

# St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

## Newsletter

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"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (God With Us)."

—Isaiah 7:14b



### God With Us.

The mystery of the Incarnation is the most significant event in the history of mankind. For believers, over-familiarity with the "Christmas story" should not be allowed to obscure the astounding fact that God Himself visited this world which He made. He did not come in outward glory, but humbled Himself to be born as a helpless child in a cave used as a stable. This momentous event hinged on the obedience of a young woman still in her teens. A girl born into a man's world, Mary's faith in God transcended the social and cultural barriers of that time and place. With quiet resolution, she and Joseph raised a child conceived under questionable circumstances in a small town in an obscure province of the mighty Roman Empire—a child whose brief life on this planet changed the world forever.

Children in Uganda are also born into a male-dominated world. This is especially true in the slums of Kampala where village culture has been transplanted to the big city. As young girls enter their teenage years, they face an uncertain future. Raised with other orphans in crowded



households by grandmothers, aunts, and stepmothers, girls are considered a burden and educating them is an unaffordable luxury. Either they are farmed out to work as household servants, or they are given as informal wives to older men. Sixteen percent of Ugandan girls are "married" by the age of fifteen, and an astonishing 53% by the age of eighteen. Not only is this a terrible waste of human potential, but it also contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Studies have shown that in countries with unequal access to education—with fewer girls attending school than boys—higher infection rates occur in both men and women. In addition to the human tragedy, the economic impact is significant. Women with little or no education are considerably more likely to be living in extreme poverty than those who have completed high school. It should be no surprise, then, that 60% of the students in our program are girls, and that girls comprise over 75% of our high school boarding students. Here are two of their stories:

We met Carol three years ago when she was fifteen. She was what we call a "virtual orphan." She had a father and a mother but they were of no use to her as parents.



Her father had abandoned the family and her mother was suffering from complications of AIDS that left her bedridden and immobile. Carol bathed her mother and cleaned the room before she left for school in the morning and after she returned at night.

With our support and her own perseverance, Carol completed Senior 4 and qualified to continue in A Level. Her family in the village offered to take the mother in, so we prepared to send Carol to boarding school for Senior 5. When the relatives came and saw the sick woman's condition, they turned around and went

back to the village without her. Carol, out of compassion for her mother, remained a day scholar. Within the past few months, both parents died, leaving Carol a true orphan at eighteen. We are committed to helping Carol through her final year of high school, and then to university or vocational school. With this opportunity, Carol will not become just another sad statistic.

We are always moved when one of our students brings a friend or neighbor to us for help. It was especially poignant when Francis, who is HIV positive, brought Dorah to our office. Francis, now in Senior 2, had attended primary school with Dorah and knew her mother as a



fellow patient in a local HIV treatment program. Fatherless, and without school fees for high school, Dorah was a girl at risk. We enrolled her in boarding school

where her unknown potential blossomed into unexpected reality. In all three terms this past school year, Dorah ranked first in her class of 52. On her 3<sup>rd</sup> term grade report, she earned Distinctions in eleven of the fourteen required subjects, including Math, Biology, and Chemistry. Had not Francis cared enough to reach out from his own affliction, this bright girl's future would have been very different.

In Gian-Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, the three kings on their way to Bethlehem stop for the night at the home of a poor woman and her crippled son. While they sleep, the mother, in desperation, tries to steal the gold intended for the Christ child. She thinks to herself, "All that gold! All that gold! I wonder if rich people know what to do with their gold? Do they know how a child could be fed? Do rich people know?" She is caught, of course, and is brought, trembling, before the kings.

She listens in awe as Melchior sings,

*"Oh woman, you may keep the gold.  
The Child we seek doesn't need our gold.  
On love, on love alone He will build His  
kingdom. He will bring us new life and  
receive our death, and the keys to His city  
belong to the poor."*

Overcome, she replies,

*"Oh no, wait! Take back your gold! For  
such a King I've waited all my life."*

May the birth of Christ and the promise of His redeeming death and Resurrection bring you peace and joy during this holy season.

### *Peter & Sharon*

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain, for the former things have passed away." —Rev. 21:4



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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