



**EARLY TEAM AT LAKE VICTORIA BAPTISM**

**For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay**

**Hab 2:3 NASB**

Visions are exciting (and sometimes frightful) glimpses of things to come but usually do not arrive when anticipation is at its peak. This was Habakkuk's reality when he uttered the prophecy to Judah so long ago. Chaldeans would be an instrument of discipline in the hands of God but they had not arrived, causing Habakkuk to exercise patience. God's timing is never wrong even if it seems delayed, but it will arrive.

### **NAKYESSA DREAMS**

2005 was the beginning of what felt like a whirlwind of ministry opportunity. We had just completed Dunamis FM with our partner Bishop Grivas Musisi who cautiously introduced his new Canadian friends into the "field of dreams". After all, his experience with Western visitors stretched back over 20 years; they came and they left, and every one had a heart to serve. And most like us were naïve.

But early intentions can be strained when the realities of ministry are felt. Within the first week our passports and money had been stolen; Grivas shared his experience with us "if God has not called you to Uganda, you will likely become upset and leave." That was a great test for us. Marty and I had instant and absolute resolution that He had called us here. We were not on vacation-we were here to find and do His will. Very soon that dream began to appear in Nakyessa where we met children who had no hope-the usual childish playfulness and optimism was simply not there. It was devastating to see that-we knew we should be here!

Grivas' church and family had arrived here many years earlier, clearing bush and chasing snakes who long since held control, to establish Christian education so rural families might have hope.

We caught that vision as well and soon so did many other Canadians who eventually brought enhancement to the Nakyessa Christian day & boarding school. Over the next 13 years, a new and fully stocked library was provided, affording students and teachers alike the opportunity to read to their hearts' delight; an environmentally friendly kitchen safely produced excellent food for all; solar power brought affordable power and light with security; fully renovated classrooms and dormitories injected new life into old facilities, water collection and storage for the first time and so much more.

But as it became clear the Lord was calling us into Ongutoi and it was time to leave Nakyessa, we struggled with one unfinished vision-a place for local women to develop skills and receive spiritual support. We had earlier considered land nearby, but it felt like that vision might "tarry".

For the next 9 years we worked in Ongutoi and avoided looking back over our shoulder; we knew we were in "tarry-mode". But then, as COVID stopped and schools opened again, many youth pregnancies were discovered, we knew it was now time to act. The Lord provided land and finances to start the girls and women skills equipping

**JESUS PREACHED IN NAKYESSA NOW**



centre for Nakyessa where skills that can lead to personal development or small business, supported by Bible distribution and daily teaching from Dr Gene Getz' **Measure of a Woman**.

Today, the vision first given so many years earlier, had finally arrived... *"wait for it, for it will certainly come"*

## ONLY JESUS

As we were leaving Nakyessa, we had been gifted a special token to build a church although we had not ever intended to do so. But as departure grew closer, the desire to build grew stronger; even more pressing was its location. We considered various locations but it seemed it should be in a prominent place where villagers and passersby could have good visibility and easy access. Jajja Ken made a very strong case for a specific spot so as our designer/architect his word was good. Only in time did we know just how good it really was.

Many years earlier, Bishop Grivas' brother Balabyekubbo Deogratias (known as Deo) had powerfully come to faith in Christ. Miracles seemed to attend his words; soon Kampala's Prayer Palace Church was born. But his faith was so exercised by his family's dark past, he could not restrain himself.

For two successive clan leaders, a corner of land in Nakyessa had been dedicated to demonic worship; the family had over time built 9 such shrines and offered sacrifices to demons. But when Deo met Christ, he knew how this was wrong and it offended the God he knew was real. So, late one night reminiscent of Gideon of old, Deo went to the site and tore down the clan altars, burning them completely and standing for all villagers to hear, declared "from this day forth, only Jesus Christ shall be worshipped here".

Deo was understandably thrown out of his clan...but as time passed, family members began coming to faith, including his own father who had been the clan leader responsible for the shrines. Then tragically during preparations for a crusade, Deo was killed in a car crash.

But the vision did not die...it just tarried.

Now, almost 30 years later we found ourselves firmly focused on building a new church in Nakyessa and to our great surprise, Bishop Grivas unfolded the story a little more. This site that had once been a shrine to evil was the VERY SPOT where we decided to build the church. We did not know of this back story until we started construction. And the newly dedicated Pastor James used his new church to reach out and often.

Today, church leaders all across the district come to work, plan and pray for ways to make Jesus known in their towns and villages; Pastor James holds regular crusades both locally and across the Nile where he has since planted more churches. Jesus IS preached here...if only Deo could see Nakyessa now!

*Though it tarries, wait for it, for it will come...*

## BIBLES AND PRISONERS

We were busy building a health centre for victims of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and had felt the urge to use our new platform for spiritual outreach, but we did not feel the Lord agreed...yet! It was only after about 7 years of building in Ongutoi that we felt the release from the Lord to begin with basic Bible distribution. It was overwhelming to meet so many Christ followers who had never owned a Bible, including preachers.

We began a fund-raising focus that we thought might be limited in scope...wrong. The intensity of desire was so strong we could not get enough Bibles; we could not fathom their hunger for God's word. But it was (and is) there. Soon we were not only giving Bibles to churches, we were providing Bibles for construction workers, students, police officers-in one place we were asked for a Bible for every officer.

And then someone mentioned prisoners. So, under the cautious eye of prison leaders in that area, every prisoner, male and female were given Bibles. I knew the Lord wanted people to know about Him and the only book that can do that was the one written by and about Him-The Bible. But we had not yet realized how Bible distribution would be a wider prison focus for our soon-to-be Life Essentials team.

## LIFE ESSENTIALS

Over time in Uganda, we had come to realize many good hearted and sincere leaders just did not have the spiritual support they needed to be equipped for the work and focus of spiritual leadership. And they could simply not afford Bible school training. Discovering Dr Getz' very unique Life Essentials Study Bible was a game changer. Pastors grasped this with intense delight, recognizing immediately how this would enhance their ability to provide depth and clarity as they taught the Word to their churches which are for the most part full all the time.

Like the Bible distribution we were surprised by the intensity-it was as if we poured water on a very dry sponge. So, after speaking with leaders, it was clear our commitment would be for a long time; plans were made to provide facilities together with the search for His choice of teachers, administration, and so much more.

## CALL OF THE ARK

As we built the centre, we felt impressed by the Lord that He would send who we needed, including staff and students. After all, this was a centre dedicated to making Him known through His Word. And then one by one, we found ourselves drawn to staff who proved more than workers-they were (and are) Christ followers who are busy serving Him even before we met. One was our young administrator, Emily.

Shy at first, we discovered an administrative tiger inside her young skin. No detail was too small and every one mattered; this felt highly unusual in Uganda where for 20 years we met only those who avoided records and accountability; everyone seemed content to work at verbal levels without ties to anything but memory.

But not Emily. In fact, her focus on accuracy stretched even me and I am "well trained" by years of Marty's similar gift. Emily's favorite request was a new key cabinet so the many doors in our centre might all have organized access...the long-standing jar of keys was gone and Emily smiled.

## PRISON FOCUS

Emily engaged in all aspects of ministry at the centre, including teaching the tech side of the Life Essentials Study Bible; leading in worship; teaching facets of the Measure of a Woman; teaching all facets of skills improvement to village women and even drama where our team engages pastors to enjoy and consider yet another mode of teaching. And at every opportunity, Emily preaches Jesus! She simply does all things well.

BUT inside every believing person there seems to be a deep-seated passion that is just waiting to appear. For Emily, that was prison ministry.



**1 IMPROMPTU HEALTH CHECK NEAR NAKYESSA VILLAGE**

**2 NAKYESSA SCHOOL VISIT**

**3 NAKYESSA SCHOOL FROM THE AIR**

**4 CHECKING DEVELOPMENT SITE FROM ANT HILL**

**5 NAKYESSA WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT CENTRE TODAY**

**6 BUILDING NAKYESSA CHURCH**

**7 PASTOR JAMES AT DEDICATION**

**8 SCRIPTURE READING DURING DRAMA FOR VILLAGERS**

**9 EMILY WITH PRISON LEADERSHIP DURING BIBLE DISTRIBUTION**

**10 LEADING WORSHIP**

## BACKGROUND

As she pressed us to consider outreach to prisoners, her words seemed more than just communication so I asked her for reasons why prison outreach was so important to her. I soon discovered a long-standing generational vision for those who found themselves isolated, regardless the reasons.

Emily had been raised in a family where life was in barracks, similar to military life, also common for police and prison workers. In fact, her father worked in prison leadership, retiring as a second in charge (called Officer in Charge=OC) But his job was more than a job to him. He actually cared for these men. Prison in Uganda is not prison in North America and her father sought every opportunity to bring even the smallest support to these inmates, now living at the bottom of the Uganda echelon.

In fact, he retired with an unfulfilled dream of starting a small carpentry school for prisoners, to acquire skill that could enable transition to a productive life after incarceration. His dream remained a dream. So, it only made sense that Emily's many hours during formative years, listening to her father's expressed concern for these disadvantaged men, reinforced by their living conditions, would birth in her a desire-a vision-to one day make a difference. And now during our Bible distribution, opportunity presented itself.

## MEAL GIFT

Poor Ugandans exist on the most basic food-usually maize flour (posha) and sometimes beans...every day. Most Ugandans we know eat meat annually, at Christmas time. So, Emily's passionate request for a meal-ONE special meal of rice, beans, posha and meat for prisoners who would also receive Bibles, was a challenge.

This very unique request had also (quietly) been requested by prison leadership who could not officially make such a request, but seeing what they do every day, compassionate guards now well connected with Emily, affirmed her dream of improving life for prisoners spiritually (Bibles) and for just one day, physically (special meal). As we considered this, to our surprise, a unique gift of food for prisoners actually came in. This \$1,400 gift made a huge impact on prison leaders, guards, inmates and their families that a Christian ministry would actually provide such a gift. Although not a regular focus, we do like such an opportunity to show compassion that even Jesus spoke of (Matt 25:41-46). If this touches your heart, please pray about a unique gift towards a Ugandan prisoner meal. We can provide this for 350 inmates if we have another \$1,400.

## VISION SUPPORT

The Lord continues to bring about His vision in and for Uganda. Each step is exciting, and it involves His people who join with prayer and finance. Please pray about supporting the unfolding vision for a spiritually strong Uganda!

Don



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