

GIFT OF TRANSFORMATION (WEEK 6 OF LENT)

STUDY GUIDE FOR SECTION SIX

- Pray a centering prayer for guidance for the discussion of the “Gift of Transformation” section.
- *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12.2)*

God is always in the process of shaping and forming all people and things. In Romans, Paul urges Christians to be pliable, that is to be open to letting God re-form and re-shape their lives. To be conformed to the ways of the world is to be eternally stuck in the mire. God is transforming individual lives – and potentially nations – through AU, as both those at the university and those who support it are open to God’s transforming touch.

1. Mary Brooke Casad describes how she experienced the presence of her late father, Bishop Ben Oliphint, as she participated in the life of AU, which he helped start. One of the ways God transforms grief and loss is the recognition that our loved ones live on through their work and deeds, which continue to transform life on earth. Share ways that you have experienced the transforming work of a loved one. Consider how your deeds and work today will live on as a transforming reality in God’s future.
 2. Sometimes it is the less glamorous things, like irrigation systems and training agricultural workers, which have the greatest transforming impact in a hungry world. What were some of the “basics” that you see as having lasting influence? How can you as an individual and we as the church be a part of enabling this transforming reality?
 3. Lisa Tichenor describes a moving moment of transformed perspective as she described how an African diplomat explained how difficult it is for African children to attend college. She sees AU as the “perfect” way to foster education in Africa, developing leaders who will have the potential to transform life in their countries. How has learning about AU been a transforming experience?
 4. AU graduate Kalaba Chali is now a pastor. He says he experienced Paul’s words from Gal. 3.28 – that all are one in Christ Jesus – at AU. Discuss his insight that oneness does not mean uniformity, but embraces those like us and different from us. How can this be a transforming insight in our lives?
- Close the session with prayer, remembering the students and faculty at AU and all of those sharing in this Lenten challenge. **ASK FOR GOD’S GUIDANCE ALONG THE WAY.**

DAY 29, MARCH 10, 2008

*You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds
and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you.*

Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be counted.

— PSALM 40:5

I NOTICED THE LIGHTS WERE NOT ON IN THE HOSPITAL. In America, the lights are always on in hospitals, even in the daytime. A young woman sat on the bed in one of the rooms with a cloth tied around her face. A flashback to my youth reminded me of the time my sister and I caught the mumps. My mother tied our faces just like that. My son, born two decades later, did not have to suffer the pain of this illness. The health insurance I had covered the vaccination that has almost eliminated mumps in the United States. While at Africa University, I learned that many students attend medical school abroad and do not return to Africa. This situation jeopardizes the lives of many who cannot afford the kind of health care we take for granted in western countries. Africa University is transforming lives. I found myself transformed by the kindness, love and prayers I received while working next to young workers, harvesting maize in Zimbabwe. The School of Health Sciences is helping to transform Africa by training and encouraging the doctors and nurses of tomorrow that there is a future in Africa for all.

PRAYER: Most Holy God, we thank you in advance for the mighty miracles that are in store for Africa University. None is more wonderful than you are. You know our hearts and hear our prayers. Our faith and trust in you will never fail. Amen.

MISSION CHALLENGE: Today I am donating the amount of my monthly health insurance premium to the NTC AU Mission Initiative.

Valarie Wright-Fleming, St. Luke "Community" UMC Dallas

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DAY 30, MARCH 11, 2008

I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

— JOHN 11:25-26

Three days after the memorial service for my father, Bishop Ben Oliphint, I boarded a plane for Africa. For many years, I had longed to see Africa University, which my father helped start as President of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 1988-1992. Now that dream was coming true, but I was saddened not to be able to share my experiences with him.

However, when we arrived at Africa University, I sensed my father's presence all around me. I saw him in the faces of the faculty who remembered him and spoke of him fondly. I saw him in the faces of the students who had never known him, but who were receiving an education because of his commitment and hard work. I saw him in the beauty of the campus, which he had helped plan and break ground for the first buildings. As I participated in the life of Africa University, I felt my father's presence, bringing me comfort and healing.

The beauty of our Christian faith is that Christ and His followers live on both through their love and deeds which continue to impact others on earth, as well as in heaven eternally. May our commitment to Africa University result in eternal consequences, both on earth and in heaven!

PRAYER: Lord, help me live a transformed life so that others may as well, both now and forever. Amen.

CHALLENGE: Today I will give to our Africa University initiative as a way of honoring or remembering a loved one.

Mary Brooke Casad, Christ UMC Farmers Branch



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GOD PLANTED A GARDEN IN ZIMBABWE and there he put the man he had formed. What a blessing it was to visit Zimbabwe and to have seen Africa University just before sunrise while enjoying a prayer walk. Yes, the heavens certainly declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

The work of God's hand is seen at AU educating young men and women from the continent of Africa. AU provides stability to the economy by providing people with jobs. "When I was hungry you fed me!" Yes, Africa University's Agricultural program provides training and food for the people. The newly constructed irrigation system provides the university with an abundant supply of water for irrigation and other vital needs.

PRAYER: Father your word tells us that you will send rain in season so that the people may gather grain. Lord you have also told us that you will provide grass in the fields for the cattle and the people would eat and be satisfied. Father, in Jesus name I thank you. Amen.

CHALLENGE: I pray for new opportunities to share the good news of Jesus. I pray that Africa University will continue to increase in favor with God and man. I commit to fasting once a week during Lent and to support AU with the money saved and to give a love offering.

Carrie J. Marshall, St. Luke "Community" UMC Dallas

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*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*

— GALATIANS 3:28

It was at **AFRICA UNIVERSITY** where I first experienced Paul's words that we are all one in Christ. By listening to the visions of one another's diverse geographical and cultural contexts, our picture of Jesus became bigger as we began to imagine Jesus as a person whose love embraces all persons. Nobody abandoned their cultures, languages or way of worshiping. The Holy Spirit created an environment whereby all came together to experience God's diversity and celebrate it as a gift.

Oneness does not mean uniformity, but embraces those like us and those different from us. This includes all people – poor and rich as well as those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. I can hear again Brother Paul's words, "*All are one in Christ...*" one body, sharing in our joys as well as our pains and sufferings. Together, sisters and brothers, by moving out of our comfort zone and standing in solidarity with those who are suffering, dying, crying, and mourning, we will bring a message of hope and healing to them.

One person alone may be unable to raise the \$1,000,000 needed for the health center and scholarships at Africa University, but if we agree with Paul that "*All are one...*" regardless of our geographical and cultural contexts, we can be part of changing many lives by supporting Africa University through our financial gifts and prayers.

PRAYER: Gracious God, I thank you for sharing in our sufferings, sicknesses and pain. I pray that you open our hearts so that we may greet with joy the hope you renew in our lives in Christ's name. Amen.

CHALLENGE: I am committing to help one international student with their student permit fees and will always be praying for Africa and Africa University.

Rev. Kalaba Chali, Lovers Lane UMC Dallas
AFRICA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

— MATTHEW 25:40 (NEW INTERPRETERS STUDY BIBLE)

Some of us have been fortunate to be involved in several different facets of education throughout our lives. Not only have we had the opportunity to experience our own personal education and witness its importance on our lives, but some of us have been blessed with the opportunity to serve in positions that enable us to try to enhance educational opportunities for others.

While each of us may not know much about Africa University, we probably do know more about Africa. Its size is enormous—China, Europe, the United States can all fit into Africa with lots of room to spare. The largest growth in the United Methodist Church is occurring in Africa. Access to education is challenging at best.

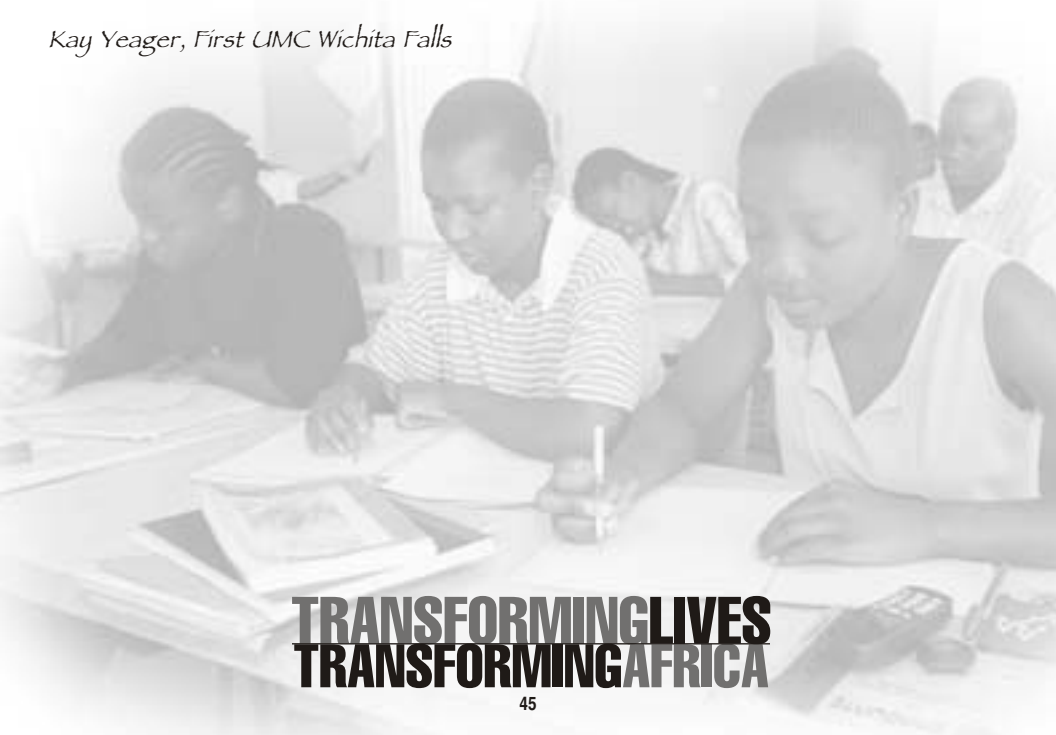
Through our support of Africa University, we have an opportunity through the education it offers to provide long-term solutions to the age old challenges that Africa faces.

Let's join together to bring light to this marvelous continent.

PRAYER: Lord, we ask that you guide each of us as we reach out to these members of your family and consider our support of Africa University. Amen.

CHALLENGE: Make a donation to AU for each member of my family.

Kay Yeager, First UMC Wichita Falls



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*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed
by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God,
what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

— ROMANS 12:2 (RSV)

“You are lucky in the United States. Your children can go to college if they want to. In my country there is so much competition for very few openings. My children work very hard and there may not be a place for them.”

A government official of Zimbabwe was in Dallas for a conference one Fourth of July. He came over to join our family in watching fireworks and eating homemade ice cream. We agreed that the opportunity for higher education is available to almost all Americans.

Africa University has grown from 40 students in 1992 to more than 1,300 today. Over 2,600 graduates from around the continent who have lived and worked together in the university are now living and working as partners to improve conditions in Africa.

There is nothing more important we can do as a Church than to help foster education in Africa. Education is the best long-term solution to the problems Africa faces. We have the PERFECT way to accomplish this task through Africa University!

PRAYER: God, we ask that you continue to transform and renew our minds as we seek to do your will through Africa University. Amen.

MY PLEDGE: I commit the college fund we saved through the years for my younger son, Willie, who died of cancer as a freshman in college.

Lisa Tichenor, Highland Park UMC Dallas



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