

BMCF-FOUNDATION DAY CELEBRATIONS,13 JULY 2008: REPORT

1. How was the ceremony in Kasese?

The ceremony was most fabulous, full of activities, jubilation, music, dance, and drama, and newly composed special songs for the this particular occasion: it lasted from 12:00PM to 5:30PM with a dinner at Virina Gardens Hotel in Kasese. It started with a very colorful Service from 8:30-10:30AM at St. Paul's Cathedral, Kasese. Bishop Duncan Gray of the Diocese of Mississippi was the Guest Preacher. In his sermon he emphasized the oneness of the Gospel and mission of the Church of Christ, and said he was very happy to visit Africa for the first time. He came as a Guest of Bishop Masereka Christian Foundation(BMCF) based in Midwestern Uganda, and was very impressed by the deep faith of the people of Uganda.

At the service were Bishop Jackson Nzerebende of South Rwenzori Diocese, and Celebrant for the Holy Communion part of the service. Both at his residence and in the Church, Bishop Jackson warmly welcomed Bishop Gray to South Rwenzori Diocese with gifts. This service was attended by the Hon. Dr. Crispus Kiyonga, Minister of Defence, MP, Bukonzo West, the Hon. Joseph Maate, MP, Bughendera, Bundibugyo District, the Retired Bishop Zebedee Masereka&his wife Stella Masereka, many dignitaries, and hundreds of Christians from Kasese and the neighbouring districts.

At the main celebration in Kasese town Hon. Dr. Kiyonga who is the Patron of BMCF was the Host of the function, and Hon. Joseph Maate was the Co-Host, and Bishop Duncan Gray was the Guest of Honor.

2. What happened/achievements?

The Foundation Stone for the new Clinic called Bishop Masereka Medical Centre was laid and prayed for by the Guest of Honour, Bishop Duncan Gray. Present at the laying of the Foundation Stone was the Minister of Defence, Hon. Dr. Kiyonga, the Hon. Joseph Maate, Bishop Jackson Nzerebende, Retired Bishop Zebedee Masereka, the Rev. Canon Julius Kithaghenda, the District Chairman, the Mayor, Kasese Town Council, Mr. Cosmus Byaruhanga and many other invited dignitaries from the region. The Guest of Honor praised Bishop Masereka and the community of Kasese for the important initiative intended to provide high quality health service delivery.

The Guest of Honour commissioned the newly re-designed website of BMCF by thanking God for the marvels of technology, and described the website as an extremely important tool in the development of any organization and thankful for the privilege of being asked to commission the site.

The Five Year Strategic Plan for Bishop Masereka Christian Foundation was launched by the Host, the Hon. Dr. Kiyonga, who thanked Bishop Masereka very much for the great spirit of dedication and the zeal for development. Dr. Kiyonga described the document as an important milestone and a great road-map for the organization, and praised Bishop Masereka for being a great visionary in the community of Kasese, referring to the several projects(health centres, modern agricultural practices, clean water, village roads and schools) which the Bishop initiated when he was still the Diocesan Bishop for South Rwenzori Diocese.

The Hon. Joseph Maate launched five newly composed community education songs, ordered and facilitated by BMCF. Hon Maate said education of children was extremely important for the community and the Country. The songs were appealing to the community to help and support orphaned children, and to help prevent the spread of HIV. The five songs were composed on request of BMCF by a celebrated and highly talented musician in Kasese called, Joash Ntalibara.

A min fund raising at the function resulted into the collection of ugx 6,000,000=as contributions toward the building of the new Clinic. Bishop Jackson of South Rwenzori Diocese pledged ugx 1,000,000 toward the project, and the Diocese of Mississippi through Bishop Gray contributed cash of ugx 16,000,000= toward the project.

The entire building work for the new Clinic is estimated to cost about \$450,000-550,000.

Prior to the main function that was held on Sunday, 13 July 08, the Guest Honor, Bishop Duncan Gray visited Kamaiba primary school with a population of 927 pupils. More than 100 of the students in Kamaiba are on the BMCF scholarship program. Bishop Gray also met and laid hands on a large group of persons living with HIV in Kasese town. Two days before the celebrations Bishop Duncan Gray visited Namugongo martyrs' shrine, the source of the Nile in Jinja, the Equator line, and Queen Elizabeth National Park. He appreciated the deep faith and great beauty of Uganda. In his brief introductory remarks, Bishop Zebedee Masereka, the Executive Director of BMCF said that the organization was assisting 549 orphaned children with school fees this year.

3. Who were the main dignitaries present?

The Hon. Dr. Crispus Kiyonga, Minister of Defence, MP, Bukonzo West, The Hon. Joseph Maate, MP, Bughendera, Bundibugyo District

Bishop Duncan Gray, Bishop Jackson Nzerebende, Bishop Egidio Nkaijanabwo of the Catholic Diocese of Kasese, the District Khadi of Kasese, Sheikh Abdullah Hakim Juma, the District Chairman Kasese, the Rev. Canon Julius Kithaghenda, Retired Bishop Zebedee Masereka, the LCIII Chairman/Mayor, Kasese Town Council, Head-teachers, District Officials, and Guardians of orphaned children.

4. Anything special the Bishop said (both bishops)?

Bishop Egidio Nkaijanabwo referring to Biblical teachings reiterated that the community of believers are mandated by Christ to love and care for the orphaned children and other vulnerable people in the community, (Mat.9:35-37, 10;7-8). He added that Jesus Christ is the model for Christians to provide physical healing, emotional healing and compassionate actions. He commended Bishop Masereka Christian Foundation for helping orphans with education, and the sick people through the Medical Clinic in Kasese.

Bishop Gray praised BMCF and all the Kasese community for being loving, hard working and pledged his continued support for BMCF and the community in Kasese.

The Rev. Canon Julius Kithaghenda, the District Chairman thanked BMCF for the good work, and pledged that the District will continue supporting BMCF projects and the staff through the Public-Private Partnership arrangement already in place.

In his brief remarks, Bishop Zebedee Masereka expressed a strong desire to transform Kasese community through investing in education and health. He mentioned that BMCF scholarship program pays ugx 90,000,000= each year for school fees of 549 students, mostly

AIDS orphans. And mentioned that earlier this year he raised over ugx 40,000,000= for the equipment of the maternity with of the Clinic, and that he was planning to invest a further ugx 80,000,000= for equipping the Clinic this year, in addition to building a new Clinic.

5. Any comment from the likely beneficiary of the Foundation programmes launched?

About 200 students on the BMCF scholarship program were invited for the celebrations and many of them participated actively in the songs, drama, poems and other activities of the day. 22 Students are in Universities and Tertiary Institutions in Uganda, and the 549 students are in the secondary and primary schools. Students sang many songs praising Bishop Masereka Christian Foundation for assisting them with school fees, otherwise they would not be in school, but would be languishing in villages with no hope for the future.

Many people in the community praised the caring attitude of the health professionals of BMCF Clinic.

6. What the Foundation is all about?

The Vision and mission of the Foundation is to help in the eradication of the spread of HIV in the region and to ensure that the people infected and affected by HIV are supported by the community.

7. When did the visiting bishop return home?

The Visiting Bishop from the Diocese of Mississippi arrived in Uganda on Tuesday, 08 July and returned to the USA on Wednesday, 15 July 2008.

8. What was his impression of the people, the project, Uganda, and his host?

Bishop Gray was very much impressed by the people of Uganda. He said he perceived Ugandans as patient, hard working and very hospitable people, and the programs of BMCF as being right on target and closely related to the Millennium Development Goals of the UN. He described Uganda as very beautiful Country every where. He visited Namugongo Martyrs' Shrines, the Source of the River Nile and the Queen Elizabeth National Park. He said the 4 days he spent in Uganda were absolutely exciting and memorable, and had changed his perspective and attitude to Africa. He was very glad he came to Uganda at this time. He referred to his host as a visionary and developmental pillar of society.

9. What next from Bp Masereka for the people of Kasese

Bishop Masereka plans to keep encouraging the people of Kasese and Uganda to be involved more in the education and care of orphaned children, and be more serious about HIV prevention. He plans to intensify the fight against stigma related to HIV infected persons, especially the children. He strongly feels that HIV and the related AIDS are quite preventable if people are serious. He feels absolutely saddened by the loss of thousands of Ugandans and other God's people due to HIV and other calamities that human beings are capable of preventing.

10. Anything else you want included in the story?

The Services and programs of Bishop Masereka Christian Foundation are not meant to compete with or replace anything being done by other development partners in the region, but are meant to supplement the wonderful efforts of other NGOs in the region and the appreciable plans and activities of the Government in the area. The work of transforming Kasese, or the Ugandan society requires the concerted effort of every one. Bishop Masereka believes that good health and education for the critical mass of Ugandans are absolutely foundational for the transformation of the Country.