

KERICHO/NYANZA/BUSIA MINISTRY

(29th July to 2nd August 2016)

Please note that this report was prepared for the Nairobi church leadership by Pastor Murungi Igweta, but in making it available more widely it will show you the opportunities and the struggles there are in church planting in Kenya.

1. Kericho Town:

On Friday 29th of July, I left Nairobi for Kericho, and by God's care I arrived at 11.00 am. I met Pastor David Ng'etich who took me round to see the people to whom he has been reaching out with the gospel in the town. Most of these men are mechanics. He told me that taking his car to be repaired many times has provided an opportunity to talk about the wonders of salvation by grace to these poor souls. Most of these men spend their monies in drinking. For example, Jared Onyanha, who sells second-hand spare parts. He claimed to be a Roman Catholic. With his business friends we spoke to them about the precarious position of peril and danger in which their souls are hanging without Christ. They had one objection after another, but in the end they all acknowledged that even though they attend the mass, which I also pointed out is idolatry, they have no certainty of eternal life. I pray that the Lord will bring them to the light of the kingdom of Christ and be saved from their sins.

Still in Kericho, David took me to Joseph Musyoka, who is an expert in making car 'bushes' from old car tyres. We found him drunk. His family lives in Matuu in Machakos (east of Nairobi) but he only goes home after every three months. He does not see the need since his children are married and he has become impotent – this is what he sadly and graphically revealed in his stupor. The opportunity was present to show his impotence without Christ in his state of total inability. When I spoke of the preciousness of Christ, at first he was so open to listening and he also asked what he can do to be saved, but when a new customer came he quickly dismissed us and was almost abusive!

Further on we met Jared and his cousin together with many of his colleagues, whose names I have now forgotten. With the help of God, six of them gathered to hear what their 'pastor's friend' had to tell them. Most of them are from the Kisii region, and so have been brought up under the Adventist ethos of strict observance of the seventh day Sabbath. Jared was the most pensive as I spelt out the gospel of salvation in Christ. I had the chance to explain John 1:12-13. He asked, "How does a sinner become a Christian?" and "How do I know that I have now been saved?" This presented an opportunity to explain the power of the atonement for sin offered by our Lord Jesus on the cross, and the peace of God that is wrought between a holy God and a wicked sinner, once one believes in Christ. I also pointed out the certainty of the hope of glory in Christ. There was no hurry to go to work with this man; even with my eyes of flesh I could see the interest in salvation in his heart. He had a question, expressing his doubts with the 'altar call' and I pointed out to him that it is an unbiblical practice that the devil is using to blanket people with an eternal blindness. So I besought him to plead for his poor soul, to God through the one and only Mediator, even Christ. I pray that the Lord of all grace will have mercy on him.

Finally, we had a chance to speak with Chris from Suba and Joe from Oyugis. They both acknowledged that since they met David, who has been constantly meeting them whenever he goes to Kericho, their love for the mocker, that is alcohol, has waned. They have not yet found a church

although they have not been diligent in looking for it because of the allure of the clients who are more on Sundays. The wife of Chris is in the Dr. Owuor's 'Holiness Altar' but he said that he would not want to go there himself, but lacks the moral authority to stop her since he does not go to church. He challenged David to begin a church in the town; at least he would be available in the morning and see his clients in the afternoon afterwards. Clearly, the Lord has been working in his heart even though we cannot say to what extent.

Recommendation: David is well known in the town by people from different walks of life. There was a hawker with whom he spent some time with; he struck a good rapport with the conductor of vehicle and with the waiter who served us lunch. Effort needs to be made to see a Biblical church planted in this dark town. Given some financial help, he could start a serious Bible study with an aim of church-planting.

2. Chebang'ang (Bomet County):

There are only 12 members in Glory Baptist Church since David is very cautious with who becomes a member. However, at the same time the attendance has been increasing steadily – about 50 attend.

Ng'etich took me to his neighbour's poultry farm, where he has gained a lot of experience in installing poultry machinery (which is imported from India) as well as the whole enterprise. He said that if it were possible to find funding for such a project, many pastors could be supported and in this way ministry support could be sustainable for a period. He believes that he has what it takes to have the same egg output as his neighbour. The project produces about 12,000 eggs daily, making a daily profit of 78K shillings! The egg demand is so high that they now have to stop delivering eggs to Nairobi.

One member Geoffrey is interested in re-joining the TPC in Nairobi in January. He said that he dropped out when his wife went to the teacher training college in Kitui. Thankfully, she has now completed the course. However this desire is dependent on a good tea crop so that he will have been able to repay the debts he incurred in educating his wife through the college education.

3. Kisumu City:

I arrived in the home of at Paul Odera in Milimani at around 11 am. He is leading church-planting work under Grace Baptist Church. They very warmly welcomed me and we had lunch together. They explained that since 2013 they have been church-planting in Milimani and have over 20 attending regularly. 11 of them are believers. Paul told me that they will be constituted as a church when there is a conversion or they are 13 whichever comes first. With his wife, they did not hide the joy of my visit and both spoke of the need for unity since reformed people are such a small community.

We went to Grace Baptist Church at Car Wash, where there was a split fellowship between men and women. The men were dealing with the life of Manasseh and Amon his son from 2 Kings 21 and 2 Chronicles 33. The fellowship was interactive and very practical in pointing out the great need of salvation but also showing how parents have to bring up their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. We had a short meeting with Sam, who wanted to know how we are doing after Kivati's death. He feared that we could be ostracised by the community as it happened in Othoo when a girl was found murdered in a sugar plantation. He also spoke of the need for unity.

After the meeting, I was dropped off at the United Mall where I met up with George Omondi (a former TPC student) and went to his home near the By-Pass Bridge. He works for a ministry dealing with the rescue, rehabilitation and re-integration of children in Kisumu. Eventually, George would like to serve as a pastor, in light of the need for Reformed gospel workers in the country, but has found the financial demands on him hindering him from venturing into the ministry. He also attributed the high rate of unfaithfulness among the Reformed pastors with the lack of means to support their families, one of the reasons for his hesitation. He said that this has made the work to suffer greatly. He wanted to know whether we were still thinking of Nakuru town. He said that he has a burden for Nakuru and would want to work there.

4. Siaya:

I arrived in Siaya after 10.30 pm and had been booked into a small guest house in the centre of the town called Kalulu. This is the same place I have resided every time I have gone to Siaya and the only difference this time was that the place had deteriorated because the proprietor died. There was no flowing water in the toilet and the shower was not working. The caretaker woke me up the following morning at 5.30 against all my wishes! However, the town has really been developed – thanks to the devolved government. Most of the major roads in the town have been tarmacked and there is street lighting.

The leader of the church, Charles Abwok, came on Sunday morning and we had breakfast in the nearby restaurant, owned by a family I have known since 2002 in Eldoret. The lady is a businesswoman from Mbita Point and the husband is a professor of zoology in Moi University in Eldoret. We had breakfast there before proceeding to the church. Abwok had come with his wife, who was already in the church premises together with 5 others. Later on a few others joined in and there were about 15 adults and more than ten children. At 10.30 am the service took off. They sang a good number of hymns and read the whole of John 6 and later on read from 1 Corinthians 7 since I was going to preach from verse 2. I was given the opportunity to preach and I took forty minutes expounding on this one verse. After this we had good heavy lunch – I was given a whole sizeable tilapia to go along with kienyeji vegetables and brown ugali! I was very impressed by their ability to come together for a meal. It is a sign of remarkable growth and improvement since I last visited.



We had an ad hoc members' meeting in which we discussed the progress of the church. They have been able to fill up five of the ten windows with bricks in readiness for the installation of the metal grills which we are expected to finance. They have already collected enough money to fill up seven of the windows in the front and back gable. I sought to show them that the spiritual life is more important and this is where they should put their focus – adorning the gospel by godly living and being more aggressive in evangelism.

Nonetheless, we have set aside some money for the purpose of putting in the windows and doors and hope that we can support them in evangelism.

Recommendations: Since the church is barely surviving, it might be wiser to find ways of getting a resident pastor for them, either one from Nairobi, or one of their own number. Eric Otieno, who is one of the deacons, is willing even to join the TPC if it was possible to find other means of supporting his family. There is a lot of potential in this church. I encouraged them to complete the filling up of the windows and repair the upper part that is broken which is now hanging precariously. However, I don't believe they are capable of doing the work by themselves and we should uphold our policy and send one of our own (preferably a deacon to make sure that the work is done to our satisfaction). Their toilet is also in a pathetic condition.

5. Funyula:

I arrived at 5.00pm and met Simon Ochieng'. In the evening we had a lengthy period of discussion about the struggles they have as a family. And then their daughter Phoebe has got a calling letter to go to Kaimosi Teacher's College in September. He also has his son in form four and there is a fee balance.

The following day I met the men who are in his leadership. Samuel Barasa is a very reliable young man who came to faith at the church in 2013 and has been closely learning under the guidance of Simon. Simon has been giving him books and despite his eye problems, he has been very faithful. The sad thing is that his wife, who has been a Christian for longer, has not followed him because she has responsibilities in her church (PEFA). The other man is Mzee Benard Otit, an older man who was attracted to the church as he came to his son's piece of land that is next to the church premises. The third is Benedict Barasa who just joined. He was leading a Baptist church near Nangina but they had problems with the man who had given the piece of land to the church, because he wanted to control the pastor, so he left. He is a man who is overflowing with zeal for evangelism, but needs a lot of 'panel-beating'. I really liked him.

We spoke about the progress of the church. They have been aggressive in evangelism and preaching. However, some people have told them point blank that they have to complete the church building first before they join!

We then went to visit a few homes in the area including Samuel's home. His wife was very cordial and she is noticeably a believer but wants to be sure that Samuel will stick with TBC. We read the word of God and prayed before seeing Samuel's mother who is an Anglican. From her speaking she seemed a believer. The wife of one of his brothers has a primary school with more than 200 kids and Simon hopes to have some influence there.

Later at the church we were joined by Patrick Odhiambo from Busia. He was very clear about his profession of faith even though he put some emphasis on the healing of his eye problem. He spoke of Christ so lovingly in a way I appreciated. He has been a student with Ngala with Mukhanyo Theological College, distant learning modules. He desires to begin a Bible study in Busia town. More about him under Busia.

Recommendations: We should do everything possible to help Simon financially. Their shop that his wife Mary runs, which is the main source of livelihood, is dwindling. As regards the physical infrastructure, he has been able to connect electricity to the facility and they have bought some

good quantity of ballast, one lorry of quarry stones (they need another), and bricks. They have bought 1000 bricks but need 4 times that number. With the construction of the church building there is a barely any room for anything else on the plot. In the future they may have to expand their piece of land. There are two different plots adjoining them. But they cost at least shillings 200K a piece. Simon also requested us to send them a group to teach their young people later in the year. We should do everything we can to mobilize some of our own to be of encouragement to them.

6. Butula (Bukhalalire):

On Monday evening with Simon we visited this place and Calisto and his family were eagerly waiting for us. I spent the night with Calisto's family. I was pleased to see how he manages his household in the evening, even though most of them are adults with children of their own.



The church is an independent Baptist, which for a long time was affiliated with a mission in Eldoret where they trained. He reported that when the initial missionary left for a year, the one who came to hold the brief displaced him, so that when he came back a division was evident. While the first one was strong in doctrine, the second one was big on money. Many churches preferred the second

one which so discouraged the first one, who Calisto preferred. When it was clear that division was inevitable, the first missionary left and Calisto opted out of the fellowship. They were never really under their oversight, but operated independently.

They have enjoyed a close fellowship with Funyula. They have done evangelism in their respective areas twice and have continued to be encouraged by the mutual interest that has been forged for the last three years. Simon has visited them a few times and has helped them in reading through the TBC constitution at their request. They have already held a meeting to discuss coming under the oversight of TBC.

They also run a nursery school which has 30 young children and 2 teachers. I met them on Tuesday morning.

They own the land where they are even though they have not been able to process the transfer. They are eagerly raising funds to effect this quickly because there have been people wanting the family to change mind and eject them from their land since the father died. Calisto said that this has been causing headache to the whole church and any relief could be greatly appreciated.

The attendance is between 50-70. They have 18 high school children and many more young people and would like us to send a group of 10 high schoolers to the Nairobi High School Camp in November. They said that they could raise one-way fare for them! They gave me a petition requesting three things of me:

- 1) To either come to their youth conference in December or send someone else to come.
- 2) To help in their desire to purchase public address equipment.
- 3) To help them attend the High School Camp in Nairobi. They have heard good reports from their counterparts in Funyula.

Recommendations: Let us take them on board, under our registration and support this work. Calisto is aging and he acknowledges it. He does not want this work to stall once he is gone. He thinks that our coming in will give impetus to the work and will strengthen them to know that they are in the fellowship of brethren. Simon has already given his recommendation of these dear brethren. Calisto is not very educated and would want to be given Swahili literature every now and then. He is nonetheless knowledgeable in the Scriptures having gone through some theological training in Eldoret. I looked at the exposition of the books of Acts, and it was commendable. It could be that in the future with the large population of young people the Lord will provide a leader from among them.

7. Bumala:

Eric Ngala leads this work and he reported good progress. The training of the pastors through Mukhanyo (South Africa) is going well. He is very keen on seeking independent registration because of the animosity towards his doctrinal convictions (Reformed and Baptist) by the present group.

He wanted me to have a look at the draft constitution he has and it was really our own church constitution except for the matter of affiliation. He would like me to help him in the pursuit of the registration once the government moratorium is lifted.

He has made contact with Charles Awelo Odhiambo (another former TPC student), with a hope of getting him to relocate with his family to Bumala to work with him. Charles preached last Sunday and Eric said that he was pleased with the preaching, even though there are rough edges. Charles on his part said that he would prefer working with TBC but he is happy to be with Ngala. He reported that his daughter Zilma is hoping to get a teacher training college but he does not have the financial power to finance it.

8. Matayos:

On my way to Busia, I went to see Hezbon Oronje at his home. He has recovered fully from the accident and he is able to walk without an aid. However, because of the financial difficulties at the time, his wife Bilha had to look for a job. She works as a cleaner at the weighbridge at Nambale and only comes home over the weekend. They have their sons in secondary school and neither the church nor his second-hand clothes business are doing well.

He would want to resume and complete studies at TPC but he can't perceive how he can manage financially. In my judgment, Hezbon is committed to the ministry and is a hard worker. Could we consider what to do with him? Perhaps he could be sent to strengthen some work? He is open to going wherever the Lord sends as long as he is in the ministry of the gospel. He is happy to be under some oversight. This is a mark of humility, having been independent for so long, it is not easy for anyone to want to be under any oversight (I do understand that he hopes that this might come with some financial benefit).

May the Lord strengthen His work of the gospel through the men He has placed in these different places. I pray that resources may be given us towards this end. Could we not make known these various works among our brethren abroad so as to adopt a church? If a church committed to helping only one church in the gospel endeavour so much could be straightened financially. If we made the needs of the schools in Pokot North known, then why not the needs of the churches?

9. Busia:

I visited Busia and met Patrick's family: his wife, Lilian and their two daughters, Trizah and Charity. They are expecting their third born. They are tired of the churches that they have known in Busia town and so would like a church that cherishes the Word of God more. I spent two hours with them so that at some point his wife opened up about her internal struggles. I encouraged her to keep her hope in Christ alive and patiently wait for the Lord. I pointed out that the Lord uses difficult times to strengthen and purify our faith just as fire is used to purify gold. Her testimony of salvation was clear and shone through her hatred of sin.

Simon has been meeting with him every Monday and he is satisfied that he can make a good church leader. He is a stone mason and works just a few days in the week in order to be able to study and do evangelism. Since this has left them with serious financial problems, it is difficult for his wife. I encouraged him to only devote a maximum of two days in a week for study, i.e. attending lectures on Monday and another day, perhaps Saturday, for his personal study. But then it turned out that they are contracted for work on Mondays, the same day he has to attend the classes in Bumala. He is resolute about completing the studies, although I tried to show him that his home comes first. Since he only has a few months he will first complete the studies. Sometimes he walks to Bumala for classes (15 miles)! Clearly he has a very determined man.

Let's encourage Simon to grow closer in fellowship with Patrick, and hopefully develop this Bible Study in Busia town in his house or where will be convenient for Patrick. He said that he meets weekly with a group that includes a Muslim and a Mormon to teach them the Bible. Patrick seemed a humble, respectful, and hardworking. He is clearly a spiritual man who loves reading his Bible and theology he is learning in Bumala even with all the pain.

Murungi Igweta

8th August 2016