

Cornerstone

Newsletter & Magazine Dec 2025

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

VALUES-BASED LEADERSHIP

In today's rapidly changing world - marked by political instability, explosive technological advancement, and increasing cultural fragmentation - the need for ethical leadership is more urgent than ever. Beneath many of the leadership crises we observe across the continent and beyond lies a single root problem: a widening gap between what leaders claim to value and how they actually behave.

Values-based leadership calls us back to integrity. It is not about charisma, personality, or positional authority. Rather, it is grounded in character, conviction, and consistency. It is leadership anchored in timeless moral principles and aligned with a higher purpose.

Such leaders (whether in political, corporate, or community spaces) are distinguished by a few core commitments. They:

- Lead by example, aligning their actions with deeply held and divinely inspired values.
- Prioritize integrity, justice, humility, service, and love.
- Inspire others to seek the greater good – not merely personal success or recognition.

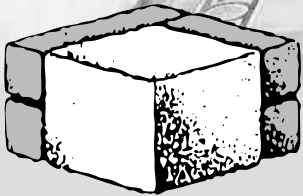
In the life and teachings of Jesus, we see perhaps the clearest model of values-based leadership. He led through service rather than domination, humility rather than self-promotion, and sacrificial love rather than coercive power. His leadership was rooted in core values that remain universal, timeless, and urgently needed today.

In this newsletter, members of our family of friends reflect on what values-based leadership means to them—how it shapes their work, their relationships, their service, and their ongoing growth as leaders. These reflections show that values-based leadership is not a slogan but a lived experience. It is a daily choice to honor what is right, pursue what is just, and embody the kind of love that transforms communities.



and...

- * Updates on various programs around the region
- * Centerfold pictorial
- * Thoughts from Tim



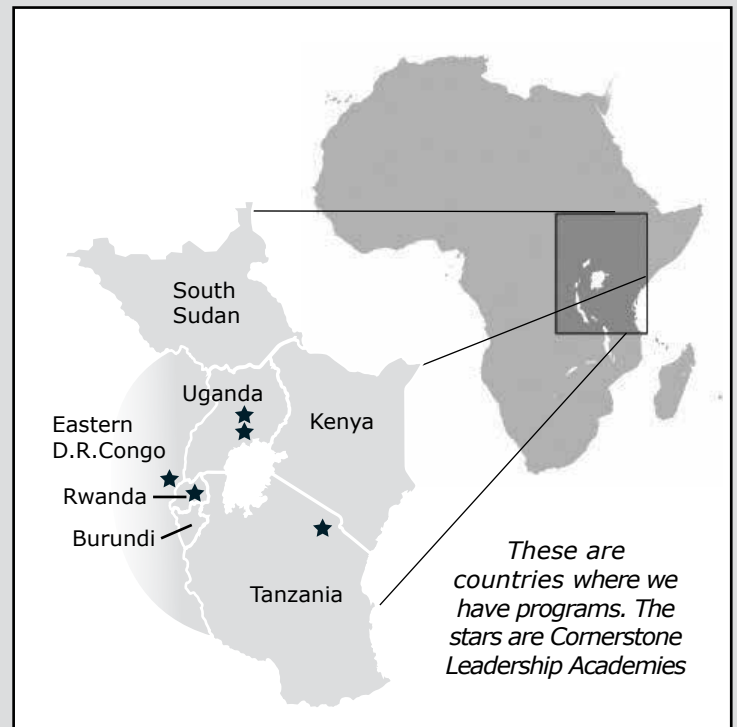
Cornerstone Development Africa

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, Kenya, Burundi, South Sudan, and D.R. Congo. 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 over 2,000 young people today- in a variety of programs including seven schools, five homes for at-risk youth, 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



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.

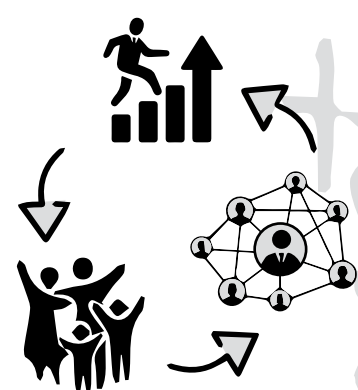
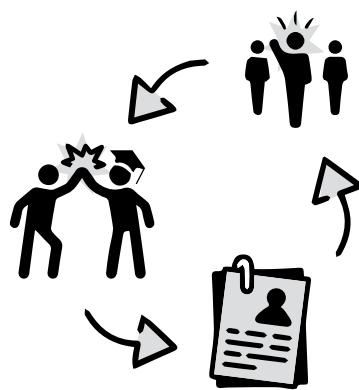
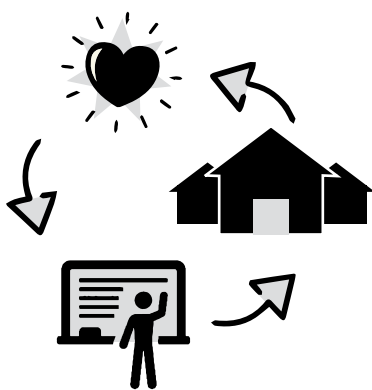
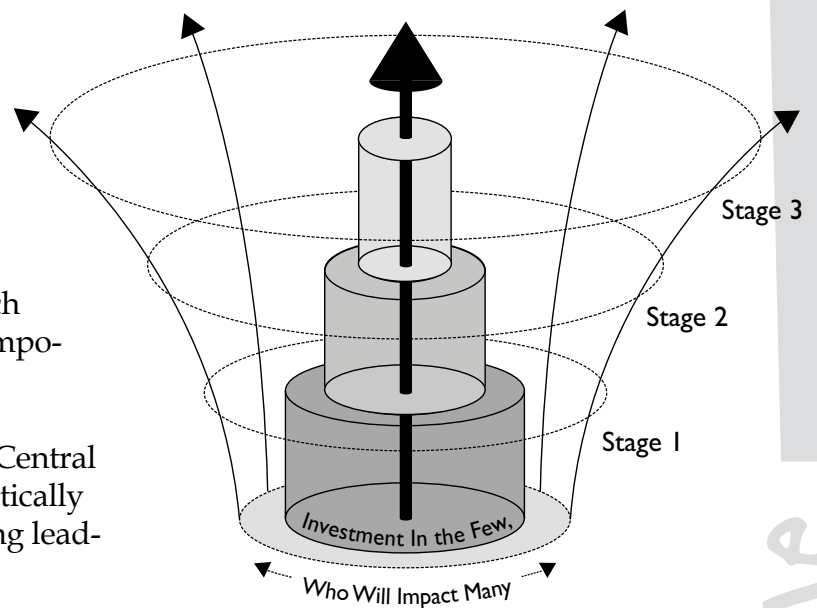
See more online: www.CDAfrica.org

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. Earlier this year, we highlighted several PEOPLE in our community, and now in this current edition, we turn to highlighting our PROGRAMS in general.

The 'Stages' of Our Work

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 various career development initiatives that will enable them to work in spaces of influence in 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 works with ongoing support systems after college that promote the personal and spiritual growth of our alumni so they go through life aligned with good values. We support these relationships and networks to develop their own life-transforming grassroots initiatives that are having impact on all sectors of society!



Cornerstone Leadership Academies

CLA D.R. Congo

This past year has been a defining season for the Cornerstone Leadership Academy in Goma — marked by resilience, transition, and visible fruit. Midway through the year, I stepped into the role of Headmaster and had the privilege of serving alongside an existing cohort of 30 students known as the Prosperous Generation.

It was indeed a challenging time for us, amid the ongoing conflict and security situation in this part of the country, however, we found ways to persevere! With strengthened academic systems and a renewed focus on Jesus-centered character formation, the cohort completed the program successfully and graduated on August 13th. Their journey reflected our conviction that leadership flows from a transformed heart — one shaped by truth, integrity, and service after the example of Jesus.

In September, we launched our admissions process and were met with an overwhelming response: more than 450 applications from across the Democratic Republic of Congo, including Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Bukavu, Goma, Bunia, Beni, and beyond. In a context often overshadowed by hardship, this response reminded us that light still draws people — especially young leaders searching for hope and direction. After a rigorous selection process, we admitted 40 students — 20 young women and 20 young men — reflecting our commitment to excellence, gender equity, and the belief that God

4 raises leaders from every background.

The new cohort began in late September and quickly embraced the Cornerstone culture, naming themselves The Chosen Generation and electing student leaders. This year also marked an important milestone: for the first time, our student body includes students from an even wider range of tribes, religions, and life experiences, including Muslim students and a Pygmy learner. Living together in genuine unity requires more than tolerance; it requires a shared commitment to the way of Jesus — marked by love, humility, reconciliation, and the recognition of every person's God-given dignity.

Throughout the term, students participated in a holistic leadership formation program integrating discipleship in the life and teachings of Jesus, English language development, reading and critical thinking, computer training, and practical life skills. The term concluded on December 1st with a bread-breaking fellowship — a powerful moment of reflection and gratitude that captured the depth of community formed among the students.

This progress was made possible by a devoted team of staff and volunteers whose sacrificial service and shared faith created an environment where students could flourish academically, spiritually, and personally. As we look ahead, Cornerstone Leadership Academy DRC remains committed to forming resilient, Christ-centered leaders — young men and women equipped to serve others, pursue justice, and bring hope to their communities and the future of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

By Akilimali Burongu

CLA Uganda & Ekitangaala Schools

What we do, how we treat others, and how we respond to different situations around us reflects the values we cherish. This is what distinguishes value-based leaders from other forms of leadership. Values are LIVED, not just spoken about.

In our leadership development work with students, we emphasize that we cannot give out what we do not have. When our values are evident as leaders and teachers, we can be sure to impact and influence the people around us especially the students learning these values as they are exemplified by us the teachers.

In John 13:1-17, before the Last Supper, Jesus of Nazareth did something unexpected. He knelt down and washed the feet of His disciples. The disciples were surprised and uncomfortable, especially Peter, because they saw Jesus as their teacher and leader. By doing this, Jesus showed that his style of leadership is rooted in humility and service. He did not just teach about serving others... he LIVED it. Afterward, he explained that if he, their teacher, could serve them in this way, they should also serve one another.

In our schools, rather than exercising authority through control, we choose to serve and empower those we lead by fostering mutual respect, fairness, and accountability in all that we do. This approach not only transforms those around us, but also transforms us as individuals. When we embrace these values in our own lives, we are better able to positively shape the young people entrusted to us, the people we lead, and our communities at large.

This past year has been one of many blessings and achievements to celebrate.

At CLA Girls, we built a new staff house and a new toilet facility. We were also able to carry out a facelift of the school fence, and we built a large oven from the old girls, which will greatly uplift and support the girls' entrepreneurship skills.

At CLA Boys, we successfully upgraded our solar system and acquired a high-voltage generator to help stabilize power challenges within the school.

At Ekitangaala Transformation High School, we were blessed with a new dining structure, enabling all our students to have their meals within the school premises.

At Ekitangaala Primary School, we were blessed with a new headmistress, Ms. Naigaga Susan. She has joined the team with renewed energy, strong work ethics, and a child-centred mindset that is already positioning the school for the next level of growth.

We celebrated the A-Level graduation of our schools in Uganda. It was a joyful moment of thanksgiving, reflecting academic excellence, character formation, and God's guidance. We release our graduates with confidence, praying they become transformative and value-based leaders in society.

It is indeed beautiful, rewarding, and honourable when our values as leaders shine like stars testifying to who we are before the world. Such leadership is in great deficit, yet deeply needed in our world today. As we embrace and demonstrate these values more intentionally, we help bring the Kingdom of God here on earth, attracting both present and eternal reward.

By Sarah Mwesigwa

A student presenting his capstone project at CLA Boys school



CLA - Tanzania

Values-based leadership stands in contrast to societies common measures of success of power, profit, and prestige. It is a quieter, yet more enduring path - one of true significance - that anchors decisions in unchanging virtues such as integrity, humility, compassion, and selfless service. Jesus modeled this perfectly:

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:26-28)

At CLA Tanzania, these words are not merely quoted - we strive to live them out. As 2025 draws to a close, we reflect on a year in which character mattered more than academics and service outshone status.

CLA has continued nurturing leaders who lead from the heart, through initiatives like mental health programs, community outreaches, spiritual engagements, mentorship, a vibrant reading culture, and the transformative GLAMI initiative for girls.

The year began in January with the launch of the Mental Health and Well-being Program, under the steady guidance of the Counselling Department. Recognizing that teachers and staff carry immense responsibilities – lesson planning, grading, and pastoral care – the Academy invested in their emotional and psychological health. Through workshops and seminars led by Mr. Branly Madati and Mr. Dunstan, participants gained practical tools for mindfulness, healthy boundaries, and peer support.

Through the Builders of Future Africa (BFA) initiative, CLA students engaged in meaningful community outreach. In October, sixty young leaders visited marginalized children in Lemanyata, Arusha, offering scholastic materials, personal effects, clothing, and encouragement. Beyond the gifts, they offered presence – sitting together, sharing stories, laughing, and learning from one another. One student reflected, “I thought I was giving, but I received hope.”

Each September, the Academy hosts the Discovery Bible Study (DBS) workshops – three days of immersion in faith, ethics, and purpose. This year’s gathering brought together over 300 participants, including students, staff, alumni, and guests. National gospel artist Paul Clement uplifted hearts through worship, while Mr. Branly Madati and Dr. Arnold guided participants in exploring

grace, calling, and transformation. Many described the experience as life-changing – an encounter that stirred souls and realigned destinies. These were not just events; they were spiritual milestones.

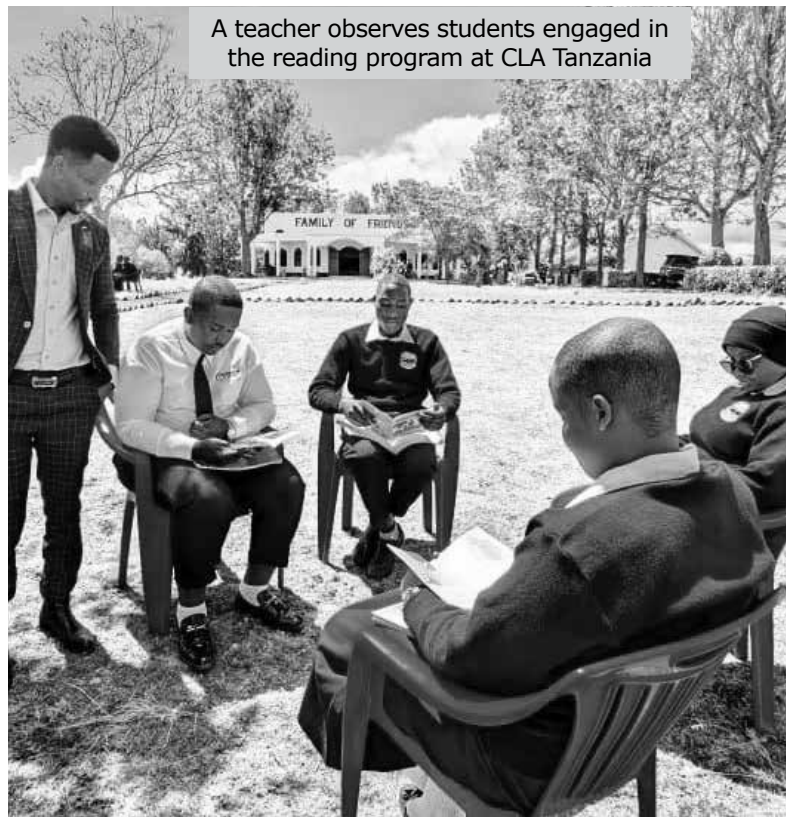
At CLA, mentorship is not assigned – it is chosen. Each student identifies a mentor who walks beside them in their personal and academic journey. This year, countless testimonies emerged: students overcoming exam anxiety by sharing their fears with their mentors, or finding courage to discuss family challenges with the people they trust the most. In these quiet, trusting relationships, integrity is modeled and character is shaped.

The Girls Leadership and Mentorship Initiative (GLAMI), a cherished partner, continues to empower young women to view themselves as changemakers. Through workshops on self-awareness, creativity, and problem-solving, girls designed innovative responses to community challenges. One participant beautifully summarized the experience: “My voice matters.” GLAMI ignites a flame in every girl – a living reflection of Matthew 5:16: “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

As 2025 concludes, the fruits are visible – burn-out replaced by resilience, isolation by belonging, and doubt by renewed purpose. While challenges have tested us, they have also refined our thinking and perspectives about life. As we look ahead, the mission of Cornerstone Leadership Academy – Tanzania remains unwavering: to raise leaders in Tanzania and beyond who do not merely succeed, but serve; who do not simply shine, but lift others into the light.

By Nason Mwadia

A teacher observes students engaged in the reading program at CLA Tanzania





A Mentors-to-Mentees 'match-up' meeting

CLA Rwanda

As we conclude this year, we reflect on our ongoing journey of shaping young people into transformational servant leaders - those whose influence is grounded not in titles or achievements, but in integrity, humility, compassion, and service.

At CLA Rwanda, we believe that character precedes competence, and that true leadership is seen in who we ARE before it is expressed in what we DO. Throughout the year, our programs emphasized spiritual formation, self-awareness, and community living as central pillars of leadership development. Through morning fellowships, care groups, mentorship sessions, and shared service, students were immersed in rhythms of life that shaped both their thinking and being. We have seen students grow in emotional maturity, moral courage, and a renewed calling to serve selflessly. Leadership roles – in the school council, care groups, or clubs – became living laboratories for values-based leadership in daily relationships.

This year was rich with experiences that helped us live out our values in community. We had the privilege of taking students and teachers to visit CLA Uganda and CLA Tanzania, engaging in cross-border learning and fellowship. These exchanges deepened our understanding that leadership is not confined by nationality or culture – it is a shared calling to live out Christ-like values everywhere. In turn, we were blessed to host students from CLA DRC, whose presence brought new friendships, diversity, and broader perspectives to our community life. Together, we learned that values-based leadership is about bridging divides, celebrating diversity, and recognizing God's image in every person.

Many students demonstrated servant leadership during their holiday by volunteering in community tutoring programs, teaching and mentoring primary school children in their neighborhoods. These acts

were not mere charity – they were expressions of purpose-driven leadership, revealing that true fulfillment comes from lifting others up and contributing to their community's growth.

A highlight of 2025 was the COSA (Cornerstone Old Students Association) Homecoming, which brought together alumni from 2009 to 2024. Hearing their testimonies reaffirmed our belief that formation within CLA leads to transformation beyond CLA. They are a huge impact in society!

Like any journey of growth, this year presented challenges – economic pressures, diverse student needs, and the ongoing call to sustain excellence. Yet these trials became our classroom for living out our values. We learned anew that faithfulness in small things strengthens us for greater challenges. Through perseverance, our community grew in unity, creativity, and trust, proving that values-based leadership is refined in the fires of real life.

As we look to the future, our focus remains on deepening mentorship, strengthening alumni engagement, and cultivating values-driven innovation – encouraging students to apply their learning to real-world challenges with creativity, empathy, and integrity. We aim to keep shaping a community that not only teaches about Jesus but lives out His model of humility, justice, and love. At its core, values-based leadership is not merely a program at CLA – it is our culture and calling. It is seen in how our students serve one another, how our teachers guide with compassion, and how our community makes decisions rooted in faith and truth.

As Jesus demonstrated, true leadership flows from character, not status. He led by serving, uplifted others with dignity, and transformed hearts through love. This is the leadership we seek to model and multiply – in Rwanda and beyond.

By Peter Nkotanyi



Participants of the annual Student Leadership Development Boot Camp

AYLFL - Kenya

This year at AYLFL has been a deliberate journey of learning what it means to live our values. Guided by the theme “To Act Justly, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly,” we have sought to move beyond words and into practice.

Across campuses, in retreats, leadership gatherings, and circles of dialogue, we have seen how integrity takes root in small decisions, honest conversations, and consistent service. Each activity has been part of one continuous lesson: that leadership begins within, and that to lead well is to live true.

Our small groups are the living heart of AYLFL - intentional spaces where students meet weekly to reflect, share, and learn accountability. Across more than 63 campuses in Kenya, beginning with the Coordinators’ Retreat, we anchored ourselves in the call to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. These circles explored identity, leadership, faith, and forgiveness, while organizing clean-ups, hikes, painting activities, visits to children’s homes, and charity drives. Through these moments, students discovered that leadership begins by leading oneself first.

The High School Leadership Development Outreach (HLD) extended this spirit of mentorship to younger learners. University students who had been shaped by AYLFL circles visited schools to share lessons on purpose, friendship, and responsible leadership. Through talks, interactive sessions, and mentorship activities, they encouraged high school students to begin thinking about who they are becoming and not just what they want to achieve. For many of the university mentors, it was a full-circle moment: a chance to give back, to listen, and to model the kind of leadership that inspires hope and responsibility in the next generation.

young people of diverse faiths met in mosques, churches, and virtually to listen and learn. From Jamia Mosque’s Open Day to interfaith dialogues on mental health, they practiced understanding, empathy, and shared humanity, learning that peace is not agreement but the courage to truly see one another.

The Student Leadership Development Program (SLDP) became another space where learning met action. Over the 8-month training, fellows designed community and policy action projects addressing unemployment, civic participation, and mental health. Through initiatives like ‘Breakfast with a CEO’, members engaged with leaders who spoke honestly about resilience, integrity, and the often-unseen cost of leading with values. Our engagement spaces expanded further through the People’s Dialogue Festival, where AYLFL joined hundreds of citizens, policy-makers, and civil society actors in conversations on justice, accountability, and youth participation.

By the time of our Annual Leadership Gathering in May, these threads had formed a single fabric. More than one hundred and twenty student leaders from six countries gathered around the theme “Justice: The Shield and Defender, The Building of a Nation,” exploring what it means to stand for truth and fairness in a divided world.

Leadership also thrives in wholeness. Our Tuesday Groups across Nairobi, Nakuru, and Mombasa became spaces for reflection and renewal. The Ladies’ Lunch Sessions and Men’s Wellbeing Circles created safe places for openness and friendship.

All of these form one story: the story of people learning to live what they believe. And so, as the year closes, we return to the question that has guided us all along:

Not just, What did we do? But, Who did we become? When the applause fades and no one is watching, how do you walk your talk?

Perhaps that is where leadership truly begins!

By Beryl Maritim

8 To live one’s values also means reaching across differences. Through the Salaam Program,

Youth Corps - Uganda

This year, the Youth Corps program has experienced remarkable growth and transformation—not only in numbers of beneficiaries and activities but in deepening a culture of values-based leadership. Across our teams, one thing has become increasingly clear: genuine change happens when leadership is grounded in integrity, humility, compassion, and service.

In our mentoring homes, we have witnessed that children learn far more from our actions than from our words. A team member once shared, “Values are better caught than taught,” and this truth continues to guide us. When a leader lives according to their beliefs, the impact becomes visible.

As one saying reminds us, “A leader who builds their leadership on values is like someone who builds their house on a rock; no matter how strong the winds, the house will stand.” We have seen this embodied across our department, where leaders model accountability, teamwork, and a Christ-centered spirit. These values have taken root among staff and are now flourishing among the youth themselves.

Through the Reunification and Boarding Program, our youth continue to learn responsibility, gratitude, and self-leadership. Mentorship sessions and life skills training have helped them develop an abundance mindset—finding joy in small blessings and opportunities.

Some participants had the privilege of attending the African Youth Leadership Forum (AYLF) and National Prayer Breakfasts in Kenya and Uganda, returning deeply inspired to serve rather than to seek status. Although some struggled with consistency or participation, we have learned patience. Transformation is a process—and love, when steady, becomes its strongest catalyst.

Our Counseling Department has quietly but profoundly impacted lives. This year, the team received specialized training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), equipping them to better understand and support young people facing emotional or behavioral challenges.

Their work is often demanding—the needs are vast and the resources limited—but their perseverance

and empathy shine through. Their faithfulness reminds us that compassion is not weakness; it is one of the most powerful forms of leadership. In our Community Outreach Program, we have continued to learn from the people we serve. Within the slums where we operate, we have witnessed extraordinary examples of servant leadership. Through clean-up drives, “Let’s Talk” forums, and peer mentoring sessions, participants have demonstrated what it means to love in action—serving their neighbors in small, consistent ways that bring dignity and hope.

At the HALO Training Institute, many of the young people we walk with come from challenging family and social environments. Some of the values we teach—discipline, honesty, empathy—are entirely new to them. Yet through daily interaction, storytelling, and modeling consistency, we have begun to see transformation take root.



Girls participating in a Music Dance and Drama Performance

As Scripture reminds us, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). This verse has guided our approach and reaffirmed our belief that small, faithful steps yield lasting fruit.

Looking back, this year has not been about grand achievements but about quiet faithfulness—learning that values-based leadership is not about authority or recognition; it is about serving others, speaking truth, and choosing what is right even when it costs us something. Just as Jesus modeled, true leadership is not defined by power but by service, humility, and love.

By Harriet Adongpiny

Cornerstone

Newsletter Pictorial



John and Margret Riordan visit CLA Girls in Uganda with Madame Monica Mwonge (the first Headmistress of the school)



Friends reconnecting at the AYLF annual gathering in Uganda



Alumni singing and dancing at the CLA Homecoming in Rwanda



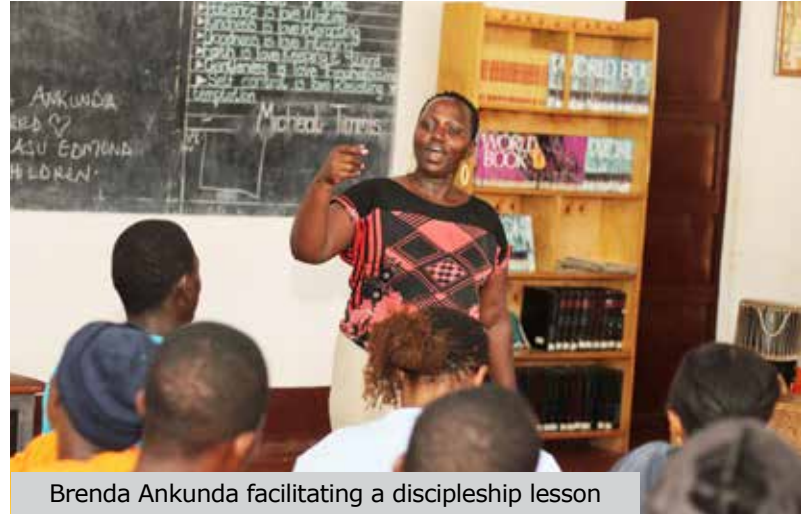
Happy to graduate at CLA D.R. Congo!



A team from Tanzania visiting our head office in Kampala



Annual Alumni Retreat in Tanzania



Brenda Ankunda facilitating a discipleship lesson

Enthusiastic participants at the Vision Conference in Burundi



AYLF Kenya - mentorship session with Hon. Kaguchia



Highschool Leadership Development work in Tanzania

An orientation for recent CLA Graduates to the alumni association



A Family of Friends!



Alumni fellowship at the Jumwiya Hostel in Dar es Salaam

Cornerstone Alumni Programs

Tanzania

Values-based leadership is not about charisma, position, or authority it is about character. It is the daily practice of aligning one's words, decisions, and actions with the moral and spiritual principles that define us as followers of Jesus. True leadership, is not measured only by influence but also in one's integrity. We are called to be servant-leaders – those who lead not through force or fear, but through compassion, humility, and steadfast commitment to what is right.

Throughout this year, our programs in COSA Tanzania have sought to embody this principle in both spirit and structure. Every meeting, fellowship, and outreach activity has served as a reminder that leadership begins within the quiet, often unseen choices of honesty, empathy, and personal responsibility.

Our Campus and House Fellowships have been the foundation of this mission. These gatherings are not just meetings; they are living spaces where young people learn to integrate their values into their everyday life. Through prayer, community service, and intentional discussions on topics such as integrity, stewardship, and purpose, a culture is being formed – one that celebrates character over performance and faithfulness over applause.

Equally vital have been our efforts in general coordination and alumni engagement. Senior members have continued to invest their time, wisdom, and presence in mentoring younger leaders – modeling the principle that mentorship is not about control but about empowerment. Their example reminds us that leadership grows best when it is shared.

This year also marked a significant expansion of our outreach work, particularly through the new hostel facility in Dar es Salaam, which has brought more young people into the conversation on faith and leadership. These emerging spaces

are becoming fertile ground for values-based transformation – nurturing future leaders whose influence flows from conviction rather than convenience.

Among our most impactful milestones were the Inter-University Gatherings, which brought together students from across the country for connection, worship, and collaboration. These gatherings reflected a simple but powerful truth: unity is both a value and a testimony. As Jesus prayed in John 17:21, "That they may all be one... so that the world may believe."

Of course, the path has not been without challenges. Limited resources, tight schedules, and logistical constraints have often tested our endurance. Yet, these difficulties have become opportunities for growth and faith. Through perseverance, prayer, and collaboration, our teams have discovered that even in scarcity, purpose and unity can thrive.

Values-based leadership means choosing truth when lies seem easier, forgiveness when bitterness feels justified, and service when recognition is scarce. In our alumni work with COSA Tanzania, we have witnessed young leaders embody these values in how they lead their peers, serve their communities, and live out their faith. Each act of integrity no matter how small, becomes part of a greater story of transformation and hope. If there is one lesson this year has made clear, it is that lasting impact in leadership is only built on eternal values, not on temporary success.

As we look ahead to a new year, our vision remains clear: to continue nurturing a generation of leaders whose inspiration flows from Jesus. We believe that Eastern Africa, and indeed the world, needs leaders who lead not by force, but by example; not by pride, but by love. In the end, the call before us is simple yet profound, to move from dialogue to action, from inspiration to implementation. We are going to be leaders who not only speak of values but live them daily.

By Elly Johnson

D.R. Congo

In the current context of the Democratic Republic of Congo, organizing activities across the country has become increasingly difficult. Political tensions, persistent instability, and ongoing conflict continue to reshape the landscape of daily life. The occupation of Goma and Bukavu by the AFC/M23 in January created a deep fracture between the Eastern region and the central government, halting banking activities, closing Goma International Airport, and triggering mass displacement toward areas not yet occupied.

This conflict adds to a long history of tribal wars, inter-ethnic violence, and inter-religious tensions that affect nearly every province of the nation. Alongside this, the proliferation of political parties, though a symbol of democratic expression, has often become a source of rivalry, mistrust, and division rather than a pathway to national unity. For NGOs, humanitarian actors, and individuals working across the national spectrum, one of the greatest challenges is navigating these complex divisions without falling into stereotypes, misunderstandings, or political alignments. Crossing these ideological, cultural, and social cracks requires more than strategy, it demands a commitment to fundamental values that transcend tribe, religion, and political interest. It requires leadership anchored in truth, integrity, and the dignity of every human being.

Our High School Leadership Development (HLD) program continued to grow, engaging 24 secondary schools. One of the year's most remarkable events was a conference hosted in a Catholic-affiliated school that brought together 350 Muslim students to explore the theme "The Person of Jesus in Islam." This gathering demonstrated something powerful: the values represented in Jesus transcend religion, age, tribe, and race. They are universal, human, and transformative. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer profoundly noted, "Christianity without discipleship is Christianity without Christ." In the same way, humanity without values becomes

political manipulation and the exploitation of one person by another for selfish ends.

In our Couples Fellowship program, a member recently shared what makes our gatherings unique. In a group of nearly 30 couples, from different tribes, religions, ages, and backgrounds – they realized that despite their differences, they shared the same challenges. What their church community could not offer was the beauty of cross-cultural learning: the realization that marriage struggles are not tribal or denominational – they are human.

Across 9 sites and 34 universities within AYLEF, we have continued to build relationships and foster unity – even while two sites are located in M23-occupied territories. Working in this divided landscape requires a delicate balance between action and communication. The only way to maintain this balance is to remain rooted in what is essential: values and principles that do not shift with politics or circumstances.

Ultimately, our mission is to help young people rediscover their connection to one another and reclaim the foundational truth of the human family: we are all brothers and sisters under the fatherhood of God. When values lead, divisions lose their power. When we choose integrity, compassion, humility, and service, we begin to build bridges that conflict cannot destroy.

In a nation marked by instability and fragmentation, values-based leadership is not merely an option – it is a necessity. It is the quiet, steady force that holds communities together, inspires hope, and lights the path toward healing and unity. This is a pursuit we want to give our all in the DRC.

As we look ahead, we are encouraged by the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

By Emmanuel Baraka



Our team at this year's Jr. Prayer Breakfast in Goma

Rwanda

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...” – Mark 10:45

One of the traits Jesus consistently demonstrated was humility through service. This remarkable example has profoundly shaped our community over the years. Across COSA Rwanda, we continue to see people stepping into leadership – whether in business, government, church, school, or the home – with a mindset not of being served, but of serving others.

Among our members are those whose commitment goes well beyond what might be expected - what we call service beyond self. Despite personal challenges, they choose to give back to their communities with generosity and purpose. One such story comes from two members, inspired Jesus’ teaching that “To whom much is given, much is expected” (Luke 12:48). They founded a local NGO called Future Builders, which supports children who could not otherwise afford to attend national schools. Today, 103 children are enrolled through their initiative. Beyond academic support, Future Builders also provides discipleship materials to nurture holistic growth – spiritual, moral, and intellectual.

In another example of this, two of our members, Sam and Bruce, launched Justice Horizons Rwanda, an initiative focused on empowering individuals through legal awareness and access to justice. They also equip high school students with tools to understand and navigate legal systems. This project beautifully reflects our belief that we achieve our greatest impact when we work together in purpose and unity.

In August, we held our annual Family of Friends Retreat, which drew over 250 participants under the theme “Choosing to Belong.” The retreat reminded us that belonging is both a choice and a calling: not only to belong to God but also to belong to one another. Through shared experiences, open conversations, and moments of reflection, we deepened our friendship and community.

On campus, Stage II members are encouraged to live together in hostels and maintain fellowship groups. These smaller gatherings create empowering spaces for testimony, accountability, and prayer, where members share challenges and find encouragement to persevere through life’s struggles. The power of fellowship in these circles cannot be underestimated; they are where values form and transformation often begins. One of the major goals at Stage II is to support members in graduating on time and with excellence, and this year, we are happy to say that 29 students celebrated their graduation!

At Stage III, we recognized a growing need among members for financial support and accessibility to loans. Traditional banking systems are difficult to navigate, with high interest rates and strict requirements. In response, we launched a SACCO (Savings and Credit Cooperative) to enable members to access both personal and business loans. This initiative embodies the spirit of community: standing together and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Mentorship remains a vital part of our culture. Older members, particularly those in Stage III, have taken an active role in guiding younger graduates from the Leadership Academy (CLA). In this, they share their time, experience, and encouragement, helping new graduates navigate university life and stay anchored in the values of servant leadership.

The Professionals’ Dinner has become one of the highlights of our annual calendar



Of course, challenges persist. Changes in academic systems, such as overlapping intakes, differing calendars, and shifting exam schedules – have at times disrupted our work and programs. Yet, even these challenges have become opportunities to adapt, grow, and serve each other in faith and resilience.

As we move forward, we remember that through Jesus, the barriers that once divided us are no more. In their place, we can choose to build bridges – bridges that allow us to celebrate diversity not as a point of conflict, but as a beautiful expression of God’s creation.

By Jackie & Modeste

Burundi

The past year has been very fruitful for our work in Burundi - full of achievements, challenges, milestones, and celebrations. Grounded in the timeless principles of integrity, humility, compassion, and service, our programs are helping to raise a generation of young men and women who lead from conviction rather than convenience.

In a time when the pressures of life - rising tuition fees, transport costs, and widespread economic uncertainty easily discourage many, our community has chosen to remain faithful to the vision of leading with values. As Jesus taught, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Matthew 20:26). His life remains our greatest model of leadership - one marked by courage, grace, and sacrificial love.

Through our high school outreach, we have witnessed inspiring progress and transformation. One of our Vision Conferences this year brought together over 1,200 emerging leaders from across the country for two days of learning, worship, and leadership development. Additionally, we organized two school-based conferences that gathered 410 student leaders, challenging them to lead with integrity and to be examples in speech, conduct, and faith. Alongside these, we hosted five fellowships for coordinators and conducted two volunteer trainings, equipping 46 young leaders to serve effectively in their schools and local communities.

Our university programs have also experienced remarkable growth. With the addition of two new campuses, CDA Burundi has expanded its reach and strengthened its presence nationwide.

In our leadership development trainings, more than 600 university students were equipped with practical tools for self-leadership, purpose, and discipline. Throughout the year, 19 university-based conferences gathered over 4,500 student leaders, sparking deep conversations on values, responsibility, and the kind of transformation that begins from within.

Beyond large gatherings, smaller engagements such as fellowships, retreats, and mentorship seminars have sustained the sense of community among coordinators and alumni. These consistent moments of connection have provided opportunities for reflection, accountability, and encouragement.

A significant highlight of the year was the active involvement of 20 Burundian CLA graduates who joined our network, bringing renewed energy, experience, and strength to our campus teams. CDA



Our team receiving P.L.O. Lumumba at the Jr. Prayer Breakfast in Bujumbura

Burundi also deepened regional collaboration, participating in several leadership gatherings across Eastern Africa with the recent one being the Cornerstone/GRG leaders gathering hosted in Rwanda. These engagements strengthened our shared mission of nurturing values-based leaders who will influence the continent for good.

This ripple effect beautifully reflects the charge in 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things you have heard me say... entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."

Despite the economic challenges and limited resources, our volunteers have remained unwavering. Their resilience is a powerful testimony to their character and faith. As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." Indeed, our leaders have stood tall—proving that character-driven leadership endures even when comfort fades.

Our journey this year has reaffirmed our conviction that the future of Burundi depends not on people with big titles, offices, or positions but on leaders who, like Jesus, choose to lead with integrity, serve with humility, and love with unwavering compassion.

As we look ahead, we are encouraged by the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

By Don de Dieu

Uganda

Selflessness is about putting others before yourself – a posture of empathy, compassion, and kindness. It is a value that matures when one gives themselves wholly to the service of others. Values, at their core, are the fundamental beliefs that guide our attitudes and actions. They shape what we consider important, the kind of people we aspire to be, how we treat others, and how we engage with the world around us. In our work, this understanding of selflessness is powerfully embodied in the life of Jesus, whose leadership consistently prioritized love, service, and the dignity of others over personal gain.

Our alumni programs in Uganda are grounded in a clear mandate: to create supportive platforms that equip members with life skills and relationships for growth, while mobilizing them into an active network of thriving, transformational servant leaders.

Our work follows a structured formation journey. Among students in Stage Two, the focus has been to challenge them to be resourceful, live exemplary lives, pursue academic excellence, and take up leadership roles in their communities. In Stage Three, our emphasis shifts to cultivating life-long relationships, promoting healthy family life, building meaningful careers and enterprises, and creating positive social impact through service and giving back.

Guided by our executive committee, this year's programs revolved around the theme "Doing Life Together." This phrase captures the heart of our mission – being present, engaged, and intentionally investing in the lives of others. It fosters shared experiences, mutual support, and a sense of belonging. Through this lens, we scheduled regular retreats, fellowships, Bible studies, and community outreaches that provided opportunities for meaningful interaction and accountability. This rhythm of shared life reflects the model Jesus demonstrated with his disciples – leading not from a distance, but through presence, relationship, and example.

We have also been deliberate in reaching out to members facing sickness, bereavement, or financial strain – rallying around them with moral and financial support. None of this would have been possible without members who chose selflessness: those who volunteered to lead small groups, organize events, and serve others without expecting recognition.

Our members' commitment to outreach has been remarkable. They have dedicated themselves to transforming the status quo in their communities – practicing integrity, supporting one another, and being the salt and light in dark places. Within student communities, over 70% are engaged in community service or leadership roles – in classrooms, hostels, faculties, and university-wide fellowships. Those in the marketplace, social sectors, and business enterprises face daily challenges to remain true to their values amid uncertainty and temptation. Yet they continue to stand out – building initiatives that support the needy, leading with integrity, nurturing their families, and facilitating small fellowship or marriage groups in their churches. This steadfastness has earned our alumni the reputation of being people marked by service, integrity, and transformation.

A student leader asks a question at the AYLFGathering 2025



Alumni sharing a light moment with their old head mistress (Madam Sarah)



Phillip Ojok facilitating a session on Human Resource Management at an ALI physical learning session in Jinja



One of the greatest inspirations we've received from the broader Cornerstone family is the call to live for something bigger than oneself. We are continually challenged to focus on purpose beyond personal interest – embracing service, sacrifice, and empathy for the benefit of others. It's a journey from a "me" mindset to a "we" mindset, cultivating gratitude and finding fulfillment in committing to something greater – whether it be community, a cause, or a divine purpose.

As a family, we are learning daily to practice selflessness by shifting focus from personal desires to the well-being of others. Through empathy, we seek to understand and connect with the needs and feelings of those around us. Participation in community service, volunteering, leadership, and shared mission has deepened our sense of unity and purpose.

We have also learned to embrace gratitude – regularly acknowledging the blessing of belonging to a diverse and supportive community. This becomes most visible in times of loss, when members gather to comfort and strengthen one another. We are also learning to stay humble, to value others' contributions, and to welcome correction with grace.

Every day, we challenge ourselves to find purpose – committing to causes that go beyond our personal comfort and convenience. We are learning to make decisions with the long-term well-being of future generations in mind, recognizing that there is always a bigger picture. Through personal

growth, service, and community, we discover meaning that transcends self.

At the heart of values-based leadership stands the example of Jesus – a leader who redefined greatness as service and power as responsibility. He led with clarity of purpose, moral courage, and deep compassion, consistently choosing the good of others over personal security or status. His life reminds us that leadership is not about position, control, or recognition, but about faithfulness, sacrifice, and love expressed through action. As we seek to form leaders who transform their families, communities, and nations, we look to Jesus not only as our inspiration, but as the standard by which values-driven leadership is measured.

Leadership, when aligned with values, transforms everything. As Silvia Ayuso wrote in *Leadership with Soul*: "When leadership aligns with values, everything shifts. Decisions become faster, trust deepens, and impact expands naturally."

Indeed, selflessness has shaped our worldview, helping us answer the defining questions: What do I stand for? What fulfills me? And what truly matters in life?

In our alumni work, these are not abstract reflections. They are the daily realities of a community learning together to live and lead selflessly.

By Michael Eluku and Vasco Musinguzi

Jesus' Leadership

it's the refusal to see other human beings who are different from us - as our brothers and as our sisters - even though we share one Father. (Matthew 23:8-9)

The combined annual military expenditures for Africa are around \$50 billion. This is almost entirely due to fear and fighting directed internally against fellow Africans. Imagine the schools, hospitals, and infrastructure that kind of money could build every single year. But on top of that unproductive expenditure, there is the tremendous damage any sort of war causes to national development, institutions, infrastructure and the general well-being of the population.

Corruption: The misuse of public resources for personal gain is a plague affecting both government and business. The cause? Again, it is a violation of divine values, particularly integrity and honesty. Leaders who fail to "walk their talk" are diverting resources meant for society's benefit. According to the U.N. this results in an annual loss from Africa of \$88.6 billion.

Of course, outside of Africa, these two major challenges exist all around the world stemming from leaders who are not values-based. In many places, what is needed is not just new governments or policies, but a transformed *leadership culture*. And, this has been the heart of Cornerstone's mission for over 30 years.

When, we were first setting up Cornerstone, I met someone who became a key spiritual mentor. His work involved trying to influence political leaders all around the world with the values of Jesus. He asked me what I thought about getting involved with that work. I told him I did not want to work with political leaders as I felt called to work with the most marginalized groups in Africa - those who Jesus called the 'least of these' (Mt.25:40) Then he asked me, "What do you think is the biggest factor that is causing suffering and hardship in those groups?" Immediately, it dawned on me what he was pointing to: poor leadership.

This tallies with two well-known quotes attributed to John Maxwell: "*Everything rises and falls on leadership,*" and, "*A society cannot rise above the character of its leaders.*" This is why, we continue after more than three decades now, to mentor and support a new breed of leaders for Africa. Men and women of integrity, humility, courage, who will lead with divine values. And, we are seeing this portrayed with many of the graduates of our program - right up to the top national levels of leadership, including

Three Leadership Concepts Seen in Jesus:

Our approach to leadership blends three major schools of thought - each of them is reflected in the leadership style of Jesus.

1. Servant Leadership: Servant-leaders prioritize the needs of others above themselves and see themselves as stewards of their communities' human, financial, and physical resources. This model was articulated for secular contexts by Robert K. Greenleaf (1970).

2. Transformational Leadership: This was first promoted by J. M. Burns (1978). It is when an individual, a group or a movement champions a visionary objective that tries to correct things that have gone wrong by finding a better way forward.

3. Super Leadership: This is a style of leadership defined by Charles Manz & Henry Sims (1989). A super leader mentors, coaches, enables and empowers all those around them to also develop their personal potential in their respective areas of responsibility. It describes a leader who doesn't just try to produce followers but rather produces more leaders.

When we look at the way Jesus of Nazareth operated and taught... we can truly see how he combined and embodied these 3 styles of leadership:

Servant Leadership: "*The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them but let it not be so with you...instead he who would be the greatest among you - let him be the servant of the rest.*"

Transformational Leadership: "*Change your hearts and minds, the kingdom of God is at hand.*"

Super Leadership: "*I will make you fishers of men. Go into all the world and make disciples.*"

In a world captivated by Artificial Intelligence and new technology - it's tempting to believe that technical skills and economic development alone can lead us forward. But when we look back through human history we see leadership without divine values always leads society down paths detrimental to our wellbeing.

Recently, as I was preparing for a talk, I asked A.I.: 'When were the Ten Commandments given to Moses?' It said: "*They are believed to have been given to Moses on Mount Sinai around 1446 B.C.*" I was surprised at how it was pinpointing this date so precisely. But then it added: "*However, scholars debate the exact time, with proposed dates ranging from the 16th to 13th centuries B.C.*" In any case, it means the 10 Commandments are over 3,000 years old. But surprisingly, even today when you take a look at them, they are simply divinely inspired principles which make for a better society.

Consider that just as the universe has natural laws - like gravity, thermodynamics, genetics - that govern the chemical, biological, and physical properties of the material world, there seem to be *moral laws* built into the very fabric of life. They are not suggestions or preferences; they are principles that define human flourishing and we violate them to our detriment.

As Dr. Richard Cabot of Harvard once said: *"The universe was not built for the success of lies."* In other words, society doesn't get better and better with the more lies that are being told.

Similarly, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said: *"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."* The phrase suggests that there is a fundamental moral, or spiritual order in our universe that supports the realization of justice rather than injustice.

Such insights remind us that although progress may feel slow, the movement toward a more just and beautiful world - is ultimately unstoppable. Scripture affirms this hope: *"The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord..."* (Revelation 11:15). This vision of the coming of God's kingdom on earth is a world aligned to divine values, and it's at the heart of what Jesus taught us to pray for, in: *"The Lord's Prayer."* The central petition around which the rest of the prayer revolves is: *"Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

This is also in line with what Jesus said was a core point of his mission: *"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God... because that is why I was sent"* (Luke 4:43). Finally, we are reassured that: *"the gates of hell will not prevail against it"* (Mt.16:18). In other words the forces of evil will not permanently overpower or defeat the movement of transformation that Jesus launched.

So, while the world keeps changing, divine values like truth, justice, integrity, courage, humility, and love remain timeless and consistently point us in the right direction. They are like a compass that always points north. And, these values are not just cultural constructs - they are transcendent principles, rooted in the moral order of the universe itself.

Here are Four Characteristics of these Transcendent or Divine Values, they are:

Universal - They are relevant to all people, across cultures, continents and religions.

Timeless - They are not subject to modern trends or fads.

Guiding - They are like a compass that help us make wise, ethical decisions.

Beyond Self - They aim for the good of others and society as a whole.

Bringing this to the personal level there are two important aspects of this we all need to work out:

1. Values Clarification: This is the personal journey of identifying and prioritizing your core beliefs. This involves coming to some clarity about your life purpose, mission and the moral compass you will use to navigate life. Miles Munroe said: *"The greatest tragedy in life is not death - but life without purpose."* Purpose, is knowing the object of the game of life. Everyone knows the object of the game of football but surprisingly many seem to be clueless about the object of the game of life. So, they play the game chaotically. I teach that, we come here to this tiny planet called Earth for two main reasons:

A. We come here to learn and grow. Life is like some kind of school for souls in eternity and there are many lessons to be learned on Earth like courage, resilience, walking by faith, forgiveness, etc.

B. We were also sent here to carry out a particular mission or assignment which is uniquely our own. And all our individual missions are meant to flow into and support the overarching plan of God for our planet - the coming of God's kingdom on earth.

2. Values Alignment - This is the process where our core values, beliefs, and principles are brought into harmony with our decisions, and behaviors. It's about ensuring that what we believe in is really reflected in what you are doing daily. This concept applies to our personal lives, professional settings and social impact.

Of course, this is a challenge for all of us. Our human nature has inbuilt weaknesses. We get tired. We get tempted. We get distracted. We get stressed. We get lazy and we are selfish - so we often do things that are contrary to our deeper convictions.

Conclusion: The future of Africa - and the world - will not be shaped primarily by better technology, but by men and women of character who embody divine values in both public and private life. So, we all need to ask ourselves:

- What core values do I stand for?
- Am I aligned with those values in my daily life?
- What kind of legacy will I leave?

In our various circles of influence, large or small, we can do our best to portray values-based leadership. We can be counted among those who understand their purpose before God. The change we wish to see in our world will happen when each of us clarifies our highest values, aligns our actions with them, and commits to influencing others with the values Jesus championed like love, truth, brotherhood, integrity and justice.



Values Found in Jesus' Style of Leadership

Reflections From Tim

Across many parts of the Global South, particularly here in Africa, one of the big issues we see currently is the anger and uprising among what is called "Gen Z" - the generation of those now in their teens and twenties. Most of our work in Cornerstone is with this group.

They are angry at what is described as a 'broken social contract.' This refers to the collapse of the implied agreement between governments and their citizens regarding rights, responsibilities and opportunities. This also includes the unspoken expectations between generations - that elders will create conditions enabling their children and grandchildren to earn a decent living and become productive members of society.

When this social contract is perceived as broken, younger generations feel they are no longer receiving the necessary protections or opportunities from their elders and leaders - in exchange for their obedience to laws, payment of taxes, hard work and the sacrifices of individual freedoms for the greater good of the society. So, understandably, they can become rebellious.

Last year, from Morocco to Madagascar - we saw various Gen Z-led anti-government protests which, in some places, led to the overthrow of the government. These movements are mostly driven by deep frustrations over high unemployment, corruption, poor public services and the rising cost of living. Their anger is echoed in the African proverb: *"A child who is not embraced by the village might try to burn it down to feel its warmth."*

Recently this happened in Tanzania, where a significant portion of our work is based. It came after the presidential election in October 2025. Youth anger exploded into

widespread protests against alleged fraud and Government suppression of the opposition candidates.

The best survey on the attitudes of African youth comes from the South African Ichikowitz Family Foundation. It gives a comprehensive look at the perspectives and concerns of young people across Africa. When asked to pick a key priority for decision-makers, the youth consistently point to the need to confront rampant corruption. They see corruption as directly reducing job opportunities - as funds that should be used for economic development are being misused.

Having grown up and lived most of my life in East Africa, I see two major issues that over the past decades, are holding back this region from creating the "better world" we all long to see. These are conflict and corruption:

Conflict: Whether it is wars between countries, violent ethnic disputes, inter-religious tensions and other forms of civil unrest - conflict is too often the default method of trying to resolve our differences. At the root of it is the "us v. them" mindset which is contrary to the divine values of brotherhood, love of neighbor and even love of enemy as taught by Jesus. Basically,

