

Cornerstone

Newsletter & Magazine January 2025

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



OVERCOMING OUR DIVISIONS

Transcending ethnic and religious division is a key part of our work within the seven-country region of East Africa where Cornerstone operates. This is one of the most ethnically diverse areas of the planet. Despite its beauty and vibrant cultures, this area has seen the highest conflict-related deaths since World War II, largely driven by ethnic strife. Along East Africa's Indian Ocean coast, historical tensions between Christians and Muslims further exacerbate divisions.

In 2023 and 2024, we hosted two 4-day gatherings in Mombasa, Kenya, bringing together about 200 participants each time – one-third from Muslim backgrounds and two-thirds from Christian. These events aimed to explore how the principles, teachings, and example of Jesus of Nazareth (known as Nabi Issa in Islam) can foster shared values and build friendships across faiths.

Muslims and Christians collectively comprise around 60% of the global population. Although they both revere Jesus, their differences have fueled significant conflicts. Yet, Jesus' teachings emphasize how we treat one another. He taught that the essence of the law is to "Love God... and love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus expanded the concept of 'neighbor,' which in the Old Testament primarily referred to fellow Jews, to include people of all ethnicities, nations, and religions. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, he illustrated this by making the hero a person from a different ethnic and religious group who simply helped someone in need.

Too often, we focus on theological differences and neglect Jesus' core command to love one another. These gatherings reminded us of the transformative power of this command, offering practical ways to foster unity and understanding.

This newsletter shares insights from our community on how to better love our neighbors - and even our enemies - in the spirit of Jesus.



Inside

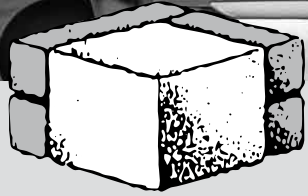


and...

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



The graduation of our 1st class at the Cornerstone Leadership Academy of D.R. Congo was a huge milestone for us in 2024



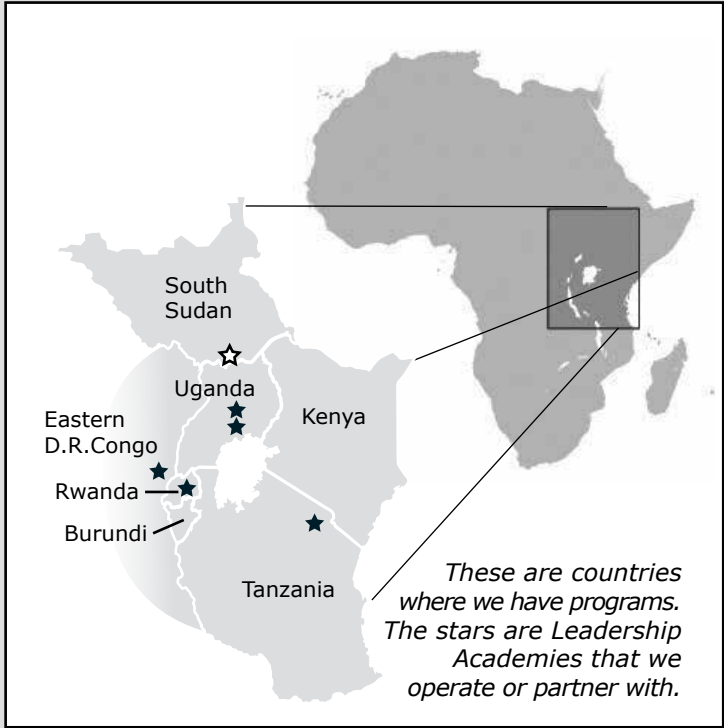
Cornerstone Development Africa

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, 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 over 2,000 young people today- in a variety of programs including six 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 better-



ment 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.

What have we been up to?

The past year, 2024, was a very productive year for us across the 7 countries where we work in eastern Africa - full of transformative activities, meaningful connections, and moments of celebration across our work and community. Picking up from our June 2024 newsletter that covered the first half of the year... in July, the spirit of leadership took center stage in Uganda with the joint CLA and Ekitangaala student leaders' orientation and mentorship. Ekitangaala alumni shone as they facilitated discipleship sessions at the Ranch schools. In Tanzania, CLA celebrated exam successes and brought together 540 students from 18 schools for a vibrant Vision Conference. Meanwhile, in the DRC, students benefited from life-skills sessions, environmental cleanups, and a powerful HLD/AYLF Certification Conference chaired by Uncle Tim and Madam Gloria, drawing over 400 young leaders. Kenya launched the Ajibika Leadership Program in July, where 30 fellows delved into advising on government policy and structures. Burundi, in partnership with Build-in-a-Box, hosted impactful workshops and a university conference that united 150 leaders.

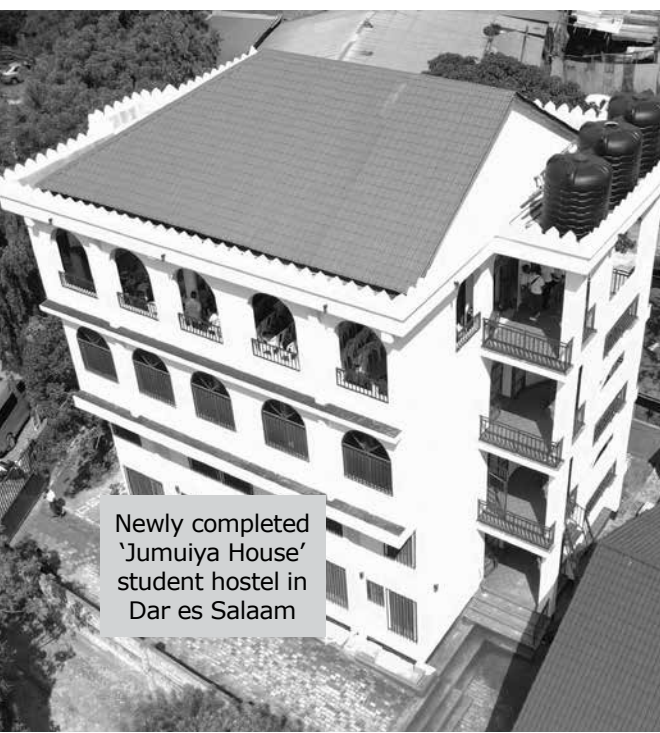
In August, Ekitangaala Transformation High School in Uganda was awarded for its Green School Environment project, while a heartfelt "Let's Talk" session by the Youth Corps tackled addiction awareness. The DRC celebrated the first CLA graduation and concluded the ICDL program with outstanding results. Rwanda saw four members secure Alibaba scholarships in China, while CLA Rwanda students prepared for U.S.-based universities through the Isomo Camp. Burundi's vision conference welcomed over 1,250 participants.

September was alive with connection. Uganda hosted the Advanced Leadership Initiative annual gathering and a lively sports gala with over 200 members of the community. Our team in Tanzania joined forces with other organizations to participate in Africa's largest clean-up campaign, while Rwanda welcomed new class members at CLA and held a regional couples' retreat. Kenya wrapped up the first phase of the Ajibika Leadership Program, empowering future leaders.

In October, CLA Rwanda achieved national acclaim with exceptional exam results and a meaningful Thanksgiving service. The DRC opened a new HLD chapter at Kinshasa Military Academy and hosted its Junior Prayer Breakfast with 300 participants. In Tanzania, new student leaders were inducted, and interfaith dialogues enriched understanding.

Closing the year in December, Uganda schools wrapped up with Stage 2 orientation programs, a staff retreat, and an E/COSA End of Year dinner celebration. Gatherings in the DRC and Rwanda brought heartfelt gratitude and reflection. Tanzania held a mega AYLF student leaders' gathering, and Burundi ended 2024 with a lively AYLF sports gala and new volunteer interviews.

From planting trees in Rwanda to strategic retreats in Tanzania, this season reflected Cornerstone's commitment to leadership, community, and transformation. Thank you for being part of this incredible journey!



Newly completed 'Jumuiya House' student hostel in Dar es Salaam

Dedication of the new class at CLA Tanzania



Cornerstone Leadership Academies

CLA Tanzania

At Cornerstone Leadership Academy of Tanzania (CLA-Tz), we have focused this year on understanding how Jesus bridges division through His teachings of love, acceptance, and hope. Our mission is to empower students and staff to serve communities, uplift the marginalized, and foster connections across social, cultural, and religious boundaries. Through our programs, we have exemplified how Jesus' message can unite people across divides.

Through the Builders of Future Africa (BFA) program, CLA-Tz students have supported underprivileged children in Arusha, particularly at Canaan and Yericko Orphanage Centers. By providing resources and emotional support, students have embodied Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25:40: "Whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." These experiences have deeply impacted students, teaching them the value of selfless love and service.

The Discovering Bible Studies (DBS) program has also been a vital platform for unity. This student-led initiative brings together students, staff, and local community members to explore Jesus' teachings. Inspired by John 13:34, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another," DBS has fostered love, respect, and unity within the academy, transcending tribal, political, and social boundaries. The program demonstrates that transformative unity is possible in any society, regardless of its divisions.

Several CLA-Tz staff attended the Jesus/Issa Gathering in Mombasa, Kenya, where they learned new ways to live harmoniously across religious divides. The gathering's mantra, "Unity in essentials, tolerance in non-essentials, and love overall," reinforced CLA-Tz's commitment to embracing diversity as a source of strength. Staff and students returned with a renewed dedication to fostering unity through love and respect for differing viewpoints.

In addition to spiritual growth, CLA-Tz also focused on mental health this year. Seminars on stress management, resilience, and emotional wellness equipped students with essential tools for navigating life's challenges. These sessions emphasized that true unity involves caring for one another's mental and emotional well-being, strengthening the bonds within our community.

The Discipleship Program remains central to our mission, helping students develop strong moral foundations based on Jesus' example. This year's program focused on spiritual formation, character development, and leadership principles like humility, forgiveness, and service.

As the year ends, CLA-Tz celebrates the success of these initiatives, which have bridged what would divide us and brought hope, peace, and understanding to the communities we serve. Through these programs, we have fulfilled our commitment to being a beacon of unity and compassion, embodying Jesus' call to be peacemakers.

By Julius Ejalam

CLA Rwanda

At Cornerstone Leadership Academy (CLA) Rwanda, we embrace the transformative power of a Jesus-centered culture that celebrates unity in diversity. Our school brings together students from Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, each with unique cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This diversity enriches our community, yet we find common ground in the teachings of Jesus, who said, “I will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).

CLA Rwanda strives to create an environment where emerging leaders can rise above differences, reconcile divisions, and work toward a shared vision. Our goal is to foster a space where every student feels seen, valued, and welcomed. We don’t just tolerate diversity – we actively embrace it, allowing it to enhance our collective journey.

Unity is embedded in all aspects of life at CLA Rwanda. From the School Council and Care Groups to fellowship teams, clubs, and sports, every part of our school reflects the rich diversity of our student body. These platforms ensure that every voice is heard and valued, with intentional efforts to create spaces where students from diverse national, cultural, and religious backgrounds can collaborate and build relationships.

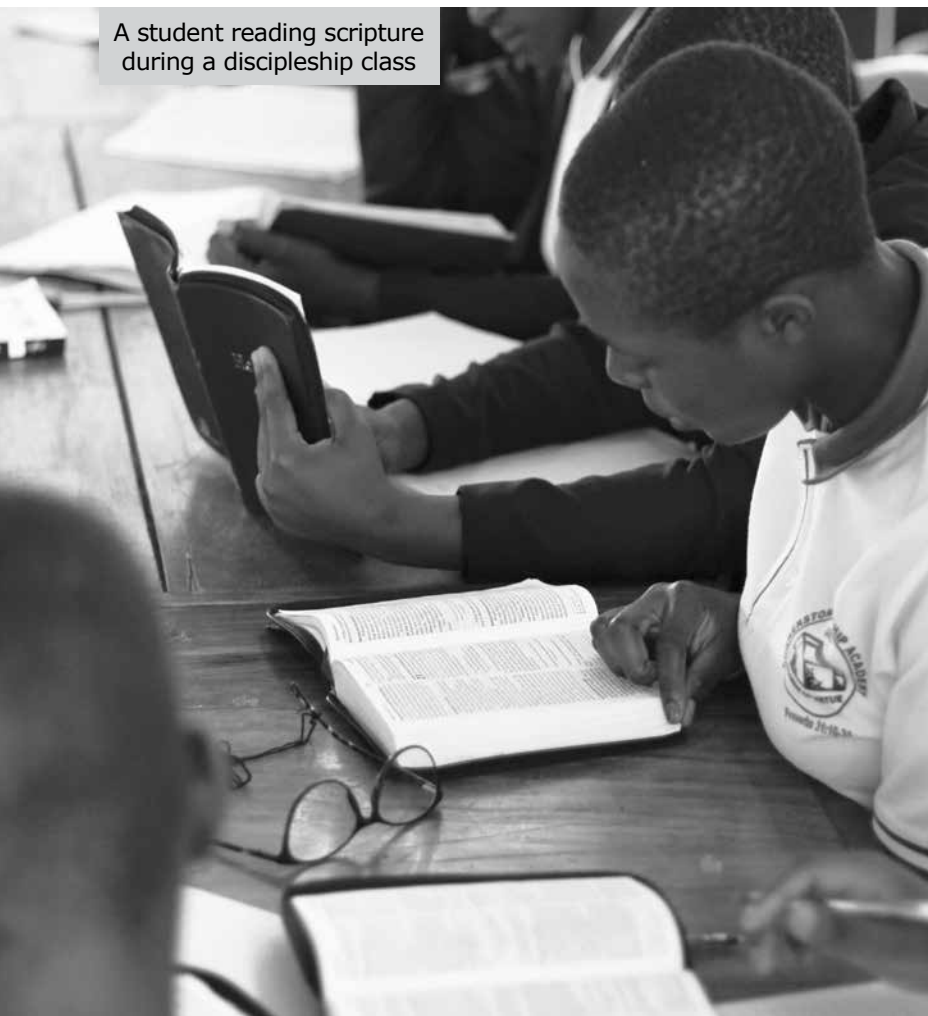
The School Council and Care Groups are key examples of this inclusivity. These groups bring students together, facilitating leadership that spans cultural and religious divisions. By working together in Care Groups, students learn vital relationship-building skills, equipping them to bridge divides in the broader world.

Our fellowship programs further reinforce inclusivity by celebrating each student’s unique background while grounding them in shared Christian values. The CLA Rwanda Cultural Troupe is another initiative that showcases the beauty of each culture, offering students a platform to learn from and appreciate one another’s heritage through performances and events.

Sports and extracurricular clubs also play a crucial role in promoting unity. Whether it’s football, basketball, volleyball, or the arts, our students collaborate in teams, learning teamwork and mutual respect. Each club is designed to bring together students with diverse talents and interests, fostering collaboration toward common goals.

These activities build friendships that transcend differences, helping students appreciate different perspectives while working together to achieve success. In academic and creative clubs, students contribute their unique strengths to projects, debates, and performances, learning that despite their varied backgrounds, they can accomplish great things together.

A student reading scripture during a discipleship class



CLA Rwanda is a living example of the power of a Jesus-centered approach to unity. Jesus’ life and teachings remind us that true unity doesn’t erase differences, but honors and elevates them. We teach students that bridging divisions requires empathy, humility, and respect – values that inspire them to engage with the world with love and understanding.

Our students graduate equipped to lead with compassion, reconcile differences, and create inclusive communities. They leave CLA Rwanda ready to build bridges and celebrate our diversity in a world that desperately needs unity. We remain committed to this vision of unity – one that honors each student’s individuality and gifts – and strive to model these values in all that we do. At CLA Rwanda, we are raising leaders who will go on to promote unity, inclusion, and reconciliation wherever they go.

By Peter Nkotanyi

CLA - D.R. Congo

Located in Goma, North Kivu, the Cornerstone Leadership Academy (CLA) of D.R. Congo is paving the way for a new generation of leaders committed to transforming their country and continent. Established in mid-2023, CLA offers a dynamic, one-year intensive program that admits 30 students annually from across the nation. The pioneer class, who graduated on August 17, 2024, are already making their mark at universities in D.R. Congo and abroad, while the second cohort, known as the “Prosperous Generation,” began their studies on October 6, 2024.

At the heart of our academy is a program deeply rooted in the transformational spirit of Jesus, reflecting His love, humility, and servant leadership. We aim to raise leaders who not only excel academically and professionally but who live out their faith in service to others, making a tangible difference in their communities.

We are incredibly proud of the achievements of our first graduating class. These young leaders have embraced the Cornerstone culture, living out the core values of love, integrity, friendship, and excellence. More importantly, they reflect the example of Jesus in their daily lives. Our alumni are studying in universities across Uganda, 3 are in Rwanda, 1 is in South Africa, and 1 is in Burundi, with 11 more pursuing their education in D.R. Congo. These students are not only excelling academically but are also engaged in meaningful service and leadership roles, reflecting the heart of Jesus in all they do.

Some might wonder how the Cornerstone Leadership Academy in D.R. Congo compares to the other Cornerstone programs, which typically span 2-3 years. While our program is shorter, the difference lies primarily in our academic approach. Instead of covering the full ‘A’ level curriculum, we focus on university-level courses that prepare students for higher education, equipping them with the tools they need for success. What remains consistent, however, is our emphasis on holistic development. All CLA students undergo the same 50-topic discipleship curriculum as other Cornerstone academies, which covers character development, spiritual formation, and leadership empowerment.

In addition to this, our students engage in intensive studies in English and computer literacy, each culminating in internationally recognized exams.

They also participate in professional life skills training, a reading program, and community

service. These elements ensure that our graduates are well-equipped not only for the academic world but for life as compassionate, visionary leaders.

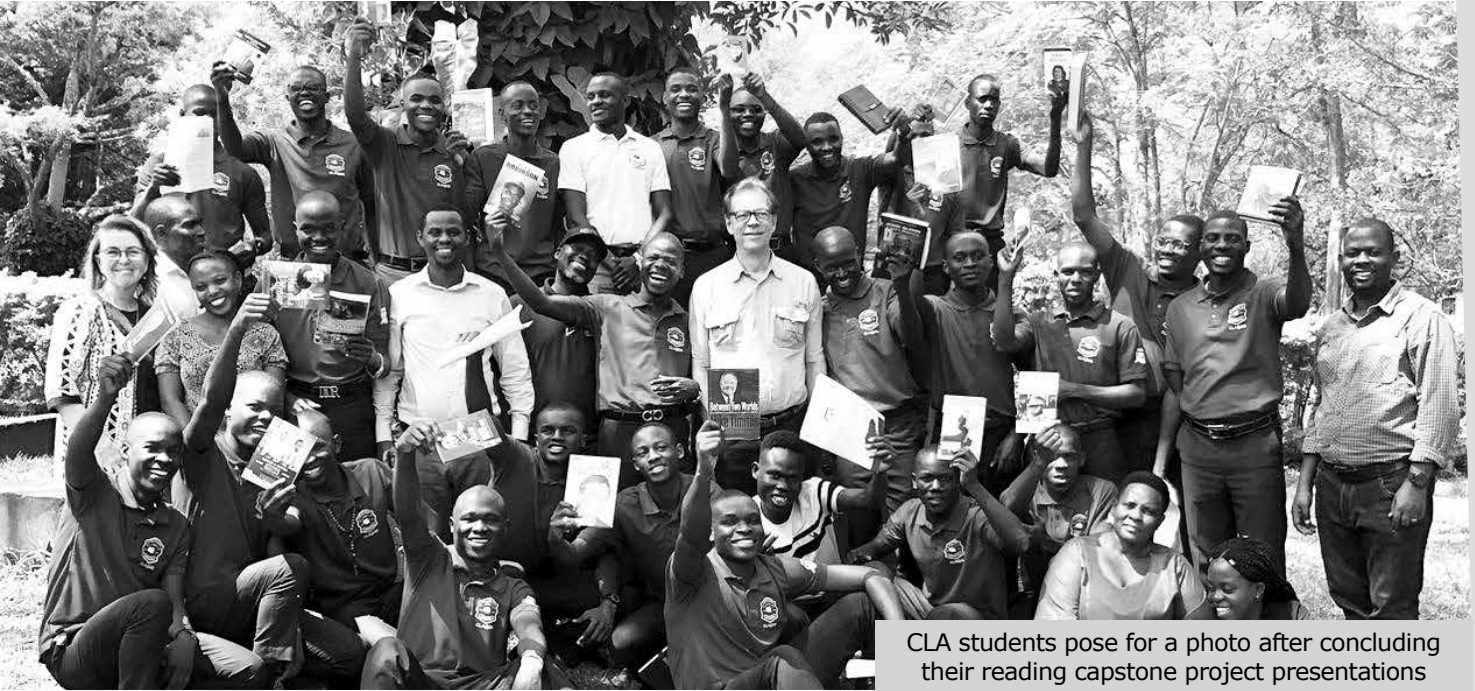
The graduation ceremony for our pioneer class on August 17, 2024, was a momentous occasion. Held in the presence of the representative of the Mayor, and guest speaker Dr. Eric Kreutter, the event was attended by international guests from Cornerstone programs in Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. The ceremony was a vibrant celebration of the hard work, dedication, and growth of our students, and a powerful testament to what is possible when vision meets action.

In September 2024, we began the process of selecting students for the second cohort. By the end of the month, the new class was chosen, and they officially began their studies on October 1, 2024. We are excited to see how the Prosperous Generation will continue to build on the legacy of the pioneers and contribute to the growing movement of transformational leadership in D.R. Congo and beyond.

We are deeply thankful to God for our incredible staff here on the ground, and for all of our partners and supporters, whose contributions have helped turn this dream into a reality. Together, we are shaping the future of D.R. Congo and the broader African continent.

By Vincent Shekibaya





CLA students pose for a photo after concluding their reading capstone project presentations

CLA Uganda & Ekitangaala Schools

My journey with Cornerstone began nearly two decades ago when I joined as a teacher. What I initially thought was just a job turned into an experience that transformed my life. Recently, I had the privilege of attending the “Jesus: Issa Gathering 2024” in Mombasa, where I reconnected with Cornerstone’s extended family – alumni and educators who share a common bond of faith. This experience left me both challenged and inspired.

This year has been marked by remarkable achievements for our schools in Uganda. Cornerstone Leadership Academy (CLA) Boys celebrated its 30th anniversary, CLA Girls its 20th, and Ekitangaala Transformational High School (ETHS) its 21st. God’s constant presence has guided us through these years, helping us achieve significant milestones.

Our schools continue to excel academically and in extracurricular activities. CLA Girls ranked first nationally in A-Level results, while CLA Boys placed fifth. ETHS earned recognition as the best secondary school in Central Uganda for its participation in the Green Schools Project, organized by Vision Group and the Swedish Embassy. ETHS has also excelled in sports, showcasing the well-rounded development of our students.

We’ve made significant investments in infrastructure to support our growing community. At ETHS, we’ve completed new staff quarters, providing a supportive environment for our teachers. A new dining hall is under construction, and a new classroom block at Ekitangaala Primary School has just been completed, providing more space to accommodate our expanding student body. These projects

reflect our commitment to creating spaces that foster both academic and personal growth.

A key feature of our schools is the sense of unity and collective mission. This is demonstrated through events like orientation ceremonies, the Timmis Cup Tournament, academic sessions, and discipleship workshops. These activities help us grow together, reinforcing our shared vision and collaborative spirit.

Our commitment to unity extends beyond academics. At Cornerstone, we prioritize bridging what divides us - especially those based on tribal and religious differences. Students and staff are reminded that Jesus is for everyone, regardless of their background. I am deeply grateful for the inclusive perspective Cornerstone has instilled in me, which embraces people of all faiths in the love of Christ.

Of course, achieving unity has not always been easy. Many community members initially struggle with biases, particularly toward those of different faiths. Sometimes, people perceive the spiritual atmosphere at Cornerstone as too influenced by a single tradition. However, as they become more integrated into the community, they realize that we are united by a shared mission that nourishes us spiritually and strengthens our bonds around the person of Jesus. This unity does not diminish our commitment to academic excellence or personal growth.

Looking back on the past 20 years, I feel immense gratitude for the personal and professional growth I’ve experienced at Cornerstone. We are more than just a school; we are a family rooted in love, service, and peace. Our continued commitment to nurturing young people from diverse backgrounds will guide us as we strive for unity and aim to be a beacon of light in the world.

By Caesar Mbazira



Capturing the joy of campus small group members after a day spent with students from other groups in their region.

AYLF - Kenya

Leadership inspired by Jesus' life brings radical hope in Eastern Africa, where divisions often define communities. In places where generations, cultures, beliefs, and identities split people apart, Jesus offers a transformative model – not through grand speeches but through His personal example of reaching across divides. His prayer in John 17:21, “That they may all be one,” provides a vision of unity that calls for action, reconciliation, and understanding.

This year, through various programs in Kenya, we redefined what it means to bridge these divides. Every project, conversation, and initiative was a step toward closing gaps that can feel too wide to cross alone. While the journey wasn't always easy, it led to profound transformations both in individuals and the communities they serve.

One program that brought us closer to this vision was the Ajibika initiative. Here, young leaders from diverse backgrounds came together to discuss accountability and civic responsibility – a space where opinions often clash. Growth began when participants set aside judgment in favor of curiosity. Like Jesus, who met each person without condemnation, they learned that reconciliation doesn't require agreeing on everything, but creating space for each voice and experience. The Ajibika program showed that unity doesn't erase differences; it embraces them, leading to a deeper understanding of one another.

The Student Leadership Development Program (SLDP) took these teachings even further by implementing community impact projects in marginalized areas. A key example was a mentorship program in prisons, reaching those often neglected by society. This work demonstrated what leadership can become when guided by compassion and justice.

8 Like Jesus, who reached out to society's fringes,

these leaders learned that transformation starts not in comfort, but in the margins, where true service transcends the roles of giver and receiver.

Empathy and collaboration were also at the heart of our work with high school students, including those at Kamenu Secondary School. Divided by social pressures and backgrounds, the students found common ground through shared community projects. Inspired by Jesus' humility, they realized that leadership isn't about having the loudest voice, but often about listening to the quietest. By choosing empathy over division, they began to transform their communities, one act of kindness at a time.

Within our alumni network, the emphasis on fellowship deepened as members faced challenges in their workplaces and relationships. Engaging in conversations with both boldness and humility, they demonstrated resilience, reflecting Jesus' teachings on community. They learned that unity isn't just about openness; it requires a steadfast commitment to one another. In a society quick to divide, these bonds, grounded in mutual respect, hold the potential to heal and transform.

Our mission to cultivate unity through leadership is more urgent than ever. Whether through spirited debates in Ajibika, impactful SLDP projects, community-building work with high school students, or the connections within over 55 small groups across Kenyan university campuses, our leaders are learning that reconciliation is built on respect, empathy, and courage. We are nurturing a generation that sees leadership not as a position of power, but as a sacred responsibility to uplift, connect, and bridge what divides us.

In a world fraught with division, we offer young leaders hope. Through Jesus' example, we can embody the unity He prayed for – respecting differences, fostering compassion, and drawing closer to one another.

By Beryl Maritim

Youth Corps - Uganda

In a world hungry for authentic leadership, the Youth Corps program finds inspiration in the timeless wisdom of Jesus' teachings. By pursuing virtues like servant leadership, compassion, and integrity, our teams have embraced a sense of purpose that empowers and inspires trust. At the start of each year, we set an objective that guides our efforts. This year's focus, "Empower Youths to Build Self-Drive and Resilience to Overcome Challenges," has not only equipped our youths to face life's trials but has also brought together young people from diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Jesus' message of unity has provided common ground for overcoming differences, showing that He transcends divisions of race, gender, religion, and class.

In our experience, bridging deep divides demands courage, empathy, and an unwavering commitment to unity. Many of the young people we work with come from broken families or carry heavy past traumas, such as abuse. These children often wrestle with feelings of isolation and shame. Our Mentors, too, face challenges, from social stigma to limited resources. Jesus' example offers a guiding light in these circumstances; He ministered to the outcast, healed the broken, and preached a message of love that celebrates diversity.

This year, our Youth Corps team worked to create safe spaces, provide trauma-informed care, engage communities, foster partnerships, and offer spiritual support to our beneficiaries. Building bridges requires us to listen to survivors, advocate for supportive policies, and create an environment grounded in love, compassion, and unity. Celebrating religious festivals, such as Easter and Eid, with children from different backgrounds has advanced mutual respect and compassion, reinforcing peace and harmony at Youth Corps.

Our Sponsorship Programs—including the Reunification and Boarding Program and HALO School Sponsorship—have empowered 124 youths through experiential learning, mentorship, and character development, all rooted in Jesus' teachings. By fostering resilience, leadership, and a sense of unity, our programs help youth transcend cultural and socio-economic divides. We witnessed significant growth in self-reflection and resilience among our youth, mirroring Jesus' example of compassion and reconciliation.

A pivotal moment for our team came during the Jesus:Issa Gathering in Mombasa, where we explored the concept of the "BOX" with Uncle Tim. The "BOX" represents the limits we impose on ourselves through tribal, cultural, or religious beliefs. Standing on the box symbolizes respecting our beliefs while remaining open to learning from others. This perspective has helped us work more effectively with individuals from various backgrounds, honoring differences without attempting to change personal beliefs.



Art therapy projects are a part of the holistic care provided in our youth mentoring homes

One of our core programs, the weekly morning devotions at Halo Training Institute, provides a nurturing space for character development. In these sessions, mentors share principles rooted in Jesus' teachings, universally relatable across faiths. During one such fellowship, a discussion on being a "committed disciple," a Muslim student lit up as she shared insights from the Quran. Her enthusiasm has since grown, and she now eagerly engages with others and aspires to a leadership role. Today, our Training Institute attracts students from all faiths by offering a safe space and supporting a Salaam Chapter, which engages in community outreach and spreads love and goodwill throughout the community.

Guided by Jesus' transformative example, we work toward a world where love, compassion, and unity prevail. By embracing these principles, we aim to heal relationships, nurture resilient communities, promote justice, and celebrate diversity. At Youth Corps, we are inspired to continue bridging divides, believing in a future shaped by shared purpose and enduring peace.

By Harriet Adongpiny

Cornerstone

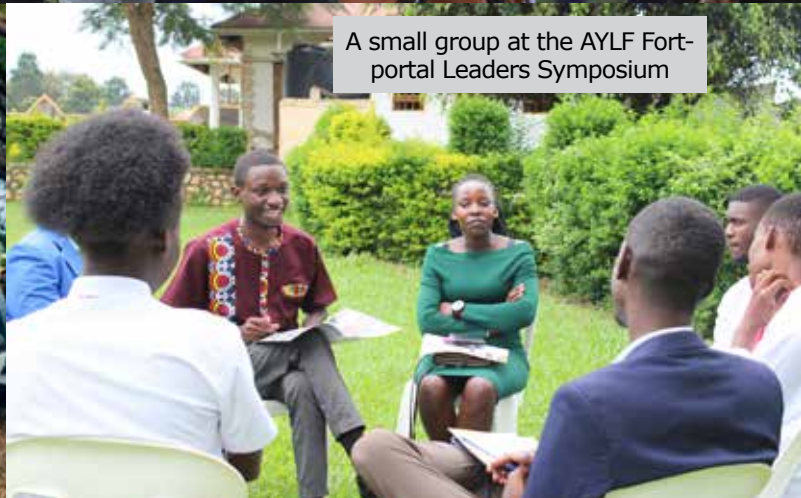
Newsletter Pictorial



Alumni in Uganda having fun at the 2024 E/COSA Sports Gala



A small group of COSA Rwanda members gather to talk about choosing and growing in your career path



A small group at the AYLFFort-portal Leaders Symposium



Goma Office end of year staff party, DR Congo



Members of the comm.s team from DRC, BUR. & RW. take a selfie at the staff retreat



New dining hall facility at Ekitanga Transformation High School



2024 Burundi vision conference



Burundi AYLF annual gathering 2024



AYLF fellowship at Jumuiya House, Dar es Salaam



Small group fellowship with Salaam Mentoring Program



Sarah teaching staff attending a safeguarding workshop, at CLA Girls, Uganda



A mens' conversation between campus students, alumni, and Kenyan senior friends.

A Family of Friends!



COSA alumni facilitates a discipleship class at CLA -Rwanda

Cornerstone Alumni Programs

Rwanda

As we reflect on this year, Jesus's words in John 13:34-35 inspire us: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." This spirit of love and unity has defined our journey at COSA Rwanda, strengthening bonds and uplifting our community through triumphs and challenges alike.

Small groups have been the heartbeat of COSA, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds to create a warm, inclusive environment. Mentorship remains a cornerstone of our work, with gap year students paired with Stage III mentors. Inspired by 1 Peter 5:2-3, mentors guide mentees with care and humility, fostering growth in character, faith, and wisdom. These relationships exemplify Proverbs 27:17: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." Together, we are building a lifelong brotherhood and sisterhood rooted in Jesus.

Weekly and monthly fellowships have provided members consistent opportunities to connect, grow, and share their faith journeys. For example, this year's International Women's Day celebration brought together women from YIM and AYLIF, enriching our community with new insights and strengthening our shared mission.

Stage II members, currently in university, have embraced leadership roles across campuses, churches, and organizations. These positions not only prepare them for future careers but also empower them to bring the light of Christ into their communities. This year, we proudly celebrated 21 Stage II students who graduated with excellent academic performance, embodying the leadership principles of the Cornerstone Movement.

We also launched "Legacy Night," a monthly gathering to engage professional and emerging leaders with lessons inspired by the example of Jesus. This initiative culminated in the Legacy Leaders' Summit, COSA's largest leadership event of the year.

In June, we hosted a Homecoming event at the Cornerstone Leadership Academy of Rwanda (CLA). Stage II and Stage III members shared their experiences, inspiring younger students to strive for excellence and a greater sense of purpose.

We also introduced a SACCO initiative to encourage financial stability among members. By pooling resources, members can save and eventually access small loans at low interest rates. This program represents a step toward empowering our community economically and creating sustainable growth opportunities.

This year, we launched a "Best Coordinator" award to honor a standout leader who embodies our values and inspires others. Beyond Rwanda, COSA members made waves internationally. Four members attended the Advanced Leadership Initiative (ALI) training, where Oliver Nyinawuntu was recognized for supporting 150 women in Rwanda's Southern Province.

Stage III members also expanded their reach in the marketplace. Vital Muvunyi and Dr. Bob have sparked meaningful conversations through their vlogs, influencing audiences with messages of faith and growth.

As our community grows, we've navigated challenges like differing academic calendars and rising living costs, which have affected some members' transition to professional life. To address this, we are supporting entrepreneurial initiatives through our financial programs, helping members overcome these obstacles while remaining anchored in faith.

Despite the challenges, COSA Rwanda continues to thrive as a resilient community, embodying Jesus's command to love and serve one another. We are excited about the future and remain committed to building a community grounded in love, faith, and service. Thank you for being part of this journey. Let us continue to walk together, inspired by the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood that makes COSA Rwanda truly special.

By Jackie Mbabazi

DR Congo

In a country like DR Congo, where instability and division have left lasting scars, young people face immense challenges – economic difficulties, hopelessness, and a lack of good role models. At Cornerstone Development Africa (CDA), we're working to change that. Inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus, we aim to build a generation of compassionate, resilient leaders who bring hope, unity, and transformation to their communities.

Our big milestone in D.R. Congo this past year was graduating the first class from the leadership academy and subsequently was launching the COSA (Cornerstone Old Students Association) DR Congo Chapter. With 35 active members meeting in Goma and Kampala, COSA is creating a supportive community where young leaders can grow spiritually, develop leadership skills, and build meaningful connections. This local chapter is an exciting step forward for strengthening our presence and impact in Congo.

Our weekly and monthly fellowship gatherings have become a hub for leaders of all ages and faiths to come together. These meetings spark deep conversations about leadership, faith, and reconciliation, creating a unique space where people can learn from one another and grow together.

To address the disconnect between young and senior leaders, we introduced the Junior Prayer Breakfast. This event brings together people from different political, religious, and business backgrounds to reflect on Jesus' example of unity and reconciliation. It's teaching us all that building true unity takes patience, humility, and open dialogue.

Of course, the journey hasn't been without obstacles. Political and religious divisions can make rec-

onciliation work tough, and many young people struggle to find role models who inspire them to lead with compassion.

We're also limited by space. Our computer lab fits only ten students at a time, our dining area is too small for large gatherings, and we don't have a dedicated chapel or enough room for sports and events. Despite these challenges, our students and staff show incredible resilience, finding creative ways to make the most of what we have.

Being a francophone country can make it tough for Congolese youth to access international opportunities. That's why we're doubling down on English training and partnering with organizations to open doors for scholarships and global learning experiences.

Our Africa Youth Leadership Forum (AYLF) and High School Leadership Development (HLD) programs are growing, and we're building stronger connections with universities and high schools. By reaching more young people, we can continue spreading the values of unity and peace.

We're excited about our ONE (Outreach Network and Exchange) initiative, which will connect alumni across the region. This program helps break down political barriers, build networks, and provide support as students move into university and beyond. It's a step toward building a more united and supportive community of young leaders.

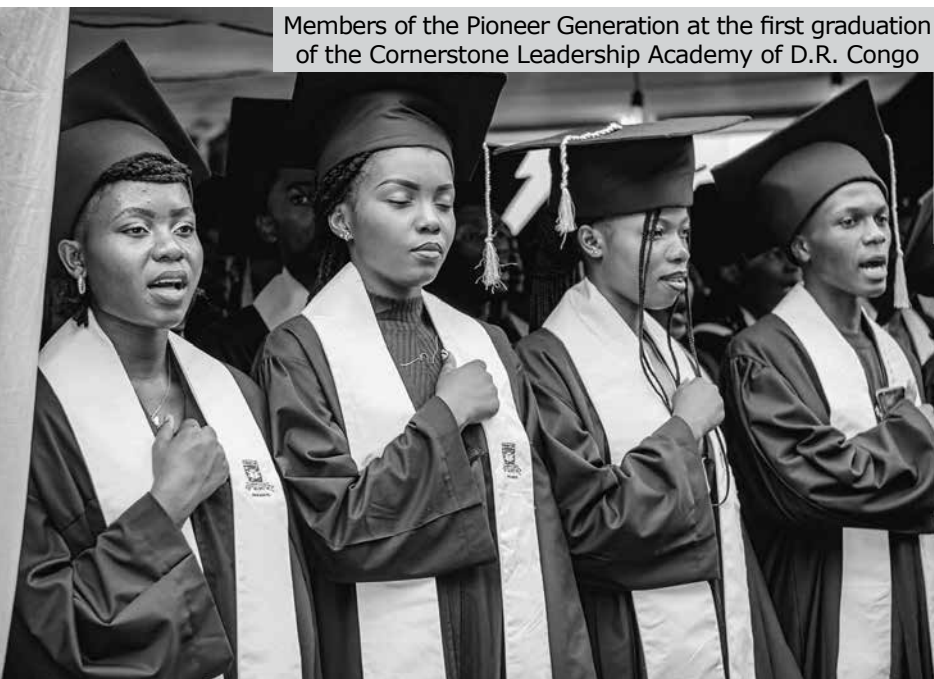
This year has been a powerful reminder of what's possible when people come together with a shared vision. None of this would be happening without the prayers, support, and encouragement of our global family.

At CDA, we're inspired every day by the life of Jesus, who showed us what it means to build bridges and bring people together. As Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." With this faith as our foundation, we're equipping young leaders to bring hope and healing to a divided world.

We're just getting started, and we're so excited about what's ahead. Together, we can empower more young people, overcome challenges, and keep building a future where unity, compassion, and transformation are possible for everyone.

By Emmanuel Baraka

Members of the Pioneer Generation at the first graduation of the Cornerstone Leadership Academy of D.R. Congo



Burundi

The ability to celebrate diversity rather than resent it may be one of the greatest challenges of humankind. Diversity is often viewed as a source of division, where ethnic or religious differences become barriers to unity. But just as musicians in a band play different notes to create a beautiful melody, so too can humanity find harmony through embracing our differences. By focusing on shared values rather than what divides us, we can create a powerful unity—a unity that brings joy and healing.

Creating such harmony requires a common foundation, a set of guiding principles that help us honor our differences while celebrating our shared humanity. In a world full of complexity, there is perhaps no better common ground than the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In Him, we find a model of love, peace, and understanding that transcends divisions. In Ephesians 2:14-16, Paul writes that Jesus is “our peace” and has “destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,” uniting people once separated by cultural and religious divides. Through His life and teachings, Jesus created a pathway for reconciliation among diverse communities, inviting us to focus not on divisions but on the essence of what truly matters.

This year, our programs centered on the person of Jesus, bringing His example to over 15,000 emerging young leaders across multiple countries. Through conferences, retreats, and seminars, we emphasized the qualities and principles found in Jesus, watching as these young people broke down barriers and expanded their sense of connection and community. Young leaders from Christian backgrounds visited their Muslim friends, fostering understanding and building bridges across differences. These gatherings and retreats not only became spaces for personal growth but also created a renewed sense of harmony, hope, and joy among all participants.

These experiences have recharged our commitment to fostering unity in our communities. The principles of Jesus have empowered us to bring hope to those who feel hopeless, and to build friendships and mutual respect in places where it was previously lacking. Looking ahead, we are inspired to continue being a light, to shine through actions grounded in love, and to contribute positively to the future of our country.

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 Don De Dieu



Participants having fun at the AYLIF retreat, Bujumbura

Tanzania

The idea of Jesus transcending division is one that resonates profoundly with our mission across Eastern Africa. Through Jesus' example, we are inspired to rise above divisions, holding to our unique identities while fostering harmony – a reflection of His life and ministry. As a Program Coordinator for our alumni, I witness our commitment to nurturing emerging leaders who bridge divides in their lives, communities, and areas of influence.

This year, COSA Tanzania has focused on core programs that nurture fellowship, growth, and empowerment among members. From Couples' Fellowships to Regional and Campus Fellowships, COSA has united diverse voices within our community. Notably, we capped the year with a family of friends retreat in Dar es Salaam in October 2024, where we also launched the Cornerstone Hostel (Jumuiya House) to support alumni attending university in the city.

Our gender-focused events like the Women's Day Celebration on March 8th and the upcoming Ladies' Retreat in November provided impactful experiences tailored to the needs of women in our community. The Women's Day celebration, for instance, addressed unique challenges that women face, reinforcing unity and support across our network.

This year, we introduced one-on-one outreaches, adding a personal touch to our community-building efforts. These conversations made alumni feel seen and valued, creating a more cohesive network aligned with the theme of unity in diversity. Additionally, moving the annual gathering to Dar es Salaam fostered inclusivity, especially for those unable to attend the same gathering held at the academy in previous years.

One of our greatest achievements has been managing these activities within budget constraints, a testament to good stewardship. Furthermore, there has been a surge in vision ownership, seen through member involvement, feedback, and the acceptance of cost-sharing. The one-on-one fellowships enhanced personal connections and belonging, increasing member engagement and commitment to our shared vision. Each of these initiatives highlights how Jesus' message of inclusion and unity is alive in our practical efforts, bringing people together in meaningful ways.

Tanzania's expansive geography presents challenges in reaching all members, and coordinating across regions requires substantial resources. Moreover, a limited volunteer base sometimes stretches our resources, impacting the breadth of our activities. These challenges underscore the importance of fos-



Tim sharing during the COSA TZ Retreat in Dar es Salaam

tering vision ownership within our community. Encouraging voluntary leadership without formal titles has strengthened our network, helping us build a self-sustaining community of passionate individuals dedicated to the Cornerstone vision.

Reflecting on this year, I am reminded of Jesus' life and teachings as a guide to overcoming divisions. Jesus' model of embracing diversity within a framework of love and unity aligns deeply with COSA Tanzania's goals. His example calls us to transcend institutional boundaries and welcome individuals from all backgrounds while upholding the core values that unite us. As He said in John 12:32, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." This passage reminds us of Jesus' power to unite people beyond boundaries, serving as a blueprint in our work with emerging leaders to address the world's many divisions.

Our programs have empowered emerging leaders with tools for reconciliation, fostered personal connections, and inspired unity rooted in shared values. We believe our community will continue to embody the theme of "Jesus: Bridging Deep Divides" by creating inclusive spaces, promoting personal responsibility, and embracing diverse perspectives. By bridging divides within our network, we prepare our alumni to be agents of reconciliation in their communities.

By lifting Jesus in our programs and lives, we draw people together, encouraging a compassionate and united community that celebrates diversity and promotes understanding. Together, we can build a community where differences are no longer barriers but the foundation of a shared purpose, compassion, and unity.

By Magoli Waziri

Uganda

In our Cornerstone Alumni programs, we strive to create a movement of friends whose shared foundation is their faith in Jesus, expressed through a commitment to love, support, and reflect His character in all that we do. Central to our vision is a culture of “doing life together” – a journey marked by sharing experiences, supporting one another, and building intentional, lasting relationships through both everyday moments and life’s significant milestones.

Meaningful and intentional relationships are connections that bring joy, support, and a sense of belonging. They are built on emotional connection, trust, open communication, shared values, mutual support, and vulnerability. This year, our goal has been to foster an environment within our programs that deepens relationships, ensuring that every member feels supported, appreciated, and valued. In this article, we shine a spot light on ideas that have made our work worthwhile;

Building Community in Intimate Circles

Inspired by the early church’s example in Acts 2:42-47, Cornerstone Alumni Small Groups embody our belief that meaningful relationships, accountability, forgiveness, love, and reconciliation flourish best within intimate, supportive circles. As Jean Vanier once said, “Community is the answer to humanity’s cry.” At Cornerstone, we believe that small groups are essential for deep connection and personal growth.

This year, we’ve witnessed an expansion in our reach to 3 student hostel groups, 7 university groups, 42 class groups, 10 regional groups, 7 interest-based groups, and 8 married groups. Within these groups, members have been encouraged to hold each other accountable, and share experiences of joy and struggle, to the end that the true essence of brotherhood and sisterhood is effectively experienced.

An Army of Selfless Volunteers:

As Mahatma Gandhi said, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Our growth as a community is grounded in the dedication of our volunteers – people with a passion for service and a heart for our vision. This year, through our Annual General Meeting, we elected a new executive team of nine individuals committed to nurturing our Alumni association by doing life together. Additionally, our network of volunteers includes over 200 Class Coordinators, 9 Regional Coordinators, 12 married small group leaders, 5 forum coordinators, and 12 hostel and campus coordinators.

To support and uplift our volunteers, the secretariat has invested time and resources in strengthening their capacity and morale through monthly check-in calls, four outdoor outings, breakfasts, and two retreats. Our annual retreat this year brought together over 380 alumni for a time of inspiration and fellowship at the ranch, complemented by monthly general fellowships in Kampala and beyond – all led by our army of dedicated volunteers.

Vasco speaking to a group of Stage II Alumni at a class retreat



An Alumni getting a certificate recognizing her service as a class coordinator



Josephats, the COSA Chairman speaking at the ECOSA Alumni fellowship



Forgiveness and Inclusion:

Keys to a Harmonious Community

Our diverse backgrounds and unique perspectives add beauty to our family of friends, but they also require patience and a commitment to forgiveness. We constantly encourage one another to focus on the positive and to practice inclusive, all-encompassing love in resolving any disagreements. This approach has over the years, including this one, allowed our members to experience genuine joy and growth, with paradigm shifts toward grace and understanding for each other within our alumni community.

Sharing Burdens:

Bearing Each Other's Challenges

This year has been challenging for our members, as the effects of COVID continue to ripple through our lives, impacting jobs, businesses, and financial stability. However, we've witnessed extraordinary support among our members, especially in times of loss, sickness, and celebration. This spirit of mutual care reflects the essence of Galatians 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens," as members step up to support each other in small and big ways. Through this, we experience the true meaning of unity rooted in compassion, embodying a brotherhood and sisterhood that endures beyond adversity.

Community Impact:

Transforming Lives Beyond Our Alumni

Following Jesus' command to "love your neigh-

bor as yourself" (Mark 9:35), Cornerstone Alumni members are making transformational impacts on the broader community. Over 80 alumni are leading social enterprises and community initiatives, from running schools and health facilities to supporting farmers, mentoring youths, and providing psychosocial support. Many others serve in church ministry or leadership positions within politics and public service, contributing to reshaping leadership culture and narratives within the country.

Looking Ahead...

As we reflect on this past year, we are grateful for the progress in strengthening our bonds, deepening our commitment to one another, and living out our faith through service and community impact. We move forward with renewed dedication to foster relationships that are not just meaningful but transformative, embodying the love and example of Jesus in our lives and communities.

As we end the year, we see these 3 points above as learning points that we ought to focus on in the New Year. Working on them, we will prevent more wounds, and help our people be more resilient. And I believe, as we do so, we ourselves will continue to discover the places in our lives that need healing.

By Michael Eluku and Vasco Musinguzi

Jesus: Common Ground

was the author of 40 books. By the end of his life it is believed that he spoke to more people about Jesus than anyone else in history.

At the time Jones first went to India, it was under British colonial rule which was being resisted by the Indians in their desire to achieve independence. The main religion of the British colonial rulers was the Church of England which has a close relationship with the British government due to the British monarch being its honorary head.

It did not take Jones long to realize, although he was not an Anglican, that he was being perceived as an ambassador of a religion that was seen as an exploitative and oppressive instrument of the colonialists. So, he felt he needed a different approach from the conventional missionary methods which involved changing the people's religion to one of changing people's hearts.

India's independence movement took the shape of a non-violent protest against British rule led by Mahatma Gandhi. Jones developed a long friendship with Gandhi and wrote the first English biography of Gandhi. Later, this very book landed in the hands of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who said, he found in it the formula for what he would use to advance his own non-violent movement for civil rights and equality for Black Americans.

In his interactions with Gandhi and others, Jones discovered that although the people of India had many reservations about Christianity - they were fascinated by, and had a reverence for, Jesus and his teachings. Therefore, Jones took the approach of conducting public lectures and round-table discussions on Jesus that attracted thousands, across the major cities of India.

These discussions were done in a way that did not limit Jesus within the institutional forms of Christianity which have emerged over the centuries, but rather, portrayed him as one who could be followed from within the cultural contexts that people were in already. This is similar to the idea that the early believers had, which did not require Gentiles to become Jews in order to follow Jesus.

In India this approach proved to be effective in regards to furthering the core message of Jesus. It is captured in Jones' best-selling book, called: "Christ of the Indian Road" (1925) In it he says: "Christianity and Jesus are not the same... people can have Jesus without the (religious or cultural) system that has been built up around him."

I have also come to believe, the essential message of Jesus was very much about converting our hearts and minds - rather than having us changing our religious affiliations, which for the most part we inherit from the families we were born into. Jesus was not a Christian, he was a Jew and nowhere in the Bible does it say "you must become a Christian" rather it says we must become 'new creations' and we must be "born from above" by the spirit of God.

Well, these are bold and controversial sentiments that do raise questions among more conventionally minded believers. And, as we in Cornerstone have followed this line of thinking, at times we have been faced with such concerns as: "Are you trying to start a new religion?" My response has always been "No, we are just trying to get back to the core, basic teachings of Jesus."

As was stated on the front cover of this magazine - if anyone does an honest overview of the teachings of Jesus it will lead to a realization that a very central focus of his teachings hinges on how we interact with our fellow human beings. For example, the only two precepts he said, that could be called the 'sum of the law and the prophets' were largely in this direction. These are: The Greatest Commandment, "Love God... and love your neighbor as your self." And, also the Golden Rule: "Do unto others what you would want them to do to you."

We could add many other examples of this emphasis on unconditional love of others but consider this one: There are just three places in the bible where Jesus himself gives the criteria of what it takes to be called a "Child of God" or "Sons/Daughters" of God. These are:

1. Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the Children of God."
2. Matthew 5:44-45 "Love your enemies... that you might be sons of your father in heaven."
3. Luke 6:35 "Love your enemies... and you will be sons of the Most High."

Basically, the message in these three verses is the same: If you want to be a child of God then you need to love everyone unconditionally, the way God loves.

At one of the Prayer Breakfast's we had here in Africa a national President noted, "Before the missionaries came, our grandparents were teaching their grandkids to share, be hard working and to be kind to each other - but that only applied to people of their own clan or tribe, and they were constantly fighting other groups. It was unheard of to love your enemies."

Historian Thomas Cahill author of "Desire of Everlasting Hills" (How the World Changed after Jesus) makes the case that this was true for everywhere in the world. Certainly, one of the most revolutionary

ideas that Jesus brought to humanity was this concept of “loving your enemies.”

We see this in scripture passages like this one: “If you greet only your own people, how are you different from any one else? Do not even pagans do that??” Mt. 5:47 Here Jesus is saying if we only greet (meaning, to acknowledge, pay respect to, welcome and embrace) those of our own group (ethnic group, political party, country or religious community) - we are really no better than those who are completely lacking of any higher, spiritual awareness

Jesus clearly modeled this in his relations with the ethnic/religious group called the Samaritans. For Jews, the name “Samaritan” became a curse word. Even the disciples of Jesus were not fond of them and were anxious to call down fire on their heads (Luke 9:54). Amidst this hostile, complex relationship, Jesus sets a very different tone. He did not relate to them as enemies, but reached out to them with compassion and love. He healed them, ministered to them and used them as examples to his Jewish brethren. And, in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the well, found in John 4 - it says that that he ended up spending two days with them in their village.

One of the things that attracted me to work with the Timmis family in this 30+ plus year venture which became Cornerstone was that they were Catholic. And, having grown up as the son of a Baptist missionary in Congo I witnessed a lot of animosity across the Protestant-Catholic division. Furthermore, the two major political parties in Uganda where we began - were also divided along those lines.

So, from childhood I was puzzled as to why the various Christian denominations, who did not love each other very much - all claimed to be following the Person who gave as the one major distinction that he wanted his followers to be known by - was their love for one another. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Jn. 13:35

Later on: Getting involved in the Prayer Breakfast circles, where I was mentored by Michael Timmis and by Doug Coe (who was mentored by Abraham Vereide) - helped to further shape my convictions in this direction. And, certainly we have seen its effectiveness over the last 30 years in our work across East Africa.

I hope this explains why in Cornerstone we have this strong Jesus-Centered approach. 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:

A) Solid, yet common ideological ground across all divisions among us.

B) Which can also serve as a basis for inspiration, reconciliation and reflection.

C) And which can provide a model for leadership principles.

Yet, we get all this with centering our core values and having as our role model, Jesus.

In conclusion, after studying the teachings of Jesus virtually all my life here is my essential list, boiled down to 10 points, of what was his core message. I see these teachings as universal and largely self-evident to all sincere people and honest seekers:

1. Human beings need a fundamental change of heart, which is largely a shift from being selfish to loving others. (Repent, change your heart and mind.)
2. A better world is coming and we should make our priority in life to seek it. (The Kingdom of God is at hand.)
3. Learning to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength along with loving our neighbor as our self - are the greatest commandments.
4. The golden rule is to: “do unto others as we would want them to do unto us.”
5. The divine principles Jesus championed such as: love, faith, joy and peace are more powerful and will ultimately triumph over their opposites: fear, hate, greed, etc.
6. Every man is my brother and every lady is my sister because we share one Father whose essential nature is love.
7. Forgiveness (the conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance) is vital for our own wellbeing and that of society. We should, ‘forgive those who trespass against us’ - even if we have to do it seventy times seven times.
8. Faith is an activator, it brings into reality the things we hope, it ‘moves mountains,’ it creates the conditions for God to bring about the miraculous - including our own spiritual rebirth and transformation.
9. We bear a responsibility to care for ‘the least, the last & the lost’ in society. This is one of the criteria by which we will be evaluated on that final day when we account for and will be rewarded for - how we lived our lives and used all that was entrusted to us.
10. We are mandated to make disciples in all nations, to spread these teaching and His Spirit will be with us.

Beyond grasping these core teachings of Jesus, there is also coming to the realization that even today, His spirit is an active power and presence in our world. As we recognize and acknowledge that He was sent by God and believe in His redemptive role for humanity - we are then challenged to personally respond to these truths. And, the only suitable personal response to these vast, profound truths - leads us to the point of absolute surrender to God.

Jesus of Nazareth Creates Common Ground Across Divisions



The spiritual heritage of Cornerstone traces back to those who influenced the origins of the National Prayer Breakfast movement. And like them, reconciliation and unity across divisions in the spirit of Jesus has always been a key part of Cornerstone's focus.

During the 1950's when the US National Prayer Breakfast became a national event involving the American President, the main speaker for the first few years was the famous preacher, Billy Graham. He taught that, "the number one problem in our world is alienation, rich versus poor, black versus white, labor versus management, conservative versus liberal, East versus West... but Christ came to bring about reconciliation and peace."

Graham's friend Abraham Vereide, founder of the Prayer Breakfast, also viewed Jesus as being a unifier across all divisions. Vereide said, "He is the only universal - belonging to all ages, races and conditions." You can also see this perspective in various statements and in the actions of Jesus that he intended his message to be for the whole world and not just one religious group. In Matthew 7:24 he proclaimed: "Whoever hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

By saying 'whoever' he opened space for people of all creeds, race and nationality to find common ground in his life-giving teachings, which he championed in order to bring about a better world, a world at peace and in harmony with each other and with God. This he called and taught us to pray for: "the kingdom of God coming on Earth as it is in Heaven."

However, in saying Jesus and his values provide us common ground, it does not mean that everyone sees him in exactly the same way. But rather, good hearted people from all creeds and cultures hold a level of respect and reverence for the man and his message which cannot be matched by another other figure from our human history.

As author Bruxy Cavey put it: "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."



Perhaps the most influential early shaper of this Jesus-centered focus held by the Prayer Breakfast movement and now held by Cornerstone, was a man called E. Stanley Jones. Jones was a good friend of Abraham Vereide and both of them belonged to "The Group of Twelve," giants of faith at the time, who met periodically. Jones was also a frequent speaker at "The Fellowship House" that Vereide and his wife hosted in Washington DC for national and international leaders, which later became The Cedars.

Jones went to India in the early 1900's as a young missionary and worked mostly among the intellectuals. Later he traveled and spoke globally. Eventually he went on to be featured on the cover of TIME magazine (Jan. 1964) as the world's greatest evangelist. He was also nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize for his peace efforts among nations and