# Phyllis Hall to Uganda
*East Africa*

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**My Burden Today**

Today is Tuesday. I teach only one class on Tuesday, so, I planned to write to you today. Then, I got shocking news – one of our village pastors, Pastor Oluka Stephen, had been poisoned. Pastor Oluka is a godly man. He had a brush with death last year when he got COVID.

You may remember in past years I have written about poisonings. There are many poisonous plants here, so, poisons are readily available. A disabled boy who attended our children's church was killed by poisoning out of revenge against his mother. A young man who was a day laborer at our school property was poisoned at a local bar. I got him to the hospital, but it was too late. I had to transport his dead body home. Another young man who helped in our school was poisoned over a land issue. I got him treatment in time and he recovered.

It is still hard for me to comprehend a culture where poisoning murders are very common, tolerated and not investigated. It is at all levels. I recently read an article where members of parliament were testifying that they had to bring their own water to meetings to make sure they were not poisoned. A former district commander I know was afraid to stay at a local hotel because he needed to make sure his sister cooked for him so that he would not be poisoned.

The first year I was in Soroti, the project director took the missionaries and nationals who taught or translated that Sunday morning to a local restaurant after church for a nice lunch and fellowship. He had ordered the local foods nationals like and reserved a table for us ahead of time. After we all had our food, he asked the young man across the table from me to pray for the food. I don't know why I looked up, but I noticed that instead of having his head bowed and eyes closed, his head was up and he was looking all around. I thought this was strange and asked him later if he didn't bow his head and close his eyes during prayer. He said quite emphatically, not when there was food – he was making sure no one put poison on his food! I thought there was something wrong with him. How ridiculous! How wrong I was. Indeed, this man's sister-in-law was recently poisoned because she left her Coke briefly unattended. Thankfully, she recovered and did not die.

Poisonings are due to jealously because someone has achieved something, or revenge, or often over land disagreements (even brothers killing brothers, or sons and fathers). People need the Lord. This is not the letter I intended to write you. But, today, it is on my heart. Pastor Oluka knows who, how and when he was poisoned. A village man he has known for a long time offered him a piece of watermelon. He took it and ate it and knew right away that something was wrong and soon his tongue swelled. The man is part of a family that has had a recent misunderstanding with Pastor Oluka. Why doesn't he report it? I don't understand. I am so glad that Pastor Oluka has not died; he thought he was dying and was ready for heaven. He is very sick, but I think he will recover. He is not a young man. Please pray for a full recovery.

**People Need the Lord**

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