

Sunday, February 5

On Sunday morning we drove to Kyabazaala, which is a drive of about 1 3/4 hours north of Jinja, the last 30 minutes on dirt roads, for the dedication of Kyabazaala Lutheran Church. On my last visit here, in 2021, I was invited to be the guest preacher in the church pictured below. There were about 70 people present for worship that day and that was pretty much maximum capacity.



At the time, the church had some bricks to build a new church/school structure but not the funds to build it. A very generous Lutheran couple in the Pittsburgh area then donated \$12,000 to build the new structure and the Eastern Deanery has been waiting for me to return for the dedication. They also invited the couple who made the donation but they were not able to attend. Lutheran Lay Renewal later also donated funds for the church to buy an adjacent plot of land.



The ceremony started outside with a lot of joyful singing and dancing. A representative of the district President named David, who is a member of the church, and I were asked to come forward to unlock the front door, after which everyone processed in. I would estimate the number of people present for worship to be about 250 and there was still room for maybe 25-30 more.

In the left front of the church there is space for the young children to sit and there are lots of small chairs for them to sit in, but not enough for the 70-80 just between the ages of 3 and 6 who were present. The older children sat with their parents.

One of the things I have noticed after visiting many schools in Uganda, and watching the children on this day, is that they are much more attentive and better behaved than American children. These young children sat and paid attention, as much as possible for their ages, for about an hour and a half, before half of them left church to go outside and play. Still, the other half sat for the next hour after that. I attribute this to the fact that Ugandan children's attention spans have not been destroyed by Western luxuries such as television and video games, and they are most likely better disciplined by their parents.

I should also mention that one young adult was baptized during the worship service and 3 older teenagers and 14 mostly young adults were confirmed. It's also worth noting that what two years ago was a fairly small congregation now has over 600 members!

After worship there was a large reception-dinner with probably over 300 people attending and lots of speeches. I was one of the last few to speak before dinner and after dinner everyone was invited to the cutting of the cake. I got out my camera to take some photos but then was told I was expected to take part in the ceremony.





With the newlyweds, Fred and Edith Waako



Dean Peter Maganda (L) and Rev. Erifazi Buluuba, Pastor of Kyabazaala Lutheran Church

Monday, February 6

We got a late start on Monday. Sunday night, after Patrick dropped off me in Jinja, and Rev. Peter in Magamaga, the rented van broke down on the Trans African Highway between Magamaga and Jinja. Patrick

had to stay with the van until a mechanic could come out and fix it, which wasn't until Monday afternoon. On Monday morning Rev. Peter rented a small car in Magamaga and he and a new driver, Mousafa, picked me up in Jinja, so that we could drive to Naigogyia, which is in Luuka District. Unfortunately, on a dirt road about 10 minutes north of Iganga, our car also broke down. The three of us, looking under the hood, found a few problems. One that I noticed was that we were running on 3 cylinders instead of 4 and that wasn't even the main problem.

Rev. Peter had to take a bota-bota (motorbike taxi) back to Iganga, where he picked up a car for hire (the U.S. equivalent of a taxi) and a mechanic, and returned about an hour later. We left Mousafa with the car and mechanic, who eventually got the car running again, while we and our driver, Ramadan (Iganga is 70% Muslim), drove to Naigobya. Ramadan is a very nice older man with a very nice and pretty new Toyota minivan that is air conditioned, a first for me in Uganda.

In Naigobya we first visited the Naigobya Health Clinic, which is on the grounds of Naigobya Lutheran Church and School. This was my third visit here. Some of you might remember that Lutheran Lay Renewal has been funding this clinic since mid-2019. We met with the nurse, Sandra Blessing (very appropriately named), and Elizabeth Maganda (wife of Peter), who works at the clinic during the times of the year when their children are in school.



Sandra Blessing (L) and Elizabeth Maganda in front of the Naigobya Health Clinic

Sandra and Elizabeth then gave us an extensive report on the ministry of clinic. Some of the most important facts are:

- The clinic is now serving people from 5 villages in the area.
- The Luuka District government has asked them to add an additional block for a maternity ward and hire a midwife. Of course, this would require funding the deanery does not have.

- The most common ailments for which people need treatment are: malaria (the clinic provides testing for this), pneumonia, ulcers (Sandra said about 80% of people over 60 have them) and hypertension.
- The clinic has had electricity for a few years now. Previously they had solar batteries but they eventually died and Lutheran Lay Renewal provided the funds to replace them.
- Sandra lives in a room in the clinic, so that she is available for nighttime emergencies.

Next, Rev. Peter and I met with congregational leaders and school teachers, during which we heard about the many needs of the church primary school and church:

- The school has 250 children and they are expecting 50 more this year.
- The six teachers are not being paid regularly because the village is so poor that many parents do not have money to pay school fees.
- Teachers do not have text books and the students do not have books either.
- The classrooms are too small and not in good condition.
- There are no toilets for the teachers or the children, just two outhouses with a hole in the floor in each one.

I promised some help and the first priorities, in my opinion, are getting the teachers paid, buying books for the school and buying two toilets.



A classroom building. First and seconds grade classes are in the brick building, third grade will be held in the temporary structure on the left.

Tuesday, February 7

The plan was for Rev. Peter and I to meet at the seminary but there was a big problem that took most of the day for him to resolve, so I had the day off to work on my reports and on getting ready for the Renewal Conference.

Wednesday, February 8 – Friday, February 10

A three-day Renewal Conference was held at the Lutheran Theological College (seminary) in Magamaga. Those who attended were mostly lay leaders, along with several pastors. The first two days I took them through our Renewal Weekend program, so they could experience it for themselves, know the value of it and be

prepared to recommend it to their congregations. On Friday I led our Seven Lessons for Living the Spiritual Life retreat. Those who attended were enthusiastic about everything we did.





Saturday, February 11, 2023

I spent most of Saturday at the seminary, meeting with church leaders, both clergy and lay.