

The Friends of St. Paul (FOSP) By Elias Masika, Richard Njoroge and Anthony Wachira.

Arise and Evangelise Friends of St. Paul (FOSP) is easily one of the most vibrant groups in the Community. Its membership spreads across the gender and age divide to create an exuberant blend of youthful dynamism, creativity and commitment as well as the wisdom of the ages. All people who attend mass at St Paul's University Chapel. So strong are the chords of friendship harnessed through FOSP that many members never sever their links with the group even when they emigrate to other jurisdictions and now constitute a very active chapter of the group known as 'Friends in the Diaspora.'

Historical Roots FOSP was founded in 1987 by a group of mostly alumni of the University of Nairobi who, during their University days, were actively involved in church activities within the St. Paul's chaplaincy. The history of FOSP will be incomplete without mentioning one Mwamba Shete (R.I.P.) whose immortal words, "... after college, life can be a wilderness...", inspired the founder members of FOSP with the need to bring members of the community together with a view to sharing and enhancing their spiritual enrichment in the great episode of life. The late Mwamba Shete's generosity and commitment is a pillar whereon the group is rooted. He willingly accommodated and assisted many students, most of whom did not have any relatives living in or around Nairobi as they 'tarmacked' after college in search of jobs. The testimony of the students who went through his 'wings' serves as a reminder of all that FOSP stands for. The Namwambas especially Fihbert and his 8 family members. Hon. Sambili, Richard Njoroge, E. Ogot, Tony Wachira, Erastus Onyango, Mc Butongore, Elizabeth Ng'ang'a, Felix Kyengo, Theresa Matheka, Dr. Munyonyi, Dr. Lucy Wainaina, Nalugala and others formed the friends. And so it was that from the plethora of difficulties uniquely faced by many a Kenyan youth fresh from college (while "tarmacking" in search of jobs after college) were sown seeds whose fruits are being felt in the community through the wonderful service and participation of FOSP in many community activities. One of the great features of FOSP has been the medical camp. This fabulous group of FOSP from medical school led by the class of Dr. Ken Wanyonyi, [format]Dr. Godfrey Mutuma, Dr. Lucy Wainaina, Dr. Kiratu conducted the first medical camp in Mbita Constituency 1988. Later on they realized the importance of coming to St. Paul's through an open one day - hospital. Free medical camps have continued in 127 St. Paul each year. The FOSP continue to organize them as a sign of the practical faith in public – it becomes doing good to your neighbour in an intrinsic value of what each faith teaches - each year the same team of doctors supported by the community of St. Paul's organises the medical camp. Over 10,000 patients have been served in the last 8 years. The camps are conducted through the charity of the local community in the spirit of Harambee - give to your neighbour. The group has steadily grown over the years and now boasts of over one hundred active members, by far the strongest in the community in terms of membership and impact. In recognition of the fact that life is a journey with many vicissitudes, FOSP members have evolved the

practice of faith-keeping, a practice that is derived from the manner Jesus Christ sent out the seventy-two apostles – in pairs. A member who has attended a prescribed number of monthly meetings in succession and has been involved in the group's activities is usually assigned a faith-keeper whose role is to strengthen and encourage each other in the voyage of faith. Vision, Mission and Motto Spiritual Goal: FOSP's name is derived from Jesus' call to His Disciples in John 15:15, "I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father ". Group Vision: This rallying call invites its Members, 'to unite all people of God in the true spirit of Christ' who, Guided by the FOSP's Vision aspire to replicate that pattern of St. Paul's lifetime experience on earth by observing the motto Ad Majorem Gloriam Dei' (For the Greater Glory of God). [I think it should be Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam] FOSP's Mission is 'to be a living testimony of the Great Gift of Love and Friendship.' We pursue hope that inspires all Christians of St. Paul's community by engaging them in activities that offer value, enrich their spiritual lives as enshrined in the social teachings of the Catholic Church. They continue to promote a deeper interpretation of our faith practically: 'I was hungry and you gave me food, sick and 128 Arise and Evangelise you gave me a cure, in prison and you visited me...' Matthew 25:25-46. Ultimately, their appeal is to leave a positive mark in the Community by revealing Christ in our daily activities with the spirit of true friendship: Ad Majorem Gloriam Dei.' [check above and be consistent] FOSP's involvement in the community's affairs is felt through its active representation and participation in the Parish Pastoral Committee. Buoyed by its Vision, Mission and Motto aforesaid, members of the group are primarily volunteers committed to serving the Community through various committees as follows: Public Lectures / Publicity Committee This committee is charged with the responsibility of bringing awareness of societal topical issues through facilitating and organizing public lectures. The lectures touch on issues such as economics, human rights, development and health. Networking Committee The committee acts as a link between Students' Community and the wider St Paul's community and prepares students for the job market through organizing career and curriculum vitae talks where resource persons from various profes- 129 sions are invited to talk and guide the students on the various demands on the job market. The question asked in 1997 by Karanja Muchiri was if you go to look for work you may take long, yet the MDs, CEOs come to St. Paul's - why not bring them to St. Paul's and talk about what they are looking for in job seekers? Since 1997 over 250 members of St. Paul's have been offered employment at all levels - 50 of them with UN Agencies. The committee also recognized the capability of St. Paul's by making it possible for lawyers, business entrepreneurs, sociologists, and government experts to meet over tea on a common goal. Charity Committee This committee rallies the community of St. Paul's for apostolate through various charitable activities. The group has in the past organized visits to homes like Nyumbani Children's Home for HIV/AIDS orphans in Karen, Shangilia Mtoto Wa Afrika in Kangemi and Nyumba ya Wazee Ruaraka among others. The group also assists their own members who are facing challenges like job losses, sickness, bereavement, etc. At the conclusion of the recent

visit to Nyumba ya Wazee held on 12th September, 2009, as a result of the experiences encountered by members, plans are now afoot to forge a permanent partnership between FOSP and Nyumba ya Wazee so as to have a more positive and long lasting impact on this very crucial Church-sponsored charitable organization. The Committee has previously organized a highly successful Annual Medical Camp at St. Paul's Chaplaincy where free medical services are offered to needy members of the Society, such services being open to all members of society. The hugely successful Charity Walk which was held last year [which year?] was an idea conceived and implemented by FOSP with a view to raising funds for the Church's projects, and it raised over Kshs. 1.1 Million towards the Church project(s).

Spirituality Committee The committee's role is to help enhance the spiritual growth of the group. This is achieved by organizing the sharing of the word of God and building on the reflection of the day during the monthly meeting. The committee also organizes retreats and novenas and has successfully organized pilgrimages to holy shrines like Subukia National Shrine, Namugongo, and Uganda. [should it be : and Namugongo, Uganda.

The Vineyard Committee The committee oversees the publication of The Vineyard magazine, a non-profit oriented magazine which serves as the mouthpiece of the Community of St. Paul and which is intended to assist members of the community to grow in faith. A quarterly publication, it carries important spiritual articles as well as many other issues affecting the Community and the country at large. Members of FOSP participate in the publication of the magazine through sourcing for sponsorship and articles and submitting such articles for publication. And, of course, they also conduct the sales of the magazine.

Other Activities

Monthly Meetings The group meets every 3rd Thursday of the month at 6 pm in the chaplaincy hall. The members meet to reflect, share, and strengthen each other's spirituality in the spirit of wisdom and true friendship. During the meeting, we invite key speakers who discuss various issues that are at the heart of today's Christian living and cover topics like HIV and AIDS counseling and poverty in our society. Other activities include monthly home visits to one of our own and socialization through picnics. One day in a year in the month of October is reserved for the Chair's Goat when all members gather to have fun in the spirit of friendship and in commemorating the year's successes.

Chairperson's Goat Eating Day Once in October every year, FOSP holds the annual Chairperson's Goat Eating Day. The occasion also serves as a team building event and has lots of group fun games. It is a special fun-filled occasion whose crowning moment is the agape lunch shared by all in the true spirit of friendship.

Subscription Fee/Donations 131 To ensure the sustainability of the group and its ability to support its key activities which, to a varying extent have a cost-element, members are encouraged to pay an annual subscription of Kshs. 1,500.00 depending on a member's individual capability. The group has also seen many numerous well-wishers who have been touched by its activities and the societal impact thereof turn up and offer donations which have kept the group going and growing to the point where it is now easily the most recognizable group in the community. Background information about the formation of FOSP This is an interview conducted on 11th

October [year?] between Mr. Richard Njoroge and Reginald on the founding of Friends of St. Paul's. The aim was to clarify the missing link between the original spirit of friends and the current one. Mr. Richard Njoroge is the director of the Community Choir St. Paul's University of Nairobi Chapel. He graduated with a Bsc. in Chemistry 1988. When he joined the University of Nairobi the division between the students' mass the community mass had just been effected by Fr. Christy Burke, CSSp (1984). In that students' choir was Mr. Mwamba Shete. Mwamba used to sing the tenor voice. At one stage he formed a strong quartet of the super tenors of the choir. When Mr. Mwamba graduated in 1986 he continued singing in the students' choir. The student's choir would meet after the 9:30 a.m. mass (around 11 a.m - 12 noon) in the hall. After the choir practice there was a tendency for the students to mill around until 3 p.m. then fizzle away to their halls of residence or even stay on chatting over tea in the chaplain's house till evening mass. That weekly gathering and sharing together developed into a well organized group of friends who could then leave to Mr. Mwamba's house in Kibera Karanja Road. The Chaplain, Fr. Burke would encourage that continued sharing at Mwamba's house. Most of the persons known to Mwamba would stay at his house while tarmacking upon completion of their degrees. Mwamba's home encouraged the Chaplain to become a regular visitor even celebrating their weekday masses when required to do so. Njoroge called it, 'A home far from home' because they all felt at home. The early members of friends led by Francis Watkins, Emmanuel Ogot, Jane Wangui Wagufio, Richard Njoroge, some of the family members of Ababu Namwamba who formed the largest group of members from the same family in the group and Mwamba 132 Arise and Evangelise kept on saying that a group should be formed to continue meeting and helping each other as friends. In recent times FOSP have had the Ngatia's, the Njogus too having the entire family as members of FOSP just as the Namwamba's did in the 1987/88. Incidentally all these people were in the students' choir. After the Light and Love Concert in December, 1987, most of them joined the community choir upon the request by the late Edward Ulzen and Mrs. Jane Ogwapit. It is during one of the gatherings in July, 1987 that Mwamba Shete put his foot down and proposed the formation of the Friends of St. Paul's. A name had to be proposed to capture the ongoing spirit. Out of nowhere it was Jane Wangui Wagufio (now Jane Ndirangu) who exclaimed that the group be called, 'Friends of St. Paul's Chapel.' The name has remained officially the identity of the group (FOSP). The question was 'What happens when one completes college?' Who would help those coming from upcountry stay in Nairobi and assist the other in searching for a job, attending interviews and helping them settle down? The answer was, 'Friends.' The Friends would end up becoming an important group that linked the students' community with the employment world. The FOSP would act as the bridge between aspirations and expectations of students as they left campus, college, and institutions of learning to explore their employment possibilities while also retaining their faith in a public space. Watkins proposed that clear objectives be formulated based on this goal. Emmanuel Ogot became secretary to the group and Mwamba the chairman. The spirituality element

became the backbone of the group. The group would meet, read scripture and meditate, visit the sick, and also invite public speakers to share on an emerging issue be it in politics of social life. Meetings now moved from Mwamba's house in Kibera to St. Paul's in 1988. Later Theresa Matheka (Judge in Nyahururu) drafted the first constitution of the group. During one of the meetings there was a question whether the FOSP should continue being members of the choir while serving as choir members. The question was left open to those who wished to be in the choir and FOSP. Richard Njoroge 133 opted to remain in the choir and stop attending Friends meetings because the choir served the same spiritual purpose. But he continued to follow events of the group at a distance. The group continued to grow between 1988 and 1992. When Mwamba became busy and Pius Mutie (Dr. Mutie now at Sociology Department, UON) became its chair assisted by Lilian Owiti. On November 30th 1996 Mr. Mwamba Shete very sadly passed away. That was a very sad moment for the group that required reorganization. Fr. Tom McDonald, CSSp, the chaplain and patron of FOSP helped to re-group the FOSP again and review its goals and objectives. This is when Karanja Muchiri, Martin Mbikuri, Reginald and four others started reviewing what would be of interest to friends with the same goals and objectives remaining the same. The networking became an important new objective of FOSP, thanks to Karanja Muchiri's foresight and clarity in ideas on the job market demands. The Phrase "I call you Friends says the Lord...." John15:15 summarised the aspirations of the group and cut across the unity of the group from Kibera gathering to St. Paul's Chapel and beyond. None students too became called to be friends of Jesus in working for the best of all in the community.