

The Link

"A True Friend or Just Friendly"

"A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

Can a person have too many friends? I recall several teenagers in high school that were very "popular" having a huge following having lots of "friends." One standout (who I will call Ben) was smart, good looking, athletic and admired by his peers. Yet, early on he got involved with drugs and eventually took his life while in prison. In John Bunyan's allegory entitled *Pilgrims Progress*, the author describes accurately Ben's plight with the phrase "slough of despond." In other words, Ben (as was the character in *Pilgrims Progress*) sank deep into the mire of sin. Eventually, he was abandoned by most of his "so called friends." Another example of having multiple friends is seen on social media. Though I rarely look at Facebook, I understand that you can friend or unfriend someone with a few clicks on the computer. People pride themselves on having hundreds (some thousands) of friends. Yet, is it really appropriate to use the phrase "to friend someone?" Many are merely acquaintances or maybe a friendly admirer, but not a true friend. Some people will go out of their way in order to be liked/accepted by others, but in actuality they are simply seeking for "significance" not true friendship. There have been instances as a missionary when an African has called me "papa" or "my good friend," hoping to get financial assistance. If their request is denied, I can quickly be "defriended," like in Facebook and not even be aware of it. What does the Bible say about a true friendship:

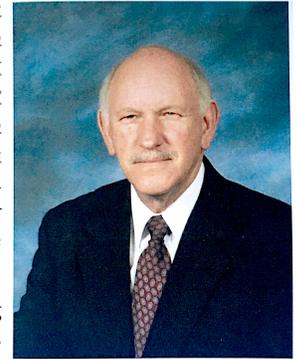
"A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" Proverbs 18:24 (nasb).

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy" Proverbs 27:6 (nasb).

"A friend loves at ALL times..." Proverbs 17:17a (nasb).

One of my best friends, James Franklin Outen (Jim), went home to be with the Lord on March 7, 2020. Jim was a Proverbs 18:24 friend who was closer than a brother. In 2001, Jim was called to be the associate pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Charlottesville where I was the senior pastor. He was the perfect match for the position. Having completed his studies at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), Jim had an unquenchable thirst to teach the Holy Scriptures to God's people. In His biography (a requirement for entrance to DTS, Jim

states, **"Many of our churches have lost sight of their responsibility to grow new Christians. Maturity comes through the dynamic power and light of God's Holy Word. I do not believe God intended us to be ornamental fruit trees."** Jim ordered his personal life, family life and ministry at the church according to the scriptures. He LIVED the word!



James Franklin Outen

Jim's friendship was not built on being a "yes man." There were times when his words cut (wounded), but it was stated in love and ultimately for my good. Jim always had my back, and I could share anything with him in confidence. Some have "friends" who espouse wonder accolades in their presence, but behind their back they will share with others what was shared in confidences. If Jim had something to say to me, he would say it face-to-face...but, he would speak well of me with others. In fact, he held my interest even above his own. Jim was a true friend!

In 2008, Jim moved to Ringgold, Georgia to retire and to take care of his faithful bride having serious medical issues. Jim wrote me a letter before leaving stating, **"I made a decision to make Nancy my full time ministry...due to her illness of some 17 years..."** Before leaving the Charlottesville area, he and Nancy gave me a check (funds from the sale of their home) to purchase land and a house for a pastor in the Ugandan village of Itukulu. Jim also served on the Board of Directors of Mission Link International for 12 years.

While in Georgia, Jim and I spoke often on the phone discussing the Bible, current events, ministry challenges and personal issues. When participating in Jim's eulogy, I struggled to put into words the love I had for my best friend. Jim made me a better person...a better Christian. I dearly miss my friend...but I am confident that when I cross over to the other side, both Jesus and Jim will be there to welcome me into the heavenly kingdom.

Rick

Coronavirus Pandemic

The Coronavirus has altered life both in the USA and in East Africa. It all seems so surreal! President Museveni of Uganda has ordered a shutdown of the nation similar to what we are seeing in Virginia. All people wanting to enter Uganda from known pandemic countries must go through a 14 day quarantine period at their own expense. A MAJOR PROBLEM IN MUCH OF UGANDA—Prices are being increased on commodities, businesses are being halted, jobs lost, modes of transportation stopped, gathering of all descriptions not allowed. If the virus were to take hold in Uganda like Italy or the USA, their poor inadequate medical infrastructure could not care for the people. Thousands will die who need a ventilator! Mission Link has sent additional funds to MLI staff to assist with the increasing prices, but **the needs are overwhelming**. On top of the pandemic, East Africa is dealing with the **Locust** invasion. Northern Kenya has been hit the hardest. Some estimate that the locust population could increase 500 fold by June. Our Ugandan staff continues to keep our USA office informed of the latest news and events. In addition to the above, Mission Link International has **postponed the "two phase" June trip** to Uganda until Fall or even next year. Please add to your daily prayers Ugandan pastors, churches, and mission organizations for protection and for continued funding needed to maintain ministries, staff and critical needs.

I know that many donors are facing a number of challenges as we together move through this war against the virus. Yet, we know that our God promises to never leave or forsake His people. The scriptures reminds us several times not to be troubled or worried (Matt. 6:25ff; John 14:27; Phil. 4:6,7). May the Lord strengthen each of us as we continue keeping our eyes fixed on the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

Your Help is Needed More than Ever!

GENERAL FUND: MLI is the “financial link” for national support and ministry projects. Though the **General Fund** is a viable and needed option for donations, below are “some” current needs & requests of which some are immediate & critical. Thank you!!

- **Motorcycle (Critical)** (includes insurance & tags) is for our pastor/teacher—**\$1500**. Transportation is vital for our teachers. Pastor Emma has the oldest motorcycle. He recently had his 3rd accident and we desperately need to replaced it. Pastor James will receive the new motorcycle passing down his to Pastor Stanley and Stanley’s motorcycle to Emma.
- **MLI TEACHERS:** Paul Akise, MLI teacher & Pastor of Budondo church plant, and MLI teacher Julius Lusinda of Tanzania, each need **\$100 per month** salary.
- **DEAF SCHOOL LAND GIVEN: PTL!—IT IS TIME TO BUILD THE SCHOOL**
- **WIDOW SUPPORT:** Your gift to the **Widow’s General Fund** helps those who do not have a donor. It also gives flexibility to help critical needs that some widows may incur.
- **OTHER IMPORTANT NEEDS:** The **Medical Fund** is constantly being used. **Any amount is appreciated**. Monthly salaries for several **staff members \$50** and two pastors at **\$70** (Pastor Emma and Pastor Wasawa). Thank you!
- **OTHER MLI PROJECTS:** Uganda Office needs to replace **phone system** (four phone set) **\$60; 2-laptops used. PEACE—Our Faithful Cook, \$850** for land for her family. She has saved \$600 from her small salary. **SHELIA**, MLI receptionist, is learning accounting—The fees per term is **\$125**.
- **STREET KID’S FUND:** MLI helped “**Mo**” to learn mechanics by gifting him mechanic tools; **Reagan** supported in school is back on the streets sniffing glue; **Azam** remains in primary school; **Moses** is a street shoe salesman; **Abraham#1** just got out of jail and recently married; **Joshua** was beaten by the police and delivered his body to his alcoholic father (Godfrey). **Police said to his father that if they catch Joshua on the streets again, they will either break his legs or shoot him.** **Michael** and **Julius** are vendors on main street in Jinja selling simple crafts. Michael suffers from depression and Julius tries to support his kid in school. **Abraham#2** lives in our compound and attends secondary school. He is being trained to cook. He is very active in the MLI church. **Zack** is Zack. Pray for him.

Mission Link Christian Study Center Witnessing Changed Lives

In the mountains of Buhwezu Village, Mission Link is making a difference in the local churches. Pictured above are 26 proud members of the 2019-2020 graduating class who spent a year studying the Bible. The six women who completed their studies have been trained to disciple other women. One testified that she had understood for the first time the meaning of grace. The Bible so impacted her life, that even her husband noticed a tremendous difference in her life.



They are now having extraordinary peace/happiness in the home. In past classes, MLI has witnessed even pastors accepting the Lord. The Bible literally comes alive for many students! I am grateful to Pastor James (pictured left of rick) and Pastor Stanley (pictured right of rick) for traveling 10 hours each month to the mountainous village of Buhwezu spending a week training Africans. We are also grateful to Pastor Charles (pictured far right wearing a purple shirt) for his efforts in locating MLI educational sites.



Land Purchased to Build a New School for the Deaf: In Kamuli District, MLI has recently purchased 3.2 acres for the future site of the deaf school. Pictured holding the camera is MLI’s Director Pastor Philip Tenywa. In the background (Right to Left): Thomas Kunya (MLI’s Bookkeeper); Pastor Herbert Kabuluku (founder of the deaf school); Attorney Stephen Muzuusa (close friend and lawyer for MLI); Landowner and government official LC-1. We are very grateful to the generous donor who has assisted MLI in purchasing the land. Mission Link has many friends in the USA who have embraced (believed in) MLI’s ministries and projects. We pray that some of MLI donors will have a giving heart for the deaf children and capture the vision of constructing classrooms and dormitories.

IMPORTANT!!

DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, ALL TRIPS TO UGANDA ARE POSTPONED UNTIL FALL OR SOMETIME IN 2021.

MISSION LINK “MAY” NOT BE ABLE TO SEND NEWSLETTERS OUT FOR THE MONTH OF MAY & JUNE. HENCE, IN ORDER TO KEEP UP WITH CURRENT MLI HAPPENINGS, PLEASE SEND ME YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS: Text: 434-981-9101 OR thelinkoffice@gmail.com. PLEASE SEND AS SOON AS YOU READ THIS REQUEST.

THIS NEWSLETTER HAS INSERTED TWO ENVELOPES FOR BOTH APRIL & MAY DONATIONS. THANK YOU SO MUCH!!

NOTICE: Again, April/May is a continuation of MLI’s cell phone collection. Please ask your family, friends, Bible study group and church (Pastor) to donate their old cell phone to Mission Link. Also needed are laptops, tablets, electronic keyboard, and cameras. Thank you for helping!



Thirty dollars a month brings great happiness to our African Widows!

Will you prayerfully consider adopting a widow? (James 1:27) **Irene Mutesi** is 69 years old (1951) having 3 children. Irene states: **“My husband died of an unknown disease in 1993. I thank God for my life.”** Irene is grateful for the provision and care given through Mission Link Int’l that has improved part of her life (soap, stove, medical, some financial support, etc.). Her challenge is school fees for the children. Irene fellowships with the Church of Uganda.”