



LAKESHORE LINES



Free – and worth every cent!

Concert a Roaring Success

By Garry F

By all accounts the choir's fund-raiser on December 4th was a roaring success. Though not bursting at the seams, the sanctuary was comfortably full. At last count ticket sales raised \$1,920 to be applied 70% to Local and 30% to Outreach.

I could describe the evening in no better words than those expressed in this email received by one of the choir members from an invited friend:

What an absolutely delightful evening! It was enchanting, engaging, inspirational, entertaining and lots of fun. Many different aspects brought back some great memories for me.

The beautiful rendition of one of my favourite hymns, *Of the Father's Love Begotten*, was only one of many highlights. Even at the treats table I had a wonderful déjà vu moment. One of the bakers made pecan chocolate chip butter balls. They were actually shaped into crescents, which is just the way my mom used to shape them. It had been over twenty years since I last had them. I spotted them as soon as I walked into the auditorium and had to restrain myself from running straight over to the plate.

Your church family is a true example as to what the church is all about. It is easy to see why people are attracted to your congregation. The evening's program was well crafted and varied to entertain but also to share a truly important message and reminder of the great gift that we all have received.

I am so lucky to have been invited and treated to such a memorable and uplifting experience.

Thank you so much.

Thank you to everyone who attended. If you were unable to do so but would like to enjoy the entertainment (if not the goodies) I have a DVD available. Please let me know if you would like one. There is no charge for it, but if you enjoy it you might consider making a small donation to your favourite cause at Deer Lake or elsewhere.

Vision Statement

Deer Lake United Church welcomes you into a Christian community for all ages that explores and expresses spirituality through:

- worship and music
- fun and fellowship
- caring and outreach
- involvement and growth

Inside this issue

Jesus Weeps	2
What a Saint!	2
Syrian Refugee Support in Burnaby	3
Christmas Comes	4
Parable of the Birds	4
A Day in Uganda	5
Photography Policy	5

And much more!



The Grinch brought down the house ...



... as did Garry and Friends

BREAKING NEWS
Shirley M is on the internet!

Jesus Weeps

It's hard to prepare for a season of hope, peace, joy and love that Advent has to offer when we read the headlines, surf the internet, peruse Facebook and watch the news on TV. Whether it's the plight of refugees in small boats fleeing Syria, bombs affecting Paris and other cities, plane crashes, or even natural disasters, hope, peace, joy and love seem scarce.

Advent is a time to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. It is not a new time for us, we are familiar with Advent, the waiting and preparing. This is not the first birth of Jesus, yet each year we are called and invited to open our hearts, once again, to the new promise of Christ in our lives. That means that God has become human, to dwell with us, in the most humblest of forms: a baby. A baby born in meagre fashion, in a lowly stable, surrounded with animals and poverty. A family had fled their home and were turned away by many when seeking shelter, safety, security and sustenance. That birth, so long ago, tells us that we, too, can welcome the Christ into our lives, each and every day. That Christ-child is seen in our neighbour, the stranger, our child, our siblings, our elders, the refugee, the politician, the musician, the volunteer, the cashier, the driver, and every other person you can think of who you cross paths with in your everyday activities.

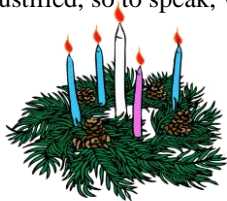
In his recent homily, Pope Francis said, "We are close to Christmas: there will be lights, there will be parties, bright trees, even nativity scenes — all decked out — while the world continues to wage war." The Pope referred to the sad state of the world at present and how even in the midst of all the decorations of the season, the world has not learned the way of peace. In light of the serious situation and crisis situation of the world, we should not cover over everything with tinsel and garlands and external decorations. The Pope also lamented the world's choice of "the way of war [and] the way of hatred... A war can be justified, so to speak, with many, many reasons, but when all the

world as it is today, at war — piecemeal though that war may be — a little here, a little there, and everywhere, there is no justification," the Pope said. "God weeps. Jesus weeps."



Christmas is meant to be a time of joy and celebration, but for some of us it's a hard time. We may be celebrating a first Christmas without a loved one; or still grieve the ongoing loss of a loved one. We may be far from family. We might be sharing custody of children or grandchildren. It's important to honour those feelings, whatever they may be, and accept them. It's okay to not be happy all the time. God weeps with what God sees around the world today. We can weep too. Often we feel we need to be joyous and happy while hearing carols, seeing shoppers, and dinner and parties are planned. But take time to rest, reflect and refocus on what Christmas mean to you. Travel this Advent journey that brings you to the manger of Christ's birth, a time of re-birth and growth for everyone, in tender ways. May you find your holy night.

God be with you,
Rev. Tracy Fairfield



What a Saint!

On Sunday November 1st, on All Saint's Day, we welcomed a beautiful new saint into our mix. We celebrated the baptism of Denise Sandra S, born May 1st of this year, to John-Paul and Chelsea S, sibling to Phaedra and Ronan.

It was a very special day as lots of Denise's family joined us. Chelsea was able to share with Denise a beautiful baptismal gown that Chelsea wore at her own baptism, when she was a wee one herself. With so much family history connected to Deer Lake United Church, it was a delight to have extended family here.

Chelsea's great-grandmother used to attend here with Chelsea's grandmother (married at Deer Lake!), who also taught Sunday School here (Chelsea's grandmother celebrated with us at the service). Chelsea's aunt and uncle, who joined us, were married here, too. Chelsea's parents were also one set of the godparents for Denise (Chelsea's mom, Sandi, was baptized here too!). Don't forget: Chelsea and John-Paul were married here last year too! So this definitely feels like home for them.

Congratulations to the family, and welcome to our family, Denise!



Syrian Refugee Support in Burnaby

Following is an article written by Holly Nathan of South Burnaby United Church describing their efforts past and present to help refugees. If you would like more information or would like to connect with Holly Nathan, please contact Rev. Tracy.

Information about other ways you can help Syrian refugees can be obtained from Immigration Services Society of British Columbia at www.issbc.org. Their Burnaby Settlement Services office is located at #207– 7355 Canada Way.

By Holly Nathan, South Burnaby United Church

December 2, 2015: It's now confirmed: a young Syrian refugee family of five, including three children aged 8, 6 and 3, will be getting a new start in the Vancouver region thanks to the commitment of Project Umbrella (a local group of friends and working professionals) and to the co-sponsorship role of South Burnaby United Church. The news has been received with great warmth, excitement and immediate responses of generosity from fellow United Church congregations like Deer Lake.

Members of Project Umbrella include a public health physician, teacher, journalist, and engineer. They visited SBUC in mid-November and many of us had a chance to meet them as they prepare to welcome a family fleeing a five-year civil war that has displaced eight million people within Syria and forced another four million to leave the country.

Although things are happening fast in our SBUC co-sponsorship, there are still several steps in the process. The family is currently in Lebanon where news reports indicate that exit visas for Syrian families heading to Canada are still being processed. A date for arrival in Vancouver has not yet been determined. Here at SBUC, we will develop plans to address the logistics of offers, fundraisers and donations, and expect to respond to the priorities identified by Project Umbrella as things unfold. Stay tuned!

How it works

The sponsored family has been identified for resettlement by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and matched with Project Umbrella through what's called the "Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program. That means the Government of Canada will provide up to six months of income support through

the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). Project Umbrella will provide another six months of financial support and up to a year of social and emotional support. Housing will be the most immediate need. For its part, SBUC will hold the sponsorship trust fund and monitor its distribution over the family's settlement year. Our role provides charitable status for Project Umbrella, which allows the group to issue tax receipts to donors.

Together: Doing what we've always done

Many of us saw the shocking picture of little Alan Kurdi, the 'boy on the beach', whose tragic death at last triggered a global sense of urgency about the migrant crisis. And many of us may have found the question, "What can I do?" overwhelming. As it turns out, SBUC is a hotbed of talent, commitment and experience when it comes to sponsoring refugees. SBUC has supported families from Vietnam (1980) and Bosnia (1997); Kosovo (1998) and Argentina (2004); Ethiopia via refugee camps in Kenya (2005); and Iraq via Jordan (2009-2011). We are still in touch with the Nguyen family 36 years after they arrived in 1980 as 'boat people' from Vietnam, after living years in refugee camps. The Nguyens are now living in Calgary. At least three of the other sponsored families are still living in Burnaby.

"It was a wonderful experience. It brought the congregation closer together," recalls nurse Lillian Peterson, now age 94.

The Syrian conflict has triggered the world's largest humanitarian crisis since World War Two, and an entire generation of children is being deprived of basic services such as education and protection. The evidence is already in that doing our part, no matter how small, can help. Together, we are better!



*My dear precious Jesus, I did not mean to take your place,
I only bring toys and things and you bring love and grace.
People give me lists of wishes and hope that they came true;
But you hear prayers of the heart and promise your will to do.
Children try to be good and not to cry when I am coming to town;
But you love them unconditionally and that love will abound.
I leave only a bag of toys and temporary joy for a season;
But you leave a heart of love, full of purpose and reasons.
I have a lot of believers and what one might call fame;
But I never healed the blind or tried to help the lame.
I have rosy cheeks and a voice full of laughter;
But no nail—scarred hands or a promise of the hereafter.
You may find several of me in town or at a mall;
But there is only one omnipotent you, to answer a sinner's call.
And so, my dear precious Jesus, I kneel here to pray;
To worship and adore you on this, your holy birthday.*

Christmas Comes

Well friends, preparing ourselves on that path of Advent. We are encouraged to prepare ourselves by opening our hearts and minds, to relive the birth narrative of a holy child who comes to be among us. To be honest, I've been struggling with this a little, as there is so much going on in the world right now, that sometimes it's hard to be the voice the Hope, but that's what we, as faithful people, are called to share. I refuse to give into hate, racism, skepticism and negativity, because I'm a glass half full kinda person, and I believe that this is who we, as God's people, are called to be in this world, especially now!

My prayer for us all this Advent season is that we, each of us, look for the signs of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love in each other, in our communities, and in the world around us.

I'd like to share with you a poem by Ann Weems from *Reaching for Rainbows* that I feel voices what's happening in the world all around us right now, but refuses to stay in the darkness! For even amidst the dark, Christ will come! Christ will be born

Christmas Comes

Christmas comes every time we see God
in other persons.
The human and the holy meet in
Bethlehem
Or in Times Square,
For Christmas comes like a golden storm
on its way
To Jerusalem –
Determinedly, inevitably...
Even now it comes
In the face of hatred and warring –
No atrocity too terrible to stop it,
No Herod strong enough,
No hurt deep enough,
No curse shocking enough,
No disaster shattering enough -
For someone on earth will see the star,
Someone will hear the angel voices,
Someone will run to Bethlehem,
Someone will know peace and goodwill:
The Christ will be born!

*submitted by BC Conference Spiritual
Care Network*

Parable of the Birds

Once upon a time, there was a woman who looked upon Christmas as a lot of humbug. She wasn't a scrooge. She was a very kind and decent person. She lived on a farm, had a big house, a big barn, and many animals. I want to tell you about one Christmas Eve on her farm.

Like I said, she wasn't a scrooge, but she didn't believe in all that stuff about an incarnation that churches proclaim at Christmas. She simply could not claim that God became a human being. It didn't make any sense to her.

On Christmas Eve, her husband and two children went to church for the Christmas Eve service, but she stayed home. It began to snow. She thought to herself, if we must have Christmas, we may as well have a white one. She sat down in her comfy chair, with tea and a good book, enjoying the peace. Suddenly, she heard a thudding sound. And another. And another.

She looked out the window and saw several birds that in the snow storm, and in desperate need of shelter, had tried to fly through the window. Now they lay huddled in the snow. She thought, "I can't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, but how can I help them?"

She thought of the barn. It was a warm shelter. She put on her coat and boots and tramped out through the deepening snow. She opened up the doors wide and turned on the light. "Food will bring them," she thought. And she sprinkled a trail of breadcrumbs from the birds to the sheltering barn.

To her dismay, the birds ignored the crumbs and continued to flop around helplessly in the snow. She tried shooing them into the barn. The birds scattered in every direction. She realized the birds found her to be a strange and terrifying creature. She couldn't think of any way to let them know they could trust her. And then she thought to herself, "If only I could be a bird myself, for a few minutes, perhaps I could lead the birds to safety!"

I wonder if God thought this about people? I wonder if God thought, "If only I could be a person, I could show them how to live."

Just at that moment, the church bell began to ring. She stood silently for a while, listening to the bell ring the glad tidings of Christmas. She sank on her knees in the snow, and whispered, "Now I understand God, now I understand why you gave us Jesus, your son, to show us how to live and bring peace on earth. Merry Christmas!"

Anon



A Day in Uganda

This is a brief excerpt from Tony W's diary of his most recent trip to Uganda on behalf of Water School. To read his full account of the week, please turn to the special supplement on page 7. If you are reading the print version, please see the digital version at <http://www.dluc.ca/fun-fellowship/newsletters-2/>.

Wednesday November 18th

After a briefing in the office, and prayers for safe journeys (people say "Journey mercies" to wish you a safe journey – a phrase I love), we left Kisoro at 9.30, heading east into the hills on the main road. It is just impossible to describe how beautiful it is here. Steep, high volcanic hills covered in bright green of carefully terraced fields with every kind of grain, vegetable and fruit you can imagine, continue for kilometer after kilometer. Little boys with long sticks watch herds of goats and the occasional cow. This is a landscape created by volcanoes rather than by water, so the deep valleys meander and curve and then end abruptly, so the roads can't follow a river valley, but constantly climb and descend. This looks beautiful, but in fact makes for difficult living.

Rainfall here is high in the 2 rainy seasons, coming from the nearby forests of the Congo, and causes constant erosion and mudslides. So people tend to live at the top of the hills where they are safe from mudslides. There are no springs, wells don't find water in the volcanic rock, and if people don't collect rainwater in their homes, they have to walk down the hillsides to the valley floor to ponds and streams, which may be several thousand feet lower. They collect water, usually in 20 litre yellow plastic jerry cans, and walk back up the steep hillside with the jerry can on their head, and maybe carrying one or two more if they are strong. What is worse is that if the rains are heavy, and latrines flood, the runoff carries dangerous human waste down into the streams, which become contaminated.

Water carrying is done mostly by women and children. Once the water reaches the villages it is valuable, so can be consumed or sold. In the dry season, a 20 litre jerry can can be sold for 1,000 Uganda shillings (\$US 0.30), which is a lot of money in this rural area. In the rainy season, most households collect water from their roof in small plastic containers, but in the dry season, which can last up to 3 months, water must be collected from the valley floor. So at these times, children are expected to get up at 5am to collect water. This means that they may not reach school until 10am, and so their education suffers. Women too spend several hours each day making a very strenuous journey to collect water. And this water is contaminated and dangerous if not treated.

Water School has spent 8 years in Kisoro District, teaching how to make water safe, good latrine construction and use, and general hygiene programs. (Statistics showed that in 1998 17% of children in Kisoro district died before the age of 5 – mostly from water-borne diseases.) The Water School program has had a big impact on community health outcomes. But until now, we haven't been dealing with the water availability issue.

[Read the full account on page 7](#)

A Water School Evening with Ugandan Meal will be held at DLUC on Friday, January 29th. More information will be forthcoming.

Photography Policy

In November, the Board approved new policy WOR005 that provides guidelines for appropriate and acceptable use of photography during various services held in the DLUC sanctuary. The gist of the policy follows. Please keep this policy in mind when using a camera in the sanctuary.

General guidelines: At all times, photographers (whether professional or amateur) must remain as innocuous as possible. These general guidelines apply in all cases.

- Attendees must remain in their seats to take photographs.
- No flash photography. (See opportunities for flash photography below.)
- Use silent shutter when possible. This is an option on most consumer cameras.
- Professional photographers and the church photographer must be as close to invisible as possible: Wear neutral clothing. Do not cross in front of the dais. Keep attendees' lines of sight clear at all times. Consider photography from the back or side balcony.

Sunday Worship Services, including Baptisms and other special services:

- Attendees and professional photographers must remain in their seats to take pictures during the service. The only exception to this is the church photographer.
- At the discretion of the minister, portions of the service may be re-posed / re-enacted after the service so that pictures (including flash) may be taken.

Funerals:

- Photography is discouraged during funeral services.

Weddings:

- Attendees must remain in their seats. Professional photographers may move about but must follow the general guidelines above.
- Professional Photographers will do all testing before the day of the wedding.
- No flash photography during the service. The Minister will provide four (4) photo ops for everyone to take pictures: the procession, the kiss, the presentation of the just married couple and the recession.
- Special requests beyond these guidelines must be approved well in advance by the Worship committee and the Minister.

Craft Sale a Success

The Craft Sale held on October 24th was an even greater success than last year's. New this year was a café area that allowed shoppers to sit and relax a while and enjoy a coffee and cookie.

Once again, Penny B was the driving force behind it, but she is quick to point out that its success was due to the dozens of volunteers, crafters and bakers who contributed their time and talents. Proceeds from the sale topped **\$3,000**.



Upcoming Events At and Around Deer Lake United Church

Open House

Friday, December 18 @ 5:00-9:00 PM at Tracy and Penny's

Gingerbread House Building

Saturday, December 19 @ 1:30-4:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall.
Please your gingerbread kit and a board to put your gingerbread house on. For more info, please contact Donna P.

Family Christmas Eve Service

Thursday, December 24 @ 4:00-5:00 PM

Christmas Communion Service

Thursday, December 24 @ 7:00-8:00 PM

Women's Breakfast

Saturday, January 23 @ 9:00 AM

Water School Evening with Ugandan Meal

Friday, January 29 @ 6:00 PM. Watch for more information.

Combined AGM and Sunday Worship

Sunday, February 28 @ 10:30 AM in the Fellowship Hall



Josh J and bride Carmen say their vows on October 3rd



Joanne, Dana and Donna at the Halloween dance

Advent Breakfasts



The men gather on November 28th at the church



Many more ladies gather on December 12th at Dana's

COMING SOON!
DLUC 75th Anniversary Party
June 2016

Watch for more details about this not-to-be-missed event.

Submissions

Lakeshore Lines is published four times each year. Submissions may be made to one of the Communications Committee members (preferably by email):

newsletter@dluc.ca

Next Issue: December 2015

Submission Deadline Sunday, February 28, 2016

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

A Week in Uganda with Water School

By Tony W

Saturday November 14th

Driving along the road from Entebbe airport to Kampala in Uganda with my friend, Zepha, I felt back in Africa. Whereas Nairobi in Kenya is the big booming modern city, Uganda is progressing more slowly. Although this road leads from the only international airport to the capital, it is still a potholed 2 lane road, busy with humanity doing its weekend chores. (China is building a new connector highway, which will replace the old road soon.) Ladies with big bundles on their heads, hawkers selling fried meat on sticks or newspapers, little shops, boda boda motobikes busy busy busy. The buildings are small and the sides of the road are grass or mud, rather than the concrete of Nairobi. But I love it and the gentler attitudes of Uganda.

We got to my hotel, the Kabira Country Club, in an hour or so, and Zepha left me. Checking in, I was greeted by the long time clerk, Robert, "Welcome back, Sir, how was your journey?" It felt like coming home on a beautiful sunny Saturday with the big outdoor pool sparkling under surrounding palm trees. My room was a 2 room suite with a balcony overlooking the pool – perfect after the hassles of security and passports getting here from Nairobi – there were 3 full security screenings to get from my taxi to the plane in Nairobi.

I took a swim, and then went up the road to the little shop to get water, beer and snacks. The rest of the day was relaxed and uneventful.

Sunday November 15th

Sunday was another nice day, starting with a great breakfast, surrounded by greenery and loud with squawking grey egrets and magpies. After doing some writing, I went for a walk through the local streets. I turned down a narrow dirt alley where there were a maze of tiny wooden shops. In the midst of this muddy cramped dark market, someone had set up a billiard table and several young guys were playing, in between the shops selling all kinds of vegetables, meats, flour bags, charcoal sacks, and fish. Kampala is very close to Lake Victoria, which has a fishing industry. Nothing is refrigerated though, and some shopkeepers were fighting a losing battle with swarms of flies. I didn't have enough antibodies to buy anything. A lady had a bank of cages full of live chickens. "Mzungu!" she said and thrust a scabbling chicken at me. I laughed and told her that I didn't have anywhere to cook it.

I walked on along winding dirt roads, trying to keep my bearings, and asking the way. Eventually I came out onto a road I knew and started back to the Kabira. It was now about 2pm and hot – time for a swim.

Later in the afternoon, Zepha and Joseph came, and we went over plans for the next 2 weeks. Everything looked good, and they left me to have dinner. I ate in the Kabira bar and was served by a guy I have known for some years called Peter. I said to him that the hotel seemed very quiet – the bar is usually full of Ugandan guys watching the English Premier League, arguing and drinking

beer. Yes, it's not good he said. We got talking. He has a B Comm degree, and is 37 with 2 young kids. He has been looking for a better opportunity, but these are hard to find. He is afraid of losing his job, and is looking to become a farmer. He has bought 40 acres of bush in an area about 60 kms north of Kampala, called Luweero. He has cleared 5 acres so far for farming. I have been to this area. It is quite underpopulated because in the Ugandan civil wars of the 1970's and 80's, this area was known as the Luweero triangle of death. I have read estimates that over 200,000 people were killed in this fairly small region in that time – hence the under population. The Water School has a project near there, run by Kiwoko Hospital (slogan – "We heal, Jesus saves"). Back to Peter – he wants to grow maize and ginger to sell in the local market, and sell the small trees he cuts as he clears for charcoal production (there is a huge charcoal market in Uganda). He has hired guys to do this for him, but is limited by funds. He has also looked into starting a business producing classroom chalk. He said that all the chalk used in Uganda is imported from Kenya. To make it work, he would import the bulk chalk, buy a chalk stick machine and then try to brand his product as locally made. He got close to buying a used chalk stick machine, but was outbid by a guy who took it to South Sudan to start an industry there. He is also dabbling in buying crops in villages and selling them in Kampala to make a profit.

So let's think about this guy, Peter. Here's a guy working in a bar. But educated and very smart. He is seething with ideas to make a better life for himself. He knows that if he starts his own business there is risk and that he will work much harder than working for someone else, but he wants a better life. In many ways his story is the Africa I see today. Many people are educated, and with few job openings they are looking for business opportunities. I would suggest that Africa is definitely more entrepreneurial than Europe, and maybe more than North America. What is missing is good infrastructure, access to markets and capital.

Monday November 16th

I woke up on Monday morning to pounding rain and darkness. The heavens were open. I was being picked up at 8am, but I knew that with the weather, it would probably be later. I ate, checked out and went down to the pick-up place, and waited. A white guy came down, revealing himself as Irish as he asked for a taxi. A taxi drew up, and the Irishman started aggressively swearing at the taxi driver to put his phone away. It was a real old fashioned, racist tirade. He wanted the taxi driver to tell him how long it would take to get downtown – one look at the gridlocked traffic in the downpour should have told him that "only God knows". As the guy left, I wished him "good luck and have a nice day", which I hoped really ticked him off. A hotel manager was there and we exchanged raised eye brows. I asked him if he ran into bad people like that often, and he said fortunately, no. I thought about this incident all day, and it bothered me that I hadn't been more forthright with this awful guy.

John, Joseph and Agatha, the 3 Water School people I would be travelling with for the week made it to the hotel at 8.45am. We

left and then crawled in pouring rain for almost an hour and a half around the northern edge of Kampala. We passed low lying slums which were now starting to flood, making life very unpleasant for the people who lived there. Despite the rain, people sat in the mud, under umbrellas selling bananas, yams, potatoes and vegetables. Life must go on.

Finally, we turned west on the road to Masaka, and left the traffic. As we left Kampala it was 20°C and heavy rain. The rain continued all day, but gradually eased up into normal rain and drizzle. After a couple of hours we passed the big signs announcing we were crossing the Equator and heading into the southern hemisphere. It was midday and 18°C – on the Equator! My companions complained about the cold as the temperature dropped to 15. Joseph had on a tuque. Everyone had jackets. Agatha had a wool hat and was wrapped in a blanket. I had on a thin shirt. “Aren’t you cold?” So I told them about life in the Yukon. “Eeeeh! People should not leeve like that!” About 4.30 we entered Kabale district and started climbing into the mountains. We climbed and climbed into this area of volcanoes, lakes, high terraced farms, and dense greenery of crops – mainly vegetables. It is spectacularly beautiful. We climbed more, entered Kisoro District and reached the top of the pass – it was now down to 12°C, and my companions were really suffering. “Is it really this cold in Canada?” Then as it got dark, we descended down into Kisoro town, where we were to spend the week. This journey actually had been much easier than when I came four years earlier. Then the mountain roads had been dirt, but in the meantime, the European Bank and Africa Development Bank had funded a good tarmac highway, and we had almost no potholes to dodge. Roads like this really change economics – freight costs and travel times of everything will be much less for whole regions – not just Uganda, but Rwanda, Burundi and the eastern Congo. They all use this road to get goods to the sea at Mombasa.

We checked into the Kisoro Tourist Hotel (not 5 star, but high end for small town Uganda), and found our rooms in the dark. We had dinner in the hotel, in an outside gazebo with a big log fire burning. The fire felt good, even for me. It was now pitch black and getting very quiet. I crawled into my bed with multiple blankets, and had the best sleep since I left Canada.

Tuesday November 17th

After breakfast on Tuesday morning we headed to the Water School office for a briefing on the next few days. We were joining the 3 staff who work for Water School here, Elisha, Moses and Annet. I had not seen them for almost four years. When I came back then, we had put in place a plan to phase out of Kisoro District in December 2015, and transfer the resources elsewhere. I explained that my main focus this week was to satisfy myself that if we moved out, that the programs we had been teaching here for 8 years, would be sustainable, and actually grow themselves through peer training to eventually cover the whole district, with a population of nearly 400,000 people.

The local guys said that today we were to go to the north of the district to see some projects we had started a long time ago, but that it was very mountainous with very difficult roads. If it rained we might not be able to make it back, so we should leave right away before the rain came. I have travelled in many places, but

these were indeed the worst roads I had ever seen. This is the rainy season which is not a good time to travel. We passed through lakes of deep mud, forded rivers, and bumped up and down very steep, jagged tracks. The driving was awful, but the scenery was fantastic. This may be the most fertile place on the planet and every square centimeter has a crop on it. This area is the most densely populated rural area on earth, and so they must maximize production. People waved and smiled as we passed.

After an hour of intense “African massage” from potholes, we reached our destination, Buhozi village in Busanza sub county, very close to the Congo border – in fact the Congo was visible across the other side of the valley several times. We parked and started walking up a narrow track, slippery with wet clay. It was midday, partly sunny, getting hot and humid. The village was about 8,000 feet in altitude, and pretty remote – no electricity or running water, and a long way from a good road, with very steep terrain everywhere. We met an elderly man, called Charles, who took us to his home. Charles is a retired civil servant, now a farmer, and a community leader and promoter of Water School programs, who spoke good English. He showed us around and then I quizzed him on issues concerning sustainability of the WS program. He has gone even further than our program and started a community saving scheme. Charles had used some of his savings to buy 2 goats. 21 members contribute \$6 per month each into a savings scheme to fund larger communal projects. He showed us the society’s charter and his immaculate records. This is a great way to change communities – micro finance in practice, done by local people.



We then walked and slid up and down steep paths visiting different households, which had been transformed by our program. Charles estimated that 75% of the households in this remote area were using the Water School program and that it had radically changed lives. He even admitted that he used to have a drinking problem, but once he saw the opportunity to change his family’s life and health with our program he reformed. He said that exposure to the program had completely changed his life. He is now a wise, funny community leader. People like Charles are changing Uganda.

We left Charles as the clouds gathered and bumped slowly back towards Kisoro.

Wednesday November 18th

After a briefing in the office, and prayers for safe journeys (people say “Journey mercies” to wish you a safe journey – a phrase I love), we left Kisoro at 9.30, heading east into the hills on the main road. It is just impossible to describe how beautiful it is here. Steep, high volcanic hills covered in bright green of carefully terraced fields with every kind of grain, vegetable and fruit you can imagine, continue for kilometer after kilometer. Little boys with long sticks watch herds of goats and the occasional cow. This is a landscape created by volcanoes rather than by water, so the deep valleys meander and curve and then end abruptly, so the roads can’t follow a river valley, but constantly climb and descend. This looks beautiful, but in fact makes for difficult living.



Rainfall here is high in the 2 rainy seasons, coming from the nearby forests of the Congo, and causes constant erosion and mudslides. So people tend to live at the top of the hills where they are safe from mudslides. There are no springs, wells don’t find water in the volcanic rock, and if people don’t collect rainwater in their homes, they have to walk down the hillsides to the valley floor to ponds and streams, which may be several thousand feet lower. They collect water, usually in 20 litre yellow plastic jerry cans, and walk back up the steep hillside with the jerry can on their head, and maybe carrying one or two more if they are strong. What is worse is that if the rains are heavy, and latrines flood, the runoff carries dangerous human waste down into the streams, which become contaminated.

Water carrying is done mostly by women and children. Once the water reaches the villages it is valuable, so can be consumed or sold. In the dry season, a 20 litre jerry can can be sold for 1,000 Uganda shillings (\$US 0.30), which is a lot of money in this rural area. In the rainy season, most households collect water from their roof in small plastic containers, but in the dry season, which can last up to 3 months, water must be collected from the valley floor. So at these times, children are expected to get up at 5am to collect water. This means that they may not reach school until 10am, and so their education suffers. Women too spend several

hours each day making a very strenuous journey to collect water. And this water is contaminated and dangerous if not treated.



Water School has spent 8 years in Kisoro District, teaching how to make water safe, good latrine construction and use, and general hygiene programs. (Statistics showed that in 1998 17% of children in Kisoro district died before the age of 5 – mostly from water-borne diseases.) The Water School program has had a big impact on community health outcomes. But until now, we haven’t been dealing with the water availability issue.

In 2015, Water School began investigating how to economically construct large tanks locally, so families could collect and save water in the rainy season, to last them through the dry season. Not only would this water be available right in the home, but it would be relatively uncontaminated. Buying tanks and distributing them is prohibitively expensive – the key to a sustainable program is to make the tanks locally, which also provides employment. We talked to many people, and came up with a design for a 6,000 litre tank, made from cement, stones and sand, with chicken wire mesh reinforcement. These tanks are sealed to prevent mosquitoes and malaria, and have vents and locks for security – water is valuable! We started pilot projects in 2 areas – here in Kisoro, and also in Busiro, close to Kampala. The initial tanks, guttering and pipes here cost \$US 800, and the ones close to Kampala just over half that (material availability and freight costs account for the difference). As we gain experience and volumes, these costs will come down.

This is all a long preamble to say that on this day I was going to visit the families who had constructed the first 2 tanks. So we turned off the main road to the village of Kateretere, and met Enos, the Parish team leader for the Water School program. The pilot program was funded by some of the money we were awarded by the Saudi/UK Stars Foundation in 2013. Water School pays for 90% of the tank cost, and the beneficiaries pay the other 10%, and provide some materials and do some of the work. (This is a feature of all our programs – we require commitment and ownership by beneficiaries, so they see the programs as theirs, which in turn enhances upkeep and sustainability.) In Kisoro, we required that each tank be for 5 families, and these families sign a contract to share in the upkeep of the tank, and share the water equally. Enos and his neighbours told the story of how excited they were to have this tank. It will change the way they live – especially for the children and women. Children can go to school on time, women can start new enterprises, like weaving mats,

which is a profitable local industry – a woven mat can be sold for 20,000 shillings (\$6). And the constant pressure to get water in the dry season is gone.

With guidance from Water School, Enos has also started a community savings scheme, with 21 members, and he showed us his records. This will provide seed money for local enterprises and community improvements.

We then walked down the track and met with George Nsasibwe, a teacher in his 30s, and his wife, who also had a Water School tank. George's tank was finished in June, and again it was life changing for them and the 4 other families they share it with. George is an educated man, and is a great example in the community.

Our big issue now is where to find the funds to expand this program. There is an opportunity to fund a simple project which works, and absolutely transforms health, economics and lives for whole families. Any takers?



We then travelled back to Kisoro, and visited with the district administrative leaders, who give our program so much credibility in the communities – the Education Officer, Mr Francis, the Health Officer, Dr Stephen, and Water Engineer, Mr David. I had met Mr David before, but he didn't remember me "All you mzungus look the same to me!"

We returned to the Touristland Hotel, had dinner, and then John, Joseph, Elisha and I proceeded to the Voice of Muhabura radio station, where we were to do a one hour talk show and call in program on the Water School, with local celebrity, Judith. Surveys show that people here receive 90% of their information from radio, this is the #1 local radio station, and we do a regular program, which costs only \$600 per year. So Elisha knew Judith, and she in turn had visited some of our projects. The program was in Lufumbira, so I didn't understand much, but it is Joseph's and Elisha's first language, so John and I did a piece in English which was translated by Elisha. It didn't finish until 10.30pm, and I was almost falling asleep after a long day. Judith is very professional, and the show went well. I found out afterwards that most of the callers were very complimentary about how we had helped them create better homes and health for their families, but

a few people complained about not having enough plastic bottles for Sodis.

I went straight to bed, and next I knew, the birds were singing, and the sun was rising.

Thursday November 19th

I think I said earlier that Water School is planning to phase our training resources out of Kisoro District and transfer them to new projects in the neighbouring district of Kabale, which shares the same geography as Kisoro. The Water School Uganda Board has set a policy of "Eyes on, Hands off" for Kisoro, which means that we will still continue some support and monitoring of the programs, but since we have now trained 53% of the 62,000 families in Kisoro District, and we have a strong network of local community leaders teaching the program to neighbours, I am confident that the program will continue to roll out across the district. I wanted to assure myself that this will happen, and with a couple of continuing support items in place (especially collecting and reusing plastic bottles from the strong local tourist industry – mountain gorilla trekking), I am convinced. We will try to find funds to build more tanks in Kisoro though, which takes money, but not Water School staff time, which is our most valuable resource.

My second objective this week was to understand how we are entering the new district of Kabale. The plan for 2016 is to concentrate our efforts in one area, just across the district border, only 45 minutes on a good road from Kisoro town, where our office is located – in fact more convenient for our staff than many distant parts of Kisoro District. This consists of 4 of the 7 parishes in Muko sub county, a mountainous area, very similar to Kisoro. We will do WASH training in primary schools and households, using the knowledge we have gained over the past 8 years.

Prior to entering Kabale, I had requested to the Uganda Board, and they had agreed, to do a thorough baseline study of conditions in these 4 parishes. Thus we will be able to document reliably what impact our training has made. This baseline is now complete, and we cannot wait for January to come and to start work in a brand new district!

One thing we have learned is that we cannot be successful without the support of the local political and administrative leaders. So earlier in 2015, our team had met with the political leader of the district (the "LC5"). When they met in his office in Kabale town, he told them that he was very aware of the work we had done in Kisoro. "I have checked you out, and I know what you can do for Kabale. I have been waiting for you to come to Kabale – what took you so long?" He then summoned the Chief Administrative Officer (the CAO, pronounced confusingly as "the cow"), and told him to give Water School all his support. This was a fantastic start to our program, and gives us tremendous credibility with the people.

So this day, we travelled 45 minutes from Kisoro to Muko, where we met the sub county political leader (the LC3), Edson, and the parish chief, Jackson. Edson is a young, educated, energetic man, and very enthusiastic about our coming. He told me, that next time I came he would slaughter a goat, and we would eat. "I love nyama choma" I said – "I will be back next week!" So the

political and administrative groundwork has been very successful, prior to starting work in Kabale.

We then travelled to several schools and households so I could see the state of water, sanitation and hygiene in this area, prior to Water School doing any work. Frankly, I was absolutely shocked at what I saw. These are places our team has not been, so they did not know what we would find. I am used to only seeing schools and households in our program, which are clean, safe and well organized. Most of the places we went demonstrated very poor conditions. In particular, we visited a large (967 pupils) primary school run by the Catholic Church. The headmaster was sick, so we met his deputy, an unimpressive man called Eric, who had very poor command of English (the national language, and the language of exams). Eric was actually useless, only telling us what we wanted to hear, so we went to inspect. The school latrines were disgusting, covered in flies and feces, smelling terrible. A boy entered them with no shoes. Coming back across the school field we saw signs of open defecation – a high disease risk. The tippy tap for washing hands was broken. This is clearly a school with poor leadership, high risk of disease, and probably poor morale and exam results. We can do a lot for those children.

We toured the parish with Jackson, the parish chief, which gave us instant access to anywhere we wanted to go – one example of why local support is crucial to success. The Catholic school was the worst we saw, but in several of the households, we saw similarly poor toilets and bathing facilities. We visited one Anglican primary school, which was better than Eric's school, but still had problems. We talked with the school nurse, and she said that the #1 disease problem in the school was upset stomachs and diarrhea – a sign of bad water and sanitation.

There are other issues in Kabale District. We have a lot of insight into the region, because the local Anglican Bishop, the Bishop of Kigezi, Rev. George Bahamunde, is on the Water School Uganda Board.



We travelled back to Kisoro and had lunch (often a midafternoon meal). After lunch, we did a review of the week, and listened to everyone's comments and reflections. The team is excited to be moving into a new area in January. John requested that I "commission" the team on their new assignment. So I told a story about seeing Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the founding president of Kenya, give a speech in Nairobi to a huge enthusiastic crowd on Madaraka Day in 1969. What a speaker! He would wind the crowd up by shouting his slogan for the young country,

"Harambee!" (Self-help in Swahili) waving his trademark fly whisk. So we went outside, held hands and shouted "Harambee!" (Pronounced haraaaaambay, with emphasis on the last syllable.) We had dinner, and went to bed early, because we had a long journey back the next day.

Friday November 20th

We left soon after sun up and retraced our steps back east, towards Kampala. We had one piece of new business – we stopped in Ruhama, a small town in Mbarara district, where we met Richard, an engineer with a Vancouver-based organization called ACTS. They have been active in Uganda since 1982, providing large water tanks, with water sourced from safe springs. Richard told us to follow his vehicle to a project they were working on, 20 kms south. So we started south into an area of bush, but strangely on a new highway being built by China. There is no good reason to invest precious resources on this highway except it leads to the home village of President Museveni's wife! We passed some unusually large luxurious homes. "This is where the government's money disappears" my companions explained. We christened the road "Janet's Highway".

Richard took us to a partially built, 25,000 litre tank. They were building 2 of these to supply Kitashakwa village with clean water. We asked to see the water source also. We bumped up a track through the bush to higher ground, and then parked and walked/slid along a muddy path to a small stream, jumping over the stream. He showed us where they had found springs with clean water, which they had capped. (This region is far from Kisoro and Kabale, and the geology here is completely different.) They then pipe 70% of this water to a settling tank, and then pipe it to the big holding tanks we saw earlier. 30% of the water is left to be the stream which farmers need for irrigation. ACTS receives funding from the Canadian Government and a bit from the Ugandan Government, and other donors. Richard said that they have done 16 large gravity driven projects like this since 1982, laying about 25,000kms of pipe.

ACTS also does smaller, household rainwater harvesting tanks, with very similar specs and construction methods to the tanks Water School is building (6,000 litres). But we may be able to learn from their experience to reduce our costs. Like Water School, ACTS is focused on getting local community buy in and ownership of projects. They spend a lot of time at the beginning working with local leaders, and then setting up a local project management committee, which is responsible for collecting small fees from users to fund maintenance needs after construction is finished. We then left Richard, and continued on to Kampala, arriving as it got dark.

The weekend was uneventful for me – shopping, reading, writing and swimming. It had been a very full week, I had learned much, and I was pretty exhausted.

Learn more about Water School and Uganda and enjoy a traditional Ugandan meal with Tony and Peggy W and Doug and Kathy R on Friday, January 29th. More details to come.