

Palmer Trip Report July 2023

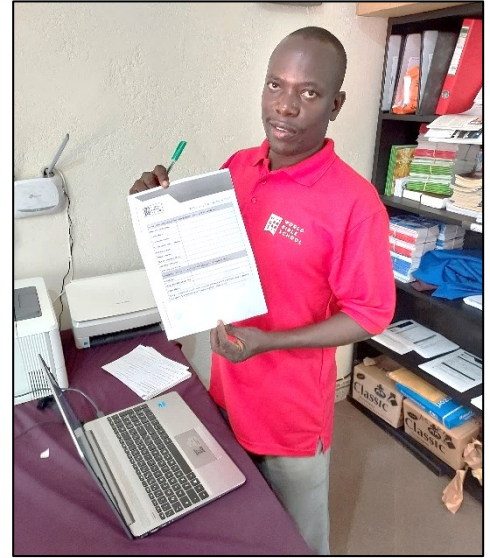
Uganda

While Uganda is currently the 9th most productive nation in enrollments in 2023, with over 9,000 new students so far this year, it has the potential for much higher enrollment and has a committed group of recruiters who are steady. WBS has had, and will have, a big impact on the growth of the church in Uganda. My trip was only one week long, so consisted basically of reviewing the operations at the WBS Service Center in Jinja and in conducting a training session and campaign in Karamoja, a region I had never visited before. The place felt familiar, though, as the language is much like neighboring Ateso which I studied the 2 years I lived and worked in Uganda from '98 to '01.

Most of the “bugs” that had plagued the Service Center over the previous 6 months seem to be worked out. The new wifi is more consistent and faster. The new laptop, printer and existing scanner are working well. I took measures to formalize one part of our lesson delivery system since from Jinja, parcels going inland in Uganda must pass through Kampala where a worker must receive them and put them on another bus. Fred

Ssenkumba had been volunteering to do that, but we now have him helping in a more official capacity to be sure the flow of lessons is consistent and dependable. He typically transfers courses from the busses twice a week.

One interruption which can still trouble the office work is power outages. To help with that I purchased a 2.5kw gasoline-powered generator so that the WBS office and Gospel Chariot Missions office can have back up power when needed.



Geoffrey Oguttu prepares to scan lessons to Sherri in Cedar Park from the Uganda Service Center



Backup generator for WBS Service Center and GCM offices

The opening up of **Karamoja** is a God-in-Action story! People and opportunities that presented themselves to the church in Jinja have led in 6 years to the planting of 14 congregations, and the establishment of a vibrant Christian Primary School, Vocational Training School and Preacher Training School at Lorengechora, between Soroti and Moroto. The church there hosted our WBS training workshop, seminar and campaign, attended by 54 from 7 congregations, with visitors from 5 denominations. Several were from the “Message Church.” An older leader of that group announced at the end of our



New WBS recruiters for the Karamoja churches of Christ

seminar that he had “now found the true church of the Bible.” He is from toward Moroto where the church of Christ has not yet been planted, so pray this is a door to that location.

Eastleigh (Nairobi) WBS Service Center

Eastleigh served as a “pilot” Service Center in WBS’ shift to what is called the ‘Ocean Bridge’ model. For two years the Hillcrest and Jim Ned Valley congregations have graded and scanned back the answer sheets for the Service Center to print and combine with the next course for each student, the courses being already “pre-positioned” there in Nairobi. In 2022 and 2023, ‘Ocean Bridge’ is being rolled out as the model that US churches are urged to use. This replaces the international posting of lessons with scanning graded answer sheets to Cedar Park which will be sent to students with their next course from the Service Center in their country. The savings on time, cost and lost lessons is dramatic.



Ron Pottberg addresses the IPCM preaching students and tours the vocational school, church and IPCM campus



The Nairobi Church of Christ Eastleigh has hosted our Kenya Service Center for about 11 years. This trip was blessed to have Ron Pottberg (veteran WBS International Relations staff member) and Ken Bolden (former 20-year missionary to Kenya) visit the Service Center and address the preacher students on the IPCM (Institute of Practical Christian Ministry) campus. The Service Center

workers are geared for Ocean Bridge to continue to impact Kenya with more effective delivery of the Gospel than was possible using postal systems.

Kisii

After Ken Bolden lost Ann to cancer in November last year, he made a trip to his old missionary stomping grounds of Kisii, Kenya, in March this year. WBS invited him to accompany Ron and me there again on this trip. A planned meeting of church leaders was hampered by nationwide political protests, which



View of Kisii Town where Mogesa CoC and Bible School are located

were violent in several areas. Nonetheless we met 4 prominent leaders and were able to propose expansion of WBS activities in the future for Kisii and Nyamira Counties, an area with between 35 and 40 congregations and with one of the highest population densities in Kenya. We pray WBS can play a significant role in the inspiration and growth of the church there.

Tumaini Prison Ministry WBS Service Center

A milestone was reached on this trip with the establishment of a second “Service Center” in Kenya on the campus of Siriat Bible School in Sotik. This office will use WBS ‘Ocean Bridge’ tools through the Tumaini Prison Ministry under the direction of Bro. Erick Chepkwony. With the support of the Springtown Church of Christ in Springtown, TX, the ministry’s work has been proven for 10 years, and WBS’ initiative comes as a result of the Kenya prison system asking Erick to expand from 10 to 34 prisons around Kenya. US churches



should be able to teach thousands of inmates with WBS, and the ministry also already has a proven history of services for post release re-integration, counseling, and family aid for mothers with children in the prisons. Ken, Ron and I visited and spoke at the Bomet and Sotik prisons. The openness of officials to receive religious instruction for inmates is remarkable, as is the receptivity of the inmates themselves. Ken was especially impressed with the Kenya prison system’s philosophy of rehabilitation, even calling themselves Correctional Facilities.

Tumaini Prison Ministry board and staff witness implementation of WBS equipment in their new office/storage space

With the opening of this office, a major printing of WBS Master Series courses was launched. 100,000 copies of the Introduction “short” course are complete, ¼ of those having been delivered to Tumaini and the rest to the Nairobi Service Center. As the next 6 books are completed, they will also be delivered according to how pressing the need is and the most economical delivery option. We do have a brother in Nairobi with a truck big enough to deliver the entire consignment in one trip if need be.

Baringo County WBS Campaign

In 2018 Elaine and I did a WBS campaign in Baringo County, a large area in the north Rift Valley with some 26 congregations of the church. On this trip, following the program set up by Symon Koech (the area’s lead WBS recruiter), I retraced my steps to some extent, visiting about 4 of the same schools we went to last time. In two days we visited 12 schools in all, offering enrollment to around 1500 students and staff. We also had a training workshop at the monthly “cluster” meeting of 5 congregations held at Cheptililik Church of Christ. A representative of each congregation was sent home to begin serving as a WBS recruiter in his own neighborhood.



Enrolling at Cheraik Pmy School



Enrolling at Kipkoriony 2dy school

While the more scattered population of Baringo County may make it seem less a priority target than urban centers, this trip reinforced my conviction that where we have willing workers, their zeal to carry out the Great Commission should not be overlooked by WBS. Ocean Bridge can function well even in such remote places when the workers are committed and the available mechanisms for lesson delivery are used, in this case sending photos of finished lessons to Nairobi

by Whatsapp and using the bus to return the next lessons. I believe WBS should maintain the vision of reaching where no other method of outreach can go, “the ends of the earth,” equipping our overseas co-workers wherever they are able to serve.

Koma Rock Church of Christ WBS Outreach

As reflected in my last Kenya trip report (Jan. 2023), God has lit a fire under the Koma Rock congregation in Nairobi! They have formed a team that goes around to Nairobi congregations to do WBS campaigns, and are also doing “up-country” campaigns as their resources allow. In June they went a second time to Kisii County, and have a campaign planned in Siaya in August, and in Malindi in December. My last day in Kenya was spent at Koma Rock—they took me to 4 schools, most of which included picking up and dropping off courses of previously enrolled students. At all the schools



Enthusiastic receptions at Kayole South 2dy and The Koma Rock School (Joshua Ogada next to me)



we addressed the student body to try and enroll more. We spoke to approx. 1500 students that day. Joshua Ogada, a minister at Koma Rock, is gifted for this exact kind of work! In hands like his I believe the future of WBS expansion in Kenya is bright.