



Cover Photo:

Sisters Siobhan, Radegunda, Ekaete and Mary Ann, our Congregational Leadership Team, reflecting together during our gathering.

MEDICAL MISSIONARIES OF MARY

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Fall Newsletter
2019

We plant Seeds of Hope

Dear Friends,

Each year, I begin writing a communication with you in June shortly after I return from our Leadership Meetings in Dublin. **I do not know how to convey to you the profound hope and resilience I found among all of us as we listened to each other about the reality of our MMM life today.**

22 of us gathered for two weeks of meetings on Formation and Leadership. We had very able and gifted facilitators who guided us and empowered us to speak, to find answers and to recommend plans for the future. **We were Irish, American, Ugandan, Nigerian, Brazilian, Tanzanian, Kenyan, and English and were representative of the reality of the Congregation today.** Though our backgrounds and life experiences vary, for each of us we found a unity and sense of purpose in our vocation and call to healing mission that was a surprise and delight even to ourselves. Our realities are so different, yet something is holding us together in a common purpose. We would like to believe it is our Creator God calling and using us in small ways to “plant seeds of Hope” in our world.

We **listened** to stories of the violence, kidnapping, instability, and fear that are affecting us in many places but especially Nigeria, South Sudan and Honduras. We struggled to know how to support Sisters, Associates and Staff who desire to continue their mission in difficult situations, but who need support to do that.

We **listened and grieved** the many deaths of our Sisters, changing circumstances in Religious life, succession planning and closure of some cherished ministries and supported each other to find meaning and purpose to move forward through the grief and change which are leading to new life.

We **rejoiced** in our new ventures in Shogunle, Torugbene and Abajah in Nigeria and in Kampala and Kansirra in Uganda.

We **celebrated, sang, danced, and laughed** on a few evenings. I was also able to celebrate my Golden Jubilee with the other Sisters in our Motherhouse in Drogheda which was pure gift for me.

Blessing on each of you and your families,



With gratitude,

Sister Joanne

Sister Joanne Bierl, MMM
Development Director

A New Beginning ~ **IN UGANDA**

New beginnings can be exciting and there is certainly the sense of planting seeds of Hope, but new beginnings are also a challenge. Where you might see an MMM Project or ministry with a thriving Clinic or community health program, it is harder to see what happens in the early days of forging a new beginning which is what Sisters Juliet Ezekwere, MMM; Sr. Jacquelline Nalubega, MMM and Saratu Benjamin, MMM are doing in Kansirra with the support of the MMM East African Area Leader Sister Maria Gonzaga Namuyomba MMM, her team and all the sisters.

Our new mission in Uganda is located in Kansiira, a Sub Parish of St. Anthony's Catholic Parish, Migyera Kasana Luweero Diocese about two hours from Kampala the capital of Uganda. It comprises six villages bordered on one side by Lake Kyoga, and the main occupation of people is fishing and farming.

In January 2019 the Sisters arrived in Migyera where they were to live temporarily in a rented house for three months to enable them to have a close asses to Kansiira



Sisters Juliet, Jacquelline, and Saratu as they depart for their new mission.

village in order to supervise the renovation of the proposed rented sisters' house in that Village.

The Sisters wrote: *"We spent three months in Migyera supervising the renovation work going on in Kansiira and sometimes helped in fetching water from the lake for the workers. This gave us a chance of interacting with the villagers and getting to know them gradually. At times some of them could assist us to lift the jerry-cans of water into the vehicle."*

January 14th 2019 was a special day for them as they were blessed by the visit of Rt. Rev. bishop Paul Ssemwogerere of Kasana Luweero diocese together with his vicar general, Rev. Mgrs Mathias Kanyerezi. He brought them some goodies (bag of sugar, Maize flour, carton of salt and soap). They were touched by Bishop Paul's humility and simplicity as he sat with them on the mat on the veranda at Kansiira. They took him around our future home that was being renovated and he was impressed by our Spirit and the mission of MMM to the people in the rural area. He could not believe that they are going to live and work in this remote place when other missionaries are requesting to stay in town where network for phones is good, electricity, water, health facilities and roads are within their reach! He was touched by the MMM simplicity. That was an affirmation and source of encouragement for the Sisters!!



Bishop Paul blessing the house as the new mission begins.



Our rented house in Kansiira Village in Uganda.

Before moving to Kansiira house, our parish priest Rev. Fr. Lawrence Kimbowa organized a meeting with the leaders of the different villages in Kansiira to discuss issues of security, hospitality and ministry. The meeting was fruitful as they turned up in good number and made concrete and positive suggestions on how to support us and the mission. They were happy to see us and were looking forward to our moving to Kansiira and working with them. The Local Chairmen (LC1s) gave us a Village Health Team (VHT) who will take us around in the different villages for home visitations.

Again from the sisters: *“Eventually on the 28th March 2019, we officially moved in to our new home in Kansiira Village. We have now settled down well in Kansiira, the villagers are welcoming and nice to us. We have started our house to house visits in our catchment area; working with the community to identify and deal with basic health issues. It is work that requires patience and listening. Kansiira has six villages and each of this village is a Local Council on its own. We have almost completed three villages with the help of the Village Health Teams (VHT) that are assigned by the LC1 Chairperson to take us round the houses. When we finish the six villages we will continue with other villages in the catchment area.*

We have also begun introducing ourselves to the different government offices that we will be working with. The people of Kansiira are happy and believe that “MMM presence in their community is a sign of light, hope and opportunities”. It is also going to make them participate more in taking responsibility for their own life and health.”

Kansiira has suffered from prolonged drought which has led to famine and death of their many animals. During the visits, often the Sisters have been left helpless as some people narrated to them the negative effects of the drought in their lives and families e.g. not affording daily meals for their households with the resulting malnutrition very obvious.

It is the beginning of a process of “planting seeds of Hope” in this poor community and working together towards better health of body, mind, and spirit. In years to come, we will be hearing more about how our new mission in Kansiira develops, but for now, it is the slow work of walking, visiting, listening, and building relationships that will bring about change. Thank you for supporting this new beginning in MMM! ■

Up-dates from the MMM World

Sister Joachim McGuinness

MMM died while we were gathered for the meeting this June. “Jo” as she was affectionately called spent more than 20 years in the USA beginning in Chicago and ending in Boston. She spread the word about MMM and made many friends for us. May that dear woman rest in peace.

Sister Theresa Connolly MMM

celebrated her 99th birthday in June with a party at Aras Mhuire, our MMM Nursing facility in Drogheda. Therese came to the USA in 1950 and many American MMM Sisters owe their vocation to her efforts to make MMM known around the country.

Our Associates are a precious gift to the Congregation

and become more and more a part of our lives as a Congregation. As the situation in South Sudan is so unstable, we do not want Sisters to be left there alone. Charles Matovu AMMM from Uganda is volunteering time in South Sudan where he will be a great help with his experience with Kitovu Mobile in Masaka in the past. Moira and Eamonn Brehony AMMM who live in Tanzania working with MMM will spend some time in South Sudan later this year. This help and support is much appreciated.

We congratulate the winners of the spring raffle: Vicki Weldon (Wichita KS), John Wooding (Homer Glen, IL), Thomas Albert (Medford, MA) and Silvia Thompson (Holiday, FL) all of whom are faithful partners with us in our healing mission. Thank you!

SEEDS OF HOPE



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Teresa Gardner-Tyson with Governor Northam and Sr. Bernie Kenny MMM.

Governor Ralph Northam flew in from Richmond, Virginia, 8 hours away, to be a part of the RAM clinic this year in June in Appalachia. He was a Pediatrician for 20 years and he is an avid advocate for improvement of health care. In the photo we see Teresa Gardner-Tyson with the Governor and Sr. Bernie Kenny MMM. Another year in which thousands of people received health care they badly needed.

MMM Updates continued...

