

Thomasville First United Methodist began our adventure of Advent Revolution back in 2007 when we began to ask ourselves some questions about how we might best honor Jesus as we celebrated his birthday. What if we spent less in order to give more?

At Christmas we remember how God left the comfort of heaven to enter into our world of sin and suffering because of love. How could we, in some way, do the same?

**WORSHIP FULLY: Christmas begins and ends with Jesus.
SPEND LESS: Free up your resources to support things that truly matter.
GIVE MORE: Give more intentionally and relationally.
LOVE ALL: Radically love others like Jesus did.**

Christmas 2007: With our focus on beginning ministry in Rwanda, we spent less on ourselves and put those funds together to build **four Homes of Hope** for orphans who lost their parents during the Rwandan genocide.

Christmas 2008: We built **four additional homes** housing 16 orphans at Star School in Kigali, Rwanda. The original students from the Star School homes have graduated from high school and moved on to study at University as well as in vocational schools. They are now employed as flight attendants, travel guides, police officers, and mechanics and are raising families of their own.

Christmas 2009: We built a **water well at Star School** so the 500 students there would have access to clean drinking water. The current population of the school has grown to over 1000 and the well still serves both the Star School students and the surrounding community. We also encouraged each of our church members to serve locally, giving them specific opportunities to demonstrate the love of Christ in our own community at Christmas. This included hosting **11 Christmas parties** for almost 1000 clients at the local food bank. Our church members continue to visit with and pray for the clients at the Food Bank each Christmas. In 2020, each client will receive a new blanket from our blanket drive and, due to COVID-19, the parties will be conducted as a drive through service.

Christmas 2010: We built a **roof on the Church of the Blessed Mango Tree** which has literally risen from the ashes after the 1994 genocide and is now one of our ministry partners serving the poorest of the poor in Rwanda, including many children they have brought in from the streets and introduced to Jesus. The Church of the Blessed Mango Tree has continued to grow since rebuilding and actively serves the community. They have now added indoor plumbing, beautiful glass windows, and a paved parking lot to the building. The other half of what we collected provided **scholarship money to help the children in our eight Rwandan Homes of Hope** to complete their education. These children have gone on to attend University or vocational training. We have a graduate working towards an MBA in Poland and another currently attending pharmacy school in Uganda. Others are working in the travel and tourism industry, banking, insurance, as automotive mechanics, police officers and a flight attendant with RwandAir!

Christmas 2011: In addition to providing more **scholarship aid** so that the children in our Rwandan Homes of Hope could finish their education, we also funded the start of a new ministry in Thomasville. The **Backpack Buddies Foundation** was established to help other area churches feed hungry children in our community whose primary source of nutrition is the school cafeteria. Backpack Buddies continues to serve the children of Thomas County by providing food for children in need.

Christmas 2012: We funded the establishment of a **Widows' Co-op** in Rwanda so the widows at The Church of the Blessed Mango Tree could receive vocational training and then get micro-loans to start their own small businesses. This ministry continues today and has grown to include both women and men who have attended vocational training and work together in the sewing room based at the church. They make school uniforms, clothes and items to sell in the local market, while helping others in the community to get vocational training. In Thomasville, we funded the make-over of the **Rec Room at Vashti Children's Home**, as a warm and friendly place where abused and neglected children could spend time with their mentors.

Christmas 2013: The Bugarama Valley is one of the neediest areas of Rwanda, sometimes called the forgotten district. In 2013, we provided building materials for a congregation to **build a new church** which serves as a hub of outreach and training for the whole valley. The church members built the church themselves and the church population has

grown in a thriving community hub providing a feeding program for at-risk children. The church serves the community by providing health, educational, and spiritual support to the surrounding population. We also provided **building materials for the Thomasville Rescue Mission**, our local soup kitchen, to move to and renovate its new location near First Methodist. The Rescue Mission continues to serve the needy in our community.

Christmas 2014: We provided all of the equipment, beds, and supplies to open the **maternity ward at the Anglican Clinic** in Cyanguu, Rwanda. Today, this medical clinic is staffed by the Rwandan government and provides diagnostic testing services, maternity care and training for community health workers from the surrounding villages. We also funded the **Mustard Seed Project**, a coalition of Chinese church leaders joining together to send missionaries into some of the most unreached parts of the Muslim world. We funded the **Backpack Buddy Foundation's first ever summer feeding program** for hungry children right here in our own community.

Christmas 2015: This year we established a **feeding program for 500 hungry children on Ishwa Island**, located in Lake Kivu between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The feeding program continues to serve the children on the island and is funded and staffed by both the local church and the Rwandan government.

Christmas 2016: We funded the **construction of the first church ever built on Ishwa Island** which now houses the feeding program started through Advent Revolution 2015 and provides a place of worship for the new disciples there. The church continues to serve the Ishwa community today and has added a large preschool with more than 100 students as well as a basket weaving co-op. We also funded a small **business-as-mission venture for our partner to reach the unreached in S. Asia**. We completed the funding for the local **"Bob Keene" Habitat for Humanity house**.

Christmas 2017: We funded the construction of a **ropes course for the kids at the Vashti Center**, our local ministry for at-risk kids. A ropes course is a powerful tool that can be used to build confidence, develop trust, deepen relationships and teach problem-solving skills, not only for the residential kids, but also for the families in Vashti's community ministry and local youth groups. We continued support of the **feeding program for 300 hungry children on Ishwa Island** in Rwanda. Since TFUMC launched this Advent Revolution project in 2015, support from the Rwandan government funds the continuation of this feeding program. The feeding program remains a vital part of the Ishwa community today.

Christmas 2018: Funds were raised to **fully equip Star School's nursery, primary, and high school libraries** to meet the needs of their current population of 964 students. This library remains an important resource for the growing population of Star School students. We also supported **Spark Thomasville** in their development and equipping of aspiring entrepreneurs in a 12-week cohort based program. Lastly, we helped our neighbors at **Colquitt UMC remodel** the interior of their church which was severely damaged when Hurricane Michael blew the roofing material off of their church buildings.

Christmas 2019: We raised funds for the cost of five plane tickets to **bring some of our friends from Rwanda** to Thomasville to encourage our congregation and to give our church members the opportunity to meet our Rwandan partners. We also supported the cost of material and local labor for a TFUMC team to work on a **community building project with Mission Guatemala (an UVMIM partner)**. A project was funded to promote our Wednesday night meal (**Community Night Supper**) to reach out to our community by treating at least 600 friends to dinner on our campus.

Christmas 2020: We funded the construction of a **second church in the Bugarama Valley** region of Cyanguu, Rwanda. Termed, "The Forgotten District," the population in this region is extremely poor and has the highest occurrence of HIV+ patients in the country. This along with a large Muslim influence and the popular practice of polygamy, makes a new church plant a positive influence for the community. The church will serve as a hub providing services for the education, as well as for the mental, physical, and spiritual health of the surrounding community. We will also provide funding to help with renovations and services at our **local homeless shelter, Fountain of Life**.

Christmas 2021: For many years we at TFUMC have spent less money on ourselves and instead, used that money to help others. In 2021 a **"Time for Joy"** focus shifted to spending our time, investing in serving others. We were challenged to consider the ways we spend our time and to intentionally focus on giving time to help others in our community and beyond. Ministry and service sign-up sheets were posted and families were encouraged to keep track of the hours spent investing in others during the busy season.