

# St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

## Newsletter

December 2009

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"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined." —Isaiah 9:2

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Dear friends and coworkers,

We will be celebrating Christmas in Uganda this year, far from our beloved family, far from our dear friends. As we reflect on the choices that brought us here, and on our work and ministry, we recall certain questions that are often asked and that sometimes arise unbidden in our own minds: "Why are we here?" "What do we hope to accomplish?" "Are we really making a difference?"

According to the latest census, eighty percent of Ugandans are Christians. Yet for the vast majority of these professing believers, Christianity is but a thin, brittle shell, barely disguising a persistent belief in the old religion, in the "small gods."

The prophet Isaiah talks about "the people who walked in darkness." He describes those who "inquire of mediums and necromancers who whisper and mutter." He asks, "Should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?"

Indigenous African religion is not based on love, or hope, or joy. It is based on fear. Fear that the dead will return and harm the living if the ancient rituals are not performed. Fear that a neighbor may be a witch and put a curse on you or your children. Fear that compels people to give what little they have to the witchdoctors in the vain hope of warding off a curse or

to appease the arbitrary antagonism of a dead relative.

Colonialism, European philosophy, political independence, the importation of Western popular culture, and millions of dollars in aid money have done little to dispel these fears or to alleviate the grinding poverty that still afflicts most Ugandan families. To continue with Isaiah, "They will roam through the land greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will curse their king and their God. They will look up to the sky and down to the earth but will find only distress and darkness. They are in the darkness of fear, and wander lost in that darkness."

Can there be love when a child is just another mouth to feed? Can there be hope when tomorrow offers no better than today, and maybe worse? Can there be joy for those who dwell in a land of darkness?



*A typical family in our neighborhood*

Education can make a difference and education is what we do. The educated are more able to free themselves from the yoke of superstition and fear. The educated are more employable in sustainable and better paying jobs. The educated are less likely to engage in risky and potentially fatal behaviors. This is conventional wisdom, and to a great extent it's true. To quote the Uganda School Anthem:

We young women and men of Uganda  
Are marching along the path of education;  
Singing and dancing with joy together,  
Uniting for a better Uganda.

Thanks to your concern, prayers, and financial support, together we are making it possible for over 200 Ugandan children and teens to attend school. Not only are their school fees paid for, they are given everything they need to succeed academically: books, pens & pencils, daily lunch, uniforms, shoes & socks, and comprehensive medical care. Most of these children are orphans, and all are living in an impoverished section of Kampala, Uganda's teeming capital. Without the support we provide, they have little hope of completing primary and secondary school and their opportunities for a better life are limited. The cycle of poverty will claim yet another generation.



*Peter with Seventh Grade Graduates*

But education alone cannot eliminate the pervasive corruption and discrimination that plague the poorest of the poor. The minds and hearts of this young generation must be shown that self-improvement alone will not lead to "a better Uganda." To this end, we are more than a bursary, more than an impersonal provider of school fees. Together with our Ugandan associates, Frank and Agnes, we demonstrate a personal interest in each and every child in our program. We advise, encourage, guide, and admonish. We teach and promote honesty, integrity, responsibility, and concern for each other.

We confront them openly with society's moral failures, and direct them to be the generation that will ultimately make a difference—not only in their own futures, but for the sake of their neighbors, families, and the generations to come.

Most importantly, we love them. They come to know this love, and they also know that we are representatives of your love, that there is a great family around the world which cares about them. The knowledge of this love brings them joy, and this joy gives them hope. Yes, together we are making a difference.

We thank you with all the joy and blessings of this season.

### *Peter & Sharon*

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"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." —*Isaiah 9:6-7*

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*Sharon with Robert, Ronald, & Beatrice*

We welcome your donations.  
Checks may be sent to:

**St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund**  
P.O. Box 285  
Chardon, OH 44024-0285

Or you can donate online at  
[www.ugandachildrensfund.org](http://www.ugandachildrensfund.org)

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