

14.8.23

Dear friends

We are approaching the end of term here, which is a hard idea to get used to in the middle of August. As I write the students are on the penultimate day of exams, and the college has a studious silence about it.

We are thanking God that Simon and I remain in good health, and generally life is going on well for us.

Unfortunately, as we have not yet managed to get the college registered with the National Council for Higher Education we had to send our new students (first years) to Arua University, which is registered, to sit the exams from there. This has proved expensive, and has rather disrupted the community feel of the college. They went off with their luggage, and the Director of Studies and all the food they needed for the two weeks they are away. The plan was to hire a cook there, as it was cheaper for the students to hire a cook and take their own food, than to pay for them to eat in the student dining room at Arua University. We are learning to think creatively here and to attempt the impossible with faith in God.

A more successful negotiation was to travel with three students up to Mukono to Uganda Christian University. For various reasons the registration and admission of these three had failed. So the Director of Studies (Rev'd Jane) suggested that we go together. The four of us set off from college at 11pm and caught the night bus, arriving in Kampala in the dawn. I have never seen the city so quiet. We got a taxi (minibus that holds 14 passengers) out to Mukono and arrived at the campus around 7am. The wonderful Sarah who helps with admin in the theology department found us tea, and we had travelled with chappatti and boiled eggs for breakfast. By the time the other staff arrived we were refreshed and ready. It was extraordinary – there were no questions, no irritation that I had just turned up: Jean, the administrator, organised someone to inspect the paperwork – birth, baptism, confirmation, marriage certificates, exam certificates and all the other identifying documents; then she organised someone to interview the students, and by midday they were admitted and processed, and could get back on the taxi to Kampala, the bus to Gulu and be back in college around 9pm. I stayed in Mukono to work on the college registration and then to collect the exam papers and came back on the Friday. God really made that possible for us.



*Figure 1: Alfred and CT cleaning the Cross*

Meanwhile we continue to work on the college registration process, which requires layers and layers of paperwork. Simon has discovered hitherto untapped talents as a policy writer and has gallantly constructed the financial, safe guarding and soon the human resources and management policy. I am awed that he can sit down and do such a thing. I find the thought induces paralysis of the brain! My



next task is to catalogue the library. I gather it really does need to be done. Someone else is working on the strategic plan for the college. The Bishop has found five top class local people (a retired banker, a professor, a lawyer, a fund raiser and a business man – all Christians) to act as our Local Advisory Council. We had our first meeting this week, and were really encouraged by their wisdom and generous thinking.



*Figure 2: The new local advisory committee*

Convening in over 50 years to take place next January. The last one was called by Janani Luwum. It can be a little daunting following in the footsteps of a modern martyr!

The language lessons are continuing on a regular basis. Many Acoli words are quite similar and meaning can be determined by pitch, even for very different words, which can lead to much hilarity for the teacher as he says something really off beam. The struggle continues, and we try to greet people in Acoli from habit. This can often lead to a mutually respectful verbal dance as we greet them in Acoli, and they reply in perfect English, both trying to be polite.

The college has a brief quiet period until the Lay Reader Training course begins on September 4<sup>th</sup> (which probably means that teaching will begin September 11<sup>th</sup>) up until December. The ordination candidates will be on placement in their dioceses until January. In the two week period between one thing and another we hope that we can put a new floor down in the college kitchen, and also build some new latrines close enough to the classrooms. Thank you for your support to make this happen.

We are still finding that the lack of rain makes food production a challenge. The college acreage is planted with maize and we hope to also plant sweet potatoes, but the lack of rain makes the ground hard to work. It is slightly confusing to a mind brought up in England, to be harvesting maize and planting carrots whilst the beans are ripening all in the same patch of ground. The climate here is conducive to growing plants.

We are looking forward to four days holiday next week to celebrate Simon's birthday, and give us a change of scene. We are going to the nearest National Park, and hope to enjoy some bird

This month Simon has completed his tour of the Diocese promoting Rooted in Jesus, and the Diocesan Convention and gathering data. He has enjoyed going round with Canon Willy and Rev'd Zachariah. They make a good team. Between them, gathering data from the local parish clergy and lay representatives, they found around 80 new churches since the last data collection in 2020. The Bishop was astonished and delighted. Simon, when he is not rescuing me with policies, is reviewing the current Diocesan Strategic plan for the Bishop laying the ground for a new plan due by 2025. It's a really good way of getting to know what is going on. He is also assisting Rev'd Zachariah with planning the first Diocesan

Convention in over 50 years to take place next January. The last one was called by Janani Luwum. It can be a little daunting following in the footsteps of a modern martyr!



*Figure 3: Church under the tree at Oitino*

watching, and perhaps a guided walk in the forest as well as enjoy the normal wildlife, such as elephant and giraffe!

God is faithful, and we are learning that stress and worry is unproductive, but relying on God, and working together as a team brings some pleasant surprises. Thank you for your prayers. Do keep in touch with your prayer requests.

Love and blessings

Simon and Sarah