

'My First Year in Retirement'

4th December 2016 – 4th December 2017

Bishop Nathan Kyamanywa

On December 4th 2016 I handed over the mantle of leadership to my colleague and friend, the Rt Rev Samuel Kahuma Abwoli, before a mammoth congregation presided over by the Most Rev Stanley Ntagali, the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda. In this first year of retirement I have experienced a number of things: some of these have fitted with my expectations, others have come as surprises. Before I talk about some of my/our experiences it is important that I share with the reader what contributes to making retirement enjoyable or not.

For anyone anticipating, planning or considering retirement: these are some of the things which in my own experience I have found need to be put under consideration:

- Retirement is not an event which starts on the day when one goes home: it is a process which should start a long time before then. Much thinking, planning and psychological preparation should be invested in it.
- Retirement is an inevitable stage in life which should be welcomed and embraced happily and positively.
- Retirement can be as useful and positive as any other stage in life.

To unpack these three points: long before retirement one should begin imagining how life in retirement could be made comfortable and prepare a good, soft landing. The process, if prepared and entered positively, will carry someone and they will enjoy it.

Get time to ask a few questions of those who are already into it. Observe how they are leading their retirement lives. Visit them at home: of course you will visit them in their own right – but in doing so, internally for your own sake, you will observe some things which will inspire you and motivate your thinking and planning, and others which will alert you on what to avoid.

Retirement involves a mindset: the quality of one's retirement will largely depend on one's attitude towards it; just as the quality of life as a whole largely depends on or is driven by an individual's mindset, so is retirement.

It is a stage in life to be welcomed and embraced – when retirement is entered with negative feelings as a time when one is “useless” or “a reject” etc, etc, then one will live in misery. To some extent this has contributed to some people clinging on, trying to postpone retirement to a later time. They feel insecure and fear the unknown.

Can retirement be equally productive as earlier years? Yes, this follows from the previous two principles. In fact, some people become even more productive in retirement than in their prime years.

Now back to my experiences in my/our first year of our retirement – *our* retirement because I am with Maama Peace. This is yet another reality which should always be borne in mind and never ignored. Both (in the case of those who are married) should plan together: carry your spouse with you through the different stages of preparation.

So far we have enjoyed doing things we did in the earlier days/years of our ministry, using more energy – manually on the farm. We have taken advantage of exercising our bodies while going round the farm inspecting the various sections (goats, pigs, cows and crops).

We have had more time together and for each other than we have had in a long time. While still active in episcopal ministry we hardly spent time together as most of the time I had a meeting to chair or a Confirmation service to preside over or a seminar to attend or lead, a sermon to prepare and deliver and so on. Most of the time the home was largely Maama Peace's duty – but now we have all the time to plan fully together.

Spiritually we have more time to study and reflect on the Word of God without rushing. This is a huge dividend for us as individuals. The pomp that goes with ceremonial life can sedate us and we forget or rather neglect the welfare of our own spiritual nourishment in preparation for our own journey with the Lord. I have had more time to fellowship with the brethren (kursorokara) and speak at fellowships (Heb10.25).

Time with family is enriching and strengthening our bonds with all our parents, siblings, "children", grandchildren and even our neighbours. Our community see us and we see them more than previously.

Ministry has become more of a spontaneous experience than a routine. We are now available to those in our Church who would like our ministry when they need us. This has led us to travel to various places where we have been invited to minister.

The list can go on endlessly but about the surprises!

You know, for 14 years I/we were being driven by a fully paid driver – taking us anywhere we had to go. Now I have to do it – be it near or far – so please prepare for that role or else begin saving for it if you are to continue enjoying that benefit.

The fact that one is no longer at the forefront of everything can be shocking if the mindset I talked about earlier is not tuned well in advance.

I am grateful to my Bishop, the Rt Rev Samuel Kahuma, his wife Maama Sarah and their entire leadership team who have kept us near and given us a great deal of reassurance and involved us where there is need.

Some ministers abhor retirement for fear of being sidelined. But we should always be mindful of the fact that we are retired and no longer at the centre of things in the same way as we were before.

As we begin our second year I cannot help but express my gratitude to Maama Peace, my wife, who has proved creative and innovative in exploring new opportunities for our livelihood together with our grown-up children who have showered tonnes and tonnes of love and made us comfortable – we believe more is in store, which is exciting.

May God bless you also.

Bishop Nathan Kyamanya is the retired Bishop of Bunyoro-Kitara