

Palmer Trip report January 2019

Tanzania

The primary purpose of this trip was to upgrade the Tanzania WBS Service Center. A new computer and scanner were delivered, and Tizo, the office coordinator, received training for our modified system going into effect this year. That is that the office will do two-way scanning using prepositioned English WBS courses. Although the shipment of \$5,000 worth of WBS courses coming on a container to Monduli will be delayed due to shipping process changes, there are enough English courses to proceed with 2-way scanning. The bulk of lessons go to Westover Hills in Austin. Tizo will begin mailing student lessons from Monduli and following up with phone calls to students to be sure delivery is efficient.



The newly painted WBS Service Center in Monduli, Tanzania



Phil & Tizo on WhatsApp Conference Call to WBS workers around Tanzania

The abysmally small number of English students recruited in Tanzania in 2018 has me brainstorming ways to generate English student recruitment there. To that end, I held a phone conference meeting with five church leaders from around Tanzania. These were: Willy Yudah of Mbeya / Sumbawanga; Chris Mwakabanje of Mwanza; Humphrey Lugendo of Dar-es-Salaam; Michael Losotwa of Arusha; and Tizo of Monduli. Unable to participate but still an important and eager player is Bernard Kulanga of Chimala.

While Cedar Park received few new enrollments in 2018, the Monrovia Church of Christ in Madison, AL, reportedly had significant results sponsoring 5 men to do recruiting and follow up. Those men all scan student lessons directly to Monrovia. They reportedly baptized 200 in 2018. Those sponsored workers were proven by a trial period before starting to receive \$50 a

month for travel plus internet/phone expenses. Some feedback from our phone conference included these observations: some schools resist WBS use and persecute the students who enroll; there is often a poor return rate (eg, 10%) from students who receive the Intro lesson; transportation costs are a barrier for volunteer WBS workers.

South Sudan

By invitation I taught a 3-day seminar on *'The Church of Christ'* at the Gurei Church of Christ on the northern outskirts of Juba. 45 people attended, mostly Gurei members with a few visiting WBS students and few members from the Gudele congregation across town. The content of the seminar was needed because of how many members are new and because denominational backgrounds and the non-restoration agenda of another Juba congregation have many asking questions about instrumental music in worship, women's roles, and other matters.

At least one evangelist, Patrick Lazarus (also the WBS Service Center coordinator), is sponsored by the West Side Church of Christ in Searcy. The Gurei church has benefitted from the return from exile of several men trained in Bible. Some were formerly of the Juba Church of Christ whose building was destroyed by war and will be a while getting started again since security in that area is still dubious. I am confident that the Gurei congregation will not compromise New Testament doctrine and practice. It also has the goal of planting a congregation in the city proper where many who cannot reach Gurei (including UN/US diplomatic personnel) could attend. This also applies many who have studied and will study WBS.



Discussion groups during Juba seminar on *The Church of Christ*

Currently the biggest struggle for Juba residents is the economy. High inflation and the absence of any production in-country—even of basic foods—make just the essentials very expensive and prices unstable. Crime and violence are high in the city, and rebel/soldier attacks are common starting even a short distance outside of Juba. With precautions, Americans can fly in and out of Juba and meet with Christians and provide encouragement. I pray that a visionary church in the States will examine the critical importance of a permanent downtown congregation in Juba and will prayerfully and wisely partner with the Gurei church leaders to bring that about. Today is when the future of the Lord's church in South Sudan is being determined. So called "progressive Churches of Christ" are already making their plans for there.

The operation of 2-way scanning at the WBS Service Center has been hampered in recent weeks by inconsistent internet access (network failure). I have instructed Patrick to change providers which he believes will resolve that problem. He continues to grade lessons himself, but will turn the bulk of that over to West Side teachers when smooth internet access is possible. West Side has assumed the role of supplying pre-positioned WBS courses, of which I was able to carry in about 70 lbs.' worth. There are currently 470 active "postal" WBS students in Juba.

Nairobi

Some additions to the Service Center office were made to protect the large quantity of Swahili courses being stored (raise them off the floor), and to be ready to bus both English Intro and Swahili courses and flyers to where recruiters need them. The possibility of adding a part-time assistant to help the office coordinator was discussed. This would be to have a "back-up" in case Richard gets prevented from his duties. It was decided that for now the coordinator Richard Karima would train a qualified *volunteer* from among either the IPCM preacher students or NCE members. I also felt it good to raise Karima's salary from \$150 to \$200 a month, while leaving the Service Center operations budget the same (\$50 a month). This makes the monthly Kenya Service Center budget to be \$250.

IPCM ("Institute of Practical Christian Ministry" -- the preacher-training school at Eastleigh) is planning to conduct WBS recruitment campaigns around Nairobi every month in 2019, starting in February. I have agreed to contribute \$50 per campaign to that from Kenya budgeted funds. I have rarely committed funds to the African-initiated WBS efforts that were not part of campaigns I was participating in, and will still strive to encourage volunteerism as the basis of WBS work. Funds used that are not related directly to my campaign trips have typically gone toward recruiting supplies and getting those to workers—supplies such as flyers, Short Intro's, and Enrollment Forms.

Kakuma



The group committed to being Jesus' church in Kakuma 2 refugee camp, Kenya

I did not include follow-up to the Kakuma Refugee Camp church-plant in my goals for this trip, but Richard's eagerness and the strategic importance of that followup made me agree to assist Richard with travel funds. Concurrent with my days in South Sudan, Richard taught a leadership course in Kakuma and was able to solidify the members who were willing to commit to New Testament Christianity (as opposed to the denominational leaders who were just seeking financial backing for their own goals). The faithful separated from the others, leaving the building that those others had formerly built. The church of some 20 members thus now needs a meeting place. It has selected as leaders 4 men.

There are 2 other WBS-spawned church plants in Kenya from 2018 that Karima is eager to get financial assistance for, but I keep reminding him that funding those is not WBS' role. It may be that God will provide a sponsor willing to make a one-time contribution to those churches' needs.

2019

I currently don't expect to return to East Africa until June this year. I have promised to participate in a WBS campaign in south Kisii County, Kenya, that is being conducted by Chad Garrett of Gold Hill Rd. Church of Christ in Fort Mill, S.C. That will be around June 12-14. I am looking at 2 other possible targets in Kenya, a seminar for IPCM, a maintenance visit to the Jinja, Uganda, Service Center, a campaign somewhere in Tanzania, and a maintenance visit to the Service Center in Monduli, Tanzania. Something to consider (though not necessarily as part of this summer trip) is a visit to Bujumbura, Burundi, where, along with neighboring DRC, Swahili WBS is very needed and wanted.