



Thanksgiving
FOR THE
MINISTRY
— OF REV. CAN. JOHN —
MULINDABIGWI

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH MBARARA 06.12.2020



This booklet has been prepared as a note of gratitude to God for the way He has used Rev. Canon John Mulindabigwi popularly known as Uncle John. Mulindabigwi has retired this year, 2020 as an ordained minister in Ankole Diocese.

The text is his personal narration on the course of his ministry especially in Mbarara and Ankole Diocese but generally as a Clergyman. Although it has been primarily produced for his Retirement Thanksgiving Ceremony of 6th December 2020 in All Saints Church Mbarara, the information herein is rich and timeless especially concerning mission work in Mbarara City.

I am grateful to him, his wife Jolly and the children for availing the material and making it's production possible.

Blessings.

Transcribed & Designed by

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SUMMARY BIO

BORN: JANUARY 1955

BIRTHPLACE: KISORO

MARRIED: 17th December 1983

SPOUSE: Mrs JOLLY MULINDABIGWI

CHILDREN: Six (Jackie, Judith, Julia, Joshua, Joel, Joan

GRAND CHILDREN : 5

ORDAINED: DECEMBER 2005 at St. James Cathedral, Ruharo by Rt. Rev. Elisha Kyamugambi (3rd Bishop of Ankole Diocese)

MADE CANON: December 2009

PRIMARY CALLING: Missions & Evangelism

POSTINGS WITHIN CHURCH

Estates Officer- Ruwenzori Diocese

Diocesan Youth & Missions Coordinator- Ankole Diocese

Missions Coordinator - All Saints Mbarara

PRESENTLY: COORDINATOR **PARTNERS IN MISSION** (PIM)
GREAT LAKES REGION OF AFRICA

THIS IS MY STORY



APPRECIATION

I am sincerely grateful to God for the time I have spent in his ministry at All Saints Church Mbarara, serving him and his people. It started way before I even became an ordained minister. I am delighted for the work of mission that God has called me to and how he used me among children, youth and families. That area of mission was indeed my call and that's where I was first assigned when I came in Mbarara. I thank God for all I have partnered with in this work. God bless them

STARTING OUT

I came in All Saints Church Mbarara in 1995. Well, I had been coming in and ministering occasionally but that year, I had come to work in Mbarara managing Shell Ankole. That enabled me to be regular in the Church. Looking back at that time, there is alot that has changed in the church, city and country development. I came before MUST begun, I have seen it start and grow into a major University in Uganda. Before, I used to come to do youth work in town with Scripture Union. At that time, my family and I were based in Kasese. I would be called to preach at All Saints occasionally. I am thankful that I have been a witness to all this development in Mbarara.

My own life has been blessed by my involvement. By the grace of God, I have matured people and also been matured by people.



At the ceremony of becoming a Canon

ORDINATION

Having observed me for sometime, the leadership of Ankole Diocese under Bishop Elisha Kyamugambi thought I would have greater impact as a minister in Church if I became ordained. I had done lots of work in Church starting out as a Volunteer Lay Hospital Chaplain of Kilembe Hospital in Kasese. I was later appointed as an Estates Officer of Ruwenzori Diocese - Kabarole District. While there, I did work with Bible Society of Uganda, Scripture Union, Life Ministry as well as other para-church organizations. All this while, I had no idea that a chunk of my ministry work would later on be in Mbarara even though I had occasional moments of ministering here.

I therefore thank God that I was considered worthy to join ordained ministry. The leadership of Ankole therefore sent me for training at UBI together with others and the training showed me the importance and value in serving as an ordained minister. They showed me the authority of that order and I appreciated it. So in December 2005, I was ordained a deacon in the Anglican Church and sent to serve in the church I had all along been serving. I was priested a year later. I have never really left All Saints Church Mbarara.

It's true that there was a time when Bishop Elisha Kyamugambi assigned me work as an interim Youth and Missions worker at the Diocese. The assignment was temporary because I think the Bishop noticed that I would be overwhelmed with the work of Partners in Mission as well as Church so he sent



With the All Saints ministry team under Rev. Can. Gershom Kamondo

me back to All Saints Church. However, by the time I left that office, we had done trainings of Sunday School and youths workers. For that I am grateful. I am also thankful that after five years as an ordained minister, I was made a Canon in the Church of Uganda. What a great privilege it was to be esteemed that way! I surely have done my best to use that position to draw people to God and strengthen them in their home church, all by His grace. I have preached a message of hope to the youth and many others.

ANKOLE DIOCESE YOUTH CONVENTION

I chaired the Diocesan Youth and Children Convention perhaps from its early years in 2010. I think the Bishop found me resourceful in implementing such great work, perhaps because of my passion for the youth. The convention has now grown, had great impact and spread even further into the province of the church of Uganda. Actually now, there are Provincial Annual Youth and Students Conventions (PAYSCO) happening in Uganda. Even the Diocese of Jos Nigeria admired the concept and took it up. This I believe, coming from Ankole, is more than just a diocese plan but is a reflection of the strategic location that Ankole occupies in western Uganda as well as the wider Great Lakes region. I later handed over to Rev. Emmy Mwesigye who used to deputize me.

At the start, we were helped greatly by a group we formed called **FRIENDS OF THE YOUTHS**. These were professionals like university lecturers, Doctors etc who offered to support youth work in the Diocese. We used to hold prayer Breakfast meetings with the likes of Prof. Pamela Mbabazi (MUST) at the Bishop's invitation. They worked greatly to raise funds and materials for the work. As Partners In Mission (PIM), we pioneered some of these ministry interventions among the youth and the church has now taken them on. It's because of such engagements that in 2005, All Saints Parish recruited its first youth worker Abel Twinamatsiko who later went into ordained ministry. Definitely, the youth we nurture grew up into professionally mature men and women and begun families. Through them, we have a new generation emerging and we are guiding them in parenting.

These are not mere words. The people we are talking about are there and the work that has raised them is traceable and it gives us great delight. Glory to the Lord!

MISSIONS TEAM & WORK

As a missions team at All Saints Church Mbarara, we have networked and partnered with other dioceses and churches and even other youth groups. There has been great growth in All Saints Church Mbarara parish. We have worked with teams and are seeing the fruit of our labour. Actually, I found the mission planning team there.

THE YOUTHS CHALLENGE

I think I began preaching in the Church in the time that Rev. Canon William Ganafa was the Archdeacon. They used to have Youth Sundays in the church like the 2nd Sunday of every month. Team then included had people like Peninah Musinguzi, Steven Mwesigwa, Sedi Begumya, Rev. Dr. Ben Tumuhairwe then in Scripture Union, Bernard Mununura and others. The team would often look out for a preacher to come and preach and encourage the youth to love and remain in their church. At that time finding youths active in the Anglican Church was a big challenge. Even then, challenges were many.

FELLOWSHIPS & PRE CHRISTMAS MISSION

At that time there were fellowships in Church but they were not vibrant. They needed to be energised. We needed to empower the work of discipleship. Then there used to be missions into town but they used to be weekend missions running from Thursday to Sunday. We discovered that this time was never really sufficient to take the good news into town. We needed more time.



Archbishop Orombi preaching in one of the Ankole Diocese Conventions

At that time, I was working with Shell Ankole and leading Scripture Union as the Chairperson. We were doing a lot of work together with Life Ministry. We somehow got together as a small cohort of people, myself, Joel Mwesige and a lady called Jovia from Rukungiri who has since passed on. After work, the three of us would meet near Life Ministry office in John Kaganzi John's building on High Street Mbarara. We always prayed together and talked amongst ourselves concerning the state of missions in the town. We felt that the mission needed to stretch to cover at least week. So we planned and shared it with the Archdeacon at that time Rev. Canon Gershom Kamondo. His wife Efrance was also now part of the team. The team meeting embraced it and so did the Archdeacon and the entire Church.

I think the first year of the week long mission was 1998. We launched it and it was really very powerful, running from Sunday ending another Sunday. People became motivated at it. Then in three years of doing the week-long mission, we felt we needed to do outreach to offices. We felt that more than just one on one missions, we needed to engage deeper with offices.

That's how we rolled out mission to the Municipal Council, Police office, Amaizi Marungi office, URA, New Vision office, Banks and other places. All these would give us an opportunity of an hour to share with them. This is what gave birth to the Professionals Dinner. This became a very great idea. People embraced it and it grew big. We would pick a topic and a speaker and it made great impact. I am grateful for the Christians of All Saints Church for being well adjusted and accommodative and for supporting such ideas. I can see that other Churches like All Saints Kampala took up some of the programs in mission benchmarking us here. That is really progress. All these were possible not just because I worked but because we were a team.

SINGLE CHRISTIAN PROFESSIONALS FELLOWSHIP (SCP)

In the course of time, the young professionals were now mobilized in Church and felt the need to keep meeting. At that time, in 2004, they were quite a



Rev. Can. Mulindabigwi with some of the current SCP Fellowship leadership



Bishop Gasatura preaching in the All Saints Pre Christmas Mission of 2019

number who had become an active part of the regular ministry engagements at All Saints Church. They included Dorah Kabatwerere, Miriam Kiconco (RIP), Joan Bananuka, Justus Murokore (now Rev.) and many others including Joel Mwesige who was then the Travelling Secretary of Scripture Union at Besania. These were young professionals in our midst. They had time and were many.

I think they felt that the brethren fellowships of Wednesday and Friday would not of their own sufficiently meet their needs. That's how they came up with the idea of establishing the Single Christian Professionals Fellowship. They agreed to meet every Tuesday evening at Besania and chose me to be their patron considering that I had been with them as a parent. It was and still is an honour to do this duty of raising young professionals and the fellowship has been on for 16 years now. So they mobilised themselves and other like-minded people to be a part of the fellowship. They held retreats, missions outreach, community engagements, participating in the life of the Church etc.

YOUNG MARRIEDS FELLOWSHIP

Along the way, relationships were formed and several of them got married. Beautiful indeed! Now we had couples coming from SCP itself and even others from outside the fellowship. Now that they were no longer single, they formed the Young Marrieds Fellowship. A number of them in it are associate members of the Single Christian Professionals group. These are a core part of All Saints Church Mbarara. They plan retreats, meet for fellowships weekly, do missions, have dinners, pick leaders and have other fora like Clusters where they minister to others and to each other. In the course of time, many get integrated in the Mothers Union and Fathers Union Groups of the Church. This ensures continuity of the ministry that is done by and through these groups. Now Young Marrieds fellowship is also in Kampala and not just limited to Ankole. I am so glad that I have seen this in my time and even greatly participated in the work that realised it. Glory to God.

DAUGHTER CHURCHES

The Mission Team are great people whom God has used to expand and deepen the scope of the work of mission in this town. The establishment of daughter

churches that have already grown around town were largely initiatives of the team. The churches include Lugazi, Kisenyi, Katete, Kakiika, Kakoba, Nyamityobora and many others. Some are already parishes and we are really glad. It is the team that used to sit and identify these places that were in need and even identify resource persons to champion work in those places. Yet we, as a team always cared to do these keeping in harmony with the church structures. We would recommend the expansion of the mission work and church into these communities and work with the church councils and structures to make it come to pass. Ultimately, as a team, we are not establishing our own churches but being used of God to do work in the platform of the Anglican Church that he has given us or placed us in. As a team, we care to not project ourselves as the focus of attention. We're one team together with the church leadership.

CAMPING MINISTRY

In handling young people, training them to be competent in life and in ministry, we begun a camping and hiking ministry. We started out with the likes of Emmanuel Kibakunda, David Isoke, Paul Akatukwatsa, Timothy Babwetera and many others. We interacted with them and trained them for fruitfulness and sharpened them to be able ministers regardless of where God has placed them.

They cooked their own meals, prepared their own shelters, did community work and were exposed to what many would call a hard life. Yet these camping sessions are what God uses to refine us and build character in us. Most of these would be vaccists and campusers or even graduates. This camping raised and strengthened the Youth Ministry at All Saints Mbarara. This youth ministry itself did a great work in doing the Diocesan Youth Convention. Their impact has been great and we thank God.



Members of the Young Marrieds Fellowship of All Saints at their 2018 Dinner



Youth from All Saints Mbarara camping at the PIM Center in Ruharo

I am so glad that the families in All Saints Mbarara trusted us with their children, to raise them and show them the way of the Lord. It's an honour for which we are grateful to God. They contributed very willingly to the missions activities and they know the value that these activities bring to them as we pray, counsel them and minister to them.

NETWORKING

We have also done great networking among Christians especially Mothers Union and Fathers Union and even wardens. We have travelled places like Rwanda, Kasese, missions and conventions in Tanzania, Narok in Kenya, Kamwenge etc. This exposure enriched the Church, both Christians and their leadership in doing the work for God. We particularly have a great link with All Saints Kilembe in Kasese partly from my earlier work in Kasese and later now in Mbarara.

While I managed a bus company, I would give bonus tickets to have Christians and missionaries travel places. This strengthened the work of networking that we did. This long term link with All Saints Kilembe led us as All Saints Mbarara to collect relief items for them when they were hit by floods in these previous years.

I believe the link is partly behind why our Archdeacon Rev. Can. Nathan Bobs Mwesigye was picked to lead an ordination retreat for the Diocese of South Rwenzori, this year. There would have been division or enmity between such groups but God is the one who destroys dividing walls and makes us one people. We have greatly benefited from this partnership and so have they.

GRATITUDE FOR FAMILY

I am deeply grateful for my family. Jolly, my wife has been greatly supportive as well as our Children. We were wed on 17th December 1983 and she hasn't been a stumbling block for me in the ministry. God blessed us with six Children; Jackie, Joshua, Judith, Julia, Joel and Joan and they too have been tremendously supportive and a part of ministry. Through them, we have been blessed with so far 7 grandchildren. Amazingly, one of them, Judith chose to be an ordained minister like me. That perhaps shows how the grace of God has enabled me to be a noble minister before even my Children. All the children however are greatly involved in one ministry or another.

TEAMING UP WITH CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The Archdeacons whom I have served with at All Saints have been great people. I came when there was Ganafa who handed over to Kamondo and later on Rev. Canon Francis Mutatina. I think there were also others who served though for a short time. We also partnered and worked with Rev Canon Joash Tushangomujuni and now Ven. Rev Canon Nathan Bobs Mwesige. These are the lead clergy but there were many other clergy like curates and even lay readers who served and matured and even became clergy and now some are Archdeacons. All Saints has been and still is a good growing ground for them as it has been for me.

JOINT PLANNING TEAM

There used to be a mission planning team for All Saints Church and a separate one for St James Cathedral Ruharo. Later on however, we got together and now we're one team doing great work together. We worked well with the leadership



Rev. Can. Mulindabigwi in the procession at the All Saints Grand Opening



Rev. Can. Mulindabigwi speaking to the Fathers Union team in Kamwenge

of the churches to especially host the Uganda Revival Team planning for like 10 years in succession every beginning of the year. The two Archdeaconries (Greater Mbarara and the Deanery) have been very instrumental and supportive. They have provided food, money, lodging facilities and their hospitality led to the National Team members always preferring here for their Annual Planning retreat. Only this year did the venue change in a long time to Kampala.

HELP FOR FAMILIES & MARRIAGES

We have also done counselling in homes and families, restoring peace especially where there is conflict. Its not done publicly but we have put out fires in homes and people are progressing well in their marriages. Then we have also participated in preparing weddings and making sure we have functions that are befitting and bringing glory to God.

We have discouraged the brides from dancing and being recklessly showy at parties encouraging them instead but to be orderly and keep graceful for the day. That unnecessary excitement on weddings is still an issue here in Ankole and Kigezi. These functions had been made into drama parades of sorts especially the introduction ceremonies. People should stop lying about and pretending or feigning ignorance before their would-be inlaws in the name of spicing up on these functions. No one should deceive people by arraying the wrong girls on functions, pretending that the in-laws had accidentally come and other things. These things kill time and dishonour the head of the home and make deception part of the foundation of the marriage. It is regrettable. How do you start out your marriage with lies? Whom are we doing a favour by going about the ceremonies in this way?



Mulindabigwi with a team from various nations in Ngara, Tanzania in 2015

PARTNERS IN MISSION (PIM)

We have done great work as PIM in Ankole and Kigezi. This is not something you can retire from. PIM work continues. We have the PIM Center whose land was gladly donated by Lay Canon Phinehas Nyenda. This place has been refreshing for families and Teams and bringing reconciliation in communities. There have been reconciliation meetings. It is like the Ahava Canal in the book of Ezra; a place to retreat to, pray and refresh from. Am so glad that it has been this way. Hopefully, in my retirement, we will give it attention and make it suitable for other services that can be effected.

PIM work also includes the work in KSVS; taking education in the rural places. We should not just have homes of the destitute in towns yet the destitute are in the villages. We should take the service to them and that's what I have done here in Kamwenge.

THE FUTURE OF MISSION IN THE CITY

I recognize that we need to keep teaching people connecting them with each other like in professionals fellowships. These will help to raise a godly people. The other line is Men's ministries. Men rarely gather together for grater things. When they do, it is for drinking. Men need attention. They need to be helped to handle the issues that bother them.

Issues may be around the family or at the workplace. There should be Men's fellowship or Bible study in homes. These and professionals fellowships will go a long way in helping the church and society.

As a church we also need continual updates through magazines and other publications. The current generation needs compelling content to teach and equip them. Once produced, we may not only sell them for income but also avail that information on social media. People always need to be guided in their pursuits. They need to be continually sensitized as has been done around COVID 19. That is also the way they have to be sensitized so that they can live a fruitful Christian life.



Left; preaching in the United States, right; praying for youth in All Saints



The Uganda Revival Team that convened in Ruharo in January 2013



Translating during a Revival Convention



With Bishop Cranimer of Muhabura



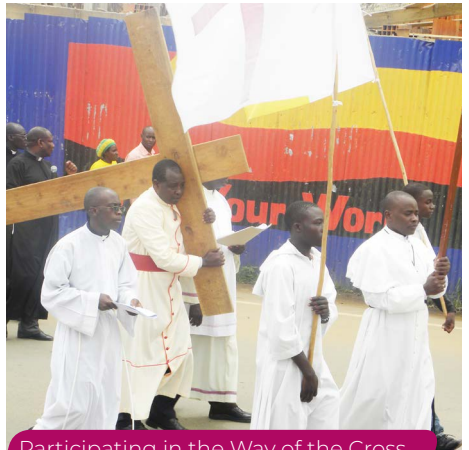
With Archdeacon Bobs



With Bishop Sheldon in Nakivale Refugee settlement

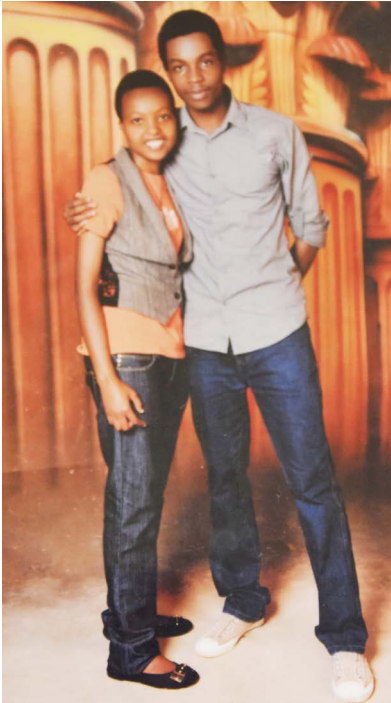


Peninah & her husband Dr Musinguzi welcomed and hosted me in Mbarara



Participating in the Way of the Cross

FAMILY PHOTOS



DAY'S READINGS

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it[a] says:

“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”[b]

9 (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions[c]? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended

higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.



COLOSSIANS 2:1-5

I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. 2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. 5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

Do Everything Without Grumbling

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”[c] Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.



St. James Cathedral Ruharo that gave birth to All Saints in 1962. It is also where I got ordained in 2005



The first All Saints Church Sanctuary then called 'Ekijanjabu'



The second All Saints Church Sanctuary that was erased to put up the current auditorium

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