



Malcolm Pritchard

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Location: Uganda



What I do: Theological college tutor, helping to promote spiritual development and a faithful understanding of the gospel in college life.

Dear Friends,

It's the dry season, hence warmer and sweeter than usual greetings from dry, dusty, sunny, sweltering, wonderful, windy Gulu.

Some of you know that recently I have had to deal with some health issues. The line between a TIA and a stroke is blurred but persistent symptoms suggest something happened to me. We all know those who have suffered serious injury from a stroke, so I am profoundly aware that I have been preserved from that.

Nevertheless I am persuaded that I can no longer do the work here and so I will shortly be returning to the UK. I stay with CMS for a further six months and then I shall retire – although as that word may have negative associations, let's call it "repurposing" for the next chapter.

I have been pacing myself, which has allowed me to continue teaching the Alpha course in Gulu main prison. A verse that means a lot to the inmates is Hebrews 13:3 **"Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."** It is good news when the prisoners know they are not forgotten. They have been a great encouragement to me, praying for me when I was ill and responding enthusiastically to my teaching. It is a lovely noise to hear the buzz of 70 men in conversation about what the Bible says about Jesus. And the acapella worship of male voices in a confined space is spine tingling. I have been able to distribute 75 Bibles and they are asking for more. It is a shame photography is not allowed inside, so please use your imagination.

I have also been learning about prisons from Dominique Gilliard, whose work I commend as he gives a scathing indictment of incarceration in the USA but positively he also shows different ways in which the church can remember those in prison even if you don't actually go through the gates yourself. For me, given that a significant proportion of those in Gulu prison are there as innocent victims of malicious allegations, the purpose of the Alpha course is to stop them, on release, killing those who stitched them up.

Another verse that has meant a lot to me as I reluctantly come to terms with leaving is Galatians 6:6 **"Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher."** (I came away from prison laden with gifts that each ward had made for me!) The Apostle Paul applies the general principle of reaping and sowing to the vital work of theological education! The Bible is not an easy book and unless Jesus followers are taught well, the church will not grow up. The word for teacher comes from the verb from which we get catechism, catechists and catechumen. It means to give instruction. The great need here in Gulu is for



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To the edges**



theological education to be properly funded and for the church's leaders to be well taught. This need becomes more acute as the diocese seeks to be self-sustaining in response to tentative developments around marriage in parts of the Anglican Communion. College trains the workforce of the diocese, as the bishop reminds me. When theological education is valued enough to generate sufficient investment, the harvest will be a church of disciple making disciples. Of course, you

would not have been supporting me if you did not believe this. I am profoundly grateful for your prayerful and generous support over the years. Thank you!

Recently I discovered a wonderful online resource called Seminary Now. It produces quality videos of contemporary scholarship in easily digestible chunks. Some of the students have been keen enough to study with me and we have had some excellent conversations late at night. It is shocking for them when they see that nowhere in the New Testament is heaven described as the place we go to after death. In biblical reality the direction of travel is 180 degrees in the opposite direction. The grand narrative of Scripture shows how God desires to live with humans. Jesus taught us to pray for his kingdom to come on earth as in heaven. And so on. The problem is there is so much baggage associated with the lie that has been told for years that it takes a while for some deep foundations to be dug up and re-laid. So please, no more jokes about St Peter at the pearly gates, boring prospects involving harps and clouds, hypotheses about stairways to heaven, hymns to be sung "til in heaven we take our place" and songs that tell me one day I'll fly away!

Revd Sarah Cawdell will be arriving to take up the role of Principal next month. Please pray for Sarah and her husband Simon, who will be serving as CMS mission partners. The word "challenge" can be a euphemism for all sorts of trials and this job will certainly be a "challenge". But it is also wonderfully rewarding as I have found, and I will miss Gulu enormously.

Thanks again and every blessing,
Malcolm



Prayer Points

- ▶ Give thanks for the warm reception of Alpha in prison. Pray for discipleship to deepen.
- ▶ Give thanks for students back in college. Pray for their health and their willingness to learn.
- ▶ Give thanks for the imminent arrival of Sarah and Simon Cawdell. You know how to pray!
- ▶ Give thanks for my time in Gulu and improving health. Pray for good endings



Photos from top to bottom: Extra-curricular theology with some of the students; Nearly every day young mothers with a baby strapped to their backs come begging at my gate. This is one of the sad legacies of the COVID lockdown; I shall soon be an alien in flight, sadly; Sarah and Simon Cawdell are coming to Gulu as CMS mission partners.



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