



The choir of St Apollo School sing for the visitors from Christ Church, Lisburn.

# Reflections from Uganda - God is good - All the time

A team from Christ Church, Lisburn, travelled to Uganda in February to build staff accommodation at a school the parish funded in 2012.

St Apollo School in Kasizi, Luwero, was established in 2007, but had only one small building and held many classes under trees.

Christ Church parish raised £75,000 and in partnership with Fields of Life two new blocks of classrooms were built. A team visited in 2012 to work on the classrooms.

The parish continued to support the school and raised more than £24,000 for a staff residence which they helped complete on this recent trip.

Here, team members reflect on their time with the people and community of St Apollo School.

“Joy, hope, faith, peace and perseverance are words which describe the experience of being in the community around St Apollo School and the church for eight full days,” said the rector, the **Rev Paul Dundas**.

“The overriding experience is that the Lord is building this community - words which are echoes of Psalm 127 which I used when we were welcomed on that amazing first Friday with songs, dancing and speeches.

“We saw a community growing in numbers, with new buildings, growing crops, so many children with school uniforms, receiving a meal each day, using English in classes, enjoying sport, good leadership in the school, an extended church building and the support of the Bishop.”

Paul said the project was ‘a beacon to the wider church and education authorities.’ “The opening of the staff accommodation brings greater stability as it will allow eight teachers to live at the school,” said Paul.

He thanked God for the team, for good health, and all that was achieved. This included practical work of building bookcases, RE lessons, the I AM Girl project, hand hygiene, women’s work, sport, worship and the opening of the staff accommodation.

“I was privileged to have the honour of cutting the ribbon to open the staff accommodation, plant a mango tree along with Raymond and Beth and then speak on behalf of the parish and team at the celebration,” Paul said. “We received many thanks and gifts which included a chicken!”

Paul also preached at the church at St



Johnston Boyle, Raymond Geddis and Gary Knowles building a bookcase.

Apollo, and led two Saturday seminars, the first with lay leaders in Kiky chusa, 45 minutes away. “They had never had a ‘white’ person speak to them before,” Paul said. He also visited a project for orphaned children. “I received a pineapple as a thank you. I was deeply touched by this gesture,” he said.

The second seminar was held for clergy in Ndejje Archdeaconry with the Bishop elect, Canon Eridard attending. “The seminar was held entirely in ‘Northern Ireland English.’ The highlight came when we presented the group with “Lugandan” Bibles – such joy!” Paul said.

He explained that the team had chosen the words of 1 Corinthians 3:11 as a text for the plaques on the new buildings: ‘For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.’”

**Johnston Boyle** said it had been an ‘emotional, spiritual and physical’ journey.

“On arrival at the school, the sight of 300 children all in their green uniforms, lining each side of the track, singing, clapping and dancing to welcome us brought a lump to my throat,” he said.



The full Christ Church team at St Apollo School, including the rector the Rev Paul Dundas and parishioners Beth Harris, Beverley Ringland, Roberta Thompson, Anita Evans, Jane Marks, Emma Jane Marks, Audrey Knowles, Jayne Logan, Johnston Boyle, Raymond Geddis, Patrick Logan, Colin Mitchell and Gary Knowles.

“To see the commitment to the Lord from these children, their teachers and parents sets an example we could all follow. Their praise, prayer, faith and worship were inspiring.

“At the end of our time there, I left with a feeling of achievement, of completion, of satisfaction, of fulfillment.”

**Beverley Ringland** said the trip provided experiences she would never forget. “The welcome, the children’s love for learning, and how God has become central to a community that was learning under a tree before Christ Church provided a school with God’s help and guidance,” she said.

She recalled how 40 women turned up for the health education programme with their girls, the children keen to learn verses and enjoy sports, crafts and worship, and a memorable sports day.

“My lasting memory is when we say ‘God is good’ to the children they reply ‘All the time.’ We say ‘All the time’ and they reply ‘God is good and that is his nature.’ Wow!” said Beverley.

Like Beverley, **Roberta Thompson** will not forget the children’s words ‘God is good’ and their responses.

“I was privileged to experience the gratitude the teachers, children and mothers have for the people of Christ

Church and how much they appreciate and care for their school as it is the centre of the community,” Beverley said, adding that St Apollo will always have a special place in her heart.

**Jayne Logan** recalls the words of the head girl at the celebration meal. “For God and my country, never lose hope.”

“‘Never Lose Hope’ is the school motto and it is very clear that the pupils, staff and parents heed these words in their daily lives,” Jayne said.

## ‘The whole community takes so much pride in their excellent school’

Beth Harris

“The school and community have progressed immeasurably since the last team visit – and with the hope and faith which

they place in God, they will surely go from strength to strength.

“I believe that every day is a school day and I have returned home having learnt so much from the people I have had the pleasure of being with in Uganda. Never Lose Hope!”

**Raymond Geddis** reflected on how much St Apollo has developed since 2012. Then there were 65 pupils being taught under a tree. Health issues were evident, as was a lack of food.

“In 2015 we found some 300 pupils, in very good health being well fed in comparison to 2012, with generally enthusiastic teachers. Vegetable gardens at the school

and the old church land are being used to supplement the provision of food.”

Raymond said a visit to Bethel Royal was an example of what can be done when the will is there. The school has 700 secondary pupils (520 boarding), and is self sufficient due to dairy, poultry and maize growing/milling operations. He related how one woman, abandoned by her husband to raise her 11 children in a mud house that had partially collapsed, received two pigs from the school principal and now has a successful pig unit, 10 cows and has built a brick home for her children.

**Beth Harris** thanked the people of Christ Church who had made the trip possible. “Words cannot express the great joy I experienced on my return to St Apollo. If only I could explain the miraculous changes to the lives of 300 children, families and the community. These wonderful people now have hope. The children appear healthier and the standard of hygiene has improved. The whole community takes so much pride in their excellent school,” said Beth.



Beth Harris plants a mango tree.



The Rev Paul Dundas in Ndeje Archdeaconry with Canon Eridard and his wife Jane.