

## Palmer Mission Trip Report February, 2020

### Summary

My January 28 – February 12 trip to East Africa went smoothly and as planned. I was blessed with comfortable lodging, edible food and no health problems! (Thank the Lord!) One of the trip's purposes was to make sure the Kenya and Tanzania Service Centers were operating well and if possible add a second part-time worker in each. Another objective was to strengthen the young church in Kenya's largest refugee camp. I believe all those objectives were accomplished.

### Kenya WBS Service Center

I have been concerned for some time about the dependence of the Kenya WBS Service Center on one man, Richard Karima, who has a lot of duties. From basically June to December, 2019, he did not scan and send student answer sheets because he could not figure out a glitch in Dropbox. Eventually all those lessons were mailed to Cedar Park, but a lot of students will receive their lessons after a long delay. I had planned to interview candidates to "hire" an assistant capable of doing all Karima's duties and to ensure smooth, prompt service even if something happens to Karima. Richard is 58 years old.

In short, no assistant has been added. The Kenya WBS Service Center is hosted by NCCE (Nairobi Church of Christ Eastleigh) at which there is a large congregation, a Technical Trades college (Kenya Christian Industrial Technologies Institute - KCITI) and a preacher training school (Institute of Practical Christian Ministry – IPCM, all on one vast compound with majestic modern buildings. The NCCE and school leaders are very worried right now because of intense

government scrutiny of all that goes on – the schools, employment of staff, even the structure and documentation of the church. This reflects a heightened effort by the government to exact taxes and revenue in any way possible. In that climate, they are afraid for WBS to support a part-time worker, even though it would officially be a "volunteer" position and the person may have no other association with NCCE and its schools. WBS does have a significant presence on the campus, with recruiting supplies, Swahili WBS courses, and the office equipment stored and used there.



**NCCE, KCITI and IPCM complex in Eastleigh, Nairobi**

I took a new high-speed scanner for the Nairobi service Center and had adequate time to get Karima trained and comfortable using everything. We resolved the Dropbox glitch. Karima is dedicated to giving priority to keeping the mail-scanning up-to-date. I did interview one young Christian woman from Koma Rock Church of Christ (about a 20 minute ride away from Eastleigh), and have suggested she or one of the IPCM preacher students be on "standby" if we suddenly need office help in Nairobi.

While at Eastleigh I gave the IPCM preacher students a short class on how to teach a WBS follow-up seminar called New Testament Christianity and the Church of Christ using already prepared student and teacher workbooks. Also we reviewed recruiting tools, but already all through 2019 these men have been doing monthly recruiting efforts around Nairobi. The dominant feedback was that almost no lessons ever arrive for students after their answer sheets are turned in and scanned to Cedar Park, even when addressed to the Nairobi Service Center.

## Tanzania WBS Service Center

English WBS enrollment in Tanzania has been something of a disappointment for the few years I have been serving. The Monrovia Church of Christ in Madison, AL, has for many years funded recruiters in three or four parts of Tanzania who scan lessons directly to them. They have been quite effective. WBS's effort to get volunteer recruiters has had little success. We are branching out, therefore, and I have added to the Tanzania Service Center a young man, Kishumui Oinyaku, to be a "full-time" recruiter and a back-up office clerk to our active Service Center director, Tizo Joseph. Kishumui will recruit at schools, organize recruiting campaigns, and do follow-up. He is a graduate of Andrew Connally School of Preaching and is an active evangelist in the Monduli Juu Church of Christ. I find him to be a serious, dedicated and capable worker. Please pray for him in this new role. He has a fiancée, and hopes to marry in a few months.



**Phil, Tizo and Kishumui at the Monduli, Tanzania, WBS office**

## Refugee Camp Church of Christ



**Bible Seminar participants in Refugee Camp**

Some four years ago, a Congolese refugee in the Nyarugusu refugee camp in Tanzania became aware of WBS and started studying. He is Rashid Elocho. His uncle was a preacher for the Church of Christ in that Refugee camp. The uncle subsequently emigrated to the USA, and Rashid moved his family to a Refugee Camp in Kenya. He began asking his WBS teacher in the US for Swahili WBS lessons for his co-refugees who could study in that language. That made a connection with me, and in 2017 we followed up some 70 Swahili WBS students with a

seminar. The church was planted, and though Rashid got his documentation and emigrated to Australia, a committed core is there left with a congregation of 30 people. This trip allowed me to make my 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to the camp and hold a Bible Seminar for the church and another 20 or so WBS students. 10 of the WBS students are English speaking and taking English WBS courses. WBS is now operating in 4 of the area camps, and in time there may well be congregations in all four.

The seminar we conducted was called *Overview of the Bible*, however a lot of the discussion time went to questions of importance to the participants, who came from various denominational backgrounds. Biblical church government, women's roles, instrumental music, worship styles and modern "prophecy" were some subjects that were



**Baptisms after Seminar and Sunday Worship in Refugee Camp**



carefully examined. About 55 people attended. On Sunday, 7 people responded and were baptized. All were adults, except one high school student.

The Refugee Camp Church of Christ is in a difficult, perhaps precarious, situation. Though the refugees are very poor and only a few of them have low-paying jobs, they collected enough money (\$360) to buy a plot and try to start building a building for worship. The school classroom they are renting is close to where a denomination meets that each Sunday



**Beginnings of church building by Refugee Camp Church of Christ**

brings a live band and shows no concern for our brethren, but blast there "music" loudly each week making it almost impossible for our brethren to have a service. Life in the camps makes an alternative meeting time very difficult to arrange. They are eager to get their own building finished, but lack the finances to do so. Also, unless a structure is finished in a timely manner, the authorities may confiscate their plot and give it to someone else. They are appealing for financial help in building their building. I usually encourage new church plants to struggle through and build their own appropriate structures. The refugees, however, do not have the same recourse or resources as most places, and are very far

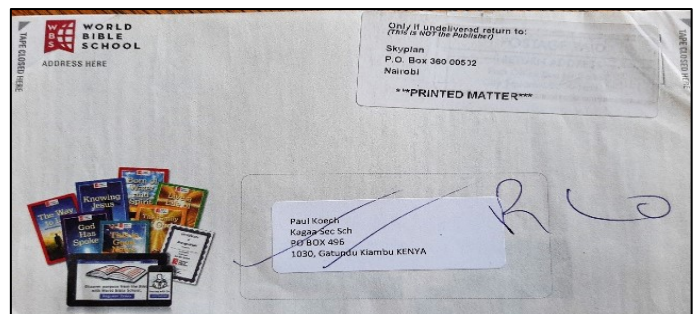
from other sister congregations in the country. A "harambee" (Swahili, "pulling together") may not be out of order to help get this congregation on its feet and provide some possibility of permanence. Over the last 2 years the church has already eliminated some denominational opportunists by taking doctrinal stances that those would-be leaders rejected. I currently feel good about the current leaders and the future of this congregation. Bro. Karima invests a lot of time and encouragement to this and other new church plants, so continued spiritual nurture seems to be in place. The church opened a PO box in the nearby town which should allow us to get teaching materials and WBS lessons to them more easily.

### Observations and Proposals

#### Postal Mail in Kenya

Richard and I visited Winnie Mang'ela, General Manager at the main post office in Nairobi. She has been helpful in the past, and is willing to investigate specific "disappearances" of mail if the sending place and time and the destination address can be identified. She once contacted Richard to give him returned mail that had Ruai as the return address. As it is, other mail, with USA return addresses, cannot be turned over to us when undeliverable. There is a large quantity of such mail, a lot of it into lessons that were shipped through Alpha Mailing and have no return addresses. Such mail is sold by the Kenya Post Office as scrap to be burned. Winnie has said we can try writing a letter to the Postmaster General to release to our Kenyan representative undeliverable mail that comes from WBS.

It is apparent that the biggest cause of undeliverable mail is wrong addressing and the use of inactive PO boxes. That comes from students and recruiters not knowing their own address nor how to fill out an address, and from schools not keeping their boxes active. Otherwise, the Kenya Postal system is just horribly slow and has the occasional crooked or unfaithful branch staff.



**Example of undeliverable mail slated for burning; the postal code is incomplete; the wrong town name is used. There is no return address.**

### Pre-Positioning Courses

I am convinced that pre-positioning courses and alternative delivery systems is the only viable way to correct the massive loss and waste that is occurring. As it is, we are likely to keep losing our volunteer recruiters who are repeatedly shamed by making promises that our delivery failures essentially turn into lies. I believe printing in-country is going to be the most practical way to have pre-positioned courses, even if the quality of books is reduced slightly. (Scanning already requires American study helpers to work with reduced quality materials; many Africans will not greatly miss the higher quality books). Sending a container of courses has major up-front costs and is fraught with shipping and customs issues. The quote from Evangel Publishing in Nairobi of 53 cents per copy for GHS is a base for comparison. Going to some "in-house" risograph/ink-jet alternative could be much cheaper still. Eastleigh in Nairobi would welcome a risograph or other printing program and have the space to facilitate it.

### More scanning locations

When scanning was first introduced to East Africa, I had a vision of multiple scanners per country in the major recruiting areas, thus eliminating internal mailing (and potential delay and loss) of answer sheets. This has now been implemented in 2 places in Kenya besides the Service Center-- in Mogotio and Eldoret. I believe this is practical for yet another 2 or 3 places in Kenya, and is basically necessary in 2 or 3 places in Uganda. I will do my best to train the new scanning workers (who are volunteer), and will screen their scans prior to their going to Sherri, until the workers are consistent in doing them as needed.

### May and July Trips

I am anticipating an April 27 – May 12 (approx) trip to Uganda and Kenya, joined by Ron Pottberg, as his schedule permits. This will primarily be to attend the Uganda Christian Bible College graduation in Kigumba, Uganda, and oversee/train implementation of pre-positioning in Uganda, on a trial-sized scale. Letting Ron see our Kenya operations will be part of this trip.

I expect to go with Elaine to Kenya around June 29 – July 30. Some campaign/seminar locations are being considered, but the main program will be designed to include a Hillcrest elder and his wife (Don and Beth Pope). That program should include a WBS follow-up seminar in Nairobi, a recruiting campaign somewhere near Nairobi, and recruiting visits to selected schools.