

Cornerstone

Newsletter & Magazine June 2023

A Family of Friends - Developing the Cornerstones of Africa's Next Generation

CELEBRATING OUR CULTURE

Every society, institution, organization or community has a particular "culture." By this, we mean the collection of shared attitudes, values, beliefs, vocabulary, and practices that have come to characterize a group. A strong, consistent culture is the lifeblood of a vibrant society.

So, with Cornerstone, over the many years that we have been in existence, we have seen the importance of maintaining our distinct culture. Here are a few reasons for this:

1. To orientate the new members that are continuously joining our family of friends. We have recognized that our culture creates a new, unified community which minimizes the ethnic, denominational or other differences that have tended to create division and conflict.
2. To provide a consistent and stable environment which preserves the proven, cherished values of the past - despite the inevitable process of change, as time marches on.
3. To provide 'cultural identity' or a sense of belonging - where members feel they are part of a community that cares for them, where they can grow and make a meaningful contribution to a shared vision.

Cultural transmission is the process through which cultural elements, in the form of attitudes, values, beliefs, traditions and practices - are passed on. This is expressed in the many ways we tell our stories, celebrate milestones, remember the past, and imagine the future.

The principles, precepts and person of Jesus form the cornerstone of our ideology. But how this is transmitted happens in ways that go beyond the formal discipleship curriculum that we teach. That's why we say: much of it is caught rather than taught.

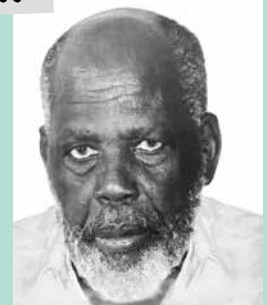
To help us clarify this whole process, in this newsletter we asked people to write about: What makes the Cornerstone culture unique and transformational? What aspects of it have changed the way you look at life and do things?



Inside

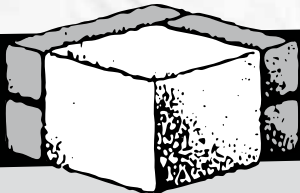


and...



Honoring the legacy of Babu Mzee Paul Lukwiya Mwoc in our community

Nathan facilitating a session at the Uganda Outreach coordinator's retreat



Cornerstone Development Africa

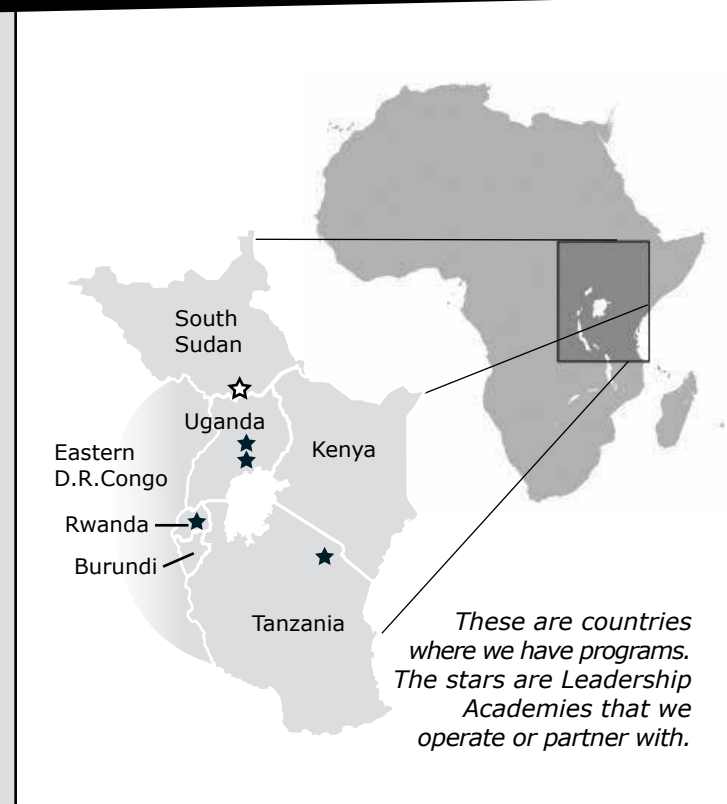
Our Vision: *An ever-expanding movement of transformational servant leaders in Africa, building a better world.*

Our Mission: *To be a family of friends in the Spirit of Jesus working together to develop generations of young leaders with vision and purpose, personal integrity, and committed to unity, reconciliation, and long-term relationships.*

Cornerstone Development was established in Uganda in 1988 to help in the rebuilding and development of the nation as it was emerging from a turbulent past. In recent years we have expanded to Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya, DR Congo, and Southern Sudan. All our programs are directed towards helping under-privileged children, with a special emphasis on youth leadership development. Since its inception the work has steadily expanded to include engaging over 2,000 young people daily - in a variety of programs including seven schools, five homes for homeless kids, five hostels for university students and sports programs - all designed for providing love, education and character formation.

Our core focus is on "Developing the Cornerstones of Africa's Next Generation". That is, to raise up future leaders with a shared vision of positively transforming their communities and nations, as an outgrowth of their own personal transformation. Our approach involves creating loving, family-like environments in our schools and other programs for under-privileged young people, while empowering them with education and character formation in order for them to become leaders. Furthermore, the young people coming through our programs are forming a movement that seeks to make a contribution to the betterment of society while promoting reconciliation across

2



all that is dividing humanity. We as a community are a living model of this kind of unity in diversity, in that we are composed of all the different tribes, nationalities, cultures and religious backgrounds found in this part of the world.

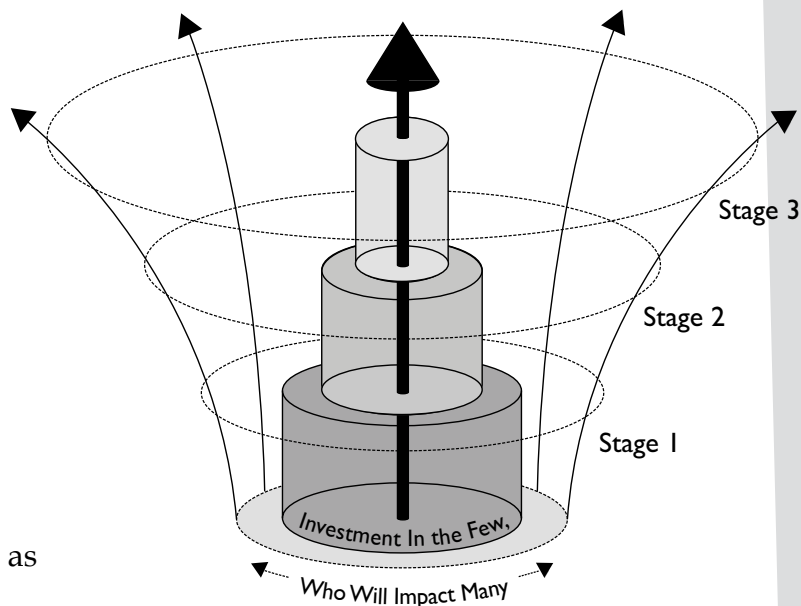
In our character development curriculum we teach the timeless, universal principles of forgiveness, honesty, integrity, compassion, kindness, hard work, humility, and of service to the less fortunate, as exemplified in the teachings of Jesus and the perennial wisdom of all traditions, but without affiliation to any one institutional religious group.

See more online: www.CDAfrica.org

Our core focus is 'youth leadership development' after the model of Jesus. So, in addition to our schools, all the various programs we run serve this focus by providing a practical "training ground" where graduates of our schools can learn to serve and pass on what they have received. Each year we put out two magazine's like this one. At the end of last year, we highlighted our work and PROGRAMS in general, and now in this current edition, we turn to highlighting several of the PEOPLE in our community.

Our Core Model

In its broadest aspect, our work is linked to a world-wide family of friends who seek common-ground around the principles, precepts and person of Jesus. We seek to do this in a way that transcends differences of race, tribe, religious or political affiliations. We also put a lot of emphasis on long-term commitments to each other, rather than seeing relationships as temporary conveniences.



Our community and programs in East and Central Africa are structured in three stages of a vertically integrated investment in the young emerging leaders we work with:



Stage 1

This stage is the entry point to our movement and it involves creating life-transforming learning environments in our mentoring homes, schools and Cornerstone Leadership Academies. This provides a core from which we impact many other schools in the region through various other programs.



Stage 2

This stage supports our young leaders during their college years and their involvement in various career development initiatives that will enable them to move into key positions of influence within society. Through these individuals and initiatives we impact thousands of other students on many of the most prominent university campuses across the region.



Stage 3

This stage is about maintaining ongoing fellowship/support groups after college that support the personal and spiritual growth of our alumni so that they go through life aligned with the best values and principles. Through this, we support these relationships and networks to cultivate an innumerable amount of life-transforming grass-roots initiatives that have impact on all sectors of society.



Sarah Mwesigwa

CLA - Uganda

A Vibrant Balance Between the Personal and Professional

My first introduction to this wonderful community we call 'Cornerstone Development' was through my then-boyfriend (and now husband), Mr. David Mwesigwa. He was a graduate of the Cornerstone Leadership Academy (CLA), and actually part of the very first pioneer class.

Completing my University studies, I decided to do my teaching practice at CLA-boys, and I was very convinced that once I was finished I would find my way elsewhere. After all, the place was quite a long distance from the capital city of Kampala, which was my ideal workplace at the time. But alas, it didn't turn out that way, because ours is a community you do not want to leave once you really become a part of it!

The first time I went to CLA, I remember some of the pioneer class members had a fellowship and I had gone with my 'friend' David. I found myself in an all-male environment, but even when I was the only female in their midst, I didn't feel intimidated, threatened, scared, or uncomfortable with them (as you might expect of a young beautiful lady in such an environment). On the contrary, I felt respected, peaceful, and loved in a brotherly sense. This won my respect for them and it showed me that this was a unique community. And yes, this is the way I still feel about them even today.

The environment of familial love in the spirit of Jesus, is something very unique in our Cornerstone office cultures. In my prior workplace, my office environment was set in a way that everyone was concerned about themselves, nobody cared about the other, and the only thing that brought us together was work. Fear and uncertainty especially about job security was the order of the day.

One illustration of this is when I finally joined Cornerstone officially as a staff member, and I came to our head office in Kampala with my motorbike. In preparation to go back home, I tried to start my bike, but it couldn't start, and then uncle Tim (my boss!) came and helped me to kick-start it. The engine started up and I rode home, but I was in shock because my boss at my former workplace would have never done such a thing! The difference here was very clear - I felt so loved and cared for in Cornerstone. It is this balancing act, between attending to our personal concerns, and professional responsibilities, that makes our office cultures such vibrant places to work and belong to.

In time, when the CLA-Girls campus opened up I took up a role there and continued my journey with this community. This has helped me gain a firmer grip on my relationship with Jesus and also become more accommodating and loving to other people from other faiths and walks of life. It continues to amaze me how Cornerstone does not just write off and give up on people. The culture of giving second, third, and fourth chances to people is unusual - whether students or staff. We are not quick at letting people go because of their behavior. At first, I didn't understand it, not until a little later that I internalized one of our core values is of commitment to long-term relationships.

This is a very rare culture that speaks volumes of Jesus' revolutionary message and approach. Each one of us is imperfect and unworthy in one way or the other, and this is the very reason why we should learn to bear with one another and help each other to be the best versions that bring glory and honor to our creator. I would not be the woman I am today without the great contribution of this family of friends. I am so grateful and humbled.

I know we are all still a work in progress, but our community, whether in Tanzania, Rwanda, or Uganda is very different from others because of our common ground in being Jesus-centered. This is what our world desperately needs, and is the answer for the world today. It's what all our leaders in various capacities need, it is what the young people in all our schools in different countries need if we are to realize our vision in nurturing the leaders of Africa's next generation.

Our Intertwined Lives: Trust & Accountability



Branly Madati

CDA Office, Tanzania

I first entered this wonderful community as a student, and for the past nine years I have gotten involved in almost every aspect of Cornerstone's work in Tanzania - it has been an extraordinary and transformative journey! Given this exposure, I am fortunate to have a deeper understanding of Cornerstone's Jesus-centered values and I play a role in helping many other young individuals grow into great and responsible individuals. The one thing that continues to amaze me here is the enduring bonds of long-term committed relationships and the cherished culture of a family of friends.

Long-term relationships transcend mere milestones or the passage of time; they encompass the intertwining of lives, the sharing of joys and sorrows, and collective growth through life's seasons. They exemplify the strength, resilience, and dedication that humans can exhibit when they open their hearts to one another. One of the most powerful lessons I've learned during my time at Cornerstone is the depth of connection that can be nurtured over time. As days turn into years and years into decades, love deepens like a mighty river, carving its way through the landscape of shared experiences.

I do have several friends I have known since childhood, but for various reasons, I have not maintained long-term friendships like those I've formed at Cornerstone. Through unique bonds I've formed here, I have witnessed the remarkable outcomes that stem from these enduring friendships. Most of the young individuals who have been part of Cornerstone's programs, including myself, have gained strong and reliable accountability partners. These partners assist us in staying on track with our personal goals and commitments, providing discipline and motiva-

tion during moments of distraction or when we veer off-course.

Building trust to hold someone accountable is no easy task; it requires quality time spent together and genuine understanding. Our community has successfully cultivated an environment that fosters such trust and allows young individuals to know and build meaningful friendships. These trusted companions serve as accountability partners who continually encourage us to persevere, even in the face of adversity. We exchange ideas, share resources, challenge one another's growth, and learn from one another's experiences.

Every person who graduates from the Cornerstone Leadership Academy enters into a wonderful alumni family of the Cornerstone Old Students Association (COSA). Unlike most schools in Tanzania that sever ties with their students after graduation, Cornerstone Development Africa has this platform that enables all alumni to continue deepening the relationships created during their time at the academy.

The impact of COSA on many individuals is truly immeasurable. Among other activities, we have implemented a welfare system that provides financial assistance for members in both good and difficult times. I vividly recall a recent wedding where COSA members alone contributed 3 million TZS to support one of our fellow alumni. Additionally, in 2021, when a COSA member in Tanzania passed away, alumni from various parts of the country came together to comfort and support the grieving family during their most trying time. The mother of the deceased daughter expressed that, despite her daughter's passing, she still feels a strong connection to Cornerstone because of how former students continue to maintain a relationship with her family even in her daughter's absence.

In conclusion, Cornerstone Development Africa is not just helping young people find trusted friends; it is a movement that creates a network of individuals with good values who can bring healing and change to this broken world. The young people who have gone through Cornerstone, although few in number, are in a unique position to network and bring about significant changes wherever they are.



Investing in the Few

Who will Impact The Many

Ndikumana Didier

YIM, Burundi

While I was still a student in secondary school, I became acquainted with coordinators from Youth Impact Mission who came to train club members at my school in Burundi. I didn't know anything about Cornerstone at that time, but the culture of dedication, selfless service, and hard work that I saw in these fellow young-people struck me immediately - you could tell they were a different breed! Intrigued by their activities, I continued to participate in YIM, and in 2018, I had the opportunity to attend the Vision Conference held in Rwanda. The impactful messages I received during the conference left me invigorated and inspired.

While YIM was doing well in Rwanda, at that time it was small and only just beginning in Burundi. I was convicted by the community's unique culture of 'impacting the few who will impact the many,' and so I decided that I had to play a role in expanding YIM here. Many organizations don't have the strategic vision to work with high-potential young people from humble backgrounds, and commit to them in long-term relationships, in order to realize real positive change in nations. But in this community, I saw this kind of vision that was big enough to commit myself to.

Over the past few years, our efforts to build YIM in Burundi have yielded positive outcomes, and I have been privileged to be a part of the YIM leadership team. I was assigned the responsibility of conducting follow-ups, evaluations, and establishing new small groups at various schools. The success we have achieved can be seen in the 28 active small groups that now operate across the country, with many other groups expressing interest in joining.

During my university studies, I served as a campus coordinator for an AYLIF small group for three years. Thanks to the training and mentorship I have experienced through different Cornerstone programs (such as the COSA class of 2021 retreat in Jinja, the Rwanda Vision Conferences in 2018 and 2022, and the Uganda Coordinators' Retreat in 2022), I was bold enough to take on leadership roles in our family of friends. These training programs played a pivotal role in helping me build influence, foster trust within my team, and establish meaningful connections that have enhanced my productivity and relationships.

As mentioned earlier, one of my roles as a YIM coordinator is to create and establish new small groups, while also overseeing the day-to-day operations of YIM in as many schools as possible. This task presents numerous challenges that require strict adherence to protocols. However, through experience and effective communication, I have managed to engage in successful discussions with headmasters, and have learned valuable lessons along the way. These real-world experiences have contributed to my personal growth, maturity, and self-confidence, not only within my role as a coordinator but also in my professional career.

In conclusion, I am sincerely grateful to our family of friends for empowering me and instilling in me the understanding that I am an essential part of my community. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all my colleagues at YIM-Burundi and the team coordinators, including Mr. Mazambo Emmanuel Gally, Mrs. Irakoze Raïssa, Ms. Igiraneza Noella Brunella, Mr. Dusabe Alexis, Mr. Mpawenayo Yves-Mick, Mr. Igiraneza Don de Dieu, and Ms. Kezakimana Cynthia. It is in these people that I have witnessed a culture of selfless service, commitment to reaching out to more young people, and mentoring others. The harmonious blend of formality and informality in our work has created an environment where I feel comfortable making mistakes and learning from them, ultimately shaping me into the leader I have become.

Empowered by Personal Integrity & a Personal Vision



Ebilga Sikiri

AYLF, DR Congo

My name is Ebilga Kavira Sikiri, and I am a clinical psychologist working in Goma, the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo). I am affiliated with the Action-Research Institute, specializing in conflict prevention and resolution in the Great Lakes region.

I was born and raised in a context of violence characterized by wars and conflicts of ethnic, land, identity, generational, and political nature. These challenges have resulted in unprecedented community imbalances. Consequently, mistrust has grown between communities, leading to a rise in crime, particularly in the eastern part of the country.

In 2017, during my final year at university, I had the opportunity to connect with the AYLF (Africa Youth Leadership Forum). This encounter significantly influenced my perspective on life. Drawing inspiration from the leadership model based on Jesus of Nazareth, I developed values that have propelled my personal and professional growth. The unique Jesus-centered leadership and friendship I found in the AYLF community has greatly impacted my life.

Relationships hold immense importance within this community. As a member, I have formed meaningful connections and expanded my social network. Previously, I was inclined to be solitary, but through these connections, I have experienced profound personal development. Whenever I travel to different provinces of DR Congo or countries within the Great Lakes region, I am warmly welcomed by AYLF members who have become friends. Prejudices and stereotypes resulting from

wars and ethnic conflicts have slowly been reconciled in my heart. I have learned to embrace and accept the differences in others, allowing me to see opportunities beyond faults and weaknesses. Our relationships define us. Disregard for others signifies ignorance and detracts from the beauty of life, ultimately leading to extreme forms of violence.

Integrity lies at the core of AYLF's focus, providing a perspective that encourages individuals to contribute to society rather than merely seeking personal gain. This emphasis on integrity has been instrumental in my personal, social, and professional growth. It has become a means for me to earn people's trust in my daily life. Each day, I strive to act with honesty, respect, and unwavering commitment to my values, even when no one is observing. AYLF has illuminated the significance of having a clear life purpose and setting specific goals to achieve one's dreams. This vision for my life allows me to project myself into the future, reflect on my aspirations, values, and genuine needs.

As a result, I have authored a book titled "My Life, My Struggle: The Experiences that Forged Me into a Fulfilled Woman." Within a short span of six months, this book has already sold over 100 copies, inspiring individuals of all ages. Through this book, I encourage people not to give up on their dreams. Regardless of our backgrounds—whether affluent or underprivileged, ordinary or extraordinary—our past does not dictate our future success or failure. The ability to dream is universal, but it is those who set goals and pursue them with optimism who achieve a better future.

My commitment to building others has been strengthened through my association with AYLF. I am resolute in supporting individuals who have the courage to go against the tide when they believe they are on the right path. I am actively involved in mentoring teenagers at my local church. Adolescence is a crucial phase of personal openness and identity formation. Through mentorship, I aim to instill the values I have acquired from AYLF to foster a society characterized by virtuous and principled individuals.



Naomi Nabasa

CDA Office, Rwanda

From Informing the Mind to Transforming the Heart

In 2015, I was given the opportunity to begin my advanced level (A' level) studies at Cornerstone Leadership Academy-Rwanda. I was filled with excitement as I had heard legends of many unique aspects of this school - compared to others in Rwanda. Not only was it renowned for academic excellence, but it also offered a discipleship curriculum of Spiritual Formation, Character Development, and Leadership Empowerment, which I looked forward to diving into.

One of the distinct aspects of our organizational culture in Cornerstone is the enthusiasm staff and students have around participating in our discipleship curriculum. The late Mzee Paul Lukwiya often said, "Education informs the mind, but discipleship transforms the heart." The topics shared in these discipleship classes became the core of our experience at the academy, and permeated many activities on campus. These classes not only incorporated knowledge on leadership from influential figures of our time but more importantly took it to a spiritual level by bringing in teachings of Jesus. Some think spirituality and leadership are distinct topics, but at CLA I discovered a transformational connection between them.

Before joining CLA, my exposure to wisdom beyond formal education (i.e. academics) was limited. The discipleship classes transformed my life, leading me to be more intentional in how I live and plan for the future. I have acquired diverse knowledge, self-leadership skills, interpersonal skills, sense of purpose, and the value of serving others. Through mentorship and learning from others who embody these qualities, I was groomed into an active leader unafraid of responsibilities. I credit this growth to Cornerstone's unique culture of holistic disciple-

ship and providing a platform for practical application, which gave me the experience and confidence that has carried me through college and beyond.

The next distinctive aspect of Cornerstone's culture is around fellowship, which works on bringing things from the head-level down to the heart-level of transformation. I have fond memories of our frequent fellowships during at school, where we came together several mornings a week. These gatherings provided an opportunity to pray, share our thoughts, and learn from one another. Although fellowship meetings may not occur as frequently as they did at the academy, they are still organized in various forms – weekly, monthly, or annually – for different Cornerstone programs. I continue to cherish these occasions as they bring the entire Cornerstone family and long-term friends from different locations together. Reconnecting with friends I haven't seen in a while and forming connections with new members is always a joyous and exciting experience.

This culture of fellowship has helped me grow and maintain vibrant relationships with my family and friends who add value to my life in various ways. Thomas Merton's quote, "Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone – we find it with another," resonates with me deeply. Our full potential can only be realized through connection and support from others, enabling us to blossom and become better versions of ourselves!



Mary Nabuma facilitating a workshop at the Kigali Office

Values, Character & Life-long Relationships



Nason Mwadia

CLA - Tanzania

As a teacher at Cornerstone Leadership Academy in Tanzania for the past seven years, I have had the privilege of witnessing and experiencing several incredible aspects of our organizational culture. The origin of this can be found in the holistic integration of our 'discipleship' curriculum in the lives of many in our community. This are teachings based on the principles, precepts, and person of Jesus that go beyond mere academics and papers, and points young people in the direction of a well-lived life. Our aim in this is to tap into a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in one's life, and to awaken their leadership potential for personal, professional, and spiritual growth. The key to doing this in a relational and authentic way is that at CLA-TZ, both staff and students actively participate in these discipleship classes together, where they acquire invaluable insights to apply to their endeavors and aspirations.

The discipleship curriculum at CLA-TZ is designed to transform learners and staff members in all aspects of life: mentally, spiritually, morally, and socially. It covers topics related to spiritual formation, character development, and leadership empowerment. Through this curriculum, students at CLA-TZ (and similarly in other schools where it is taught), gain integral and relevant knowledge that serves as a catalyst for positive transformation. As a result, our learners are encouraged to take bold steps and become individuals of substance in their university studies, careers, and communities. Many CLA-TZ alumni have gone on to become guild presidents and ministers at universities, while our working professionals have become more productive and influential in their respective fields. This success is often attributed to the teachings and values imparted in our discipleship curriculum.

The discipleship classes at CLA-TZ are fundamental and beautiful, as they guide individuals onto the path of leadership and responsibility. The curriculum emphasizes the qualities and principles of leadership exemplified in the life of Jesus, whom we consider a role model. Just as Jesus invited his Disciples to follow him and become fishers of men (Matthew 4:19), we follow His example too. By nurturing leadership qualities, CLA-TZ and other Cornerstone schools produce leaders whose lives reflect the character and principles exemplified by Jesus, making our organizational culture truly unique and distinct.

At CLA we have a practice of 'care groups' where students and staff form small cell-groups amidst the larger school population, fostering an environment where love is freely given and received. Together, we work, support, and uplift one another, transcending challenging circumstances. The relationships formed within these care groups endure beyond school life, extending into the real world. Our alumni, deeply rooted in the CLA family, frequently return to school as visiting alumni, sharing their life experiences, offering guidance, and providing inspiration to current students. This enriches the aspirations of our students and contributes to their positive transformation.

The natural extension of this discipleship lived out by those in our community is the larger family of friends that we become a part of as alumni. This notion promotes long-term committed and healthy relationships rooted in the spirit of Jesus. Within this family environment, we treat and support each other as equals, disregarding labels and stereotypes. We cherish brotherhood and sisterhood, recognizing the significance of family-like relationships in our lives. The support system provided by this family extends to emotional, practical, social, and moral aspects of our lives. At CLA-TZ, we are taught to give and receive love, caring for one another regardless of what could divide us (gender, tribal lines, religious affiliations, etc).

We take pride in our organizational culture, which instills values, molds character, and forms lifelong friendships. It is rare to find such a beautiful culture in other organizations. As a teacher and member of the pioneer generation, I am honored to be part of this incredible journey we are on together!

Cornerstone

Newsletter Pictorial



AYLF Small group in Southern Burundi meeting along the shores of lake Tanganyika.



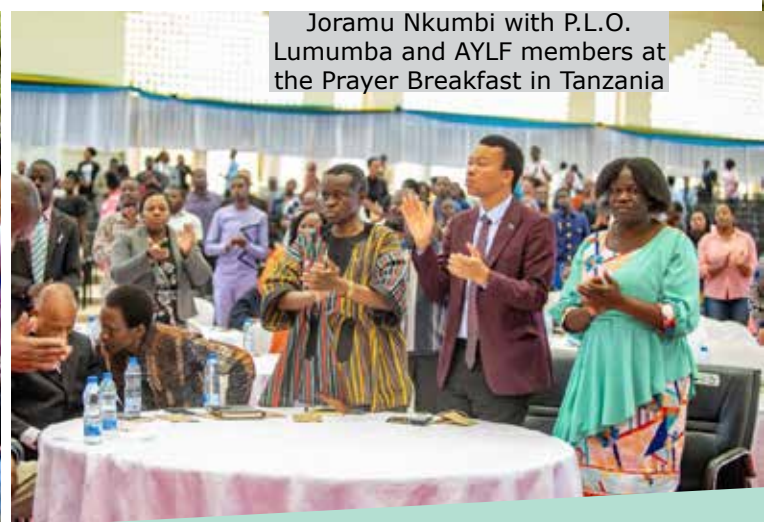
Stage III members at the Women's Day celebration and LiftHerUp women's mentorship program - Kigali, Rwanda



Marrieds Small Group at Goma office - DR Congo



Salaam small group meeting at the Kampala office - Uganda



Joram Nkumbi with P.L.O. Lumumba and AYLF members at the Prayer Breakfast in Tanzania



Salaam meeting in Dar, Tanzania



Outdoor fun for a small group sports activity at Nyandungu Eco-Park in Kigali, Rwanda



Tim Kreutter teaching about mentorship at the Uganda outreach coordinator's retreat



Isaac Nininahazwe on a panel discussion at the AYLF conference in northern Burundi



COSA small group Mtwara, Tanzania



AYLF Coordinators retreat, Kenya



Students sharing a discipleship topic with students at EKTHS



Rebecca Ineza with students at CLA Tanzania

A Family of Friends!



Angella Nannyondo

Youth Corps, Uganda

A Culture of Reconciliation & Personal Growth

clusive culture where everyone feels valued and included. This emphasis on reconciliation not only bridges personal divides but also extends to embracing diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences.

Our culture recognizes that many of us have endured hardships and possess diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Through open dialogue, empathy, and understanding, we actively work towards healing wounds and fostering unity in this nurturing environment.

The commitment to reconciliation extends beyond personal histories and encompasses embracing diversity within our organization. We appreciate the richness that arises from different backgrounds and perspectives including; religious, tribal, political, and nationality, acknowledging that it fuels innovation, creativity, and resilience. By fostering an inclusive culture that values each individual's unique contributions, we encourage the exchange of ideas and the development of collaborative solutions.

This new paradigm has in turn significantly influenced my own professional growth. Experiencing a genuine sense of belonging and being part of a supportive community has fueled my dedication and commitment to my work. I have witnessed firsthand how collaboration and teamwork thrive when relationships are cherished, and diversity is celebrated. This inclusive environment has fostered the exchange of ideas, resulting in innovative solutions and the achievement of shared goals.

I can say that this culture has ignited my passion and unlocked my potential. It has empowered me to bring my authentic self to my work, leading to enhanced productivity, innovation, and a deep sense of fulfillment.

In a world that often prioritizes tasks over people, I am genuinely grateful to be part of an organization that recognizes the fundamental truth: what we do flows out of who we are. By nurturing relationships and promoting reconciliation, our organization has created an extraordinary culture that has transformed not only my life but also the lives of those around me.

In a world where organizations often prioritize tasks and productivity above all else, I consider myself incredibly fortunate and privileged to be part of an organization with a culture that is exceptional and transformational. At the heart of our community lies a profound belief that relationships are paramount. As someone who has experienced a fractured family background and lacked strong familial support, this philosophy resonates deeply with me. Within this organization, I have found a new "family of friends" who have embraced me with open arms.

The relationships I have developed with my colleagues surpass the conventional coworker dynamic. They have become my pillars of strength, providing unwavering support, guidance, and a true sense of belonging. In this nurturing environment, I have discovered a space where I can authentically be myself, fostering personal and professional growth.

The emphasis on relationships has filled the void left by my fragmented family background. The genuine care and connection we share create a support system that extends beyond professional responsibilities. Celebrating milestones together, offering emotional support during challenging times, and sharing in each other's successes and challenges have cultivated a profound sense of belonging that positively impacts my personal life.

This quality of relationships is possible because of the focus on reconciliation in the spirit of Jesus - which has been transformative for me. By actively working towards healing past wounds and fostering unity, we have created an in-



Friendship is a

Choice We Make

Mercy Karumba

AYLF, Kenya

Two friends crossing a desert who found themselves caught in a heated argument. In a moment of anger, one friend slapped the other across the face. While the slapped friend felt the sting, he chose not to retaliate and silently etched his pain onto the sand, writing, "I am hurt because today my friend hit me on my face". Undeterred by their disagreement, they continued their journey and eventually stumbled upon an oasis. Deciding to refresh themselves, they took a bath. However, during this time, the friend who was slapped began to drown. In an act of bravery and friendship, the other friend rushed to his rescue, pulling him to safety. After the ordeal, the rescued friend inscribed on a stone, "Today I was saved by my best friend".

Curiosity piqued, the friend who had delivered the slap inquired, "Why did you write on the sand when I hurt you, but on the stone when I saved you?" In response, the other friend wisely stated that we should inscribe our hurts on the transient sand, allowing the wind to eventually erase them. Conversely, we should etch the good deeds performed by our friends on sturdy stones, ensuring that they are forever engraved.

This story (*left*) perfectly encapsulates my experience within the Cornerstone culture. As a member of the Africa Youth Leadership Forum (AYLF) for nearly a decade, I have witnessed the healing culture of our family of friends. I have seen members come together to rally behind friends amidst election campaigns, offer unwavering support when a fellow member faces health issues or the loss of a loved one, and witness the overwhelming attendance and encouragement during significant life events such as weddings and graduations. It is truly heartwarming to have a family of friends that stands by your side.

It is crucial to acknowledge that friendship, like any other relationship, organization, or association, is not devoid of disagreements, moments of anger, or unintentional hurts caused by actions or words. Often, we mistakenly associate enduring friendships with perfection, assuming that they are exempt from such challenges. However, just like any other bond, friendships have their ups and downs, encompassing both pain and joy.

To truly experience the profound fulfillment of friendship, we must embrace vulnerability. Being vulnerable entails allowing those around us to see our real and whole selves, without the facade of a shield. It means revealing our pains, fears, and insecurities in a culture of spiritual authenticity as Jesus taught. It also involves the humility of granting our friends the permission to correct, criticize, and guide us when necessary.

Like the two friends in the story, opening ourselves up to vulnerability comes with the risk of potential 'slaps' from those we trust. This experience can be doubly painful, both in terms of the hurt itself and the realization that it was inflicted by someone we deeply relied on. Nonetheless, the beauty lies in our choice to respond. We can choose to inscribe our hurts on the transient sand, allowing them to be carried away by the wind, simultaneously, we can choose to etch the kindness, support, and love we receive onto the enduring rock, serving as a daily reminder of the goodness bestowed upon us. Choosing friendship means choosing vulnerability, while always remembering that none of us are perfect. It also means extending the same grace to others that we desire for ourselves. This, in essence, is what being part of a family of friends truly means.



Mundua Scola

LASS Alumni, South Sudan

**Honesty,
Forgiveness,
Hard Work,
Humility, and
Service to the
Less Fortunate**

The members of our community have built a culture centered on integrity, virtue, and servant leadership. This unique approach to working with people has not only delivered academic excellence but has also profoundly impacted the lives of its students, who are making positive contributions in South Sudan and beyond.

I am a proud member of the Class of 2017 at the Leadership Academy of South Sudan (LASS). After completing my studies at LASS, I continued my educational journey and enrolled at Makerere University Business School in 2018. In 2022, I graduated with a bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management, a significant milestone in my personal and academic growth, and now I am an active member in our alumni association LAOSA (Leadership Academy Old Students Association).

The culture of servant leadership in this community has had a lasting impact on my character. Concepts such as honesty, forgiveness, hard-work, humility, and service to the less-fortunate, inspired by the teachings of Jesus, have become guiding principles for my actions and decisions. These values have not only enhanced my personal growth but have also influenced the way I interact with others. I strive to lead by example and make a positive difference in the lives of those around me.

I have learned that true leaders are those who humbly serve and empower others. Through various opportunities, such as engaging in community service projects, mentoring the younger generation, and promoting dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation, I have discovered the joy and fulfillment that comes from making a positive impact on the lives of others.

The transformative power of this culture has shaped my perspective on leadership and responsibility. I have developed a passion for servant leadership, embracing the idea that true leadership is rooted in selfless service. This realization has profoundly influenced my career choices and community involvement, as I actively seek opportunities to lead with humility and compassion. This transformational culture has instilled in me a strong work ethic, teaching me the value of perseverance and dedication. It has equipped me with the tools to navigate challenges with grace and resilience, both in my professional life and in other aspects of my journey.

Another important aspect of our culture is its familial environment and the value it places on living as brothers and sisters, fostering unity and a sense of belonging. This experience has inspired me to build strong, meaningful, and intentional relationships wherever I go and work. I am passionate about engaging in open and respectful dialogue with individuals from diverse backgrounds, tribes, and communities. I seek to understand their perspectives, challenges, and aspirations. By fostering genuine communication, we can bridge divides and promote a culture of empathy, inclusivity, and mutual respect.

The unity in our community is a powerful force for change. By standing together and exemplifying the love of Jesus, we can inspire others and create a ripple effect of unity that extends far beyond our immediate circles. Together, we can be catalysts for transformation, drawing from the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood that binds us. The culture of our 'family of friends' has been a powerful influence in shaping the lives of many, driving them to make a positive impact in South Sudan and beyond. Let us continue to embody the precepts and principles of Jesus, serving as beacons of hope and inspiration. May our actions be guided by love, compassion, and the unwavering pursuit of peace.



Theoneste Nzaramba

CLA - Rwanda

The Power of A Shared-Vision

I have had the privilege of working with the Cornerstone Leadership Academy in Rwanda for over eight years. I started my service in this community as a student council member during my time at the academy, then later served as a mentor during my gap year, and currently, I am honored to serve as the discipleship coordinator at CLA. In this article, I would like to reflect on my experience amongst the larger community of Cornerstone Development Africa, and in particular, the power of shared vision which is at its core.

Cornerstone operates quite a few programs in the region, and the shared vision of "An ever-expanding movement of transformational servant leaders in Africa, building a better world," unites us all for a greater cause. It is remarkable how this shared vision has brought everyone together, speaking a common language as a 'family of friends' in the spirit of Jesus. This shared vision has fostered an inspirational spirit of unity across the region, and it is daunting to imagine the progress we will make in the next ten years. East Africa could be on its way to becoming one cohesive family, thanks to this single aspect of our organizational culture. As an African, I find this notion inspiring, as it encourages us to come together as one family.

As a leader, this aspect of shared vision becomes particularly relevant in a school setting where we have young people who we are nurturing into future leaders. The catalyst for transformation occurs when these young men and women embrace the vision and make it their own. When we take the time to articulate the vision to these young individuals and allow them to share it,

they end up taking more ownership over the work. Ownership of a vision is a key element in leadership because it ultimately leads to enhanced efficiency. When vision ownership becomes ingrained in an organization's culture, it fosters social cohesion and a genuine sense of belonging. Respect for one another and love for the vision and organization become evident because each individual takes ownership and contributes to the shared vision. Undoubtedly, this aspect allows members to live a shared life, creating opportunities for mutual learning. One of the greatest benefits of working in a team is the opportunity to acquire skills, values, and ethical principles from other members. Within our organization, this aspect has enabled members to cultivate these qualities.

More specifically, shared vision translates directly into shared responsibility, making the journey of creating a better world for humanity lighter and more fulfilling. I can honestly testify that if the responsibilities of the discipleship office were not shared, I would have found myself imposing my ideas on others in the name of running the transformational curriculum. On the contrary, my main task has been to help both new and existing staff comprehend and embrace the shared vision as a priority in our work. Ultimately, this makes the process of student transformation easier for both the staff and the students. Therefore, this aspect allows all participants to find their most suitable position in the game of transformation. Shared vision is lived vision, and lived vision is achieved vision.

In conclusion, my experience at CLA-Rwanda has shown me the transformative power of a shared vision in leadership. Our shared vision of "an ever-expanding family of friends" is bringing together East Africa, and is fostering unity across the region. It has also enabled us to create an environment where vision ownership, shared responsibility, and mutual learning thrive. This aspect has made our journey towards creating a better world for humanity lighter and more fulfilling. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of an organization that recognizes the importance of shared vision in achieving meaningful and lasting impact.



Brenda Mugagga

CLA Alumni, Uganda

The Paradigm-shift of Servant Leadership

tion from the aforementioned experiences, I would be uncertain of how to accomplish this responsibility. My commitment to excellence drives me in fulfilling this role. I firmly believe that by coordinating with dedication and attentiveness to each individual in the class, we can help each other excel in our respective paths. Galatians 5:22-23 serves as my guiding manual when executing my duties as a coordinator: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

I am deeply grateful for the profound experience I had immersed in the Cornerstone culture at CLA Girls. Through the discipleship classes, the guidance of our beloved teachers, and the invaluable opportunities I had to serve at CLA Rwanda and the Youth Corp homes, my life has been rightly shaped and given direction.

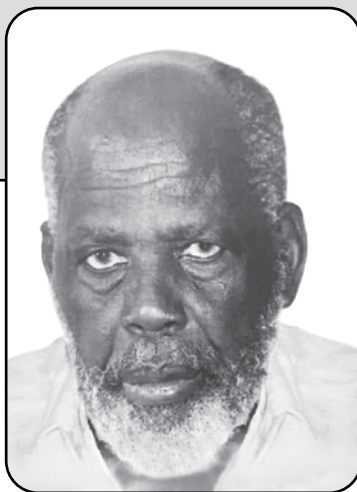
The paradigm shift I underwent while learning about 'Servant Leadership' is among the most notable aspects of Cornerstone's transformational culture that I would like to highlight. As an employee, I am constantly reminded to view my position as an altar of the Lord and to be a vessel of honor in the great house (II Timothy 2:20-21) for the people I lead. A servant leader willingly sacrifices themselves for the better of those under their care. Therefore, I am inspired to fulfill my responsibilities while nurturing the growth of those entrusted to me in various aspects of their lives. I am compelled to utilize my position to benefit everyone within my sphere of influence, instead of exploiting or manipulating those who work under me. Having experienced the negative impact of such environments firsthand, I wake up each day looking forward to meeting my team, accomplishing our set targets, and celebrating our collective victories. The joy we share as a team far surpasses the joy of an individual.

Serving as a class coordinator in our alumni association presents its own unique challenges, yet it is one of the ways we can bring the COSA vision of long-term relationships to fruition.

Upon my graduation from the leadership academy, I was commissioned to venture out, grow, and shine as I embarked on my university journey. Fortunately though, I didn't leave the academy alone, I left the academy with a profound connection to three remarkable women who have become my lifelong support system. The principle and culture of covenant relationships in Cornerstone blessed me with sisters from Buganda and Busoga whom I would have never met otherwise. To my dear companions Mary, Lydia, and Pastor Desire, our bond has been tested like any other relationship, yet we have remained steadfast and united. This commitment has empowered each of us to strive for personal growth while uplifting one another, as we share our lives together. I cannot fathom what my life would be without these ladies. The principle of covenant relationships may have seemed unrealistic when it was first shared, but now I truly appreciate its significance, recognizing it as one of the foundations for commitment to both our spouses and, above all, to God.

Alumni having breakfast at the 2023 annual COSA retreat





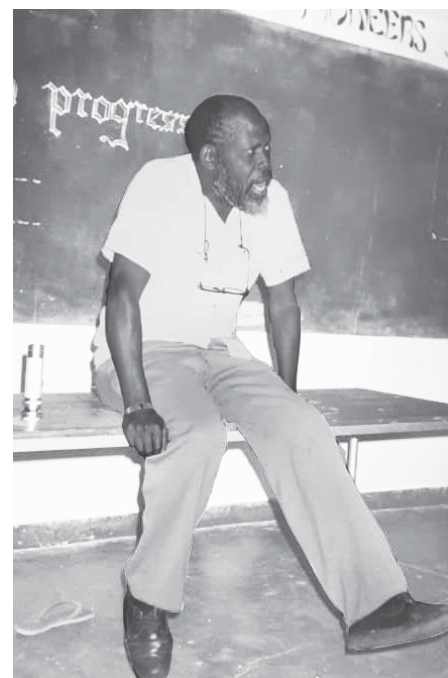
***Babu Mzee Paul Lukwiya Mwoc** was the headmaster of the Cornerstone Leadership Academy Boys from 1996 - 2006, and thereafter served for the next 10 years as an overall Education Coordinator for Cornerstone Development Africa. Mzee Lukwiya passed away peacefully at his home on May 28, 2023 at the age of 83 years old. He will forever be remembered as a foundational elder figure in the Cornerstone community who helped establish a transformational culture in the schools, and positively impacted many young peoples' lives.*

From the moment Mzee returned to Uganda after years of exile in Kenya and joined Cornerstone Leadership Academy Boys as an economics teacher, it was evident that he possessed something truly special. This realization was solidified when he assumed a central administrative role within the school. Mzee secured a special place in the hearts of every student and colleague, commanding respect through his dignified demeanor and equitable treatment of all individuals. He made intentional and personal connections with everyone, including teachers, students, staff, and members of the community. In essence, he became a father and grandfather figure for our community to rally around.

Mzee's dedication to the growth and well-being of young people played an integral role in shaping the culture of Cornerstone. His love for them was profound, and in return, he was adored by all. He fostered deep friendships with everyone he encountered, becoming a surrogate father and grandfather to those who had not experienced the love of a biological parent.

Mzee never hesitated to provide guidance to young people who believed they had all the answers. He possessed the wisdom to assert himself when necessary, while also offering love and support in the right measure. He embraced others warmly when the situation called for it, always genuine in his affection. Every individual within this community received expressions of "I love you" or "I am praying for you" from Mzee, a testament to his boundless love and a life well lived. The community is forever indebted to Mzee for this love and for the profound impact he made during his time with us.

By Phillip Ojok



Mzee Lukwiya as we remember him best - sharing with students

Spiritual DNA

History of the 'DNA':

DNA refers to what you have inherited from those who have gone before you. In regards to the DNA of biology, you inherit the genes of your parents. In regards to the DNA of an ideology you inherit the ideas of your mentors. As Sir Isaac Newton said: *"If I have been able to see further - it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants."*

As mentioned earlier, we grew out of a larger movement that started in the US about 70 years ago (around the time of World War II) called the National Prayer Breakfast. Small groups of business, political and community leaders began meeting together weekly:

- To encourage each other to live out their highest and best values - in ways that would address some of the problems in their cities and communities.
- To support each other in their personal lives.
- To pray for the leaders in their city and nation.

Many of these groups meet at the beginning of the day for breakfast, and that is how the term 'prayer breakfast' came about. It first became a large, annual, national event in the U.S. during the time of US President Dwight Eisenhower, who said these groups would meet, *"Simply in the Spirit of Jesus, regardless of their different backgrounds and hold each other accountable to his basic core principles, in order to bring positive change to their nations, their cities and to their own lives."*

One of the founding members, Abram Vereide, held this view about Jesus: *"He is the only universal - belonging to all ages, races and conditions. The basic eternal truths of other religions being largely summarized in his teachings."*

Vereide's friend and partner E. Stanley Jones - greatly shaped the Christ-Centered aspect of our DNA. Jones went to India in the early 1900's as a missionary, worked mostly among the intellectuals, and was a friend to Mahatma Gandhi. There he made a discovery of the difference between "lifting up Christianity" and "lifting up Jesus."

Jones found that people in India had all kinds of reservations about the religion of "Christianity" due to the way it came to them from the Western culture amidst British colonial rule. BUT, they had a very positive reaction to the person of Jesus and his message.

So, in 1925 Jones wrote the book called, "The Christ of the Indian Road." In it he says: "Chris-

tianity and Jesus are not the same... people can have Jesus without the (religious or cultural) system that has been built up around him." This is seen in groups such as "Jews for Jesus" who retain their Jewish identity and religion while recognizing Jesus as the messiah.

Vereide and Jones were part of an initial interdenominational group of twelve significant spiritual leaders of the time, who would meet for mutual encouragement. They further shaped and transmitted "the DNA" to Richard Halverson and Doug Coe. Halverson passed on in 1995. Doug Coe continued to influence and mentor many others, including myself and Michael Timmis, until he passed on in 2017.

The Jesus-Centered Focus:

Every movement requires a clear set of shared values, a vision and a common philosophy to keep it going strong over the years. But, it's not easy to find:

1. A solid, yet common ideological ground across all divisions among us.
 2. Which can also serve as a basis for inspiration, reconciliation and reflection.
 3. Which can provide a model for leadership principles.
- Yet! We do get all of this with centering our values and philosophy around Jesus:

In regards to the aspect of Jesus providing common ground across the various creeds, author Bruxy Cavey captured it well: *"Consider the possibility that Jesus Christ is in an unparalleled position to offer spiritual help for all people, regardless of their religious background. Think of it, he is a rabbi to the Jews, a prophet to the Muslims, an avatar to the Hindus, an enlightened one to Buddhist, the Son of God to Christians, a wise teacher to secularists, and a 'friend of sinners' to the rest of us."*

The Basic Truths Embodied in Jesus' Teachings Are Universal and Self-evident to All Sincere People:

1. That, human beings need a change of heart, from being selfish to loving others. (Repent)
2. That a better world is possible and it is near. ("For the kingdom of God is at hand")
3. That we are tasked to be the 'salt & light' of the world.
4. That the principles of love, faith and unity are more powerful than the hate, fear and division we see around us.
5. That, it is better to forgive than to seek revenge.
6. That, we should "do unto others as we would want them to do unto us."
7. That we all bear a responsibility to care for 'the least' in society
8. That, we are all God's children and bear his image.
9. That, one day we all will have to give an account to our Maker for how we have lived our lives.
10. That we are tasked to spread these teachings to all nations.

Eight Core Values of Our Greater 'Family of Friends':

1. Maintaining Long Term Relationships:

We are a network of friends that goes back several decades, and so sometimes we informally call ourselves a 'family of friends.'

- John 13:34-35: "All men will know that you are my disciples because you love one another."

2. It's a World-wide Vision but grounded in Small Groups

We come from many different nations, yet the strength and foundation of the whole vision is simply based on friends gathering regularly in small groups... for fellowship, for accountability, for partnership, and to pray for each other, their nations, local leaders, and the leaders of the world.

3. We focus on Jesus as the Common Ground:

We reference our core values and methods to the principles, precepts, and person of Jesus. Because, his life and his teachings are respected universally – irrespective of religious affiliation: Un-conditional love, sacrificial service, humility, faith charity, care for the least, forgiveness, justice and liberty, uplifting & inspiring of each other, spreading hope and not despair.

4. A Revolution of Love, That Works Across All That is Dividing Humanity:

Nearly all of the conflicts and wars in the world today are being fought because of religious, ethnic, ideological, or class differences. We want to be the kind of people who can cross these divides, who can "stand in the gap," who can love "the enemy" and "love our neighbor" – the way Jesus taught.

5. It's a Call for Personal Transformation:

The hope for the transformation of society lies with individuals whose minds and hearts have been transformed. This 'paradigm shift', when you see things in a completely new way, changes you, changes your stance toward life, changes your behaviors. We experience change in ourselves as we follow this way of Jesus.

6. It's about faith for a Better World:

Personal transformation creates the capacity to see a more beautiful world that our hearts know is possible. The world in its present state is not in alignment with the ideals of the Kingdom of God, which Jesus prayed would come on earth. That is why we see all the poverty, injustice, and suffering in the world.

7. It's a Focus on the Essentials:

Jesus taught one commandment that was the sum of all the law and the prophets. Too often we divide ourselves over minor things and we miss the MAIN thing. The main thing is to learn: "To love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbors as our selves" (Mt 22:37-39). All of us know more theology than what we are living... we don't need more theology, we need to live better what we already know and focus on the main thing.

8. We reach out to leaders, and we develop leaders... but we really only have one 'Leader' that we follow and that is Jesus.

The leaders of this world hold enormous influence for good or bad over millions of people. Through the Prayer Breakfast groups around the world, and through student leadership forums, this family of friends has reached to people in leadership (Acts 9:15: "take my name before the gentiles and their kings).

What is the Dream?

What is the vision of our family of friends in East Africa? It would simply be a network of people who seek to be 'the light of the world' as Jesus put it - shining with love and integrity in their various spheres of influence across the region.

Jesus used four metaphors to describe how his movement advances. He said it was like salt, light, yeast, and the good seed sown in with the bad. All of these things are very transformational but they transform their environments in a silent and almost an invisible way.

Closing thoughts:

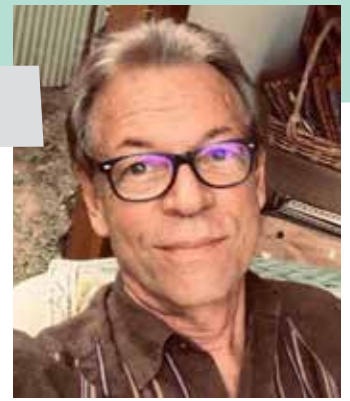
When we are talking about "DNA", we are also talking about keeping the vision, philosophy, methods and vocabulary pure and consistent as we grow. Otherwise, two types of mutations crop up that weaken the simple power of our origins.

- Things can get pulled toward the religious sub-culture we are most familiar with and thereby lose the radical element of inclusivity.
- Things can get secularized (for the sake of greater inclusivity) and lose the spiritual power behind it.

'Friends' and 'family' bring us some of our greatest joys in life, but they are also where many of our toughest life-lessons are worked out. Such as lessons of patience, forgiveness, keeping commitments - all aspects of developing a more self-less kind of love.

We work towards "Unity without Uniformity" and "Diversity with out Fragmentation." We do not all have to be exactly the same in order to remain united as brothers and sisters in the spirit of Jesus. It's a choice we must make to change our mindset, our prejudices, and our behaviors, towards others who are different from us. We can allow and appreciate diversity, but let's not allow those differences to move in a direction that cause divisions, discriminations, segregation and alienation.

All this takes effort, it takes work, it must be pursued - but it is at the heart of what Jesus wanted in his most passionate prayer found in John's gospel, chapter 17: "I pray that they may be one."



The “Spiritual DNA” Of Our ‘Family Of Friends’

A big part of culture is the ideology of a particular group. So, I want to write about the history of the ideology we inherited in this family of friends and to capture some of its essential elements.

We often use the term a ‘family of friends’ to encompass the various initiatives that have sprung up over the years, which have been influenced by the spiritual lineage that came out of the National Prayer Breakfast movement which began over 70 years ago, in America.

But actually, we see this family of friends as simply a branch or extension of “the Jesus Movement” that began 2000 years ago. Jesus had a plan and a vision for a better world, which was: “The coming of the Kingdom of God...on earth as it is in heaven.”

So, the underlying foundation of all we are doing in Cornerstone is simply to promote in the people and societies of this region - the values embodied in Jesus’ vision of the “Kingdom of God coming on earth.” This means championing the values that Jesus championed: Harmony, reconciliation, unity, order, brotherhood, justice, wholeness and the radical personal transformation that leads toward social transformation.

In East Africa this work includes: the Cornerstone Leadership Academies and schools, the alumni of these schools, Africa Youth Leadership Forum, Youth Impact Mission, High-school Leadership Develop-

ment, Youth Corps, Salaam Mentoring Program, the senior friends behind the National Prayer Breakfasts in the region and all our friends from abroad who resonate with or feel connected to this work and community, in one way or another.

Four Main Pillars of Our Various Programs:

Over the years, we have identified these four aspects or pillars that we seek to consistently uphold in the various branches of our family of friends. We focus on:

1. **Leadership:** Creating influence for a better world.
2. **Integrity:** Being the salt and light in our world.
3. **Life-long Friendships:** Staying together, long term.
4. **Reconciliation and Unity:** Briding across all the divisions that exists in our world - in the spirit of Jesus.

When you look at these four pillars, you can see they are pointing to some *problems* and you can see they are pointing to some *solutions*. The Problems are: Lack of Good Leadership, Corruption and Division. The Solutions are: Taking on leadership for positive influence, living with integrity, being part of a life-long network to create transformation and loving our neighbors.

Two Critical Issues our World Needs to Resolve:

These four pillars also help address two critical issues in our region (and in the world) that are holding humanity back from seeing that better world we all long for, which Jesus called the ‘Kingdom of God’:

1. **Conflict:** We continue to see groups that dislike and mistrust each other and may often use violent means of settling disputes between nations, tribes, religions, or other interest groups.
 - Due to a Lack of Cohesion - Failure to see everyone as fellow brothers and sisters as Jesus taught in Mt. 23:8-9
2. **Corruption.** Personal misuse of resources meant for the whole nation.
 - Due to a Lack of Character: People who don’t walk their talk and are not acting with integrity and principles - or being the salt and light that Jesus called us to be.

