

JUNE 2023

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10: 23-25.”

Dear Friends,

Your gifts continue to be a source of encouragement to us - we praise God for your faithful giving!

One of the beautiful treasures of Advocates International are our archives that date back to when Sam Ericsson founded AI in 1991. I often delve into these, on the one hand because for me it is a great trip down memory lane, but on the other hand because I want to keep reminding myself about our founding vision and values. Recently, I looked at Sam’s newsletters of 30 years (1993) and 20 years (2003) ago.

In the past two years I have been quite impressed with myself about how much I have travelled to visit our advocates across the globe! That was until I read in Sam’s newsletter of May 13, 1993: *“I returned yesterday from the 36,000-mile journey that circled the globe. It was the most memorable trip of my life. When I stepped on board Delta Flight 60 bound for Frankfurt, Germany from Washington D C on April 5, I was in a ‘state of expectancy’. But the evidence of His ‘surprising power’ during the trip was beyond anything I could have hoped – or planned”* ***“In his heart man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps” Proverbs 16:9.***

Sam traveled with one objective – to meet people – the advocates around the globe, donors and potential donors, judges, heads of state, law students... He really understood how powerful it was to meet in person, to look one another in the eye, sometimes speaking a word of correction, but more often, words of affirmation and encouragement! Those of us who had the privilege to know Sam as a mentor can attest how those personal meetings inspired and mobilized us!

In September 2003, after quoting the above scripture from Hebrews, Sam writes: *“Why mobilize Christian lawyers, judges, and national leaders? Because evil is on the loose. We need to encourage and equip competent advocates who are engaged on the frontlines of the battle. Among the worst evil are religious intolerance, persecution, and discrimination. Lawyers play the key role in promoting justice and religious freedom. Justice and freedom grow best when competent nationals nurture these ideals within their communities. As seen in Christ’s Good Samaritan story, the innkeeper was indispensable in caring for the man who had been beaten, robbed, and left for dead. What would the Good Samaritan have done without the innkeeper? Likewise, lawyer “innkeepers” are indispensable for those in need, whether they are pastors, presidents, or prisoners. Often, they are “the voice for the voiceless.” Evil is escalating on every continent. The “clash of civilizations” is no mere theory. It is a brutal reality. During the past decade, we have facilitated conferences, seminars and gatherings held in over 30 nations. Overall, about 7,000 professionals from at least 100 nations participated in these meetings. The most important result was not just hearing good speeches. **Even the best of talks is soon forgotten. Rather, the fruit has been in building solid relationships among Christian lawyers who have strengthened fellowships in 70 nations linked together in regional networks.** Committed lawyers – empowered by Christ – are impacting nations. In most countries where believers are wrestling with the “principalities and powers” that promote evil, someone within Advocates’ network is most likely among those professionals “standing in the gap.”*

20 years later, every word which Sam wrote continues to be true - evil remains on the increase! More than ever, God is looking for Christian lawyers, judges, and national leaders on the front lines of the battle. He is calling for the innkeepers to take responsibility for justice in their countries. He pleads for us to be a “voice for the voiceless”. Our generation are not stronger or more tenacious than the Christian lawyers were in 2003 and need all of the encouragement we can get!

The poor world economy and pandemic have been huge deterrents for us to travel and meet each other in person. We are reliant on virtual meetings (held at awkward hours to bridge the more than 24 time zones across the globe) to **spur one another on to love and good deeds**. So often someone on the call is hurting and needs prayer but others on the call are not even aware of it!

I thank God for the wonder of technology and that we can meet virtually but I want to encourage each one of you “***not to give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.***”

According to Christianity Today, 19 of the 50 countries in the world where it is the hardest to follow Christ in 2023 are in Africa. 5 African countries are in the top 10. The more disturbing statistic is that 8 out of the 12 countries where Christians face the most violence (and often death), are in Africa. (Nigeria, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, and Niger). With our Daniel Project, we want to raise up and equip innkeepers in these countries who can contest for justice and religious liberty.

Just one example – there are two young Christian women, in their early twenties, *Astur and *Cashu (*not their real names) who were arrested in a country in the Horn of Africa for proselytizing. They have been held in harsh conditions in prison for some time now. Through the efforts of several of our strategic partners, they might be released from prison soon. The necessary paperwork for visas in a neighbouring country has already been done. Our advocates in the neighbouring country are currently on standby to collect these two young women from a remote border post and take care of them until they can get visas for a European country.

One of the great opportunities that we have now to inspire and mobilize our Christian lawyers in these African countries is to get them to attend the 15th biennial **Convocation of Advocates Africa** which is being held from 25 – 30 July on the shores of the beautiful Lake Victoria at the Imperial Resort Beach Hotel, Entebbe, Uganda! The theme of the convocation is “*Positioning the Christian lawyer to thrive through a volatile and ambiguous world*”. The response to the persecution of Christians in Africa is a key component of the conference. The link for the convocation website is <https://ugandachristianlawyers.org/15th-biennial-convocation/> .

Air travel in Africa is extremely expensive and it would be difficult for many delegates to be able to afford to attend. The registration fee for the convocation is \$300 per person. Would you please prayerfully consider giving towards this? Your generous gift will enable these advocates who are on the frontlines to “meet together and encourage one another.”

We are excited to be having an in-person Global Council meeting on the first day of the convocation. Please pray with us that many of our Global Council members will be able to attend as we enter this strategic time in the history of the world.

May each one of you intentionally spur someone else on to love and good deeds! I pray that you will be able to meet together and encourage each other.

Warmly in Christ



Teresa Conradie

President and CEO, Advocates International



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