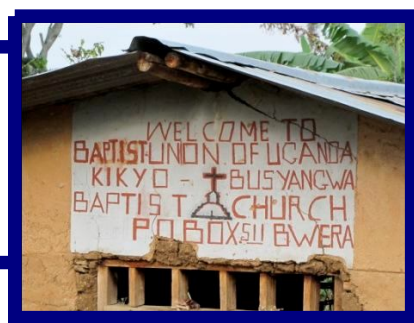




Riddells' Update February 2010

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A weekend break



Whilst the thought of slipping to Florence or Venice for a weekend cultural break has a certain charm, we have found some of our weekends filled with slightly different activities over the past 18 months (and a few less pre-Raphaelite paintings). On average we travel to different rural churches within the West of Uganda 2 or 3 times a month for stays of 1 to 5 nights to support the work of the Baptist Union of Uganda. Our most recent visit took us to Bundibugyo District, where Graeme ran an education management workshop with Baptist Schools whilst Jenny taught the law to pastors and community leaders. This was followed immediately by a trip high into the Rwenzori Mountains to Kikyo Village for a weekend of legal education and Sunday fellowship. A weekend visit to a rural church in Uganda is slightly different to one in the UK...

'They will be there on time'



'What time would you like us with you Pastor Fidel?' (Graeme's standard question). 'You must arrive by 8am to pick

me'. (Fidel's standard optimistic reply). 'Are you sure? No one ever really turns up before 10:30 am.' (The standard follow up

question). 'No they will definitely be there! Come by 8 am!' In fact we were both wrong - the participants didn't turn up until nearer 12pm!

'This road has no problem'

View from the road on the way to Kikyo Baptist



Together with BMS volunteers Tim and Ali Crofton and Andy Gillot we picked up Pastor Fidel and Pastor Muthahanzwa of Kikyo Baptist Church halfway along the mountain dirt track adding to the fun of our favourite off road game – how many people can you fit into a RAV4?

We like Pastor Muthahanzwa – he is humble, Godly and a real visionary – he is however a rotten judge when it comes to roads. 'Yes this road has no problems' he kept saying as the car teetered on the edge of a 40-foot drop where the exposed volcanic boulders jutted out ready to disembowel the car. Eventually the road became so bad that everyone had to be offloaded and make their way on foot whilst Graeme continued to crawl up the escarpment wall now with better clearance.

Unfortunately due to the slippery gravel on the road, Tim fell and dislocated his shoulder. Time to revert to plan B. Jenny and Andrew and the two pastors would carry on walking up to the village for the last hour to get the training underway whilst Graeme would try and rush Tim and

Alison to a mission hospital an hour and a half away.

Teaching and Learning



View from the window at Kikyo Baptist

The trekkers reached the village after a long sweaty walk. Some thirty village leaders and pastors arrived at Kikyo Baptist church to participate in a legal education seminar on children's rights and how to write a will. Meanwhile, Graeme passed the hours away at the mission hospital reading wall posters on all the horrible ways he could die from cholera, dysentery and hepatitis – apparently mother was right, washing your hands after visiting the toilet is good advice. Following a prayer by the anaesthetist (not sure if that is reassuring or worrying), Tim underwent a general anaesthetic in the operating room and had his hanging shoulder shoved back into the right spot and was returned to Kasese to recuperate. Graeme drove back up the mountain (snapping a front suspension bolt in the process) arriving just as the legal seminar was finishing at 6pm.

'...and so to sleep...'

Preparing a place to sleep in the village starts early before the light fades. We would be sharing the floor of the church

Our shower room next to our sleeping quarters



office along with the other pastors. Once mosquito nets were rigged up and roll mats spread, a jerry can of water (carried by a very kind women from a stream an hour's walk down the valley) provided for a quick wash behind a sackcloth screen affording splendid views to all the children on the hill above who had gathered for a Bathsheba experience. This was followed by the peace of sitting on a hillside watching the sun going down and chatting to pastors until dinner arrived at 10pm and being selfless enough to give one's blood so that the mosquitoes might not go hungry.

The next morning...

Waking in Kikyo village is a bizarre experience. At 6am, a church member stood at the top of a hill and blowing into an old trombone performed a very bad rendition of 'All to Jesus I surrender' (to which most people in the village were probably muttering 'we wish that included your trombone').

Pumpkins at the Sunday service

After breakfast the service preparations began. A tarpaulin was raised between the church walls where there was no roof; the sound system was tuned to a setting that probably reads '*AS LOUD AND DISTORTED AS POSSIBLE*'; vegetables were brought in for the church auction and the trombonist even managed to spring a few chords of what we think might have been 'The old rugged cross'.

10:00am and the service is under way with worship and choirs. 12:00noon Graeme gets up to preach by which time it is clear that half the people's minds are on lunch. 1 pm the church auction begins to raise money to build the church roof – we settle for a few pumpkins.

Object lesson with a pumpkin: 'Remember kids if you stay out late your fate may be like that of Cinderella'



2:30pm lunch is served. 3pm we are on the road heading back to Kasese exhausted but also encouraged by what God is doing in Kikyo.

The Body of Christ



Sunday service at Kikyo

Which is really the point of this whole letter. Dislocated shoulders and bad trombonists aside, there can be fewer uplifting experiences than to share fellowship with and be taught by people who truly love and worship the Lord despite the hardships they live in. In Kikyo village many children will die before the age of 1 and many will suffer neglect due to poverty, there is no piped water or electricity and banana blight is affecting the staple crop but individuals seem to have a passion and a love for the Lord in a way that we rarely see in more affluent societies.

What is even more encouraging is to see the way this community looks after its poorest both spiritually and physically and are working to raise a church building themselves despite lacking the means to do so properly.



Preparing bricks in a kiln at Kikyo Baptist

One member donated the land for the new church, everyone helped to make the mud bricks, and a Christian

carpenter gave his time free to put up the rafters. Now they will begin the process of trying to raise the £300 it will take to get the iron sheeting to cover the roof so that they don't get wet when they meet to praise God. Yes, there are lots of hardships in Kikyo and it is an incredibly isolated place – but if you want to come away feeling inspired at how God is using his people to make a difference, next time you may wish to visit Kikyo rather than Prague for your weekend break.

Please pray:

- For the 30 village churches in Kasese Association which are working to share God's love both spiritually and practically with community members.
- For Pastor Muthahanzwa and the believers at Kikyo Baptist as they continue to reach out to their community.
- For the continuing legal education programme amongst rural community leaders and pastors - that it would empower them to stand up against injustice.



Pastor Muthahanzwa standing outside the almost completed building at Kikyo Baptist.