

April to June 2021
APF Prayer and Newsletter



African
Pastors
Fellowship

Impetus.

Twenty Years of Partnership in Malawi

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From the CEO

'The smell of the sheep'

Early in his tenure, Pope Francis called on the world's priests to bring the healing power of Jesus to everyone in need, stay close to the marginalised, and be shepherds living with the "smell of the sheep". When a priest "doesn't put his own skin and own heart on the line, he never hears a warm, heartfelt word of thanks" from those he has helped, he said. Pastors "who do not go out of themselves [can] gradually become intermediaries, managers – collectors of antiquities or novelties – instead of being shepherds living with the smell of the sheep."

While I may not have put it quite like that, Pope Francis precisely captures the reason I felt compelled to travel to Uganda in early March. I had spent too long at my desk in lockdown, managing the charity, submitting funding bids, supervising the team, authorizing bank transfers and remotely monitoring APF funded activity in Africa. Increased online contact with African partners has been excellent and it is here to stay, but it is also self-selecting, providing communication and partnership opportunities only to the very best connected and resourced.

A Zoom meeting is convenient but clinical, too easily muted for effective pastoral care to be exercised in the long-term. Travelling to Africa was not an easy decision but I felt called to be with the shepherds and sheep APF exists to serve.

Several years ago, one of our long-standing African partners said, “APF pastors the pastors that pastor the pastors”. He was right. At the core, what we deliver is pastoral ministry. More than sending money for training, seed-funding projects, provision of books, bicycles or even eVitabu, APF offers relational partnership, critical friendship, leadership mentoring, a mutual exchange in which fellowship thrives. It cannot always be done remotely from a desk in the UK but must, at times, become flesh and blood, eye to eye, person to person in the dust and heat of Africa.

I write this article from Kampala, Uganda’s busy and vibrant capital city. Earlier today, I met with the founder of a local organisation that works with victims of sexual violence, executive members of a regional Baptist ministry team, the principal of a rural Bible school and a local Christian politician from out of town who runs multiple social entrepreneurship projects.

Could these meetings have taken place online? Perhaps. And in strict economic terms that may have been more cost-efficient. But it would have lacked the human solidarity that comes from standing alongside brothers and sisters, developing trust, sharing stories, exchanging family news, enjoying laughter and a depth of prayer. Remote working might be more cost-efficient but it is not necessarily more cost-effective.

A year in lockdown has been frustratingly efficient. APF has thrived despite the many challenges presented by Covid-19 – you will see that as you read the following pages. I hope, however, you will forgive me for wanting to experience again the “smell of the sheep”.

With thanks,



Dave

Celebrating
40
Years

Join APF for a 40th Anniversary Celebration!
On Saturday 26 June in Whitnash near Leamington Spa
Details on page 6.

Around Africa

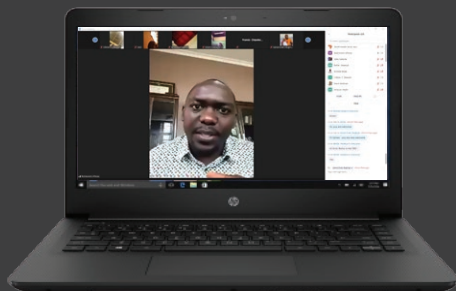
Africa Zoom calls

Our monthly Zoom calls with African partners continue to go from strength to strength. It's a highlight of each month to join some truly gifted leaders from across Africa as we share, discuss and pray together.

February's call was led by Revd Dr Richmond Wandera, founder of Pastors' Discipleship Network, based in Kampala, Uganda. Richmond led a thoughtful session on spiritual inheritance. Using Proverbs 13 and his own experiences of growing up in extreme poverty, he described how poverty had the potential to rob Africa of an inheritance of good Christian leaders. He encouraged those gathered that rather than being impressed by large but superficial crowds, a better way was to foster a deep spiritual

inheritance for future generations of the church.

March's Zoom meeting was led by guest speaker George Verwer, founder of Operation Mobilisation (OM). George is retired but he continues to be a great supporter of APF's local language Bible distributions through OM Special Projects.



Kenya



- 150 new users installing eVitabu and receiving induction training in various locations across the country.
- 100 Pokot local language Bibles distributed through AIC North Rift.
- 72 days of in-service training will be delivered in west Kenya by Daniel Odour Gwara.
- Two pastoral grants provided for a laptop and an income generating poultry project.

Liberia



Around fifty leaders (both men and women) from the Grace Christian Fellowship Network received leadership training.

Zambia



Sixty Nyanja language Bibles have been provided for rural church leaders in the Word of God Church network.

Tanzania



A series of eight training conferences are being delivered by Heavenlight and Kesiah Luoga, reaching hundreds of leaders throughout 2021.

Burundi



- Plans in place for 150 new users to install eVitabu and receive induction training through the Baptist Union of Burundi.
- Ten bicycles provided to church leaders serving in rural communities.

Rwanda



120 Kinyarwanda language Bibles have been distributed to rural churches through Word of Life Ministry, based in Cyangugu.

Malawi



- 300 beneficiaries received soap, hand-washing buckets and PPE equipment organised through New Life Christian Church.
- Ten bicycles for rural leaders via Support for Change Initiative Ministries
- One emergency pastoral grant providing supplies to a desperate pastor and his family.



Uganda



- 250 Luganda, Lusoga and Teso local language Bibles have been distributed through the Baptist Union of Uganda, Pastors' Discipleship Network (PDN) and directly through APF's local coordinator in Central Uganda, Walubo Jude.
- Forty students sponsored for Certificate in Theology courses at Atirir Bible School, Soroti District.
- Thirty portable solar lamps provided to church leaders in Teso Region
- Fifteen participants from eight nations enrolled for online training being delivered in partnership with Uganda based Eaglelite Associates.
- Six pastoral and Covid-19 relief grants providing funding for emergency needs and recovery from the economic impacts of the pandemic.



UK Supporters Zoom Call

In January, around 25 supporters joined a Zoom meeting with Pastor Lawson Limau (pictured). Despite a few network issues and the lateness of the hour in Zambia, Lawson showed great determination to make the call. It was great to be able to connect 'live' with one of APF's newest African partners and we hope to repeat this kind of fellowship in future.

Online Engagements

Over the last few months, both Dave (CEO) and Geoff Holder (APF Projects Coordinator) have been busy speaking at a variety of live and pre-recorded church services and conferences, to preach, present APF and eVitabu or speak more widely on areas of personal expertise.

Please contact us if you would like to book one of the team to participate in services, small groups or other events.



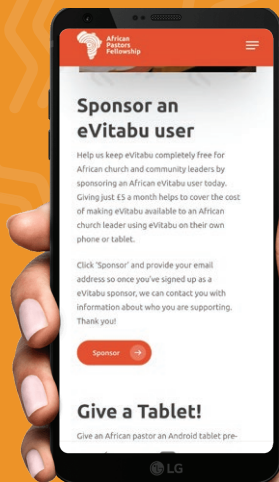
eVitabu Sponsorship

Since the launch of the eVitabu sponsorship portal in January, we have recruited over 40 sponsors! Thank you so much for your generous support of eVitabu.

Our target for the year is to have at least 100 sponsored users which will begin to make a substantial impact on the sustainability of eVitabu.

For a monthly contribution of less than the cost of a paperback book you can place a library in the hands of an African church leader.

Visit www.africanpastors.org/evitabu and set up an eVitabu sponsorship today.



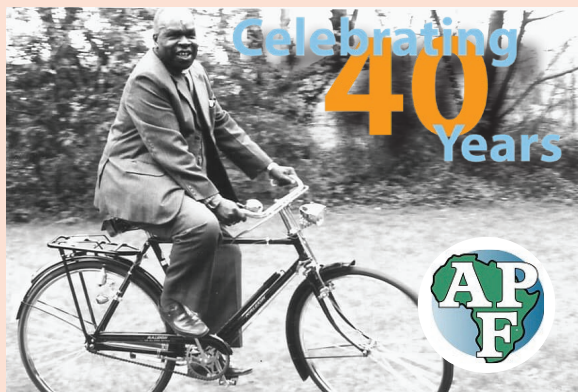
APF 40th Anniversary Celebration Garden Party

Join us (hopefully!) at
St Margaret's Church
Whitnash, Leamington Spa

On Saturday 26th June, 2-4pm

For a garden party to celebrate
40 years of APF. Including:

- African catering and music
- Keynote address
- Recorded greetings from African partners



Visit bit.ly/APF40 to reserve your free entry ticket today!

* If it is not possible to have a physical gathering, we will have an online event instead, although in that case you may have to do the food yourself!



In loving memory...

We are grateful to the friends and family of Mr Fred May who gave very generously to APF in lieu of flowers at his funeral. A family member found APF online while looking for a cause that Fred would have approved of. As a Christian and keen cyclist, our Bikes for Pastors campaign was an ideal fit. In total, over £1,000 was raised in memory of Fred.

Fundraising

There has also been some excellent and innovative fundraising by supporters including Andy Page, who asked for donations to APF for his 50th birthday celebration, and Revd Richard Tucker (pictured) who is completing 70 daily walks of at least 70 minutes each to mark his 70th birthday. To support Richard, visit:
www.justgiving.com/fundraising/richard-tucker15



A photograph of a man with dark skin and short hair, wearing a blue and white striped button-down shirt. He is standing in a field of harvested corn, with dry, yellowed corn husks visible around him. The background shows a cloudy sky and more of the field.

Twenty Years of Partnership in Malawi

2021 is APF's 40th Anniversary year! In celebration, some of our longest standing partners have shared memories of partnering with APF. This time, Revd Lloyd Chizenga describes some of the ways APF has supported the ministry of New Life Christian Church in Malawi for more than two decades.

I joined the Fellowship in 2000 when Revd Ralph Hanger was APF Director. Since then, APF has been instrumental in my life and family and the ministry of New Life Christian Church here in southern Malawi. APF to us is family so we are celebrating 40 years with you.

Over the years, APF has been a true partner in the gospel of Jesus Christ. When our house was attacked by robbers in the night, APF helped us relocate to a safer part of Blantyre and build a new home.

When our church network was very young and had no trained leaders, APF helped new pastors get vital basic training. Each person got a certificate of attendance.

APF provided goats to poor church leader families. When a goat gave birth to twins, one young goat was given to another family as a way out of household poverty.

Income generation projects have been an important part of APF's support here in Malawi. Working with pastors' wives to set up micro-businesses has made a huge difference. Many children were able to go to secondary school and pay school fees because of the profits pastors' wives made from these small enterprises.

More recently, APF has equipped our leadership team with eVitabu. eVitabu is like a library that grows and grows. I was one of the first pastors to use eVitabu.

I travelled to Uganda in 2018 and was given a tablet to use eVitabu on. There are so many resources on eVitabu that are good for pastors here in Malawi to read.

Covid-19 continues to be a huge challenge here. Many businesses are bankrupt and hospitals are struggling. In Blantyre, city health authorities have launched emergency activities to deal with a big increase in the number of patients. At Christmas, workers returning from South Africa brought that new Covid-19 variant with them which is more easily caught. Malawi is not likely to get any vaccines soon, but we are grateful to APF for the grant which helped us buy washing buckets, soap, masks and sanitiser.

The most significant partnership between APF and New Life Christian Church however has been the Growing Greener project. We have been running this for about five years now and it is truly a life changer for poor farming households. We train communities in village churches on farming techniques like no-till soil management, composting, mulching, agroforestry and on-farm micro-business.

Rural communities are always suspicious of change. Even when a change is shown to make a positive difference, witchcraft is blamed. But because the Growing Greener project is led by us and comes through the local Malawi church, not from outsiders, people trust it, follow the teachings and it is working. So far, this project has reached many thousands of households.

All this would have been impossible without APF's standing alongside us. By working in partnership with the local African church, APF taps into the resources already there in the church and in the community. It is this approach that is really make a difference.

So, to all our friends who support APF back in the UK, thank you!

Revd Lloyd Chizenga is 'Bishop' of New Life Christian Church (NLCC). NLCC is an independent network of churches based in Blantyre. The majority of NLCC congregations are in rural communities in Malawi and Mozambique.



Revd Paul Kyilimpa (l) from Uganda and Lloyd (r) checking out some of the farming resources on eVitabu during the app's launch event held in Kampala during 2018.



Twenty years of partnership in Malawi

Lloyd with a pastor's wife at an APF training event in the early 2000s.



Household income generation schemes for pastors' families supported by APF.



Milk, meat and young. Rural households use goats as a way to save and invest.



Geoff Holder speaking with farmers participating in Growing Greener, 2017.



The African Paradox

Official statistics record that over 100,000 have now died of Covid-19 in Africa. Each one of those death is a tragedy. 100,000 is a lot of people. But the death toll is lower than many predicted when the first cases appeared in Egypt. So what is going on?

Firstly, this figure almost certainly under-reports the real numbers. Post-mortem testing at a university hospital morgue in Zambia published in the *British Medical Journal* for example showed that one in five were infected. Most die before reaching hospital without being tested. Secondly, the idea that Africa has been spared rings hollow in hotspots like Mozambique, Eswatini and Malawi where hospitals are struggling.

Unproven and dubious theories abound about the so called 'African paradox': vitamin D from sunlight giving extra protection or higher general exposure to disease due to poverty building stronger immune systems. What is true is Africa's population is young. This is likely to be helping and many African countries already have hard won experience dealing with epidemics like Ebola and HIV.

Paradox or not, our world is interconnected. Covid-19 in Africa is bad for the whole world.

"As for me and my family, not all is well. According to the doctor we all caught a bad common cold. We went down to self-induced bed rest believing the doctor. Soon, my husband, who is diabetic, became seriously ill and was hospitalised. Due to difficulty in breathing and other complications he was tested for Covid-19 and put on oxygen. The results came out and were positive. He was taken to the isolation centre in a very traumatic process for all of us. I broke down openly because of his underlying condition and due to the fact that we can't visit him. In the process of treatment, his blood pressure went high and they are now managing it. I and my other family members are on self-home care as advised. Kindly, we need your prayers during such low moments.

Rev'd Elizabeth Cheruiyot,
St Paul's University, Kapsabet, Kenya.

Please pray

- Give thanks that the spread of Covid-19 appears to be lower in Africa with fewer cases and deaths than many predicted. Pray that Rev'd Elizabeth's husband, Bethuel, recovers quickly.
- Restrictions to stop the spread of Covid-19 are in place across much of Africa but with little government help for the millions who are losing earnings. Pray that local economies would quickly recover and for areas like Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique where extremists are taking advantage of the disruption to further their agendas.

West Kenya Training Update



Daniel Odour Gwara coordinates Renewal Ministries, an ecumenical network of Christian leaders from across western Kenya. Equipped with eVitabu and an annual APF training grant, Daniel holds church leader teaching workshops for pastors and lay leaders from across the region. He updates us on progress.

Since the beginning of the year, I have been trying to reach key leaders of training hubs in West Kenya. Together, we have been organising training for this year.

At this time, the big challenge we all face is the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 is making people fear for death. It has made people think about life and death and many are now coming to ask about Jesus. When leaders gather for training, we have done our best to make sure we have water for washing hands and other things we need to stay safe.

A great tool that I use when I train church leaders is eVitabu. One of the resources I have been using on eVitabu is a video message from Revd Dr Kate Coleman about David and Goliath. If we have a big screen connection, we show this video on a projector.

Another set of resources on eVitabu that have really inspired people at the training hubs are from Foundations for Farming. This training teaches more sustainable ways of doing agriculture and running on-farm businesses, all starting with God's word.

With APF's support, we are running training across fifteen centres in western Kenya and reaching hundreds of pastors and church leaders. They really want to learn as many lack even basic pastoral and theological training. We have also been holding fellowships for about 100 women in Kisumu city. Most of them are lay leaders and women pastors.

We trust God that soon we will be holding a vision casting. This will be for those who have not yet heard of eVitabu. We'll be helping them find the app on their own smartphones so they can also download it and benefit from the training resources on it themselves.

Please join us in praying for more opportunities and openness to the word of God here in western Kenya.

Please pray

- Give thanks for Daniel as he travels to meet, encourage and train Christian leaders serving in rural communities throughout western Kenya.
- Give thanks for the pastors and leaders who gather for training. Pray they would benefit richly from what is being shared.
- Pray that more funding will be found to support APF Regional Trainers like Daniel.
- Pray for other leaders who receive APF Regional Trainer grants including Pastor Heavenlight Luoga (Tanzania), Revd Peter Mugabi (Uganda), Revd Francis Esomu (Uganda) and Revd Charles Munyamahoro (Rwanda).



Church leaders at training hubs run by Daniel in Western Kenya.



Making the cut? Tackling FGM/C in rural Kenya

Walter Rutto is CEO of Transformational Compassion Network (TCN). He explains why the local church is best placed to work alongside rural Kenyan communities to address sensitive cultural issues and gender-based violence and promote sustainable development.

Transmara South sub-County is a part of Narok County. Located towards the south of the Great Rift Valley in Kenya, it is home to Maasai, Kalenjin, Gusii and Kuiria ethnic groups. It is an area famous for its wildlife and rich cultural heritage. Traditional culture in rural Transmara remains deep rooted. Rhythmic music and call-and-response songs echo under the guidance of a song-leader. Boys are sent out with the calves and lambs as soon as they can walk.

Several ethnic groups here continue to practice circumcision on young boys and girls as a rite of passage into adulthood.

In Maasai villages, for example, young men and women undergo 'emorata' when they come of age. Girls experience female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) as part of an elaborate ritual before entering early arranged marriages. Boys must endure the operation in silence or be shamed.

Men normally take several wives. Traditionally, when a woman gets married, it is understood that she has also married the other men in her husband's generational group as well as her husband.

Please pray

- Give thanks for Walter Rutto and the work of TCN in rural Kenya. Pray for him as he works to support the mission of local churches and equip village pastors.
- Pray for local village pastors working to protect girls and young women from FGM/C. Pray that God would strengthen them and protect girls at risk.

Across Transmara, we estimate that there are more than 30 different church denominations and networks ranging from the older Anglican and Catholic churches to new indigenous local groups and congregations.

The local church is the best place to address the challenges facing young people in this part of Kenya. Churches are where young girls shelter and seek protection especially during 'circumcision season' in early December. Girls prefer church-run safe houses to those run and funded by international organisations. Despite the church's poverty, the girls know and trust Christian leaders. Only pastors have the power of persuasion needed to facilitate reconciliation between rescued girls and their families.

Although pastors have the spiritual authority to tackle FGM/C in local village communities, few have received higher education or proper theological training. Most, especially those serving in smaller church networks, dropped out of formal education before even finishing primary school.

At TCN, we are working in partnership with the Kenya Highlands Evangelical University and Kaboson Pastors' Training College to support rural pastors across Transmara. The training is giving pastors Bible knowledge and is equipping them to think theologically about their culture. We believe that the Bible in the hands of a well-trained pastor is the key tool that is needed to address damaging practices like FGM/C.

Climate change is making rainfall less predictable and less frequent. This and overgrazing mean the economic outlook is challenging. It has led to ethnic conflict, cattle rustling and land disputes. We therefore also train pastors as peacemakers and teach them to lead sustainable development projects that reduce environmental degradation and improve food security. We never lecture but use a 'flipped classroom' approach where learning is achieved through discovery, discussion and reflection.

Thank you for supporting TCN as we work together to empower leaders for community transformation in Transmara.

"My pastor called the people from here and told them there was a kid he was bringing whose father wants her to get circumcised, but she doesn't want... I slept at the pastor's place. The next morning... he took me to a certain office and registered me. There was a file he filled, so he talked with the people of this rescue centre and we came."

17 year old girl from Narok County. Quote from Population Council report 'Tracing Change in FGM/C', December 2018. Church leaders play a key role in facilitating rescue from FGM/C and reconciliation between rescued girls and their families.

The vision of APF is to enable African Christian leaders, of all denominations, to minister effectively in thriving local churches that serve flourishing communities.

Giving to APF

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If you would like to donate to APF, please visit www.africanpastors.org/donate where you can make a one-off gift or set up a regular donation. Alternatively, post a cheque to our address or use one of the services below:



Please consider donating £2 to cover print and postage costs. Thank you.

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