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SEPTEMBER 2024

GROW Pastors' conference in Pader



Stephen and Jane Everard went out to help at the conference and are writing to tell us more about this and their time in Uganda.

"Come to me all you who carry heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you... and learn from me"

Matthew 28: 16-18 abridged

The GROW (Grass-Roots Outreach with the Word) Pastor's conference took place in rural Pader in Northern Uganda from 12th to 15th August. It was attended by 90 pastors, excellent attendance given the distances some had to travel and the burden of responsibilities they each carried.

The broad contents for the GROW conference had been agreed between

EI leaders and local church overseers in 2023, based on their knowledge of the needs of local church leaders. Its purpose was to offer teaching, support and encouragement to better equip the pastors, many of whom have had little training and operate in isolated settings. It also brought together pastors from 7 different denominations, an unusual opportunity in itself.



Stephen and Jane Everard and the team from Bayview Glen Church with Mike and Marianne Botting and the rest of the EI team in Uganda.



The conference had been planned by El Uganda Country Representatives Mike and Marianne Botting and Walter Okidi (Team Leader in Pader). It was led by Marianne and Walter, a team comprising four members of Bayview Glen Church, Toronto and ourselves, third time visitors to Uganda but on our first mission trip with El. All was excellently supported by the local El team in Pader.

On arrival, the pastors completed a survey designed to draw out some of the motivations and difficulties they experienced, e.g. “I feel strongly that it is God who called me to be a pastor”; “My ministry causes many conflicts in my home”; and “I have a trusted friend that I have shared my sins with who prays for me”. An extended exercise then enabled the pastors to identify the main stresses they experienced: “Financial stress in the family”, “Conflict with spouse”, “Financial problems in the church”, and “A lack of Bible and theological knowledge”.

Each day, and most sessions, began with exuberant worship, led by a keyboard and small group of singers. There were morning and evening devotions led by members of the team and each teaching session was covered in prayer by at least two members of the team.

Teaching sessions, mostly led by members of the Bayview Glen Team, focussed on “Understanding the pastoral call”, “Making disciples to make disciples”, “How to manage limited resources” and “The principles of ‘kingdom finances’”, “Growing in intimacy with Christ as a pastor”, “Balancing ministry to family and others” and “Persevering in the pastoral call”. Most sessions were followed by group discussions, guided by a few questions prepared by the speakers.

Additionally, there were two larger group sessions in which pastors were encouraged to look more deeply at the emotional impact of the key stressors they had identified and then to encourage each other, from scripture and personal testimony. There were also two powerful sessions devoted to prayer, one in small groups and one where individuals could pray with team members, who were assisted by translators from the local El team.

Throughout the conference, hot food and refreshments were provided by a wonderful team, and these times gave pastors the opportunity to chat with each other and with members of the team and to network together.



Difficulty managing limited finances was a key focus of the conference, and the pastors shared their feelings of shame caused by the lack of finances, as well as the conflict with spouses that often ensued. For some pastors there was also a perception that their lack of finances reflected badly on the message of Good News they were endeavouring to proclaim: “How can people believe in a generous God when the pastor is so poor?” It may be that this theological misconception could be the focus of further teaching in the future.



For many pastors, old religious beliefs and cultural traditions still exert a strong influence, such that there was an apparent struggle to trust in the victory won by Christ and the freedom this brought.



It was wonderful, for us, to witness both the openness of the pastors and the joy they expressed through worship, despite their individual struggles with present demands and ongoing and past traumas. However, the need to talk and to pray, with each other and with appropriately trained and experienced visitors remains a priority for the future.



Our enriching experience in Uganda continued after the conference. With Pader EI staff members, we had the privilege of visiting a school benefitting from EI's pads ministry and also one of the Sunday School discipleship projects supported by EI. Spending time with Pader pastors and a community project leader, who are instrumental in their outreach to the local community, was inspiring. It was a joy also to be welcomed, along with EI Pader staff, to the home of one of the team, where we enjoyed a delicious meal altogether.

In Gulu, we were privileged to share in worship at the University Community Church attended by Mike and Marianne and enjoyed spending time with the pastors and other members of the church. We also met with senior staff from the Diocese of Uganda and visited the Archbishop Janani Luwum Theological College in Gulu, spending time with its inspiring principal, Sarah Cawdell, and her husband Simon.



Mike and Marianne Botting have also written an article about the conference, of God's faithfulness in this event. Please read on the EI Uganda website: www.eiuganda.org/stories/when-god-shows-up or scan the QR code.

More articles about the conference will be posted on the EIUG website in the future, so please check back.



The EI Jubilee Year!



Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far has the LORD helped us."

1 Samuel 7:12.

Emmanuel International, as an international organisation, was registered in Canada on 11 September 1975. On 12 September 2024 we ushered in its 50th year of recognized existence. Our 50th year, our Jubilee year!

Trusting and obeying a just and generous God with thanksgiving. That is the heart of the Jubilee year. Looking back and looking forward. Emmanuel International, this is OUR year of Jubilee. This is our opportunity to praise God with all our hearts, souls, strength and minds. With Samuel of old, let us raise our Ebenezer, for truly, "hitherto has the LORD helped us." Read more on our website www.eiuk.org.uk.

We launched a **£50 for 50** fundraising campaign. This is an opportunity for you to join us in glorifying God in this EI Jubilee Year! Please visit the website for more information. We will use funds raised in this campaign to support our spiritual ministries.