

Greetings everyone

Yes, in fact I am still alive and very well, which cannot be said for my laptop and the lack of communication is due in part to the problems I have been having with it.

The last couple of months have been such a mixture of activities and feelings that it is hard to write them all here today.

Christmas in Besaniya was very quiet this year compared to last year and a little but lonely at times as most of the boys had gone out from the home this year to distant relatives and families that would take them in over the holiday period. The reason we take them out at Christmas is to allow them to build relationships with their existing families and so that they can see what the world is like outside of Besaniya, as life within the orphanage can be a little isolated and we want them to see what life is like out in the village.

On Christmas day we had only 3 boys in the home and it didn't really feel very festive. Then in the afternoon my family phoned from my grandparents and I spoke to the entire family one after the other as they told me their latest news and what presents they had got, it was very nice to speak to them all and made the day feel like Christmas although my grand parents next phone bill will be considerably higher!

January is becoming very busy with lots of projects to work on and the sudden realization that I have only got until the 26th of March to finish everything I have started and have yet to complete.

The E.C.M. (Evangelical Christian Ministries) house in Kampala is coming closer and closer to completion. In December I took one of the boys called Isaac, who has never attempted any electrical work before let alone a complete electrical domestic installation with me and we wired the new offices, garage, store and wash rooms. It was hard and dirty work but we successfully completed it, Isaac watch and helped me and then went off into the garage and did the entire installation there with virtually no help or direction from me and he did a 1st rate job.

Over Christmas the extension was mostly plastered and on Monday 15th January a work team came from Northern Ireland, through Ignite to paint, tile and do some joinery. The team work so hard over 5 days and I have to admit that I don't think I have ever seen a team work so hard and fast and well before. They did a fantastic job and have transformed the ECM house into a bright clean and ready to use centre for the work of ECM. The new extension is nearly finished and with the coming of my brother Jonathan in a week we will together go and put the finishing touches on the house for a day or two.

Currently we are also hoping to finalize the planning for the building of a church on one of the islands called Beyange in Lake Victoria. My church,

2nd Saintfield have raised money for a project that will be completed in remembrance of the Rev. Desmond McBride. When the church is finished it will be handed over to ECM and the church of Uganda to be used by the lay reader that has already been placed on the island by ECM for both church activities and as a school for the island's children. We were hoping to be on the islands this week but have decided to finish the ECM house completely before moving everyone out to the islands to begin building.

Besaniya has now had an unofficial hand over with Sam and Mary Matumba taking a back seat and letting Festo take the reins, so too have I begun preparations for my upcoming departure. It is my wish and that of the staff that the boys of Besaniya continue to use and develop their skills in the workshop which was one of my main tasks to develop and improve over the last 2 years. After some discussion we have decided to construct a set of strong and secure cupboards where the boys will store their own personal tools. We will give them all their own set of tools that they will keep in their cupboard so they can use them when they wish and this will hopefully prevent theft, confusion and encourage them to look after their own property.

The latest project is the design and construction of a football table or a *Foosball* Table. As history shows, 30 boys arguing and playing with something often shortens the life of that said thing, I think manufacturers should really look into testing their products on the Besaniya boys as they can be guaranteed to destroy the indestructible! So the football table is taking some time and I hope that when completed only a nuclear holocaust will damage the paintwork.

The problems we were having over the last month have been mostly solved or are nearly solved. The most important one was of course the failure of the water pump or the supporting electrical system. For the short term we are praying for rain everyday and God is so far obliging. Jonathan my brother is carrying out the new pump and it will be his first job with me to install on Wednesday next week.

As many of you will be aware my brother and mother are heading out to visit me for 10 days to see me, the country and do some work with the kids of both CHERUB and Besaniya so please pray for them that they will have a safe and comfortable trip and that they won't find it too hard to put up with my cooking for most of their trip!

To you all thank you for the continuing support and prayers, I will see many of you soon as I am returning to sunny NI on the 26th March.

simon