

Mama Irene Gleeson

1944-2013



26 July, 2013, 10:00 am

at Irene Gleeson Foundation Headquarters, Kitgum

Mama Irene's Life Well Lived



Irene's childhood began December 30, 1944 on Sydney's Northern Beaches, and despite her earnest prayers and tears, her home life was one of despair, poverty and sickness. Her father abandoned her pregnant mother, and Her mother passed away when she was only 15 years old. She felt as though she stood alone in the world as it rushed past her.

She married at 16, had four beautiful children and built a loving home. After 20 years, her marriage ended in divorce and she began a desperate search for truth. She tried everything, only to be left confused and disillusioned. In 1982, she made a decision that would change the course of her life; she decided to give Jesus total control. She immediately felt weightless and free.

Reading the Bible taught her how to pray and she saw God's faithfulness over hers and her children's lives. After travelling to Africa in 1989, she heard about the orphans and abducted children in Uganda and felt God's call to help them. She sold her beachside home and her possessions and left Australia in December 1991, bound for Africa.

(Picture to the left: Irene's joyful smile after she received Jesus as her Lord and Savior on

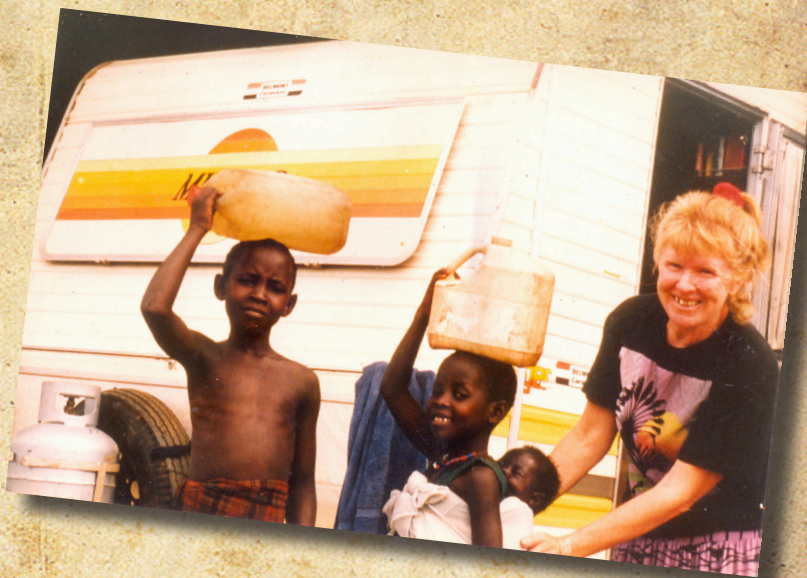


Her personal scripture was Exodus 23:20, "See I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared for you."

(Picture to the right: Irene with three of her four children. From left to right: Maree, Shelley and Greg. Not pictured, Heidi)



She towed her caravan from Kampala to Kitgum and set it under a mango tree with no water or electricity – just a desire to do whatever she could to help out this community. But Irene was stepping into a war zone that would challenge her existence every day.



The North of Uganda was being destroyed by 37 years of war during this time, and many attempts had been made on Irene's life. But through God's grace, her life was spared over and over again and she continued to fight for the local Acholi people.

She gathered 50 traumatised children under a mango tree and began to teach, feed and bathe them. Now, 22 years later, the Irene Gleeson Foundation (IGF) 20 acre 'Victory Centre' nurtures almost 3,600 children daily along with the Amida, Padibe Camp, and Palabek schools in the outer regions which care for more than 3,400 children.

In 2012, Irene was diagnosed with cancer. Despite beginning chemo and radiation in Australia, with the doctor's negative reports ringing in her ears and being given only months to live, Irene's faith in her

Lord God only rose. She decided the place she needed to be was among her people in Kitgum, so she booked a flight back to Uganda where she stayed from July to October loving on her African staff and children. After an unsuccessful surgery in the United States in February, Irene headed home to Australia to spend her last few months with her family in March of this year. She was surrounded by her children and loved ones in Australia when the Lord welcomed her into the gates of heaven on July 21st, where she heard, "Well done my good and faithful servant."



The Irene Gleeson Foundation Today

*"Wherever this Gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of Her."
-Matthew 26:13*



IGF was born out of Irene's faithfulness and exists today due to her sacrifice. In 1991, Irene came to Northern Uganda with just a caravan full of few possessions and the knowledge that the Gospel compelled her to change the world.

Hearing of the children who were being abducted, Irene utilized her background as a teacher and came with plans to open a school for orphans. She began teaching 50 children to write their names in the dirt under a mango tree. Slowly, through Irene's



perseverance, faith and the support of Australian donors, the program began to grow. Irene began to build school buildings, toilets, and medical clinics for her children,

but never spent any money to build a nice house for herself, but instead continued to live in her caravan. She chose to bathe in a basin as her children did, and eat posho and beans as her children did. Irene lived and worked through many struggles, including being held at gunpoint six times.



In all the turmoil, the work grew. In 2000, after constructing many primary classrooms, Irene built a technical and vocational school for primary graduates. In

2006 Irene built her second school, at Amida IDP camp, in 2007, her third, at Padibe IDP camp. On July 15, 2013, IGF opened a school in Palabek – the first school to be opened without Mama Irene. The work continues!



Today the education program of IGF is the strongest pillar of the program. IGF gives daily education, food, water, counseling and basic medical care to 6,000 primary school students, and 1,000 vocational students.

When Irene came, she encountered abject poverty that was all-encompassing to her children, and

realized that education alone will not transform, liberate and empower the children she was serving. She began by buying basic medicine for the children to save them from easily treatable diseases. Later, as the program raised up spiritual leaders, Irene's program offered counseling for the traumatic experiences many of her children had suffered, as many had been child soldiers of war affected youth. Also, Irene continued her philosophy of not institutionalizing children in orphanages by building child-headed homes for orphans, so that they could maintain a connection with their land and their clan.

In 2005, after a student near and dear to Irene became an orphan when his mother died of AIDS, Irene opened an HIV/AIDS hospice where women and children living with the disease could receive medical and palliative care, while the children could still attend school without the burden of caring for sick parents. Irene has seen many people walk free

- healed from the disease over the years due to Jesus' healing hand.



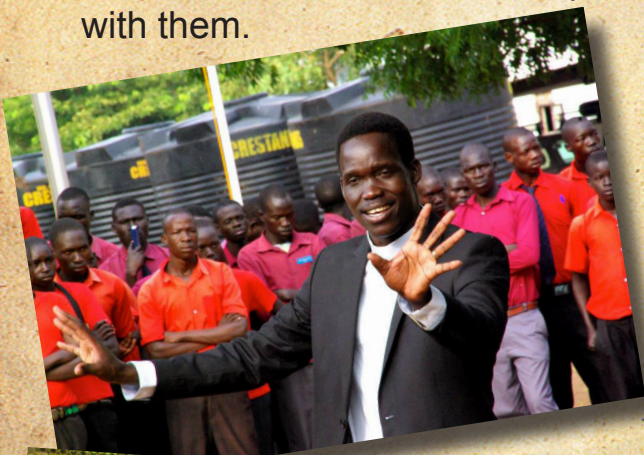
Irene lived in a broken and war-torn community, and, in 2008, to bring a message of hope, she started MightyFire FM, a leading radio station in Kitgum. MightyFire can today be heard as far as South Sudan and Kampala, bringing a message of peace, hope and reconciliation. Mighty-Fire also offers community education programming with shows devoted to discussion of development issues, community debates, and other difficult issues by offering an equal voice to all members of society.



Irene's motherly heart for children is shown by her devotion to all aspects of their well-being. When Mama Irene heard that 16 women died per day in Uganda due to child-bearing complications, she decided to do something about it. Irene's largest piece of unfinished business is the IGF Women's Hospital and Maternal Health Project. Seeking to reduce the maternal death rate through community pre-natal education and a referral hospital on the main campus in Kitgum, the Maternal health project will seek to ensure that all children keep their Mamas with them.



Today, the IGF staff mourns the loss of their fearless leader, affectionately known as "The General" and "Mama." However, those 450 men and women have made a commitment in her honor to bond together and to be strong and courageous despite the loss. The mantle of leadership is being passed to many with Irene's death, and IGF is led by a world-class senior management team with a combined 39 years at IGF between them. The Australian and American donors who support IGF remain committed to IGF despite this present struggle, and are devoted to growing IGF in honor of Irene. This project will not die even though Irene is no longer here. Instead it will grow, adapt, and better serve the people of Kitgum and the surrounding region to become leaders in development, success and excellence. As Irene constantly repeated, we will not rest until we see every child reach their full potential, so that they do not die with the music still in them. Mama's song lives on in all of us.



Amazing Grace

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear.
And Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far
and Grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me.
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

When we've been here ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

To God be the Glory

To God be the glory, great things he hath done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the lifegate that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the people rejoice!

O come to the Father thru Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

(Refrain)

Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing thru Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

(Refrain)

Order of Events

- 9:00 – Praise and Worship as Mourners Arrive
10:00 – Opening Prayer and National Anthem
10:05 – Mama Irene’s Biography and IGF Work Today
10:15 – Testimonies by Irene’s Children
10:25 – Introduction of Invited Guests
10:30 – Liturgical Services
11:30 – Interlude
11:35 – Start of Speeches
12:00 – Interlude
12:05 – Continued Speeches
12:45 – Testimony
12:50 – Interlude
12:55 – Continued Speeches
1:15 – Speech by Chief Mourner
1:30 – Interlude
2:00 – Service of Lunch
3:00 – Closing Words and Dismissal with Optional Tour of IGF
3:30 – Chief Mourner and Guests for MightyFire Radio Program

**UGANDA:
IRENE GLEESON
FOUNDATION**

POB 40, Kitgum, UGANDA,
EAST AFRICA.

JohnPaul Kiffasi, CEO/Director

M: +256 772 584 355

E: jpkiffasi@gmail.com

Trent Fuenmayor: Asst. Director

M: +256 790 501 072

E: trentfuenmayor@gmail.com

**AUSTRALIA:
IRENE GLEESON
FOUNDATION**

POB 2122, Mansfield DC, QLD
4122

Colin McNabb, Executive Manager

M: +617 3103 0318

E: colin@irenegleesonfoundation.com

Alice Zagorski, Administrator

M: +612 9451 3463

E: info@irenegleesonfoundation.com

**UNITED STATES:
IRENE GLEESON
FOUNDATION USA**

Alliance Ministries/IGFUSA

400 Office Park Drive, Suite 301

Birmingham, Alabama 35223

Jamie Ankenbrandt, USA Director

M: +1 205 807 0714

E: jamie@alliance-ministries.com

Website: www.igfusa.org



IRENE GLEESON

foundation.com