

# A Trip to South Nyanza in August 2018

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My wife, Olivia, son, Junior, and I visited the TBC brethren in South Nyanza between Friday 24<sup>th</sup> and Monday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2018 for the youth conference that was being held for the first time in the region. Below is a report highlighting the various activities we were involved in, the spiritual progress of these churches and the areas of support and prayer.

## 1.0. The Youth Conference

This was the first youth conference held in the region. It was coordinated and hosted by Osani TBC to bring together youths from the four TBC churches in South Nyanza—Osani, Wath Orango, Thimlich, and Nyakwaka. A total of 23 young people—9 boys and 14 girls—between the age of 10 and 21 attended. Such a composition required that I use Dholuo throughout the conference. The theme of the Conference was ***"Young People and Sexual Purity."*** Adonijah, pastor Daniel's firstborn son, played a key role in the planning and execution with the necessary help of his father.

### 1.1. The factors that necessitated it

The conference theme was arrived at against the backdrop of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies in Hombay County where these churches are located. According to the National AIDS Control Council report, Kenya is one of the four HIV 'high burden' countries in Africa – about 1.5 million people were living with HIV infection at the end of 2015. Women in Kenya are more vulnerable to HIV infections compared to Kenyan men, with the national HIV prevalence at 7.0 per cent for women and 4.7 per cent for men as per the 2015 HIV Estimate report. The epidemic is geographically diverse, ranging from a high prevalence of 26 percent in HomaBay County in Nyanza region to a low of approximately of 0.4 percent in Wajir County in North Eastern region.<sup>1</sup> This is despite the various intervention mechanisms by the government through the initiative known as Multisectoral HIV Programming<sup>2</sup> and the various NGOs in this region to minimize the spread of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://nacc.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Kenya-HIV-County-Profiles-2016.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> A government-led programme management style in which all sectors including the country/county public service, private sector, civil society, PLHIV, key populations and development partners share responsibilities, resources and expertise and collaboratively partner to design, plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and review HIV programmes.

the epidemic in the region. Such a prevalence is indicative of sexual exposure and activity at very early ages. There is therefore, need to preach the gospel in this region, especially among the young people being one of the Vulnerable Populations<sup>3</sup>. It is generally difficult to talk about HIV/AIDS in this region, even in churches, due to stigma and the fact that even the clergy are victims.

## **1.2. The Conference Sessions**

The conference comprised of a workshop on Saturday afternoon and five plenary sessions. Caleb, who leads the church at Nyakwaka, took the Saturday Night Session by considering Gal. 5:19-24 while our host, Pst. Daniel Ngolo, took the Friday Night Session by considering 1 Thess. 1:2-10. I took the remaining three Sessions on Saturday. In the morning, I introduced the conference theme and its contextual relevance under the heading "The Reality of Sexual Immorality in Nyanza." This was followed by an interactive session where we took questions from the young people and responded to a number of them before lunch break. Some of the gender-related questions were however, left to be considered in the afternoon after separating the boys and the girls. For instance, the boys were interested in knowing whether circumcision can actually reduce the chances of contracting the HIV virus. Girls were comparatively shy and this forced my wife, Olivia, and Mrs. Ngolo, who were leading them through the girls' workshop, to prod them. Some of the young people, especially the boys were willing to open up to us only at a personal level. In the afternoon, I spoke on the "Remedy for Sexual Immorality" and the "Goal of Sexual Purity" respectively. The keynote points of my sessions included; [1] Sexual Immorality as Sin against God and its predisposing factors (Adopted from the life of Joseph in Potiphar's house—Gen 39); [2] The Consequence of Sexual Immorality as missing the Kingdom of God—and not just contacting HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies (1 Cor. 6:9-10); [3] Sexual Immorality as sin against the body, God, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:12-20); [4] The Remedy for Sexual Immorality being salvation—Justification and Sanctification (1 Cor.

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<sup>3</sup> Are groups of people whose risk of contracting HIV is situational or contextual such as adolescent girls, orphans, street children, and people with disabilities, migrant workers and mobile workers.

6:11, Psa. 119:9, and 2 Tim. 2:22), and [5] The Goal of Sexual Purity—being to glorify God with our Bodies (1 Cor. 6:20).



Picture 1: Olivia and I with a section of the young people who attended the conference



Picture 2: Olivia and Mrs. Ngolo speaking with the girls during the workshop session

## 2.0. Sunday Service

The service was characterized by Dholuo hymns and a few common choruses. There was Public Scripture Reading led by Adonijah from Psa. 15 followed by a brief session of exhortation. There was also Corporate Prayer led by three men in turns. These men spent time to lead the brethren in praying for the various spiritual and congregational needs. Pastor Daniel led the service.



Picture 3: A section of the Sunday congregation

### 2.1. Bible Study

Caleb taught in the Bible Study on Church Membership from Acts 2:41-42. The focus of the study was “how one becomes a member of a local church.” Three things were emphasized—faith in Jesus Christ, repentance towards God, and baptism. This was a timely message especially in a region where many people believe that the church should operate in the same manner as their social welfare groups (*chamas*) in relation to its membership. Most people think that as long as you remain faithful to the church by remitting a certain predetermined amount of money, you automatically become a member—whether or not you fulfil your membership responsibilities as clarified in the Bible. Of particular interest is the predominant concept of membership by subscription—monthly, quarterly or annually. Such a notion has been taken to imply that the church should bear the full financial burden

when for example, a member is in any form of financial need. At the end of the teaching, there was an interactive session that shifted the discussion to membership responsibilities and privileges.



Picture 4: Caleb teaching in the Bible Study

## 2.2. Preaching

I preached to a congregation that comprised of young people and adults from the four churches by considering Rom. 6:23. I majorly contrasted two things from this verse; the wages of sin and the [free] gift of God. One of the preaching tools greatly employed in such contexts is illustration.



Picture 5: I preached in the Sunday service

### 2.3. The Lord's Table

Pastor Daniel presided over the Lord's Table by giving a brief exhortation from 1 Cor. 11:17ff. The children were allowed to witness what's going on—but not to participate—as a way of exposing them early enough to the privileges of being in Christ. The non-members were also allowed in to witness what's going on for similar reasons.



Picture 6: **Standing:** Nicholas (in yellow) and Caleb serving the elements of the Lord's Table. Pst. Daniel presiding over.

### 3.0. South Nyanza Churches' Fellowship and Spiritual Growth

The four churches continue to strengthen their fellowship together and spiritual growth through rotational monthly services. They all meet together once a month for sharing in the Lord's Table after the Sunday service. They have committed themselves to supporting one another financially by contributing a certain amount of money for the hosting church whenever they meet. The brothers at Osani meet for their weekly prayer meeting every Wednesday while Nyakwaka and Thimlich have theirs on Thursdays. Wath Orango brethren prefer to have theirs on Saturdays. These churches intend to enhance more fellowship by introducing women's fellowship before the end of the year aimed at bringing together the wives of the deacons and pastors to enable them work together for the spiritual good of these churches. It is also meant to help the ladies to understand their role in the local church. This is against the background of the difficulty they have

experienced concerning their participation in the local church. They have been particularly questioning why women in TBC don't preach like in other churches.

#### **4.0. South Nyanza Churches' Leadership**

Pastor Daniel is the man who is trained among these men and has much responsibility in the region. Other than pastoring the congregation at Osani, he also coordinates the various activities aimed at bringing together all these churches as a way of strengthening and enhancing their spiritual growth and fellowship. He also helps in dealing with the various administrative issues of these churches. Currently, he is involved in taking the leaders through the Distinctive Doctrines and the Guidelines for a Local Church. He hopes that this will equip these leaders for effective ministry. Nicholas, who dropped out of pastoral studies last year, is doing pretty well as a deacon for now. He is of much help to the church at Osani and to pastor Daniel. Nelson is the man leading the church at Wath Orango with the help of David, who serves as the deacon. David was especially helpful in the youth conference as much of the work was left to him. He is recovering well from the accident that he survived a while ago and is now able to walk without crutches. Caleb continues to lead the church at Nyakwaka with the support of William as the deacon while both Silas and Walter lead the brethren at Thimlich.



Picture 7: With 7 of the 8 men who serve God's people in South Nyanza. **From Left to Right:** Walter (Thimlich), Tonny (Nairobi), Daniel (Osani), Silas (Thimlich), Caleb (Nyakwaka), Nelson (Wath Orango), Nicholas (Osani), and William (Nyakwaka). **Missing**-David (Wath Orango) was caught up elsewhere.

## 5.0. Areas of Support and Prayer

- 1) We need to pray that the Lord would be pleased to save the young people in these churches and use them to reach out to their friends in the region with the gospel. The youth leadership trusts the Lord to increase the number of the young people who would attend in the subsequent conferences. They hope to have the Youth Conference annually. Most of the churches around—like the predominant SDA—have youth conventions that are characterized by less focus on Biblical teaching and more presentations such as dances and songs. It is generally believed in the region that youths can only attend conferences flavored with such elements.
- 2) The region is in great need of a laptop to help them efficiently communicate with the church in Nairobi. At the moment, pastor Daniel has to hire the services of a cybercafé to type and send their reports to Nairobi among other crucial things. It is especially difficult for him to access the nearby centers for cybercafé services when it rains.

- 3) The region is trusting God to start more meetings that would help them grow spiritually and in fellowship together, such as the women's conference. They are therefore, looking forward to receiving support from the church in Nairobi in all these plans, such as some brethren being sent to help them whenever they have a conference.
- 4) Pastor Daniel has had several challenges with his motor bike. He is trusting the Lord for a new one to increase his mobility within the region as he visits and strengthens the other three churches.
- 5) Thimlich brethren are trusting the Lord for the financial support to complete their church building which is almost done. Some of the things yet to be completed include fittings and plastering.

Report by

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