

VISIT TO UGANDA - "THE PEARL OF AFRICA"

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by Rev. Ian McIver, Caloundra PC

Into Kenya

Our recent visit to Kenya in September 2011 involved ministry in some of the "slum" areas of Nairobi in particular, as reported in the last issue of *New Directions*. The experience was very moving and the Christians we met so inspiring in their love for the Lord and dedication to His work.

On to Uganda

While we were in that part of the world we also took the opportunity to spend a few days in Kampala, Uganda to visit a Sudanese student that Norma and I have sponsored for various levels of education since 2003. We took the hour-and-a-half flight from Nairobi to Entebbe, Uganda and entered what felt like a different world. The contrast with the "slums" of Nairobi could hardly have been more marked as we visited that "green and pleasant land" that Sir Winston Churchill once called "the pearl of Africa".

The College

Westminster Theological College is a college of the Presbyterian Church of Uganda. It enjoys considerable support from Mission to the World of the Presbyterian Church in America, which supplies missionary educators and support personnel. Indeed it parallels in a very real way the Westminster Theological College, with which our own QTC had a consortium relationship for several years, and which has now been "reborn" as the Sunshine Coast Theological College at Buderim. As a result of generous support from the United States an attractive campus has been purchased and a number of buildings have been erected.

Lecturing Staff

The Principal, Rev. Emma Kiwanuka, is a Ugandan, and the full and part-time lecturing staff are African, American and British. The Dean is Rev. Dr Dave Eby, a



Main entrance, Westminster Theological College



Ian and Norma McIver with two Ugandan friends, Kampala, Uganda



Norma sharing the goodies for Okuc - books, solar lights and mosquito netting!

An African Story

Okuc [pronounced "Okuch"] is a young man in his mid-twenties from South Sudan whose education was held back by the civil war that raged for many years in that country.

When we first began to sponsor him we enabled him to complete his last three years of primary school at the age of about 16-18. He then completed four years of high schooling, also in western Kenya, and then in 2010 he went to Nairobi to complete a certificate in IT and computer studies.

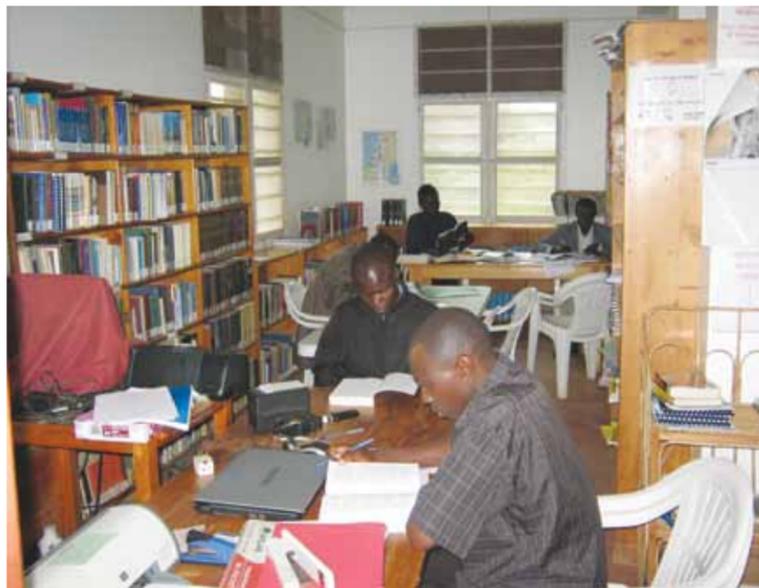
When Okuc expressed an interest in training for pastoral ministry [and he has considerable aptitude], Norma, with the help of one of our African friends, was instrumental in finding a good college for him. That college is the Westminster Theological College in suburban Kampala, Uganda. Okuc commenced his first of four years' study at the College at the beginning of 2011. Given that we were already in Kenya it was obviously a good opportunity for us to visit him and to see first-hand the College that has been established there in recent years.

Presbyterian Church in America missionary. Dave and his wife Darlene kindly gave us hospitality when we visited towards the end of September 2011.

The Eby's have sold up their home in the United States in order to buy a home in Kampala, so they are there "for the long haul". Their home in suburban Kampala was formerly a coffee planter's residence. The property is large enough for them to have built other houses for other staff members, including Carolyn Phillips [from Alabama, USA], who works with the Presbyterian Church of Uganda, and Rev. William and Margaret Dunlop [from Scotland] both of whom lecture for the Westminster Theological College.

College Campus

The College itself has an attractive property about 15 kilometres from central Kampala overlooking the shores of Lake Victoria, and includes administration, library, lecturing and dining facilities in four separate buildings, and accommodation for the student body in about six other buildings.



In the Library, Westminster Theological College, Kampala, Uganda



Dave and Darlene Eby, William and Margaret Dunlop, with Norma, Kampala, Uganda

Student Body

There are some 60 students in the undergraduate degree programs and another 30 undertaking graduate studies. Accommodation is provided on campus for all students. The student body comes from about a dozen African countries including Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, Cameroon, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zanzibar and even one "ring in" from the Philippines. Nearly all come from both French and English speaking African countries. Some, such as Cameroon and Rwanda, are in the process of making the switch from an emphasis on French to one on English as the standard medium of communication. As the College has only been running for a few years its strategic significance for promoting the reformed faith through much of Francophone and Anglophone Africa is already clearly evident.

Students can study for the Bachelor of Theology degree in the undergraduate College and then for the Master of Divinity or a number of specialities in the Master of Arts program including Theological Studies and Biblical Counselling in the graduate College.

Inspiration

Our visit was very brief but we were inspired by the work being done by the College, its staff and particularly by Dave and Darlene Eby and William and Margaret Dunlop, who provided a delightful contrast of American extrovert enthusiasm on the one hand and quiet Scottish reserve on the other, but a deep shared commitment to the Lord and His work on the part of both couples!

The students that we were also able to meet were likewise an inspiration. It has been a privilege for us over many years now to have been involved in the life and nurture of one of them in particular, our friend Okuc from Southern Sudan. All of them will have stories to tell that are as interesting as his.

Our prayers are with them in their studies as they prepare for usefulness and ministry in the Lord's work in their own countries or wherever the Lord may yet place them.

Further Contact

If anyone is interested, the College does have a very good website www.wtcwtsuganda.org

A Challenge

Who knows, there may be others in the PCQ and PCAustralia with time on their hands in retirement who might like to consider a spell of lecturing at a sister college and denomination in far off Uganda. As in the rest of the world, there are many in Uganda - "the pearl of Africa" - that need "the pearl of great price" - the fullness of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. I can assure anyone who would be willing to consider going, and who found that they had academic qualifications and aptitudes that the College could use, that it would be a rewarding experience.

Future Dream

Indeed, if the College could use us, I am hoping that one day Norma and I will be able to return for a longer period of time in order to contribute to the lecturing program and life of the College.

Norma has expressed a willingness to go too which is something I very much appreciate. Africa has been in my blood since childhood, and to some degree everything feels familiar to me whenever I go back. But for Norma, visits to Africa have meant new and somewhat different experiences and a steep cultural learning curve that it took a while and several visits to adjust to. Without doubt Africa is worth the effort though.

In the meantime there is still a lot of work to be done in Caloundra, so plans for a return to Africa need to remain on the "back burner" for now. No harm in "dreaming the dream" though.



First Presbyterian Church, Kampala, Uganda