

## Message from the Chairperson

“Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’”

In my message to readers of this year’s newsletter, I would like us to hold in blessed memory those of our members who have gone to be with the Lord. In particular I would like to mention three names, not only because of their relation to the Association and to the Church of Uganda, but because they were also personally known to me. Bishop Keith Sutton, former bishop of Lichfield who passed away in March last year was a former tutor in the late 1960s at the Bishop Tucker Theological College, Mukono, which has over the years produced many clergy and bishops of the Church of Uganda. Keith succeeded the late Bishop Brian Herd as Chairperson of the Uganda Church Association and I was elected to succeed him. I was glad to represent the Church of Uganda and the Association at his memorial service held at Lichfield Cathedral in May at which Archbishop John Sentamu was the preacher.

In June, 2017 Jenny Ottewell also left us. She had served as Christian education adviser for the Church of Uganda at a very turbulent period in that country’s history and she continued to support the Church of Uganda’s children’s ministry after her retirement. She exuded faith, dedication, resilience, integrity and hope. At her funeral service at St Thomas’ Church, Kendal, which I attended, one of the symbols on display was the Ugandan flag.

As we turned our back on 2017, news came of the death of former Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, Livingstone Mpalanyi Nkoyoyo, who passed away on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018 at Mengo Hospital. Nkoyoyo, as he was popularly called, combined rare gifts as a pastor, leader, and builder of church and community projects, the most memorable of them being the Uganda Martyrs Museum at Namugongo. In a country that has been deeply divided along political, ethnic and religious lines, Nkoyoyo was hailed by members of the different religions in the country and by political leaders as a unifier.

Which brings me to the final point, namely that we build on other people’s work and above all on the foundation that Jesus left and that our work is not in vain. In that connection I would like to express my thanks to members of the Uganda Church Association generally and the Committee in particular who have worked together to sustain the work of the Association of which this newsletter is a reflection.

Yours sincerely,

*Amos Kasibante*

## **Review of 2017**

### **Revd Amos Kasibante**

The end of the year and entry into the New Year is often celebrated as marking the beginning of a new chapter of hope and giving closure to the storms of the previous year. It was no different with Uganda. The religious leaders gave their usual official messages as did the political leadership – the latter citing various milestones reached and achievements made and obstacles overcome. However, the political storms of 2016 reverberated into 2017 and the mere change of calendar did little to weather away those storms. Chief among them were the “Kasese massacre” of November 2016 when the national army and police launched an attack on the palace of the Omusinga (king of the Bakonjo people), Charles Wesley Mumbere. At the end of the skirmish over 100 people lay dead, many of them palace guards and servants. The king was arrested and put into custody in Jinja many miles away from Kasese. He would later be brought to court. For the people of Kasese the New Year was only an extension of the old year.

The month of November 2016 had also experienced the gunning down of Major Mohammed Kiggundu, husband to “Maama Fiina”, who is the leader and representative of those who practice kiganda traditional religion. Major Kiggundu and his body-guard, Sgt Stephen Mukasa, were showered with bullets by men riding on boda boda motor cycles early one morning as they went to work, an execution style that had been used to eliminate many notable Muslim Sheikhs. This high profile method was first used in 2005 when Mrs Robinah Kiyingi, Kampala lawyer and Ugandan director of Transparency International was killed. She was wife to Australian-based Ugandan specialist cardiologist, Dr Aggrey Kiyingi.

This gruesome method would also be used in March 2017 in the execution of police spokesman and flamboyant Assistant Inspector General of Police, Felix Kaweesi, who was gunned down along with his driver and bodyguard in the early hours of 17<sup>th</sup> March 2017 just after he set off from his home at Kulambiro on the suburbs of Kampala to go to work. This high profile killing and the manner in which it was executed is the one event that dominated all of 2017 and its ripples will reverberate into 2018 as well. Following the massacre, the police arrested some 23 suspects, most of them Muslims, and locked them up in the notorious police unit at Nalufenya. They were accused of terrorism. The Inspector General of Police, Gen Kale Kayihura, had alleged that Kawesi's murder was the work of the Allied Defence Force (ADF), a predominantly

Muslim guerrilla outfit operating out of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), but with pockets in Uganda.

When they were arraigned before court, they showed terrible signs of torture. Later in the year, court granted bail to 7 of the suspects, but they were brutally re-arrested by armed men in plain clothes as they were leaving for home. The Kawesi murder portrays many dimensions of the country's political and security situation. One is the intractable tension and suspicion between sections of the Muslim community and the government. The other is that while the government constantly talks about the peace and stability ushered in by President Museveni's National Resistance Movement in contrast to the governments of Amin and Obote and while it is true that the police and army do not target ordinary civilians, there is also fear that high profile massacres have been taking place and no one has been apprehended, arraigned before court, found guilty and sent to prison for any of these massacres, thus raising the suspicion, real or imaginary, that the massacres may be the work of elements in the country's security network.

On the church scene – the churches continued with their usual work of evangelism, pastoral care and projects of social and economic development and were urged by government to help improve the condition of the people especially in the area of creating employment for the country's army of unemployed university graduates. Pentecostal and Charismatic churches of all description and all types of pastors continued to grow and emerge, thus prompting the debate that churches should be registered and closely monitored by the state. The Catholic Church, which is famous for keeping its clergy in line, also suffered some defections as some Catholic clergy, led by the Charismatic Catholic priest, Fr Jacinto Kibuuka broke away and formed his own Mamre Prayer Centre at Namugongo close to the Catholics' famous Uganda Martyrs' Shrine. Kibuuka has now re-named his church, the Orthodox Church of Central and Eastern Uganda and was consecrated as its bishop. Kibuuka has a very big following.

While the government has often hailed the church as a partner in development, this "peace" was disrupted around Christmas when in their Christmas message various bishops openly condemned Members of Parliament for voting to remove the presidential age limit of 75 as stipulated by the 1995 Constitution and contrary to the views expressed by the majority of the voters whom the MPs had consulted. The removal was accompanied by some very violent scenes involving a scuffle in Parliament when members exchanged insults and physical blows and when men in suits, later known to be members of the Special Force Command (SFC), an elite military unit, were smuggled into Parliament to contain the situation. In the scuffle several MPs, all on the opposition side, were badly injured and needed hospital treatment and surgery.

The Bishops' message drew the ire of President Museveni who accused the Bishops of over-stepping their area of competence and indulging in divisive politics. The Bishops did not take the President's accusations sitting down. At the funeral of the former Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, Livingstone Mpalanyi Nkoyoyo, Catholic Archbishop of Kampala, Cyprian Lwanga, spoke out on the matter saying that the Church was not an enemy of the government, but that church leaders had a duty to speak out on matters affecting the peace and stability of the country and nobody should shut them up, thus drawing applause from the crowd.

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