



Expanding Christ's Kingdom in Kenya ... and beyond

15 April 2024

Dear Friends,

The CDC in the US estimates that 25% of adults aged 65–74 suffer from heart disease, with the number approaching 40% by age 75. Now, imagine if no medical school offered any training regarding heart disease. This is the state of our seminaries. . . . Every pastor will have both victims and perpetrators of abuse in their congregations, yet our seminaries offer little to no training on abuse.

The quote above is from our paper, “Who are the Lost Sheep, and What is Our Mission? How the Issue of Abuse in the Church is a Missiological Issue,” which I, Ruth, and Joshua presented at the **2024 ASET (Africa Society of Evangelical Theology) Conference** in March. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:11–13 that Jesus “gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God — a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ’s full stature” (NET). Training is important. Without training, the body of Christ is not equipped and built up for the work of ministry, and we will not attain maturity in Christ.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR THE CHURCH

Often, people see evangelism as the only task of missions. In this view, addressing abuse becomes a distraction from missions. A few years ago, a pastor here in Kenya preached a heartfelt sermon on abuse in the church, which he called “church hurt,” and how it has driven many people from the Church. His solution was for the Church to increase our evangelism efforts so the Church won’t die. Yet would it be faithful for a shepherd to buy more and more sheep while there are predators living in his sheepfold and eating the sheep or for a mayor to say that the solution to a murder problem in their city is for the citizens to have more children? Evangelism must be concerned both with leading people to faith in the goodness of God *and* with ensuring that we do not destroy that faith by our failure to address abuse.

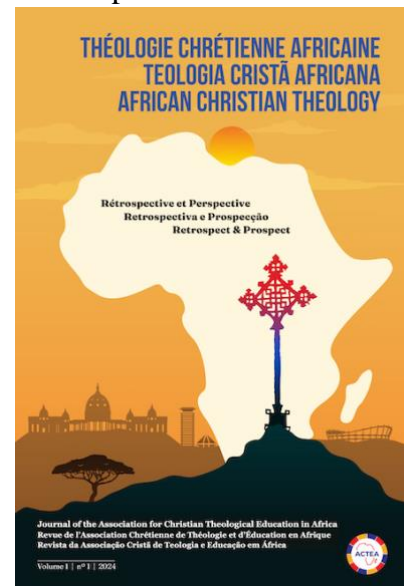
Ensuring the safety of the vulnerable within the church *is* a missions’ task, yet the Church does not yet recognize it as a missions’ task. This calls for education. That has been my, Ruth’s, focus over the past year, and God has opened many doors. I was invited to give a plenary address at International Academic Conference, on the theme, “Vulnerability, Molestation and the Church’s Response.” The conference was dual on-line and in-person in October 2023, at Baptist College of Theology, Oyo in Oyo, Nigeria. I presented my paper, “The Rain Reveals the Leaks: How the Vulnerability of the ‘Least of These’

Reveals the Vulnerabilities in our Own Hearts and Systems,” and attended the conference virtually. I was also invited to be part of the Central Working Group of *No More: Global Seminaries Confronting Sexual Misconduct in Christian Communities*. Most of my work for *No More* has been virtual, but I attended the in-person meeting in February 2024 in Dallas, Texas, with other scholars from around the globe. Finally at the March ASET Conference, I presented the aforementioned paper with Joshua.

Our ASET paper generated a great deal of interest and discussion. Another missionary who attended the conference sent us a message a few days after the conference sharing that our discussion and prayer with him about our paper was transformational for him and empowered him to speak about abuses he had witnessed within his own ministry context and how it was affecting the community he worked with. Through my discussions with other scholars at the conference, it became clear that many scholars here in Kenya are deeply concerned about the widespread abuse in the church. A year ago, hundreds of Christians here in Kenya starved themselves and their children to death under their pastor’s leading, so church leaders have recognized that we need to be more educated and watchful about abusive and cultic dynamics in the church. We will be forming a group to work together to address the issue.

When COVID restrictions shut down Joshua’s scheduled courses training local church leaders, he turned to online platforms to continue his mentoring. In discussions with African church leaders it became clear that the leaders needed more venues to communicate with other leaders across the continent and needed access to more resources. That led to Joshua and a Zambian colleague, Wakakuholesanga, forming the **African Christian Theology** fb group. The need was so great that the group grew rapidly and currently has nearly 3000 members. Meanwhile, Joshua began gathering resources and building a virtual theological library/bibliography within the group to equip church leaders. Because of the efficacy of that work, he was asked to join **ACTEA**, the organization that accredits and resources theological schools in Sub-Saharan Africa. He was asked to coordinate their new research and publications division.

In this role, working in partnership with a team of African scholars, he founded ACTEA’s new journal which is designed to equip African church leaders and those who teach and train African church leaders. Such journals have historically, he says, been important for the task of equipping and training the Church, mentioning Alexander Campbell’s *The Christian Baptist* (1823–1830) and the *Millennial Harbinger* (1830–1870). The inaugural edition of the tri-lingual journal (French, Portuguese, and English), *Théologie Chrétienne Africaine / Teologia Cristã Africana / African Christian Theology*, came out on 31 March. The issue’s theme is “African Christian Theology: Retrospect and Prospect,” looking at the past and future of the Church in Africa.



In addition, Joshua has taught some online classes and continues to mentor younger seminary and bible college teaching faculty.

With Ruth’s ministry work increasing, we have been praying for help with homeschooling. We have begun talking with an online homeschool coach who meets everything we have been praying for. It will be expensive, especially with our current budget, but we believe it will be very beneficial. We have also been praying for a new homeschool co-op that is close to us. At a church picnic on Easter Sunday, we met a Kenyan homeschooling family and were delighted to learn that they live and attend a co-op in our small town.

In February, we were able to take a family vacation where we were surprised and delighted to find our sand-castling friends we met at the beach on our last trip, two years ago. We made two more magnificent sandcastles with them.

TIMELINE

As an ACTEA representative, Joshua has attended a number of conferences, mostly in Nairobi.

- May 2023: The Inaugural AHS (**African Homiletics Society**) hybrid conference (in-person and online), Nigeria, on the theme of “**Biblical Preaching and African Realities.**” (Homiletics is the study and practice of preaching.) Joshua is a charter member of AHS, a member of its constitutional committee, and a peer reviewer for conference papers.
- June 2023: The Nairobi Hub of the Yale-Edinburgh Conference Group on World Christianity and the History of Mission, where he presented a paper by invitation: “*Eramatare: A Missional and Theological Approach to Environmental Stewardship.*”
- July 2023: Theo Global East Africa, co-hosted by ACTEA.
- August 2023: The AASR (African Association for the Study of Religions).
- September 2023: The ACTEA General Assembly and Consultation, discussing the theme, “African Theological Education: Retrospect and Prospect.”
- October 2023: The AEA (Association of Evangelicals in Africa) Consultation and Dialogue with Non-Formal Curricula Providers and Theological Educators, co-hosted by ACTEA, was held to initiate conversation between 30 Seminaries and Bible Colleges and 50 Non-Formal Curricula Providers, in order to scale up the reach of biblical training.
- March 2024: The annual ASET Conference, where we presented our paper and where Joshua is on the communications committee. This year’s theme was “The Mission of God and God’s Church: Missiology in African Christianity.”

Ruth attended:

- August 2023: “Empowering Female Faculty in Theological Education in Africa,” an ACTEA conference, in Nairobi.
- October 2023: International Academic Conference, online at Baptist College of Theology, Oyo, Nigeria, where she presented her plenary paper.
- February 2024: *No More: Global Seminaries Confronting Sexual Misconduct in Christian Communities*, in-person in Dallas, Texas.
- March 2024: The ASET Conference, where we presented our paper.

PICTURES



Ahaviah & Eliana



church picnic, Easter



maintenance



**Joshua & Ezekiel (AHS president)
ACTEA's General Assembly**



**life as ministry: Ruth with
young married couple Charles & Eliza**



click image to watch Ruth's presentation



Joshua & James Sinkua



Tuesday Men's Prayer Breakfast

PRAY

- Give thanks for our continued Kingdom impact;
- For sufficient resources for our children's education;
- For our family's health;
- For God and God's people to provide a sufficient level of support so we can continue in our work.

CONSIDER

- Whether you can partner with us financially (scroll down to see how) either as monthly support partners or with a one-time contribution to help offset our current deficit.

Thank you!

Mainosa ilomon! ... neaku taa lelo.

(Let's chew the news! ... And that's the way things are.)

grace and peace and thanks to you in our Lord Jesus,

Ruth + JOSHUA

ruth & joshua

with alitzah, hannahgail, eliana, zerachiah, ahaviah, & shalviah

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