



Preparation

This is a story of someone whose Christian faith led him to act courageously and take risks on behalf of others who were suffering. Janani is remembered with great affection in Uganda, which is a country where the Christian church is young and vibrant. Uganda only came to hear and accept the good news of Jesus just over 100 years ago and today the majority of its inhabitants are Christian believers with a lively faith that they readily express in joyful songs and memorable worship services. Enthusiasm about sharing their faith and the need to pray through every detail of life are both lessons that the Ugandan Church has for us in Britain today. It is in this context that the story of Janani is set.

The following story could be introduced with some pictures/maps of Uganda. These can be obtained from a web search or by contacting a mission society such as the [Church Missionary Society](#), which has a long history of working in partnership with this country. CMS should be able to send you a picture of Janani Lawum as well as information on the work of the church today in Uganda.

The story has various points (marked), which invite a mime participation from children. There is a suggestion for a simple Ugandan song and a prayer at the end of the story.

Development

I wonder what your idea of a superhero is?

(invite some suggestions for what a statue of superhero looks like)

- Someone who does brave deeds?
- Someone who has super-powers?
- Someone who is super-strong?

What makes a hero?

Christians believe that real heroes are the ones to show us the best way to go in life. They are like signposts. These are the people who make a difference for good and who we remember, even if their lives were short.

Today is the day that the people of Uganda remember one of their heroes. Someone who showed them that believing in God and doing what was right was more important than anything else - even his own life. Here is a picture of Janani Lawum their Christian hero - someone who made a difference for good for God. We call him a martyr, because in the end it cost him his life. Christian heroes are people who show us more of Jesus.

Janani's family could not afford to send him to school until he was 10 yrs old. Up until then he worked with his family to cultivate a small plot of land and look after the animals at his home *(suggest an appropriate mime)*.



When he did go to school, he had to walk 80 miles there and back at the beginning and end of each term (*suggest an appropriate mime*).

Janani became a Christian when someone explained about God's love for the world shown in Jesus. He became a Church leader, cycling everywhere and caring for everyone (*suggest an appropriate mime*).

But at this time in Uganda's history (about 35 years ago) a dictator came to power called Idi Amin and more and more anti-Christian activities went on. Anyone opposed to the government just disappeared and most people became very afraid (*suggest an appropriate mime*).

By now Janani had become the head of the Church in the country - the Archbishop of Uganda. People were not being treated fairly and were disappearing without a trial. The President was increasingly power-mad and dangerous. What does a hero do? What did Janani do? (*Ask the children what they think he did? What would they have done?*)

Janani spoke out for those who were having a hard time. He ran a great risk. Doing what was right was more important than anything else - even his own life (*suggest an appropriate mime*).

Eventually his house was searched and he himself was publicly accused - falsely. He shared in the same injustice that others were experiencing. Then one day he too disappeared. The authorities said he was killed in a car accident but in fact he was shot by the government. People never forgot Janani. He showed the way of Jesus and in the end this way won the day, because the President did not survive. (*As you tell this part of the story, ask the children to stretch out one arm in one direction to illustrate how Janani said 'no' and 'stop' to all that was wrong and then to extend the other arm in the opposite direction to illustrate how he reached out to those who were in need and very frightened. The two arms extended create a cross shape. Janani was acting the way Jesus had done*).

They had no body to bury so they had a special service around an empty grave. It reminded people of the empty tomb on Easter Day. Jesus was alive and still working through people like Janani and the people of Uganda have never forgotten this.

This is a true story.

A short Bible passage could then be read. The verses from I Peter 2:21-25 would have inspired Janani to act the way he did.

This is a simple song in Lugandan - a language of Uganda. It means 'God is so good ... He is so good to me'. It is sung to the tune of Junior Praise 53: *Katonda Mulungi (x3)...Katonda wange*

You may like to pray this prayer from Uganda, in English, after you have allowed some silence for children to think quietly about how they might stand up to things that are wrong. Would they speak up for those who are in need or afraid? Would they take risks to help others? What sort of heroes are the real heroes today?



The Prayer:

Heavenly Father, amid all the challenges of a changing world, help us to learn the new ways You would have us tread; and, along every unknown path, give us the courage to follow the example of Jesus, the same Saviour, yesterday, today and forever. Amen