



1/2/25

Dear Friends, Family, and Supporters in America,
Greetings from Entebbe, Uganda. Happy New Year!

I write to you from my gate at the airport just before my return to the U.S. My family has gotten my car battery out of its wintery slumber and my trunk loaded with random totes from my locker which hopefully contain needed items for launching my spring semester at the seminary on Monday. Or perhaps I will open them to discover large quantities of Tupperware. Fortunately, I will get the weekend to greet my family in Wisconsin before I hit the books.

On the way to the airport, our elder council's coordinator, Eliab Kinene, had us stop in Kampala to finalize registration of **Ambassador Free Living Church**. Its official now and recognized by the government. This will be a great relief for Ambassador Institute whose future hangs in the balance when our NGO (non-government organization) expires in four years. But when it comes under the church, the Institute will be fully sanctioned to operate across the country once again. Eliab and I toasted the success at supper. AFLC Uganda is now a single house church in Jinja, but the congregation that Nate Jore planted in Nabukosi and Eliab's church, Redeemer, in Mpumede may be among the first to come alongside in a formal association. Conversations with Eliab and with Nabukosi elders, Henry, Rob, and Ronald, have looked on the proposal with favor. Other congregations may follow. Pastor Namuyonjo David, national chairman of Ambassador Institute, also has set a vision for planting a church on some donated property north of Kampala. God-willing we may have a formal association of four or more congregations by next New Years.

Other December highlights include some of the holiday celebrations I got to experience:

On December 6th, Jinja's Ambassador Church (only days away from formally adopting "Free Living" into the middle of their name) threw its first celebration for the community. My original proposal had been that some of us get together to sing some Christmas carols for the community. But my fellow elders had soon left that proposal in the dust of Uganda's approaching dry season. We rented speakers, microphones, and keyboard, bought a Christmas tree, and cooked up a storm of meat and matoke (cooked banana). The chosen venue was only a hair or two from my front door—the porch of my house (fondly named "the director's cottage" by my team) served as the musician's stage. Many guests were soon filling our compound.

The evening's highlight was a dramatization of the visit of the Magi, the massacre of the innocents, and the flight of Mary and Joseph to Egypt. Dr. Mugooli was nervous about his first dramatic performance which only added to his role as Joseph. Mama Rose played Herod's head scribe and was relieved when I told her that it would look better if she read the Matthew 2 prophecies directly from the Bible. Gustav enjoyed making use of the tattered armchair that sits on my porch as his throne for King Herod. Aunt Anne brought little treasures from her house to give to Baby Jesus. And Mama Nissi enjoyed flitting about as the Angel of the Lord. Personally, I think a congregation should consider casting their next pageant angel to a woman in her seventies.

On December 13th, I hooked up with Mpumede's Gideon Church to celebrate a day with forty-some youth at the Source of the Nile. Pastor Xander (my fellow elder at Ambassador Church) and I were invited by Pastor Alex to preach and help baptize Shuluwa, Salago, Shadia, and Lilian. It was my second opportunity to perform a baptism—my first being Rohi, Pastor Alex's daughter, and her two cousins at a pool not too far from the Source of the Nile. The Source of the Nile's name comes from the designated place where Lake Victoria officially becomes the Nile River. It is a beautiful location for a baptism. Among the youth baptized was an older man recently converted by Alex from Islam. After the baptisms and three messages to the youth from the pastors and I, Alex asked me to break out a game of Codenames. I led my team to victory, this being my first victory against Alex after a humiliating trail of losses over the years. The prize: the last pizza.

On December 23rd, Mama Nissi and I organized a celebration for the spouses of our National Executive Team and our Elder Council. This was the first time we have gathered the spouses of our leaders. Each leader gave a speech honoring the sacrifice and support their spouse has made to our ministry, and each spouse gave a speech of response. Then we shared time in the word (Luke 2), ate another feast from the kitchen of Mama Nissi, took a group photo for the wall of our office, and ended with a game of trying to guess the names of different bible stories. The spouses, many of them non-English speakers from the village, were highly appreciative for the event.

On December 7th and 27th, we celebrated graduations on the island of Butagaya and then the village of Mitiyana. Thirty more graduates were added to our ranks of disciple-makers. The journey to Butagaya required a ninety-minute drive along the coast of Lake Victoria, a forty-minute ferry cross to the island of Buvuma, a sixty minute drive by taxi across Buvuma, and then another hour in a motorboat. On the last stretch, we passed by an island overshadowed by statues of witchcraft. It was within view of the tents of our graduation ceremony. Pray that our islander graduates boldly gain enemy ground as they start their classes.

Last but not least, on New Years Eve, Steve Maka, our workshop coordinator, invited me four hours north to the lakeshore of Lake Kyoga in the fishing community of Galiyira. Steve, a true fisherman turned fisher of men, happens to have planted the classes that graduated in Butagaya and Mitiyana... which are quite far from his home in Galiyira. He was also responsible for helping draw over a thousand people to this particular crusade. It is certainly the largest crowd I have preached to and wondered if I would need a boat like Jesus. It was Shariff's first large crowd as well—Shariff, a saved Muslim and my

driver this season, is only entering his second year as a believer. His jaw dropped and heart raced when Chairman Namuyonjo unexpectedly introduced him as my translator. But he did wonderfully.

God's Blessings,
Michael Rokenbrodt



December 23rd Celebration - The spouses of our national leaders cut the Christmas Cake



The Elder Council and National Executive Leadership Team of Ambassador Institute with their spouses. (Missing: Vice-Chairman Pastor Godfrey and his wife.)



The donated property north of Kampala. Possible site for a church plant? The women are the donors, mother and daughter. Behind me on the right is AI national chairman Pastor David Namuyonjo. On the left is elder council secretary Pastor Musasizi Wilson.



Try email marketing for free today!