

Prayer Letter from the Underhills

2024/2, 10th. February

Dear Brethren,

The Lord was so gracious in the recently concluded visit to Kenya and Dubai. Everything was accomplished that had been the purpose of the visits. We trust that He is bringing forth fruit for His glory from all He enabled us to do.

KENYA

Oliver Allmand-Smith and I visited West Pokot County in our capacity as trustees of the U.K. charity TRAIN(Kenya). Oliver has had an interest in the work of the gospel here for almost 20 years, and it was his third visit to Pokot. He is a pastor of Trinity Grace Church, Ramsbottom, near Manchester. Elly Achok, pastor of the Gospel Missions Agency in Mumias, Kenya, also accompanied us, and kindly drove us there in his car. It was his first time to visit 'Kenya B', as we came to call it, a far cry from the more developed Kenya A. In the last year TRAIN(Kenya) has been using donations in three ways in order to encourage the work. The charity tasked us to find out the benefits of this expenditure and to know whether we should continue to give such support and to see what further needs there might be.

(1) The three long-standing **church leaders** have received limited monthly support. Joshua



Sitet (Kasei), Thomas Lokerisa (Kamketo), and Andrew Chemolok (Chepkinagh), have been in the work for more than 20 years. Over those years there has been much growth in terms of planting of new churches and starting schools associated with each church. There are now 14, with one even being started over the border in Uganda where the Pokot also live and take their cattle to graze. During this time there have been the usual problems – an influx of other

churches especially of the Pentecostal/Charismatic variety, and others bringing in lots of money, the influence of politics, the legacy of a strong culture and in particular the practice of polygamy. There was a time when the Full Gospel swept the area. The Lutherans came in with development projects. People in the churches have taken opposing sides in the vying for prestigious political office. As regards polygamy, these three men have been faithful to their spouses, but many others have succumbed to the demands of the culture and have been excommunicated. There has only ever been one church wedding (which I performed in 2014) and there are rumours that this may have turned polygamous. You might ask why is it a rumour? The man works away from the area and this gives the opportunity to have one wife at home, and another elsewhere. We were even told that the older men in the church are so aware of the power of polygamy that they do not encourage their sons to marry in church lest they later turn to become polygamous. Where are future church leaders going to come from in such a situation?

We spent much of one day talking with these three men seeking to understand them and to encourage them in the work of the gospel. These were some of the things we shared together: support for teachers in schools, the best way to promote the gospel in the schools, the need for a missionary to help with the work, the establishment of a Bible school in the area, moving the churches towards self-sufficiency and encouraging them to progress with government registration. We felt these men are weary with so much responsibility and that they need an 'infusion' of encouragement of various things. They have been faithful even as they have struggled with family demands as a result of school fees and drought.

(2) A permanent **church building** in Chepkinagh has been almost completed. The Sunday we were there was the very first time it was used! The floor was not concreted, the walls were not plastered, and the window glasses were not in place. Prior to this they had been using one of the school classrooms which was too small for the many attendees. Now they have ample space and we trust it will be used to the full.

Chepkinagh church building



(3) Monthly support is given for the employment of extra teachers in the **schools** sponsored by the church. 10 of them are registered with the government but the government does not provide anything like the full quota of teachers required for the proper running of the school. TRAIN(Kenya) provides funds to support more than 20 extra teachers, who must have been trained according to government standards. Where possible we want them to be church members, or at least attendees. We are particularly concerned for the Friday morning PPI (= Programme for Pastoral Instruction) where a church representative can teach the doctrine of the church. What an opportunity this can be for the gospel to come to many hundreds of children! To aid this we provided material from Rafiki on the Gospel of Matthew (<https://rafikifoundation.org/>).



Kamketo Primary School

We were able to visit quite a number of the primary schools – at Kamketo, Kasei, Nakoretee, Chepkinagh, Apur, and Wasat, as well as the secondary schools at Kamketo (girls) and Kasei (boys). We sought to meet with the head teachers and staff to find out how the school is progressing. Two of the primary schools were very encouraging with well organized leaders and a very supportive staff. We wish that could be said of every school! This area of West Pokot is remote and many teachers not from the area who are posted here would regard it as a punishment. There is a lot of absenteeism among teachers, one of the excuses being that education offices, banks and shopping are a day's journey away in Kapenguria. As serious was the low enrolment in the schools. Covid restrictions took many children out of the educational system for good. January is the beginning of the school year and many children were still seeking fees and others were still with parents in Uganda where they had gone for grazing their animals. Education is still not seen as vitally important by many. Much patience is needed with this community as they come out of a cattle-raiding culture into the modern era. But without the provision of education from where can we expect future church leaders to come?



Elly at Kasei Primary School



Keith at Kamketo Trinity Girls Secondary

We were able to preach everywhere. Oliver wrote a daily diary and took many photos, and you can very soon access this at Trinity Grace Church. [<https://trinitygracechurch.net/kenya>]

Please Pray

1. Wisdom for TRAIN(Kenya) to know how best to encourage the work of the gospel by its giving.
2. That the 3 leaders – Andrew, Joshua and Thomas – may be faithful to the gospel, and that the Lord would use them in the preaching of the gospel in the community and schools.
3. For the 2 young men currently training in the TPC in Nairobi – William and Geoffrey, and that the Lord would be pleased to raise up other such men.
4. Those who teach the weekly PPI lessons in the schools on Friday mornings using the material on the Gospel of Matthew.

DUBAI

I have developed a relationship with Grace Reformed Baptist Church, and was last here in November 2022 for their 10th. anniversary. The connection is through Alan & Kez Kimunguyi who were young people in the church in Nairobi and now live in Dubai. Before they came the church was entirely Filipino and used Tagalog (90% of the UAE population are workers from outside the country). Now they use English and the church is more multi-cultural.



They wanted me to deal with the problem of legalism. So for the Friday night Bible study I took Matthew 22:34-40, emphasizing that that being anti-legalism does not mean antinomianism. I preached twice Sunday morning, on the Cost and Return of Following Jesus (Matthew 19:27-30), and on being Ready for the Second Coming (Matthew 25:1-13). Being so-called 'winter' with temperatures in the lower 20s C. we had food in one of the parks and they requested me to talk about courtship and

marriage with many of them unmarried and getting older.

Rey Rodejo is the lone pastor and very much feels the need for an eldership. I remember when we started the church in Nairobi, it was not so much the amount of work that was a concern but bearing the responsibility alone. So we had much time to talk about the usual problems that he is struggling with in the church. I trust I was able to be an encouragement to him.

Personal

I was scheduled to have a Thyroidectomy (removal of the thyroid) on Monday but it has had to be postponed because they have found that my heart rate sometimes goes very low so that it could be dangerous to operate without further investigations being made.

I have the following schedule of preaching until Easter which may very well need revision:

February 11th. – Belvidere Road, Liverpool (home church). In the morning we are starting 1 Timothy and I am to introduce it with 1:1-7 which will be on the Importance of Doctrine. In the evening I will seek to deal with Psalm 109 and how we should interpret the imprecations. Ian Higham, the pastor, is having medical treatment over the next months and there will be times when he will be unable to preach, so a few of us are taking up the baton.

March 3rd. – Belvidere Road, Liverpool (morning) on 1 Timothy 1:18-20. The Reformed Fellowship in Warrington (afternoon) which is struggling with those who showed an initial interest now backing off.

March 10th. – Trinity Baptist Church, Charlesworth morning and afternoon. For the morning I continue in my exposition of John 17.

March 24th. – West Park Church, Wolverhampton, morning and evening.

In Christ's service,

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Other websites:

TBC Nairobi – <https://www.trinity.or.ke>

TPC – <https://www.tpc.or.ke>

TRAIN(Kenya) – www.trainkenya.com