

# THE JOURNEY OUT

## 2019: A YEAR TO ASK GOD

**"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO DWELL IN YOUR HOUSE; THEY ARE EVER PRAISING YOU. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO STRENGTH IS IN YOU, WHOSE HEARTS ARE SET ON PILGRIMAGE."**

PSALM 84:4-5

Twenty-five years ago our beloved founders, Arthur and Molly Rouner, went from "dwelling in the house" of Colonial Church for 32 years, to "setting their hearts on pilgrimage" as they were led to Rwanda and beyond establishing the work of the Pilgrim Center for Reconciliation.

This year as we mark the 25th year anniversary of this remarkable ministry we are digging deep into the words of Jeremiah the prophet who in Jeremiah 6:16 instructs us on our pilgrimage to stand and look, ask, and then walk in the way the Lord directs. So, we have been taking time to look back with gratitude, look around with wonder, and look ahead with expectation. In response to what we are seeing we now...

### ASK

Perhaps like me, you grew up in a family, faith community or culture that subtly frowned upon asking. After all, one did not want to be presumptuous! Recently in contrast to that mindset I have been challenged by the words of the Apostle John when he writes:

**"THIS IS THE CONFIDENCE WE HAVE IN APPROACHING GOD: THAT IF WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, HE HEARS US. AND IF WE KNOW THAT HE HEARS US—WHATEVER WE ASK—WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE WHAT WE ASKED OF HIM."**

I JOHN 5:14-15

I desire for us to have that kind of confidence so that when we approach Him we will believe that He will in fact hear and respond to our requests. He is waiting for us to approach Him with open hearts and open hands. Therefore, there are three things we have been asking for this year, things that we know are according to His will.

### WISDOM

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."* James 1:5 We are asking for God's wisdom to continue to lead us on this amazing pilgrimage. We need His wisdom to know where, when, and who to go to now and next, and how we can most effectively touch and transform lives, relationships, and communities as we go where He leads us. We believe that He has led us to launch PCR Uganda this next year and is leading us to lay the foundations for additional country initiatives in the future.

### PROVISION

We also recognize that we cannot go anywhere or to anyone without provision from the Lord. First, **we are asking for more of the Spirit!** *"How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"* Luke 11:13b We can do nothing without Him, but with Him all things are possible. Over and over again we see "only God" miracles of hope, healing, and reconciliation in the most difficult and dark situations.

Second, **we are asking for more workers!** Matthew 9:38 *"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."* He is answering our prayers! In Africa and here at home God is raising up men and women as ambassadors of reconciliation to bring this message to ever expanding groups of wounded and waiting ones.

Third, **we are asking for more resources!** God is our source and He is a God of infinite resources. As the vision for this movement continues to grow we are seeking Him for His provision to support this growth. James 4:2b says, *"You do not have because you do not ask God."* So we are boldly trusting that where He guides us He will also provide for us.

### INHERITANCE

We ask for wisdom and provision so that we can fulfill our call to ultimately bring this message and method of reconciliation to everyone everywhere.



With the psalmist we hear Him say *"Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession."* This is the destiny for those who follow Christ in His work and way.

### WALK

As we stand, look, and ask, He now invites us to walk in the good way He has prepared for us. He told the Israelites;

**"IF YOU CAREFULLY OBSERVE ALL THESE COMMANDS I AM GIVING YOU TO FOLLOW—TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD, TO WALK IN OBEDIENCE TO HIM AND TO HOLD FAST TO HIM—THEN THE LORD WILL DRIVE OUT ALL THESE NATIONS BEFORE YOU, AND YOU WILL DISPOSSESS NATIONS LARGER AND STRONGER THAN YOU. EVERY PLACE WHERE YOU SET YOUR FOOT WILL BE YOURS."**

DEUTERONOMY 11:22-24

We believe that as we follow Him in obedience, the Lord will continue to lead us on His ancient path, a path to bring hope and healing through this ministry of reconciliation.

Twenty-five years ago Arthur and Molly stepped out of the church and into a wounded and waiting world. As we celebrate our great legacy we are also encouraged and empowered to continue to pursue our destiny. Will you join us on this great Kingdom pilgrimage?

Jim Olson, PCR President





# CELEBRATING OUR LEGACY...

## PILGRIM CENTER'S FIRST RETREAT REPORT

The first program "event" was held at the Scripture Union Center, Kigali, Rwanda. The decision to present our first program as a "retreat" resulted from earlier assessment of the state of the Church in Rwanda and of the needs of the Church leaders. A sense of exhaustion is pervasive. There is a struggle with defeatism as the church faces a climate of suspicion, a mixed record of faithfulness under fire, on-going fear that the war is not yet finished, and very real limitation due to the consequences of genocide and war.

Contrary to expectations, there was no posted agenda for the Retreat, no experts, no blackboards. Instead, all gathered in a circle in a small room. The invitation to the Retreat was given through Jesus' words, "Come apart and rest a while." The retreat opened by placing a crude wooden cross in the middle of the room, our time together was "beneath the Cross of Jesus." We shared worship, and deepened our understanding of the Lord in our midst.

The second day we began with the question:

*"Has there been pain in your life that you would want to share with the group so that we may pray for you?"*



Seven and a half hours later we concluded that time of shared pain. As each one shared there was a time of prayer for healing with the laying on of hands. It is to witness to the depth of our experience together that one of the participants went for a towel to wipe the tears that had spilled on the table beneath the Cross where we prayed

together. We closed our time with foot-washing and Communion. Our message was not preached, but rather experienced by all.

The experience of this retreat was deeply moving for our team - Arthur and Molly Rouner and Tekle Selassie. The experience of the participants is perhaps best expressed in their testimonies:

*"This is the first seminar which touched my heart. When we are touched ourselves, then we know that we must touch others."*

*"This retreat was planned by God Himself. I and the others are still surprised at what has happened! If this was the starting point for reconciliation - our country would be healed. THIS is the starting point - at the Cross."*

*"I am no longer afraid."*

Submitted by Molly Rouner, March 1997

## PASSING THE TORCH

"Passing the torch," in any organization, is never easy. Especially in organizations based in faith, and calling for ministry delivered through persons, in way of offering care and healing to other persons.

The organizational success, in offering something given by the Holy Spirit, and modeled specifically by Jesus' own personal ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing, is conveyed through things like personality, commitment, and spirit. And these qualities are instinctive, delicate, and deep. They are shown through humility, sacrifice, persistence, and endurance. Those are hard qualities to find, when the truth is they come into leaders' lives by often painful avenues.

Our first great gift in the transition after twenty years, came through the readiness of already dear young friends, Todd Bertelson and his Mary. They came with deep humility and sweet spirit, and even of uncanny instincts in the healing ministry of retreats.

When they felt called back to their real estate business full-time, we knew God would show us the next successor. Todd stayed on the Board. We all prayed. And the Spirit identified and brought us, clearly and unmistakably, our gifted Dr. Jim of Bethel Christian Fellowship, St. Paul.

Brought by his colleague Dr. Justin Byakweli, Dr. Jim Olson seemed to see something in the Pilgrim Center akin to his own spirit, bringing about a falling in love with the work and the vision and its history and hope. The Spirit soon brought him to position as our leader.



He was eager to understand the Pilgrim Center's "DNA" and what it was that God was doing here. He met with Molly and me, to get at the instinctive, delicate things that had already made our healing ministry through retreats a thing of the Spirit.

The Africans had taught us much. That *trust* was critical. That white western Christian condescension would spell disaster. That following the Spirit's lead one step at a time, was essential. And that the truth that Jesus always comes is His steadfast assurance that God will work with deep power in all these retreats.

Critical for all our work is God's answer to Molly's question, "Why have brought me here?" ... "For you to ask the Africans to forgive you and your people in the West for what you did in Rwanda to divide them from each other." Her commitment to kneeling and asking that question has been the authentication mark of our work, along with kneeling and washing their feet.

Dr. Jim has many gifts. He is boldly standing before doors that are opening everywhere. He plans broadly and meticulously. He is young and strong. Annette has a lovely gift for hospitality and a deep instinct in prayer.

The Pilgrim Center is in wonderfully good hands. The blessing of their leadership is already showing.

Arthur Rouner, PCR Founder

## "BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD."

We found this was true as a Pilgrim Center team. Requirements for service: dependence on God, trusting God, learning from - guided by God - our ministry parent. In very complex situations that resulted in on-going hatred, conflict, death, the message we were given was to open the eyes of victims and perpetrators to see their true identity as children of God. In that awareness the impossible became possible.

So what were the results? What is the legacy? We do not have academic evaluations, but - the pastoral team we started with in Rwanda in 1995 is still doing retreats in Rwanda and have also served with the US team in Congo, Tanzania, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi - and yes - in the US.

Friendships forged in prayer in the retreats became a huge resource in their communities - pastors of competing denominations, student leaders no longer leading from their ethnicity but from their unity in Christ, mortal enemies caring and blessing across the lines.

A whole cadre of peacemakers who were blessed by the retreat - taking that experience, that message into their own organizations - church, government, university, village life. A number of participants founding peace development programs drawing on their connections and capacities beyond our reach.

Personal healing testimonies by the thousands:

**"I am somebody"**

Genocide orphan

**"I can sleep now"**

Child soldier

**"From that time, I am living"**

A university student

The legacy is that it goes on. Praise God.

Molly Rouner, PCR Founder





# PURSuing OUR DESTINY

## UGANDA: A NEW COUNTRY PROSPECTUS

In 2020 the Pilgrim Center for Reconciliation will be officially launching PCR Uganda. Known as the “Pearl of Africa,” Uganda emerged from colonial rule in 1962. Like many African countries it has faced ongoing challenges of political, religious, and ethnic strife. The brutal dictatorship of Idi Amin from 1971-1979 left a deep scar on the soul of the country. The ongoing guerrilla campaign of Joseph Kony and the Lord’s Resistance Army since 1987 has resulted in the deaths of an estimated 100,000 civilians, the abduction of 20,000 children, and the displacement of 1.5 million people. Additionally, unrest in surrounding countries has brought hundreds of thousands of refugees into the country. The need for healing and reconciliation in this wounded and waiting country is urgent.

Uganda has held a special place in the heart of the Pilgrim Center as Arthur and Molly visited there several times through the years to host retreats. In January 2017 I first visited the country to host a retreat for church and community leaders in Moroto, Northern Uganda. Over the past 2 ½ years I, and other US and Rwandan Senior Facilitators, have returned to Uganda multiple times, hosting 700+ people in Healing and Reconciliation Retreats, Training Retreats, and a Way of Reconciliation Course among diverse people in 12 communities from various regions of the country. Everywhere we have gone we have found wide open doors to receive our method and message.

In all these endeavors we have been preparing the groundwork for creating a sustainable, reproducible, and contextual movement of reconciliation.

Over the past two and a half years we have:

- Registered as an NGO with the Ugandan government. This has taken over a year and was completed in conjunction with local legal representation.
- We have also established a PCR Ugandan Board of Directors and Administrative Support Team.



- Identified our new PCR Uganda Country Director, Mr. Bob Mayonza. Bob is an outstanding dynamic young leader who currently serves in various leadership capacities with World Outreach Mission Foundation and Uganda Christian Outreach Ministries. Leaders in both organizations have released Bob to also take on this leadership role.
- Raised up, trained, and released 13 local Facilitators and Senior Facilitators. These leaders have gone through a thorough preparation process including attending a Training Retreat, observing and participating in several Healing and Reconciliation Retreats, being mentored and coached by our US and Rwandan Senior Facilitators. Additionally, these leaders have formed teams in the five regions we have established to provide ministerial and administrative oversight for the entire country.

We are currently partnering with our PCR Ugandan leaders to prepare a strategic plan that is:

- Clear about our goal of interdependence, promoting shared resourcing, funding, governance, and ownership of the work.
- Consistent about budgeting guidelines and financial protocols including transparency, accountability, and reporting.
- Comprehensive in scope, intentionally seeking to develop a movement that will touch every region and all peoples in the country with this remarkable message and unique method of reconciliation.



## 2020 INSIGHT

We are excited to have our official launch in March as the momentum for this reconciliation movement is growing. It is already spreading throughout the country amongst the youth, religious leaders, community leaders, policy makers, the church, communities, refugee camps and educational institutions.

There are over 33 million people in Uganda, and statistics show that 80% of this population fall in the age range of 18-35. This young generation is surrounded by various factors including unforgiveness, violence, and revenge that affect their lives socially, economically, emotionally, politically, and spiritually. We are more than ready to engage the next generation to hear, read and participate in the new life God has given them to live.

Since 2017 we have travelled throughout the country from Moroto, Soroti, Moyo, Lira, Nakapiripiti, Mityana, Kazo, Kampala, and South Sudan. Throughout these journeys we carry out reconciliation and healing retreats and witness through testimonies how lives have been changed during our sessions and prayer times.

One of our new innovations is the Way of Reconciliation Course and we were honored to have Bible College students attend and learn how to bring hope and healing in order to renew individuals, restore relationships and revitalize communities that God has called them to serve.

In Uganda, these past months we have engaged with community leaders, pastors, youth and media personalities that have strong influence on what our community and culture receive and help determine the course of life for our friends (refugees) that flee their country because of political unrest and wars (South Sudan community and country at large). On our recent retreat that we held with over 50 media journalists, they purposed to produce media programs so that the message of reconciliation can be spread widely to the youthful, technological generation.

We intend to hold transformational forums in school settings so that the younger generation can be groomed with the knowledge, purpose and merits of healing and reconciliation.

Pilgrim Center Uganda is structured and operates in a regional set up that includes the central, northern, western, southern regions and also work within South Sudan. Additionally, we are working on establishing sustainability projects across those regions to boost our resource mobilization.

We want to extend our thanks to all our friends and partners that continually invest their resources into us as we bring this ministry of reconciliation to Uganda and neighboring nations.

God bless you!

Bob Mayonza, PCR Uganda Country Director



**THE PILGRIM CENTER** is called to bring hope and healing by renewing individuals, restoring relationships, and revitalizing communities through the ministry of reconciliation.

Our work takes us to places of historic and contemporary conflict and pain to minister reconciliation by loving presence, healing retreats, and peaceful witness.

**JOURNEY OUT CONTRIBUTORS:**

Crissy Ginther, Graphic Design  
Bob Mayonza, PCR Uganda Country Director  
Rev. Dr. Jim Olson, PCR President  
Rev. Dr. Arthur Rouner, PCR Founder  
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## WAY OF RECONCILIATION COURSE UPDATE

It has been almost one year since we launched a new tool intended for small groups to dig into the topic of reconciliation in a classroom format. The Way of Reconciliation is designed to be used with small groups over six sessions covering the topics of Reconciliation, Repentance, Forgiveness, Renewing the Soul, Restoring Relationships, and Revitalizing Communities. It includes both information giving and interactive pieces to engage the head as well as the heart with the goal of personal transformation.

Since last fall, the course has been delivered in several Twin Cities churches. Most typically, it was held on weeknights as part of a midweek gathering. Participants received a packet of materials and were encouraged to dig into scripture while doing personal reflection. Several noted that they enjoyed being able to connect with one another in table discussions, and then take application ideas with them between sessions. As one person testified:

*"Over the past month and a half Messiah Episcopal Church has experienced the great blessing of having the teaching team from Pilgrim Center lead us through their course on Reconciliation.*

*Our hearts have been challenged, encouraged, and enriched by this teaching that has as its goal to not just be about sharing (very valuable, applicable, and Biblical) information and processes, but about connecting the learning we receive with our deepest heart and soul. We have seen this goal in action with time during classes to quietly ponder with the Lord insightful and challenging questions about where we are personally (and communally) in the reconciliation process. This class has given us the intentional time and space to come before the Lord with new understandings about His grace and goodness, as well as the opportunity to learn and connect with each other in active discussion within*

*small groups and group-wide brainstorming. The wisdom, compassion, and Holy Spirit-overflowing teaching that Messiah has received from the Pilgrim Center has been to us an everlasting gift and balm to our souls, and has shown us the path to greater healing that the Lord has for each one of us, for our church community, and the world-wide community."*



This past May we delivered the course at Yesu Akwagala Bible College in Uganda. The entire student body including those from five different countries along with school administrators experienced the course as a two-day seminar that was also live streamed on Facebook. Three sessions each day were interspersed with time for worship and targeted prayer ministry. As we closed and gave completion certificates, students shared how they planned to apply what they learned toward challenging life situations while others encouraged us to bring the course to their countries.

As one of those involved in the development of the course and as a facilitator, I have enjoyed engaging with The Way of Reconciliation within these different contexts. In Minnesota, I found seeing one another over several weeks built trust in sharing and deepened both reflection and personal

connections through the content themes. It was especially encouraging for me to hear people share examples from their lives starting in session one and then follow the progression of how they were applying the materials each week to their situation. In the seminar format as done in Uganda, I loved teaching it to such a receptive audience that was

applying it in ways I hadn't thought of. Teaching the course with a much larger group in consecutive sessions built a valuable momentum and allowed us to refer to previous content that was fresh in participants minds.

If you have ideas for an audience that might use the Way of Reconciliation Course please let us know. We have also designed a course Teacher's Guide which includes helpful delivery tips, learning objectives, question suggestions, and content ideas for each theme.

We hope the Way of Reconciliation Course is widely disseminated and trust that God will do a good work through it in a variety of settings.

Dr. Jonathan Stuart, PCR Board Member