

## Sheringham church completes Uganda mission

A team of 24 people from Lighthouse Community Church in Sheringham have just returned from a mission in Uganda, which has seen many lives changed in that small but faithful community.



Jo Mutton, one of the 24, takes up the story.

At 3.30 in the morning on Friday October 23 we began our journey from Lighthouse in Sheringham to Uganda. Our mission was simple – to show the love of Jesus in practical ways to a small community called Kiwoko, in the bush, North of Lweero.

Lighthouse Community Church and Pastor Bryan Pickard have been supporting this community for several years, but this was the biggest and most adventurous mission to date and was affectionately entitled the 'loaves and fishes trip'. It was self funded by the participants, but included the generosity of small businesses, and individuals from the church and local community.

The Ugandan Pastor overseeing our trip greeted us in Entebbe, 24 tired travellers and 48 suitcases squeezed into a small 20-seat bus and mpv! Pastor Steve told the team how excited the villagers were to be receiving us, and that their expectations were high! No pressure!



The pastor had identified areas where we could assist the community. This included predominantly working at the local church, which had a school on site catering for 274 children, some of whom were boarders as their homes were so far away. However there were no dormitories for them -instead they had taken over a classroom and were sleeping on mattresses on the floor. This inevitably put pressure on the other classes, as on some occasions 3 classes were sharing one room which resulted in cramped and dysfunctional teaching.

At one end of the building part of the wall had fallen down due to intense rain, so this repair became a priority for the British and Ugandan building team on the first morning. The wiring around the church and school was extremely dangerous, with exposed wires, so this was also considered an important job in order to make it safe and functional.

One of the team had organised a water filtration system to be installed at the school so they could harvest fresh water when it rained. Precarious scaffolding was used to erect the guttering with the assistance of local labourers, and a brick support was constructed for the water tank.



In the team were 4 teachers who had been invited to offer some basic teaching techniques to the teachers of the school and others in the surrounding area. Pastor Steve wanted them to address positive encouragement rather than physical punishment toward the children as an alternative form of discipline, as well as suggesting different ways of using resources and interactive teaching methods. This was well received by the Ugandan teachers.

Whilst teachers were undergoing training, their classes would be involved in an activity club run by the Muzungus (white people), this included a variety of activities: t-shirt painting, decorating bunting for their

class, action rhymes, bible stories, threading, parachute games etc. The younger members of the team did a fantastic job of co-ordinating this along with a sports day at the end of the week.

Also on the team were 3 nurses; it had been decided that basic health checks were to be undertaken on every pupil in the school. One of the biggest problems that children experience (apart from Malaria) is that of Jiggers. These are parasites that burrow into the sole of a child's foot and reproduce, which is very uncomfortable for the child. Parents often painfully gouge out the parasite, often causing infection and possible deformity. All this could be avoided if the children wore shoes. Treatment by soaking feet in a solution of oil and paraffin is enough to kill the Jiggers; this was shown to a local nurse who is now willing to follow up treatment on a regular basis with a view to ultimately eliminating this problem. We were also able to provide shoes to those who were affected.



One of the most humbling experiences for us was when we were able to hold a feeding programme for the older members of the church and local community. Our aim was to feed 150 people but we managed to stretch provisions to provide for 180. The people started congregating early in the morning, before we arrived, and patiently waited whilst we prepared the food parcels which included: maize flour, beans, salt, sugar, matches, and soap, to sustain them for a month, at a cost of approximately £5 per person. The delight on their faces was evident, and they were so appreciative that similar aged people back in the UK cared enough for them that they wanted to provide for them in this way.



Another highlight was an opportunity to have a baptismal service at a local watering hole which had been mentioned at our first Sunday service. About 40 people arrived on the day including a few Muslims who were baptised by the Ugandan and British Pastors.

Towards the end of our trip it became apparent that there was enough money in the budget to purchase some beds for the boarders at the school. On our travels back and forth to the school and church we had seen metal triple bunk-style beds which we felt would be ideal for the boarders at the school, so an order was placed for ten beds to be

delivered to the school. A lot of the village community came out to welcome the beds!

It made us all realise that what we take as basic human comforts at home are not available to those we met in Kiwoko. However, their meagre living conditions did not result in complaints, but rather in rejoicing for what God has given them and an inner peace that their lives are in God's hands. Their love and hospitality towards us far exceeded anything we could do for them, and we were all humbled, touched and challenged by their faithfulness.

