

UGANDA

Uganda has a long and varied history with OAC. The best way to describe it is as a joint venture of the Anglican Church (Church of England), the “West Country branch” of Great Britain, directed by Korky Davey, and the first national director of Uganda, Reverend David Serunjogi.

Let’s begin with David Serunjogi. He started life in 1959, being born under a tree! Friends were trying to get his mother to the hospital, but he was born before his mother got there. His father had five wives, so David was the 15th of 25 children! His father was Catholic, but his mother was not married in the church, so when David was growing up, he was not allowed to attend the Catholic school because he was “illegitimate.” One of his father’s wives treated David badly, so he went to live with his mother and grandparents. His mother and all his siblings died within a week of each other from a severe form of Malaria, so he found himself living on the street.

In those days, Uganda was ruled by Idi Amin, whose soldiers began to round up street kids to work as slave laborers on his sugar plantations. David was saved from that fate by an owner of a car repair shop who allowed him to sleep in an old car on his property and also taught him car repair. A customer then invited him to the Anglican Church. Because of his bad experience with the Catholic Church, he was reluctant but did not want to offend the shop customer, so he went. At first, he was offended because the preacher was preaching against some of the things he was doing, having assumed the preacher had been pre-warned about him. That was not the case. The Holy Spirit was convicting him of his sin. When he was told these things were in the Bible, he asked, “Show me in the



REV. DAVID SERUNJOGI “ROMANS 8:1”

Bible,” and they did. But they also showed him Romans 8:1, “There is, therefore, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” That verse changed his life, because being a “bastard,” as his family called him, had made him believe that he could not be forgiven due to his background and sinful lifestyle. David came to the Lord on November 20, 1988. He gave himself the official name of “Romans 8:1.” and since that time has been known as Romans. Assured that his past was behind him, Romans quickly moved forward in his Christian life. He rented a room and took in six boys off the street. Later, he married Sarah. They have since had eight children and adopted ten more!

To educate his children and other children they invited, he and his wife started what later became “Trinity Children’s Centre” in Kampala. They went on to establish another primary school and then a secondary school in Masaka. They now care for about 2000 children, of whom 400 are orphaned. To pay for their care, Romans organized some money-making enterprises, which included a hall where people could come and see their favorite football (soccer) teams play live, a Maize (corn) mill, and a hardware store. He also started the “Double Cure Medical Centre” in Mpigi, halfway between Kampala and Masaka, where people can get medical care at



DOUBLE CURE MEDICAL FACILITY IS NOW OPEN

reasonable rates without bribes. They also have an inoculation program for the villages. David was trained and ordained as a priest in the Anglican Church under the Central Buganda Diocese and was appointed “Evangelist for the Central Buganda Diocese.” The government threatened to close down his schools unless he got a formal degree. So, he found an American sponsor and applied and was accepted for a course in Applied Theology from Redcliffe College in Gloucester, England. His Bishop’s letter of recommendation had used his nickname “Romans 8:1” instead of his proper name. When the immigration authorities asked him about that, he related his story. Their answer was to grant him a two-year visa instead of the six-month one he had requested!



KORKY DAVEY AND THE TEAM

Romans found out about Open Air Campaigners through Korky Davey, who had a close connection with the Bristol Diocese of the Anglican Church. The Bristol Diocese became very interested in the situation in Northern Uganda, where a terrorist group, “The Lord’s Resistance Army,” was active. This group got its start in the Congo and was rampaging, pillaging, and engaging in mass murder in the northern part of Uganda, with the church being very much under attack.

Flying into Kampala with a small team, Korky found out that “Mission Aviation Fellowship” (MAF) flights into the northern part of the country were not affordable, and road travel was too dangerous. Instead, Bishop George Siabulya of the Central Buganda Diocese invited Korky’s group to lead seminars for his clergy in schools ministry, of which Romans was part of as Diocesan Evangelist. Bishop Siabulya’s cathedral was in Kusaka and Korky describes him as “a man with tremendous character and huge enthusiasm for the Gospel.” As it turned out, over the next twelve years, Romans organized the training seminars, helped by OAC staff, and assisted by the translation work of Tabitha Ddembe who had trained with him for ordination in the same college. The seminars were held at a conference center on Lake Nabugabo, which became an annual event. Another big help was Alan Reader, who had been the Deputy Head of the Bristol Grammar School but had taught in Uganda for twelve years. He had introduced higher mathematics to the Ugandan schools. He was instrumental in helping the Bristol team understand the local culture and helping to lead the seminars.

Evangelism seminars were also held in Mityana. As a result, the local cathedral’s attendance went up from 30 to 600 in a couple of months. The local people were fascinated with the Gospel being presented in the open air. The local Bible college was also revived. Those completing the seminar were issued a certificate signed by Alan, Korky, and the local Bishop. One of those certificates showed up with an application to Bristol University, which demonstrated the value of them to the Ugandan students.



EVANGELISM SEMINARS ARE WELL ATTENDED AND PROVIDE VALUABLE SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE OPEN-AIR OUTREACH

Korky was so impressed with the way Romans conducted the seminars that he invited him to Bristol for six months of training. Korky relates that “he created a tremendously good impression” around the local schools, particularly in Somerset. He was often invited to “special school days,” where he got on “wonderfully well” with students and faculty alike. Other trips to Bristol followed, which cemented his relationship with OAC.



USING AN OLD SHEET AS A MOVIE SCREEN

Open-air work in Uganda consists of village meetings by putting up a sheet to be used as a screen and showing the Jesus Film when it gets dark. David starts with football (soccer) clips, followed by the Jesus film, and more promised football clips at the end. Before the crowd leaves, they get a full presentation of the Gospel. Never having experienced anything like this before, the whole village will be present. In one village, the son of a Muslim chief became a believer. Many of the villagers also indicated they would like to become Christians but pulled back for fear of displeasing the chief. However, this particular young man had the courage to take his stand for Jesus.

Tabitha Ddembe, Romans’ co-worker, is responsible for schools in five parishes, with seventy volunteers, most of whom she visits on a regular basis with books and fresh school supplies. These seventy are able to minister to a great many children. Four hundred workers have attended the OAC Anglican training schools over the years, and some of them minister in remote areas, which makes it difficult to track their progress.

Though the ministry in Uganda is very different from the OAC ministry in other countries, it is extremely effective in reaching people for Christ. OAC Uganda was approved as a full-fledged branch of our ministry by the OAC International Board in 2017, with Romans as its national director. In recent years, a ministry shift away from open-air ministry has taken place and as of 2020, Uganda is no longer an OACI member nation, although they continue to love and serve the Lord in many wonderful ways.



REACHING THE UNREACHED ON LAKE VICTORIA



ROMANS (UGANDA) AND ROB GEORGE (AUSTRALIA) MINISTERING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL



TABITHA IS A GREAT CO-WORKER