

DOWN to EARTH

Emmanuel International UK News
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Tom Edom is back in the UK!



Tom Edom returned from Pader, Northern Uganda in December 2017. We asked him to tell us about the projects that he is leaving behind.

Here I am, back from Uganda after very nearly 6 years. How the time flies! I arrived in Uganda on the same flight as Canadians Mike and Marianne Botting. We first talked to one another in the visa queue in Entebbe and deepened the acquaintance by sharing a room that night, due to a miss-booking. Alan and Cheryl Parrett were country directors at that time and they patiently oriented us to Ugandan life in Kampala before moving us 450 km North to Pader after nearly a month. We found ourselves to be the only long term 'Mzungus' (white people) in Pader and that made us quite dependent on one another for social and spiritual support. As time went by, more and more NGOs moved away from Pader, reducing the number of occasional visitors that came through. Visits from friends, family or EI representatives were highly valued! So please pray for Mike, Marianne and little Elias as they carry on alone. And pray

for others to join them in this challenging and rewarding ministry.

I was sent to Uganda to support Mike and Marianne in the CHE ministry but it turned out they really did not need much support. Whilst they were doing well learning Acholi, the local language, I was struggling to retain the basics in my head.

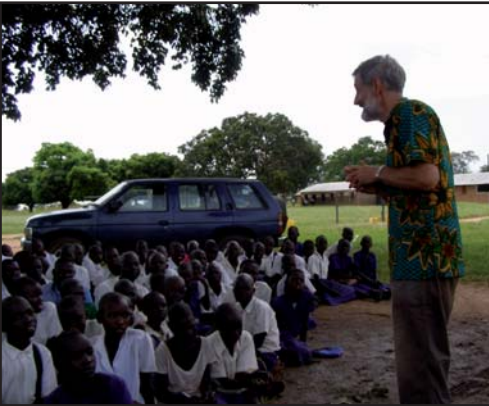
It was about that time that I met Samuel, a young Deaf man, who offered to teach me Uganda Sign Language and I found that far easier to pick up than Acholi. Soon after, I also met his friend Hope (they are married now, with a child) and between them they patiently answered all my sign language questions and brought



Tom with Mike and Marianne Botting and their son Elias



Interpreting a hymn in Ugandan Sign Language at church, with the help of Patrick Ociti.



Tom in 2015, telling a group of girls how special they are in God's eyes



Tom and Milly, with some of the supplies for the pads project

me to a level of competence. I found I was able to converse with the deaf by waving my hands about and watching them wave theirs! They were delighted to have someone else to communicate with. The circle of people who they can express themselves to is so very small.

However, it is a real regret that I was not able to get beyond the basics of the Acholi language, even after 6 years; I guess I just don't have the right sort of brain, coupled with old age! In principle it is an easy language, with short words (rather Anglo-Saxon like) and simple grammar.

Back in 2012, national members of staff Milly and Doris were keen for me to restart a sanitary pads ministry for girls that had been piloted by Cherry-Anne and Anita Bertrand a few years previously. I hesitated (being but a man) and had to be asked several times before I went on a cloth buying expedition while in Kampala in early 2013. I had been pointed to the right part of town by Cheryl but easily found the one supplier Keera, who dealt in the materials needed and was able to advise which to use. It was a remarkable gift from God to find exactly the right person in the teeming streets of Kampala's market district.

Having got the new and different cloth combination, we developed a design and started rolling it out to schools, the girls doing the sewing. From the start we issued knickers. It quickly became apparent that the vast majority of girls were ill equipped to manage their periods at school. No sanitary towels and most with no knickers. But also, that most could not sew either. So we started getting them made by a tailor so that a girl's prospects would not be dictated by her skill in sewing. Four years later,

we were producing pads at the rate of 24,000 per year and have reached nearly half of the schools in Pader and Agago districts, many of them twice.

The “We” in this case was Milly, whose extraordinary energy, management and teaching abilities, coupled with a fierce desire to help Acholi girls, made the project really happen. All I did was offered administrative support and managed the money. Funding was and still is essential. With each girl costing about £2.20 it is great value but there are thousands of girls needing this basic support, with their younger sisters following on. So, a big thank you is due to all who have supported the ministry and for EI who have gotten behind a project that can be a conversation stopper! And you will remember Sue and Ineke’s epic 24 hour walk last summer; Sue was raising money for Pads.

Mike and Marianne are now assisting Milly in the ministry, so please continue with your support. Andy Sharpe in the UK office has been working hard to secure Pads funding from trust funds, so please pray that those applications bear fruit.

In January 2017, funded by a couple from Chichester Baptist Church (CBC), I took three nationals, one of them Deaf, on a ‘Farming God’s Way’ course, that was being run in Gulu, only a few hours away. Some prefer to call this ‘Conservation Agriculture’ and it is being practised by Tim and Rachel Monger in Mwanza, Tanzania, as well as by a CBC based mission called Feeding Futures, working in Kenyan Schools. Quite a lot of my energy in the first half of 2017 was taken up with implementing these methods in and around our compound in Pader. The method has big benefits to offer but its



The girls are supplied with knickers and reusable pads



Preparing the plot near Tom's house to demonstrate Conservation Agriculture



First crop of maize in Patel's garden

major downside is that it requires almost every aspect of cultivation to be done in a way that is different to how people have been brought up. In Uganda almost everyone is a farmer and, to them, the whole package of Conservation Agriculture looks very strange. The fact that I am not blessed with green fingers probably did not show Conservation Agriculture at its best.

Better low tech agriculture is badly needed (in Africa in general) for several reasons: poor average yields, sensitivity to climate irregularities, soil infertility, soil erosion and so on. These are all dramatically improved when Conservation Agriculture is well implemented but helping people to change their shared practices and stand out from the crowd is tough. There is a real opening for someone with the right skills to lead this work in Pader, with the region subject to climate irregularities that normally mean low yields in one or both growing seasons. In case you were

wondering, none of the three that I took on the course have adopted the method, though one has adopted some aspects.

When I first went to Uganda in January 2012, I left behind four adult children; now six grandchildren have been added to my family. With the internet allowing video calls, it is much easier to keep in regular contact with family than it was for previous missionaries. However, I felt that it was time I came back and contributed to their upbringing in person rather than as a moving image on a screen.

It is not quite clear what life holds in the immediate future. I am back in my house but it is my daughter's home and so I am living 'up close and personal' with two of the grandchildren, which is challenging for all concerned! We are working to organise it so that part of the house is separated as a holiday let. Then I have another building in mind to work on to make my home.

Ministries may emerge in my church; I am waiting to see how the Lord leads.

Please pray for Tom as he settles into life back in the UK.

We are looking forward to hearing Tom speak at the EIUK Annual Conference and AGM 2018 on Saturday 27 January. Fred and Carla Silva and Tarcisio and Jurema Porto, our missionaries from Brazil, will be joining us too.



Tom is thanking God for the safe delivery of his 6th grandchild: Jonah Barnabas Bailey was born on 7 January 2018, weighing in at 10 lb 6oz.

Dates for your diary

EIUK Conference and AGM:

Saturday 27 January 2018 at St John's Church, Southbourne.

Board Meeting: 27 April 2018 in Oxford.