

CHALK AND CHEESE

June 2009

I realise this phrase may be quite British! As I have often described my life here as a rollercoaster at times, I thought it high time to change. Though the reality is that my life can seem such a mixture of highs and lows and such opposites and extremes.



I hope you can see a glimpse of my new home, I have been able to get furniture made and it really feels like home, I have christened my area 'Sunset Boulevard' as we are blessed to have a wonderful sunset over the hills – I love to sit out on my verandah and watch it descend in an array of colours, I never tire of that sight.

As I like to start on a bright note, let me say that I am healthy and well, feeling more settled into life and work here. I have just had a busy but good couple of months with Scottish visitors, first we had John, Buchan, Torquil and Val, then my friend Sandra from Lewis arrived to teach art and crafts to our kids and clients in the slum areas, she helped them learn new skills like recycling paper, etc.

Though to explain my 'chalk and cheese' title it has been both good and yet so difficult too at times. As I settle into my new home and share in hospitality with friends and colleagues, and the kids as they visit with me here, I work with children who have no home or shelter and the unfairness of that is an ongoing sadness. I enjoy having visitors and I endeavour to cook something reasonable (cooking is not a gift of mine), and yet I work with children who scavenge in dustbins to find anything to survive.



Work has been challenging as the health workload is on me again as Tim the other nurse resigned/dismissed in Dec. I have always tried to have a team in our health work and it seems that it may work for a while but then we seem to return to square one again and again.

We have had a number of sad deaths in our ministry recently too, the last newsletter had a photo of myself with Mama Birungi and her son Sam, he was sick at that time but seemed to be getting better but sadly passed away a few weeks ago. Also a

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lady called Martina passed away in Jan, leaving 6 orphans, 4 in our care – she was a bright, calm lady with a quiet dignity, longed for her children to have a chance in life, she struggled with her health for many years, latterly she was tired of her ill health and longed to go to heaven.

I have not spoken much on individual cases of child abuse here but I would like to share a difficult story about a wee 3 year old boy

called Mukisa George. Child sacrifice is rife in some places in Africa as people still hold strongly to some aspects of witchcraft, if a witchdoctor tells you to do something, even the most cruel or bizarre, many will endeavour to achieve it, for promises of wealth, etc. In Uganda hundreds of children have gone missing to what is thought to be child sacrificing, some dismembered bodies are found, some are never found. Mukisa George was taken from his home to such a witchdoctor and they cut away his genitalia and planned to kill him but he was rescued. However he has been left so damaged, physically and emotionally and we are trying to assist him and his family receive good surgical care at a hospital here.

Another sad case, but we hope with a good future as we hope for George, is about a 16 year old boy called Charles. Again it is a very private and difficult issue but Charles was born as a hermaphrodite, which means he has both male and female parts. In developed countries this would have been identified in a baby and the family given the required counselling and surgical assistance, However Charles has had a difficult life, raised as a boy, feels like he is a boy, but has both gender organs. We have just recently been in contact with him and surgery is planned for 6th April.

The rest of the 'regular' work continues, based from my clinic in the Rehabilitation Home, caring for our resident kids, working in the slum areas with about 60 women in our Family Empowerment Programme, doing mobile clinics in the remand centre and lots more!

Change of pace to say thank you for prayers for my family, we do miss each other as many miles separate us but we are thankful that we can talk on the phone. My nieces, who are off course superstars, are growing up so fast and I miss time with them, seeing their school performances or a new trick on their bikes, or how fast they can swim now! My sister has a busy and full life as a single



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Mum to the girls and also as a community midwife (madwife) in Skye. Mum has found the winter long and difficult at times, physically in the cold and ice and also we all still miss Dad so much. My brother William is living and working in Australia.

I have not been able to continue with my language studies since Dec which is unfortunate and if things miraculously become less busy I will resume. I speak Luganda most days, and my language teacher said I was at 'advanced' level which was both a surprise and delight, however I would like to get better and feel freer in the language, especially in counselling the kids.

I know I often end with thanks but please don't ever think I mean it lightly, I literally could not be here, nor be part of this amazing ministry with street children without the support, encouragements and financial gifts of so many of you. Some give individually, others from groups or churches. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Allow me to mention particular folk like Torquil and all those in 'Heart for Uganda', Christina and all the Lochs ladies, John, Susan, Jan, Ken, Buchan and all those at Hillington park and the ARK, Alex Macdonald and sons, all at Smithton Culloden church, and all my friends and supporters.



GOD BLESS YOU RICHLY

LOVE FROM AFRICA

MARSALI