



Hello from Hands Across Nations in Uganda

8 February 2017

Happy Very Belated New year from Hands Across Nations in sunny, sweltering, Uganda, to all of you in snowy, shivery Washington, Colorado and other parts of the world! Our 2016 ended with one of the most memorable and wonderful Christmas celebrations ever. Last year, Keith and I celebrated with Isaac, our illustrator – it was a very quiet yet precious time with him. This year was at the opposite end of the spectrum, but Isaac was once again involved.

Three days prior to Christmas, the disability/leper class, which is taught by Isaac and Lucy Tar, dressed in their finest clothes and were transported to the Lira Prison to sing for and with the men and women incarcerated there. They were to join in singing together in support and love of the people inside the prison. Others from churches in the community also joined in.



At first most of the class were sitting or standing but by the end of the time together.....



Pretty much EVERYONE was up and dancing including those with crutches, walking sticks and canes.

Isaac and Lucy Tar (one of 5 “Lucys” we have to keep straight), team-teach the first class of people with Leprosy and disabilities. Lucy had a great desire to do something special for the class of over 20 people, for Christmas Day. Most of them have to beg for their daily food, so Lucy, Isaac and 2 other teachers, Joyce and Teddy, decided they would like to prepare a special Christmas Home Cooked Dinner. This is part of their heart for the poor, the lowest of the lowly, forgotten and overlooked by many. This group was featured in a video at our October Benefit Dinner so many of you will recognize the faces of the class members.

Two days prior to Christmas, Lucy and I made the rounds in the Lira open market, supermarkets, and chicken selling operations to find all the ingredients for this special dinner.



At 8am Christmas morning, Lucy and the 3 others met at our home/office to slaughter the chickens, chop all the vegetables, sauté the ground beef and cook over 3 open charcoal stoves and 2 propane burners. With the learners, parts of their families, some of our staff and their children and a few children from across the road, our dinner numbers grew to about 35 people.



For all of you who have never prepared a chicken from scratch, like me, you might be amazed at how eggs start inside the hen.....a real delicacy!



There was laughing and singing throughout the morning into the afternoon – such cheerfulness swelled in all our hearts as we thought of this gift we were preparing for our cherished learners. By just after 2pm, their normal mid-day mealtime, we were on our way with all the piping hot food in pots, over 90 freshly baked mini banana cakes, along with dishes, spoons for everyone, and sodas – a real feast for Christmas.



There was such a spirited celebration of all who were there, when we arrived , praising God for His son Jesus, in singing and dancing which seemed never to end. In this photo, they were singing about Jesus healing their back pain



The teachers set up their food service line, and.....



Each person was individually served by our teachers and staff, expressing our love and deep appreciation for them.



Several needed help to chop up the chicken so they could handle it with their hands which are missing fingers.

Afterward each one was given a 2.5 pound bar of laundry/bathing soap – you wouldn't imagine that would make people get up and march around the building singing, raising and lowering their bars of soap like they were in a University Marching Band at halftime at a football game.



Sophia, standing, who is disfigured due to the rebels cutting off her lips and ears during the war that ended in 2007, comes to class with her sweet son Jared – he was very shy, didn't smile and did not dance with everyone (very unusual for a child here) when he first came to the class. He's been won over with breath mints and playing and dancing with him. Now he wears a smile all the time and joins in with all the activities like his mother. It's so heartwarming to see the changes in both of them in just a few weeks with the class.



This was the devastating mutilation of Sophia's face during the war. Her reconstructive surgery is not perfect but she is understandable in her speech and is no longer self-conscious about her appearance in the reading class.

After piling all the dishes and pots into the Toyota, the team came home and cleaned up ALL of the dirty dishes and cooking utensils. Even that wasn't the end. No money was asked for or given for their precious service to our learners that day.



Instead each was given a large bouquet of marigolds from our garden and had their photo taken in various poses.



Keith completed the day, by sitting with them for a short Bible Study of Isaiah 58 verses 6-12 which talks about the kind of “fasting” the Lord has chosen – ⁷“Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter, when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? ⁸Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. ⁹Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help and He will say: Here am I.” ¹²Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.” These young people, all in their twenties have come through a war which went on for more than 10 years of their lives, and they are now seeing that they, themselves, have become the rebuilders of the Lango Tribe Sub-Region. God is using them for His wonderful purposes. We rejoice and honor them for their sacrifices in teaching their learners to read and write, and in giving of themselves, completely, on Christmas Day, as their living sacrifice to God and the poor.

Blessings to you from Keith and Carolyn Jones – wishing we could see first-hand the winter wonderland of Chewelah and Stevens County. Thank you to the many who are sending contributions to help us continue what God has given us to do here in Uganda. We can’t say it enough, YOU make it possible for us to be here.

You can contact us through email: keith.jones@handsacrossnations.com, carolyn.jones@handsacrossnations.com, and www.handsacrossnations.com

If you would like to support the literacy program, especially for the disabled, lepers and prisoners as they cannot afford the books so all of their supplies are provided freely, you can send it to:

Hands Across Nations
PO Box 9048
Spokane, WA 99209