

April 13, 2008

Greetings to all of you!

I am sorry we have been slow to let you know that we arrived safely. Actually, we have had so much excitement here as we have been visiting friends and moving into our very beautiful home. Attached is an email which my dad and mom wrote after traveling to the island with us. I think you can nearly feel their excitement and ours, too!!!!

Time is quickly passing here in Kampala and soon we will be on Lingira Island with Andrew and Karina. Marilyn and I did have the privilege to go with them to the island and see their work, the school, meet the staff and teachers, and especially their new home.

The whole place is like a miracle - 3 years ago it wasn't even a dream! I used to run through the trees, grass, rocks and jungle. Now there are school buildings, hostels for students and teachers, cook shack, assembly hall (used for church), etc. When Tony Carter (elder from Mayger) comes back he will have taken footage of the campus on video so you can see the reality of what is happening.

As our boat arrived at the LLHSS (Lingira Living Hope Secondary School ) dock, there was much singing, shouting, clapping, dancing, yodeling and greetings. We were all swarmed - especially Andrew and Karina! Amanda Taylor was also with us and stayed on for a few more days. We were delighted to see many of our friends. The young people then gave us reports of others who are away at school, volunteering as assoc. pastor, volunteering at a medical lab., etc.

Andrew and Karina were then led down the path that was cleared from the school, around Kyoya village to the Shepherd's Heart Int'l Ministry (SHIM) on the East side of the village and on to their house. Amid the singing and dancing, Andrew picked up Karina and carried her across the threshold, giving her a big kiss -to much more shouting! The house is way beyond expectation. We thought it would be mud or wood, but it is brick and concrete. It was not 2 rooms, but 4; metal outer doors - glass in the front one, bars and shutters on all windows, tin roof and large cleared area around - less likelihood of snakes! The workers labored day and night to have it inhabitable for them - even now doing finishing. The new concrete pit toilets have a cleared path to them, and an extra room to put a wood sitdown bench for visitors !! Nice.

That night Uncle Samson led in a dedication to the Lord's work, stating that 'this is OUR house, you are the hospitality!' - he was the builder, and a director of SHIM. The entire staff was present, although some live on the mainland in Jinja. Karina is still acting president, Pastor Robert the VP, 'Chief' the accountant, Gloria the receptionist, sec'y, bookkeeper, counselor, etc. Those 3 have just graduated from Mukerere University and had other offers of good jobs. Uncle Samson, Olive and Okoro, who are the 'parents' and hospitality chairmen, are directors. What a delightful group - deeply spiritual, joyful , fun and funny, very focused in their callings. (You can read the SHIM flyer that Karina left to read more - if you don't have one, write us at home to request.)

Currently we are with Tony and Laura at I AM Children's Family Ministries in Kampala - took us 6 hours to get back here by boat, boda-boda (motorbike), walking, taxi van, and much more

walking. This has been a profitable time with them and 2 other ladies who came with Laura. This is the orphanage that Carters have supported since 2003. We've all been busy teaching, preaching, working with the women, men and children and young people. Every morning we come together with Maama Susan. (Her husband who began the work, died a year ago. He was responsible for establishing so many men that now have other ministries.) Our morning prayers are worship, praying and sharing the Word of God - it has been incredible. Tony has shared the children's Jesus film spoken in Lugandan in different areas - of course, with immediate crowds!

We were able to spend one evening at Bugembe with Maama Alice at SIITA Nest Mother's Love Home. This is where Amanda has been and will return. She has asked about each of you that she had met when at Mayger a few years ago, even those who have now gone on to other churches. When Pastor John asked how she could remember your names, she simply said that she and her staff pray for you by name - weekly or daily. Her place has also enlarged and improved. During the upcoming school holidays, we will return there to hold Youth Conference as we did 3 years ago.

The end of this week we will move to the island and begin our time of ministry there - preaching, teaching, loving and sharing. Just wishing all of you could come experience this for yourselves. It is reviving. Life is simple, yet hard. It seems easier to keep the main thing the main thing! Dependence on the Lord is more obvious, and perhaps easy.

John and Marilyn

This is Keeky again. Yesterday we had a wonderful time of prayer with the Shepherd's Heart staff. Each one shared what God has been doing in and through them in the last few months. We rejoiced to hear testimonies from Mama and Papa O regarding their 25th anniversary celebration and the family ministry they have begun. Tears were also shared as several shared painful losses. Lingira village lost 15 people to AIDS over Christmas-time. Half of those were from the church. Please continue to pray for God to grant us wisdom and direction in this area.

Today we are taking Dad and Mom Thomas back to the island. Dad will minister at Lingira Church on Sunday. On Monday, we will all take the boat another 3 hours south to Namiti island. From there, we will join Uncle Samson's discipleship classes on Namiti and Jaguzzi islands, and hold family ministry seminars on Kirewe and other islands. We are so excited to see what God is doing in these southern islands!

Much love to you all. Thank you for your prayers.

Love, Andy and Keeky