

Phillip & Laura Shero  
July 12, 2008  
Subject: Fresh Start  
Reasons to Praise

"My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!"

The last two weeks since our return to Uganda have provided many opportunities for praise and thanks to God: new teammates, reports of new church plants, growth at MCC, MTI construction, books added to library, and the arrival of a shipping container are a few.

Dennis and Mary Okoth came from Nairobi, Kenya to join our team just as our family left for furlough. Dennis served as principal for Nairobi Great Commission School for many years before coming to Mbale to lead our Bible school, Messiah Theological Institute to the next level. Dennis is also serving as an advisor to the university project. His experience and administrative ability have already blessed MTI, enabling us to provide even higher quality training and education to over 500 church leaders every year. Dennis's presence in Mbale is blessing our team, the town church, and our office staff. At the end of this month, he and Mary Beth Bodiford will be presenting a financial seminar to all the mission employees to help them escape the trap of debt and be better stewards of their money.

James and Noeli reported that the Rural Ministry Team did not achieve their goal of planting 72 churches in 2007...they planted 52! I am so proud of them! I knew when we left that the Rural Ministry was in good hands with James. There is a new momentum and sense of ownership in evangelism and church planting that was not present before. The men and women of the RMT have set a goal of 62 new church plants in 2008. This Tuesday they reported one more after a number of them visited several of the islands on Lake Victoria. There is also a new movement of church plants in Masindi District on the far western side of Uganda.



MCC Youth at Friday afternoon Bible Study

Our first Sunday back at the town church (MCC) was a praise-filled celebration. Shawn has been giving focused attention to the youth group, which is now in the 40s on some

weekends. Twenty-one young people stood in front and led the church in the most moving worship I have experienced at MCC. There is a greater level of commitment and participation from the youth now than ever before. (Some of these kids will be students at the University in the next few years.) Another indication of growth at MCC is the start-up of three home groups, which we hope is the beginning of a greater sense of family and connection at MCC.

Just down the hill from the church building sits the newly opened MTI Conference Center. Though it still lacks facial bricks and ceilings, the facility has already hosted students for several courses. Other groups in town have also rented it, earning over \$1,000 in the last six weeks! The Conference Center has dorm rooms for MTI students, freeing up space at the main building for our expanding library and classroom needs. Speaking of which, James Morrill is here for a year to help catalogue and organize the next 10,000 volumes for the MTI and University library collection.



MTI Conference Center outside and pavilion/courtyard inside (rooms on sides are dormitories)

Finally, the container that was shipped last December arrived earlier this year, blessing a number of ministries all across the country. Three Bible schools had books on it. An orphans' home in Jinja shipped toys for the children. Several missionary families bought space to move household items to Uganda. And our family got new couches! After ten years of absorbing the dust and humidity of Uganda, our old couches were a haven for allergens. Within moments of sitting down, my eyes would water and my nose would clog up. What a joy to come in and sit down on a clean, comfortable sofa and relax...and lean back...and close my eyes...and wake up in time for supper!



Kids eating Burger King on the floor in the airport

June 29th, the 10th anniversary of our arrival in Uganda, found us in London's Heathrow Airport. While the location was not very auspicious, perhaps there is some symbolism in the setting. Heathrow is a place for people in transit—people going from one place to another. We were returning to Africa after a longer-than-expected furlough but with a sense of newness and rejuvenation. The past several years brought challenges and crises that had worn us down. But God has refreshed our spirits and given us a fresh start. He has moved us to a new place of joy and peace and trust we had not known before. This month we begin what may be our second decade in Africa—a reason enough for praise. But if it is to be so, it will be by the grace of God my Savior.

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