

## MissionTrip to Uganda

A Team of 8 fortunate individuals embraced a life time opportunity to participate in an intense 2 ½ week relational mission trip to Uganda, Africa from March 13 – March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009. We were a diverse group with ages ranging from 16 to 45 and from 3 different churches within southern Ontario; Anglican Church of the Ascension in Port Perry, Orangeville Baptist Church and Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterdown. Our mission included visiting schools, churches and medical clinics sponsored by IN (International Needs) Network. We were given opportunities to engage with the children through teaching Religious Studies, Music, Canadian Geography and Arts & Crafts in the classrooms. We were also able to connect with the communities through preaching and teaching at local churches, delivering food parcels to those in need in the slums of Kampala, visiting the family's of the children sponsored by our parishioners in Canada and assisting at an orphanage for abandoned children in Kampala built to accommodate 50 babies ages 0 – 4.

Our incredible experiences were calculated through the many paradoxes we encountered while viewing their society through our 'westernized' eyes. We experienced a profoundly poverty stricken country littered with garbage, an inconceivable unemployment rate, and an unthinkable concentration of disease; yet there is an unbelievable atmosphere of hope, faith and community spirit within their culture. Of one particular encounter, demonstrating one of God's commandments to 'love thy neighbour', conveyed a whole new meaning when Simon Bell (our team leader) met an elderly woman named Florence. Florence was caring for a nineteen year old boy, Reginald, who was left in a catatonic state after been severely beaten by a gang nine years prior. Reginald was subsequently abandoned by his family who did not have the means to care for him in such circumstances. Florence, a modern day 'Mother Theresa' took Reginald into her own home and has cared for him since. They are of no blood relation and she too lives in poverty beyond our comprehension. This was one of many examples we encountered in the various mission projects we participated that challenged our thoughts, values and faith.

Now back on Canadian soil, the most difficult phase of the mission is figuring out how we fit back into Canadian culture. We have been awarded a tremendous gift where God had planted this calling of mission on our hearts and we now owe it to God, ourselves, the people of Uganda and our fellow Canadians to exercise this new found knowledge for the greater worth of God's kingdom. It would be a social injustice to fall back into life as we knew it before we ventured into this life changing experience. The poverty and needs are extensive and so we are challenged to focus our efforts and energy on just one area in order to help make a difference. We continue to pray for all those we met personally that were suffering, dying, not knowing where their next meal is coming from, abandoned, and especially for those willing to help – The Mother Theresa's, Justice Miwanda (the director of IN Network) and others that continue to hold on to hope and faith.

Thank you to all those who supported this mission.  
Melanie Hewitt – Ascension Port Perry