

Uganda Unfolding

Educational Care in Uganda

There's lots of fuel in my tank, but there's not much air in those tires!



Brace yourself...this edition seems to be focused on travel!

For many of you, September marks the end of summer vacation and a return to work and school. That has also been my reality. I was blessed with fine vacation time in Ontario and Alberta this summer. It was especially wonderful, and healing, to spend time with most of my family at our five year reunion; reminiscing, missing, and remembering with joy my dad, my sister and my nephew who are no longer with us, and welcoming five delightful new children into the clan. I got to reconnect with friends, sleep in my own bed in my own house for a week, and glory in God's beauty through the Rocky Mountains on a road trip with my mom and my niece.

It was also refreshing for me to have some reprieve from the ever present need to be aware of personal security here and to have a breather from being faced with the deep levels of poverty I see here every day. In fact, I wondered how I would feel about "going home" as the vacation wound to an end, but I was actually excited and eager to get back to life and work in Uganda.

And here the travel tales begin. On my first day back, and needing to run some errands, I discovered a flat tire on the car. That got fixed...and I was ready to go. But wait! The car won't start-dead battery. When a boost from a good Samaritan friend didn't work, the battery got an all night charge and a transfusion of new battery acid. Excited, I started the car, only to discover that the brake pedal had absolutely no give to it. I gingerly drove to the supermarket with my hand on the emergency brake, and home again. Then a mechanic was called and the cure was a new master cylinder. I'm happy to report that it seems this old jalopy has been restored to some sort of temporary health for now.

Educational Care trainings began the last week of August. In Entebbe we began a new cycle of training with one group, while I continued on with another group. There were such positive reports of their work with preventive and corrective discipline.

One teacher said, "The effects are going far beyond my classroom. A mother of one of my students has told me how she is now using some the strategies I was using in the classroom and what a difference it has made to her family life. She has been sharing at her workplace and now others are also trying new ways of discipline."

A training in Mityana was cancelled at the last minute. It is a reality when working with a model of doing ministry "with" and not "for". While I was disappointed, it also gave me opportunity to join the World Renew East Africa Ministry Team's annual meeting. Although I had to leave for the airport at 3:00 am, and got home at the same time five days later, it was a joy to join this team of dedicated, joyful and loving servants.

With just enough time to repack my bags, I headed to Soroti, a drive of 5-7 hours. We have

Prayer & Praise

PRAISE

- ◆ For a rejuvenating vacation in Canada.
- ◆ For good health and traveling mercies over the past three months
- ◆ For a busy and satisfying training session during this school term holiday.
- ◆ For dedicated and willing trainers in training who worked with me
- ◆ For a home that is peaceful, in a good location and allows me to bless others

PRAYER

- ◆ For partners to move beyond expressing interest to firm commitments for trainings
- ◆ For ongoing safety in general, amidst a seeming increase in insecurity concerns that are rooted in political and economic realities here
- ◆ For Jesca and Michael, both EC students of mine, whose first baby recently died during childbirth in Soroti

begun a new cycle of training there with an entire school staff. And we anticipated our first EC graduation in Soroti!

The most challenging week of training took place just last week in Moroto in Northern Uganda, in a community of the Karamajong. When I went to board the bus Sunday morning, it was already absolutely jammed with people and goods, but I was graciously offered a seat beside a woman who was a teacher for the deaf. As we proceeded, more people boarded, until there was not even standing room in the aisles. I was met by the District Education Officer who came on a boda (motorcycle taxi) so my body and bags got on another one and I was taken to my hotel. The next morning, he came to bring me to my school, but on arrival he noticed a flat tire, so we first waited for someone to come and change it. The rest of the week we traveled to and from work on bodas. My training partner, Pastor Ivan Wanda, arrived very tired mid Monday morning, after taking a night bus from Kampala. On reaching Soroti at 5:00 am, there were no vans going to Moroto, and for some reason the 6:00 am bus also did not come, so he got on the back of a lorry and, in his words, "...had a five hour full body massage."



We both realized that this is an area where God's light needs to shine, as we began hearing from our students. There are deep social ills that also filter down into the education system; frequent lates and high absenteeism among teachers, high levels of alcohol abuse, as well as sexual abuse of students. Many teachers deal with huge class sizes; one grade five class had 139 children! Only a third of our teachers had access to Bibles. And although we never succeeded in having the teachers come on time, we did have a wonderful week of engagement and learning together.

Then back to Soroti. We waited for the taxi van to fill up (what you would consider a 9 passenger van is not ready to go here until it has a full load of 14). Half hour down the road we had a flat tire. The spare was completely bald, with a very neat three sided gash through which the inner tube showed. That took us another 20 minutes; at which time it was also flat. Another van stopped, but the spare tire it had was the wrong size. When another taxi stopped eventually all of us, except two, squeezed into their already full car, with two passengers sitting on top...and so we made our painful way the remaining 4 hours to Soroti.

The following day I rejoiced with the 16 graduates of EC. Although I hadn't begun the training with them, they have become near and dear to me, and we had a wonderful celebration. Ministry partners there, especially Obua Baker and Karen Lubbers, worked tirelessly, and we had a truly unique Soroti Special graduation. It was marked with joy, laughter, games, solemnity, praise, and great food!



With just enough "fuel left in my tank" to travel back to Kampala, I got up at 6:00 AM Sunday and waited for my driver to arrive. But he was late. Yup, you guessed it...he had a flat tire! There were no repair stations open yet, so we headed to Mbale to get it fixed there. Some 40 km outside of Mbale that tire also went flat. We limped along until it was no longer possible. Then Ivan and I waited roadside with the car while the driver caught rides with motorcycles and brought tires to and fro.



And as we sat in the shade on little handmade wooden stools provided by a woman from a near by compound, Ivan reminded me that it is not normal, even here, to have five flat tires in one week. He reflected that the Kingdom work we are doing is really engaging in the battle of darkness against light. We took time to pray over the work that had been done, and the lives that have been impacted. We prayed that God would continue to protect us and equip us to serve Him well and with joy.

Thank you for all your prayers and support that allows me to be here to live the life and do the work to which I have been called.

Resonate Global Mission

Canada
3475 Mainway
P.O. Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington ON L7R 3Y8
1-800-730-3490

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