



A First-Hand Account of Uganda by John Givens*

Dave invited me to join him for a Training of Trainers week in Kampala, Uganda recently. Although I had a general understanding of the Partnerships ministry, this was an opportunity to witness the work first hand and meet the people being trained to train others. “You’re going to love these guys. I can’t wait for you to meet them,” Dave promised.

About 16 church leaders representing four regions of Uganda gathered for the week of training, which focused on the question, “What is the Church?” using the church at Ephesus as a model. Many of these men were farmers, most with little exposure to Bible training or even basic pastoral resources, much less pens and paper. Yet their love of Jesus and appreciation for the training over the past three years was clearly

evident. I was impressed with how hard they worked. A typical day started at 9am and concluded at 6:30pm. Their questions were thoughtful and heartfelt. Perhaps the best evidence of their learning was their ability to access scripture to support their observations, particularly as it related to their local situations.

What are the challenges these men face? Beyond the obvious poverty and health concerns, many are dealing with witchcraft in their communities and the mindset of traditional African religion. Illiteracy is prevalent in rural communities (I did see a solar powered audio Bible), and the “Grace Gospel”, what Bonhoeffer called “Cheap Grace” has taken a foothold throughout Uganda.

But what I saw in that room throughout the week holds promise for this country. Coming from different tribes, speaking different native languages, our group was a beautiful picture of the body of Christ in Uganda. Several times a day we paused to worship God in song. Never have I experienced such joyful, full-bodied, expressive praise as we lifted our hearts,



hands and feet, sometimes using languages I had never heard before. I could not help but think, “Heaven is going to be wonderful!”



After our week of interaction with these men in Kampala, Dave and I traveled to the Masaka region where we met with three beautiful church leaders, Aloys, Abel, and Amos. Aloys, now in his mid-70’s, had mentored Abel in the faith, who in turn mentored the younger Amos. It was a reminder for me of the distinctly relational quality of discipleship. This is true in the US just as it is in Uganda, where God is at work in places I’ve never been and in the lives of people I’ve never met. What a privilege to experience this first hand through the work of Partnerships.

**John Givens is a wonderful friend from Andover, Massachusetts who has taught middle school students for more than thirty years. Following his “retirement”, John served as part-time Small Groups Coordinator at an Andover Church. Forty years ago, Joyce and I met John and Cynthia at West Church in Peabody, MA and our families became fast friends. In Uganda, John shared his teaching expertise and taught communication skills to the “Training the Trainers Project” participants. Thanks John, for making the trip to Uganda!*

As we come to the end of 2018, should you desire to give a year-end gift that will enable future ministry, please go to our website at www.partnershipsfortraining.org/support/ or visit <http://newhorizonsfoundation.com/waytogive> and identify Partnerships For Training Pastors as the project of choice. Currently, we are at approximately 50% of our stated \$30,000 goal for year-end giving. Thanks for considering how you might help us meet this goal.



Final thoughts: Joyce and I are grateful for you and the global partnerships God has provided. Thanks for your prayers, your loving support, and your consistent encouragement as we walk into a new year. Together, let’s all embrace the privilege of serving Christ and his Kingdom. We wish you a very Merry Christmas!

Merry Christmas from our Global Partners and all involved in Partnerships For Training Pastors!