



# Buyamba News

Helping Uganda...one child at a time

## Bridging the Gap in My Red Shoes

Written By: Taya McLoud



### I was wearing my red shoes.

I purchased the red Puma sneakers because I knew whenever I'd wear them and look down, the color would remind me of Jesus's blood being shed for me. It was just one more way to have Jesus fill every nook and cranny of my life. Soon the shoes were packed for my Uganda trip. Our team would be spending time at both of the God Cares School campuses as well as within various communities. If anyone asked about my bright red sneakers, I figured they would be a great way to bring up the topic of Jesus. Little did I know that when I arrived in Uganda, I did not need my shoes or anything else to transition to the topic of Jesus. Jesus, I found out, was already deeply rooted in this beautiful country. He wasn't merely a topic for discussion. He was a beloved member!

From the beginning of the Lighthouse Church team trip to the end, I experienced Jesus in practically everything at both campuses of God Cares School. He was in the firm hug of a teacher welcoming me into her classroom. He was in the bold, enthusiastic worship voices behind the microphone at chapel. He was in the quick, but careful hands of a school cook who worked to feed hundreds of students, but still warmly welcomed me into the kitchen to chat. He was in the full brown children's eyes that spied me and came racing over to grab my hands. He was in the faithful comment of a Dongo family member as he stated matter of fact, "We believe God will provide." He was in the nurse's tender care of the cut on my finger, even though her medical supplies were scarce. I could go on and on...

Not only did I see Jesus in God Cares Schools, I saw overwhelming evidence of Him in the communities. God was present on the billboards and in the names of businesses.

His name was literally tacked up on the walls of homes in the slums where many of the God Cares children go home each evening. His name was written, spoken, and sung with joy and confidence every time I turned around. *Continued on Page 2 ...*

## THE U.S. BUYAMBA STORY PART 3: CALIFORNIA

While things continued to grow in Kingston, New York and Texas, God was igniting another Buyamba flame in California that started with a Ugandan woman named Samalie Malindwa. Samalie had been in ministry for years with Pastor Dongo and Florence in Uganda, growing Kabalagala Pentecostal Church. Samalie remembers the day that there was no church building and they would be evangelizing in the streets of Kabalagala, knowing that God wanted ministry in the middle of the growing city. As the street church grew into a tent, then a building, Samalie served alongside the pastor couple as KPC's accountant.

In 2000, Samalie moved in with her sister Milly and husband, Placide DaSilva, to Thousand Oaks, California. When Dongo visited the U.S. in 2001, he contacted Samalie, and she invited him to visit. Milly and Placide introduced their new Ugandan friend, Pastor Dongo, to their own Pastor, Larry DeWitt, at Calvary Community Church in Westlake Village the following Sunday. Milly recalls that they found Pastor Larry right before church started to make an introduction. Even though Pastor Larry met Pastor Dongo five minutes before the service, he recalls, "God put on my heart to be open to this Ugandan brother, and I also trusted the integrity of Milly and Placide." *Continued on Page 2 ...*

# THE U.S. BUYAMBA STORY

## PART 3: CALIFORNIA

As Pastor Larry walked up to the platform, he introduced Bethuel Dongo as his Ugandan brother and shared Dongo's mission to care for orphans. He asked the church to join him in prayer over Dongo. The next week, Pastor Larry invited him to meet the whole staff, and Dongo captivated their hearts as he told the story of his many children. Then Dongo prayed over them. Those two prayers that week, united their hearts and thus the 16-year partnership with Calvary Community Church began. Pastor Kirk DeWitt ran the Missions Department at that time and he and his father Larry began to strategize on how to help. Pastor Larry felt that there needed to be photographers sent to Uganda to take pictures that could tell the story, so when Milly went to Kirk to ask if maybe Calvary should send a team of people to see the work happening on the ground, the church was ready.

Milly recalls that when she asked who should lead such a trip, Pastor Kirk said "This is a great idea and YOU are the leader to do it!" Milly and Placide led that first Calvary Community mission trip with a team of 26 people. More than half of these were high school students who were added to the team at the last minute. The planned high school trip to Zimbabwe had been cancelled due to the political climate at the time. The team returned called and charged to care for the children of Uganda, and the church involvement grew, sending teams every year, sponsoring children, and helping with significant building support for God Cares Schools.

God was also moving in individual hearts. Degna Horton was walking in the mall one day when she saw Pastor Dongo and the DaSilvas walking the other way. She felt the Lord's connection to the three and felt that one of them was a pastor, but she didn't know them. She prayed that if the Lord wanted them to meet, He would allow their paths to cross again.



**Ezra Dongo, Rebecca & Larry DeWitt**



**GOD CARES NURSERY**

*Degna Horton*

Degna ended up sitting in church that same Sunday that Dongo was introduced. She went up to him after service and told him the story of seeing him the previous day. She recalls, "Pastor Dongo took my hand and said, this is truly a divine appointment." Degna had many connections, and she soon started making them. She became an ambassador for the ministry, connecting people both in California and other states. Pastor Dongo would stay with Keith and Degna Horton for years to come, and he affectionately called Degna "Madam Secretary" as she would schedule meetings each visit with different churches, schools and individuals that would evolve into lasting partnerships.

*To Be Continued ...*

## Bridging the Gap in My Red Shoes

I was humbled. I was shown that when you cling so tightly to Jesus that he's in every breath and action you take, you don't need shoes to remind you of Him and what He did for us. Here I was coming to God Cares School to teach and

share the love of Jesus, yet I was the one who was being ministered to.

My red shoes reside in Uganda now. I left them for someone else to wear. I hope that they'll be worn by "the least of these" and that they give comfort and protection to that person's feet. And even though I pray that the person who wears them already has a relationship with Jesus, if they don't, I believe they will. And it probably won't be because they'll relate the color of the shoes to Jesus's sacrifice. Instead, Uganda's people will unashamedly share the message. It's what they do. Thank you Uganda, and thank you God Cares Schools, for your hearty example of what it means to be followers of Jesus.