

EWCV Newsletter May 2002

Arriving in Uganda

We arrived safely and are staying presently with Bishop Samuel Kanya and his lovely wife Robinah and their family at Kako which is about 6 miles before Masaka town. Christopher Muwonge and his wife Harriet met us at Entebbe Airport Saturday morning. We were driven to the Bishop's residence which is about 72 miles/ 120 km. south of Kampala and we crossed the Equator not too far north of here. Quite an experience! We are now in the southern hemisphere in the southern part of Uganda just west of Lake Victoria.

We have only been in Uganda for just over a week ago and we have seen so much!

Staying with Bishop Kanya and His Wife, Robinah



Veranda - EWCV, Uganda

Each evening we try to take time to sit with Bishop Kanya and his wife Robinah on the front veranda where we have coffee/tea overlooking the magnificent view of the flatlands and hills below stretching towards Lake Victoria along the horizon. This view reminds me of God's wondrous creation and works. With David in the Bible I exclaim, "O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions" (Psalm 104:24). On the veranda we share with them our daily devotions "Our Daily Bread" and discuss

how the Bible readings relate to our personal lives today. Robinah is an incredible prayer warrior who encourages their children to pray by example. They have seven children of whom four are presently at home. Their youngest daughter, Eva, is finishing high school, daughter Nora is teaching Secondary School nearby, daughter Sarah just returned from teacher's training and will be looking for a teaching position. Their son Joel is home from University near Kampala and will return in another month. They are a lovely family with each one of the children at home sharing in the responsibilities of the household. Guests are constantly coming and going unannounced. Many people do not have telephones and will walk long distances to come and meet with Robinah. I praise God for the Bishop and his wife who have so many responsibilities for so many people in this Diocese of West Buganda.

Travelling through a Rural Parish, Uganda



Rural Parish, Uganda

We have travelled with the Bishop into the countryside to visit churches where he conducts confirmation services, sometimes two services at different churches in the same day. What an experience for us! The Bishop had asked me to be the guest preacher. I was honored to speak about "Eagles" and to share my favorite verse of scripture Isaiah 40: 28-31. When I spoke about the eagle's ability to fly over storm clouds, I mentioned how they keep their focus straight ahead. I related it to us flying over the problems of life by keeping our eyes focused on Jesus daily and our need to turn to Him for our strength, guidance, and wisdom. I mentioned that there is only one way to break through the gap of sin which exists between God and ourselves. We need to first of all deal with the sin in our lives and to ask forgiveness for our sins. We thank Jesus for dying on the cross for our sins and ask Him to be our Saviour, putting Him number one in our lives. Then we receive the free gift of salvation. I praise God for the opportunity offered to have preached the Gospel message five times now to nearly 2000 people young and old.

When we drove with the Bishop, we were greeted at the road entrance to the church with children on each side of the road greeting us with waves and wonderful smiles. Banana leaves were used with bouganvillia flowers as decoration along the roadside. We were taken into a classroom building where we were treated to breakfast before the church service. The classrooms do not have flooring, but the ground is covered with hardened cow dung. We were brought a basin with water to wash our hands. Then the food was brought to us inside of steaming mounds of banana leaves which were folded back for us to take the food. We are trying many different types of food for the first time. An incredible amount of work goes into the preparation of these meals. After the service we were given a similar lunch. We have been drinking only bottled water or soft drinks since we arrived in Uganda.

At several schools groups of students entertained us with singing and dancing to the beat of the drums. There were no other instruments. Awesome! We arrived home at around 8 PM each evening very tired. The Bishop had to drive in the dark as it gets dark at about 7 PM with sunrise at about 7 PM. Twelve hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness all year near the equator. At each place the Bishop was given gifts of things like a live goat, live chickens, huge bunches of green bananas, fresh eggs in a basket, pineapples, etc. His car couldn't hold everything. The main highway towards Rwanda is paved and quite good. However, when we turn onto the side roads, they are something else. I can't imagine what they will be like during the rainy season! A person really needs a four wheel drive vehicle. The rainy season should be starting any day now and they are in need of rain for the crops. Three months of rain and then dry again with two planting and harvesting seasons per year.

Meeting Ugandan Children



Ann With Children in Uganda

The children everywhere we go take great joy in examining us. The children are delightful with their broad smiles. At school the children wear brightly colored uniforms if the parents can

afford cost of the uniforms. Many of the children go without shoes. There are often 100 pupils in a single classroom with 6 children per desk. The teachers have enormous tasks with low salaries and few teaching supplies and textbooks.

Seeing the Need

This area of Uganda was the first to announce to the world 1983 that people were dying in the thousands from HIV/AIDS. The country was also ravaged by wars where thousands of adults were killed. Thus many children were left without parents and many children with HIV/AIDS themselves. The poverty has been unimaginable especially in the rural areas where we have been. We tried to obtain 3000 Christmas Shoebox Gifts for orphans of the area through Operation Christmas Child who are associated with Samaritan Purse, but have been unsuccessful. They do not disclose which countries nor the areas where they give the gifts to children due to security reasons, we are told. It is a wonderful program. This southern area of Uganda is now blessed with peace. However, in Northern Uganda several hundreds of miles north of us war continues to ravage that area where thousands of children have been displaced, captured by the rebel forces, or have died. The daily reports in the newspapers are not pleasant to read. Along with the high cost of war goes the large amount of corruption being disclosed daily in newspapers & radio at all levels of society. It is very frustrating especially when you see the incredible needs of the children, widows, elderly, and handicapped.

The recent countrywide census held in Uganda disclosed an increased population from 16 million in 1991 to 24.6 million today – an increase of 3.3%, thus giving it one of the highest population growth rates in the world. With the new free UPE (Universal Primary Education) program, the classrooms are overflowing with students. Recently a math teacher told Bill that he has approximately 120 students in his Primary 7 (aged 12-13) math class with no texts for them nor materials. Computers are non-existent in 98% of the schools. Teachers in rural schools often go without pay cheques for months and have very poor accommodations, if any available nearby. The children's parents/guardians often cannot afford to pay for basic supplies like pencils, pens, scribbles nor for a lunch for the child (cup of maize porridge). Often there is no water available on site and students fetch the water in large jerry cans from distant bore holes carrying these large cans on their heads. Latrines/toilets are most often inadequate for the large numbers of students. Most children from ages 3 to 4 and up begin working at home carrying water, wood supplies, looking after younger siblings, looking after their elderly grandparents, and working in the fields. Most children do not have shoes and many children do not attend school, but have to do some form of work. However, when we greet children, they

respond with wide smiles. World Vision has been doing a marvellous job in so many areas of the country providing 75% costs towards building some school classrooms, supporting orphans in a household context, and many other projects. We've also recently become aware of Compassion Canada supporting many orphans. There are so many orphans in need!

Feeling God's Call To Start an Orphanage and School



Ann Holding a Baby

There are approx. 60,000 orphans in this diocese of West Buganda, a small part of Uganda. This is due to the ravages of civil war during the 1970's when large numbers of people were killed and then the aids epidemic continues to wipe out so many people leaving so many children without parents and children with aids themselves. We pray that God will use us to make a difference in the lives of some of these children. We realize that we cannot take on all of Uganda, but we will try to make a difference with God's help in this diocese. For starters, an orphanage/medical clinic right in this immediate area of Kako would make a difference. We are praying about this. It seems like a huge task, but with God all things are possible. We are looking at the possibility of using the old cathedral building once the new building has doors installed and window frames/screens so they can move into the new cathedral. Ann had spent the first year and a half of her life back in Saskatchewan in an orphanage in 1943 before her grandmother found her and adopted her so Ann is keen on this project.

We came to Uganda from Athens, Greece on August 17th to meet our friend Christopher and his wife Harriet and their children, but also to volunteer our services wherever God would use us within the Anglican Diocese of West Buganda under Bishop Kamy's direction. During our three months here, we have travelled with the Bishop to 25-30 schools and parishes in every direction, even south towards the Tanzanian border. In many cases Bill has been invited to be

the guest preacher during the service as well as speaking with several thousand students. The singing and dancing of children to the beat of the African drums has been awesome. We have a vision of a project at Kako where we live for starting a home for children who have HIV/AIDS virus, no parents, and nobody to care for them. The project has not yet been approved, but we have formed a committee which includes a couple of medical doctors with whom to share our vision. PLEASE pray for this. With God in charge, "His power at work in us can do far more than we dare ask or imagine". Ephesians 3:20,21 .



Leadership Team - EWCV, Uganda

Living in a Rented House in Rural Kako

Even though we are surrounded by a sea of poverty, we find great beauty in the rolling landscape, the vegetation and in the warmth of so many of the people we meet. Uganda is a very beautiful country – "The Pearl of Africa". The house we are renting in rural Kako is perched at the top of an escarpment overlooking the rolling hills (500 to 1000 ft below us) with Lake Victoria in the distance. Our front porch offers this magnificent view with the fields of banana trees and coffee trees on the slope below our house. Right now everything is so green. Our rose bush in front of the house keeps producing the most beautiful red roses each day. This area of Uganda is Semi-Tropical with a most pleasant climate all year round. We are in the rainy season for another month, but it rains only for about 2-4 hours either at night or early morning, then the afternoons are hot and sunny. We find the sun's rays very intense living near the equator though it seldom goes above 30C nor below about 16C. There are several areas nearby in the valleys with dense jungle vegetation and large numbers of monkeys which we occasionally see, but most of the hillside slopes contain fields with bananas, coffee, tea, peanuts, beans, etc. The birds are plentiful, colorful, and enjoyable to listen to near our house. We have a big Jackfruit

tree out front and have finally tasted the delicious jackfruit – quite different. It is quiet and peaceful here where we live. The most noise we hear is the neighbor's rooster in the morning, their cow mooing, the birds chirping, or the rain falling. For those of you who know where we lived in Athens, Greece, you would truly appreciate the contrast with where we are now in terms of the noise factor and fresh air. Bright green grasshoppers are in abundance right now and are quite expensive to buy in the markets to eat fried or steamed. Bill tried eating them and says they are delicious tasting something like chicken or even shrimp. It is amazing how they are caught live in the millions at night time in big barrels. Bright lights or used to attract them and under the lights are huge long metal sheets. They fly into the metal sheets and then slide down into the barrels below. What a sight! Grasshopper season only lasts for a couple of weeks during the two rainy seasons of the year.

Besides people dying from HIV/AIDS, malaria is also a major illness for many young and old. We continue to take malaria pills weekly and sleep under mosquito treated nets. We have a wonderful doctor who takes great care of us. We are both presently in good health – thank you Lord! We are learning slowly the local “Luganda” language, but try to have a translator when needed as we can often be shut out of conversations. It is quite frustrating as we often found it to be in Greece. However, we have to remind ourselves that we are in a foreign country and far from home. Bill often travels about by Boda Boda (motorcycle taxi). It is quite reasonable in price, convenient, and speedy. He recently obtained his local drivers licence. Ann is still reluctant to try a Boda Boda and goes by car taxi to town weekly for shopping at the market in Masaka (6 miles) with our house guest, Rachael.

Rachael (22) is our friend's Christopher and Harriet's eldest daughter. She is living with us until March when she will return to Makerere University in Kampala in the Faculty of Education. Rachael has been a great help with the housework, cooking, and shopping along with Ann. They often are found at the kitchen table playing scrabble. Rachael's parents Christopher and Harriet live about 18 miles south of here. We have enjoyed staying with them several times and they visit at our home whenever possible. We regard them as our family here in Uganda, a great blessing! Their son Samuel (18) is a student here at the Kako Secondary Boarding School and is presently writing 20 exams with the outcome playing a large factor in what direction he will take next in his education. The younger daughter, Mary (15) lives at home with her parents and attends Secondary School there. Free education stops at primary school. Then schooling becomes expensive at the secondary level and especially for post secondary training where they cannot obtain loans from banks to continue. Many young people are unable to continue with their education because they cannot obtain part time jobs, their parents are too poor to provide funds, and they cannot get loans.

Meeting with Gideons

We have met with one of the local Gideons and his wife. He has promised to help us obtain some Bibles to hand out at churches and wherever needed. We will possibly get to attend some local Gideons meetings and also hope to greet the members of the Lion's Club in nearby Masaka town. Yesterday we met the Mayor of Masaka and the local Member of Parliament at a breakfast at his home.

Meeting with the Rotary Club and the Lion's Club of Masaka

Bill has made presentations to both the local Rotary Club and Lion's Club of Masaka. He has been encouraged to see the work they are doing in this part of Uganda. The Lion's Club of Norway has established a wonderful eye clinic at Masaka Hospital having provided the buildings, all the equipment for the operating room, two 4 wheel drive vehicles, plus maintaining the doctor on site plus staff. Bill took a young child to the clinic and was amazed at the numbers of people of all ages using the facilities. He later took the boy's Grandmother (80+) who had been blind for 7 years for a free cataract operation. The doctor performs many eye operations throughout wide areas of Uganda – all sponsored by the Lion's Club of Norway. We also toured a school for the Handicapped which is part of a rural school. They have a number of blind students there supervised by a blind teacher. We are approaching the Lions Club in Canada as well as the local Masaka Lions Club here in Uganda to provide some support for this school which lacks many of the basic needs for their dormitory and classrooms. The children have no beds nor mattresses to sleep on, lack water supply, and properly located toilet facilities especially for the blind students.

Communicating with Friends and Family

Often we find it difficult to maintain our email communications because of frequent electricity outages, telephone line or email lines being down for perhaps several weeks. Please do not give up on us – we will eventually get back to you. Also, there is only one computer in the office shared by many staff. We have been receiving (snail mail) letters from overseas at the post office mailbox in Masaka okay within about ten days, and parcels three weeks to one month. It is extremely expensive for us to mail a parcel overseas.

Recent emails from our son Mike and daughter Linda indicate that they are all fine. Congratulations on the job promotion, Mike! The grandchildren are growing like weeds with Felicia (16), Sheena (11), Amanda (11), Joshua (9 in Dec.), and Jennifer (4). We always take delight in hearing about their progress in school, music (piano and band), dancing lessons, sports, etc. We are proud of them all and have been blessed with a fine family. We miss them all very much, but they understand that in deciding to be obedient to God and to serve Him overseas, it means for us a separation from our family and friends. We also hear from sisters Vicky and Gloria through emails or letters and enjoy their updates on their families.

Applying for Work Visa for Volunteers

We are presently filing papers in Kampala for a one year Work Visa (Volunteers) with the Diocese of West Buganda. We believe that we have a unique opportunity to serve God here in Uganda and have been involved in a number of projects not mentioned in this letter. Bill will be assisting in the Diocese over the next year by driving the Bishop's car to take the Education Officer to visit 600 Primary Schools during 2003. We had prayed in Greece that God would prepare a path before us in Uganda. He has prepared a much better path than we could have imagined. That doesn't mean that we do not have times of being lonely, frustrated, or worried, but when we do, we know that we have to keep reading God's word for wisdom, strength, and guidance from His promises! "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19