

WELCOME

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

WELCOME TO THE TRANSFORMING LIVES TRANSFORMING AFRICA LENTEN STUDY GUIDE FOR 2008.

This Guide, prepared by laity and clergy of the North Texas Conference, is intended to inspire participation in our joint initiative to raise \$1,000,000 to provide a health clinic and scholarships for Africa University in Zimbabwe. This method is designed to produce a conference wide participation of individual members instead of seeking large donations from individual churches.

We invite you to share this Lenten journey with other members of our annual conference. We will literally be reading, studying and praying as one body over the same scriptures and devotionals during the days from Ash Wednesday through the glorious day of Resurrection on Easter. It is our prayer that traveling with others will be a source of power and encouragement as we accept our particular **“CHALLENGE”** for the benefit of Africa University and the glory of God.

Grace and Peace,

TYRONE GORDON AND LISA TICHENOR, CO-CHAIRS
BISHOP'S INITIATIVE FOR AFRICA UNIVERSITY



UNITY

UNITY IN CHRIST – NO DEGREES OF SEPARATION

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

— MATTHEW 5:7

During the season of Lent, Christians join Jesus in the journey to the cross, reflecting on his sacrifice, but even more on the reason for the sacrifice. We wonder why God Almighty became vulnerable to sin, pain, and death, even death on a cross?

In II Corinthians 5:19, the Apostle Paul provides the definitive answer: *...in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.*

In God's infinite mercy, God came into a broken and bleeding world to break down the barriers that separate humanity from God and one another. Then, in an amazing act of trust, God said to pass on the message of reconciliation. We walk to the cross with Jesus as his ministers of reconciliation. To follow in his footsteps means that the barriers that separate us must come down.

In 1990 the term "six degrees of separation" became part of the popular vocabulary when John Guare wrote a hit play with the same name. Three years later the play was adapted into a movie starring Will Smith, and in 2006, the "six degrees" concept became the central point of an ABC television series.

The concept, once confined to academia, is based on the theory that if a person is one step away from each person he or she knows, and two steps away from each person known by these acquaintances, then everyone on earth is no more than six steps away from one another. To borrow another phrase from pop culture, "It's a small world after all."

Few of us have had the privilege of visiting Africa University or visiting anywhere in Africa. That doesn't mean that we are separated from AU and its mission.

Not only do we have a close relationship through mutual friends, some of whom are contributors to this devotional guide, but as United Methodists, we also have a direct link through AU itself. We in the NTC have a unique opportunity to work together to build a health center and provide scholarships for young men and women who will be God's agents of mercy and reconciliation as they go back to countries devastated by disease and premature death.

JESUS, WHO CAME TO ERASE ALL DEGREES OF SEPARATION BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANITY, CALLS US TO FOLLOW HIM.

Through our Lenten sacrifices for AU, we will obey the command to be reconcilers, showing mercy and empowering others to pass it on to God's children in Africa.

IN I CORINTHIANS 3:6, PAUL WRITES:

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

"Africa University has been built (planted), and I am hoping and praying that we, the North Texas Conference, will be Apollos, by watering the plant; but always mindful that it is God who gives the growth."

— BISHOP ALFRED L. NORRIS

AFRICA UNIVERSITY, the sole United Methodist institution of higher learning in Africa, has been educating students from throughout the continent for the past 15 years. The beginning was modest – 40 undergraduates enrolled in agriculture and theology programs. Today some 1300 students from 25 African countries are enrolled in six undergraduate and five graduate fields of study.

It is now acknowledged that Africa University is making a qualitative and quantitative difference in the educational, religious, economic and political landscape of sub-Saharan Africa.

United Methodist apportionments are the primary financial support for this remarkable institution and several other avenues have been created for special giving. Despite all of these efforts, the school continues to face challenges as it grows. The needs are many, but two stand out.

The only campus health clinic has not been enlarged since the university opened and is now woefully inadequate to meet growing student needs.

Health Science is one of the smaller, but critically important programs at the school. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are among the many diseases ravaging the African people. Promoting and encouraging students to study health sciences is of the highest priority. More Health Science scholarships would train additional public health workers to take basic medical care and education back to their home countries.

United Methodists in North Texas will have the opportunity to bring healing and salvation to God's people in Africa by joining in the Lent/Easter 2008 campaign to raise \$1 million, half to build a new health clinic and half to fund Health Science scholarships.

Through a united practice of prayer, Bible study, and sacrificial offerings during this time when we focus on Jesus' self-giving love and sacrifice on our behalf, we have the gift and challenge of helping save and empower the lives of God's children in Africa.

HOW TO USE THIS LENTEN STUDY GUIDE

Forty different writers, laity and clergy, have prayerfully meditated prior to writing their devotional that supports the goals of the Bishop's Initiative for a health center and scholarships for African University. Many of these writers shared in an inspiring trip to Zimbabwe last summer, among them our Bishop and his wife, to see that the dream of a United Methodist affiliated university is still alive. Other writers are persons that hope to make the trip in the future, God willing, and others realize they will never make the trip but are still committed to this cause. While the writers are not professional writers, we believe that you will discover that the different personalities and theological insights truly represent the richness and diversity of our annual conference. Please be open to each of the devotionals, study questions, prayers and their individual challenge.

Be aware that thousands of others are daily reading and reflecting on the same devotional that you are and praying the same prayer. Let this Lenten Study Guide strengthen our connection with one another.

THE LENTEN STUDY IS DIVIDED INTO SEVEN SECTIONS – each section representing a week of Lent.

Each section has a common theme, such as the Gift of Life, for each week of Lent. Each writer has made a commitment to “challenge” themselves to share in the Lenten journey in a meaningful way through the experience of sacrifice on behalf of others. Each challenge represents a financial commitment that the writer will make to this initiative. You are encouraged to look at the “challenges” at the beginning of Lent to assist you in determining how you wish to respond.

ALSO INCLUDED FOR EACH SUNDAY OF LENT IS A STUDY GUIDE THAT PROVIDES QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION TO USE AS A PERSONAL GUIDE OR SMALL GROUP GUIDE.

- You may use as a personal daily discipline to help you grow deeper in your discipleship.
- An exciting and life-changing way to use is with other believers that want to grow as Christians. You may use it with a small group at your church, in your office or in your home. If you are already a member of a small group you probably already have a method of sharing/studying that can easily be incorporated with this guide.



FLAGS FLOWN IN FRONT OF AFRICA UNIVERSITY SHOW COUNTRIES REPRESENTED IN THE STUDENT BODY

**WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING AFRICAN MODEL FOR BIBLE STUDY
AS ONE WAY TO MAXIMIZE THE BENEFITS OF THE GUIDE:**

1. Read the devotional slowly (one person out loud).
2. Reflect upon the devotional for a word or phrase that catches your attention (one minute).
3. Each person shares that word or phrase with the group.
4. Read the passage again.
5. Think about (or write out) in silence where this devotional touches your life today (three minutes).
6. Each person shares “I am touched by ...” or “This passage tells me that I ...”
7. Read the devotional again silently.
8. Think about (or write out) “From what I have heard and shared, how can I be more faithful to Jesus Christ in the immediate future? How can our church be more faithful?” (three minutes)
9. Each person shares “I” in relation to the above question.
10. Each person prays for the person on their right naming what was shared in #9 and prays that prayer until the group meets again. The group closes with the Lord’s Prayer led by the first reader (number one above).

Note: In #3, #6 and #9, be brief. Do not elaborate, explain or give “sermonettes.” Sharings are made to the center of the group. Other should not respond to or build on sharings in cross-talk as if they were in a discussion group. Reflect.

OPENING DATE – MARCH 23, 1992 IN OLD MUTARE, ZIMBABWE

THE PURPOSE OF AFRICA UNIVERSITY IS to help African Christians train leaders for their churches and societies. Today, one fifth of the world's population lives in Africa.

THE VISION OF AFRICA UNIVERSITY is improved quality of life, peace and prosperity for the peoples of Africa through quality higher education that includes teaching, research, community service and leadership development.

THE MISSION OF AFRICA UNIVERSITY is to provide quality education within a Pan-African context through which persons can acquire general and professional knowledge and skills, grow in spiritual maturity, and develop sound moral values, ethics and leadership qualities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT AFRICA UNIVERSITY, GO TO THEIR WEB SITE: WWW.AFRICAU.EDU



- In 1984 two African bishops, with support of thousands of African Methodists, issued the call to create Africa University. At the 1988 General Conference, United Methodists overwhelmingly accepted the proposal to begin the university in Zimbabwe where no private universities existed.
- In 1992, 40 students entered Faculties or Colleges of Theology and Agriculture/Natural Resources. In 1994 AU graduates 27 students and in 2007 282 students. There are currently 2,600 AU graduates across Africa.
- Student body in 2006-2007 was 1,298 with 666 females and 632 males representing 23 different African nations. There are 119 Faculty members representing 14 different countries.
- It costs \$5,200 to support a student for one year. This amount includes tuition, \$2,500, meals, \$2,100, room, \$200, medical care, \$200, and Student Union Fees, \$25. International students need an additional \$200 for student permit fees.
- The University grants Undergraduate degrees in Faculties or Colleges: Theology, Education, Agriculture and Administration, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Peace, Leadership and Governance. Postgraduate degrees include: Agriculture, Management and Administration, Theology, Health Sciences and Peace, Leadership and Governance.
- Africa University graduates return to places like Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Angola, becoming national leaders in medicine, education, the church, politics, agriculture and other areas to affect change.
- Africa University is supported by congregations and individuals across The United Methodist Church. Africa University apportionment receipts from local churches are used to provide the basics necessary to operate the university, such as utilities, equipment and faculty salaries.

THE STUDENTS SPEAK

"I'M NOT JUST GOING TO WALK OUT OF THIS PLACE (AU) WITH MY DEGREE. I'LL WALK AWAY WITH THE FEELING I COULD HELP MAKE A CHANGE IN THE WORLD."

—MUNYARADZI MAPOTA, STUDENT FROM ZIMBABWE

"IF, IN THE FUTURE, I'LL BE ABLE TO HELP EVEN ONE PERSON, I'LL DO IT WITH HAPPINESS AND LOVE BECAUSE OF WHAT THE CHURCH HAS DONE FOR ME. THANK YOU."

YOLLANDE SAMBA MAVUND, GRADUATE FROM DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

"AT AFRICA UNIVERSITY, I HOPE TO REALIZE PART OF MY DREAM: TO BUILD PEACE AND UNITY IN MY COUNTRY. AFTER I GRADUATE, I HOPE TO WORK THROUGH THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AS A PEACE BUILDER IN MY COMMUNITY, WHICH, FOR TOO MANY YEARS, HAS BEEN TORN APART BY CIVIL WAR AND STRIFE."

ABEL NEMUEL LAMIDO, STUDENT FROM LIBERIA