



## Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather - Uganda

### A glimpse at what your support made possible:

With the partnership of generous RCA churches and the hard work of the teachers and students at Bishop Allison Theological College (BATC), both Diploma and Certificate students completed their coursework in 2022! Praise the Lord! This accomplishment is especially significant after the school closures caused by the global pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

BATC equips South Sudanese church leaders with theological training. In 2022, 33 South Sudanese church leaders took several of the following classes: Christian Worship, Pastoral Psychology and Sociology, Trauma Healing, Preaching, Evangelism, Introduction to New Testament and Systematic Theology. Their classwork ended in August, then from September through December the students completed internships serving churches in the Ugandan refugee camps and in South Sudan.

Monday Susan Amin and Alice Hassan are two of the five women who attended the theological college in 2022. With the responsibilities of caring for children and for the home, it is very difficult for South Sudanese women to attend college and become ordained pastors. Monday Susan explained:

*"I have six children at home who are having a hard time while I am away. My husband is working hard to pay the children's school fees, but our family is struggling to pay our rent and make sure there is enough food... All these challenges can cause me to be distracted in class. I need God to do a miracle for my family so I will no longer worry about them, and I can concentrate fully on my studies."*

Even in the midst of such difficulties, Monday Susan shared: *"I am very grateful for my life at BATC. There are many things I have come to learn in my time here. I have worked in the Church for many years, and I was ordained a deaconess in 2018. From my years of work in the Church I have found many challenges and problems. Through the courses I have taken here at BATC I have learned that I dealt with many of those problems in wrong ways. But now, I know how to rightly deal with issues in the Church. I have been transformed through the knowledge I gained here, and when I go back to my Church, I will not be the same person I was."*

Alice Hassan also had a testimony to share:

*"I want to thank God for bringing me this far. When I was born, my father was disappointed that I was a girl, so he rejected me, and I was sent to live with my aunt. My aunt took me in, raised me, and worked hard to pay for my*



Monday Susan Amin who is currently a student at BATC and also attended the RECONCILE Peace Institute (RPI) when our family lived at RECONCILE

education. After graduating Senior Four, I joined the church choir and became a Christian. When I came to Uganda as a refugee I joined a church in Arua where I met some of the staff of BATC. Those staff encouraged me to join the certificate program and helped me through the application process. I never thought I would be able to continue my education past senior level. I am very blessed to be here at BATC!" – Alice Hassan

After the 2016 Civil War surge reached Yei, South Sudan, BATC relocated to Arua, Uganda. Our family, also displaced due to the same violence, moved to Arua in 2017. Shelvis and I (Nancy) both enjoyed teaching at BATC while in Arua, and we are grateful RCA partners with BATC in their important work. In 2023, the college plans to return to South Sudan, and Shelvis looks forward to traveling to Yei to teach short-courses. While there are high hopes for this return "home" for BATC, much preparation, including the renovation of buildings, is needed in Yei.

Please pray for BATC as it continues the critical ministry of preparing pastors to serve both people living in refugee camps and also those living with insecurity in South Sudan. May God continue to give these courageous church leaders hope and strength.



Once in Kampala, we were very grateful for a visit from Rev Emmanuel Lokosang, the Principal of BATC. Addie enjoyed playing chess with him 😊



Shelvis returned from Oxford in June, to a group of very grateful children :-)

### Our challenges of 2022

This past year held numerous challenges for our family. The year started with COVID passing through our family in the U.S. So, January was a month of quarantine for those of us stateside: Nancy and the kids.

Shelvis started 2022 completing the academic term in Oxford, England. He has been researching grassroots peacebuilding efforts of the South Sudanese church. Our initial plan for our family to be together in England for his research shifted due to COVID related logistical challenges.

After the strain of living on different continents for several months, we reunited in June and then moved to Kampala, Uganda, in August. In September, a case of Ebola reported in Uganda led to an outbreak which brought stress and loss to the community. We are grateful the outbreak is over now.

Living in Kampala puts us farther from the refugee camps than our previous home in Arua, yet it provides our children with an opportunity to attend an international school. In 2023, Shelvis plans to travel both to the camps and to South Sudan while Nancy and the kids remain in Kampala. The numerous changes of the past two years have taken a toll on us, especially our kids.



Before leaving Charleston in August, we shared about our ministry with the children's school at morning assembly. It is always hard to say goodbyes.



An Ebola outbreak in Uganda meant mandatory temperature checks before entering school in the mornings.

How does this impact our ministry? The COVID and Ebola related challenges have kept us physically distant from our partners, RECONCILE International and BATC. While we remained in contact through phone calls and emails, we look forward to being closer in 2023.

**Please pray**

- Please pray for peace in South Sudan so that starving people get the food they need to live
- Please pray for the church in South Sudan, that it remains a beacon of hope in a broken world
- Please pray for our children, that they will find peace in each place they move, knowing God is always with them

Thank you so much for your support during this year filled with challenges and changes as well as new opportunities for showing God's love and the unwavering hope faith provides.

Shelvis and Nancy



*Our family moved to the hills of Kampala, Uganda at the end of August 2022.*