

Report on the Great Lakes Initiative (GLI) Leadership Institute, January 12-18, 2014

“GLI offers [our organization] an opportunity to discern ‘the signs of times’ through the lens of the suffering Church. GLI allows us to participate in the laments and hopes of African Christian leaders and the poor we seek to serve together. Hence, it strengthens our Christian identity in East Africa externally and internally. We receive and give in this exchange. Mutual blessing.”

“Reconciliation is not only discussing issues or simply an academic platform; it is primarily allowing the Holy Spirit to transform people by reminding them of their Christian identity. [After the GLI] I do not see myself as primarily a member of any ethnic group, not even the citizen of a country first. I see myself as the child of God placed by God in Africa ... working to make Shalom prevail in Africa.”

Feedback from participants in the 2014 GLI Leadership Institute

Overview

In January of this year some hundred and twenty-five men and women representing thirteen countries traveled to St. Mary’s National Seminary in Kampala, Uganda, to meet for our fourth annual Great Lakes Initiative (GLI) Leadership Institute.

Although many present had come heavily burdened by the challenges they faced in their home countries—only three men and women from the South Sudan were able to attend, for example, because of violence that had erupted there in the previous months—participants were determined to learn from the seminars offered and were determined to take back to their communities new ways to foster hope, reconciliation, and peace. As one participant noted, the Institute provided “an idea of how the Church can serve as common ground for the reconciliation of tribal, ethnic, political, nationalist conflicts [and] the shared identity of Christians can serve as a space for people of varying identities to come together . . . [this is] valuable knowledge for peacebuilding work.”



Rich Theological Content and Discourse

Each day of the Institute focused on a particular question in regards to the ministry of reconciliation: *Reconciliation towards what? What’s going on? What does Christian hope look like? What kind of Leadership? Why me, why bother?* Daily morning and evening worship provided the framework to explore these questions in depth in the subsequent morning plenaries and afternoon seminars. More than setting the tone for each day, however, the ecumenical worship reflected the rich diversity of Christians gathered as we were led in varying styles of worship in a multitude of languages.

Morning plenaries offered further theological reflection on the days’ themes, rooted in both Biblical and contextual analysis. Along with thematic theological teaching, each plenary included witnesses



Fr. Emmanuel Katongole leading GLI participants on the day of pilgrimage to the Anglican shrine of the Ugandan Martyrs.

who reflected on God’s work of reconciliation in their particular context. These witnesses spoke to the reality that the work of reconciliation is fraught with both lament and hope, and encouraged all participants to seek the “signs of the times” in their own context.

All plenaries and worship were bi-lingual (French and English), thereby reflecting the linguistic and cultural diversity of the participants.

This year the emphasis in the seminars we offered was firmly focused on reconciliation and what Christian leadership looks like in times of crisis. In “Embracing Reconciliation for Children,” Vat Kamatsiko, Njeri

Kinyoho, and Dr. Daniel Muvengi explored the importance of teaching our youth habits that led not to disharmony and hatred but to mutual support and agreement, while “Restorative Justice in African Contexts”—taught by Muigai Ndoka and Oscar Nduwarugira—grappled with the complex idea of justice as viewed through a Christian and a political lens.¹

While the Institute fostered Christian leadership through its plenary sessions and formal seminars, a good deal of what was learned occurred informally. This was due to two main factors.

First, those in attendance came from a number of diverse groups: all seven nations of East Africa were represented and a total of fourteen different nationalities were present. Additionally, Christian leaders across the Protestant and Catholic divide attended and were able to meet in a rare and holy space in order to engage in constructive dialogue. And finally, we saw an increase in the percentage of women present, and three of the seven seminars were taught entirely by women, with two others having women as co-teachers.

Second, the structure of the Institute allowed for participants to meet in sessions outside the seminars—for example, “country meetings” were held at meal times and during the evening so that members from each of the Great Lakes countries could continue to discuss the impact that the



During the 2014 Leadership Institute, ScholarLeaders International presented Dr. David Kasali (above center) with the [2014 ScholarLeader of the Year Award](#), in recognition and celebration of his outstanding achievements and contributions, and to provide him a new platform to share his experience. On Dr. Kasali’s right is Wilfred Mlay (GLI Ambassador) and on his left, Evan Hunter (ScholarLeaders Vice President).

¹ See Appendix for a complete list of seminars offered during the 2014 GLI Leadership Institute.

Initiative has had on them—and to simply share their ideas in an informal way.

Each country group spent time identifying signs of hope and signs of lament and made plans to meet again at home. Among the commitments made were the following: viewing the work of organizations through a “GLI Lens”; praying intentionally for each of the “Signs of the Times”; and allowing the Muslim Call to Prayer to be a call to pray for peace between Christians and Muslims.

For more stories of transformation, please see:

1. Report from Mennonite Central Committee participant:
<http://pamosley.blogspot.com/2014/01/come-out-of-your-cave-and-be-in-my.html>
2. Reflection from Salim J. Munayer, Ph.D, Musalaha Director
[How do your people lament?](#)

GLI Leadership Institute as a Powerful Ecumenical Space

Certainly the Institute continues to provide a unique ecumenical space that allows participants to transform their understanding of what it means to be the Church. As one Catholic leader testified: “I am very happy to have participated in GLI because I have benefited from a tremendous ecumenical experience: the worship, prayer together, happiness to be together. It was profound. In my own country, it’s not possible for me to get together with the Protestant family to cry out to God. There needs to be change and I can feel in myself that I am becoming a New Creation. I’ve studied ecumenism but to live it out is something quite different . . . we need to become the ‘new we.’”

Perhaps one of the most striking transformative stories shared came from our Burundi members. After the 2013 GLI Institute, Protestant and Catholic leaders from Burundi left with a common commitment to work together in the truth and reconciliation process being undertaken by both governmental and civil agencies in their home country. Reporting on that process, one of those leaders told us that Burundi had been “at a crossroads . . . not far from peace but . . . not far from war, either.” However, because of the Institute and its meetings, their relationships have strengthened, and so the Protestant Burundi GLI leaders have been able to work together and consult 400 Protestant denominations as part of the process of developing the amendments to the *Truth and Reconciliation* legislation being drafted and under discussion in the Burundi Parliament. All but two of the Protestant denominations signed the amendments just before the 2014 Institute. As one leader told the Institute, “It is an historic event for the normally divided protestant churches to share one voice—a sign of transformation within the leadership of the churches of Burundi.” The lament that the church did not have a common voice to foster reconciliation was thus addressed and Christians in Burundi “have had time to be together and think together.”

Financing the Institute

The GLI Leadership Institute has over the years been the beneficiary of many generous grants and donations from our partner organizations. This year our core partners, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), provided us with \$15,600, while World Vision East Africa and ALARM gave the Institute \$15,000 and \$5,000 respectively. The Duke Center for Reconciliation provided \$35,000 via foundation grants.

Some of our revenue directly funded particular seminars and their leaders and participants—“*Sacred Trust: Land and Community in Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives*” received \$16,550 from the Issachar Foundation, and “*Theological Education and God’s Shalom*” was co-sponsored by Duke Divinity School and Scholar Leaders International. Additionally, a total of \$10,500 came from the Kroc Institute, the Bible Society of Sudan, World Vision USA, World Vision Tanzania, and World Vision DR Congo.

GLI has been immensely fortunate in the funding it has received: the work we do could not occur without the generosity of our donors. However, we must continue to secure additional and more sustainable sources of revenue as we plan for events in the future. The current financial model of the GLI is weak as it depends on the passion and drive of specific individuals located in institutions rather than committed institutional support. In the absence of these key individuals, funding would cease to be available.

Other Leadership Institute Partner Support

The GLI Leadership Institute is led by excellent faculty, all of whom volunteer their time:

- ALARM provided staff to teach the plenary “Reconciliation Towards What?: New Creation,” and MCC staff taught the seminar “Restorative Justice for African Contexts” and the plenary, “Why Me and Why Bother: Spirituality for the Long Haul.”
- Staff from World Vision co-taught the seminar, “Embracing Reconciliation for Children,” and, together with staff from MCC, led daily worship.
- Duke Divinity School provided one faculty member to co-teach the seminar “Sacred Trust: Land and Community in Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives,” and staff for overall coordination for the Institute.
- Vital logistics support was provided by World Vision Uganda and ALARM Uganda, and equipment for printing and communication was provided by World Vision and MCC Uganda offices.

GLI Regional Rootedness and Resilience

The “Word Made Flesh” curriculum and methodology continue to shape the Institute and the work of the GLI through the modeling of a Christian vision of reconciliation that is at once theological, practical, and contextual.

Leadership of the GLI continues to be more visibly African and less visibly coming from Duke. All of the plenary sessions were taught by East African leaders, with GLI Ambassador Wilfred Mlay acting as daily general facilitator.

The potential for national GLIs to transform Christian leadership for reconciliation has been increasingly identified as key to the success of the future of the GLI. Seeing the witness of the “national GLI” take root in Burundi has certainly encouraged other countries to see a national GLI flourish at home. A central issue for our planning around the GLI transition from Duke leading to the leadership of African partners is how to encourage, support, and strengthen these national efforts.

Fr. Emmanuel Katongole (co-founder of the Duke Divinity School Center for Reconciliation) returned to the GLI Institute and reflected that “being back at the GLI [Institute] after a two-year absence confirmed what a unique and special space it is, and how much I have missed the rich interactions, the friendships and dynamic practical, lived theologies shared through the stories and at the seminars. I was amazed not only by the rich diversity of leadership gifts represented by the participants, but particularly by the incredible leadership team of Mlay, Kasali, Ndikumana, Muvengi and others ... if there is any lingering question of African leadership, the GLI is both the case and evidence! Honestly, it is amazing—almost miraculous—to see the quality and style of leadership that has come to carry forward the GLI in a truly shared mantle of African leadership. I could not but be extremely proud and humbled to sit back and watch the fruits of our efforts multiplied.”

As noted after the 2013 Institute, the GLI partnership has named the next two years as a significant transition time for GLI, and has set as a goal that the 2015 Leadership Institute will be the final one coordinated from the CFR office. The core partners will meet in June 2014 in Bujumbura. This meeting will focus specifically on drafting and finalizing a strategy for funding and implementing GLI regional rootedness and resilience. Specific objectives for this meeting include finalizing steps for the GLI to be registered as an independent entity in the region, naming a new GLI Regional Coordinator, establishing a board, and agreeing to a revised financial model.

For more information on the Great Lakes Initiative please contact:

Wilfred Mlay, GLI Ambassador

GLIambassador@gmail.com

<http://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/center-reconciliation/programs/gli>

APPENDICES:

National and Denominational Participation

National Diversity

The following countries were represented at the Institute:

Uganda – 27	Rwanda – 9
Democratic Republic of Congo – 24	Kenya – 8
Burundi – 20	South Sudan – 3
USA – 14	Republic of Sudan – 1
Tanzania – 12	

Interested leaders from Ethiopia (2), Ghana (1), Zimbabwe (1), the United Kingdom (1) and Israel (1) were also present.

Denominational Diversity

The GLI continues to be a rare and holy space in East Africa that gathers Christian leaders across the Catholic/Protestant divide. Among denominations represented at the meeting were:

Unidentified – 27	Baptist – 8
Catholic – 27	Other – 8
Presbyterian – 10	Evangelical – 6
Anglican/Episcopal – 9	Inter-denominational – 6
Mennonite – 9	Methodist – 5
Pentecostal – 9	

GLI Leadership Institute Faculty and Staff

Plenary Leaders

Dr. Wilfred Mlay, Maggie Barankitse, Fr. Zacharie Bukuru, Dr. Katho Bungishabaku, Dr. David Kasali, Ismail Kanani, Dr. Emmanuel Katongole, Njeri Kinyoho, Milcah Lalam, Lindsay Linegar, Simon Mikanipare, Rebecca Mosley, Dr. Salim Munayer, Emmanuel Ndikumana, and Deogratias Nshimiyimana.

Seminars and Faculty

- Embracing Reconciliation for Children—Vat Kamatsiko, Njeri Kinyoho, and Dr. Daniel Muvengi
- New Creation: Mentoring Women Leaders—Maggy Barankitse
- Nurturing Personal Resilience for Sustained Mission—Dr. Bill Lowrey and Dr. Alice Petersen
- Practical Spirituality to Sustain Peace Builders—Violette Nyirarukundo
- Restorative Justice in African Contexts—Muigai Ndoka and Oscar Nduwarugira
- Sacred Trust: Land and Community in Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives—Dr. Femi Adeleye and Dr. Ellen Davis
- Theological Education and God’s Shalom—Dr. David Kasali and Dr. Salim Munayer

Translation, Worship and Coordination

Kate Davelaar, Fr. Stephen Kiggundu, Acher Niyonizigiye, Jodi Mikalachki, Rebecca Mosley, Josephine Munyi, and Liberty Muhereza.