

# Cornerstone

Newsletter & Magazine July 2022

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

## HOLISTIC GROWTH

In today's world, it's clear that every young person should learn how to read, write and acquire basic math skills. But, that is not all we need in our personal growth, for as Mzee Paulo Lukwiya used to put it, "education alone can just produce clever devils."

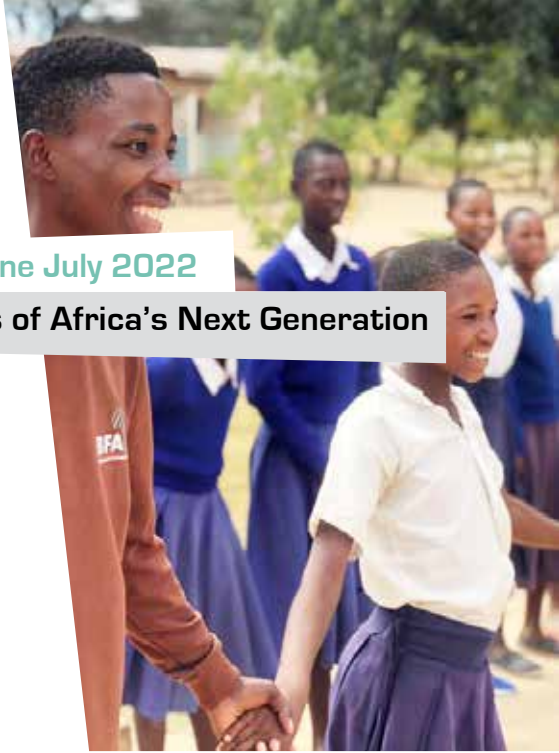
We believe that education helps *inform* the mind, but discipleship, character development and mentorship, helps *transform* the mind and the heart.

A good education is one thing but a good upbringing is another. More than just scholarly teachers, young people need mentors who will help them understand 'the big picture' in regards to their purpose in life.

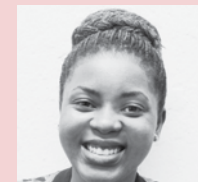
A life lived well is more than earning a living by becoming a lawyer, engineer, teacher, or doctor, etc. The knowledge passed on to students in school is often viewed only from the perspective of personal financial success. This is fine, but success alone does not fulfill God's reason for us being here. We are called to be the salt and light of the world!

*Success* comes from what we do for *ourselves*, but a life of *significance* comes from what we do for *others*. This means a life lived in such a way that adds value towards that 'better world' which Jesus called "the kingdom of God coming on earth." And each of us is given a purpose within our circle of influence, which supports this overarching plan of God the world.

One of the most important aspects of a life lived well is learning to give holistic attention to all areas our growth: physical, mental, social, and spiritual. We often reference a verse that speaks to these 4 areas from the gospel of Luke. It describes the early growth and development of Jesus as he grew, "in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and favor with Man" (Lk. 2:52).



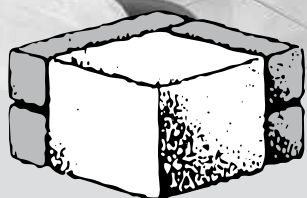
### Inside



### and...

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

Wednesday  
staff fellowship  
at CLA / Arusha  
Office



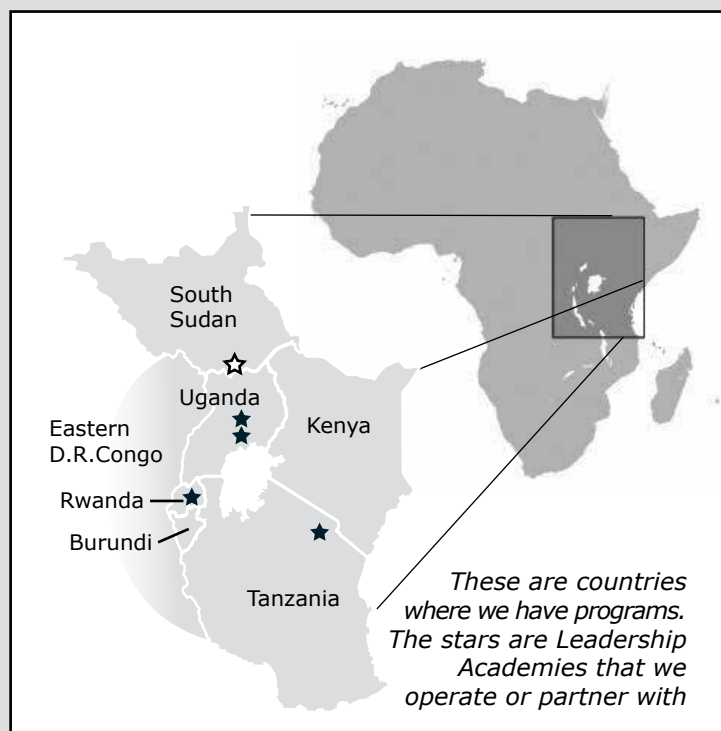
## Cornerstone Development Africa

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

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

Cornerstone Development was established in Uganda in 1988 to help in the rebuilding and development of the nation as it was emerging from a turbulent past. In recent years we have expanded to Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi 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 five schools, five homes for homeless kids, three 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](http://www.CDAfrica.org)

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

## What have we been up to?

We started off this year strong, with all our schools fully re-opened for on-campus learning (post covid-closures), energized with a vision for a season of regional expansion in our work, and a renewed commitment to strengthening our programs from the inside-out. Two topics have generally stood out in our pursuit of excellence this year; (1) strengthening the quality of one-to-one mentoring that happens at all stages of our work, and (2) strengthening our programs' efficacy in holistic development of beneficiaries (and in particular, our schools' attention to critical '21st century skills').

Quite a few private schools in the region (but especially in Uganda) could not financially survive the two years of covid-related restrictions and so they shut down. This created an increased student demand on the schools that were able to survive, such as our Ekitangaala Transformation Highschool in Uganda. Furthermore, because of our continuous support of teaching staff and subsequent engagement of students, our schools performed among the best they ever had in the 2021 academic exams. These two factors translated into a record number of scholarship applicants at our CLAs and a record number of enrollment at our Ekitangaala Transformation Highschool where we now have 750 students (up from 450 prior to start of the Covid pandemic). Due to this surge in demand, we acquired additional land in order to construct new dormitory and classroom capacity. We are also in the process of completing several other facility expansions and upgrades (including a new library!), to better serve the student population.

This year we have also been expanding our work in Burundi. This includes greater coordination for our CLA alumni in Bujumbura (for Burundians who had gone through our school in neighboring Rwanda), greater outreach into High Schools and Universities and generally building up our leadership team in-country. We are also expanding facilities at our Cornerstone Leadership Academy in Rwanda so as to annually admit a more substantial portion of Burundian youth compared to previous years. Upon graduation, these students will return to Burundi to contribute to the transformation of their country which ranks at the bottom of many global indicators for development.

If you visit our Cornerstone Leadership Academy in Arusha, Tanzania, you will notice a new office block that has just been completed that will serve as an administrative base for our programs in-country going forward. In Tanzania, the school is close enough to town, that we felt we were able to run our national office from the campus itself, rather than having a separate office in Arusha. Later this year we hope to begin the long-awaited construction of a university student hostel in the capital city, Dar es Salaam. This facility will also have a small administrative office attached to it for coordinating local programs as well.

We have also made efforts to better organize our work in Kenya by establishing a coordination office in Nairobi that will better serve our various outreach programs there (AYLF, HLD, Salaam) and engage our alumni (mostly from CLA in Uganda) more meaningfully. Our work with South Sudanese youth continues mostly with graduates of the Leadership Academy of South Sudan who are in University in Uganda, but we do have plans to re-launch an AYLF chapter at Juba University later this year. Finally, we continue to discern a vision for work at the highschool level in D.R. Congo, which is a place that has been on our hearts for years, but continues to experience civil unrest which makes it difficult for more substantial investment to occur.



**Jackie Muhumuza**

**CLA Uganda**

## Using '21st Century Skills' For Good.

In February, teachers from our various academies gathered in Entebbe for a retreat. It was a period of interaction, relaxation, enjoyment, and learning. We as educators and youth mentors discussed this concept of nurturing the “whole person,” and what that means in light of the 21st century skills we are advancing in our schools. To this end, a number of new initiatives were devised, one of which is the establishment of special interest clubs. Already thriving at the CLA Girl's school are clubs such as the writers' club, entrepreneurship club, and IT skills club, to name a few.

Our students' emotional and mental well-being took a serious hit during the two-year covid confinement. Despite schools' best efforts to maintain communication with their students and keep them interested in their schoolwork, some students had seemingly moved on to more 'important matters', such as taking on part-time jobs.

However, they were all welcomed back to in-person learning on campus at the beginning of the current academic year. At the outset, things looked difficult because some people were upbeat and smiling while others were downcast and gloomy, probably because they were unsure of what the future held. We have worked hard to support the students in our schools and they are slowly healing.

To encourage students to get back into the reading culture, libraries have been stocked to the brim. Student reading comprehension and social skills have both benefited from this practice of reading and discussing books aloud in small groups. A renewed enthusiasm for reading among our students has been reported in the teacher circles. Since “leaders are readers and readers are leaders,” it stands to reason that the program would also help participants become better leaders by expanding their vocabularies and fluency in English.

In another effort of encouragement, a lot of former students still stop over to say hi. The students are always greatly inspired by their visits. Ladies from previous generations in Cornerstone Leadership Academy, as well as their friends and well-wishers, came together to celebrate Women's Day as a sisterhood at the Girls' School. The presence of these older sisters and the female teachers who attended was a powerful motivating factor.

My upbringing prioritized one aspect of life over the others, but my time as a teacher at Cornerstone Leadership Academy and conversations with friends' families have altered my perspective on “holistic growth.” For example, consider the cases where young women were taught to focus solely on being good wives and mothers. Young women were discouraged from participating in leadership roles and athletics. Actually, I thought it was shameful when women spoke up or participated in male-dominated fields like politics or the military.

Young men on the other hand, were prepared to lead families and communities. Despite the fact that the specialized jobs performed a complementary function, some young people failed to realize their full potential and fulfill God's purpose for their lives. Every young person we work with however, has the opportunity to shine in our life-transforming learning environments - in the same way that Jesus meets each person where they are and challenges them on their own journey of redemption and growth.

The success of our products after graduation is always an inspiration to me, and it is proof that our message of focusing on balancing one's social, spiritual, physical, and intellectual lives has transformational effects in the long run.

These days we are embracing more cutting-edge knowledge and technologies of the modern era, yet the timeless principles remain constant. As followers of Jesus, we have a responsibility to be intentional about developing ourselves and others in all aspects of life, so we can use these '21st century skills' for good, and be transformational in building more wholesome communities, and a better world.

# Considering A Wise Investment Of One's Life



**Nason Mwadia**

**CLA Tanzania**

**I**n our work, we often look at Jesus' life on earth for inspiration and insight in regards to how we live our own lives. There are many moral values we can observe in his teaching, but more interestingly to me, is the way he lived his life. He was not just concerned with spreading the gospel, but he also spent time investing in his friends, his family, his health and wellbeing, and his personal relationship with God.

I love working with the Cornerstone Leadership Academy (CLA) because our community recognizes that academic education alone is ineffective in nurturing a full human being. There is so much more about our nature that academics build on, that must be inter-twined with our learning, to ensure success and satisfaction in twenty-first century life and work.

This holistic development entails the growth of a learner's mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, and social skills so that he or she is capable of effectively meeting the demands and overcoming the challenges of daily life. Each person is unique in terms of their characteristics, interests, preferences, values, attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses, and it is through a well-rounded education that a person can become the best and truest unique creation God made them to be.

In many education settings, everything other than academics is called 'co-curricular' or 'extracurricular' activity... and it often gets neglected, or is not prioritized. However, when we look at things more holistically, you see that our transformation power is not just in our curriculum, but it is in our school culture, and community. This is the core approach

of our discipleship, mentoring, and leadership development classes, but it extends beyond this into many other things.

In an effort to build confidence in one's own unique 'voice', and ability to connect with others, we have things like debates, our 'Quiz Challenges', our intellectual symposiums, our public speaking platforms, and spelling bee competition, among others. To nurture spiritual formation, we have things like Discovery Bible Studies (DBS), Sunday services, evening prayers, live choral concerts, and numerous fellowships all run by students and occasionally by the school. In an effort to instill a strong work ethic, and positive connection with the earth, the school has developed a school garden where we grow vegetables, which has also encouraged them to eat more vegetables and improved their diets. To provide opportunities for socialization, we have care groups and encourage the idea of covenant relationships, but we also expose them to interschool competitions and conferences that help them form relationships with a broader community of young people in Tanzania.

We also know that all this growth and learning is more 'caught' than it is 'taught', and so as teachers we live by example. Again, Jesus is our model in this because of the way he mentored his disciples. In Matthew 4:19 we read of him saying to them, "follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And they then lived together for some time, traveling together, eating together, etc. In the same way, at school I have six specific students who I commit to mentoring. They come over to my house for social gatherings and we talk about life and school and pray together.

There is a wise Chinese saying, that goes: "If you want 1 year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people." Being in the people 'business', is a wise long-term investment of one's life. I am deeply thankful for the opportunity to serve others in this work that we do... where we strive to see beyond our differences, where we build others up, and where we work together for something bigger than ourselves.



**Jules Mbonaruzza**

**CLA Rwanda**

# Intentionality & Stewardship

interactions with our students in family settings foster unique social skills to our students which gives them an edge over their counterparts who go to schools where this isn't possible.

3. Physical exercises are sports in which teachers and students participate in games such as basketball, volleyball, football, rope jumping, and marathons. All of this contributes to their physical development and strengthens relationships between teachers and students.

4. Creative learning events and competitions. One example of this is every year, we organize a school level science competition in which students form groups and conduct research on innovative practical experiments under the supervision of their teachers. This helps them to think critically, as we advise them to improvise when preparing their projects, utilizing local / inexpensive, readily available materials and resolving community issues. Another example of this is in our talent shows where students showcase their special abilities or interesting personal interests. Talents such as traditional dance, drumming, singing, poem writing, playing guitar or piano, public speaking, and so on are all on display at CLA-Rwanda. It is always a fun day on the campus where we celebrate the diversity of talents and passions our students have.

5. Spiritual formation. We put Jesus at the center of everything we do at CLA-Rwanda as a model for the kind of life we aspire to live. We have various fellowships, and discipleship classes during the course of the week where we create spaces for students to progress on their journey of spiritual growth, learning from each other, learning from mentors, and creating time to listen to God's guidance in their life.

6. Outreach programs. We care for our local community and organize outreach programs where we visit some needy individuals and help them with food, construction, and providing their children with some school supplies. Developing a sense of civic responsibility is an important part of a student's growth and discovery of their place in the world. To summarize, we at CLA-Rwanda are servant leaders and we are a community that is always looking for ways to strengthen our relationship with God, and the community in which we live.

**A** holistic education is a comprehensive approach to education in which educators strive to address students' emotional, social, ethical, and academic needs in an integrated learning format.

As educators, we have been entrusted with our students' futures; it is our responsibility to guide them toward a brighter future by providing a well-rounded education that addresses each student's unique needs. To me, this "holistic education," is about intentionality and stewardship, and it is a great honor to participate in.

There are activities at Cornerstone Leadership Academy in Rwanda that contribute to the school's goal of fostering the students' development in all facets. Among them are the following:

1. Care groups are smaller 'families' within our larger community that every student belongs to. This family has an appointed 'father' or 'mother', and it is a space where students feel cared for and receive encouragement. Every teacher is attached to a care group and by being a part of this, teachers have been able to advise and help members of the care group family. To effectively play a mentorship role within these structures, a teacher must be familiar with his/her students' histories, struggles, and aspirations. All this aids the teachers to help mentor the student a unique and personal way.

2. Sharing our lives together. Most teachers live on campus, and we intentionalize relationship-building time for our students, such as opening our homes to them, cooking with them and practicing home activities with them, such as showing them how to slaughter a goat! These informal



**Naome Baraka**

AYLF, D.R. Congo

**G**reetings to all! My name is Naome Baraka - I am in my final year of studies at the University of Goma's Department of International Relations, and I am also member of the Africa Youth Leadership Forum - DRC coordination team.

AYLF is a family of friends who, without labels or stereotypes, welcomed me into their midst two years ago with great enthusiasm, joy, unconditional love, and compassion. Since then, I've not only broadened my circle of friends, but I've also discovered a family that extends beyond blood ties.



AYLF small groups in DRC



# Recognizing Issues, Taking Action.

This year, many of the discussions that have taken place within the AYLF community have centered on "educating the whole person," which fits in beautifully with the topic of "holistic growth" that is the focus of our mid-year newsletter.

This article will focus on the concept of holistic growth, and I will make an effort to define it in the way that I understand it: A philosophy that encourages the highest possible level of personal development and well-being. In my life I've learned that the physical, cognitive, thought, intellect, intuition, spiritual, soul, aesthetic, sensitive, and emotional aspects of a person are all impacted by holistic development. It is not about just being a generalist, but about valuing the way they each work together for real effective personal growth in ones life.

One of the programs that AYLF Goma is offering this year is called the "Nguzo program," and I have had the good fortune to take part in it. This program acts as a directing tool for activities that are carried out within the framework of our university's small group system. The third module of the Nguzo program, for example, focuses on capacity building for growth, impact, and sustainability. This gives the young leader the opportunity to intensify the process of personal growth and well-being. It covers significant topics like self-awareness, self-examination, and the resolution of interpersonal conflicts.

With this, I have greater capacity as I journey through life, with a better grasp of what it means to relate with God, myself and my neighbors - as Jesus taught. The participation in this program has provided me with a valuable set of new skills, and as a result, I am confident that my tomorrow will be significantly better than my yesterday.

Now that I am learning this, I feel I am better able to recognize issues and take action to fix them in more meaningful and effective ways. When I am in need of assistance, I am able to do so in a timely and appropriate manner. Because of the personal growth I have found in AYLF, through exposure to the material and the mentors, I am more confidently living a life that is true to myself, and I can more clearly see pathways to living out my true purpose.



**Kisembo Monicah**

**University Programs, Uganda**

## Being Part of a 'Family' Keeps Me on Course

While the main focus of the young people we work with in University is often on academics, we strive to challenge them with opportunities to grow in other areas of their lives as well, including their spirituality, physical health, and interpersonal skills. We do things through regular activities like football games, house fellowships at our hostels (Gulu, Solidarity, and Jabulani), indoor games, campus fellowships, and community service projects. We also run a book reading program to broaden their minds, and develop critical thinking. We have worship night experiences, bible studies, fellowships, and other activities aimed at spiritual growth and development for our members, and we have also encouraged them to serve actively in their local churches.

One of the great things about our Cornerstone community is that personal growth is not just something we teach young people, but it is something we all go through even as staff members. For example, I have the opportunity to attend a staff fellowship every Monday, and on Tuesdays we have an Office Ladies fellowship, wherein various topics are shared by our very own co-workers - both have greatly contributed to my personal development. Because of the nature of our work with students, we are frequently called upon to exercise our faculties of reasoning, decision-making, guiding, and demonstrating the correct path. Thus, I make it a point to learn new things constantly. We organize and execute activities on a weekly basis, which necessitates consulting and involving others, including coworkers, other departments, coordinators, Old Girls and Old Boys (alumni), lecturers, and so on. This has allowed me to develop a strong social support system, which has aided in my personal and professional development.

We do all of this in the spirit of Jesus, for we know that he had a personal life of his own, and he had his own unique human challenges he had to overcome. He had relationships with his friends and with his family he had to maintain. He started out his everyday life just like his followers, and we know from passages such as in Luke 2:52, that he experienced his own journey of holistic growth. Regular reminders from loved ones emphasize the value of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. So, as we take cues from Jesus' life, we should be mindful of our health, our relationships with others (favor before man and God), and our spiritual, social, and material well-being.

We began the year on a high note in our work with University Students (aka Stage II) in Uganda, noticing a positive shift in our hostels in particular, as schools fully reopened campuses after two years of covid related disruptions. This year also brought a change in the university calendars, and we now have three semesters in a year at Makerere University, Makerere University Business School, and Kyambogo University, among others.

This is exciting for us, but also necessitates adjustments in how we operate and carry out our department's activities. Another update is that 16 of our members graduated from various programs at Makerere University and Makerere University Business School in May 2022. Three of them received first-class degrees, and one (Habaasa Darius) emerged as the best performing student in his college at Makerere University!

Cornerstone is, in my experience, a 'beautiful family.' This is what I think because back in 2013 when I first started at the leadership academy, we were told that we had 'brothers and sisters' from previous generations, and in turn, we would go on to be the same for those who came after us. Because of my position as a stage II coordinator in Uganda, I have the honor of being a 'big sister' to many of the COSA members who came after me, and I am grateful for this opportunity. In Cornerstone, I've found mentors and role models who are available all the time and with whom I talk almost every day. One of the key statements in our Stage-II goals is, "To Promote a Continuous Holistic Personal Growth and Leadership Development Environment for Our Members."

# Bet On YOU!



**Rebecca Ineza**

**Kigali Office, Rwanda**

To grow holistically means to be intentional about health in every area of my life. Some areas are easy for us, other areas are hard for us to even see our shortcomings in!

Earlier this year, I had the incredible opportunity to participate in a yearlong mentorship program run by a lovely older couple in Kigali, Rwanda. In the first quarter of this year, they challenged me to focus on discovering 'who I am'. One thing I realized was that I couldn't improve upon aspects of myself that I was unaware even existed or needed improvement.

At roughly the same time, I was reading Mark 7:24-30 in one of my morning devotionals and was struck by the power of knowing who you are. The daughter of the Syrophoenician woman in these verses needed a healing miracle. Her mother had a conversation with Jesus, which went something like this:

"First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." The mother responded, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Jesus replied, "For such an answer, you may depart; the demon has left your daughter."

Though I'm sure you've read this story before and marveled at Jesus' ability to heal the girl, what struck me this time was the mother's audacity; first, to ask for help from a person who was culturally forbidden to assist her. Secondly, to dispute Jesus' reply and insist on her own position. It is clear this woman knew what she wanted, had found the person who could give it to her, and it was a safe bet that she would leave with it, which she did. Something tells me that this lady was fully aware of

who she was. She was fully aware of her status as a woman, a gentile, and an unworthy recipient of the favor she was seeking. Despite this knowledge, she did not remain silent; rather, she accepted her identity and posed a question to Jesus, to which He responded by giving her exactly what she had asked for.

Many of us today would be offended by the comparison to a dog and would turn back, claiming that Jesus told us we didn't deserve what we asked for. Admitting that there are parts of ourselves that could use improvement is the first step toward becoming whole, even if we do not always feel we need it. If the woman in the story had been offended by Jesus, possibly her daughter would not have received her healing miracle.

The first step toward wholeness is the realization that we have gaps that need closing.

At this year's Women's Day celebration, I heard an inspiring woman give a single piece of advice to over a hundred women who had gathered to celebrate the day: "BET ON YOU!"

Do I challenge myself enough to believe I have what it takes to be who I want to be in life? Would I "bet" on myself? I guess I have to, for this is the only life I have! So, here are some of the things I try to do to help develop as a whole person:

- Intellectual: I try to read at least one book each month.
- Spending time with people who are more enlightened than I am.
- Physical Exercise: The days on which I 'make time' to the gym were also the most productive
- Get some rest: because my body needs it.
- Read scripture AND listen to the spiritual guidance that arises through it.
- Have a close confidante: someone who shares my feelings and supports my emotional health.
- I practice self-care: it's a hard world out there, and if I don't care for myself who will?
- Loosen up occasionally with the right friends and do something enjoyable together.

Holistic growth begins by addressing the area of your life that you have the least confidence in. It may take time, but the first step is awareness. As I attempt my agenda above, just making some steps forward subdues my self-limiting beliefs and I appreciate my progress even more!

# Cornerstone

## Newsletter Pictorial



Vasco orienting the class of 2020 at the Nile Camp, Jinja



Hon. Ambassador Theo Nelly sharing with students at CLA Tanzania



Baraka meeting with campus coordinators in Uvira, DRC



Tim and Sam sharing at a 'family of friends' gathering in Bujumbura



Enock visiting Gabriel and colleagues at their Nairobi office



"Girl's Talk", Womens' Day event at CLA Rwanda



New office block for CDA program administration at Arusha campus



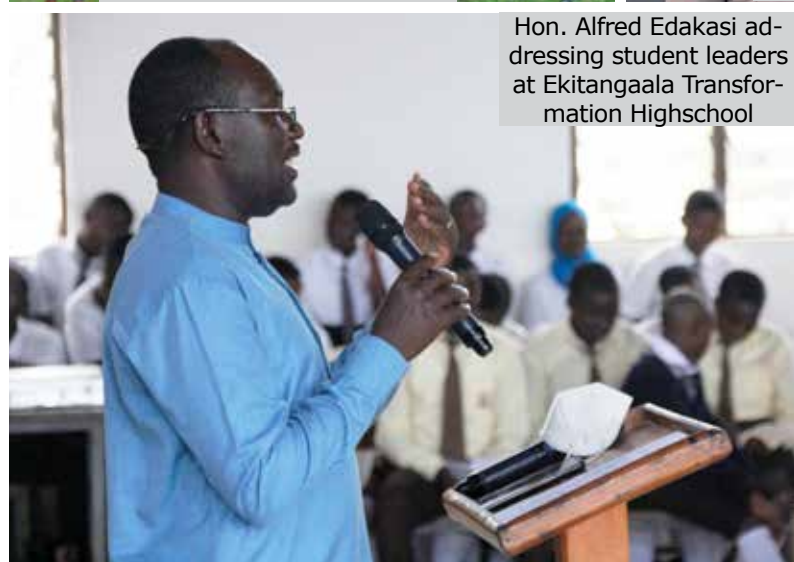
The recently acquired 'Cream House' in Butare, is our newest hostel!



AYLF small group gatherings



Students and speakers at the Vision Conference, Arusha



Hon. Alfred Edakasi addressing student leaders at Ekitangaala Transformation Highschool



LASS alumni retreat, Jinja



Alumni homecoming at CLA Rwanda



HLD chapter graduation ceremony, Arusha

*A Family of Friends!*



**Khemis Ladu Zakaria**

**Alumni Programs, South Sudan**

When I think back on the road we've walked to get where we are now, I can only give God the glory. There have been many ups and downs in our family, but Ecclesiastes 3:4 has always served as a comforting reminder that "a time to grieve, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." We have shared joy, sorrow, and everything in between these past few years... and yet here we are together!

This year we have seen great progress taking place in our work with South Sudanese youth. Among some of the more noteworthy are that 11 of our LAOSA (alumni) members graduated from various universities with academic distinction, 47 students made the transition from LASS to higher education, we at 'Stage II' participated in community outreach in a refugee camp, and AYLH hosted 14 fellowships and 4 bread-breakings.

These accomplishments also come alongside more somber updates, as is always the case in our sort of work... to this end, some of our members have suffered losses of loved ones; Mr. Deng Daniel lost his mother, while Ajonye Rejoice lost her father. On a more challenging note, one of our members, Abe Simon, has had to be dropped from classes due to some mental illness he has suffered from.

When I look at the work we are doing, I believe holistic growth is foundational to our young people's development, and our work is simply incomplete without it. To me, the essential message of Jesus emphasized this - that we are not transformed by just mere words or actions, but by the state of our heart and soul mani-

# A Lot Is At Stake If We Fail To Pay Attention...

festing in the world... it is a whole new inside-out approach! That is why his life and teachings are so revolutionary.

When we look at this theme, we can see two parts... first, the aspect of HOLISTIC means "dealing with or handling the entire thing or person, not just a part", and second, GROWTH to me means the gradual progression from one state of being to another. I am convinced that this process should coincide with the restoration of the lost image of God in humans through the harmonious development of the physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions of life. If it does not, then we are still missing that 'whole-ness'.

Thus, effort should not only go toward attaining academic excellence, but also on different aspects of life in a balanced fashion. Otherwise, as Mzee Lukwiya would say, "An education without God makes one a clever devil," or as Aristotle would say, "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."

It is true that focusing on the mental aspect is beneficial, but doing so without the context of spiritual maturing makes one a danger to oneself and even more dangerous to the community around them. That is why in South Sudan, we don't take lightly the message of holistic growth, as a matter of fact, it should be a movement effort, otherwise, a lot is at stake.

Working with LAOSA and as someone who attended the Leadership Academy (LASS), has given me insight into how I must lead my life in the workplace and away from it. At the very least, my interaction with others has to be a report card of the transitions I am making in my journey to being whole and as a result, I should be a worthy example to others.

When the above becomes our aspiration, we season the earth with the salt of our individual transformation and as others watch and listen to us, the salt spreads as others desire the same for themselves. This is how we transform communities!

# Nyie ni Watu Poa Sana!



**Ephraim Elisante**

**Alumni Programs, Tanzania**

Every time he meets someone from our Cornerstone community, my brother says, “Nyie ni watu poa sana. How come all of you are such nice people to be around? It’s great to have all of you around with such personality.” In Swahili, “Nyie ni watu poa sana” literally translated means, “you are really cool folks!”

Any encounter with a Cornerstone friend is always a welcome surprise for him. He is a very well-traveled guy, and in light of all he has seen, he insists on how fortunate I am to have such good people surrounding me here. We are people who see the world in a unique way... people who view life more ‘holistically’ than the status quo. I must admit, I feel the same way whenever I am away from my friends for too long. Away from this family, it feels lonely, but every jot of remembrance of how fortunate I am to be a part of this movement compels me to continue being a good ambassador of change for the world around me.

Our growing community recognizes the importance of maintaining our bonds with one another over the long term and has put in place mechanisms to facilitate this. This includes activities that foster our growth together in all areas of our lives, including our spirituality, health, intelligence, and relationships. These initiatives are mostly managed by the old boys and girls, who exert their influence so well and make these initiatives thrive.

Monthly Fellowships for Men and Women, Married Fellowships, Staff Fellowships, Campus Fellowships, Regional Fellowships, House Visits,

Coordinators Fellowships, the Advanced Leadership Initiative for social entrepreneurs, Inter-Regional Gatherings, and Annual Gatherings are just a few examples.

Our alums have joined, started, and co-founded a wide variety of programs beyond those of our office. Typically, these are community-focused initiatives with a larger mission to improve people’s lives and the world at large. Our alumni are running legitimate and respected businesses in a variety of disciplines, including agriculture, electronics, consultancy, fashion, brand recognition, and financial services, and we have established ourselves not only in areas of social initiatives, but also in the economic sector. We have friends who are presidents of universities, guild ministers, leaders of associations to mention but a few. Because of the empowerment we’ve gained in Cornerstone, some of our members are seeking elective public office and others are obtaining leadership roles in different institutions in their communities.

In all this, we have never stopped extending God’s work through each of our individual talents and giftings. We are living out Jesus’ command in Matthew 28:18-20, to “make disciples of all the nations.” This is how we see our role in Jesus’ prayer that the Kingdom of God may come on earth as it is in Heaven. It is up to each one of us to live our lives well.

On the labor market, we have also established a foothold. We are not where we need to be, but many individuals who have risen to the occasion have been exemplary in their workplaces. They have been lauded for having a servant’s heart, being creative, working hard, and, most significantly, for having high character and establishing meaningful professional relationships. Establishing a network of local entrepreneurs and innovators is central to our strategy for expanding our footprint here and better meeting the needs of this community, job-wise.

It’s worth everything, to remember our wonderful life together as a close-knit group of friends. This family’s ‘story’ is moving and worthy of being told. I am glad to be one of those who for the rest of my life will be a part of advancing this great vision of ours!

# Adaptation & Flexibility!



**Cynthia Kezakimana**

**Highschool Outreach (YIM) / COSA, Burundi**

To me, “holistic growth,” is about being realistic with what is most relevant to effectively handle the challenges and demands of everyday life.

This year, we’ve made it a point to focus on holistic growth by setting goals that will help the emerging leaders we work with to grow intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially, so as to become real agents of positive change in our community. We do this by beginning to challenge them with a paradigm shift on their lives, to see things in a new way as Jesus taught, so that they understand the synergistic inter-connectedness of these areas of life.

For me, working with young people was hard at first, but with adaptation and flexibility, I’ve had to learn on the job. I consider the African phrase, “It takes a village to raise a child,” to be true. We recognize that it takes the combined efforts of parents (guardians), educators, and those of us in Youth Impact Mission (where I work) to guide these young leaders toward more wholesome and balanced lives. Everyone’s input is essential to their development.

The beautiful thing about this kind of youth mentoring work is that, in the process of putting forth these values and ideals to these young people, our own inner capacity to live them out increases as well. As mentors, we should strive to develop holistically since our mentees look up to us and, as far as I can tell, observe what we do and say. Our actions speak far louder than our words, therefore if we are to teach these young people, it is crucial that they see in us what we are trying to instill in them. This endeavor of building a movement of servant transformational leaders in Burundi has strengthened my faith in youth. When I see their determination

to alter their lives and their desire to build a peaceful and reconciled society, it reassures me that we are really giving ourselves to a vision that is worth investing our lives in.

Our Jesus-centered approach has already had a significant influence in the tiny area from which we operate. In the lives of the young people we serve, we can see substantial transformation and powerful new attitudes and behaviors that are exhibited in those we work with. Though it is a bit unconventional (not what they are used to in typical religious groups), our young people are reinvigorated by the revolutionary aspects of it, and they are eager to make new friends in our expanding network of like-minded young people.

In our holistic approach, there are many ways we engage these emerging leaders. To begin with, we seek to challenge them intellectually, for example, in our reading programs. We have created a tiny library already in our workspace where they can have quick accessibility to developmental literature. In addition, our team continues to have random evening discussions on a variety of issues to sharpen and challenge our minds, and every member freely expresses his or her views. In terms of mental health, the YIM coordinators conduct regular check-ins on members to determine how they are doing in life and visit them when necessary, which has created a safe environment for our members to approach us for assistance or advice. Physically, we’ve lately implemented a Saturday sports program in which we walk and jog together. This has not only helped us become healthy and strong, but also allowed us to get to know one another and form deep and lasting connections. Socially, we encourage our youth to give back to the society, whether at their local schools or elsewhere, and they have enthusiastically responded. For example, in April, students from various YIM clubs planned to visit an orphanage where they would provide food and other necessities.

In conclusion, 1 Thessalonians 5:23 states, “now may the God of peace make you holy in every manner, and may your entire spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless”. I believe it is God who ultimately facilitates our holistic growth. He accomplishes this when we humble ourselves to His guidance... it takes adaptation and flexibility, but in the end we will realize our true purpose in life!

# An 'Abundant Life,' Is A 'Whole' One



**Peter Ssegawa**

**Youth Corps, Uganda**

This year, one of our goals as a department was to place a greater emphasis on, "Intentionally strengthening our mentorship services for the holistic development of our beneficiaries." Though we have had our fair share of challenges, we are pleased to inform you that as a result of our tireless efforts we have positively impacted the lives of a great number of young people.

In our work, we often talk about taking a "holistic approach," which aims to take into account all aspects of a person and to treat them as whole people. This is not the common approach of only focusing on whatever aspect one is interested in, but it involves going the extra distance in all their physical, moral, psychological, social, and spiritual areas of growth. We have advanced an innovative mentoring program with the noble goal of reviving people's self-respect. The goal is ultimately to give under-privileged or at-risk kids access to life-changing and self-empowering experiences. Our mentorship model has a 3 phase approach, consisting of:

1) Empowerment: where, our mentees are empowered with weekly character development precepts sharing, access to knowledge/information and opportunities, but most importantly, support for them to find hope and purpose, pursue academic excellence, and set professional goals for their holistic growth. This is the foundation on which our mentorship is based.

2) Protection: This is the phase where the mentees are accompanied as they begin their journey and become a part of a support system and a community of people who make a difference in the world.

3) Prevention: This is typically the most inconspicuous part of the program, and it is during this phase that the intervention of mentoring contributes to changing behavior as well as finding a purpose and finding inner peace.

In our work, we are both inclusive and integrative - this is known as the "whole person approach." A development of this kind takes into account all aspects of the human experience, including the physical, the moral, the psychological, the social, and the spiritual. A regaining of human dignity is the primary focus of our unique program. Often, this is done with the intention of assisting in the provision of transformative and empowering opportunities to children who are in vulnerable situations.

We believe that genuine change occurs in a society only when its most disadvantaged members - the poor, the oppressed, the sick, the vulnerable, and the miserable - are given the opportunity to participate as responsible members of their communities and are thereby empowered to contribute to the development of a society that is both just and free.

It is a revolutionary idea to pursue individual or community growth that is holistic in all of its aspects and manifestations. It is also about the redemption and transformation of the structures and powers that hinder and obstruct the individual from enjoying the "abundant life" that Jesus desires for everyone to have (John 10:10). Because growth happens through interactions with other people, the overarching philosophy that guides our holistic ministry rests on the premise that love is the bedrock upon which meaning and purpose is built (1 Corinthians 13).

A simple secular education and development that dichotomizes the body and soul, creating a false separation between the physical and spiritual realities of life, does not offer nearly as much hope nor does it have as good of a chance for satisfaction and fulfillment as the holistic worldview that Jesus taught. I have been through many ups and downs in life, and I always found the most peace in this perspective, and it is what I have chosen to invest myself into.

# Our Decisions Determine The Difference!



**Brenda Ankunda**

**Alumni Coordinator, Uganda**

**A**s a child, I was convinced that my life should not be determined by the circumstances in which I found myself. I knew I wasn't meant to live an average life, but the biggest difficulty and question I had at the time was: How could I break through and live above the restrictions that surrounded me?!

I lived in Kamwenge my entire life until February 2007, when I arrived to Kampala for the CLA interviews. Despite the fact that it was my first time in front of an interview panel, despite the fact that I had no idea how things would turn out for me, and despite my nervousness and poor self-esteem, I knew it was a life-changing opportunity for me!

To make a long story short, I was accepted into CLA.

During my stay at CLA, I found life to be both tough and fascinating. Life was difficult for me since I was constantly learning new things, and they challenged us in all aspects of life - physical, social, mental, and spiritual. Being in a school with a chapel where people come in every day to pray, was new to me, but I really enjoyed the new depth it brought into my life.

When I completed CLA and joined university, I focused on my studies, and also wanted to serve and give back every chance I got. I intentionally made myself available and embraced all opportunities that would open up to me. It wasn't long before numerous possibilities began opening up and I was finally hired as a mentor at the Youth Corps home.

**16** My time as a mentor, and now as a program coordinator has had a profound impact on my life. I've

learned to be patient with myself and others, which is a quality I've lacked for a long time. I've learned the value of empathizing and understanding that life is about more than just me. Kindness is a virtue that the journey of life has taught me. Over time, I've learned to value the strength of deep and meaningful friendships. I can't ignore the fact that my wedding was planned by friends I met in Cornerstone!

I've learned that success comes from hard work; it's not by coincidence or luck; I have to get out of my comfort zone and work harder. As I grow older, I realize that life is about making a commitment to growth and one can not grow well without balance. In this process, I often ask myself if I am living out God's purpose for me? On my mind are challenges that I deal with every day...

...that I need to be intentional about how my family grows, that the friends I have should be meaningful and mutually beneficial, and that I need to commit to learning something new — a new skill, a new class, or pushing myself to read books, watch the news, and know what's going on in the world. These are skills that I can't learn from anyone else.

...that I must recognize that my body is the temple of the holy spirit, and that I must be mindful of what I eat, maintain a regular exercise regimen, deepen a high degree of self-awareness, and pay close attention to my body. After all, my leadership lives and flows out of my body, a failure to take care of it, stipulates a failure to lead.

As a mother, as a wife, as a professional woman, AND as a student, pursuing a master's degree, I have come to deeply realize the need of striking a balance between one's spiritual, social / relational, mental / intellectual, and physical well-being! If one of the four is neglected, it throws the whole system out of balance. Success in one of the four areas is no excuse for neglecting the others, as we should know.

Through the world around us, God offers many blessings and possibilities for growth. But our decisions determine the difference between where we are now and where we hope or aspire to go! I believe that we can make better decisions for our personal development and the betterment of others around us. This is how we make the world a better place!



# Advanced Leadership Initiative

## Accelerator Pilot Program

The Advanced Leadership Initiative program embarked on a journey of piloting an accelerator program to create systematic learning for ALI members. Previously, the ALI program had selected social entrepreneurs randomly and these were all at different levels of growth in their initiatives. It was therefore hard to understand how to intervene and meet each individual's need of learning for the betterment of their project/initiative.

The first ALI Accelerator Programme for emerging Social Entrepreneurs was a three-month study program that sought to equip Cornerstone Alumni and alumna with faith-based social entrepreneurship and leadership skills, that could help them to start and scale high-impact social enterprises, to address the most pressing challenges in the communities in which they live. The initiative is based on the belief that emerging social entrepreneurs are better placed to develop solutions to the challenges faced by the communities where they live. The Accelerator, therefore, provided trainees with expert study in social entrepreneurship and leadership skills through needed modules.

The main goal of the program is to equip emerging social entrepreneurs in East Africa with the skills, networks, and resources they need to start and scale social impacts, that can cause a transformational change in their communities.

The Specific objectives of the Accelerator:

1) To equip the emerging social entrepreneurs with organizational management and leadership skill, mentorship, advice, and tools to develop their social initiatives.

2) To provide emerging social entrepreneurs with an awareness of and exposure to faith-based social entrepreneurship.

3) To connect the participants to other social entrepreneurs, mentors, impact / angel investors, educators, and innovators.

4) To form a strong network of like-minded social entrepreneurs for support and peer accountability.

Highlights in the study program:

The 1st ALI accelerator had 11 participants. These participants are from the cornerstone programs of COSA and Youth Corp. Each of the participants selected already had an ongoing initiative in their local communities: initiatives falling in the fields of economic empowerment, education, vocational skilling, mentoring and leadership development, family and psychosocial support, as well as holistic spiritual development.

The learning sessions were held online through zoom. The participants were awed, amazed, and challenged by the facilitators' wealth of knowledge. The sessions were very challenging and eye-opening for the participants. They saw more opportunities to serve and transform their local communities. The participants also gained clarity in their visions. They created strong networks and have started collaborating on projects together.

# Holistic Growth

ture, and underscores the importance of our efforts to nurture such youth with the timeless, universal principles and values exemplified by Jesus of Nazareth. To this end, in our work we have focused on “Four Pillars” that we want all the products of the Cornerstone programs to be known by:

1. ***Taking up Leadership*** – to create a positive influence for a better world.
2. ***Portraying Godly Integrity*** – being ‘the salt and light’ in our world.
3. ***Cultivating Life-long Friendships*** – walking together through-out their lives.
4. ***Furthering Reconciliation and Unity*** - across all the divisions that exists in our world.

Furthermore, in recent years we have taken a closer look at what we need to do to enhance the kind of holistic growth in the four areas of spiritual, mental, social and physical - which Jesus underwent, as mentioned in Luke 2:52. In pursuit of this, among other things, we added a new section to our discipleship curriculum called the “Virtues of the Heart” to help us clarify the nature of shifting to a soul-centered way of living.

Academic performance is easy to measure and quantify with exam scores. And for this reason, it can often become the major focus, especially in schools, in regards to developing the potentials of youth. Yet, we have all seen people who were academically brilliant but are now walking the streets jobless or floundering in other areas of their life, simply because they did not give proper attention to holistic growth in ALL areas. So, I would like to proceed with offering several thing young people can work on to realize more of their potential.

## Seven Things (Besides Education) to Help Reach More of Your Full Potential:

1. **Entirely Surrender to God.** In line with the thoughts I shared at the beginning of this article, surrendering the ego to God activates a process of divine intervention in our lives, where God’s spirit begins to transform our personality. And, this process catalyzes or awakens latent soul

qualities that we carry within us by virtue of the fact that we are “created in the image of God” and we carry the DNA for a life of significance.

With this action of yielding to God we experience a greater degree of guidance which could be compared to an ‘invisible hand’ that begins to direct our life in ways we could have never imagined. And, God’s plans for us are ultimately far better than the best plans we can come up with ourselves.

I experienced this personally when I as a 19 year-old student at university in the US, in a moment of absolute surrender, I told God: “I will do whatever you want me to do, I will go wherever you want me to go, I will be whatever you want me to be.” Soon after this the idea of returning to Africa for my life-work began to take shape and I began meeting key people who became my mentors and partners.

This whole idea is captured well in the classic poem: “The Touch of the Master’s Hand.” It tells the story of a violin that was up for sale at an auction but at first, no one wanted it. Then, a Master violinist stepped to the front of the crowd and used it to play a beautiful tune. After this everyone appreciated its value and it eventually fetched a large sum. The moral of the story is that for the most beautiful music of all to be played through our life, we first have to yield ourselves to be an instrument in the hands of God.

2. **Exercise whatever gifts and capacities you have acquired at your current stage of growth.** Many of you reading this, in our various programs, have been given much in regards to leadership and discipleship teachings. But, such knowledge is like a muscle, if you don’t use it you will lose it. However, the more you exercise it – it grows stronger and stronger. Jesus taught: “If you are faithful with little – more will be entrusted to you.”

3. **Edify yourself by illuminating your mind with sacred truths.** Every kind of media we consume, either through print, video or music - has an effect on us. Inspirational media has the same effect on our hearts and minds that sunshine does on a small growing plant. The word ‘inspired’ literally means ‘in spirit.’

One of the best sources of inspiration comes from

absorbing the words which Jesus spoke. In him, what the ancient Greeks called the “Logos” (the divine principle implicit in the cosmos, ordering it and giving it form and meaning) was incarnated. He was described as “the light that enlightens every man coming into the world” (Jn. 1:16). His words are “spirit and they are truth” (Jn. 6:63). And Jesus himself said, “I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth” (Jn.17:37). So, when we turn our minds towards the ‘true nature’ of reality, in which we find ourselves as souls on planet earth, clearly, we will make wiser life choices.

**4. Gain Exposure.** We need to periodically move out of our comfort zone and put ourselves in new environments to face new challenges in order to grow. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two on journeys with no provisions to challenge them (“take no purse”). And, on other occasions he went on treks with them into a variety of new places. We too will grow by breaking out of familiar routines and taking on new challenges.

This can involve traveling, interacting with people different from us, making friends from other countries and visiting places of worship unlike those with which we are familiar. This kind of exposure also involves attending workshops, gatherings and associations. All of this helps us to break down our limiting beliefs, prejudices and fears that hinder realization of our potential.

**5. Gain Experience.** After you complete your formal education, you are given a piece of paper that states your academic qualifications. But as you begin using this paper to seek employment - the next thing people look at is your experience. So, don't wait until you graduate to start building your experience!

Experience can easily be gained by doing volunteer work in your area of interest. Experience also greatly helps you to determine what you like or don't like to do as well as where your gifts and abilities are found. I often tell young people that this process of figuring out where you ‘fit’ in life often continues through your teenage years and into your 20's. It's all part of your preparation process. It is not until around age 30 that many people settle on what becomes their vocation. We also see this with Jesus, where there was a long developmental process taking place before he began his public movement at age 30.

**6. Expand Your Network.** We are very familiar with the idea that to start a business you need capital. But young people are often unaware that to start ‘a life that will enable you to reach your higher potential’, there is an equally important kind of ‘Social Capital’ that is required. This is a network of friends, family and mentors that you must intentionally cultivate in order to benefit from its power.

Social capital can not be bought and is not built overnight. It requires emotional and social intelligence. For most of us, our relationships tend to be more accidental than intentional. Our friends, and the elders in our life, tend to be the room-mates, class-mates, or work-mates that we just happened to meet at various phases of life.

If you compare this to marriage you can see a great difference. A marriage is the strongest relationship we see in human society and this is due to the long-term commitment that is made to remain together in a partnership of mutual benefit. But the same kind of commitment to stick together with our brothers, sisters, and mentors will produce similar positive influence and benefits.

The most important asset we have in life is not our job, money, or title - its people. As you intentionally stay in touch with people and do things that bring them joy, encouragement, support and solutions, your network and social capital will grow.

**7. Eliminate Hinderances to Your Potential.** We all have habits or behaviors that hold us back. Our human make-up has inbuilt weaknesses like temptations, laziness, addictions and so forth. If these are allowed to grow in an uncontrolled way they are just like weeds in a garden that eventually will choke-out the crop of good things that are trying to grow in the same space.

Self-control is listed among the fruits of the Spirit. Jesus was being shockingly blunt in addressing this aspect of things when he said: “If your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell.” Mt.19:9 And surely, our life becomes a hell when addictions take over and we waste so much time and energy that could have helped us grow to our full potential.



# Cultivating Holistic Transformation

*"We have this treasure in jars of clay." 2 Cor. 4:7*

Hidden in the human heart lies a mystery. We could call it a seed, waiting to be awakened. We could call it the soul, that spark of the divine in us waiting to be activated. And, there are many factors that will determine if that seed will germinate, grow to its fullest potential and bear fruit.

When Jesus began his public campaign, his manifesto was simply: "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand." In ordinary English, I would say it means: "Change your hearts and minds, for a better world is near." Or, "If we can change our hearts and minds, a better world is possible."

For many years I have asked myself, what is the essence of this change that Jesus was crying out for here, with this word "Repent"? And, I have reached the conclusion that it involves the shift from a selfish/ego-oriented way of living life, towards a love/soul-oriented way of living life.

I believe terms like 'born again' or being 'saved' are simply terms seeking to describe this major paradigm shift from living a self-centered life to a love-centered one. When this happens in a genuine way, one's human nature is reborn, so to speak. And, we are 'saved' from the negative consequences of the purely selfish, ego-centered behaviors that are responsible for much of the pain and suffering we experience, both on the personal and collective level, in our world.

This shift is activated by the surrendering of the ego to God, triggering an inflow of the divine Spirit into our hearts, with its fruits of love, joy, peace, kindness, patience, etc. And, this catalyzes a transformation of our personality by awakening the latent attributes of our soul - chief among which is love. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." Romans 5:5

Our scriptures tell us that every human being is created in 'the image of God' and they also say the essence of God is love. So, if you combine these two thoughts, it is logical that everyone carries the capacity to become a loving influence in our hurting world. But, it's also obvious that we all have an ego, that part of us which can act in extremely selfish ways - the opposite of love. Love seeks to bring benefit to others. The ego seeks to bring benefit to itself.

It would be impossible to function in this world without an ego but the chief goal or the greatest commandment as Jesus put it, is to learn to 'love our neighbor as our self,' along with loving God.

These simple statements of Jesus, point to the central task of every human being: to transcend our ego-centered way of living and replace it with a soul-centered way of living, whose principle expression is love. As this happens, we will be divinely guided towards our full potential because our lives will come into alignment with God, who is love.

## The Aim of the Cornerstone Schools

In our efforts to mentor and develop 'The Cornerstones of Africa's Next Generation,' we operate a number of schools, leadership development programs, and a very robust alumni network. In addition to great academics, we provide youth with an excellent platform for holistic transformation and development of their character.

By the end of this decade 42% of the world's youth will be young Africans. Furthermore, African youth are highly mobile and spreading all over the world ([www.prb.org/resources/africas-future-youth-and-the-data-defining-their-lives](http://www.prb.org/resources/africas-future-youth-and-the-data-defining-their-lives)). This is truly an under-recognized demographic that has huge potential to affect the world in the fu-