

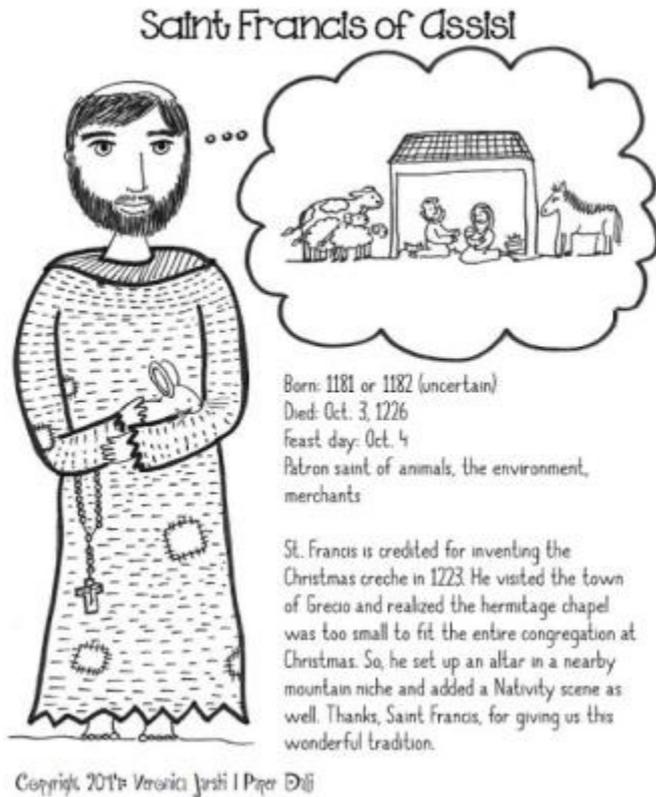


St. Francis Family Helper Programme

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December 2016

Dear



remember anything else. We say that the Birth of Christ brings Peace yet we have war and suffering on a global scale of such dimensions we wonder if we shall ever live to see a world at peace. Where Christ is born, hope is born. Where Christ is born, peace is born. Where peace is born, there is no longer room for hatred and for war.

As long as we are breathing in, it is never too late to start a new beginning, a new life. In the words of one of our most illustrious teachers, "There is no way to Peace, Peace is the way!" (Thay)

This is a time for us in St Francis to offer our deepest gratitude to you, dear friends and donors for your great support for our mission. We would like to mention each one of you by name, but the list is too long and besides some of our donors do not like any form of publicity or naming. We appreciate your spirit of sharing and generosity which is bringing happiness into this corner of the world. May you receive many blessings in return.

Greetings once again from St. Francis Family Helper Programme. Another year is coming to an end. Thank you for accepting our past, supporting our present and encouraging our future. As we write this letter our attention goes to what Christmas means all over the world! For some it is a national holiday, nothing more, nothing less. For others it is a time for wrapping gifts and sharing with family and friends. Our friends and donors are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jehovah Witnesses, and some of these do not like to hear "happy Christmas?". Please do not take offense as we write to you from Uganda, where Christmas is mostly celebrated as a Christian feast where we remember the birth of Jesus Christ. 2000 years ago in the "Holy Land". This gives us plenty of scope to ask questions. This land which some call Holy has been a place of war and destruction for so many years, few of its residents can



In this picture, Primah who is drumming, which in African culture is a sign of joy and celebration, is the mother of one of our sponsored

children; She and we hope that you are hearing this sound from Uganda, in your heart, and that you will know we are sending waves of love, joy and gratitude in your direction.

From the Desk of Christine (Executive Administrator)

Many things have happened in our various departments.



Since February of this year, we have a new Board of Trustees, and we have an updated Constitution. Owing to our financial constraints, this new Board has gifted us with their time as volunteers. We are so grateful. We also thank the exiting Board which served us for many years willingly and generously and who

were always ready to help us solve problems. Unfortunately, we now lose a member of our new Board, as Brother Tim, has been transferred to Nairobi. Tim, we miss you and shall continue to miss your helpful presence in St. Francis.



Back L to R David, Fr. Richard, Robert, Fr. John M.Afr, Brother Tim ofm, Felly, Sr. Pat Pearson Provincial DMJ, Valeriano.
Front. Sr. Christine, (executive administrator), Bruno (chairperson) Prudence, Mary

Brother Timothy Lamb OFM (Order of Franciscans)

I hereby resign my post as a board member of St. Francis Family Helper Programme affective July 14th 2016. I also by this letter, regretfully acknowledge my inability to provide instruction in the St. Francis Counsellor Training Institute in the future. As you know, I have been transferred to Kenya to serve as both Master of Students and Secretary of Formation. These will be very demanding positions which may not allow me to travel to Uganda frequently. These

jobs do however necessitate travel and when in the area I will certainly stop by and visit.

I have enjoyed my association, however brief with SFFHP. I have been challenged to grow both in knowledge and grace. My work at St. Francis has been memorable. Thank you for your support, kindness and gift of laughter. May God bless you and the work that is done here. Yours in the peace of Christ Timothy M. Lamb, OFM

Travelling in Europe

Christine and Mary

2016 has been a very special year for me, Christine, as I had the wonderful opportunity of visiting our donor organisations in Germany and Ireland. Everywhere Mary and I were given a really warm welcome. I was impressed with the hospitality, the kindness and the openness of the different people we met. I also loved the beauty of the German cities and was excited to be in France for the first time.



Golden jubilee of Fr. Ferdi

People spent time with us, accommodated us, treated us to food and drink, listened to our stories from Uganda and responded generously to our appeals for further assistance. In addition to visiting our donors we were also able to attend the golden jubilee celebrations of Fr. Ferdi Tillmann M.Afr., in his home parish Bamenohl, to visit my sister and her family in Bonn and Mary's family in Ireland.

Our time in Europe began with a three week retreat in Plum Village in France, where I was fully immersed for the first time in my life in an intensive training in mindful living. I have been meditating for many years but being invited to walk mindfully, to eat mindfully,

to sit, stand, greet friends, climb hills, wash pots, pans and dishes mindfully was new for me. Mindfulness is becoming part of everyday life, thinking and healing in many parts of the world. In Plum Village, the focus of mindfulness is to help deal with suffering, to know where to find true peace and happiness and to learn to know the landscape of our own minds from which everything emerges.



In addition to the training, the hospitality, the joy of the communities of monks, nuns and laity, we were fortunate to be there at a time when the founders of the Wake Up Schools, Initiative were

present and we could meet them and attend their meetings. The community of Plum Village was very interested in the work we are doing with Primary School Teachers in Uganda, welcomed us into the global Wake Up Schools community, have allowed us to use this calligraphy of Thich Nhat Hanh, in our schools, and even discussed the possibility of visiting us in Uganda to teach mindfulness to our teachers and students.

We had the pleasure of meeting this wonderful teacher and peace activist, although he is now suffering from a serious stroke.



2016 has been a great year for St. Francis in its efforts to grow as an organization. We are very blessed to have a Misereor consultant in Uganda who has given and continues to give us assistance. We would not be who we are today without Gerlinde's professional



assistance. Most recently she helped us to renew our organizational documents, Constitution, Personnel Manual, Financial Policies, Management Structure, and then she still came to supervise an evaluation of our Misereor funded psychosocial project. It was a tough process for many of us but we learned a lot, we believe we are better because of it and we are more than ever grateful to Misereor of Germany for having allowed Gerlinde do this important work.

Barbara Mukundane



I travelled outside Uganda for the first time in my life so the experience was really amazing. Boarding a plane for the first time, walking around "up in the sky" was like a dream and a bit unreal. Although I travelled overnight, I could not close my eyes as I wanted to see and experience everything to the full. A friend told me that when the plane starts to fly you hear your heart going as if it's also flying so I was expecting that. And indeed when the plane started flying my heart definitely started acting differently! People use the expression of having one's heart in one's mouth! I think my heart was just bouncing all over the place!

Culture Clash:

On arrival at Dublin airport, I had a very upsetting experience and I would not wish it on anybody. I forgot my invitation letter, which Mary's sister had written to me. Although Mary was my host in Ireland she could not write the invitation letter as she resides in Uganda. Not only that but the Irish Immigration officials did not believe my story. They thought I might be trying to leave my own country to go and find work, as an illegal immigrant. Take an example of one line of questioning which caused a problem. The Irish officer said to me "Will you work?" In Irish immigration language this actually means, "Are you going to get a job for money?". In my Ugandan culture it meant for me "are you going to sit around all day or if someone asks you to wash the dishes or peel the potatoes, will you help?" I answered "if I am asked"! There were another few examples which caused doubt and confusion, but thank God the immigration police spoke to Mary by phone and as our stories

matched, I was eventually allowed into the country. When I emerged from Immigration with the Police officer, I was either so excited or so numb, I actually did not recognize Mary although she was sitting waiting for me. The police officer, who had never met her, recognized her first and pointed her out to me.

Lesson for life: Do not forget your documents when you are travelling, and do not think a visa to the country of destination is all you need. Make sure you understand a bit about the culture of your hosts.

Another lesson: Thank God very seriously and sincerely for being a citizen of this beautiful country of Uganda. Thank God for a State and a status. Thank God we are not at war and trying to run away to another country. Thank God for belonging! Thank God for a wonderful home to come back to! Being a migrant, an immigrant, a refugee and stateless must be extremely painful as you do not know where you belong.

After the storm comes the calm and so it was with me. When I met Mary we stayed in Dublin for a few days and she and I walked the streets of this city. I visited the famous university of Trinity College. The campus is beautiful and the thousands of students walking around or sitting down studying, or enrolling for a new year, looked happy to be where they were.

I stayed with Brendan and Lou for a night. On my last night in Dublin, Stephen Burke took Mary and me to a lovely restaurant for dinner, and I also met Mary's sisters Anna and Eileen in Dublin.



Stephen Burke and myself with Mary at camera

From Dublin we went to Donegal where I stayed with Miceal Moran, to begin with. Thank you Miceal and Bridie for hosting me, driving me to Killybegs and the high cliffs around the north west coast of Donegal. Now I know why you were such an expert at

gardening in Uganda, having seen your beautiful garden in Ballinakillew.

Once I was with people, and especially the many friends of St. Francis who were my hosts and drivers, I experienced the Irish hospitality which is so like our Ugandan hospitality. Everywhere people welcomed me. Thank you Edel, Sinead, Anthony, Sinead's mum, Pat, Paul, Martin, Orlagh and family and finally Anna and Eileen, Mary's sisters who hosted me in Laghey and Salthill, Galway. Branwell thank you for bringing me into Galway to buy parts for my phone.

One of the most interesting experiences was attending a hound dog race! It was my first time to see that people take their time to go and watch dogs running and what made me so happy was the way the dogs were trained so that each and every dog was trying to win.

It is not easy to say what was the best part for me but I did love the Celtic jewelry centre in the Claddagh in Galway where Mary bought me a Claddagh ring, that



is worn by people all over the world as a symbol of love, loyalty and friendship. The owner of the shop, Niall Mc

Nelis, is a Galway city Cllr. and when we told him about St. Francis FHP he showed interest so we might one day welcome him to Uganda. No wonder the people in Dublin could not understand how a person coming to Ireland for the first time would have so many people to see, as they do not know the relationship between St. Francis Uganda and the friends of St. Francis in Ireland and elsewhere.

Tomomichi Kusajima:

Tomo, as we call him for short, is leaving us at the end of the year and we are really sad to see him go and to have to say goodbye to JICA, the Japanese volunteer agency, which has helped us with Japanese volunteers for the last 7 years. Tomo, thank you so much for your presence and service to the IT department in St Francis. We are going to miss you and miss your expertise in the computer room. We are grateful that Shinchi and you trained others to take over your work but of course although Mukwasiibwe and Hassan are great, they cannot have picked up all your expertise. We wish you well for your future. We will be happy to see you back in St Francis whenever you make up your mind to come back to us.

Tomo went to visit some people and places in Africa before heading back to the pace of life in Japan. Here are his words.

Rwanda

I visited three JICA volunteers in their places of work. The first was at a computer vocational school where the volunteer teaches computer programming like C++ and Java. I was surprised because students had high IT skills and high motivations. They were also studying computer on their own after school.



The second one is a rice specialist. He instructs local farmers on ways of producing more rice and preparing and using local fertilizer. The last volunteer I visited in Rwanda works at a kindergarten that was built by Japanese funds. An older Japanese woman also works there as a music teacher. She has been supporting Rwanda since the Rwandan Genocide happened and decided to visit the country and now lives there permanently.



The day I was there coincided with the solar eclipse so I joined the students as they observed this wonderful event, using some special tools sent to them by Japan. I went to the Kigali Genocide Memorial at the end of my travels. I had known about the Genocide but not all the details which I learned during that visit and yet

in spite of this event, I found the Rwandan people and children so friendly and full of smiles and laughter.

Malawi

Again I visited the work places of three Japanese volunteers. The first one works for



community development teaching both charcoal preparation and playing of a harmonica. The youth come from 10 villages to learn these skills. Malawi is a much poorer country than Uganda and they experience very severe famine there because of long droughts.

I enjoyed the traditional food Nsiima, made from ground maize and cooked in water. I also enjoyed the local fish, coming perhaps from Lake Malawi.

The second teacher was teaching science and mathematics. Classes were organized not only inside the class rooms but also outside. Children were very bright and hard working.

Some of the teachers went to Ugandan Universities so the conversation with them took a lively turn as they and I compared notes of our Ugandan experiences.

Tanzania

I climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro with my friends for six days and five nights. It is 5,895 metres high, and is the highest mountain in the African continent. For the first three days we climbed while enjoying a beautiful landscape. Then the altitude changed drastically and we could climb for only 3 hours in a day.



After the fourth day, I was sometimes able to see mountain flowers. However, the terrain consisted mainly of rocks and stones as being 4,000 meters high many plants couldn't thrive there. On the last day of our climb we woke up at 11 pm and started climbing to the summit around midnight. I was so sleepy because I had not been able to sleep well. Also I got terrible altitude sickness; with headache, nausea, and dizziness. Both the tour guides and the other climbers helped me to keep going and to reach the peak where we saw a glacier. According to the guides this glacier keeps getting smaller owing to global warming. I felt sad that generations to come might not be able to witness this beauty. I was so fatigued because it took nine hours going up to the summit from the last camp site, and three hours coming down. If I had been alone, I couldn't have achieved it. Overall, I realized the importance of teamwork which is a value emphasized in St. Francis also. Although I did not visit all the countries of Africa, those I went to were really very beautiful, with great hospitality, sunshine and laughter. Do not be afraid to come to Africa as a volunteer. It is a wonderfully rich experience.

Counsellor Training Institute

On November 17, St. Francis experienced another "First". Six students graduated with a BSc. in Counselling Psychology.



Anyone reading this might ask "why only six? Why not 26?" Possibly the main reason for this is that to date we have not had a weekend or evening programme in Counselling Psychology. We wish to start this in 2017 and already have 21 adults who wish to have this degree. They have delayed in coming to class because they are mostly primary school teachers with a very low salary and cannot find the school fees. Some



Bena above is one of our staff members and will marry in December and have her party here at St. Francis FHP

primary school teachers earn about 100 Euro per month. The highest paid with posts of responsibility just under 200 Euro. The majority of those who applied are married with children so it is easily understood why furthering their education poses such a problem. A four year study programme leading to a Bachelor's degree costs approximately 2000 Euro. One of our new graduates was so overwhelmingly happy that her husband threw a big party to honour the occasion and she was asked to go around all the guests (dancing with the degree paper in her hand) showing the achievement. This brought home the importance of education in this country, which so many take for granted in the privileged societies of the North, and which some do not value at all. Another of the great paradoxes of life.

When we were all reeling from the shock of having Donald Trump elected to the White House, we received one long commentary about some "why's" of this happening.

"Like millions of others I kept making an argument and principled stand for the higher significance of my values, and though we weren't wrong in that argument, *higher significance will never overcome more fundamental needs.....* if we want to work to foster significant multicultural values, we'll have to do a far better job of listening to and engaging with those who have not had their fundamental needs met. Nothing less will do."

There is still such a major divide between the lifestyles of those of us who have “everything” (food, clothing, shelter, medical care, clean water, security, relationship, education, employment, salary”, and those (70%) who have not enough to survive on, that a climate of intense dissatisfaction becomes apparent, such as we have seen in America and that seems to be manifesting in many countries of Europe and the world.

The south west of Uganda has been known as the “land of milk and honey” as cattle tribes and farmers own a lot of cattle, and generally speaking the land is productive. However, to our dismay the lack of rain in an area called Isingiro, just 100 kilometres away has caused drought and famine. As the vast majority of Ugandans depend on the land to feed them, if the land becomes arid, families do not have cash to buy food from other sources. This is a distressing and shocking event and the Archbishop has been making appeals to all Christians and all organisations like ours to give donations of food or money. When famine, starvation and death are so near then we cannot turn a blind eye or deaf ear.

Child Sponsorship Department



Musinguzi Jordan

We are happy to let you know that the last year has seen an improvement in the academic performance of our sponsored children. This will be good news for those who have been witnessing a rather broad level of weak performance, which we have always attributed to the severe difficulties encountered by the majority of our children both at home and at

school. Remember, we do not select children from well-functioning families as these children will be educated by their parents. We select children, most of whom do not have parents, who do not have much security in their lives and who would not manage to get an education without direct assistance. It is getting more and more difficult to keep this project going as school fees keep rising in Uganda and it is not easy to get sponsors.

During holidays we normally organize special activities with and for our sponsored children. The aim is to build a good, healthy, warm and loving relationship with them and their families, so they can trust us and in this way benefit from any emphasis we place on career guidance, good performance, and ability to discuss problems which prevent them from moving ahead in their academic life. This obviously needs



Arienne, Eirene volunteer from Germany, teaching children to bake biscuits. They ate them with total joy!

time together, a deep, honest and understanding, communication and enough quality time with the children. We always have mindfulness exercise with them in order to be present with ourselves and others, aware of the environment we are in and to focus on our bodies and minds. It also helps the students to feel comfortable and safe and to relax.

Both parents/guardians and children appreciate these holiday meetings which are facilitated by trained counsellors. In addition to the meetings we also offer counselling to the children who are referred for counselling and to the parents who request it.



Some children are given school fees plus school needs and still keep on performing poorly due to the background situation full of violence, abuse and parental negligence. When such a child is given counselling, it helps to calm the situation this child is passing through and the child gets support in learning how to deal with some challenges.

Counselling has helped to narrow the gaps between parents and their children; it has improved communication and the relationship within their families. In your minds you can always substitute parents with guardians, who might be grandmother, single mother, aunt, uncle or other relative.

Child sponsorship is doing all this because we want to raise the standard of living of rural families through sharing and transfer of knowledge and skills in the hopes of building a more equitable world together. The department is presently sponsoring the education of 164 children, 104 girls and 60 boys, 52 in primary 94 secondary and 18 in third level institutions.

Our appreciation goes to our sponsors who have been supporting us for so many years in educating our children. We also thank very much the sponsors who visited their sponsored children this year and who have also been writing to encourage them. May God bless you abundantly.

Tailoring School

The last year has been a special year for St. Francis Tailoring School. With the new intake of 38 students, the number was actually too big to fit in the existing classroom, so one whole class moved equipment and students to the new Educational Centre building which we have been constructing since 2012 and which is still not complete. They carried furniture and machines in the traditional way—on their heads.

It is about a ten-minute fast walk from the tailoring school to the new building. This move has various implications. The tailoring school will have a closer link with the other departments which are already installed in the new building, but the teachers who have to move between the old tailoring school where the 2nd years study and the new class of 1st year students probably takes up quite a bit of extra time.

Students do not learn only tailoring skills. They also study English, mathematics and basic computer knowledge and we get some visiting lecturers coming to talk to them about small business practice, about HIV/AIDS, and some relationship skills.

Field Trip



On the 25th August, 2016 at 2:30am in the morning the whole student body from the school went on a journey to Jinja—a town in Eastern Uganda, for a study trip in the one and only cotton textile industry in Uganda. There was so much excitement filling the air as the students climbed into the bus some for their first time to this place that is not only the biggest industrial centre in the country but also holds the source of the river Nile, which is reputed to be the longest river in the world, although the same is claimed about the Amazon river in South America.

Sr. Christine, the Executive Administrator was present as they started this adventurous journey, they prayed together and she wished them the best on the study trip. By 9:20am the group had already arrived in Jinja—about 240 kilometres from home—having passed through Kampala the capital city of Uganda at the wee hours of the morning. Travelling so early in the morning, meant that traffic jams were avoided.

When the students arrived at the factory, they were given a guided tour. Obviously preparations had been made much earlier so they were expected. They saw and learned the various steps of making fabrics from cleaning of cotton to spinning the yarn which is used for weaving the cotton fabric produced in and sold all over Uganda—named after the town. The fabric itself is called Jinja fabric. They were then shown the dying processes and the making of coloured and patterned cloth which they loved a lot.

Prince Charles of England visited this spot. There is a memorial to Mahatma Ghandi there and it was very wonderful for the students of St. Francis to be tourists in their own beautiful country if just for a day. They got into the bus for the journey back home and by the time they reached Mbarara, they had travelled over 400 miles in one day and spent 20 hours on the tour. Quite a feat!



Our year two tailoring students in their self-made dresses

After the informative and interesting tour of the factory, the group had an opportunity to visit the now renowned shrine of the Uganda Martyrs in Namugongo, Kampala. The place has greatly developed ever since the Pope's visit to Uganda. There is an outside altar used whenever there are special occasions like on the 3rd June the celebration of Uganda Martyrs Day. Above you see a photograph of our students taken at this spot. After a visit and a prayer at this shrine the group went to what is commonly known in Uganda as the source of the Nile river. As Rwanda also claims to have the source of the Nile in its country, it can be concluded that the Nile hides its source from all the claimants, and makes itself interesting, by remaining a mystery.

Another trip which one of our teachers makes 2 or 3 times a year, during holidays is to our "sister" school in Kivumu, run by the Franciscan friars. Fr. Ivica Peric, the headmaster of a very big technical and vocational school, funded Mukwasiibwe's training in the UK, in machine maintenance a number of years ago. Ever since, Mukwasiibwe looks after the machines of St. Francis in Uganda as well as the school in Rwanda.



is very
inda, this
am!



We have more news from two former volunteers to St. Francis—Clio Korn who taught Neuroscience to our Masters' students and Mirabelle who made videos. (You will soon be able to watch them on YouTube). Clio has now handed final thesis at Oxford as a PH.D. and Mirabelle is working in a publishing house in San Francisco.

Clio on her way to hand in the final paper and Mirabelle enjoying a break in the Golden Gate Park in S.F.





Uganda calling KKC (not what they think from da deep south!) this is to say hello to Kelly the Kat-lover from California! We have been talking about you and thinking about you especially

since my Kat disappeared, and you had given away his sons and heirs, we are wondering if you could get them back for us? There is a new airstrip in Mbarara, so they would not have to make the long car journey again. They could be flown direct!

Kelly, thank you for your long visit. The students are asking for you. We are still trying to learn now to use the GoPro so



by the time you get back here, we will be much more technically astute. Apart from a long dry season followed by some very tropical rainfall, nothing much has changed in St. Francis since you were here. Still we send you back some of our memories, as well as tons of love and good wishes for this time in your life.

Before we close for the Christmas holidays we shall have another few major events occurring. We shall train about 100 primary school teachers in "Personal and Group Transformation, Liberation Education and Child Centred Learning" we shall graduate a number of new tailors/dressmakers, we shall see Benardette get married to her policeman fiancé, and say a sad goodbye to Tomo. We shall welcome John and Susan Mc Goldrick back to Uganda for a few months of sunshine and volunteer work.

Love, thanks and good wishes for a peaceful month ahead and a very Happy New Year from all the grateful staff of St. Francis.



Sr. Ch. Ntibantaga.

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Mary Karwa

Primer

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Imberaga.

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Ntiterwagatsinde Abel

Abel

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Athanasius Kabashenge

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Keyme Hassan
Mukwizibwe Kalirungu
Kebirungi Resty

草島智道

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Arienne Schultz