

Global School of Sports Ministry

NEWS BRIEF & THANK YOU

December 2021

As we enter a new year, I wanted to take a moment to thank you once again for your tremendous help and encouragement over the years in our work with sports ministry programs.

The sole purpose of my correspondence to you is to simply thank you for your prayers and wonderful support over the years as we prepared and sent out “search and rescue” teams into parts of our world crumbling before our eyes.

I can't thank you enough for making it possible for us to stand strong, resist the forces of evil and navigate through these troubled times in an effort to offer light for a world engulfed in darkness.

Not long ago I received an e-mail from a friend in Kenya that sent my spirit soaring. I would like to share a little bit about this Kenyan since your prayers and help over the years made it possible for this individual (and many others) to come to Christ, survive several “bumps” in his life, help him get back on his feet and return to the harvest fields once again.

I first met Franklin Shelimba several years ago when our ministry was planning to start a series of programs in some of the major slums in Uganda. One of our U.S. staff members, Don Brenneman, had heard of a very large and successful slum program in Kenya and suggested we might want to visit this slum and learn from their success.

I agreed with Don and a short time later my wife, Sue, and I were able to travel to Nairobi and meet with the founder of this massive slum program. Over 800,000 people were crowded into this one community. Ten thousand children and adults participated in various programs established by the founder and were run by a number of residents who had been trained to organize and oversee the different events. One such program was an incredible soccer league designed to involve children and adults. Hundreds of people took part in this amazing event.

Although the organization led by the founder was impressive and well run, it was a secular organization and the spiritual element was not included. Nevertheless, there was much to learn from this well-organized operation.

After meeting with the founder and explaining our goal of establishing programs in the slums of Uganda this gracious man arranged to have two of his Kenyan leaders give us a tour of the slum and introduce us to the different programs being offered. The tour lasted four days as there was so much to see and information to be shared.

The two Kenyan leaders assigned to us were very polite and helpful. One of the two was Franklin Shelimba, an outstanding soccer player and a very bright and pleasant man. The second guide was also a fine leader, a Muslim, and also very polite and gracious.

When our four-day tour was completed, I presented the founder with a sizable donation for his work in the slum, a number of soccer balls, and other equipment which he greatly appreciated. I also presented our two Kenyan guides with a pair of t-shirts, a Sports New Testament for each of them, some Christian sports tracts along with other gifts, and some cash to help them with some of their personal needs.

Shortly after returning to the states, I received an e-mail from Franklin thanking us for his gifts. He also stated that he had read through the entire Sports New Testament and also read the literature I enclosed which explained how one could become a follower of Christ.

After carefully reading the literature, Franklin accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. He also requested that I send him more of the follow-up material that I told him about. In addition, Franklin asked if I could please send him a complete Bible that I said I would provide if he would like to have one.

Thus began a unique journey with this new believer who the Lord placed in our path to help guide us through a massive slum in Kenya. Now it was our turn to help Franklin walk along the challenging path of faith and discover the special gifts that God had provided him. During the next several months Franklin was enrolled in the King's boot camp as God prepared him for service in the royal forces of the kingdom.

When Franklin finished his basic training he immediately began to share his faith with the young people with whom he had been assigned in the slum. Unfortunately the founder of the slum program informed Franklin that he was not to share his faith while working with the Mathare slum program.

Franklin was very disappointed to be denied the opportunity to share this life-changing news with those greatly in need of hope, purpose and meaning. He decided to resign his position and find another way to share his faith with those who had such need.

When Franklin asked to come under the wings of Sports Outreach we agreed to add him to our staff although we were not sure how we could pay him due to our very small budget. Nevertheless, after much prayer the Lord touched a few of His people and Franklin was fully funded and became a key to opening the door to Kenya and a whole new country for the ministry of Sports Outreach.

Within a short time Franklin recruited a few others to join him and this small group wasted no time in establishing a school in their newly selected slum in another part of Nairobi. Before long we were in the education business as scores of slum children couldn't wait to learn and attend a school that was tuition free.

Volunteers along with a number of paid staff joined together as a rental building soon became a school and before long our classrooms were overflowing with eager to learn students. Parents joined in and helped as they were able including providing a simple nourishing meal for the children, for some their only meal for the day.



On one of my visits to Nairobi, Franklin took me on a tour of the slum where he was working to meet some of the parents including a look inside a number of the huts where these people somehow managed to survive.

In one of the huts we visited I was introduced to a very sick woman dying of AIDS. She was all alone and told me how much Franklin and some of his colleagues were helping her by preparing meals for her, washing clothes and providing new bedding for this poor woman who had only rags to cover her during the cool nights that prevailed in this particular region of Nairobi.

During the course of the next four years Franklin initiated a number of new programs, helped scores of very needy people but along the way stumbled, got back up but fell again. As a result of his stumbling, the administration decided to remove Franklin and replace him with some of the other leaders who had proven themselves as very capable and dependable administrators.

Some of Franklin's "bumps" were heart wrenching. When his wife ran off with his best friend and left him with their young daughter to raise, Franklin was unsure how he could care for his little girl and still work in the ministry. Fortunately Franklin's mother took care of the need and cared for this broken-hearted child. Franklin continued in his role as father and gradually this young child began to smile again as the warmth of the love of her grandmother and father penetrated the darkness that had swept over her when her mother deserted her.

Franklin had a few more "bumps" and the administration of Sports Outreach was once again forced to release him. This once proud and respected man was heartbroken. His life had been shattered. It seemed to him that he had lost everything and even felt God turned His back on him.

When I met Franklin after his dismissal I assured him that God never abandons His family members. There may be consequences for ones actions but the Lord never leaves or forsakes His followers. God still loves His children who slip and fall.

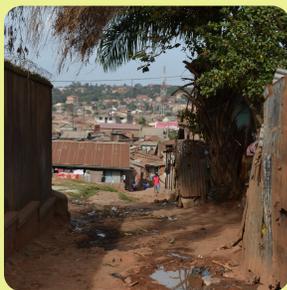
1 John 1:9 makes this clear: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”.

Franklin sought God’s forgiveness. Unfortunately there are always some of those who claim to be Christians who can’t forgive and end up casting verbal stones at wounded warriors. Franklin was shunned and abuse was heaped on him.

Thankfully the Lord made it possible for me to come alongside Franklin and assure him that he is still loved and that the Lord had work for him to do. We must all remember that when a brother or sister in Christ trips and falls, it is our responsibility to help them back up, not to destroy them but to restore them.

I am so pleased to say that Franklin did get back up, got involved in a church, enrolled in our GSSM course, passed our course with honors and is now back into the harvest fields as part of our “search and rescue” team.

Then, to add frosting to the cake, Franklin sent us an E-mail that brought tears flowing from this old coach’s eyes.



Although the E-mail was 2 pages long and of great interest to all of us at GSSM, let me share one paragraph that caused my tear-filled eyes into a downpour...and perhaps will cause you to do the same. This same Franklin, abandoned by those who continued to throw verbal stones at this wounded man in recovery, shared a paragraph that brought me to my feet in applause to the Lord as I tried to grasp the enormity of Franklin’s outreach.

In Franklin’s own words that follow, I will let you be the judge:

“School ministry: I managed to go to four different high schools to share the Gospel. (These are public schools that often invite pastors and Christian leaders to share with their students as they seek to teach their students the importance of spiritual matters).

And more than 344 students accepted Christ. And now we have been having fellowship together with the Christian union in school for accountability and at the same time for fellowship.”



Franklin goes on to say that the school administration wants him to come back and discuss some tough questions that teenagers deal with and what the scriptures have to say concerning these issues.

Just think, 344 young people from 4 different high schools in Nairobi, Kenya now have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. You might even have a chance to meet these African students when you arrive at Heaven’s gates and are welcomed into the presence of our Lord who just might introduce you to these newborns who will want to embrace you and thank you for making it possible for Franklin to be restored and to be led to share the Good News with a group of high school students seeking to know the truth. Jesus puts it this way:

“And you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32 NIV)

Our Lord also added in John 14:6,
“I am the way and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”.

Thank you again for making all of this and much more possible. May the Lord richly bless you and your family. Then, as all believers take a few moments during these uncertain times to praise God and thank Him for the privilege for being part of His family, isn't it comforting to know that when everything seems to go wrong and pain is everywhere, our Lord promises never to leave us or forsake us.

May we all be determined to obey God's command to stay strong and be courageous and be that special light that can penetrate even the darkest part of our sin-infested world.

So be encouraged. Put on your Armor (Ephesians 6) and “clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” (Colossians 3:12)
 Then arm yourself with the indestructible weapons of love, the sword (God's word) and prayer. Once you are properly equipped it is time to drive the enemy into full retreat. It won't be easy. As Billy Graham once said, “God didn't call us to a playground... He called us to a battlefield.”



And here is the great part. You don't even have to leave your home to be part of this major counter-attack against the forces of evil that have flooded our nation and the world with their lies and deception. Enough! It is time for all true believers to surrender their lives unconditionally to Christ. Then when you enter the battle raging all around you and the storm clouds are the darkest, you have the promise of our Commander-in-Chief, that He will always be with you.

Therefore never forget, you are on the winning side. Our Lord will be victorious and will enable us to drive the forces of evil into a full retreat. Then in the last days Christ will annihilate Satan and all of his evil followers.

With these incredible thoughts in mind, let praise flow from our lips as we watch a new year unfold before our eyes.

Thank you once again for being a blessing to so many. Please know that you are greatly appreciated and are a very important part of our mission that offers love, hope and mercy to a very needy and corrupt world.

Blessings!
 Russ Carr
 On behalf of GSSM

