

News Brief

JANUARY 2021

Year in Review

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Every January, we like to reflect on the last 12 months and celebrate all that the Lord did. We are always in awe, as the things He does are far greater than what we could do on our own. As you read this News Brief, we hope you are also able to celebrate these reminders of the good that happened in a tough year. You were an important part of these stories!

Last February, Franklin Shelimba shared about his prison ministry. He visited a local prison and hosted soccer matches with over 900 inmates in attendance. Through this event, he had the privilege to share the Gospel to hundreds of men, many of whom responded with the desire to follow Jesus! GSSM President Russ Carr also shared about the events of the 2019 Christmas outreach in Kiteza where GSSM students, graduates, and staff helped clean the village, repair homes, host sports training for kids, and provide a Christmas dinner for the community.

In March, Russ addressed the question of why, which may seem even more relevant now than we even knew it was then. He shared an excerpt from his book The Coach Who Lost It All In Order To Win It All and discussed the many questions of why difficult things happen and how the Lord remains good and faithful through it all.



February



March

April is when the reality of the severity of the global pandemic was just beginning to set in. Russ took this moment not to dwell on the hardships and changes we were all facing but rather shared with us an important reminder, “Jesus commanded us to love one another as He has loved us.” In a time where we all needed to come together to support one another near and far, Russ launched his Home Mission Project, sharing countless Sports New Testaments with GSSM supporters and encouraging them to pass them along to someone who may be in need of some Good News during a very hard time.

April



By May, we had heard some updates from GSSM alumni and students around the world and were given a better look at how the pandemic was affecting life and ministry in different regions. We heard from Muan, Ivan, MacGeofry, Ojok, and Isaac in India, Malawi, and Uganda.

Isaac shared how he had to get creative with ministry and use social media to connect with his athletes for regular discipleship methods. In some locations, like Malawi, enforcing a stay-home order was extremely difficult because of the amount of existing poverty. Overall though, the tone was very similar to what we were experiencing here – job loss, hardship, and the desire for restoration.

May



June

In June, Russ shared another update from Uganda as we started to hear more about the effects of the pandemic on the nation. At this point, promised provisions from the government had not yet been delivered to many communities. Patrick shared that people were knocking on neighbors' doors to ask for food. Patrick and David both were able to provide food for a few families in their communities, doing what they could while still taking care of their own families and the friends whom they were helping care for as well.

As July arrived, we were all feeling the pressure to take a breather as the previous few months had taken a toll on all of us. Russ saw this need and wrote the July news brief about "Taking a Time-Out". He noted how, during an intense sporting match, a coach sees when it is best to call a time-out for the team. Russ encouraged us to be still and hear from our "coach", and allow God to speak to us in the moments where we needed Him to move.



July

Alyssa announced in August that she and her husband, Mike, would soon be welcoming their new daughter, Charly Wren! Alyssa shared that this miracle was a huge blessing after a very trying start to the year. Meanwhile, the Ebenezer team shared that transportation had slowly reopened, giving them the opportunity to start ministry again. Isaac sent us many photos and updates in August of his team and their regular discipleship lessons; his athletes were responding so well to what they were learning about being a follower of Jesus!

August



In September we heard of more slow reopenings of communities around the world. MacGeofry (Lilongwe, Malawi) told us that his church and small groups grew by 50% during the pandemic! Barnabas was able to meet with the Ebenezer team to reflect and share about ministry over the last few months and make some plans for the remainder of 2020, and Isaac's discipleship classes continued! We also announced the new GSSM Sponsor a Student Program.

October brought us into the final quarter of the year and Russ guided us into remembering true thankfulness. We have been so grateful at GSSM to have support and encouragement during a very difficult year. The ways Russ was pointing us all to be thankful was not to say "thank you God for these hard times" but to say "thank you for these ways you showed up and provided amidst the hardship and your promise to be with us in it all." Also In October, our new term of 36 students started the GSSM training course!



September



October

When November came, we got great news! Early in the year, we weren't sure when in-person ministry would be able to happen again at a larger scale so we were very excited to hear that the Christmas outreach would be happening!

Barnabas shared that the annual Christmas outreach would take place in Migyera, Uganda and that they were planning to send their team to host a sports clinic, share the Gospel, help clean the community, distribute food and other resources to families in need, and share a Christmas dinner with the members of the community!



November



December

In December, as we closed out the year, we highlighted one more of the great things that happened in 2020. Franklin Shelimba of Nairobi, Kenya has worked all year to empower members of his community in different ways. He has taught over 30 families how to farm mushrooms to generate income. In addition, he has taught women in prostitution how to use farming to create income and get out of prostitution. As a former professional soccer player, Franklin has trained many athletes in soccer and volleyball, offering them a fun recreational space as well as a place to hear the Gospel and learn more about following Jesus. He was even able to harvest enough spinach and kale to share with more than 40 families in his community.

Thank you for taking the time to reflect on the last year with us! We hope and pray that the Lord has blessed you as you have welcomed the New Year. Above all, I pray that you can find some goodness and joy in the midst of hardship. Best, *Sequoia Phipps*



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