

# The Gospel in Uganda

Keith Sharp

Uganda is an East African, equatorial nation of 30 million souls. It's capital, Kampala, a city of 1.5 million, is about 25 miles from the north shore of Lake Victoria. Idi Amin Dada, "The Last King of Scotland," was its brutal dictator a generation ago.

Daniel Aburu was a Ugandan Pentecostal preacher who was sent for training to Fort Myers, Florida in 2002. There he met David Schmidt and Oscar Gavin, who converted him to Christ. After obeying the Lord in baptism and studying further with brethren Schmidt and Gavin, he returned to Uganda to preach the true Gospel of Christ. Daniel began and worked with congregations in Kampala and Tororo, a city on the Kenyan border 120 miles east of Kampala, and the ancestral home of his wife, Rosemary. Daniel is 45, and he and Rosemary have three daughters, Shallom (14), Blessed (8), and Charity (7). Daniel was supported by the Southside Church of Christ in Fort Myers, Florida and the Laurel Canyon Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio.

Daniel helped convert Rosemary's brother, Francis Okech, who is also 45 and was the head of international banking at Nile Bank in Kampala. In 2005 Francis resigned his high paying job to devote his life to preaching the Gospel. He traveled to South Africa and studied with Paul Williams and David Beckley. He sold his car and was barely surviving on irregular donations by concerned brethren when I first met him. In 2004 Francis' wife died giving birth to twins, Benjamin and Mary. Francis has two other children, Mercy (12) and Samuel (7).

Two years ago Francis started a congregation in Jinja, which is where the Nile River leaves Lake Victoria, 50 miles east of Kampala. That congregation now has about 45 members, several of whom were converted from Islam. Some young Muslim hooligans tormented them out of their first meeting place. They now meet in a rented building with a tin roof, dirt floor, and no walls. Their membership is primarily destitute people from horrible slums, and their collection is about 35 cents a week.

In 2005 Daniel Aburu accidentally hit and killed his two year old son with his car. After this tragedy, Daniel's extended family turned against him, accusing him of bringing a curse on the family. His brother, a devout Muslim and a policeman, instigated an investigation against him, accusing him of murder. In my very unprofessional opinion, Daniel suffered a nervous breakdown. Daniel Aburu has now fallen away and gone to Kenya.

Rosemary still lives in their home in Jinja and works with widows and women whose husbands have abandoned them, leaving them with dependant children. She both teaches them the Bible and, from her own money, gives those who are already faithful Christians small amounts of money to start a little business so they can provide food and shelter for themselves and their children.

After the death of his son, Daniel stopped going to Tororo, and a denominational preacher took over there. Faithful brethren, led by 30 year old John Ochwo, started a little congregation meeting on John's land in the village of Papoli, about 10 miles out in the bush from Tororo. This is a traditional African village, where the people live in earthen huts with thatch roofs and have no electricity or running water. About thirty members and thirty children meet in what my parents would call a "brush arbor." The members, including John, are subsistence farmers on tiny

plots of land. John farms two acres with hand tools and does the preaching. John's transportation is a bicycle. When I was there, his wife Esther was due to deliver a baby at any time, and she was anemic and lacked the money to go to a hospital to deliver the baby. They now have the money.

Daniel quit going to Kampala in December due to his depression and fear of arrest. The congregation there meets under an open sided canopy in a hotel parking lot. They have no men who are capable at this time of stepping up to lead, and about half the congregation has quit attending. They now have an attendance of 25-30. Francis Okech now works with them on Sunday evenings.

I worked with Daniel, Rosemary, Francis, and John and lived with Francis for sixteen days in February. That is the basis for this report.

Most of these Christians did not own Bibles, and some cannot read. Brethren in America paid for Bibles, 50 in their native Luganda and 50 **New King James Version** Bibles for those who can read English. I also brought reading glasses for those with eye problems.

Francis Okech is a dedicated, faithful, dependable, morally pure, very intelligent man of God. Obviously the spread of the Gospel and defense of the faith in Uganda will depend on Francis. He divides his time among the three existing congregations and tries to take the Gospel to other areas. He is raising four young children with no wife to assist him.

Since Francis lives in Kampala, his living expenses are close to those in America. He just has a lower standard of living.

Francis needs immediate and continuing financial help. He needs a four wheel drive pickup for the rough roads on which he travels and to transport destitute Christians to the worship assembly. He needs to upgrade his house, so he can host visiting preachers and have group Bible studies with neighbors. He needs about \$1750 a month support. He needs dsupport in addition to this since he shares his support with his sister, Rosemary Aburu.

I hope both individuals and congregations will consider helping Francis. If you or the congregation of which you are a member is interested, you may contact Francis directly at francisokech@yahoo.com. He may be slow getting and replying to your message, since he has to use an internet café. As a banker, he can tell you the best way to get money to him.