

Message #7. Uganda USFW Conference-11-15 December, 2024

On Tuesday, the 10th of December, I washed clothes, repacked and rested. 'Then in the afternoon, I found a group of women entering Agneta's house, escorting young neighbor, Aggie, who had just graduated from Nurses Training. She was the top student at Mugumu Nursing school in Perioperative Theatre Technology. . When family and friends are excited, they festoon a graduate with a shiny lei. She was given a gift from the school for being their top student. Her father is disabled, and it was a success to help a bright girl from a poor family to achieve such a status. She was one of the girls, from needy families whom I had assisted in school fees.



Aggie, the joyful new nurse

Uganda women eagerly sewing

The next morning, Agneta and I took off on pikis to Kabrengu, and then via matatus to Lwakhakha, Uganda where three women from Nairobi joined us. We were then escorted by Alfred Wasike and Centrine to Royal Friends HS, to the conference venue.

We were warmly welcomed by all in Uganda. It was a joy to help at a conference where there wasn't so much confusion and conflict as in the Tanzanian conference. The first full day of the conference, Agneta gave a talk on money. Sylvia Wopicho, was the main speaker on the theme of "No retreat, no surrender", from the Book of Ruth in the Bible. She suggested that instead of calling the mothers of our husbands inlaws, they should be called "inloves", (treated with respect and love).



Sylvia preaching



Centrine Nafula and Alfred Wasike



Ruth who played Ruth in the drama

Jack Bell, a British man and Mary, his Ugandan wife entered the building- They are building a large house across the street from the school. Mary began translating for all the speakers, and stayed the whole conference. They even invited all of us from Kenya plus two of the Uganda women leaders to eat supper at their new house that night. It was a treat to get freshly made pineapple and mango juice.

In the afternoon, with the help of Mary, I divided the women into small groups and taught them how to use cloth scraps to sew by hand simple purses. I had extra material, so awarded the top twelve with bigger pieces to make a bag to carry their hymnbook, bible, and notebooks to worship services. Some were very skilled, while others were eagerly learning how to sew.

The second day, a Ugandan woman taught about Gender based violence, a very common cause of problems for Ugandan women. One male elder came in and tried to prevent the women from speaking. I used my position as presiding clerk of the USFW International Northeast Region to share that USFW is the one gathering where women can talk woman to woman about women's issues, some of which are taboo for men to talk about. In the afternoon, the Nairobi women handed out white headscarves to all the leaders. Then, Agneta taught the women how to make a cake using an oven created from two sufurias and over an open fire. We tasted it after supper, while it was fresh and warm.

Each evening, the keyboard was used to play music and neighborhood children danced with joy until midnight each day (a good alternative to the drinking of homemade alcohol).

On Saturday, all the Kenyans acted out the story of Ruth and the other two widows. Ugandans use multiple languages (their hymn book is in only 5 languages), but in drama all could understand without translation. Agneta, Belia, and I then left the conference early (I needed a day to rest and repack ready to journey back to USA) and we travelled back to Malava -including part of the journey in a large cement truck from Lwakhakha to Kabrengu. The three from Nairobi stayed for the rest of the conference.

Today, I rested and washed clothes and sorted out what to take home, and what to leave here. I went with Agneta and her grandson, Dufraime to Shirugu Meeting, and found the typical 80 women and 20 men present, (yet all leadership is usually given to men.) On Monday, I will begin my journey back to New Hampshire, stopping for a day in Nakuru while enroute to Nairobi, in order to visit Pamela Ngoya, who is fighting breast cancer.



The headscarves received by leaders

Belia Wasula, Phoebe Apheti, Emily Sisei, Ruth Inyanyi, Agneta Injairu

Thanks so much for all your support. In gratitude,
Marian