

Prayer Letter from the Underhills

2025/3, 29th. May

Dear Brethren,

The Lord was very kind in the time I recently had in Kenya and Ethiopia. Neither I, nor Priscilla at home, had any particular difficulties. Indeed the brethren in Kenya said that I appeared a lot stronger than when I was with them at the beginning of the year!

Much of what I was able to do was centred around men that I had helped to train in the Trinity Pastors' College (TPC) in Nairobi. Scores of men passed through this College from the 1980s and many are faithfully preaching the gospel in local churches and beyond.

1. Gospel Missions Agency (GMA), Mumias

Mumias is located in west Kenya, north-west of Kisumu. The main purpose of the visit was to be one of the speakers at the Annual Reformation Conference, 11 sessions over 3 days. Elly Achok, together with his slightly older brother Barnabas who leads GMA in Mombasa, was



immersed in the Word of Faith movement until the Lord graciously transformed his life in 2008. I gave you links in the previous Newsletter so that you could read about this from themselves. Elly (2010-2) and Barnabas (2012-4) studied at the TPC that grounded them in the teaching they are seeking to promote today. Barnabas was the other main speaker.

Their first task was to reform the local church, a slow process needing much wisdom. You can imagine that many members did not like the changes and left. But now the church is conducted in ways that I find comfortable and thank the Lord for this great change according to His word.

The task Elly set himself was much wider than the local church. There were the multitudes of leaders and churches that needed to be reached because they had been led into grave error by him. The method has been to arrange this aptly named Reformation Conference and to advertise it widely. Hundreds have been coming, and this year 400 were registered. At the Conference they promote the Biblical teaching of the Wisdom Training Centre (now many centres). On the Saturday more than 70 graduated from the Certificate one year course which is basically a study in the doctrines of grace. 15 graduated from the Diploma two year course which is more designed for those interested in ministry. Many are changed in their doctrine, and some profess conversion! They look to influence their local church, and even to start new churches based on Biblical truth. [Remember so many churches have been deeply influenced by the Word of Faith movement.]

The Conference theme was 'This is our Faith, a summary of our Christian faith from a soteriological perspective.' Having to do with Salvation, there were the following 11 sessions: the Manual (Bible), the God (Trinitarian nature), the Christ (fitting and sufficient Saviour), the Manner (penal substitution, justification), the Application (new birth and adoption, sanctification), the Evidence (marks), and the Practice (local church, service, evangelism).



A number of conferees were church leaders, having been trained at the Nairobi TPC. The six below are from GMA churches, and the three are the Pokot brethren (started TPC 2000) who travelled all the way to attend. George Mwanjisi from Boyani (Coast) was also present (started TPC in 1995). Praise God that such men have had training and are active in planting and ministering in local churches.



Sunday we met as the local GMA church in Mumias with, or course, fewer people. There were two lengthy preaching sessions. First was brother Barnabas dealing with Assurance from Romans 5:1-5. I love the careful way these brethren practically expound the Scripture in its context. I followed, as always with translation into Kiswahili, with a consideration of the blessings we have in Christ from Ephesians 1:3-14. I was requested to do this. Typically Kenyan churches have long morning services, with nothing later. Elly told me that they are discussing starting an afternoon service so that they can use the Lord's Day with much more profit.

2. NET Foundation, Bumala

Eric Ngala (right) started the TPC almost 20 years ago in 2007. He is from Bumala, which is west of Mumias near the Uganda border. As well as having a church to lead, he is much engaged in pastoral training, in connection with Mukhanyo Theological College based in South Africa, and NET Foundation from the Netherlands. In different centres around Kenya about 100 men are enrolled in studies. Eric asked me to address the 15 students present on Principles of Church Planting.

[<https://english.netfoundation.nl>]

[<https://www.facebook.com/eric.ngalamutumbi>]



3. Grace Baptist Church, Kisumu

As we passed through Kisumu, flying from Nairobi, and then by road to Mumias, we passed by to fellowship with Tonny Karwa, pastor of Grace Baptist Church. I 'met' him from my hospital bed in 2014 and he subsequently went through the TPC. I was able to spend a long weekend with him and the church back in early February (Newsletter 2025/1). In the last few weeks he has been speaking for the Africa Pastors' Conferences in South Africa and Namibia.

4. Ethiopia - Addis Ababa

Brother Abdi was with me the whole time in Kenya, so much appreciating the fellowship and ministry. We travelled back on the Friday and I spent 3 full days with him and his family in Addis Ababa. Abdi works under the auspices of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF), broadcasting the gospel far and wide in his native Somali tongue. I often reflect how difficult it must be to compose programmes week after week, year after year, only speaking into a



microphone, not knowing who, if anyone, is listening! But listen they do, all over the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, and he seeks to visit where possible. He works together with brother Zemen, specifically seeking to train Muslim background believers. My book, *Becoming a Christian*, which was published in Kenya, has been translated into Amharic and Oromo by Zemen. When Abdi's translation into his language is published it will be in the three major languages of Ethiopia. These

two brothers run the training centre about 15 miles north of Addis but because of unrest it was deemed too dangerous to visit. Ethiopia is sadly experiencing much instability. Abdi has a great need for help in his ministry, especially as he is not getting younger! In Nairobi we met up with Nur, who for a time was a member of TBC. He has a ministry amongst his fellow Somali's and in this digital age they can cooperate across countries.

On Sunday we worshipped with the Addis Baptist Church on the top 13th. floor of a commercial building. Everything was in the Amharic language and script (see the book cover). With such a script totally unrecognizable to me, one can't even make any sounds! I just recognized the name 'Jesus Christ' in speech. With up to 100 in attendance, mostly young, it was a full day. It began at 10 a.m. with Sunday School,



including for adults, where the pastor, Gedion Asgew, taught. I preached in the morning service on Mark 10:28-34. We had lunch together, the Ethiopian food 'injera' (fermented teff grain made into flatbread), and the very spicy 'wot' stew that I had to bypass. At 2.30 I preached again at the afternoon service on Matthew 10:37-39. That was followed by a time of discussion in groups arising from the day's ministry and I was requested not to contribute lest others say nothing! Despite the language barrier it was an encouraging day. Most of those present speak English so I was able to converse privately.

Apart from Somali refugees in Nairobi we had many from Ethiopia. In the 1990s Yared was one of them. As a very young men he fled when the military junta was overthrown as his father had led in the military. He thought he would be arrested as was his father. We protected him in Nairobi for three years before he travelled down to South Africa where he has been for almost the past 30 years. He has continued to profess faith in the Lord, and it was lovely that he was visiting 'home' at the same time so I was able to meet up with him and his mother. He says his father was converted in prison and was released two years before he died some few years back.

5. Others

I was able to fit in meeting up with quite a few others, including:

- TBC Elders. We had an all-day meeting to seek to deal with the problems between us. By God's grace it finished well and we made the first steps towards reconciliation.
- Lucy Ochola is the widow of Joseph, and they were two of the original members of TBC. Joseph was a long time deacon and office manager. Lucy now lives in the rural home with one of the sons, and we were able to enjoy a few hours of fellowship. Amazingly, the youngest son Robin and his family, are now with us in the Liverpool church!

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

Trinity Grace Church, Ramsbottom –

<https://trinitygracechurch.net>