

Gaitano Mbat: Report of Mission to North Pokot.

To be of benefit to my readers I will break down the missions report to two parts, one being the simplified chronological happenings and the second part my takeaways, opinions, encouragements and prayer requests in context of the places we visited. The team from Nairobi to Pokot was, Pastor Keith, Benedict Allmand-Smith and myself. We also had Mr Peter Nalunyit and Mr Samuel Waswa, who are both students at the TPC in Nairobi and were heading back to Pokot where they lead their churches. The trip had every day on a tight schedule as there were many people and churches to be visited and so I hope my way of writing the report helps to appreciate the need for missions, and a realistic perspective into what goes on for those who have never been to missions, those who would love to hear about the state of the church in Pokot and those hoping to go on missions at some point. You can however skip to the second part if you would like to hear my take on thanksgivings and prayer items, and personal areas of encouragement.

PART ONE: The trip

21st Thursday (Nairobi-Bumala)

We started off the trip early morning, I was picked in Kikuyu on our way out of Nairobi at about 7am and we set off. We left Nairobi in two cars, the first the Church van, had Pastor Murungi driving it with the team that was to fully attend the RBAK conference in Bumala; and the second, which I boarded, Pastor Keith's car which had the team that was primarily headed for Pokot. I say primarily since we too went to Bumala as we were to do on our way to Pokot. Bumala is in the western border region of Kenya which is about 3-4 hours' drive south west of Kapenguria (through Bungoma and Kitale) where we were to enter the Pokot region from. We stopped at Othoo on our way to Kisumu through Ahero, met the leaders of the church there and we went with one of them; Pastor Moses to Bumala as he was attending the conference.

We arrived at Bumala at around 3 in the afternoon, well received by Pastor Eric Ngala, the leader of the A.I.C Bumala church that hosted the conference. There were about 20 attendees as of when we arrived and Pastor Keith preached on the 5 Solas that night as an introduction to the conference.

22nd Friday (Bumala-Kasei)

At about 9am the conference kicked off with Pastor Keith preaching on the history of the reformation, then Pastor Murungi handled the second session entitled "the reformed pastor".

We had little chance to speak to the attendees of the conference, whose number had grown since many of them came that morning, as we had to leave for Pokot. We quickly had lunch and bid the brothers at the conference goodbye. We Left Bumala at about 2pm and drove through Bungoma and Kitale all the way to Kapenguria. At Kapenguria, also called Makutano, we met Mr Thomas Lokerisa, one of the leaders at TBC Kamketo and Mzee Domoo Lokerisa, brother to Thomas and a member of the Kapterema Church. We went together with Mzee Domo as Mr Thomas remained in Kapenguria, our destination being Kasei. We dropped Samuel and Peter at Konyao as they would be picked to be taken home in Chepkinagh, where we would visit the following week. We arrived at Joshua Sitet's (leader of the church at Kasei and Kasei Boys Secondary school chairman) house at around 10pm where we stayed for the next two days. We had supper and rested.

23rd Saturday (Kapkewa)

We woke up early morning had devotions and breakfast then headed to Kasei , where we picked Mr Isaiah Juma (leader at TBC Kasei and chaplain at Kasei Boys Secondary). Together with Mzee Domoo and an old lady in her 80s and drove uphill for about an hour to Kapkewa village. We were well received by the brothers there. The church in Kapterema from past the hill also joined us there since we couldn't go to them. I spoke with the children briefly explaining the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. In attendance was the old lady gladly following and aiding the children in answering. Pastor Keith taught twice with a break in between. He then met with the men from both churches, each church separately, to hear about the progress of ministry and also to allow for them to make any requests they might have. It was evening so we went bank to Mr. Joshua Sitet's home.

24th Sunday (Kasei, Kamketo)

We woke up early morning and had devotions, made our way to Kasei Boys Secondary by 8am for their Sunday service. I spoke shortly from Mathew 7:24-27 about the wise and foolish builder. Benedict gave his testimony to the boys, which was quite fitting as he had finished high school a few months before, and thus appeal to them as young people to trust in Christ and thus know Him at their level. Pastor Keith preached on the parable of the rich fool, and alluding to what Benedict and I had said, showed them that true meaning and life is only found in Christ Jesus. We then briefly interacted with the school principal, Mr Otieno , a catholic, whom Pastor Keith seized the opportunity to explain the gospel to and left him with a Grace and Truth magazine to read. We then went to TBC Kasei for the worship service at around 10 am. Pastor Keith preached twice after we sang and we later had lunch and fellowship with the brethren. In the afternoon Pastor Keith spoke to the TBC Kasei members on 1 Timothy 3, urging them to look into electing the eldership. He then spoke to the Kasei primary school head teacher and principal briefly to preach to them and also to hear what requests the school may have as TBC is the sponsor of the school. We then went to Joshua Sitet's home briefly to pack then we left for Kamketo with Joshua and Isaiah, this was about 4pm. We were well received at Kamketo by Solomon Lokerisa (our host), Thomas himself, Andrew Chemalok and Patricko (the other leader of the TBC Kamketo Church, also a teacher and school chaplain at both TBC Kamketo Trinity Girls Secondary and primary). He then had discussions with them, together with Joshua and Isaiah on the progress of ministry and the way forward for the churches especially with regards to appointment of Elders for the churches as none of them has ordained an elder. Joshua and Isaiah left for Kasei after the evening devotions.

25th Monday (Kamketo)

We woke up early morning and had devotions then breakfast. We then headed out to TBC Kamketo primary in the morning, met the head teacher in her office then proceeded to preach to the primary school students who had been gathered to meet us. We then crossed over to the high school section and met the teachers briefly, we also met the principal who took us around the school, showing us the new classrooms the government helped to build. She also took us to the dormitory for the girls which had been recently refurbished, and the second one which formerly was the church building (the church currently meets in the primary school hall). The school, started 3 years ago now has students up to form 3. The principal has really worked hard to encourage the academic as well as the spiritual life of the school. We then met the girls, Benedict shared his testimony with them, and Pastor Keith asked Benedict follow up questions before he sat to help drive the point home, that being in a Christian family or school doesn't make you a Christian, only believing upon the Lord Jesus. He then preached to them the gospel. We also delivered a computer that had been promised to the school. The principal received it and was very grateful.

We had lunch at our host's then came back to meet the TBC Kamketo church (and two other churches about half an hour's walk from Kamketo that we wouldn't be able to visit) in the primary school hall, Pastor Keith preached twice. After talking with the members when the meeting was over, Benedict, Andrew and I went with Thomas to his home, then back to where we were staying. We had supper, devotions with our host's family and the leaders of the Kamketo church (Patricko and Thomas Lokerisa) and Andrew (leader of TBC Chepkinagh, where we were going the next day) then we rested.

26th Tuesday (Kiwawa, Chepkinagh)

We woke up early, had devotions then breakfast after which we bade the brothers from Kamketo good bye and left with Mr Andrew Chemalok on our way to Kiwawa first then to Chepkinagh. We stopped at Kiwawa, where Andrew has been leading the church (he is able to lead it since Samuel Waswa now helps him lead the church at Chepkinagh where both of them live). We first saw the church building that is in the process of being built, which is the classroom during the week for the nursery school. We found children and two teachers using it as we arrived although the building is halfway done. The brethren there were warm and welcoming, we shared a cup of tea before Pastor Keith preached and encouraged the church. We then left for Chepkinagh and immediately headed for the primary school when we arrived as we were behind schedule. Before I preached to the children I asked if any of them had a memory verse. A girl stood up and recited two passages in English! One of which is Isaiah 9:6, to us a child is born! I then preached from John 14: 6, emphasising Jesus is the way, and the truth and the life. We then met the Head teacher Mr Birgen in his office (He was with us as we spoke with the children). He had a guest with him who had waited for us to arrive, a TSC (Teachers Service Commission) official and commended the church for its role in pioneering education in the region (over 40 teachers from 13 schools in the region are being supported by the church through the giving of interested brethren). He had requests and also promises that would be of great benefit to the schools in the region. Mr Birgen also expressed his gratitude as TBC is the sponsor of the school. It was notable how he did it as he even had a letter to the sponsor specifically to say thank you for what the school has received. Pastor Keith spoke to the teachers of the school in the staffroom, alluding to his own experience as a teacher and reminding them of the importance of Jesus Christ, both to the student and the teacher. We then went with Mr Birgen, Andrew, Waswa and a few teachers outside the school compound where they showed us the land for the proposed Secondary school. We also saw Mr Waswa's house which is under construction as he currently (as of the time of writing) lives in Mr. Andrew's homestead. We went back to Mr Andrew's home as he was our host, talked with people at his home, had supper and then devotions with the brethren of TBC Chepkinagh. We then retired to bed.

27th Wednesday (Apur, Wasat, Kwirir)

We woke up early and did devotions as usual, took breakfast and bid the brethren there goodbye. We then went with Mr Andrew to Apur. We were welcomed by the leader of the Church there, David, and other members of the church there as well as the children studying at the church's school. Pastor Keith preached twice; from John 3:3-8 and Ephesians 5:1-2. We ate lunch then headed to Wasat. We met briefly with the primary school students and I preached to them the parable of the lost sheep from Luke 15. We met Peter Nalunyit there as this is his home. Samuel Waswa was also there as he rode the motorcycle from Chepkinagh. We then left for Kwirir which is about 20 minutes' drive from Wasat to fellowship with the brethren there. The leader of the church there was very welcoming and glad to have us. Peter Nalunyit (who helped plant the church at Kwirir, also leader of the church in Wasat) rode with Samuel on the motorcycle and thus were with us. Pastor Keith preached twice then met the men from the church to hear the requests they had. We had a chance to interact with the

teachers of the School there as well. We then headed back to Wasat as the sun set. We had supper, then met the Wasat Church in a classroom. We sang and after that Benedict shared his testimony of how he became a Christian, and then Pastor Keith preached twice. We took pictures and finally retired to bed.

28th Thursday (trip back to Nairobi)

We woke up earlier than usual, prepared, took breakfast, packed the car, then prayed with the brethren that came to bid us farewell and set off. We left for Kapenguria with Mr Andrew and Mr Peter.

We sang hymns in the car as we drove, stopped briefly at Kapenguria and we met Mr Joshua there. The leaders were to receive the motorcycles donated to help them in their ministry through increased mobility. We bade them goodbye and left to continue on our journey back. We drove through Kitale to Eldoret, where we met Pastor Naphtali Ogallo briefly, and then also my parents at my dad's office in town. We then drove to Nakuru via Eldama Ravine then all the way to Nairobi.

It is crucial to note that without the help of the leaders in Pokot, it would have been difficult to preach anything as they were with us all through, translating, sometimes even conversations. Mr Joshua Sitet translated for us at Kasei and Kapkewa, while Mr Andrew Kamketo, Kiwawa, Chepkinagh, Apur, Wasat and Kwirir.

PART 2: My take

I will divide this part into 3 sections; **Thanks giving and encouragements; Prayer points and requests** and **my conclusion**.

Thanks giving and Encouragement

- All 3 times that I have visited Pokot I am always amazed and encouraged by their unity. They are not perfect but given their circumstances and way of life, yet they regularly have joint services of all the churches, and this speaks volumes of their solidarity, The churches are close knit, and they largely know what is going on in the other churches, when you consider they are about 13 churches, it is amazing.
- Although none of the churches has ordained a leader to pastor them, they have really strived to open churches where there is need and God has been gracious to provide men to lead those churches, even though they are overstretched.
- The schools that the church has started, even though it's not the primary mission, has provided great opportunities for preaching. In the schools as the sponsor we have men who act as chaplains and as regularly as they can, be it assemblies of the government-designated PPI on Friday morning, have access to thousands of students to preach the word of Christ to.
- Pokot to me is the closest picture of the early church I can get. There are all these churches with people who have believed upon Christ, and they need encouragement and strengthening, and the leaders traverse the lands around the hills, sometimes walking for hours to be able to bring the gospel to a church on Sunday morning. Their joy to welcome missionaries like Pastor Keith and the other brothers who travel there is to appreciate their crucial role in encouraging, building and strengthening the churches there.
- I was amazed by brothers and sometimes old men and women at their grasp of the word of God. They struggled to clearly articulate but upon asking follow up questions I realised the teaching of God's word is bearing fruit, and I found that very encouraging. That anyone is able to grasp the mystery of the gospel, is only because the Holy Spirit reveals it to him.
- Lastly, by and large the Pokot are very friendly and welcoming which makes it way easier to preach the gospel to them. The brothers there are ready to share the little they have for the sake of Christ and I really appreciated their hospitality towards us. I felt at home.

Prayer points and requests

- The Pokot tradition has some very sinful aspects, one of which is polygamy which is glorified in their culture. This has really made the church life difficult as some brothers in the church have fallen prey to this, partly because the other Pentecostal churches tolerate or even glorify polygamy. We heard of a church in which the Pastor has 4 wives! When we were at Kamketo, we were told with much sadness and debilitation that the deacon of the church there had recently married a second wife and deserted the church. It is a bad situation for the church as he is a signatory in the church's bank account. We need to pray that through the gospel, many will know Christ and his law, and that the brethren will not conform to the ways of this world.
- It is a wonderful thing that the leaders of the church are able to move around to be able to minister to the churches, they are still few compared to the harvest before them. They need prayers and support to be able to accomplish the mission and noble sacrificial work of shepherding the church.

- The schools the church sponsors have been a blessing by being a platform to reach children with the gospel but they have needs that may be a burden. All the schools we visited, some of which had only one classroom, would request that another be built, or a dormitory, or toilets for the children. Put together it is quite a lot of money, and it is easy to get lost in starting new schools that the ministry of preaching suffers yet it's the church's primary mission.
- Lastly there is great need for growth in the churches, growth in the knowledge of the Scriptures and also in Christian maturity. The churches need a lot of strengthening, a lot of stirring up as we found that many brothers had stumbled into luke-warmness or outright coldness towards the gospel.

Conclusion

The trip was very refreshing for me. Many people think that you go for missions to encourage others, this is true, but it is also true that the missionary finds joy in seeing the Lord work in the hearts of men. To hear the testimony and faith of the brethren, to share in their joy and pain, this is true brotherhood. No one will convince me that I do not have family in Pokot, I have gained new brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers in Christ. May we have the grace to Love as Christ, and care for and encourage his sheep.

Pictures

1 RBAK conference at A. I. C Bumala



2 Joshua's home in Kasei



3 Joshua and his family



4 Brethren at Kapkewa



5 TBC Kasei with students from the primary school after the service



6 Primary School students at Kamketo



7 TBC Kamketo Girls



8 At Brother Andrew's homestead before we left for Abur



9 the brethren at Abur before Pastor Keith preached





1 Children at Abur



10 Pastor Keith preaching at Kuerir



11 Tea and chapati at Kuerir after preaching



12 observing women collect water at a river bed



13 Brethren at Wasat



14 Brethren at Wasat



15 Benedict giving his testimony at Wasat



16 Pastor Keith preaching at Wasat



17 Mr Tudori, His family and I



18 prayer before leaving for Nairobi