-goals.

In the last analysis, a leader must be assessed not by her doctrine or ideology. Less so by whether or not she was a war veteran. Voters need to swing their votes to make democracy work. If they always vote the same way, what is the point in having a democratic process? And above all, public response at the ballot box should reward those who are improving conditions for children, including orphans.

This should be the new clarion call for Africa's leaders. Maybe Thabo Mbeki is right, that the next president of South Africa should be a woman? On the whole, they should be more tuned onto the children's frequency. Although they be among the most ardent conservers of liberalism - to detrimental extremes - as is the case with South Africa's health minister. One editorial cartoon has every one around her pointing at *her* (media, NGOs, donors, churches, etc.), while she herself is pointing to a sign that reads: Apartheid.

If Africa's leaders keep dwelling on the past, they will continue to behave like King Herod of old. The time has come to dwell on the future, starting with youth, children and infants. Reducing the number of women lost in childbirth would be a good place to start. It should be on people's minds as an indicator, when they are deciding whether or not to vote a leader back into office.

Remembering that every time a woman dies in childbirth, another orphan is born.

## 10. Post Script

Allow me to sum up the message of the theme of this “Childermas appeal” letters in a couple of paragraphs...

King Herod was wrong – infanticide is no solution. Constantine was right - to outlaw it. The monasteries did right to absorb orphans for over a thousand years. In African culture, the extended family did right to make room for orphans over the ages. The Reformation did right to close the monasteries. Francké did right to establish the first institution ever for orphans (in Germany in 1696). Muller did right to transfer this know-how to Britain during the industrial revolution. Dickens did right to expose the conditions of England's poor houses in a free press. Dr. Bernardo did right to emigrate orphans to the New World – by the boat load, right up to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Charles Brace of the Children's Aid Society did right to initiate the “orphan trains” out of New York – signaling a paradigm shift away from institutionalizing orphans to fostering and adoption. The Christian activists who staged the *Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* were right that orphans should be on a par with other children. C4L is right – that orphanages and adoption combined will not even come close to meeting the emerging number of AIDS orphans. Other strategies are needed – to add value - like mentoring, drop-in centres, schools-based support and psycho-social camps. Two decades from now, the number of living AIDS orphans will out-number the number of all orphans that have ever lived, put together. The proportions of this phenomenon are unprecedented in human history.

Adoption into the extended family, or even a surrogate family, is the strategy preferred by all - although on the whole, emigrating orphans tends to have gone out of vogue. However, to the children who are really (not just fictionally) “home alone”, St Paul has a comforting thought in Ephesians chapter 1. He states that God ordained that we should ALL be *adopted into His family*. This inspiring chapter about God's supreme plan contains this a propos reminder. We are all adopted. Into one and the same family. Even orphans? No - especially orphans. We have one and the same Father. *God has no grandchildren.*

- How does it feel to be adopted into God's family?
- Will God be pleased if some siblings are thriving while others are “home alone”?
- What are WE doing about *the innocents*?
- What are we doing to hold leaders accountable for child survival?
- How can we strive to substitute leaders for whom child protection is not a top priority?
- Are there ways we can promote *a new way of leading*?

*God  
Bless Africa  
Guard her children  
Guide her leaders  
And grant her peace  
For Jesus Christ's sake  
Amen*