



Great Expectations and Even Better Outcomes
Hands Across Nations Newsletter
July 17, 2015

SAVE THE DATE - SEPTEMBER 12, 2015,
HANDS ACROSS NATIONS DINNER AND AUCTION

The miracle that began in the Lira Main Prison in N. Uganda in February this year, has continued to unfold and expand beyond anyone's wildest expectations or dreams. As the time was nearing for Carolyn and Debbie to return to the U.S., the race was on for the men's "Learning to Read to Read the Bible" literacy classes to complete the last of the 72 lessons required to graduate. Unanimously, they all decided to extend their class time from 3 1/2 hours a day to 4 1/2 hours for the last 3 weeks before the proposed June 20th graduation date.

They were not only the first prison group to graduate, but the very first in the entire Hands Across Nations reading program to graduate, and they completed it in just 3 months! There were 61 who completed the lessons, with 55 passing the exam. Those who didn't pass, received participation certificates and will go through more training to become graduates.

The graduating students in the foreground and their teachers under the tarp to the right in the background, organized the entire graduation program themselves. They wrote and acted out a drama about living in illiteracy and the problems it brings including ending up in prison. The bright outcome was that inmates who thought this was the worst that could happen to them, came to see that learning to read and write while in prison was an unexpected gift from God.

Their class song, written and performed by the students told about the reasons their parents didn't allow them to get an education: they needed their children to watch the younger children, wash the clothes, fetch water, tend the animals and dig in the garden. But now they can read and write as adults because of the "Learning to Read to Read the Bible" program brought to them by Hands Across Nations.

Here are the amazing statistics of these remarkable men:

- 50% of the graduating class had never received any schooling.
- The highest grade anyone in the class had ever attended was 4th grade.
- The top student exam score, which had 5 parts including math, reading skill, comprehension and punctuation, writing a personal letter, and word construction, was 485/500 points, or 97%.

- The most improved student, who had never attended school, graduated #3 in the class scoring 456/500 points.

During graduation, 4 of these students were called up to be given sections of the Bible to read, chosen by the Anglican Bishop Kami, our honored guest. One was a 67 year old man without previous school experience, the second was a 30 year old Muslim with 2 years of school, the third a middle aged man with just a few years of school, and lastly a 20 year old man from a different tribe who didn't know the language, and could not read at all when he started.

Bishop Kami gave each man 5 verses from the Bible which he selected and were new to them. The first 3 men read so flawlessly that you would have thought they had been reading their whole lives. The last young man read clearly and slowly but was also perfect in reading the words correctly. The stunned silence of the whole crowd of guests and prisoners was a testament to the true miracle of what had transpired in the three months since the classes in the prison had started. It was the turning point in the attitudes of all who had come to see and hear the outcome of all those days of learning that had been going on. Each day, people driving by could see the men, under their tarps in their bright yellow uniforms, intently learning to read and write. Each honored guest stood to praise both the men who had taught and those who had graduated, as well as the team from Hands Across Nations who brought the program to them. They all gave their full support to the expansion of the program to the prisons and villages of the Lango Tribal Sub-Region. It was a moment of jubilation for all of us after many months of hard work.

Not only can the graduates now read and write as well as anyone who has completed high school, but most had learned addition, subtraction, multiplication and division with numbers of up to 4 digits. They had progressed on into simple algebra as well.

Each man who completed the training, as well as all 16 teachers received a certificate and a Bible in their own language - a gift from one couple here in Washington who volunteered to pay for them. Congratulations from the trainers, HAN Co-Director Carolyn Jones, Bishops of the Anglican Church and All Nations Church, the Deputy Commander of Lira Main Prison and the Lira District Prison Commander gave the students and teacher a sense of pride in what they had accomplished so well.

We are seeing lives being opened up and transformed, where people are thankful for having been brought to prison so they could learn to read and write. One Muslim teacher, Ramathan spoke of why he, as a strong Muslim, would be in favor of a Bible based literacy program. He spoke with emotion, stating "If God has brought this wonderful program of learning to read and write through using the Bible to this prison, then who am I to say "no" to it? I have grown closer to God through reading the Bible during this time."

Many had written poems from what they had learned in their lessons about God, AIDS, back pain, diarrhea, and prison, to name a few. Others have found that they have artistic skills they have never known before.

When the inmates are locked up in their "wards" at 4 pm, the students and teachers of the reading program, lead "church" each day. There is singing which sounds heavenly, then reading and teaching from the Bible that goes on for hours. The prison Officer in Command and the staff of guards have said that the atmosphere at the prison has changed from one of anger and fighting, to one more toward peace and camaraderie, and the guard's jobs have been easier working with the inmates.

There are between 650 -700 men in the prison, many who cannot read or write. Some of these men are in the next group of 125 men that started their new classes to learn to read and write at the beginning of July.

We provide all their primer books, notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, chalkboards, chalk and tarps to give them shade as they are unable to pay for them. It is an expense well worth paying, for the miraculous outcome.

The graduates will continue training in business mathematics and are developing a math curriculum that can be used in the village classes as well. They will also be attending Bible Studies, and receiving training in the production and use of charcoal powder for diarrhea and wounds, other health related subjects, and simple, effecting farming methods. They are our pilot program from which we have learned so much, that will be implemented in the village classes.

Sam, the Prison "welfare" staff member - gave a power point presentation about this successful program to the top leaders of the prison system of Uganda. Upon returning, he stated that the Uganda Prison Commander was supportive of the program and its expansion to all of the Lango tribal sub-region prisons. The Lord is opening doors!

In Matthew 25: 35-40, 45-46, Jesus is judging the people of all the nations. In a nutshell (but it is well worth reading the whole section yourself) He says that those who have fed the hungry, given a drink to the thirsty, invited in a stranger, clothed someone who needs clothes, taken care of someone who is sick and **visited those in prison**, have actually done it for Jesus himself and He will reward you. For those that have passed by those opportunities, they have passed by Jesus, and will go to eternal punishment, and the righteous who did feed, clothe, take care of and visit him will go to eternal life. That is a fearful statement with which we must all grapple. He cares about those categories of people. It is worth being considered a "fanatic Christian" to warn others that there is an eternal consequence for us if we live only for ourselves in this life.

We are here not just for our own purposes. And the rewards of living to serve those that matter to God, are peace and joy forever - way beyond what we gain from serving ourselves alone. It's taken us many years to find that out ourselves. Being a living sacrifice for God's purposes is a fantastic adventure! Our entire team in Uganda has been blessed by what we have experienced in the prison while serving the men and women there - many who are probably innocent as they have not yet been judged in a court.

The inmates in the women's class in the prison are halfway through the reading lessons and will finish sometime this fall. Many of the teachers have either been released or moved to other prisons.



Please pray for our gifted illustrator, Isaac, as he continues to finish the drawings for Primer Book 2. We are using illustrations from primers of other language groups until he is finished. Each drawing is his gift back to the Lord as he carefully reads each Bible Story, and then begins to sketch and complete the illustration for that story.



Keith has remained in Uganda for some weeks to complete making enough blackboards and printing enough primer books to ensure that there are enough supplies for our team to continue with the work while he returns to the US for a short time. The old Toyota, Lazarus, is just large enough to carry all the boxes of primers and the home made blackboards that Keith and our team of Ugandans have produced for the literacy classes.

We have a Godly, dedicated force of men and women who make the entire program successful. And we know that all the credit goes to God as he guides and leads us through all the challenges we face and helps us to grow in strength and knowledge.

May all of you be blessed by God, as you have prayed for and given to the work of Hands Across Nations in Uganda. Thank you for caring for those we serve - forgotten and invisible to most of the world.

Donations can be sent to: Hands Across Nations, PO Box 711, Chewelah, WA, 99109

"Sharing the love of Christ in practical ways",

Keith and Carolyn Jones

Co-Directors, Hands Across Nations