**UGANDA REPORT**

It seems like only yesterday that I was in the “Pearl of Africa”, as she is fondly known amongst the African countries, and yet it has been almost 8 weeks since I have been back from what I can only describe as, yet another amazing trip to Uganda.

I left the UK on the 28 August, with two other ladies who live in Seattle, Washington; and who were to be my ministering “buddies” at a women’s conference we were all invited to be speakers at. We touched down at Entebbe Airport in the dead of the night; thankfully we were met by two lovely ladies from the Makerere Full Gospel Church (MFGC), who were our hosts, which took the worry out of us trying to locate our accommodation in a foreign land.

After just over an hour’s drive from the airport, we arrived at our destination, in Kampala, which was to be ‘home’ for at least part of our stay. We were met with a warm greeting from the other lady who made up our speaking quartet team, who flew in from Taiwan a couple of weeks or so prior to our arrival.

So let me just back track, as I should explain how this opportunity came about for me to minister at the women’s conference at MFGC in the first instance.

I was privileged to go to Uganda in 2014 on mission with a group from my church, predominately to work with the youth at MFGC. We ministered at various remand homes, orphanages, and universities and had a great time spreading the fragrance of Jesus everywhere we went and giving these amazing children hope in their dire situations.

When I got back home, a lady who was ministering on the same trip with her husband (from Seattle, Washington), asked if I would go back with her the following year to speak at a Women’s Conference that she usually spoke at; it was an opportunity I felt I could not turn down, especially since I have had prophetic words through individuals telling me that I was going to be God’s mouth piece and would speak to women at conferences overseas. It seemed like a no brainer.

So now you’re up to speed with my story of visiting Uganda for the third time. I guess you couldn’t call my first time in Uganda a trip of substance, since my feet literally only touched the soil to pass through en-route to Sudan in 2011, where I had another amazing opportunity to speak at a women’s conference in Sudan; which is a whole other story for another time.

At MFGC, Fred & Sabrina Wantaate are the Senior Pastors, overseeing 1,200 churches in connection with their organisation. MFGC have three services on a Sunday morning; 9 am, 11 am and 1 pm, with their youth service at 3 pm.

It was only a week prior to leaving for Uganda that I learnt from the women’s ministries co-ordinator, Prossy Mbabazi, that each of us would have to minister in one of the morning services and I pulled the short straw of ministering at the 7 am service, on both Sundays, which was a huge challenge to me, especially as I am not a morning person. This factor became the joke of our entire stay; I did eventually learn to see the funny side too by the end of the trip. However, I felt privileged that these Pastors, who are a great couple, would entrust the ministering to their congregation, who number about 1,200 per service, in the hands of a virtual “nobody”, since I had never met them until this trip, as they were in the States on training when I visited last year.

The women’s conference started on the Tuesday, the theme of which was “….and you will bear much fruit…” (John 15:5) which lasted a duration of five days. Women, young and old, came from the surrounding regions of Kampala in their droves; in total I would say that there were about 300 women who attended the conference.

The meetings consisted of praise & worship, talks by the invited guest speakers and singing groups, who sang beautifully in their native Luganda tongue and had the audience participating in intervals of jubilant dancing and worship. I had the opportunity to minister 4-5 times throughout the conference, which included a workshop with the singles.

On the first day of the conference, I was to share my session on the singles network with Pastor Mike Thomas, of Divorce Care, who resides in Uganda, but unfortunately he was unable to attend the conference. This change to the programme meant that I had the full hour to minister and spoke on “Living with a Purpose on Purpose”, where as an introduction I was able to share the vision of TSN and give away a few of Kris’ study books, “Jesus, Single Like me”, that I had brought with me, as well as bless some of the ladies with my own book “Insightful Tips for the Unique Mature Single”. The feedback from the ladies was very positive with them stating that they would use the books in their Esther Singles ministry, which is a ministry that falls under the women’s ministries, headed by the women’s ministries co-ordinator.

In the days that followed, I spoke twice more challenging the women about the fruit that already resided on the inside of their lives and how they would see that fruit blossom and “bear much fruit”, with topics such as “What do you have to give?” and “How to avoid making fruit comparisons”. It was interesting to have exuberant interpreters who capably and passionately translated my heart to the women, which followed by them responding to times of ministry at the altar in response to the word.

On the last Sunday of my trip, I was asked to meet with the young ladies who meet once a month for the Esther Singles Ministry, where 30-40 young ladies, between the ages of 20-35, were eagerly awaiting my arrival.

It was exciting to share this special time with these ladies, having only had a short time in the workshop at the conference to interact with them and hear their heart of life as single women in Uganda. To summarise, I would say that whilst they have the usual pressures of parents wanting them to be married any time soon, followed shortly by having children, I was very impressed with the general consensus of where they were within their own walk with God. Their relationship with God is what is key in their lives and is where they are challenging and focusing their attention; secure in the fact that they would not bow to the pressures put on them, no matter how sincere or insincere those pressures were.

I shared my own walk of faith with them and also shared how I have dealt with life as a single woman for over 30 years. You could see as the eyes widened at my revelation, however, they were greatly encouraged by my steadfastness and commitment to God, with or without a man by my side. Which I also believe empowered them in their own individual walk with God and changed their perspective of how they would view and see their singleness in the foreseeable future.

I noticed that this group of women were very supportive of one another, with some being braved to share that they were currently in relationships, but that they did not allow those relationships to come before their relationship with God. Whilst there were those who were not currently in a relationship, however, the encouragement they displayed towards each other was genuine and a blessing to behold. I felt confident that they would pass on what they were learning to the generation coming up behind them so that a healthy outlook of life as a single would be lived to the max.

Overall, it was a successful conference and a wonderful opportunity to speak words of empowerment to the women who sacrificially took time off from work or left behind their families to sit attentively, like Mary in the Bible, and absorb and soak up everything that was put before them. As one of the speakers, I believe the seeds have been sown and that a harvest of those seed will bring forth “much fruit” in the lives of these women.

The Ugandans are warm and special people and whilst I don’t know when the doors of opportunity will open for me to return, I do know that it won’t be my last trip to the “Pearl of Africa”.