

Letters from the Front

March-May 2010

The Watters leave the Pearl of the Orient for the Pearl of Africa— for the sake of the Pearl of Great Price!



First glimpse of the beloved land



Bold bright colors of downtown Kampala

Dear faithful friends,

In 1980, a 33-year-old Navigators' staff member in Glen Eyrie, Colorado Springs, CO applied to be a missionary in Nairobi, Kenya but was told that he was still too young a believer to be considered for the post. Fast-forward to October 2006: the same man (now 59 years old) was asked by his ACTION Field Director to consider serving in Africa.

Fast-forward again to April 20, 2010: 30 years from the day he got turned down for Nairobi, after 19 years of ministry to Manila's streetchildren and urban poor families, Mike Watters got off the plane at Kenya's neighboring country Uganda to begin a new life as a missionary to Africa together with his dear wife. (Setting foot on Ugandan soil came after a long wait for his bride too—four years and nine months from the day she heard about the fields white unto harvest in Africa.)

Rejoice with us dear friends because we are writing this update in Kampala! Up to now, we still cannot believe that we are actually here! What a great memorial stone April 20 is for us—the day when our mouths were filled with laughter and joy and praise for our great God who did great things for us and who graciously brought us to the beautiful and spiritually needy land of Uganda.

"When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, „The LORD has done great things for them.“ The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad. Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negeb! Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Psalm 126:16, ESV)

Prayers answered abundantly beyond all that we could ask or think ...

Thank you for your precious love and prayers! The Lord was gracious to grant our petitions!

1 On April 12, the Lord brought in 100% of our *minimum* outgoing funds (hallelujah!) and we were finally able to seek clearance from our ACTION U.S.A. Director to leave for Uganda on April 20. Our Director gave his permission *subject to the condition that* we will continue to raise more monthly support (we are still about 40% short of our target). How blessed it is to be sent out by our friends and supporting churches in a time of recession! Thank you all for your sacrificial and faithful giving!

2 The runup to our departure from Manila was grueling (both physically and spiritually) but the Lord gave us the grace to embrace His will for us and we made it to our 12:20 am Emirates flight to Dubai! Rebecca's braces were taken off on April 12 and she got her retainers on April 18. In between, her dentist completed all the dental work she needed (including six crowns and two inlays). My eye doctor in Manila was also able to simplify my glaucoma meds. While on this new regimen, I consistently got the eye pressure readings that my doctors in Minnesota were targeting, hallelujah! The Lord gave us unusual strength, especially Rebecca, as we faced all the pressures of our last few weeks.

3 We thank our gracious hosts and dear friends Ferdie and Joanne Cabotaje who loved us and gave us a home for four months as we completed our medical and dental work and went through everything that the Lord lovingly appointed for us. We also thank our dear friends Jeffrey and Vivian Co who housed us during our last week in Manila and strengthened us greatly

with their love for the Lord and His Word, and their all-out, over-the-top hospitality and friendship!



Precious after-dinner talk with Ferdie and Joanne



Feasting on Vivian's gourmet cooking

4. Despite many unforeseen calls on our time, by God's grace we were able to meet with almost all of our closest friends and supporters and to share the Gospel with and encourage many as the Lord gave us opportunity. The Canadian immigrant brother of Rebecca's friend met with us and the Lord allowed me to share the Gospel with him. We also encouraged him with a book on suffering. (Thank you to all who prayed for that time with him.) On one of her visits to get her braces adjusted, Rebecca was approached by her orthodontist's assistant for counsel concerning a family problem. As the Lord ordained it, Rebecca was able to meet with her a few days later and share the Gospel with her!

Last April 7, Rebecca also completed the much-delayed translation of *Jesus Christ Is God the Lord* (the book written by our good friend David Linden for the Filipinos he loves so much)! We thank God and all who faithfully prayed for this undertaking. May God use this book to bring many Filipinos to the glorious truth of Christ's deity!

The Lord also granted me the privilege of facilitating the video-seminar *Amazing Grace* at Guiding Light Christian Church (our supporting church in Baguio City) and preaching the Gospel at the opening of the art exhibit of four fellow saints (including Rebecca's 80-year-old mother) in a mall in Mandaluyong City.

1 While we ran out of time to pack and finalize many logistical details for our trip, the Lord brought dear sisters to help us (especially Elma Degracia and Luz Yapit), allowed us to obtain our international driver's permits, found us a place to stay in Kampala *four* days before our flight, and provided the funds for us to send our important papers, etc. via Emirates air cargo and FedEx (the latter through the kindness of dear and generous friends)!

2 When we arrived in Kampala, the Lord also:

- caused our air cargo to be released after 24 hours (some missionaries had to wait 11 days);
- found us our rental house on our *third* day in Kampala (the *first house* we looked at on the *first day* we started looking!); helped us open a dollar bank account and a P.O. Box during our first week (both —in record time); permitted us to meet with Jerry and Candis Bingham (our Gulu-based ACTION-Uganda Field Director and his wife) the day before they left for their furlough;
- against many odds (some thought even impossible), bought for us a good second-hand 1995 Honda CRV *priced at less than what we budgeted for it* (many thought we should have raised double the amount of money for a vehicle);
- gave us new friends (Ugandan and American) who have been such blessings and such great help to us as we navigated the culture, bought what we needed, started driving in Kampala, and began settling into our new home; allowed us to adjust fairly quickly and easily to new surroundings, new food, and new people; enabled us to find some of our prescription meds and supplements here—even psyllium fiber; and knitted our hearts to and deepened our love for the Ugandan people!

7. We are very grateful to God for allowing our very busy teammates, Jim and Kappy Robinette, ACTION-Uganda missionaries in Kampala for the past six years, to make time to be with us during our crucial first week. They helped us open our bank account and P.O. Box, change our U.S. dollars to Ugandan shillings (Ush or -/), canvass appliances, look over furniture on Ggaba Road, and gave us many pointers on life in Kampala. Kappy blessed Rebecca with a wonderful —Welcome to Uganda— gift pack and has already blessed us with two delicious meals at their home. Jim Robinette is Chapel Library's man in Uganda and he loaded us right away with their materials and with Gospel tracts in Luganda which we have been distributing ever since. By the grace of God, we have started a weekly team meeting and devotion every Tuesday and will have our formal orientation on June 1-4.



Jim expressing for all of us our appreciation for Kappy's cooking!



Our first Sunday service in Kampala!

Two good and perfect gifts from the Father of lights ...

Her name is Linda Green. We met her in the dining room of Hotel Olympia (our —first home□ in Kampala) on May 1 and the Lord knitted our hearts together instantly! She has been a missionary in Soroti (about six hours north of Kampala) for five years and was visiting in town. Linda spent 20 years in the U.S. Navy and so we had a lot to talk about. The following night, she overheard Rebecca talking on the phone to the driver of a rental truck. Amazingly, Linda offered us her Land Cruiser for the following week as she was going to be out-of-town! Rebecca and I were very touched that she would lend us her vehicle after only 24 hours of friendship but it was clearly the Lord's provision. Next to our first week in Kampala, it was *the* week we really needed a vehicle! As the Lord would have it, Linda also stayed with our neighbor Beverly Bidwell when she got back from her trip. She has since gone back to Soroti but not without a home-cooked Filipino meal at our house and an invitation to dine with us whenever she is in town. How good the Lord is to bring His people together! May the Lord be glorified as He accomplishes all His purposes in our lives!



USN Chief Linda in full steam (with Miss Beverly)



Amos and Peace at our thank-you dinner at Pardis

Amos Kwikiriza is a brother we met while looking for a 4WD vehicle to buy (only 4WD vehicles can navigate Uganda's lunar roads). Previously, we had been dealing with another Ugandan brother who had helped other missionaries purchase their vehicles. When our teammate Jim Robinette gave us Amos' name, we were not able to call him immediately because of this previous arrangement. But God had a plan. It was Amos who drove Linda Green to the bus station and who turned over the keys of her Land Cruiser to us! Amos has since become our first Ugandan *mukwano* (close friend) and has helped us buy our CRV through a cousin, found us our housekeeper (Patience Karegire comes once a week and is the sister of his wife Peace), brought us to his home and introduced us to his wife, daughter, and brother-in-law Raymond (whom the Lord allowed me to share the Gospel with), taken us to the Uganda Revenue Authority to get our TIN, introduced us to the *muzungu* (white or more accurately, non-black) missionaries ministering in his church, mentioned our future ministry to his politician relative who has already offered land for a streetchildren drop-in center, helped us canvass and buy many items for our home and vehicle, provided many insights into Ugandans and life in Uganda, took us for our first authentic Mutoro meal (boiled goat's meat, millet-cassava bread, and matooke), and in general has treated us like family! It has been a real blessing to build our friendship with Amos. We look forward to all that the Lord has in store for us (and for Amos and Peace) in this relationship!

Cleaving to the ledge of God's great grace ...

Since 2007, the Lord has graciously and lovingly appointed to us many great trials. Thinking about them brings to mind these lines from John Piper's poem on *Job*:

—What we have lost God will restore —
That, and himself, forevermore, When

he is finished with his art,
The silent worship of our heart. □

A reading from Spurgeon sums it up for us:

—The place which is called Calvary. □ *Luke 23:33*

The hill of comfort is the hill of Calvary; the house of consolation is built with the wood of the cross; the temple of heavenly blessing is founded upon the riven rock—riven by the spear which pierced his side. No scene in sacred history ever gladdens the soul like Calvary's tragedy.

...
Light springs from the midday-midnight of Golgotha, and every herb of the field blooms sweetly beneath the shadow of the once accursed tree. In that place of thirst, grace hath dug a fountain which ever gusheth with waters pure as crystal, each drop capable of alleviating the woes of mankind. You who have had your seasons of conflict, will confess that it was not at Olivet that you ever found comfort, not on the hill of Sinai, nor on Tabor; but Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha have been a means of comfort to you. The bitter herbs of Gethsemane have often taken away the bitters of your life; the scourge of Gabbatha has often scourged away your cares, and the groans of Calvary yields us comfort rare and rich. We never should have known Christ's love in all its heights and depths if he had not died; nor could we guess the Father's deep affection if he had not given his Son to die. ... He who would know love, let him retire to Calvary and see the Man of sorrows die. [Charles Spurgeon, Morning and Evening: Daily Readings, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/morneve.d0410am.html>]

As Piper wrote in his —A Word to the Listener □ (for the listeners to his poem *Job*):

—Pain and loss are bitter providences. Who has lived long in this world of woe without weeping, sometimes until the head throbs and there are no more tears to lubricate the convulsing of our amputated love? But O, the folly of trying to lighten the ship of suffering by throwing God's governance overboard. The very thing the tilting ship needs in the storm is the ballast of God's good sovereignty, not the unburdening of deep and precious truth. What makes the crush of calamity sufferable is not that God shares our shock, but that his bitter providences are laden with the bounty of love. □

Yes Lord, the —great purpose of life is not to stay alive, but to magnify—whether by life or by death—the One who created us and died for us and lives as Lord of all forever, Jesus Christ □ (Piper, *ibid*). We continue to entrust ourselves to You our faithful Creator. Thank You for the bounty of Your love!

Inquiries

- We continue to receive inquiries from people who want to support us financially. The simplest way to give to us (and the way we recommend to all our donors, *especially those who reside outside the U.S.*), is to use a credit card and the —Donate to Mike and Rebecca □ button on our web page: <http://www.actioninternational.org/watters>. Such donations are automatically received at our ACTION-U.S.A. office. Donors can also make out a check to —ACTION International Ministries, □ earmark it for —Mike and Rebecca Watters, □ and mail it to any of the addresses given on page 6 of this newsletter. ACTION offices outside the U.S. will in turn remit the donation to the ACTION-U.S.A. office who will then remit all donations to our Uganda bank account.
- We thank God for all who pray and give to us faithfully month after month (and those who have been doing this for many years)! We would like to make sure that you are receiving our prayer letter because you are or would like to be our partner through your prayers and/or giving. If you would like to unsubscribe from our mailing list for whatever reason, please send an email to mikeandrebecca@actionintl.org with —Unsubscribe □ as the subject and we will promptly delete your name from our list. We seek to exalt God in each of our newsletters and pray that all who receive it are, by God's grace, blessed by the accounts of God's faithfulness!
- You may send care packages and mail to us at P.O. Box 70051, Clock Tower, Kampala, Uganda but we have been warned to tell you: no cash or checks please. Your money gifts will be safer being sent to us through the ACTION office in your country.
- You may call us on our Magic Jack no. or MTN-Uganda cellphones given on page 6 of this newsletter. Brethren in the Philippines may also text us using Rebecca's Globe cellphone. Uganda is 5 hours behind Philippine time, 10 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time and 8 hours ahead of Central Standard Time. Thus when it is 11pm in Kampala, it is 4am in Manila, 1pm in Seattle and 3pm in Minneapolis.

Prayer requests

1 Pray for a church that we can commit to and partner in ministry with. Since arriving here, we have been to three churches (one more than once) and we have several more to visit. We are looking for a Ugandan church that is committed to the sufficiency of the Word of God and to biblical ministry, a church we can be involved in and which God can use to further equip

us to minister to Ugandans.

2 Pray for God's purposes in our relationships with Ugandans: Daniel our *askari* (or —guard□ whom we share with the two other houses in our compound), Patience our housekeeper, Amos and Peace, the staff at Hotel Olympia (Emily, Agnes, Obadiah, Haruna, Frank, Zacchaeus, Eunice, Marian, Adrian) who received Christian literature from us and who maintain a very cordial relationship with us, the Congolese family who are our neighbors, Fatuma Kaaya our landlady, Francis our carpenter, Ronald our plumber, Hannington our electrician, Irene and Sylvia the cashiers in the two groceries we frequent, Charles a sales clerk who has expressed interest in the literature we have been giving him, and Judith and Daniel who own the produce stand we buy our vegetables and fruit from. May the Lord give us many Gospel opportunities with them and allow us to encourage those who profess to know Him! May the Lord give us deep friendships with them and others here in Kampala for the sake of His name!

3 Pray also for the contacts we have made with the Filipino community here. Most of the Filipinos we have met are in construction (RJ and his wife Michelle, Mang Tony, Allen) though we also know a couple who are believers and who own a Japanese restaurant (John and Elma). We have already connected with them through Facebook and mobile phone and are looking forward to joining the Philippine Independence Day celebration this coming June 11. May the Lord bring a bumper harvest of souls from these relationships!

4 Pray for our Luganda lessons that began last May 24. We praise God for our teacher Margaret Zabasajja, the older sister of our Minnesotan-Ugandan friend Trudy Norman, who comes to our house Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays from 1-3pm. She is a retired, 60-year-old English teacher, who is experienced in teaching Luganda to foreigners. Pray for teachable minds and tongues for us. Luganda is not an easy language to learn. Pray also for a deep friendship and Gospel opportunities with Margaret who is Catholic.

5 Pray for our relationships within ACTION-Uganda, particularly with the Bingham and the Robinettes, as we endeavor to articulate our vision for the work in the country and build the team. We have finished writing up our draft ministry proposal and have submitted it to our International Director and ACTION-Uganda Field Director for their comments. We will also be discussing these with Jim and Kappy. May the Lord give us His heart concerning His people and His work here in Uganda. May the Lord be glorified in our unity and in our love for one another!

6 Pray for God to raise up more —fellow workers of the truth□ to partner with us and for God to raise more monthly support for us. Pray also for the timely remittance of funds from the Philippines to the U.S. and from the U.S. to here and for favorable currency transactions (Php to USD, USD to Ush). We praise God for providing our set-up funds, for helping us prioritize our spending, and for the contacts and the many bargains He has given us! (Even longtime missionaries here and Ugandans themselves are surprised at the prices we have been able to get for our purchases! We thank God for granting us much favor with tradesmen and shop owners!)

7 Thank the Lord with us for the installation of our broadband connection last May 27! Though it is spendy, it allows us to use our Magic Jack and Skype and transact online (unlike our mobile internet). We also praise God for Facebook! There were many times when our mobile internet did not allow us to download our emails but it allowed us to post updates on Facebook. What a blessing!

8 Pray for us as we adjust to the frequent, unannounced City water interruptions (some lasting up to 48 hours) and power interruptions (the last major one took 30 hours) and try to establish a household routine. We have begun to store water in big containers in case the water in our tank runs out. The Lord has also allowed us to buy enough surge protectors for our appliances. How grateful we are when we have both electricity and City water at the same time!

9 Praise God for the cool weather (like Baguio City in the Philippines), the quietness, the clean air, and the singing of many different kinds of birds in our home in Katuuso, Buziga. It is a real sanctuary from the heat, the congestion, the noise, and the red dust enveloping much of Kampala. What a good gift from the Lord!

Thank you again dear friends for your faithful love, prayers, concern, and sacrificial giving! We treasure your friendship in the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Webale nnyo! Mukama akuwe omukisa! (Thank you very much! May the Lord bless you!)

Pressing on for the joy of Ugandans through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Mike and Rebecca

Double-click on this link for secure online giving: <http://www.actioninternational.org/watters> Or send your gift for Mike and Rebecca Watters to: ACTION USA • PO Box 398, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043-0398 • Tel. 425.775.4800 • info@actionusa.org ACTION Canada • 3015A 21 Street NE, Calgary, Alberta T2E 7T1 • Tel. 403.204.1421 • info@actioncanada.org ACTION New Zealand • PO Box 8928, Christchurch 8440 • Tel. 011.643.341.0933 • rob@brighthopeworld.com ACTION Philippines • PO Box 110, Greenhills Post Office, 1502 Metro Manila • Tel. 632.531.3709 • take.action@actionintl.org ACTION United Kingdom • PO Box 144, Wallasey, Wirral CH44 5WE • Tel. 011.151.630.2451 • info@actionuk.org • Registered Charity 1058661 All gifts made out to ACTION are used as designated and receipted for tax purposes.

Saying goodbye to friends and family in the Philippines ...



The Lord was so good to allow us to celebrate 8th anniversary of Providence Reformed Baptist Church in Tondo last April!



Kuya Mike with faithful Mylin Butor, Jocelyn Macalalad, and Josephine Delector and dear children of PRBC



The orphan boys of the former Little Flock Orphan Home with their new house-parents Scott and Emily Delohery in Antipolo (friends of Tedd and Margy Tripp)



Dear friends and children in the faith Bong and Minnie Ventura (Minnie lived with Rebecca in the Bible Training Home before marriage)



Friends, prayer partners and supporters at Guiding Light Christian Church in Baguio City



Beloved Ninong Pastor Robbie and Ninang Mavie Casas with their daughter Corinne at the construction site of the new GLCC building



A farewell baking lesson for Rebecca with dear friend and ACTION-Philippines missionary Sharon Germaine



Sampling Vietnamese pho at Megamall with brother missionary Scott Gillespie of ACTION-Canada



Delicious shabu-shabu with longtime friends and ministry partners Robinson and Julie Chu



Gracious hosts and dear friends Edwin and Josephine Salonga and their eldest daughter Christine who treated us to gelato after a memorable gourmet dinner



Faithful preacher of the Word and longtime friend and ministry partner EJ Del Mundo and his lovely Jaja



Together for the Gospel: Hagios sisters holding up their —Wordless Book Gospel bracelets



Beloved —mommies and fellow lovers of Jesus in —Dakila ang Diyos cell (Rebecca once led this discipleship group)



Celebrating Rebecca's Mom's 80th birthday with her Dad, sisters Shirley and Milaine, brother Louie and nephew Daniel—with many other relatives and friends



Preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the opening of an art exhibit at the mall



A Thai meal and then coffee at McDonald's—and the Gospel—with now-good friend Edwin David

Beginning a New Life and Ministry in Uganda....



House No. 2: the Watters'—home sweet home



View of Buziga Hill from the top of the driveway in Katuuso, Buziga, Kampala in our compound



They have stolen our hearts completely (clockwise from left): The children of Faith and Grace Healing Ministries near Masajja on our first Sunday in Uganda (we accompanied our teammate Jim Robinette who preached at the morning service); Rebecca with the children, Pastor Jeffrey Lubanjwa, and two members of the worship team; our askari Daniel and the two youngest of five children of our Congolese neighbors: Magali (the taller one) and Wanda; a sugarcane vendor and his friend striking a pose for our camera in Old Kampala