

## Green pastures article

### East Africa Catechesis of the Good Shepherd update

August 2017

It is now a decade since the first Kenyans went to level 1 training in Masaka in Uganda with Mary Hare. Much has happened since the mustard seed was planted. The East Africa CGS is now in four nations, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and South Sudan and it is likely that soon the Holy Spirit will open doors in Tanzania, Burundi, the Congo and Zambia. There are now about 40 atrium centres developing in churches and schools with many more expected as the wonderful reality of CGS atrium experience becomes more widely known. Eight of these centres are also regional training centres. It is quite amazing that the one who fell in love with CGS in Masaka and who CGS Australia helped bring out to Australia in 2008, Gladys Wafula, is President of CGS East Africa.

A quite wonderful development is that four colleges are now building CGS into the training of teachers and ordinands. This includes the Anglican Church Army all of Africa evangelist training centre in Nairobi, Kenya. One of the colleges is in at Malek in South Sudan and much help will be needed to foster this development but with huge potential. The photo opposite is at Nambale teachers training college, Gladys is on the far right.



South Sudan has become a major Holy Spirit motivated initiative for the East Africa Association. A Malek training centre has been started and currently 14 young Sudanese are beginning preparation to be formed as Formation Leaders for South Sudan. They are passionate about the work and are very determined that many South Sudanese children are able to fall in love with the Good Shephard in atriums. They also realise that the atrium experience provides healing by the Holy Spirit of the child's inner hurts.

A third training mission is scheduled to fly to Malek in early November to start the development of level 2 there. The trainers have to fly because the roads are too dangerous and we don't mean as in road conditions, but from rebel killings that are happening all the time. Missionary Aviation Fellowship help with air travel but the cost is still substantial.

One challenge is the rich variety of liturgical expressions across East Africa. In the Anglican Church and other Protestant denominations there is not an internationally defined liturgy other than for the Anglicans, the foundation of the Book of Common Prayer. This means that there is some variation in each country and practice can be a little different in various dioceses as well. It means that the Formation Leaders need to make little adaptations so that the children experience in the atrium, the liturgy of their church. One dilemma we have had is with the Eucharistic presence of the Good Shepherd. This material is so pivotal and so well, links the Good Shepherd to the liturgy of the Last



Supper. But the reality for East Africa is that most churches only have Eucharist (they call it Holy Communion) once or twice a month. We have to decide as to whether the Good Shepherd only feeds the sheep with the Communion or if he feeds them at the other services as well, with the Word. This has to be the case because there are so many vibrant Spirit filled churches where there is both an emphasis on Word services and on the Eucharist or Holy Communion. Some years ago we introduced an experimental material into level 1 atriums in East Africa called the presence

of the Good Shepherd in Worship. The first stage is the calling of the sheep to a special place where they are fed with Words from the Bible about the Good Shepherd and then at a later presentation they are given the special food of the bread and the wine to remember the Good Shepherd. Long observation indicates that the children deeply understand and make these connections.



We feel that the Holy Spirit is deeply honouring the CGS work in East Africa. In April earlier this year we were at St Crispin's in West Kenya where atriums have been operating for 9 years. I felt very privileged to be able to lead the Holy Communion service and both Kaye and I participated with the distribution of the Communion. We were absolutely amazed and God smacked at the large number of teenagers coming up for Communion at our Communion station downstairs and we realised that there were many more at the mezzanine level as well! Praise God. This is testament to the impact CGS

has had on St Crispin's where the number of children has gone from 200 to over 1000 and the number of committed adults from less than 1000 to over 3500. To us, seeing this makes us feel that the Holy Spirit is honouring the atrium approach that has been taken to accommodate the more evangelical expression of liturgy.

The other lovely reality about atriums in East Africa is the children love going there, but as well they invite their friends to come. They then fall in love with the Good Shepherd and then nag their Mum and Dad to come to church and the church grows. As this starts to happen the parish becomes much more supportive of the CGS. Schools are the same, the Atrium experience grows into the ethos of the school and becomes owned and promoted to parents enrolling children as a core essentiality of the school!

Another development is what we call the packable atrium. We have had difficulty in slum areas finding space for atrium material, let alone the "wear with all" to develop a set aside room. There is no space, the slums are so crowded. We were wondering too, as to how CGS could be brought to so many hurting children in South Sudan and started to think of some sort of a booklet. When Simon Okwako, a Kenyan formation leader was out last year we had a long conversation with Angela Hague in Sydney and she encouraged us to make sure the small children could have hands on atrium experiences. We then decided to experiment with the making of a more compact packable atrium

for level 1 that can be easily packed away and transported. We have a proto type at the Raceview Sudanese Church near Ipswich in South East Qld and it is being used by Sudanese children. One truly amazing thing is that the Sudanese at the Raceview church are from the Malek area of South Sudan! At this stage CGS East Africa have three packable level 1 atriums being used in slums. More recently with the help of Bill Gubbins of St Luke's Anglican Church at Canungra in South East QLD, (who also made the level 1 packable prototype) we have developed a prototype level 2 atrium and it is being used at the Yeronga Sudanese Church in Brisbane. James Othieno one of the erstwhile CGS artisans in Kenya is about to start making the first components of a packable level 2 to take to Malek when he goes with the next mission in November.



We are blessed to have the one who coordinates CGS East Africa, Canon Kistos Khisa with us during part of September and most of October. He is the vicar of St Crispin's Anglican Church in the west of Kenya, where CGS first started 9 years ago. He is also Vicar General of the Bungoma Diocese, a position that is similar to an assistant Bishop.



He is here to highlight the huge outreach into South Sudan that the East Africa Association is undertaking. Also CGS East Africa is becoming incorporated to make sure that it remains focussed properly on CGS principles and as well has open transparent management and accounting. We have received a lot of help with this from an excellent Governance Lawyer, Randal Denning, and it will be good to go through all of the requirements with Kistos so he can help the East African Lawyers set up

the most appropriate entity. We are very thankful for the support and encouragement the Australian Association is giving to help make Kistos' visit a wonderful success.

John and Kaye Corner

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