



## Sharing the Love and Truth Of Christ in Uganda

*By Preston Smith (CPI Director of Development)*

Church Planting International led its first short-term missions team to Uganda, Oct. 22-Nov. 2. Steven and Christy Shepard arrived a week ahead of the team and hosted a training conference for Christian leaders at Calvary Worship Center in Kampala, the home church of co-worker Michael Dikatali. After the rest of our 13-member team arrived, we traveled six hours to the Bundibugyo District, a mountainous region of Uganda bordering Congo, where we began ministry in the small village of Bundimulombi, a remote mountain community of 2,800 people. Pastor Michael also went with us and served as our guide.

When we first arrived in Bundimulombi, we were treated to an unforgettable welcoming ceremony by the students of God's Mercy School. Founded by pastor and CPI co-worker Isaac Mugisa, God's Mercy provides Christian education for 235 children ages pre-school through high school. Currently, the classrooms at God's Mercy are stick huts with dirt floors, many of which only have partially covered walls of mud. Part of our mission was to construct the school's first brick classroom building. As a result of the exploratory trip in 2014, CPI initiated a feeding program which provides lunches for the children. Many of the children were coming to school without breakfast and were having difficulty concentrating on their studies.

Over the course of seven days, our team hosted children's programs, women's ministries, a three-day training conference for church leaders, and a medical clinic that treated approximately 300 individuals. Members of our team also visited homes to pray for families and deliver basic supplies. On Sunday we attended three worship services at churches planted throughout the region by Pastor Isaac. Our team members preached God's Word, shared testimonies, and our newly formed and unrehearsed "Uganda Missions Choir" sang hymns. CPI also provided about 300 books for church leaders along with 82 copies of the New Testament, recently published in the local tribal language of Lubwisi.

This was the first trip to Africa for the majority of the CPI team members. The Ugandan culture and precious people left an unforgettable impression on us all. I was specifically touched by the humility and gratitude of our Ugandan brothers and sisters in Christ. They have very few resources, yet are so grateful for what they have and use it to serve the Lord faithfully. From seeing groups of believers meet in churches with dirt floors, some without access to electricity and some even without walls, I was moved by how fancy buildings and elaborate programming didn't define their churches — instead they were defined by love, fellowship and corporate worship of our Heavenly Father.



Carl Catoe and DJ Mears work on benches for God's Mercy School



Believers receive New Testaments in their native language

# Reforming Worship

Article by Steven Shepard

*Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. (Psalm 95:6-7)*

In writing about reforming worship I am referring to what takes place at our church services. There is also a proper biblical meaning for worship that goes beyond simply singing and praying in church. The problem is that genuine worship as revealed in the Bible is often hindered in many church services instead of helped.

We must begin with an understanding of what worship is. Psalm 95 captures its meaning. The Hebrew word “worship” means to bow the knee or prostrate oneself, which represents something far more profound than merely the outward position of the body. What matters to God is our hearts. Worship involves surrendering and subjecting all that we are to God. We see this meaning also in Romans 12:1: “... I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” God calls us to surrender our whole life to Him, and we respond by continually confronting and adjusting our attitudes. God is after repentance, humility, profound respect, gratitude, obedience, and love. This should also be the goal in our corporate worship services. Worship is not about entertainment, or our feelings, or personal experience. ***It should not be centered upon ourselves at all.*** Worship is about exalting a holy and sovereign God and subjecting everything we are to Him. And worship goes way beyond Sunday morning. It involves the way we live every moment of our lives.

But what do we see manifest today in so many local churches throughout the world? The attention, mind, and senses are drawn to the front, to a brightly lit platform where talented musicians perform polished numbers with ear splitting volume. (I have been to services where ear plugs are even offered to the worshippers). If this were a Christian concert, that would be fine, but this is supposed to be a worship service. The attention should not be on the great music, the rhythm, or the worship band, but on God. At such times I look around only to see that most of the people are not singing. They are disengaged and have become a passive audience to a program.

Here are three ways to reform our church services so that true worship might be encouraged instead of hindered:

- Teach and renew our minds about the meaning of worship.
- Insist on song lyrics that are profoundly God-centered. Sentimental songs about our own feelings and experiences are not helpful. Songs should be about the greatness of God, what He has done for us in Christ, or express our surrender to Him.
- Musicians should accompany but not dominate the singing. The volume should be low enough so that the voices of the congregation can be heard. Again, worship is not a performance, but a congregational experience, where the whole body of Christ is actively engaged.

Let us not just accept whatever pop Christianity serves up, but insist upon God’s standard for worship. As we set apart our lives for Christ alone – we will become more and more conformed to His image and we will know His abiding presence.



*In 2015 CPI began to sponsor a school lunch program for the children at God’s Mercy School (above) and also helped Pastor Isaac begin a cocoa marketing business (below)*



**Above:** current classrooms at God’s Mercy School  
**Below:** recent progress of the new school building



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