

HISTORY OF GRACE LUTHERAN SUPPORT FOR UGANDAN AIDS ORPHANS

Mark and Sharon Dembro met Father James Ssemakula, a priest at the Anglican church in Stockholm, when Mark was assigned to the U.S. Embassy in the mid-90s. Father James described to them the situation of HIV/AIDS orphans in rural Uganda, and they began contributing to that effort. In 1996 Father James returned to Uganda to work with AIDS orphans in Mpigi District. With support from the Swedish government and private contributions, he supported 70 children and had started programs to empower women. Grace Lutheran began contributing to his work in 2002. Father James visited Port Townsend in 2005, speaking to area churches and other organizations about his work, and receiving pledges of support.

In August, 2005, we were shocked to learn that Father James had died suddenly while visiting his family in Sweden. We were at a loss to imagine how we could continue to help these children, 'orphaned' a second time. Contacts of Bill and Gwen Howard (who had visited Father James in Uganda) recommended a young man of integrity who would see that our money got to the orphans' schools. His name was Kenneth Kasule. Kenneth has far exceeded our expectations. He:

- knows each child, their scholastic and other needs and aspirations
- visits their schools regularly and speaks with their teachers
- knows their home situations and intervenes to resolve problems
- takes care of their medical needs
- counsels them
- holds group meetings at the end of each school term to discuss school and other issues
- provides us with budgets and written accounts of all funds expended for each child

Kenneth was able to contact 35 of Father James' orphans. All of this initial group have finished secondary school and additional training courses and are now middle-class citizens. A sample:

- Sylvia Najjuma graduated in information technology and is now married to Kenneth. They have two sons.
- Esther Ndagire graduated in business computing.
- Nusulah Nabuuma studied hotel and institution catering and works at a restaurant in Kampala.
- Charles Kitumba studied electrical installation and renewable energy and has his own business.
- Sarah Namuwonge is a practical nurse and started a clinic in Kampala with a friend.
- Prossy Namuyiga studied cosmetology and works at a salon in Kampala.
- Jane Namugayi studied catering and works in a primary school canteen in Kampala.
- Beatrice Nakubulwa is a secondary school music teacher.
- Rovincer Kuteesa was a social worker in Sudan. She managed to escape back to Uganda.
- Issac Newton Lubanga studied carpentry and works at a furniture factory in Kampala. He is married with 2 children.
- Margaret Nalukenge is a secondary school history and religious education teacher. Married with two children.
- Alice Nantongo studied business administration. She works in a boutique and has a baby girl.
- Milvat Nansamba is a practical nurse and has her own drug dispensary.
- Moses Mwange imports goods from Kenya to sell wholesale in Kampala.

- Lilian Nabulime studied mass communications.
- Goreet Namakula finished secretarial studies.
- Moreen Nakayiza finished education studies.
- Daniel Lukwata finished information technology studies.
- Lillian Nabunnya works for UNICEF implementing mobile phone-based systems related to maternal and child mortality and disease outbreaks
- Shari'ah Namyalo graduated in economics
- Haruna Mugonza graduated in Clinical Medicine and Community Health and is building his own clinic
- Vivian Nanfuka is our first M.D.

We currently support 28 children. Because of Kenneth's dedication they have been able to continue studying during the last two years of school closures. In national tests, several of our students have scored at the top of their districts.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

ARE WE SUPPORTING AN ORPHANAGE?

No. Our children live with extended family or with the remaining parent. If that situation is untenable, Kenneth enrolls them in a school that accepts boarders.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

Church budget funds are not used for this program.

Funding comes from Lisa Lanza's annual concert, the endowment fund, Thrivent, and individual contributors. In order to ensure the viability of the program, we need broad congregational participation. The amount pledged by members determines how many orphans we are able to help. Average cost per child is about \$500 per year including administrative expenses.

DO WE SUPPORT THE CHILDREN IN OTHER WAYS?

Our support goes beyond financial commitment. Each child in the program is linked to a member of Grace with whom they exchange emails facilitated by Kenneth. We include an orphan each week in prayers during the Sunday service. We contribute to a fund to buy a special Christmas gift for each child. This year all the children received a pair of shoes and an English dictionary.

HOW ARE OUR FUNDS ACCOUNTED FOR?

Before the beginning of each of the three school terms, Kenneth submits a budget itemizing projected cost. We wire the sum to his account at Chartered Standard Bank in Kampala. We have the code for accessing account information. Kenneth disperses the funds to the schools our children attend. He scans the schools' receipts for each child and transmits them to us via email. He does the same with any other expenses he incurs on behalf of the children.

At the time Kenneth submits the proposed budget, he also submits a record of funds expended in the previous term for each child, and an itemized list of his transportation and communication expenses. These include his cell phone, internet subscription, and transport costs to go to the children's schools. These average about \$160 per three-month school term. Kenneth receives a salary of \$40 per month for his services. He also receives about \$200 per term to be used for emergency medical and other expenses.

HOW CAN WE TRACK OUR CHILDREN'S PROGRESS?

After each term, Kenneth scans and sends the child's school report. These are then forwarded by email to those writing to the student along with the letter the child writes to his/her Grace pen pal.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT THE PROGRAM?

A pledge request goes in the mail box of each member of Grace early in the year asking for a financial commitment to the program for that year. These commitments determine how many orphans we can support. Although the cost per child varies depending on school and grade, we estimate \$500 per year (this includes administrative expenses).

Just as important is the relationship we build with each child through our letters. We have eight students in need of correspondents. Although you are encouraged to write often, you should commit to a minimum of three letters. Your child will normally write to you after each school term when Kenneth gathers them for their meeting.

WHY SHOULD I SUPPORT THE ORPHANS?

There are 15 million AIDS orphans in Africa, 1 million in Uganda alone. The reality for these children is that without education, their likely future is begging or prostitution, and possible early death from AIDS. Grace Lutheran, and others in our community, have participated in a miracle - these throw-away children, with our help, become productive, working, middle-class citizens. For the program to continue, it needs the broad involvement of the congregation. Another benefit beyond price - their prayers.