

*'I get my strength from God. I keep praying because this is the only place I can get strength.' Modesta's husband and son were killed by her own family, yet she remains sustained by her faith. Through ALWS Gifts of Grace, you can welcome refugees like Modesta and Niera with a Refugee Kitchen Set*

you're  
**safe** now

Courtesy Jonathan Krause

**It's a long way from Kakuma Refugee Camp in northern Kenya to St Paul's Lutheran Church in Shepparton, Victoria. Yet in the last couple of years St Paul's congregation has doubled in size due to the influx of African refugees, many of whom have made the journey to St Paul's via Kakuma. There are so many people a new church is needed to fit everyone in!**

Their joy in worship and passion for their faith are inspirational, and the singing is guaranteed to give you goose bumps! Yet the journey that has brought them to us is filled with pain and fear and often almost unbelievable horrors.

More than 60,000 people live in the Lutheran-run Kakuma camp,

and on average 250 more arrive every month. Through our church's overseas aid agency Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS), Australian and Kiwi Lutherans have special responsibility for the reception centre.

The centre is where new arrivals are welcomed, helped to settle in and reassured they are safe now. They receive medical and psychological check-ups and are supplied with hot meals for ten days, as they wait for ration cards and to be allocated a house by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Families also receive kitchen sets.

A Refugee Kitchen Set is one of the gifts you can choose in the new ALWS Christmas *Gifts of Grace* catalogue. The Refugee Kitchen Set costs \$26, but

when you meet some of the people who receive your help, you know your gift is priceless. Like grandmother Maburuku ...

'I came to this camp because of the war in Somalia. I cannot remember the date we left, because we were running. I ran to look for peace.

'There was one man who assisted us to go on a boat up to Mombasa. We reached this camp in 2004, but here I met so many problems. My husband beat me, and we separated. I had nothing.

'I got a job at the food distribution centre, so I could earn some money. Now I feel like I am knowing peace.

'There are three children who were unaccompanied: two girls aged 14 and a boy 10. These children are as orphans, and there is constant pain. I see these



children have nothing. To me, even though I am poor, my feeling is I can do something.

I beg my relatives to assist me to care for these children — with clothes, with shoes. My wish is that these children will not be any different to my own three children. I do not tell anyone that they are not my own natural children. I would like them to have a good education, though I don't yet have enough support to do this by myself.

'The children love me, and I love them. I thank you and bless you for the work you do to help us.'

Modesta is a refugee from Burundi, and she shared her story the day after she arrived. 'I am Hutu, and my husband was a Tutsi. When the violence started, my family killed my husband.

'This was so painful for me. First, it was my own family who killed my husband. Secondly, my husband's family thought I was involved, so they rejected me, too. At this time my family also killed my child because they say he is Tutsi, too. Romeo was five. He was a twin. The other child lives.

'I am worried we will be forced back home. If there is any help here, we will appreciate it. I may try to forgive my family, but I don't know how.

'If you ask me where is God, I know God was there. Yet still it seems such a wrong thing to happen to my husband. My husband was a good man. He liked to interact with people. And he liked to pray so much. He was not willing to see people have problems. He always wanted to help.

***The Lutheran church in Shepparton has doubled in size and now requires a bigger building, thanks to the influx of African refugees. On the last Sunday in August the congregation celebrated two baptisms (both children about 14 years old) and eight first communions! The gospel was read in Swahili, English and Dinka, and Pastor Matt Anker was able to do the invocation, absolution and blessing in the three languages, too!***

'I am not angry with God, because what God has planned, no-one will change it. I get my strength from God. I keep praying because this is the only place I can get strength.

'My message to Australians is first thanks because you have helped us when so many of us have died. I make a request that you please do not get tired of helping us, and keep giving us your support. Tomorrow I have hope that we can some day smile once more.'

Last Christmas, Australians gave each other \$987 million worth of gifts nobody wanted. This year you can choose ALWS *Gifts of Grace* that represent the help you give people like Modesta and Maburuku through ALWS — gifts that will be treasured always.

As well as Refugee Kitchen Sets, there are more than 20 other gifts including hygiene kits, household loos and a range of farm

animals, from ducks to day-old chicks to goats! You receive a *Gifts of Grace* photo for each gift you buy that you include with your Christmas card as your gift.

It is a long way from Kakuma Refugee Camp to Shepparton. But we are servants of a God who knows no boundaries. And whether it's face-to-face at a place like Shepparton, or through *Gifts of Grace* across the oceans, it's our privilege and blessing to be able to say to these brothers and sisters in Christ, 'You're safe now'.

**Jonathan Krause is communications manager for Australian Lutheran World Service.**

You can order *Gifts of Grace* at [www.alws.org.au/grace](http://www.alws.org.au/grace) or call 1300 763 407 to receive your FREE catalogues. All gifts are tax-deductible.

***Saida: 'When the fighting came, my parents ran one way, I another. I don't know where my parents are, if they are alive or dead. I ran with my grandmother. She died, but now I am living with my new grandmother.' Maburuku has taken Saida in as her own child. Australian and Kiwi Lutherans help support them through ALWS***



Courtesy Jonathan Krause

