

Pray for Kenya 2022/4

25th. October

Dear Brethren,

By God's grace I was able to spend from 7th. to 23rd. September in Kenya. From 8th. to 16th. we were in Pokot North, and it is about these days that I want to write to you in this report.

Pokot North is an area in the far north-west of Kenya on the Ugandan border enclosed by the Turkwell/Suam River to the south and east. We started to have contact with the area about 30 years ago when the work of the gospel was in its infancy. Now there are 14 local churches, with up to 200 baptized believers, and in each place there are schools sponsored by Trinity Baptist Church.



I went with these brethren (L to R) – Abdi Osman from

Ethiopia, who joined me as I passed through Addis Ababa on my way to Kenya; Dominic, a pastor with TBC Nairobi; and Gaitano, a TBC Nairobi member; and I told the brethren that this could be my last visit, what I am now saying everywhere I go. I want to structure

this prayer letter under the various challenges that the work in Pokot North faces.



1. The challenge of **leadership**. The three we started with in 2000 continue to lead, although they were only formally set aside as pastors in 2018 (L to R) – Joshua Sitet (Kasei), Andrew Chemolok (Chepkinagh), Thomas Lokerisa (Kamketo). For some years there was a Kenyan 'missionary', i.e. a non-Pokot, working alongside each of them especially in the schools. They have now left the area.

Only one other brother, Peter Nalunyit of Wasat, has been set aside as pastor, although he has yet to complete the TPC studies. A number of others have started the TPC but for various reasons gave up before completing and have not been faithful in the church. William Siwanyang is in his first year now and we trust he will be faithful. There are at least two possible reasons for this lack of leadership. First polygamy is rife, even amongst young men. Second the pull of training for a job which will bring in far more money is great especially from the wider family who are probably not Christians. [William's father is a member in Kapkewa.] We also believe there is a call to train men locally where, while using English language materials, communication will be in the vernacular Kipokot language.

2. The challenge of **drought**.

In Pokot North there are hills rising to over 8,000 ft. where the growing of maize is the most productive. On the plains towards Uganda cattle are numerous. Every dry season, twice a year, the herds are taken into the more lush pastures in Uganda. This is especially the case when there is drought. Men and even whole families may migrate, so upsetting church life. The general effects of drought are a decline in livestock prices as animals are not so healthy, an increase in cereal prices, with the knock-on effect of more expensive consumer goods. This undermines the purchasing power of households, heightens food insecurity, and impacts projects like church buildings.



3. The challenge of **culture**. One must be very patient with culture as long-standing norms may take time, teaching and continual exhortation to overcome. I encountered the following:

- Family relationships. Men and women keep separate. At lunch after the service in Wasat I saw the men sitting a hundred yards from the women and expecting to be waited upon. I asked if this is the way they love their wives, expecting them to do all the work and take care of the small children. Later I was somewhat rebuked: 'Don't forget how far the gospel has brought these men'. Formerly, when they went on a raid and defeated the enemy, they noted they still had the 'enemy' at home.
- Weddings. I asked why there have been no church weddings since the first I conducted in 2014. The reply: 'Traditionally, a young man impregnates a lady, then the lady's father requires that he marries her'.
- Polygamy. This is almost universal, even amongst the younger men. Even if such are converted, they cannot become church leaders. This is one of the strong reasons for seeking to reach the youth of school age that the Lord might be pleased to save them and keep them in a monogamous marriage. Yet many have fallen to the societal pressure to multiply wives.
- Young men. On a couple of occasions I encountered young, educated men just sitting chatting (or looking at their phones). This is the culture, of course with the background of illiteracy. I exhorted them to use the time the Lord had given them usefully. For example, in helping their mothers who drag 20 litre jerry cans of water around and who roam to collect firewood! They could read, study the Bible and pray together, and visit others for spiritual encouragement and witness.



4. The challenge of **politics**. Elections are hotly fought in Kenya! At the local level it may well become a family (clan) affair because of the supposed financial and other advantages of having one of 'one's own' in power. A member in one of the churches has been an MCA (member of the constituent assembly) in the county seat at Kapenguria. It is a relatively lucrative position. His son, also a church member, vied for the same seat in the recent

elections. Some asked if this seat is therefore to be hereditary. Sadly, the whole affair brought division in churches as the clan is widespread in the region and many church members belong to it. We repeatedly urge church leaders to completely stay out of politics, but it seems hard for them. I asked the leaders to humble themselves before the members to seek to solve this. A meeting for reconciliation was scheduled for 13/10.

5. The challenge of **schools**. When TBC formally entered the area in 2000 there were already a few churches and schools established. Now there are 14 local churches with schools attached, most of them having the full complement of 8 classes for primary education. Most schools in Kenya have been initiated by the community in conjunction with churches and other NGOs. Although such schools are run by the government, as a church we are able to teach the Bible there and we pray that many young people will be converted as a result. If we did not do this other churches, such as Catholics who are very strong in education, would have the influence. There is so much competitiveness to start schools, and their recent



Teachers at Chepkinagh Primary with 300 registered pupils

proliferation may be one reason why the government has not staffed them to required levels. The reality is that whereas there ought to be 10 teachers in each school, none have more than 5 provided by the government, and one only has two. The school must therefore rely on parents and the sponsor (i.e. the church) to contribute. Parents are not able to bear the full load and for the past year the church has been unable to do much. TRAIN(Kenya) is considering what help might be given. We heard how much the schools have benefitted the local

churches in terms of attendance, and how difficult the community found it when support was suddenly 'taken away'.



Preaching at Kapterema Primary



Preaching at Kasei Secondary (Boys)

6. The challenge of **opportunities** to be grasped! We believe the brethren in North Pokot need much encouragement and help, both in terms of man-power and financial support. Brother Gaitano Mbatia wants to develop this with a few interested brethren in Nairobi. These are some the practical things we would like to be done:

- Churches. There are annual camps for Men, Women, and Youth, which have been well attended and are a great means of outreach. A team from Nairobi could help in teaching and personal encouragement. Such would be especially helpful among the youth as all education is in English, and non-Pokot people obviously do not speak Kipokot and many people there speak nothing else.



L – Joint Sunday service with Wasat & Kwirir churches.
R – Greetings circle after joint meeting with 3 churches at Apur.



- Primary schools. In each school there is a 30 minute lesson weekly where the church can teach its own doctrine to all the pupils, called PPI or Programme for Pastoral Instruction. We are seeking to source materials which can be of help to those who lead these lessons.
- Secondary schools. These three schools we sponsor are boarding and this gives the opportunity for 'weekend challenge' once a year. Normal school activities stop and the word of God is brought to the students over many sessions. This is something in which brethren from Nairobi can be very useful.

In office of Principal of Kasei Boys, engaging deputy Julius. We have good relationship with these officials.



- Above all, pray for the regular preachers in Pokot North, that they will be faithful to the gospel, and that the Lord will use them powerfully, in a place that remains open to the word of God. May the Lord raise up many more such preachers!

In Christ's service,

Keith Underhill

kunderhill@digitalsavannah.co.uk

mobile phones: +447982698151 (K), +447912079482 (P)

[please note that the land line +441512223749 is no longer in use]

www.trinity.or.ke; www.trinitybaptistkenya.org

www.trainkenya.com (TRAINKenya Charity)

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