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Dear friends,

As I write this I have just returned from two weeks in Uganda. This was the first time that I had been to Africa, so I carried all kinds of preconceptions with me. I always try to be conscious of this reality of the way we all approach new situations and do my best to let experiences come fresh and simply appreciate them for what they are. However, it is difficult. I also try to see each fresh experience as something through which it is possible to learn more about God's love and concern for his world and also for me. The basic message of Easter is that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that all who believes in him will not perish but inherit eternal life.

I found amongst Christians with whom I mixed in Uganda a great confidence in this Easter message. My friend Patrick who I met at Cambridge and had not seen for twelve years runs the resources centre attached to the Cathedral in Kampala. He is also on the Global Council for Anglican Youth Organisations, with specific responsibility for the whole of Africa. I talked with a number of people associated with the Boy's Brigade, which is strong there, though suffers from the same problem that we have here with youth organisations, namely getting and keeping volunteers. It was good to hear about the work of the Church of Uganda, part of the world-wide Anglican family of churches.

As part of the Anglican calendar of special days, we remember Charles Lwanga and the martyrs of Uganda. These were a group of young men who died hideously for their faith at the hands of king Mwangi who was threatened by the teachings of the faith, particularly in relation to multiple marriages, the rights of women and the equality and dignity of all people before God. These deaths happened in 1886. While now life expectancy in Uganda is only just over 50, it is sobering to think that for many of us these deaths occurred during the life times of our grandparents or great-grandparents. There is a commemorative board in Ridley Hall Cambridge of bright young men who went as missionaries to east Africa in the late 1800s and early 1900s, many of whom died soon after arriving. But their legacy is there

are Christian schools everywhere, desperately trying to survive in a land where outside of the major settlements sanitation, electricity, roads not full of potholes, nursing, and a reliable Police service are all dreams that appear completely unobtainable. The Pentecostal Church in its various manifestations is thriving. Christian work is still desperately needed. Unbelievable as it may appear to us, human sacrifice and even more appallingly, child sacrifice is on the increase. Yet despite so easily giving a picture of a chaotic county with violence always just below the surface, every Ugandan I met was charming. And there was great hope. As was said to me, "most Ugandans work very hard and want to make life better for themselves and their families. We want to make our country a better place in which to live."

Travel is unquestionably a great educator. It is fascinating to see how people live in a world that is full of contrasts. Yet what becomes ever more clear the more places to which you travel is the universality of the Christian message. I recall my friend Patrick being dismayed back in our Cambridge days about how few people went to church in England He could not understand that the county whose people had brought the faith to his country was somewhere that many people did not attend church. I recall him saying, "In Uganda, you might have to walk miles to come to church, yet this is what people do. In England there are churches on every corner, yet people do not go. Why is that?" It was a good question when he asked it, and it remains a good question. Recently I heard that more people now attend major shopping centres on Sundays that go to Church. Even in a credit crunch people still flock to worship at the shrines of consumerism.

Where are you planning to be on Good Friday or Easter Day? You may have to work on Good Friday. If not, please join with one of the Churches Together events. The Walk of Witness at 12.45 has grown over recent years. Please consider celebrating Easter Day at one of our services. The Churches in Uganda will be packed that day. The Ugandan martyrs gave their lives for the values of the faith. We taught the people of Uganda the basics of the faith. Ugandan Christians today have much to teach us. Amen. Yours in Christ, *Patrick*