

# UGANDA UPDATE

## Uganda Facts

Uganda lies near the equator and so is tropical in climate and the impression I get on every visit is, this is what the Garden of Eden must have been like! Lush growth, stately trees, verdant plains and ample water in rivers - the Nile - lakes, Like as in Victoria, and marshes used for rice cultivation.

Uganda's population is almost the same as that of Canada - about 33 million. However, there the similarities stop and other realities come to the fore which are unsettling.

- Uganda's median age (middle statistic) is 15.
- Uganda's life expectancy is 45 years.
- Uganda's unemployment rate for those 18-35 years of age is 85%.
- HIV/AIDS is taking a tremendous toll on this nation.
- 84% of Uganda's population is considered to be Christian.
- Uganda has two complete growing seasons per year!



## Youth Conferences

Over the past two years, the Messianic Congregations of Uganda (MCU) have sponsored a youth conference in order to inculcate some of the basic beliefs of the faith. Baraka International Ministries (BIM) has been pleased to provide the funds for each youth attendee to have a T-shirt with the conference theme on it. 2013, the theme was 10 Words meaning the 10 Commandments and all of the teaching centred on that topic over the week. 2014, the theme was The Perpetual Covenant. Those pictured above are wearing the T-shirt from that conference. Thank you from them for funding this simple yet important aspect of the conference which helps build a sense of identity for students from diverse areas of the country. They have expressed their appreciation several times to me. These shirts are purchased and printed in Uganda.





## Marian, Marian's Namesake

Last year while ministering in Uganda for the Pastor's Conference, one of the attendees celebrated the addition of a little girl to their family. I was honoured by them naming the child after my wife Marian and so there is a little Marian who is an addition to our family in Uganda.



## International Visitors

This year we were pleased to welcome some visitors from nearby Kenya to the Conference. Above left is my host, John Swaga accompanied by George, Peter and Francis all of Kenya. What a wonderful privilege it is to see these brothers taking the time and expense to attend and to share their love of leadership in these countries. I have an invitation to teach in Kenya when I return!

## MCU Conference in Iganga –

Once again it was my privilege to serve the MCU in speaking and teaching at their annual conference, this time being asked to teach the Book of Genesis. This was something which I gravitate to and enjoy since they are so hungry for teaching, especially that which goes beyond mere story telling. We all know the stories of Genesis, but do we understand the prophetic and thematic connections which are first voiced here in our Scriptures.

Some 80 people attended this year and there was the usual excitement of greeting when they saw me again. Some however were new to the conference and this is good because God is bringing entire congregations to join with the MCU and bringing with them other satellite congregations as well. There has been a 27% increase in the number of congregations over the past year so we are thankful to God for his enabling this ministry.

One question I asked during the 5 days of the conference was, "Why did Jesus have to die?" I received a typical answer which alerted me to the need to examine this further with them. I took Friday morning, the last conference day and showed them from Genesis to the Apostolic Scriptures the whole panorama of what the Gospel is about. As I came to the end of this lengthy explanation - some 3 hours later - I knew I had communicated because there was the typical affirmation of Ugandans - clapping and laughing! We praise God for that reception!



## Outreach in Mbale Area

I had been asked last year if I could extend my stay when I came again since they wanted me to visit some churches in this more easterly part of Uganda close to the Kenyan border. So, in planning this year, I made arrangements to stay an extra week.

In this area, there is a family of three brothers who have been diligent in their work to spread the Gospel to nearby congregations. The first was in the village where they started a school last year. Their vision was to see a school started where their children would not be exposed to the Muslim concepts in education but rather those of a Christian nature. The men started a school last year and had 140 students and 15 students in a junior school. This year the schools have attendance of 450 and 130 respectively. Now do not get the wrong impression. The school is being built and so is incomplete as yet, but they will plaster the walls when funds come in as well as cement the floors when funding is available. Right now they have walls made of bricks which they made from the clay on the site, and a roof over their heads with desks made by local carpenters, rather rustic in nature but still serviceable. The feed the children lunch each day and provide them with uniforms so that they all have a similar appearance - very British I might add! We held a service in one of the classrooms and children, adults, the aged (one man 84 years of age) and a government official were present as well as pastors from other churches! I was impressed with the support of the government official in providing firewood to cook food for the students as well as supporting the effort for the school in general.

Another day, another village and I noticed that the attendees were all men. It turns out that these brothers have been visiting this village and sharing things of the MCU and been well received. After my speaking, we were invited next door for a Q&A period in a nearby school room and that proved to be a lively session to say the least. The bottom line was that these pastors have invited my host John Swaga to return for two days per month to teach them of the Feasts of the Lord! It will not surprise me to see more of these congregations joining the MCU in the near future.



This day in a different compass direction off to Pallisa. This congregation was a dynamic group of people with some having been followers of the Way for some 30 years. I noticed on the table where we met that someone had already photocopied the manual I had prepared on Genesis and was studying it. He had not been able to be present at the conference due to business commitments and yet was eager to learn what had been taught. Yes, a meal is often associated with a service and here you can see them eating, and notice the pile of rice which was dutifully consumed along with beans, some fish, some maize ground and cooked into a solid porridge-like substance and millet flour which had been boiled similarly. Yes, the mango was for me and was extra sweet since they ripen on the trees!



Budaka, was our last village visit and we met under a mango tree! Men were given the chairs which had been taken from the nearby residence and the women and children sat on mats in the shade of the tree. Again, passionate people who are not afraid to share their faith and call people to repent. This was a marvellous experience as the lady of the home had been at the conference and had spoken there very eloquently. She is one of three lady leaders of the Women's Ministry in Uganda. I had the privilege of speaking and spoke on the Life of Barnabas and the instrumental man he was in those early church days, reaching out to help those in need, by selling some property and contributing it to the care of the Apostles so that the needs of others could be met; reaching out to that pariah Sha'ul (Paul) who had been seeking their deaths but had undergone a transformation on the road to Damascus and welcoming him into the Jerusalem assembly; investigating and teaching along with Paul in Antioch the new Grecian believers who came with their pagan baggage and lack of Torah understanding for whole year and then being sent on missionary journeys in the company of John Mark and Sha'ul. What a man of encouragement and yet he has a low profile in Scripture. This message was brought to an end with some Scriptures particularly encouraging these believers to recognize God's protection and direction in their lives as well as supplying their needs.

What a week! Travel over some of the worst roads I have ever been on - potholes, speed bumps so high that if you did not come to a stop you would have taken out the bottom of the car, washouts which required dead slow progress - all in a car which had long ago said goodbye to its suspension so that any rut or hole telegraphed right up one's spine! Thankfully we were safe and for that we thank our Father!

But it is to **YOU**, our partners in ministry that we carry a hearty thank you from our brothers and sisters in Uganda! They are so appreciative of your provision to send me to teach that they constantly thank you even in your absence! So, to their thanks I add mine for providing the funds to send books, provide conference handbooks, provide for travel expenses, health expenses, T-shirts for youth, and postage to send two boxes of books for the pastor's library. Thank you also to those who have provided funds for a new school, headquarters for MCU! This property is being selected and will soon be purchased to provide additional opportunities for educating the youth of Uganda, along with a central office for church and pastoral leadership. One thing I appreciate is the fact that these Ugandan brothers are interested in self sufficiency and are seeking ways to help their people earn more money and improve their livelihood - physical and spiritual care is becoming their real motive in ministry. Together we praise God for you and them as well!