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## **January 2020 Newsletter The Big Uganda Issue!**

As promised, it's time to talk about the ministry work involving our friends in Uganda. This one is going to be a little complicated. Over the last several years, the threads of our relationships have become intertwined. They now look more like a rope. Maybe a lifeline? Let's walk through them a little bit.

In 2016 I started discussing theology and distance education with an enterprising young ordained Lutheran pastor in Uganda, Simon Peter Waako. He was asking some interesting questions and had heard that I teach Greek. He wondered if my background in distance education might help us find a good way to get "several" people prepared with biblical Greek. Apparently "several" was around fifty. Our relationship as fellow pastors grew as we talked about different possibilities and how we would need to find a plan that would work well for people in his setting.

As 2016 continued, Simon Peter started talking about drought. It was the second year of widespread crop failures. He was especially concerned about some villages in an area to which he had been trying to reach out. At some point around 2016 or 2017 I took the risk of sending some money to purchase food. Simon Peter sent back pictures of a borrowed compact pickup truck, dangerously overloaded with sacks of corn meal and rice, making a delivery to some villages which had no food. I began to get the point that my pastor friend in Uganda was genuinely concerned for the well being of those who had less than he did.

We continued talking on and off about theological education, but the ongoing drought was a consuming issue for the people in the Kaliro district. I continued working to identify a Greek text that would suit their needs well. After all, I knew we would be able to concentrate on theological education sometime.



Here's a recent picture of Simon Peter and his happy family - Doreen, Joseph, Christina, Lazarus, and Alice (left to right). In the summer of 2017, Simon Peter contacted me, very concerned, because his wife, Alice, had been diagnosed with a brain tumor. We had pictures. They looked grim. An attempt to save Alice's life would cost more money than Simon Peter would probably ever see in one place at one time. We began asking mutual friends for help. Alice was able to have surgery, which was partially successful, then follow it up with

radiation therapy lasting about two years. She has been released from the radiation therapy and is just having medication and follow up visits. So far, with what Simon Peter has been able to manage, and what our (mostly) American friends have kicked in, all the bills have been paid.

This was an understandably consuming issue for Simon Peter, Alice, and their entire family. However, during that time, Simon Peter managed to plant a church in the Kaliro district, as well as founding two schools. He told me the nearest school is about a two hour walk away. The local school is part of the ticket to self-sufficiency for the community. Here's a picture of the school full of students!



At this point, Eleos Ministries enters into the picture. Eleos, run primarily by my daughter Lizzie and her husband Justin, tries to keep at-risk people from falling through the cracks. They have helped several people escape from homelessness and unemployment. They have provided safe havens for numerous orphans, especially those who are aging out of orphanage systems in other countries. They became interested in the schools Simon Peter founded. The Kaliro district, along with the rest of Uganda, has a fairly high rate of adult mortality, partly due to the AIDS crisis, and partly due to issues of malnutrition and other disease issues. Eleos wondered if there was something they could reasonably do which would help. As it turns out, a campaign of writing encouraging cards and letters to at-risk students has been very successful. The young people in crisis do much better when they are encouraged by people who believe in them and are willing to pray for them. They are also greatly encouraged by little gifts we might not even think are significant: a pack of gum, a sparkly pencil, some stickers. Behind the scenes, Eleos has also recruited some supporters who anonymously pay the school fees for some of the students. A whole year's tuition is under \$100.

As Eleos continued growing in their work with the students, they had the idea of collaborating with a goat farmer who lives in our area. Would it be reasonable to give some of the poor families specific training in animal husbandry, to make sure they seemed to be up to the task, and to place a pregnant goat in a family? Yes, it would, but a task like that will require some face-to-face work. While on such a trip, they could also get better identifying information about the at-risk students and their families, as well as finding some additional people in need. Eleos asked me if I would like to come. I think they value my relatively large amount of mass and the fact that I can work with a shovel to set fenceposts in a goat enclosure.

I began talking with Simon Peter about the trip. He wondered if I could teach a compressed seminary-level course for “several” people who would like to learn more but cannot afford attendance in a seminary. Please remember that earlier “several” was about fifty. Because we can’t afford to help with transportation and lodging for those people, the “several” has become more like twenty-five people. So after spending a little over a week working with the young people and their families, as well as the goat project, I’ll be teaching a four day intensive introduction to Lutheran doctrine and presenting a lot of Bible study methods as well.

Remember the Greek text I was working on locating? In October of 2019 I made an agreement with the author of a very simple little Greek book, originally intended for Bible translators working with various African languages, by which I could use the book, free of charge, for whatever students I needed. We’ll be able to implement that sometime in the future, but for the moment we have enough innovations to figure out.

What’s the bottom line? The body of Christ around the world works together. We care for those who are in less favorable situations. We strengthen the weak, rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn. It’ll be a great privilege to bring help and encouragement to these friends about halfway around the world.

## **Wittenberg Door Financial Update**

In our December newsletter I pointed out that we have made significant gains in raising support when compared to last year. Since that newsletter we’ve done a little shifting, a little shuffling, and I think I have some substantial updates here.

As we begin the 2020 budget year, we are preparing to send an appeal to all the churches of The American Association of Lutheran Churches, as well as all the pastors on our roster. Since Wittenberg Door is a mission of TAALC, we will be continuing to ask that our churches help carry the financial weight, as some have done. Of course, even if you are not part of TAALC, we like you and are thankful for your help as well!

We’re going to make a couple of changes to our bookkeeping. One, which I think is very significant, is the addition of a “benevolence” category. As you read above, it’s already been in operation, as we have raised nearly a hundred thousand dollars to bring Alice through her health care needs in the last two and a half years. Addition of this category will make it more clear to donors who are helping with Alice’s ongoing care that they do really have the full tax protection of our 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. Their contributions go to our benevolence fund, and, as it happens, the benevolence project is Alice’s care. There’s always room for more participation in this area!

Of course, the addition of \$1,600 per month in the benevolence account means our overall budget will look very different. We will be bringing in this group of donors, whose commitment is to that project and not necessarily to our local ministry as a whole. You can bet that I am ready to remind those donors that we do other things too :).

In the past several years some of our family needs have been met through savings in a trust

fund administered by members of my extended family. Those trustees have agreed that they will be making a contribution through Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry intended to help defray my living expenses. As a result of this, some of the money I have managed to live on will be more visible in the books of the ministry.

If I can figure out how to do it, I will probably start placing a pie chart financial update on the website, showing our total contributions compared to total budget. The goal from a statistical standpoint is to make the pie full. The goal from a ministry standpoint is to use every dollar and every bit of ministry time making a difference in lives, bringing the help and hope of God's Word to those in need.

All these financial changes are simply a way of having more transparency and financial disclosure to our supporters, as well as to those who may be considering whether Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry should receive their financial support.

Watch our website! Watch our newsletters! And remember, you can always add your support to this work! Checks mailed to us are deposited with no commission paid to any intermediary. Most of our contributions are actually received this way, but we can receive funds sent through Paypal or Google Pay as well. Giving is easy! Simply visit our website at [www.wittenbergcomo.com](http://www.wittenbergcomo.com) and click on "about" and "support us."

## Upcoming Activities:

Our regular weekly activities are mostly on break until the end of January. Please make contact to confirm if a scheduled event is happening.

Tuesdays 5:30 pm – Mere Christians – at The Heidelberg

Wednesdays 5:30 pm – Biblical One-Anothering – at Beta Sigma Psi

Thursdays at 1:00 pm – Bible discussion at Mizzou Student Center

January 1 - Pastor Spotts at St. John's Lutheran Church, Lohman MO

January 5 - Pastor Spotts at Family of Christ Lutheran Church, Ashland MO

January 7 - Pastor Spotts at Missouri Synod Circuit Gathering, Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbia MO

January 9-25 Pastor Spotts goes to Uganda!

January 24 - Friday - In place of our regular dinner, we'll get together at a restaurant.

January 27 - We jump into the second semester of college work a week late!

January 28 (tentative) Pastor Spotts teaches *The Bible in Context* at ALTS.edu, 7-9 pm for 10 Tuesdays

January 30 Pastor Spotts teaches Greek 1 at ALTS.edu, 7-9 pm for 10 Thursdays

February 7 - Dinners resume

**We always have something new at the website, the blog, and the activities calendar. Please be a friend on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. If you're in Columbia, let's get together on or near campus. Go to <https://www.wittenbergcomo.com/support-us.html> to provide financial support. The Wittenberg Door 300 needs you!**