

## family@church/kagera talk

*(If you are using the optional slide show to accompany the talk, the numbers in red indicate when the pictures are to be shown)*

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 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. 1) just a bunch of rags held together by string or tape. 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 Murgwanza this morning some people were up and doing things at 5.00 a.m.

It is still pitch black but outside the men's accommodation block of the Kagera Christian Training College there is a great deal of activity. (Pic 2) Bikes are being brought out from the shed and checked over to make sure all is well. The students put robes and books into paniers or rucksacks and then set off. They will cycle many miles as the dawn breaks to reach the church they have been assigned to this Sunday. (Pic 3) Murgwanza is on a ridge, so the first part of the journey is a joyous downhill freewheel, but, of course then there is the hard slog back up the other side. Nowhere in Kagera is flat so the journey is always hard work. They are unlikely to be back until late afternoon. However, the students are lucky, they do, at least have bicycles.

Many of the pastors they will be helping are not so fortunate. Many have a long walk to a distant church in their parish. (Pic 4) Reverend Samson reckons he walks an average of ten kilometres a day, so on some days it will be a great deal more. There is a real need for pastors to have motorbikes to cover the large parishes for which they are responsible. Their income comes directly from the parish, so a poor congregation means that they, in turn will be poor. This means that they cannot afford motorbikes, health insurance or school fees for their children. (Pic 5) State schools provide free primary education, but schools are very basic and poorly equipped with (Pic 6) often sixty or seventy children in a class which is why private education is your child's best chance of being able to go on to college or university.

As our students start to pedal or push their bikes up the Ngara ridge (Pic 7) they pass the Diocesan tree nursery, a project established by the Church and Community Mobilisation Process. The idea is to get trees planted on land that desperately needs it if soil erosion is not to wash it away. The trees will also provide income and wood for the local church and

villagers. CCMP will also help communities to understand the resources they have in their villages and teach them how to make the most of them. The establishment of saving and loan groups will enable people to invest in new technology, such as motorbikes or sewing machines, to improve their lives. (Pic 8) Old, wasteful farming practices, which our students pass as they climb up the ridge, will be replaced by new techniques that increase yields and therefore farm incomes. (Pic 9) 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 (Pic 10) Ngara Anglican Primary School, a Diocesan school where parents pay to send their children for a much better education than the state schools can offer. At the moment the school struggles financially, (Pic 11) but a new dormitory block is being completed which should ensure an increase in income and put the school on a much better financial footing. However, there is still some way to go before the new block can be opened and money is needed to finish it. (Pic 12) A new school kitchen is also needed but otherwise the school is well equipped, and the results are excellent. Last year they came first in the region and 12th out of 3000 in the whole country.

As the students arrive at their parish church for this Sunday, they will be reflecting on what they have learnt at Bible College. The College provides a good theological education, but resources could be better. (Pic 13) The library needs more up-to-date text books and the computer facilities are very basic. (Pic 14) The accommodation blocks are also not ideal as there is no privacy - 8 students share a room - and washing facilities need improvement. Students often have to walk down to the river to fetch water 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.

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'. Some financial assistance from us can make all the difference, but this help is a hand up not a hand out. The Lent Appeal is all about sustainable development, helping people in Kagera to help themselves. Enabling them to recognise and to make the most of the gifts that they have. (Pic 15)

Let us show our love for our brothers and sisters in Kagera in our response to the Bishops' Lent Appeal for as the passage from Romans says, 'If we can give, we should be generous'.