LESSON 0 - PUBLIC FOUNDATION LESSON

The Meaning of the KOCI Emblem

The KOCI emblem is a visual lesson. It joins African memory, Christian hope, the beauty of creation and a call to transform lives through responsible leadership.

Historical honesty matters: the Ankh began in ancient Egypt, long before Christianity. It meant “life” or “to live.” Christians in Egypt later used its cross-like form as a sign of life through Christ. KOCI receives that later Christian reading while respecting the symbol’s African origin.

The Ankh: life and enduring existence

The Ankh is one of Africa’s best-known ancient symbols. Egyptian writing used it for life, living and the gift of life. It was also connected with continued existence beyond physical death. That does not mean ancient Egypt and Christianity taught exactly the same thing; it means both used the language of life beyond the grave.

It is often called the “key of life” or “key of the Nile.” The exact origin of its shape is uncertain. Some interpretations see a sandal strap or mirror; others see joined male and female principles, heaven and earth, or forces that generate life. The “union of opposites” is therefore a meaningful interpretation-not a proven single explanation.

For KOCI, the loop and cross invite a simple question: What kind of life are we helping people live?

The cross: eternal life through Christ

KOCI does not treat the symbol as an object of worship. It is a teaching sign pointing beyond itself to Jesus Christ. Christians believe that death does not have the final word because Christ died and rose again. Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).

The emblem therefore moves from an ancient African sign of life to the Christian proclamation of new life, resurrection, reconciliation and hope in Christ. “The dead are not really dead” is best expressed in Christian language as: those who belong to Christ live in the hope of resurrection and eternal life.

Reading the whole emblem

The crown

Christ is King. His kingdom represents truth, justice, mercy and service. The crown also warns leaders: authority is stewardship, not personal ownership.

The circular globe

The world belongs to God. The circle suggests wholeness, relationship and a mission that crosses borders.

Sun, rain and sky

Light, water and seasons sustain life. They remind us that human power is limited and that leadership must respect God’s order and timing.

Trees, land and animals

Creation is not decoration; it is entrusted to human care. A leader must consider people, livelihoods, animals, soil, water and future generations.

The people

The two human figures represent dignity, community and shared work. Transformation is done with people, not merely to people.

The flowing path

The bright movement through the globe suggests a journey: learning, change, restoration and purposeful action.

Gold and blue

Gold communicates value, kingship, excellence and hope. Blue suggests heaven, water, trust, depth and a global horizon.

People · Purpose · Planet

Strong leadership holds together human dignity, a clear God-honouring purpose and responsible care for creation. None should be sacrificed for the others.

Biblical foundation

Romans 1:20

Creation makes God’s power and divine nature visible. Nature is evidence pointing to the Creator; nature itself is not God.

Psalm 19:1

The heavens declare the glory of God. Sky, light, rain and seasons become daily invitations to worship and responsibility.

Colossians 1:16-17

All things were created through Christ and for Christ, and in him they hold together. Christ-not the emblem-is the centre.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15

Human beings bear God’s image and are given responsibility to cultivate and protect the earth. Dominion must become care, not destruction.

John 11:25; 1 Corinthians 15

Christian eternal life is grounded in the death and resurrection of Jesus and the promised resurrection of his people.

Revelation 19:16; Mark 10:42-45

Christ is King of kings, yet Jesus defines great leadership through service rather than domination.

From symbol to leadership practice

See life

Notice God’s gifts, human dignity and the living world before making decisions.

Serve Christ

Use authority with truth, humility, courage, justice and sacrificial service.

Transform responsibly

Bring change that strengthens people, fulfils a worthy purpose and protects the planet.

Personal reflection

1. Which part of the emblem speaks most strongly to your present leadership responsibility-and why?

2. Where might your leadership be serving purpose while neglecting people or the planet?

3. How does Christ’s servant kingship challenge the way you use authority?

4. Name one decision you can make this week that protects life, restores dignity or cares for creation.

Sources and further reading

The Metropolitan Museum of Art - The Ankh as the hieroglyph for life: metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/548476

The Metropolitan Museum of Art - Ankh used as a Christian cross in Byzantine Egypt: metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/453629

U.S. National Park Service - Ankh, an African symbol of life: nps.gov/afbg/learn/historyculture/ankh.htm

Bible: Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1; Colossians 1:16-17; Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15; John 11:25; 1 Corinthians 15; Revelation 19:16; Mark 10:42-45