

January to March 2024
APF Prayer and Newsletter



African
Pastors
Fellowship

Impetus.



Equipped for Digital Ministry

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From the CEO

As I write, it is my last day in Africa after nearly five weeks of activity engaging with partners, teaching at conferences, monitoring projects and making new connections.

Among the highlights were a few days spent with Walubo Jude in Kamuli district in Uganda. There were two eVitabu workshops in churches, hospitality included six meals in one day, and around 500 trees planted at two different schools!

I planted the mahogany tree in the picture at Bulogo Primary School on one of my first trips to Africa as APF CEO. Its growth is remarkable! Somehow it symbolises the reach and influence of APF, especially through eVitabu and our dedicated African Training Partners in the intervening years.

Let us commit to pray for one another – and all we work alongside in Africa – that throughout 2024 each one might be “like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers” (Psalm 1:3).

Revd Dave Stedman

In the UK

Welcome to the Team!

With the UK staff team of Dave and Geoff feeling a little overstretch (and as neither of them are getting any younger) everyone felt it was about time they got some extra help with APF's social media content.



Hannah Flemming-Hill

Step up Hannah Flemming-Hill! Hannah is a digital missionary who has worked on social media campaigns with Anglican, Methodist and Baptist groups and is now studying a masters degree at Spurgeons College in Digital Theology.

Hannah will be working with APF as a consultant, sharing news and updates from APF and our partners in Africa on social media. Make sure you follow us on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram and LinkedIn so you don't miss out on her latest posts.

Follow APF on social media using these handles:

Facebook **@africanpastors**

X **@AfricanPF**

Instagram **@africanpastors**

LinkedIn **@african-pastors-fellowhip**

Parenting in the Digital Age

New APF Trustee Kingston Ogango led our Parenting in the Digital Age event at Canterbury Baptist Church in November.

The half day conference tackled issues around family dynamics, parenting tactics and how to remain relevant to 'digital natives' and was very warmly received.

Kingston joins the APF board of trustees from Alpha International where he is Africa Regional Director and Alpha's National Ministry Lead for Kenya.



Kingston Ogango

Around Africa



Just a few selected highlights from our APF partners' news and activities Around Africa in recent months.

Rwanda



Victor Imanaturikumwe ran a workshop for students at Nyagatare Campus University of Rwanda. 'We hosted a hundred students one conference,' Victor told us. 'This will be a pilot phase for eVitabu workshops in more University of Rwanda campuses and others universities. This conference will help us to have deep insight, analysis and statistical data on how people use eVitabu and its impact in Rwandan churches, universities communities at large.'

Zambia



In Lusaka, APF partner Lawson Limao has been delivering eVitabu workshops. Lawson is one of APF's most effective trainers and has helped over a hundred Zambian Christians use the app. He says 'I love eVitabu because it builds knowledge for pastors and church leaders through the various resources available on the app for both individual learning and community development purposes'.

Burundi



Kesia Luoga (pictured below with her husband, Heavenlight) ran a training conference in Karuzi in north-east Burundi. Kesia and Heavenlight are from Deeper Life Church in Karagwe, Tanzania but with APF's help often travel to Burundi to teach and equip the church leaders. Kesia explained that there is a great need for training pastor's wives to be trained. 'I taught about how they can grow their ministry just as Priscilla and Aquila did and I shared my personal experience.'



Lawson training in rural Zambia

Uganda



- In November, Dave ran 'The Smart Pastor' and eVitabu workshops across Uganda (Bulapo conference pictured). 'We started by thinking about humans and technology, then Jesus and technology, then what makes a smartphone 'smart' and discussing its risks and benefits' he says. 'We then installed eVitabu as an example of a helpful use of digital technology'.
- Revd Esomu Francis, Principal of Atirir Bible School in Soroti Distict received a grant for a laptop.
- Bishop Lee Rayfield Leadership College in Kitgum Diocese will be receiving support to design and develop a website.



South Sudan



As part of our commitment to build digital capacity through training, tools and teaching we were recently able to provide Revd Alex Sokiri (pictured below) from Juba, with a laptop. In November, Alex helped run a eVitabu workshop for South Sudanese pastors in Moyo, a small town in Uganda, just a few kilometres from the South Sudan border .



Christmas Trees in Uganda

At Bulogo Catholic Primary School, teacher Samuel has adapted lesson plans from eVitabu to start an after school club called 'Climate Stewards'. Together with APF partner, Walubo Jude (pictured below right), he bought a variety of tree seedlings, taught about trees and helped plant around 250 fruit trees in the school compound.

Jude has a passion for planting trees and has planted more than 50,000 trees around Kamuli District in Uganda at schools, churches and local homes. Tree planting has many social, economic and environmental benefits and the cost of a seedling is about £1, including planting. With our Christmas trees dropping their needles and soon to come down, why not help Jude plant more living trees in Kamuli by donating the cost of your Christmas tree?



Walubo Jude



A Flower Blooming in Northern Uganda

In Kitgum Diocese in the far north of Uganda you can find a small rural trading centre near Pader Town. It provides a vitally important market for the many thousands of smallholder farmers who live in rural communities across the area. Pader District was badly affected by the long Lord's Resistance Army insurgency which ravaged northern Uganda around the turn of the millennium but since then, the area has recovered quickly, in part due to trade up and down the highway to Lira, Kitgum and with South Sudan.

In 2014, without a single Ugandan Shilling of donor funding, the Diocese of Kitgum opened the Bishop Lee Rayfield Leadership College in the trading centre with a mission to train up new Readers (called catechists) to serve across the Diocese and beyond.

In rural Uganda, ordained clergy frequently oversee twenty-five churches or more spread over vast areas. Each congregation needs a trained leader and that's where the Readers step in.

Readers read the prayer book (that's why they're called 'Readers') but they also teach, preach and provide pastoral care in their villages.

Based in some refurbished temporary classroom blocks, Bishop Lee Rayfield Leadership College offers a Certificate course in Theology and Development for Readers. It now trains men and women from across northern Uganda and South Sudan, keen to serve in this way in their own communities.

College Principal Rev Okidi Charles has a big vision for Bishop Lee Rayfield Leadership College. He describes the college as a flower that attracts insects. While the insects pollinate the flower, the flower provides nectar to make honey that is beneficial to their community. It's a beautiful picture, perfectly illustrating the mutually beneficial relationship between the college, its students and the communities the students belong to.

Rev Charles has another metaphor for the work of the college. He says that one person having a monopoly of knowledge is like a tall eucalyptus tree standing in middle of a compound. It can only provide a little shade and is not very useful by itself. Training many people with knowledge and skills, however, is like a swam of caterpillars that can cover the entire community in any given moment. 'I believe in teamwork and building human resources that will meet the quest of the Ministry of Christ' he says, quoting an old saying in Acholi '*Cing acel pe konyo*' which means 'One hand alone cannot help but many hands put food on the table'.



College Principle Rev Charles Okidi



Bishop Lee Rayfield Leadership College in rural northern Uganda

Digital ministry is also creating new opportunities that Rev Charles is keen to embrace. He has a deep concern for the growing number who he recognises are called to Christian ministry but cannot study full time at a training institute because of work or home situations. 'Training through digital ministry will rock the world' he says. The solution is to 'create digital space classrooms to enhance those God has touch to become tent makers. This is the desire of the college: training should be both physical and online.'

In order to achieve this vision, Rev Charles is aware of the need for investment in IT equipment, internet connectivity and web resources at the college. It is a big ask but he is not deterred. 'Through digital tools we will be able to give the community and the Church in northern Uganda access to the message of God and developmental skills for holistic transformation' he says. 'This calls for collective efforts of all the stakeholders of Bishop Lee Rayfield Leadership College from within and without.'



Healing bruised lives in Kenya

APF partner Transformation Compassion Network (TCN) is an interdenominational network that trains Christians in Kenya in bringing holistic development to their communities. TCN Director Walter Rutto shared Betty's story with us. It illustrates exactly the sort of transformation TCN seek to bring about in the lives of individuals, households and whole communities.

Betty Chepkirui is a real fighter. She is a single mother of three children and a resident of Balek Village in Bomet County, south-western Kenya. She's an active member of St John's Catholic Church.

Her past life experiences, however, had left her with much bitterness. The Bible says that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45) and her words were an expression of endless pain.

A simple question from anyone would result in knocks, kicks and fights. She just wanted to be left alone and she believed that no one cared about her.

Then Betty joined our Kingdom Business course. Kingdom Business is a six-month course with three modules, each taking eight weeks. Learners attend class once a week for three hours to complete three lessons. This is a training that seeks to work on the mindset change for holistic transformation.

In the course is a topic called 'Christian growth - experiencing God's love and forgiveness'. Through this part of the course, Betty began to find some release from the past pain she had suffered from, began to forgive those who had oppressed and hurt her and experienced God's healing in her life. It was like seeing medicine for the heart in action.

After the healing of her heart and mind, the healing further spread to her entire household. We soon began to see how Betty began to transform her smallholding, following the training we were providing very well. As her garden began to be more fruitful, the whole household began to experience a calm environment and her entire family discovered God's love through this transformed woman.

Now Betty keeps poultry and dairy cows that help to feed her family. She sells surplus products and the extra income cushions her household budget.

The proceeds from her farm also helps her support her ailing mother. This has not been easy as she is the firstborn in her family. In this part of Kenya, it is said that a firstborn should be like an assistant parent. When the parents are not in a position to meet the needs of their dependants, all those family responsibilities are transferred to the firstborn child.

Since Betty's life turned around, she has further known to walk in the way of the gospel. Because she has enough for herself and her children, she is now able to give offerings and tithes in church and



Betty Chepkirui

also support the needy who live nearby in small but important ways. One of the best indicators of successful holistic training is when we look at church tithing records and note a tangible improvement stemming from community and economic development hand-in-hand with Christian discipleship.

Another aspect of our teaching programme covers household hygiene, health and wellbeing. Betty has taken this on board and kept this message close to her heart. Her compound is now always very clean, litter disposed of and the children know how to wash their hands before eating. This is no small thing and just these simple things can stop the spread of germs and bacteria. Diarrhoea remains a leading cause of death of children in Kenya.

When we asked Betty if we could share her story with African Pastors Fellowship and other partners, she was glad to do so to show just how transformative holistic training can be. Out of enthusiasm and without supervision, she is now teaching others in her village how to walk this journey too. Many are listening since it is evident that she's a transformed woman.



Equipped for Digital Ministry

By Revd Dave Stedman

In November 2023, APF launched an exciting partnership with Spurgeon's College to offer APF partners and eVitabu users a unique opportunity to enrol for the Equipped for Digital Ministry course (EfDM). Dave explains what the course involves and why it is so important.

Ownership of a smartphone is now an essential prerequisite for candidates applying to study at many universities, seminaries and Bible schools in Africa. Digital devices are no longer 'luxury' items but essential tools for business, banking, entertainment, travel and study.

With mobile subscriptions in sub-Saharan Africa set to reach 685 million by next year, the need for training in the use of digital tools for ministry and theological reflection about the relationship between human beings, technology and God are as urgent in Africa as in any other part of the world.

EfDM is a six-module online course. Students can work at their own pace, and the completed course leads to a college certificate. Learning and assessment requires students to engage at both an academic and vocational level with the following modules:

- Ministry in a Digital Culture
- Digital Church: Communications
- Media Streams
- Inclusion and Ethics
- Digital Church in Practice
- Digital Futures

Over the past two years, as a result of studying for a Masters in Digital Theology at Spurgeon's College, I now find myself inhabiting a niche area of theological expertise in east Africa with many invitations to open up the subject of digital theology in both formal and non-formal training environments. I've delivered numerous Digital Theology Taster Seminars and developed an introduction workshop called The Smart Pastor.

Feedback from these workshops has shown an obvious hunger for more in depth teaching and capacity building in both practical and theoretical aspects of ministry in the digital age. As a result of exposure to The Smart Pastor, there is even a Christian university in Uganda which has committed to introduce digital theology as a core component of its ministry training and is asking for support in developing its curriculum and delivery.

Over the course of this year, through conversations with Spurgeon's College Principal, Rev Prof Philip McCormack, the possibility of offering EfDM to African clergy began to take shape. Philip recently returned from a visit to Moyo in northern Uganda where he saw first-hand the appetite for learning and the need for capacity building of Baptist pastors from South Sudan.





Spurgeon's COLLEGE

Spurgeon's College has generously reduced the price of EfDM for APF partners. Philip sees this as a great opportunity for the college to expand its influence as global

One of the early applicants, Revd Shadrack Koma, a regional overseer in the Africa Inland Church in Kenya, is ambitious and excited about the course and how it will enable his ministry. He writes, '[EfDM] will help me to reach out to millions of unreached people in the digital world. By leveraging technology, especially social media and other digital platforms. I look forward to upgrading my ministry digitally.'

Pastor Daniel Masiga from Uganda, who chairs the Christian Leaders Fellowship in Mogadishu, Somalia, is similarly enthusiastic. 'For me being equipped for digital ministry is an opportunity to be better positioned and better equipped in the cause of advancing the gospel of Christ using technology' he explains.

'Technology has a way of magnifying human abilities and learning to use it efficiently is an opportunity I wouldn't love to miss. Especially knowing that this education is coming from a college and a team of educators such as Spurgeon's College. In a nutshell, I hope to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency in digital communication so as to reach people and places I may never be able to physically reach.'

At the time of writing, just one week after applications opened, twenty-three APF partners have already enrolled (although only one has paid). Despite EfDM being offered at a significantly reduced cost to APF partners, £305 remains a lot of money for the average African pastor. For many it is out of reach.

We believe it is important that applicants take financial responsibility for their studies so a proportion of the cost will always be met by the student, but we also appeal to our supporters to consider sponsorship so we can fast-track some of those who enrol but will struggle to 'mobilise the funds'. As one of my African friends told me just last week, 'the flower is there, the bees wish to come, and when they do they will go and make honey'.

The EfDM Africa partnership is unique and undoubtedly strategic. Please pray for those that aspire to learn to be enabled to access the training: May they fulfil their personal potential and strengthen the church, practically and spiritually, in-person and online, wherever God has placed them.

For Prayer



Grace Kaziba, the house manager at Faith Babies Home in Uganda, is due to undergo surgery this month. She asks us to pray for funds to cover medical bills, the doctors who will perform the operation and for her complete healing. The 45 children in her care and support staff need Grace to be fit and healthy.

Japhet Matugoma is the retired legal representative of Église Évangélique de la Bonne Volonté au Rwanda. His home was severely damaged by landslides earlier this year and the government has advised the local population to relocate as there remains a risk of further landslides in the rainy season. Japhet has lived in this place for around fifty years, it is the family home and there are limited resources to help with a relocation and construction of a new house. Please pray for him as the need is urgent.



Daniel Odour Gwara is one of APF's most active training partners. Operating in western Kenya, he reaches eight large groups of leaders and has been training them using eVitabu. During 2023, Daniel's training has covered topics including prayer, agriculture and vocational skills. Daniel doesn't have a smartphone so he relies on the goodwill of neighbours and fellow eVitabu users to search and download resources on eVitabu, for email and other online activity. Please pray for the provision of a phone or tablet for Daniel, and others like him, so they can access essential tools of ministry in the digital age.



Ruth Nalugya is founder of Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Network Uganda (SHYNEA), a Ugandan NGO which provides advocacy, practical advice, access to clinical care and awareness raising projects to support children and families living with disability. Ruth is the mother of a child with spina bifida and understands the stigma that can still be associated with disability. Pray for her and give thanks for her strong faith which motivates her work.



Africa Trip Update

In November and early December, Dave Stedman met with key APF partners in Uganda and Kenya. At the time of writing, Dave was still in Kenya but we thought we'd share a few of his photos and highlights of his trip.



▲ I planted this mahogany tree at Bulogo in 2015 on one of my first visits to Uganda for APF. Its growth is somehow symbolic of the increasing influence of APF in the continent through eVitabu and our partners .

▼ Lunch with old friends Walubo Jude, Makos Pearson, and Kiiza Geoffrey. Dave shared that he has known some of these men since they were boys and they are now fathers. Great time discussing politics, rugby and parenthood!.



◀ Lunch meeting with Ben Mutegeki, Managing Director of Pastors' Discipleship Network and Cornerstone University. There are exciting plans for Digital Theology to be part of the curriculum at PDN and they discussed growing the partnership with APF.



▲ In Kampala I met with regional overseers of the Uganda Assemblies of God churches for an eVitabu induction and a Digital Theology Taster workshop.



► I met with Pastor Joshua Ssemanda, Uganda national coordinator for Africans Training Africans (ATA). Joshua travels the length and breadth of Uganda, visiting some of the remotest regions to mentor, encourage and train rural pastors.



▼ Musa, caretaker at Bulogo Primary School, who helped the children plant 250 trees during my visit. I love the juxtaposition of tradition hoe with the smartphone in his shirt pocket. I find this symbolic of continuity and change across the continent of Africa.



► I had a productive morning with Revd Bernard Obuya Obuya, president of the Baptist Convention of Kenya, and members of his team. There is likely to be an opportunity in 2024 to do an eVitabu workshop with regional overseers and other key Baptist leaders, as well as a request for study Bibles for Baptist pastors and local language Bibles for church congregations in rural Kenya.



◀ A brief but joyful and productive meeting with Rukundo Abel, national overseer for YWAM in Uganda. He has an infectious passion for sharing Bible teaching and ending Bible poverty. Abel installed eVitabu on his phone and is encouraging YWAM staff to download it.



▲ Moyo conference with 35 South Sudanese pastors. We are moving from a Digital Theology taster session to an eVitabu induction workshop.



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

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Giving to APF

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

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