

Prayer Letter December 2009

Dear friends

A King's coronation

We sat next to the leader of the Ugandan opposition, behind most of the Ugandan cabinet and a few feet away from President Museveni in a huge grass house that serves as the parliament of the Ling of the Bakonjo (the local tribe). This was the official recognition by the Ugandan government of the King of the Bakonjo. Historically there was subjugation of the Bakonjo by neighbouring kingdoms and there is still hurt. Recent reconciliation meetings have tried to foster a spirit of forgiveness and this event was part of the healing process. There are mixed feelings about the new institution. The recent riots in Kampala show what can happen when a cultural institution strays into politics bringing further divisions and there is the big issue of spiritualism. Still you can't beat a day of dressing up with the Ugandan cabinet and local royalty for jolly good fun!

Please pray for a lasting reconciliation between the people of the Rwenzori region centred around the cross of Christ.



Prisons work

God has been answering prayers! In our last letter we shared our frustrations how the UCLF criminal public defence programme in Kasese was going slow due to a lack of co-operation from the Kasese courts. The aim of the project is to advocate on behalf of those who have no legal representation. Solomon (a Ugandan advocate working with us) and Jenny made several trips back and forth to the courts in Kasese and Fort Portal (the next town) to continue to build relationships with court officials and to help them understand the nature of the work: "Yes, we do want to help some of those who have been sitting in prison for more than five years awaiting trial and yes, the legal service we offer is entirely free!" The Fort Portal courts have now really captured the vision for the work and have passed the vision onto the Kasese courts. **Praise**



God that, from zero cases in our last newsletter, Solomon has now opened 100 files with a number of these cases having been completed (including the case of one man found not guilty after six years on remand).

A prayer for healing

The defendants make for a catalogue of what we might view as the worst of society. The majority of the prisoners being represented are charged with murder, armed robbery, rape and child abuse – but guilty or not they all deserve the opportunity to receive a fair trial and have an advocate speak on their behalf. Many have been found, or pleaded, guilty. **Please pray** that, as they begin to serve their sentences, their victims would be able to move on and find healing and comfort in the God of love and compassion who understands their deepest hurt. Also pray for those convicted – that they would come to an understanding of a God of justice and mercy who can forgive even the worst of sins through repentance and faith.

Money matters

Question: "So headteacher, where do you keep the school money including all the fees collected". Answer: "In a tin (one assumes Quality Street or Roses) under a mattress at home". Part of our ongoing training with Christian school leaders is to try and build their capacity to ensure that the Baptist schools strive for the highest possible standards both academically and spiritually. Accountability and transparency were top of the teaching agenda in recent schools' finance management workshops we have held. This was the last in the school

leadership and management series Graeme has been running for the past six months in Kasese. It ain't exciting stuff – how to fill in a payment voucher, how to open a bank account and reconcile statements with cash books. But the BUU education department believes accountability and transparency are vital if the Baptist schools are to be shining witnesses in their communities.

Please pray for integrity and strong leadership in Baptist schools in Uganda.



Looking to the future

We are beginning to put our work diaries together for the next six months. Jenny has been granted funding to carry out legal trainings and to have a radio show in Kasese. Graeme is going to be focusing on trying to get a Christian child rights programme off the ground. He has been tasked with preparing child protection policies for the BUU and developing a Christian child rights programme for schools and churches. He also hopes to deliver the schools' management workshops in Bundibugyo. **Please pray** for guidance as we seek the next step.

Trips around the west

We have recently made a number of visits to various villages around the west, most notably to Buruli in Masindi district and Bundibugyo in the far west. Despite the shocking roads and the spartan sleeping accommodation on floors of huts, we have been greatly encouraged by the time of fellowship, legal training, schools meetings and Bible teaching we have been able to do together with Pastor Moses Kaiso, the BUU Western Region overseer. Other legal trainings and radio shows have been conducted in Kasese in the past month. We never did make it to Congo due to the loss of our passports in Rwanda (see last newsletter). Thankfully we now have new passports so once more we have a worldly identity. **Praise God** for his protection and guidance during these visits to the village.



Church news update

Church work has been going well although the English Bible study we run is struggling (average three people attending – **please**

pray for this). Jenny has been particularly busy this month with church. On a Wednesday morning starting at 7 am (it's the only time the women are free before they go to market) she has been teaching the church ladies about child rights, marriage and inheritance. A recent 'Women's Sunday' at church saw the women taking the whole service and they nominated Jenny to preach. A number of people are also seeking to be baptised in early December. One of the group, is a neighbour of ours from a Muslim family who became a Christian a few months ago. Grace (name changed) has been coming to church regularly and really growing in her faith and wishes to be baptised. Unfortunately her family are completely opposed and have forbidden her to take this step of faith or to bring her older children to church. **Please pray** for Grace and for understanding from her family.

Returning home to the village

What does every Ugandan do for Christmas? Returns home to the 'village' as the country officially shuts down for a couple of weeks over the holiday period. We are taking the opportunity this year to have some private annual leave in our own 'village' and will be in Scotland over Christmas and New Year. Graeme's mother has recently been diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing radiotherapy so the time at home will be very precious in terms of spending time with family. We hope to be in the UK for our official home assignment in late spring/early summer 2010 when we hope to visit many of you, our supporting churches. **Please pray** for Norma as she undergoes treatment for cancer and for a special time with family in the UK.

And finally... the best town in the Wild West

The Uganda bureau of livestock statistics reveals that in Kasese District there are 47,223 cows, 8,170 pigs, 300 exotic goats and 57 donkeys. We are proud to say we can now add to that number a horse named Polly. A Belgian man has recently arrived to work with the local government bringing with him his daughter's pet horse. No longer will we need to lower our heads in shame out here in the wild west of Uganda with other towns taunting us that we don't even have one horse. Kasese we officially recognise you as 'a one horse town' – you have finally arrived!

Wishing you all a peaceful and restful Christmas,

*Thanks for all your support,
With our love, Graeme and Jenny*