



share.

Share the Blessings, Inc.

Advent 2008

Photo by Thera Freeman

Advent greetings to you and your loved ones! In just a few short days, we will gather with family and friends and once again welcome the Savior into our lives. As we do, we are reminded that the One who comes does so to reveal our identity as children of God, redefining the way we understand family and teaching us of our oneness in him. This sense of connectedness is what drives our work at Share the Blessings.

Since the first pilgrimage to Uganda in 2002 and a trip to Bolivia in 2004, the relationships we established in those places have continued to grow. We have come to regard the students, teachers, pastors, and others we have met as family, and we recognize that we need them and their communities as much as they need us. We have learned that we share a common journey, the same need of God's guidance and grace, and the same

hopes for a future without suffering, poverty, and violence.

While our goal is to provide education and clean water, what we truly hope to offer is our love and kinship. Our family members in Uganda and Bolivia have in turn shared friendship, hospitality, prayers, and lessons that we could not have learned from anyone else.

Within these pages, you will find glimpses of our work, of our relationships, and of our six-year journey of pain and hope with communities in Uganda and Bolivia. We invite you to join us in sharing God's gifts with God's family by praying with us and helping to provide clean water and education.

Because of our connectedness, the current

period of economic hardship presents a challenge not only to us, but to the students we have sponsored. It is our hope that we are able to keep all 52 students in school during 2009 and even add to their numbers. We are grateful for all who have been able to partner with us, both financially and in prayer, and we wish each of you a blessed end to Advent and a joyous Christmas season.



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Photo by Carol Shay Lenox

A Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope to Uganda

July 10-24, 2008

On Thursday, July 10th, fourteen residents of North Carolina's Triangle Area boarded a plane bound for Entebbe, Uganda. While they were not exactly sure what to expect, one thing was certain: they were going to Uganda as pilgrims. They would not be going as tourists, because their objective in traveling was not to be amused or entertained. They were also not going as missionaries in the traditional sense of the term, because their aim was not to *do* anything. Instead, they were going simply to *be present*. They went as learners, not as teachers; as receivers, not as givers; as listeners, not as talkers. They opened themselves to the stories of their Ugandan neighbors—stories of suffering, struggle, hope, and joy—and tried to be attentive to the presence of God in their midst.

Through these personal encounters, the pilgrims began to *feel* the pain of Uganda and its people, and they experienced first hand the unique gifts Uganda is able to offer to the world. The song "Tuli Kimu Mu Kristu"—"We are One in Christ"—became palpable as pilgrims established deep connections with their Ugandan brothers and sisters. Below are some of their reflections.

Monday, July 14th

The day included a trip to the Source of the Nile; along the way we saw tea and sugar cane plantations. At the Source of the Nile, Father Emmanuel spoke at length on the history of Africa. We continued on with a stop at Bujagali Falls on the River Nile and proceeded to Jinja for lunch at the Hotel Triangle on Lake Victoria. After lunch, we stopped briefly at Kanjulumira Falls on our way to St. Maria Goretti Skills and Training Center for Girls.

Today I discovered where tea and coffee grow and that sugar cane does not grow in little bags. Today

I learned that Europe "discovered" Africa at the Source of the Nile in 1863. I discovered Lake Victoria and beautiful falls, and I discovered compassion at St. Maria Goretti Skills and Training Center for Girls. I discovered the poverty that exists along rural roads. I discovered the wonderful warmth and welcome of Sister Mathias and her students. I discovered that Africa does not need my discovery, but Africa has so many gifts to offer me. I walked on Holy Ground today where God is truly present.

- Fr. Tom Norris



Pilgrims listen as Angelina Atyam shares stories of violence and forgiveness.

Wednesday, July 16th

"I am just an ordinary woman from Uganda."

This was how Angelina began her story, but it was already so obvious that she was far beyond ordinary. I've never met anyone quite like her, and I feel blessed to have had the experience. The depth of her forgiveness—she called it being a "practical Christian"—made me feel shame for the many petty hurts I have held onto over the years. Angelina runs the Concerned Parents Association (CPA), birthed after her daughter and 138 others were abducted from a Catholic boarding school by the Lord's Resistance Army. Her daughter was held captive for almost 8 years before God led her to escape. Her story is amazing, and I could in no way give it justice here.

After lunch we boarded our vehicles to head out to a regional CPA meeting. Sandra, Nate, Mike, Gary, and I climbed into a Land Rover with the CPA director, Immaculate, and one of their interns. We proceeded down the long, bumpy road (at 60 mph) to the meeting. There is so much to take in—the many people on the road, the displacement camps variously placed along the way—but nothing really prepares you for the immense poverty you confront face-to-face when you enter one of the camps. The people are so beautiful, but they look so tired. Yet, they greet us with song and dance. We kicked around a makeshift ball with some kids. We met with the CPA. We headed back. I must admit that I felt utterly helpless in that place. I had to resist the urge to take photos of the kids just to try to show those at home—to help give them a glimpse—but I didn't want to make the kids feel like they were on display. So many faces, many

haunting, the occasional smile, and even a laugh when Gary completely missed kicking the ball. They are still kids, after all, and there can still be moments of joy. I hope there are many, many more moments than what I was able to see.

- Carol Lenox

Tuesday, September 2

"God said, 'Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.'"

- Exodus 3:5

This was one of the "themes" of the day while we were in Uganda. When I read the themes prior to the start of our trip, I could see the pertinence of only a few of them. This wasn't one of them. Take off our shoes? Why? Where? Yes, I can understand that we should see Uganda as "holy ground," but to me, all of God's creation is holy.

When Emmanuel offered a reflection on this Bible story a few days into our journey, I began to understand. A personal goal of mine was to be aware of the ways in which God was trying to speak to me. Remove my shoes; feel the ground on which I was walking; remove whatever was preventing me from feeling the real Uganda, including my misconceptions and what I tried to imagine my experience would be. Feel Africa. Know Africa through all of your senses. This was the challenge presented to us. This was my challenge.

I removed my shoes at Emmanuel's primary school, knowing this was the very same ground on which he had walked barefoot as a small boy. I removed them to feel the cool waters of the Nile, wading in the same river on which Moses traveled in

a basket of reeds. I removed them to climb a tree—just because I wanted to!

Most importantly, I let go of the things in my mind that would prevent me from experiencing Uganda in the ways God wanted me to. At the beginning of the trip, I was most anxious to figure out what I was "supposed" to see, hear or do, or to attach the right "meaning" to each event in my day. I realized that this attitude and eagerness to "know" was wearing me down. I realized that it was like a shoe blistering my feet. So, I shook that shoe off, and I relished the freedom of experiencing Uganda barefoot.

Our challenge was to feel Africa. Being humans, we would first come to know Africa through our five senses. I'm having trouble describing the "assault" our senses experienced on this journey. I hesitate to call it an "assault," because it sounds very hostile. Yet, our senses were so bombarded with such intense, unprecedented occurrences, that there is hardly any other way to describe it. It was an assault of surprises, an assault that would transform our thinking, and an assault that would forever change the way we see our lives.

- Mary Jo Clancy

2008 Pilgrims

Jason Byassee
Mary Jo Clancy
Michael DeLissio
Donna Fitzgerald
Fr. Emmanuel Katongole
Carol Lenox
Gary Lenox
Fr. Tom Norris

Patti Ryan
Fr. Bob Schriber
Carol Schriber
Paulette Tune
Nathan Wagner
Sandra Wagner
Rob Wiggins
Marian Zalonis

To learn more about participating in a Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope, contact pilgrims@share-the-blessings.org.

Congregation's Love Overflows

On July 15, 2008, the pilgrims traveled to Kisammula to dedicate Share the Blessings' most recently-constructed well. Funded by contributions from Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Joliet, Illinois, it is the twelfth well built by Share the Blessings since 2003 and the third well sponsored by Sacred Heart.

The pilgrims were warmly welcomed by villagers, who shared their gifts of sugar cane, mangoes and maize, and by children who had gathered with their jerry cans. The group gathered with villagers around the well for a time of sharing and prayer, giving thanks to God for the gifts of life and water.

To find out how your congregation can share the gift of clean water, contact info@share-the-blessings.org.



Education Spotlight: Greetings from Uganda!



To: The members of Share the Blessings,
Re: Greetings and appreciation from Uganda!

Dear members,

If you are alright, I am alright. It's a pleasure for me to write you this letter. Allow my sincere greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all brotherly affection. I am Boniface Senteza, a major seminarian in St. Mbaaga's Major Seminary, Ggaba, in the second year of the seminary formation. (This presupposes that there are still six years for me to reach priesthood.)

Currently, I am pursuing a Bachelor's degree in social and philosophical studies affiliated with Urbaniana University, Rome. I am happy to be in the seminary and really enjoy and love the priestly vocation. And it is on this note, that I wish to thank you for the love and the financial support that you have given me since 2004 through Father Joseph, which has enabled me to continue my seminary formation. Beloved members, I pray for you; may the Almighty bless you all.

"We are in the world, but we are not for the world" (St. Paul). I continue to pray for you, that the work you are doing in the vineyard of the Lord may bear fruits that will yield a great harvest.

I wish to extend my sincere Christmas greetings, too. I ask you to be already aware of it and to begin the new life of Christmas that will demand a lot from you—particularly the untiring love of God and neighbor, prayer, and thanksgiving—in order to wholeheartedly welcome the Messiah when the time comes. May the Holy Spirit guide and enlighten you in all your wonderful work.

Well, I better go for now. Here is a gift of my humble appreciation and my recent picture in a black cassock. I hope you will like it.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,
Senteza Boniface

Dear members of Share the Blessings,

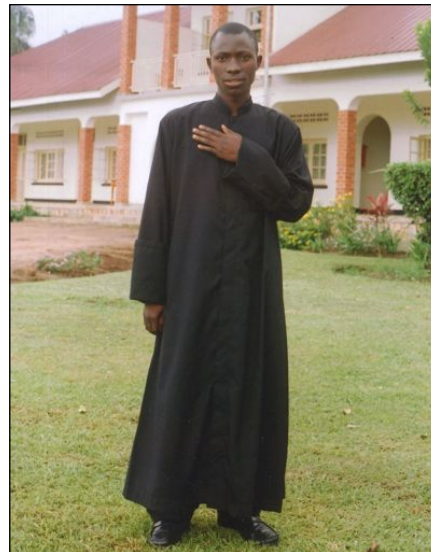
I am so glad to have this chance to send you this letter once again. Let me hope you are all fine in God's presence. I would like to greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and thank you for the financial aid, determination, and hospitality you have shown me ever since you commenced helping me as far as my education is concerned. Now I am in senior six preparing for my final exams at the secondary level.

I humbly request many prayers from you for the examination for my Uganda Advanced Certificate for Education (UACE). Likewise, I promise you constant prayers.

I wish you a happy life, a marvelous Christmas, and a prosperous New Year.

May the Creator reward you abundantly.

Your obedient student,
Sebwato Frank



In 2008, Share the Blessings supporters helped put 52 Ugandan students through school.

uganda education facts:

Average pupil to teacher ratio (primary school): **52 to 1**

Percentage of children who complete primary school (grades 1-7): **56%**

Percentage of children who transition from primary to secondary school: **37%**

Percentage of children who drop out of secondary school due to lack of fees: **62%**

Dear friends,

With great pleasure, allow me to extend my warm greetings to you. Such greetings come from your son Kabalimu James, Senior Six Arts class.

Allow me to inform you that I sat for my final exams in November, which will promote me to the University or another institution for more studies. So, I thank you for the role you have played toward my being at school. I had lost hope of reaching an advanced level, but due to your parent-like love, you have allowed me. I ask God to reward you promptly.

I am aiming to join university or any institution of studies. I am very ready to continue with my studies so that I can be employed and earn some money for bettering my future, which will enable me to invite you, the members of Share the Blessings, to eat and drink at my home.

Thanking you for the wonderful work you have done for me, I pray for you in God's name. I wish you a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Yours faithfully,
Kabalimu James

Dear members of Share the Blessings,

I am very grateful to greet you again. I greet you in our Lord's name. I hope that you are fine, and I want to tell you that I am also fine. Therefore, together with you, I want to thank the Lord who has blessed us with the gift of life.

I am so thankful for the good things that God has given you, and in the same way, I am sorry for all of the hard moments that you have encountered since we last heard from each other. I have mainly written to thank you for all the effort you have put in to keep me in school. Thank you very much. May the good Lord bless the work of your hands.

My performance in class was not the best since I was sick for the last few weeks of the term through exams. I tried, and I did it, though not as well as I would have liked. I am promising to do better this term, so I badly need your prayers, too.

My family loves you and has sent you greetings. Let me stop here by wishing you a merry Christmas.

Your foster daughter,
Nakaggwa Teopista

Dear members of Share the Blessings,

Warm and prayerful greetings to you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is yet to be born in our lives. May his birth be of a blessing to you. May God also bless the work of your hands based on the good service that you render to his people—especially those in need. I am Stephen Ssonko, 24 years old now, whom you have sponsored since 2002.

The purpose of writing this letter is to thank you, members, for the good love and financial support that you have given me through Father Joseph Kakooza Nyanzi. I am glad to let you know that I have received the money, and I am in school. Last year, I sat for my Ugandan Advanced Certificate of Education and passed well. Now, I was admitted to Katigondo National Major Seminary to pursue a Bachelor's degree in social and philosophical studies, as well as to pursue my goal of the priesthood.

Praise be to God for creating people like you who are ready to render services to those in need without expecting any return. My return to you is that I promise to pray for you always and also to study hard. I also kindly ask you to pray for me, so that I can make it to the priesthood. May God work with you, through you, and in you. Above all, may he keep you alive and may the work of your hands and good plans be blessed. Amen.

Yours in Christ,
Sem. Stephen Ssonko



Percentage of children who complete secondary school: **15%**

Cost of tuition at a Catholic primary school: **\$180 per year**

Cost of tuition and board at a Catholic primary school: **\$300 per year**

Cost of tuition at a Catholic secondary school: **\$240 per year**

Cost of tuition and board at a Catholic secondary school: **\$450 per year**

meet some STB leaders...



Donna Fitzgerald, President & Chair of the Board

After visiting Uganda for the first time, I found a great need to help those who are not afforded two of the things we most take for granted—clean water and education. Having traveled to Uganda six times now, I have made many friends and have become part of a Ugandan family.

I have visited all 13 of the water projects funded by generous donations to Share the Blessings, and I have seen the joy on the faces of the villagers as they pump

clean water for the first time. I have also seen the promise of the children who are able to attend school because of our donors, and I have witnessed their hope for a better future.



Ed Collupy, Secretary & Treasurer

Visiting Uganda twice in the last 5 years has been nothing short of the experience of a lifetime. How could I not be involved in an organization like Share the Blessings after seeing the joy of people when I had the chance to shake their hands, hug them, listen to them, tell them about my life and my family, share a meal with them, and walk with them to the muddy hole to bring water back home?

For me, Share the Blessings is not just about building wells and sending kids to school who otherwise would not have the opportunity; it is about extending greetings and support and being a friend.



**Lauren Green, Chair of Water Committee
Kevin Green, President Elect & Webmaster**

I am involved in Share the Blessings because I realize that God has been extremely generous to me, and I believe that God intends for us to share the gifts he has given to each of us. This ministry has provided an opportunity to join with people locally, nationally, and globally in sharing what we have with each other. It is not just a transfer of material gifts.

What has meant the most to me is hearing and seeing how our gifts have transformed the lives of people so far away. Our brothers and sisters around the globe need to know that we care about them as God's children regardless of our differences or the relationships that exist between our governments.

- Lauren Green

The first time I traveled to Uganda, I experienced an emotional roller coaster as I saw the country's great beauty as well as its great need. The key experience on that first trip was going down to "the watering hole." It was a nice walk downhill to get the water, but seeing what was called the "watering hole" was shocking. It consisted of muddy rain run-off, and I remember thinking that while I would not let my dog swim in that water, it was a typical water source for many villages in Uganda. After filling a jerry can with water, we had to turn around and carry it back uphill!

When I returned to Uganda four years later and saw one of the wells that Share the Blessings supporters made possible, it reminded me of that first important experience. These wells provide clean water—one of the most basic human needs—and don't need to be placed at the bottom of hills, because the water is pumped. With more centrally located wells, the villagers don't have to walk as far with full jerry cans. It is hard to explain, but the experience of being there and carrying that water can with the villagers provided the initial drive to make a difference.

- Kevin Green



Rick Young

My wife, Martina, and I are good friends with many of the folks who made the first pilgrimage to Uganda with Father Emmanuel. When the first group of pilgrims returned, excited about helping to address some of the significant needs they experienced, we decided to join their efforts. We both had experienced life in majority world countries and could easily identify with their passion. The most rewarding part of being involved with Share the Blessings is knowing that we are making a difference in people's lives in a real, concrete way by helping to provide clean water sources and educational opportunities where they might not otherwise exist.



Carol Shay Lenox, Chair of Education Committee

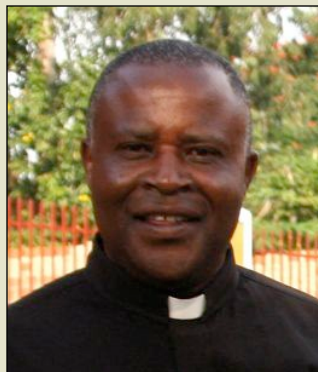
I became involved with STB after my pilgrimage to Uganda with Fr. Emmanuel this past summer. I have always had a heart to work with children's education initiatives, and I was deeply touched by the Ugandans I met—especially Fr. Joseph and Sister Mathias—who were making great sacrifices to provide educational opportunities for young people. Helping to support STB's work is one of the best ways I have found to share the blessings I've received.



Marilyn DeLissio

A few years ago, I viewed a documentary entitled “The Heart of Darkness,” which focused on the lives of those living in the Democratic Republic of Congo. For days afterward, I was plagued by an enormous sense of helplessness and desperation, since any aid meant to be delivered to those living in poverty rarely reached them. My dear friend, Sister Ann McCarthy, and I knew only that we could help through our prayers. Shortly after

this I became acquainted with Father Emmanuel. Emmanuel never mentioned the plight of the people in his Ugandan village, but through time and friendship, I learned that the people of his village had to walk three miles to obtain water that we would not see fit to water our lawns with, let alone have our children drink. Once I learned of the predicament of his family and neighbors, I was certain that a miracle sent him to me. Here was the way to send aid to those in need and be certain it would reach the intended people. I have often said to Father Emmanuel that we need his village and his people more than they need us. I thank God for placing him in my life and for giving us this opportunity to make a difference.



Fr. Emmanuel Katongole

As I was driving home after STB opened its first well in Malube—the village where I grew up—I was struck by the sight of people lined up with jerry cans to get water. I thought, “This is just one well in this poor part of Africa with so much need for water.” It occurred to me that one well may seem insignificant in the midst of such overwhelming need. But, I kept thinking about the waters of baptism,

which in themselves seem so small and insignificant but are actually what make us children of God. The significance of baptism does not lie in its “size” or in the quantity of water; the significance is in the sign. This one well was not going to solve all the problems of Malube, but it was a sign of something bigger—a connection between Malube and those living in the U.S., evidence of our oneness as children of God.

how to share...

pray with us.

Please join us in praying for:

the health and safety of Ugandan students at home on their year-end vacation; students awaiting the results of their UACE and PLE exams; students applying to University; Father Joseph Kakooza, parish priest at St. Joseph Parish, Katikamu, and in-country supervisor of STB’s education efforts; and Kisammula, Malube, Bugwanya, Nalubogo, Kakooze, Kyagalanyi, and Ntangaala—the communities where we have built wells.

Dear God,
We the students of St. Francis kneel down before you to pray for the success of the work of Share the Blessings in Uganda. First of all, we thank you for the wonderful people of STB, for their continued support towards our education, and the provision of permanent sources of clean water for our people in the villages. Knowing that education and water are some of the best gifts one can get—for education is the key to any type of development and water is life—we indeed do appreciate your love for us which comes to us through the members of STB. Thank you for our education and for clean water. We promise to do our best in school and always to love you. Since there are still very many needy children who cannot go to school because they lack school fees, and since there are many people who walk very long distances in search of clean water, we humbly ask you to bless and protect the great work of STB. Let many people of good will join STB, and constantly bless all its members abundantly. Amen.

By Ssentogo Philip, Senior 4. Recited every morning after mass by the students supported by S.T.B.

partner with us.

☐ I would like to share the gift of education.

I'll Help	Student Status	One Term	One Year
	Primary, day student	\$60	\$180
	Secondary, day student	\$80	\$240
	Primary, boarder	\$100	\$300
	Secondary, boarder	\$150	\$450
	Seminarian	\$160	\$480

☐ I would like to share the gift of clean water.

☐ I would like help with other projects (classrooms, computers, Center for Adult Education in Bolivia).

Amount _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Please make checks payable to *Share the Blessings*, or donate online using PayPal at www.share-the-blessings.org.

Share the Blessings, Inc.
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Cary, NC 27511

clean water & education for our family...

tuli kimu mu kristu.



we are one in christ.

