

Kumi Benefit Ride/Hike – The Back Story



Kumi Benefit Ride/Hike (KBR) is Chinese Community United Methodist Church's (CCUMC) annual fundraiser for special capital projects supporting a school in the village of Kumi, Uganda. How did a small church in Oakland Chinatown get connected to a school 11,000 miles away in rural Africa? Kumi Christian Visionary School (KCVS) began as the dream of Silver Omakenyi, a gifted music student who was attending the Reformed Theological Seminary in Kampala. He invited his teacher, Aeri Lee, to visit his village, a day's journey away, where she learned of his devotion to many local orphaned children. He shared with her his dream to build a quality school for the most vulnerable children, many who had lost a parent to HIV Aids.

Aeri brought this vision back to her home church, CCUMC in Oakland, where she served as the Director of Worship and Music. Through several fundraisers and an abundance of prayer, land was purchased in 2007, and building plans began to take shape. Little by little, the church raised funds, enabling first a foundation, then walls, a roof, windows and doors. A Volunteers in Mission (VIM) team helped work on construction in 2009. In 2014, the school opened with 7 classrooms, and eager children began to attend. That year, a second VIM team volunteered in the classrooms, bringing books and soccer balls, and holding teacher training sessions. What celebration there was in Kumi!

An annual dinner is held in Oakland to pay for staff salaries, partial tuitions, fuel, food, supplies, and administrative costs. But it was soon evident that a lot more was needed to run a successful school. It required dormitories, showers, beds, a playground, a bus. Where was the money to come from? In 2016, the church's handful of cyclists suggested a bicycle fundraiser, and KBR was born. 16 intrepid cyclists rode 62 miles from Vallejo to Livermore and raised enough money to build a Girls' Dormitory. In 2017, a hike was also added, and people raised enough money for fencing, a playground, finishing the main building, and the purchase of additional land. In 2018, almost \$40,000 was raised to build a Boy's Dormitory with showers. Many thanks to sister UMCs who provided support: Wayside, Grace, Castro Valley, Formosan, Lynnwood, and Asbury.

The 2019 Ride will target several small capital projects, such as bringing electricity to the school, paving and landscaping the entrance road, repairing the water supply pipes, and other current needs. If you are interested in going to Kumi and working at the school, plans will be shaping up for the summer of 2020.

While the road has not always been smooth, working through the challenges has been a testament to God's amazing grace. Even the smallest steps of faith were often rewarded with unexpected miracles. You are invited to join CCUMC on this journey. Learn more at their website: www.ycvm.org or email: ycvminfo@gmail.com