



April 25, 2016

Living a Life of Significance

One of the great motivators of life is the desire to have a life of significance. Leaving behind something of worth, a legacy, gives us a reason for living and a reason for giving of ourselves. Some lives are lived in such a way as to inspire many to follow them. Jesus said that "whoever loses their life for my sake will find it." While serving in Uganda, we are seeing hundreds of men and women who have decided to give of themselves not just for their own sake but for the love of Christ and those less fortunate, and are "finding" their lives by teaching others to read and write in their native language. It costs them their time, talent, money, and effort, but the reward is great - seeing others whose future is forever changed for the better.

Currently we have two women from the USA who are also making an impact in Lira Uganda: Jean Homer, from Spokane and Nancy Burke, Carolyn Jones' sister from Pagosa Springs Colorado. They are stepping out to teach prisoners in the Lira Prison how to teach others to speak, read and write English. It is the national language of Uganda, but many in N. Uganda speak only their tribal language, which limits them to the sub-region where their tribe is settled.



This is a whole new adventure for both Nancy and Jean. Using the program from Literacy and Evangelism International, they have taken the step of "losing their lives" to give them to 10 prisoners and one who was released, who will be the teachers of hundreds of other prisoners who desire to learn English. Using a method of "Model, Repeat, Solo" the men will learn an innovative and enjoyable way to teach English as a second language. First the teacher will demonstrate a short greeting, then the learners will repeat it with the teacher, then speak it on their own. They then practice with other learners making it a lively and enjoyable experience. The method includes games, using pictures then describing what they "see", and acting out common situations in life. In the weeks ahead, Jean and Nancy will team teach the method to these courageous men, then mentor them as they step out in faith to begin English lessons with non English speaking inmates.

Last week was the 3rd graduation for men in the Lira Prison "Learning to Read to Read the Bible" program which began through Hands Across Nations in 2015. Okol Denis, a "lame" young man HAN gave a set of crutches, became a new teacher for this graduating class.

Denis has come out of his shell these past few months of teaching. He wears a constant smile and likes to poke fun at his disability, making others laugh with poses such as the one above.

The class, led by coordinator Agem Martin, were some of the best readers graduated so far. Martin and other teachers have said that the newly translated "Little Bible" which contained all of the scriptures from the lessons in Primer Book 1 in simple Lango language, have helped the learners to read because they are hungry to read God's Word.

Two former inmates who were in the first class of trained teachers were acquitted in court of capital crimes, and were able to return to celebrate with their former fellow inmates.

This week was the very first graduation for learners out in the villages. It took place in the village of Awidakowil in a distant district about 3 hours from Lira. Though the program started in the villages before the prisons, classes have been slower to move through the 72 lessons, because the everyday obligations of life tend to make meeting together regularly more difficult.



The class of 22 women and 2 men was one of the more recent classes to start, just 8 months ago. Solomon, squatting in the front on the left, wore out a pair of shoes walking to the many churches who have classes going, to make sure they were all doing well, and to help them if they were having problems. He desperately needs a bicycle! He and his sister Scovia who is also a teacher, taught their mother, Mary in their class. Many more classes are right behind this class and will be graduating in the next few months.



This elderly gentleman was beyond ecstatic that he had been able to learn to read and write.

Illiteracy in Lango village women is almost universal. Men, if they are illiterate, are embarrassed about it and are less likely to join a class at first. The graduates are eager to continue learning and want to learn English next. So Jean and Nancy's small beginning in Lira prison, will soon spread to the villages. We can hardly imagine the impact their sacrifice in coming to Uganda will make in the next few years. God will show Himself "powerful on their behalf" because their "hearts are committed to Him". (See 2 Chronicles, 16:9 in the Bible). He will take their efforts and make them significant.

We can see that there is an opportunity for people who desire to make a real difference in the world, and especially to make an impact here in N. Uganda by giving themselves in the prisons in the Lango tribal sub-region. The literacy and English programs are the beginning, but each of us has a talent or skill that could be useful in forever improving the future of many men and women. The same can be done in our own communities. As Ezra Mucunguzi, the deputy OC (Officer in Charge) of Lira Prison once said at a literacy class graduation, "take what you have learned and go change your world."

Just a side note we learned yesterday – there was a call-in radio program last weekend about a children's program of learning to read in their own native tongue that is being implemented in the primary schools by an NGO called "Mango Tree". However there were many calls into the station praising the Hands Across Nations "Ber Atek" adult reading classes, from all over the Lango Sub-Region. All were unsolicited and gratefully received. God is doing a Great Thing and is expanding the territory!

Anyone interested in exploring the possibility of coming to Uganda to share your skills and talents can contact us at keith.jones@handsacrossnations.com or carolyn.jones@handsacrossnations.com. Your faithful donations over the last decade have done so much in serving "the least of these." We are indebted for your sharing of your God given prosperity with those who have become our community, here in N. Uganda. God has "flattened mountains" and stretched our finances so that more is being accomplished than we ever hoped could be.

A big Thank you and God Bless You.

Keith and Carolyn Jones