

Retired Members' Corner



MOSQUITOS, MARRIAGE & MISSION

Asante na karibu. Thank you and welcome. This was the greeting I received on returning to the church in Karatina, Kenya, earlier this year for the second anniversary. The Kikuyu believers greeted us as brothers in Christ. The Kikuyu tribe is the largest of 42 tribes in Kenya. The Mau Mau rebellion in 1953/5 was made up of Kikuyu tribesmen rebelling against British rule. Kenya became independent in 1963. Fifty years ago their forbears would have greeted Dedan Kimathi, leader of the Mau Mau and practitioner of sorcery and wizardry, in a similar manner. What a change the Lord can make in both an individual and a tribe.

People give me a strange look when I tell them I'm off to Africa. I have to remind them that Moses started at eighty. When I come back they tell me how well I'm looking. I sometimes wonder if they expect me to have caught dengue, sleepy sickness, blackwater fever or a combination of all three. Mind you, I came very close to doing myself an injury. An unwell colleague had three mosquitos inside his mosquito net one night and in an effort to catch them I became so entangled that the net came down. In order to rehang it from a hook in the ceiling I stood on top of two suitcases on top of a chest of drawers with a sweeping brush shaft – and survived. Suffice to say, when the sick patient saw the grapplings of the gauger he forgot about himself in his concern for his friend and, like Job, he recovered in no time (Job 42 v 10). When the angels hear that I am going to Kenya they have to prepare themselves for unscheduled overtime without cash limits (Psalm 91 v 11).

Pastor William Githingi Wachira finally married Sister Saralyn Wairimu on 9 April 2005. In Africa betrothal and marriage are not as we would expect. The bridegroom has to pay the bride's parents a dowry for his bride. I asked William what would be the going rate for a half decent bride – a water tank and twenty cows was his reply. Saralyn is a graduate of Jomo Kenyatta University so I expect her father would want a good return on his investment. The bridegroom also pays the cost of the ceremony which, for William, included feeding the whole congregation (700) at the wedding feast. I was not allowed to see my bride's dress until inside the church – William had to go shopping and buy Saralyn's dress and trousseau in accordance with her wishes. Finally he had to pay for the honeymoon which was in Johannesburg.

Our Bridegroom has purchased His Bride with His own precious blood (Acts 20 v 28, Eph 5 v 25) and He will provide the marriage supper as well (Rev 19 v 9). Jesus provides His Bride with her dress of fine linen, clean and white. How about your garments?

After Karatina we headed back to Nairobi for a tent crusade in the suburb of Kayole. In Karatina we could worship from 10 AM to 10 PM each day – the folks came from far and wide and made a festival out of it. In Nairobi the people came after finishing work. The tent meetings were from 3.30 PM to 6.45 PM – the area was too dangerous to be out after dark. From midday to 2 PM each day we held lunchtime meetings for office workers in a large room in Hotel 680 in Nairobi city centre. We had marvellous meetings in both venues. There were five of us. One of our number was an expert on the mouth organ – actually he can play almost any instrument you care to give him. Normally the Africans are very noisy and active in their worship. He was singing “Amazing Grace” when he took his harmonica out of his pocket and, with his hands cupped round it, began to play into the microphone. The place went silent – the Africans had never heard anything like it before. Then the place erupted into cheering, whistling, whooping and dancing. I reckon we’ll be hearing strange music in the future when the sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, timbrels and various cymbals of the ancients sound forth in the New Jerusalem.

The Lord blessed everyone present in the tent at Kayole. Until you have experienced African worship it is hard to explain how emotional it can be. People with none of this world’s possessions but completely taken up in fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Those with Bibles are busy underlining verses and writing comments as we speak. They search the Scriptures and they are eager for your views on particular verses. Their eyes opened wide when I mentioned a time would come, when Jesus reigned, when the lion (simba) would eat straw like the ox (Isaiah 11 v 7). There were lions within twenty miles of us and they certainly did not eat straw; they killed and ate other animals and humans if you got in their way. There was genuine repentance, with tears flowing, as young and old came out to the front and gave their hearts to Jesus.

Kayole is a slum suburb with very little work prospects and a lot of violence. There were armed soldiers on duty outside the tent throughout the campaign. As evidence of the Lord’s presence and protection it is interesting to note that on our last day the local chief of police came to see us and informed us that not one single crime had been reported in the area whilst we were there.

The converts were left in the care of Pastor Sampson King’oo who, prior to our visit, had a small group of Christians in a Kayole schoolroom. His flock has increased from ten to about one hundred, praise the Lord. Pray earnestly for Pastor Sampson, his wife and four daughters who are all very sincere Christians devoted to the work of the Lord. The Pastor now has several converted young men ready to build a place of worship they can call their own. Pray the Lord will guide them.