

# **REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP FOR RECONCILIATION INSTITUTE, 2024**



*Report generated by Marion Ndeta Wasia,  
GLI Regional Coordinator*

## **Testimonies**

“I will return to GLI again. I have never felt so refreshed, rejuvenated, and challenged as I did here,” said Rachael Chemase, a participant from the Reformed Church in Eldoret, Kenya.

“I felt completely at home at the GLI Institute. There were so many takeaways for me to reflect on and implement. Every Christian leader should have this opportunity. I will certainly return,” shared Berhanu Fufa from World Vision Ethiopia.

“This has been an incredible experience. It’s a unique conference with rich content,” noted Maria Jessop, a representative from Catholic Relief Services.

“This Institute has refreshed me holistically,” said an anonymous participant.

Judith Kosgei added, “This is my first time at the GLI Institute, and it has been an excellent space for learning, shaping, and growth.”

## **Introduction**

The 13th annual GLI Leadership Institute brought together 107 Christian leaders representing 13 countries from more than 11 denominations. The Institute provides a theologically rich, ecumenical space that allows Christian leaders to learn from the diversity of their experiences while developing concrete methodologies for seeking unity across divisions. These efforts foster communities centered on a Christian vision of reconciliation.

The Institute nurtures Christians dedicated to continuous training and equipping others, calling forth the gifts of the community to inspire, form, and support individuals to become ambassadors of God’s movement of hope. It also deepens formation through teaching a biblical vision of reconciliation, inspiring the transformation of communities and relationships across the region.

The Institute connects leaders with a common theological vision and language through shared stories and collective learning. The Word Made Flesh (WMF) methodology, central to the Institute, brings together theological, contextual, and practical learning. It reflects the core Christian calling to follow Jesus as life's source, goal, and purpose and as the way toward God’s reconciliation.

The Institute offers a space for leaders who are passionate about their Christian faith, peace, and reconciliation and who hold a vision for a better world centered on the life of Jesus. Participants are provided with opportunities for learning and resource-sharing that creatively inspire and support their individual and communal spirituality.

This year, 107 participants—different races, ethnicities, and traditions, men and women, young and old—from 13 countries and over 11 denominations came together to engage in this journey.

## **Daily Rhythm**

Each day began and ended with worship. Select participants led morning devotions, introducing the day’s theme. This was followed by a one-hour session of scriptural imagination, providing an

opportunity to deeply engage with God's Word and reflect on His kingdom. The witness session, held after a break, brought each day's theme to life by highlighting real-world practices and contexts across the region. In the afternoon, participants joined small groups for seminar sessions based on their preferences. The Institute offered six seminars, equipping participants with practical peace-building skills. Participants also gathered in Country Working Groups (CWGs) to focus on the challenges specific to their home countries, identify community divisions, and develop strategies to address them upon returning home. This time also allowed participants to connect more closely and form lasting relationships through the established networks.



Participants of the Non-Violent Advocacy Seminar

The GLI Institute centres around five key questions, each explored over the five days. These questions encourage participants to open up to each other and new possibilities, listening for the Holy Spirit's guidance in their journey. The aim is to embody reconciliation and a new we in Christ, especially in the context of the challenges faced by communities in the region.

Day One: New Creation -

Reconciliation Towards What?

Oscar Nduwarungira started the day off with a devotion that encouraged participants to focus on the price, which remains new in Christ despite all else around us. During the Day One theological framing, Father Jacob Onyumba, while drawing a parallel between the Great Lakes current status and Walter Brueggemann's discussion of the US's dominant culture, he chastised the Church of amplifying the dominant culture instead of functioning "as a community that is alternative to the dominant culture." He encouraged participants to envision the New Creation by demonstrating hope and witnessing that the earth's wounds can be healed. While reading select verses in Exodus Chapters 13 and 14, he said Christians of this region should profess that conflict is not good and is not the only script in this region by building Goshen villages amid the turmoil. He said the church should embody the community of Goshen, like in Egypt, a community that reached out to the hand of the Lord while crying under the oppression of Pharaoh.

He noted that those who demonstrate the New Creation embody the radical new reality that Isaiah talks about in Isaiah 65:17 - 19, where God makes a way where there seems to be no way. "The vision of Isaiah is radical. Not mere thinking," he exposed. He, however, clarified that the New Testament New Creation was symbolized by the death and resurrection of Christ, believing

not in the expression of modern optimism but in a set of new values and the possibility of goodness, love, and compassion.

He added that as we live the new reality, we should celebrate God's deliverance with remembrance ceremonies, knowing that our liberation is founded on a New Creation. He said the new reality becomes the alternative culture, which is apart from the dominant culture, a community of Goshen, ready to follow Jesus Christ on crucifixion Friday just like on resurrection Sunday. He challenged Christians to change our way of seeing things and realize that the Goshen communities are not the Church of the powerful but of the weak and lowly. He said that despite everyone wanting more guns and wars between nations, GLI imagines the possibility of a new reality where we hope for reconciliation and live in a way that demonstrates to others that God is gain.



Encouraging collaboration among brethren, Father Jacob challenged the GLI 2024 Institute participants to build Goshen communities where they weep, cry, live, and celebrate together the radical reality of love, justice, and compassion. He admonished all to walk together, saying we must soul-search and ask, "Whom am I walking with? Are they embracing the vision of the New Creation? How many are walking with you?" "Because the communities become signposts of reconciliation, demonstrating reconciliation to the fallen world," he concluded. Bishop Willy

Ngumbi Ngengele witnessed the Goshen communities in Goma, where the Catholic Church supports those in the communities to rebuild their lives.

### Day Two: Lament – What’s Going On?

We heard a lament from Rev. Albert Randa of MCC Tanzania, decrying the successive tribulations that have befallen him with multiple losses through murders and medical negligence. But through his sharing, we learned that God provided him with comfort to carry on as he hopes for justice for the lost lives of his children.

Referring to the African spiritual “Lord How Come We Here,” Dr. Eric Lewis Williams, from Duke University’s Centre for Reconciliation (CFR), shared an example of both an individual and communal lament that enslaved Africans used to present their deep laments, mourning and grief as they petitioned God to intervene in their situation of bondage. He noted that, like in the song, it embodies the community’s embrace of lament as a gift in time of weeping. He reminded all that even in times of lament, God also weeps because He is deeply grieved and concerned at the pain of His people. “Lament is an opportunity to join with God through prayer to lament what is going on in the world,” he said.

Dr. Eric stated that the book of Habakkuk highlights lament and praise as twins. He called on the Christian Church to lament for the wounded world, where lament is raised to God as a cry of fear, pain, anguish, anger, grief, and reference to God. “Hebrews 5:7; Jesus consistently offered His lament to God,” he said. He highlighted that lament is a gift that;

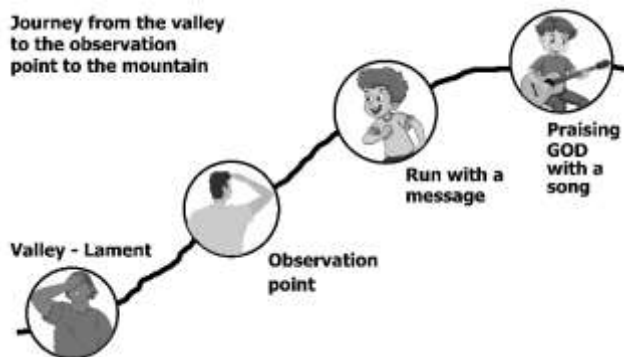
1. It is a healthy way of expressing emotions and, thus, a pathway to healing, as it is a therapeutic, spiritual discipline and a healing practice for individuals and communities.
2. Fosters spiritual authority and vocational authority, where Christians face and express pain rather than avoiding it. This helps believers to express faith in God, an act that strengthens their faith and fortifies belief.
3. It can broaden a social vision and increase a sense of justice consciousness. He added that lament explains the notion of justice of God in a human society. It calls for divine intervention to mobilize believers not to turn their faces from the presence of injustice but to awaken consciousness to advocate and reflect.

He expressed concern that humanity has become a subject of its destruction, pain, and confusion. He called on mourning women and men to take up wailing and talk to God about suffering and call on Him to alleviate pain and evil. He said the time has come for contemplation and action, like Abraham Heschel, who joined Dr. King in marching while praying, “We need to pray of our feet. Do something!” Challenging Christians to take up issues that matter, namely poverty, injustice, the suffering of nationals and young people, and victimization of women, then our initiatives do not matter. Samuel Okiror, the MCC Country Representative of Chad, provided the witness. This nation suffers persistent conflict between farmers and pastoralists and is now choked by droves of refugees from Sudan. Levi Yoga provided a context of the Sudan crisis and its impact on South Sudan, with revelations of an overflow of Sudan refugees into South Sudan, where some refugee camps with a capacity of 2,000 refugees are accommodating over 14,000 refugees.

### Day Three: Hope - What Does Hope Look Like?

The theme was explored through a scriptural imagination by Rev. Dr. Celestin Musekura, the Founder and President of African Leadership And Reconciliation Ministries Incorporated (ALARM, Inc.), one of GLI's founding partners. Drawing a contrast between lament and complaint, Dr. Musekura said that lament, though an expression of anger and disappointment to God at going on, comes with hope. Drawing from the experience of Habakkuk in Habakkuk Chapters 1 – 3, as in the image below, Musekura offered deep insights and discipline when faced with despair.

He stated that hope begins with an honest dialogue with God, saying, "Unless and until we go to God honestly, we will never know hope." Sharing his own experiences in times of turmoil, he exhorted the congregation to get involved and remain faithful to the message and the cause of reconciliation.



Participants had a moment at the Uganda Martyrs Museum, where they heard the powerful story of witnessing the Christian faith of the 25 people who had to pay the ultimate price for their faith and belief in Christ. Touring the museum erected in their honour, complete with vivid imagery, brought the magnitude of what it means and can cost to stay the cause of Christ.

#### Day Four: Leadership - What Kind of Leadership?

The focus was on what kind of leadership would take our region to our desired vision of peaceful existence. The speaker, Bishop Zac Niringiye, drew his presentation from the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:5 – 15 and Ezekiel 3, where he challenged participants to emulate the life of Christ and live as He did. "There was something about how Jesus lived," Bishop Zac said, adding, "It is about being. About living." He further challenged by asking: What does the way we pray and how we pray portray? A hypocrite? A pagan? A leader?

Bishop Zac said the work of reconciliation is disruptive, so it calls on every leader to be a leader of a character that depicts humility and honesty, a deep conviction that is demonstrated by our values and belief, courage to live our convictions, a consistency that demonstrates our track record and be competent where we keep growing, learning and unlearning as we develop connections of solidarity with other like-minded leaders. During the participants' response to the message, one participant commented that "leadership is about live-ship," a statement that became GLI's 2024 Institute catchphrase.

#### Day Five: Spirituality for the Long Haul: Why Me? Why Bother?

The final day of the Institute focused on the daily disciplines of Christian leadership. The day's speaker, Marion Ndeti, GLI's Regional Coordinator, built on Christian leadership as a live-ship as the day's question spoke of formation. In reflection, she noted that the day's theme called participants to reflect on where they draw their strength to continue in the ministry of

reconciliation. She reiterated the need for consistency, conviction, and commitment in the lives of Christian leaders, even in constructing practical leadership patterns and personal spirituality.

Drawing lessons from the story of Moses and the Burning Bush in Exodus 3, she said this scripture taught leaders the discipline of paying attention to our hearts, beliefs, and persuasions. She noted that the discipline of paying attention calls leaders to slow down from daily busyness, be present in their moments to take a retrospect of the heart by interrogating their thoughts, motives, and persuasions, as well as embrace fellowship with other brethren. Such moments of fellowship allow us to listen, pay attention, and see the extraordinary in the seemingly ordinary, like the situation of Moses and the burning bush that would not be consumed. The day ended with a celebration, with certificates of appreciation awarded to partners who had made the Institute possible and certificates awarded to participants. It was then followed by a banquet accompanied by worship music from a singing team of youth based in Kampala.

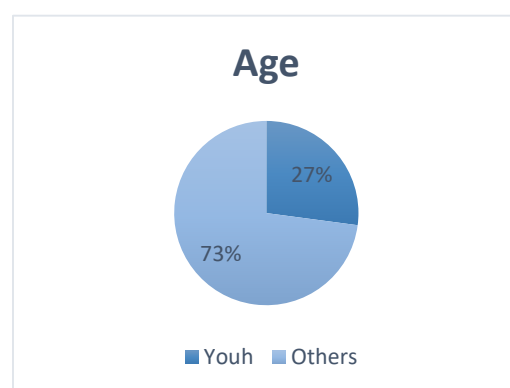
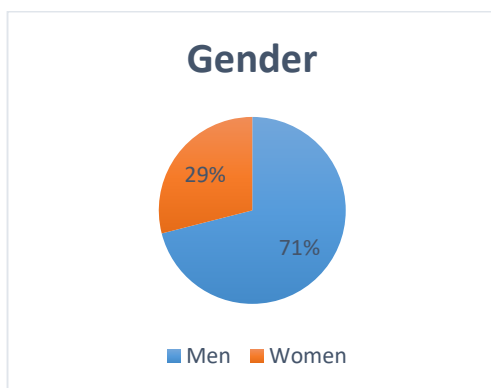
### Seminar Topics

1. The Prophetic Word in Times of Conflict
2. Nonviolent Advocacy Approaches for Christian Leaders
3. Self-care and Nurturing Resilience in Turbulent Times
4. The Word Made Flesh: A Pedagogy for Christian Reconciliation Curriculum
5. Restorative Justice in the African Context
6. Activate, Not Radicalise: Youth in Peacebuilding, led by Otieno Ombok

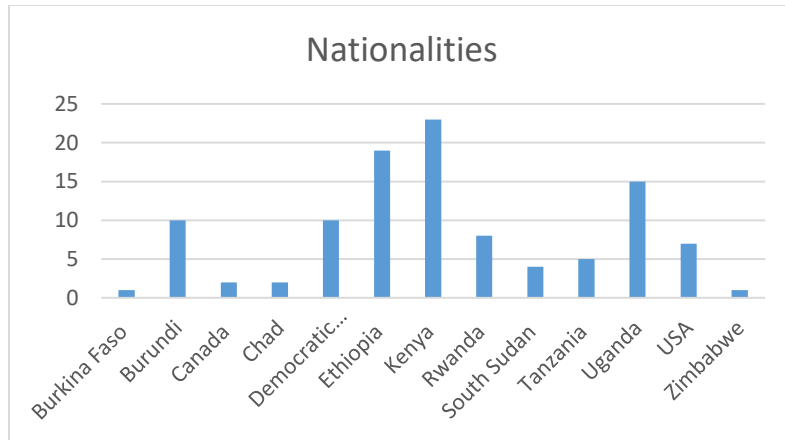
### Participant demographics

1. Gender and Age

This year, we had 107 participants: 76 (71.03%) men and 31 (28.97%) women. This is a 29.9% increment from last year's attendance. Among the participants were 29 (27.1%) young people below the age of 35, with our oldest participants between 69 and 79.



2. Nationalities



### Denominations

Anglican  
 Baptist  
 Lutheran  
 Mennonite  
 Methodist  
 Non-Denominational  
 Pentecost  
 Presbyterian  
 Restoration Movement  
 Catholic  
 Other

### Funding

We are thankful to our generous partners, who sponsored participants to the Institute at the St. Mary's Ggaba Senior Seminary in Kampala, Uganda. Their contributions made the Institute possible by funding its costs. Our gratitude goes to;

1. ALARM
2. CRS
3. CFR
4. Dale and Gann Herman
5. GLI
6. MCC
7. Self-sponsorship
8. Tearfund
9. World Vision International
10. World Renew

### Evaluation and Feedback

We are thankful to repeat participants and more thankful to the first-time participants. All participants could express their observations through an electronic survey, and their responses enabled GLI to improve in future institutes. It was overwhelming and refreshing to see the vote



of confidence in the relevance of the gathering as well as the themes and topics discussed. 100% of the respondents pledged to return and recommend the Institute to other participants. There also were suggestions on new focus topics, especially in seminars, on developing the youth as non-violent advocates leading. It was also observed that more young people and women should be encouraged to attend the gathering, and more women should be included as plenary speakers. Overall, the evaluations were positive and encouraging.

### **Institute Faculty**

1. Father Jacob Onyumbwe
2. Celestin Musekura
3. Eric Lewis Williams
4. Hezron Komen
5. Jeremiah Kibanya
6. Liberty Muhereza
7. Marion Ndeti
8. Maurice Otieno Ombok
9. Oscar Nduwarungira
10. Vat Kamatsiko
11. William Kiptoo
12. Bishop Zac Niringiye;

### **Translator/Interpreters**

1. Jean-Marc Asobee
2. Kelly Lunani

### **Worship Leaders**

1. Amos Manirakiza
2. Faith Mbayah

### **GLI Staff, Volunteers, and Logistics Team**

1. Betty Tumukunde
2. Christine Achayo
3. Elizabeth Namutosi
4. Margaret Alobo
5. Marion Ndeti
6. Solomon Hains

### **GLI Media**

For more information, videos, and photos, please visit GLI's media on;

GLI website: [www.gliinstitute.org.ug](http://www.gliinstitute.org.ug)

Facebook: Great Lakes Initiative – GLI

X/Twitter: @gli\_ea

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@greatlakesinitiative4742>