**family@church/kagera Romans 12:4-11**

(Pic 1) Our reading from Romans today was about gifts that God has given us. We all have different gifts and that is why when we work together as a Church we can achieve so much. What gifts do you think you might have? Is anyone here good at running? Is anyone good at flower arranging? Is anyone a good dancer or singer? Is someone good at football? Now, imagine having a gift but never being able to use it because you don’t have the opportunity to practise it and develop it. Suppose you are a really good footballer, but you don’t have a football, (Pic 2) just a bunch of rags held together by string. It’s going to be pretty difficult to develop your skills isn’t it? God has given people in Kagera the same range of gifts that he has given us, but sometimes they find it hard to use them and develop them. That doesn’t stop them from trying, but it makes it a lot more difficult. Now what day is it today? Of course it’s Sunday. What time did you get up this morning? Well in Kagera this morning some people were up and busy at 5.00am. It was still pitch dark. (Pic 3)

Bikes were brought out from the shed and checked over and quickly the students from Kagera Christian Theological College were off to their placement churches to assist with services as part of their training. Kagera is hilly area so it'll be hard work to get there. But at least they have bicycles to get there in time for morning service. (Pic 4)

Many of the pastors at the churches where they'll be helping aren't so fortunate. Most have long walks to distant churches in their parishes. (Pic 5) Reverend Samson reckons he walks an average of ten kilometres a day. Imagine walking from here to x (location around 10km away). There is a real need for pastors to have motorbikes to cover the large parishes for which they are responsible. However, their income comes directly from the parish, so a poor congregation means that they, in turn will be poor. Bishop Darlington told us that the average wage for a priest is 30,000Tsh...sounds plenty, but it's actually around £10 … per month. It's not enough to live on let alone afford a motorbike, health insurance or even school needs for their children.

As our students start to pedal or push their bikes up the Ngara ridge (Pic 6) they pass the Diocesan tree nursery. This project was established by the Church and Community Mobilisation Process. The idea is to get trees planted on land that desperately needs it, to prevent the soil being washed away in the heavy rains. (Pic 7) The trees will also provide income and wood for local churches, schools or villagers. (Pic 8) Thomas the CCMP co-ordinator has planted trees on his land for his four daughter's university education...they're all under 7! CCMP will also help communities to understand the resources they have in their villages and help them realise that they themselves can improve their own lives. (Pic 9) Savings and loans groups have been set up. People start by paying subscriptions of maybe 50p and then borrowing small sums to set up businesses like these. Bee keeping. (pic 10) Small shop. (pic 11 ) Then with the profits they pay back the loans with a little interest.

As the students cycle to their churches they pass many patches of land which have been farmed for generations. 70% of the population of Kagera are subsistence farmers. But with the devastating effects of climate change new farming techniques are needed to get the best from the dry land. (Pic 12) CCMP teaches techniques that improve yields and increase farm incomes. (Pic 13) The students are already learning these methods at College, so when they become pastors they can introduce them to their parishes.

Some of our students will cycle past the local Government Primary School. (Pic 14) Class sizes can be up to 100 and there aren't any books. Ngara Anglican Primary School, NAPS, is the Diocesan school where parents pay to send their children. (Pic 15) At the moment the school struggles financially, but a new dormitory block has been completed which means that now the school can take boarders, it should be on a sounder financial footing.(Pic 16) However, there is still some way to go before building work at the school will be finished. (Pic 17) A government inspection showed that a new school kitchen is also needed and in the longer term a library and computer room. The results are excellent. In 2018 they came first in the region and 12th out of 3000 in the whole country.

(Pic 18) As the students arrive at their parish church for this Sunday's service, they will be reflecting on what they have learnt at Bible College. The College provides a good theological education, though resources could be better. (Pic 19 The library needs more up-to-date text books and the computer facilities are very basic. (Pic 20) The kitchen is very poor. The accommodation blocks are also not ideal as there is no privacy - (Pic 21) 8 students share a room - and washing facilities need improvement. (Pic 22) Students often have to walk down to the river to do their washing when the mains supply is shut off. These young men and women are very enthusiastic and keen to serve the Lord, but they need the facilities to match their enthusiasm.(Pic 23)

Students, school children, farmers, pastors all have God’s gifts, but they need a little help to make the most of them, so they can serve their communities and help them ‘to live life in all its fullness’. (Pic 24) A little financial help from us can make all the difference, but this help is a hand up not a hand out.

Let us show our love for our brothers and sisters in Kagera in our prayers and in our giving. As the passage from Romans says, ‘If we can give, we should be generous’.