

From: Rebecca Baldock

30th October 2007

Hi

Hope you are all well. I hear it's getting quite cold back at home. Things are doing the opposite here and starting to get hotter as we are beginning to come out of the rainy season, and into the dry again.

Someone has asked me to comment on church life again in Uganda. I still find this a very difficult topic to write about. I wrote about it over a year ago and my understanding of it remains the same, but here's a bit more insight.

One African Bishop when visiting the US was met with the question, "If 80% of the people in Uganda are Christians (according to statistic) why is HIV so prevalent there". I'm told that about 80% of people who go to church and claim to be Christians would also say that they are not saved. This generally seems to mean that they think Christianity is a good thing, but they do not have a relationship with Jesus and it's not fully a part of their lives. One of my friends whose on the leadership of a huge church in Kampala surprised me one day by saying that about 80% of the people who came to their church were not Christians. He then followed this up by saying how the leadership were very happy with this as it gave them such a great opportunity to share the word of God with others, and many many people come to Christ through their ministry. This church also has very good structures in place for discipling Christians.

The strong Christians that you meet out here are often very inspirational people. They usually have a strong prayer life. One of my friends wakes up at 5 every morning to spend an hour in prayer, and this is common practice. Their knowledge of the bible is excellent and their close relationship with God is visible through their work and lives.

The fact that so many people come to church helps to enable the church to have a strong voice. I've been impressed how the church often stands up for issues of injustice and other important issues. When I was in Kampala in February I heard a Bishop preaching about the problems with waste and the environment. Now this is quite a popular topic at home and nothing new, but out here it is radical. For many years waste has been biodegradable, but in the recent years more and more plastics etc have come to Africa and they have no system in place to deal with it. There's no litter bins, no rubbish collectors. When someone has finished with a plastic bottle or bag they just throw it on the ground no matter where they are. Uganda is a beautiful country, but the greenery is interspersed with litter. At homes people will collect the rubbish into a pit in the ground, and regularly burn it. This is a neater way of clearing away the rubbish but the burning is still not good for the environment. This rubbish has created many problems. The plastic bags hold water and create a great place for mosquitoes to breed. The rubbish is decreasing crop yield. It's also affecting people who are living in the slums. The Bishop spoke about all this then continued his sermon stating how we should be responsible for the environment that God has given us. He encouraged people to use boxes of cotton bags instead of plastic ones. If they did use plastic bags they should ensure that they were good ones and reuse them. They have also placed recycling bins in all the Anglican churches and centres in the capital. That was the first and only time I've seen or heard anything about recycling in Uganda. In the same month I heard another church also preaching on environmental issues and our responsibility to care for the environment. The government is now

trying to put a ban on plastic bags and some shops have started using paper bags due to this.

Changing the subject entirely. There is something in particular that I would like to share with you for you to pray for. It is probable that we have an outbreak of a haemorrhagic fever in a town called Bwera which is about 30 minutes drive from us. These fevers are carried by monkeys or bats and are passed to humans through bites, or eating the animal. It is then spread from person to person through any bodily fluid (including sweat and saliva). There is a 90% mortality rate for people who have the disease. In the summer there were two cases reported near Mbarara (about 3 hours away from us). One person died the other survived and no one else has contracted the disease. Three weeks passed and it was declared cleared. At the same time there has also been a reported outbreak in the Congo. 60 people had died, but we have heard no more about it since. Bwera is next to the Congo. Over the past week we have had two people admitted with haemorrhagic fever. One of the people died. The other is being treated in isolation and the Ministry of Health has been informed. Samples have been sent to confirm, and examine which one of this type of diseases it is. To put your minds at rest I am at little risk of contracting the disease as I have no contact with these types of patients. They are isolated on a ward of their own and the Drs and nurses treating them will be protected by gloves, masks and extra clothing etc. If people who have it are isolated and people in contact with them protect themselves it can be stopped from spreading. Please pray that these will be the only two people to have the disease and that it won't infect any more people.

Thank you
Love Rebecca

Prayer points

- Please thank God for the voice of the church in Africa and pray that they will continue to speak out in positive ways.
- Continue to pray that people will come to know Christ and for discipleship
- Please pray that these two people will be the only cases of haemorrhagic fever. And for protection of the Drs and Nurses who treat them.