

Message 3- FTC Graduation, USFWK Pastors Gathering, Uganda YM

Greetings from Kenya. I arrived back from Uganda yesterday evening. This past week has been overwhelmingly full of joy.

On the 28th of October, I travelled to Kaimosi and visited Elizabeth Mulimi, who represents all Kenyan women on the USFW International board. Judith Nandikove and Agneta Injairu joined us and we had a zoom gathering concerning the oral interview part of Africa Quaker Archives. By the time we finished that meeting and had supper, it was dark, so we all stayed overnight at Elizabeth's- with much joyful sharing, prayer, and song.

The next morning, we all went to the graduation. Agneta was graduating with a diploma in Theology from FTC Kaimosi Campus, Judith was graduating with a certificate from the FTC Nairobi Campus, and Elizabeth was receiving a certificate for a leadership workshop at FTC Kaimosi. All Covid protocols were followed, we all had masks. There was a procession including a parade band from Kaimosi Girls High School, and scouts from the primary school who raised the flag. I sat in the tent of the invited guests along side Dr. Miriam Were (the first Kenyan woman to be trained as a medical doctor). From 9am until 2:30 pm there were songs, many introductions of visiting dignitaries. The choir that attracted the most interest was the Samburu graduates singing in their mother tongue



Kaimosi Girls HS band and Kaimosi Scouts

Samburu graduates singing with joy

A special thanks were given to John Muhanji who had completed his PHD at George Fox College during Covid, and to Moses Musonga, a tutor at FTC who has led an exemplary life of service to Friends. He was given an honorary PhD from The Abundant Life College in Kitale (since FTC is not yet accredited to offer the Masters and PhD level of degrees.) The top student in the Bachelors Program was Alfred Wasike, General Secretary of Uganda YM who gave the speech on behalf of students.



Moses Musonga.



Alfred Wasike. (and photographers)



Miriam Were and I -two elderly witnesses

As the rain was threatening, the students who were graduating were finally recognized and called forward to receive their certificates/diplomas/degrees. There were over 200 graduates (from all branch campuses). No graduation was held last year during Covid, so the number was doubly high. The rain began to pour before they finished awarding all the certificates. In African tradition, rain after a wedding or other special occasion is often considered a blessing. The greatest joy I had was to witness a good number of women active in ministry with me who were graduates. When Agneta and I returned to Elizabeth's house, Elizabeth in traditional manner, began singing and dancing with a lei which she then presented to Agneta, who had received the higher degree at the graduation.



Elizabeth dancing towards Agneta



Joyful celebration of fellow women

Despite the rain we all were full of joy, supporting the women who graduated.



Agneta and Judith with Marian



Celestine and Judith (from Nairobi) with Elizabeth Mulimi at FTC

That night, a number of the women who usually travel with me in ministry gathered at Elizabeth's place. We had not seen each other for two years so there was much excitement as we all met. All who came had been to Tanzania, so Dorcas Otieno was able to let us know what has been happening in Tanzania since all of us had last been there. We rejoiced to hear that Esinas, the woman clerk of Tarime Meeting where we had put the roof on the church, has gotten a new pastor and the meeting is now growing to the point that they themselves are building an addition! Pamela had carefully made beautiful masks for each of us (Her seamstress work supports her travel in ministry to Tanzania.)



Dorcas, Pamela, Agneta, Evelyn, and Roselyne sing.



Evelyn, Roselyne, and Pamela check cell phones during a break!

The next morning, we all returned to FTC where we found students and staff busily cleaning up. We gathered in the board room. Several other pastors soon joined us. We had a deep sharing of our different understandings of the Biblical story of the woman at the well (John 4: 7-16) Robert Wafula came to welcome us and also joined the discussion. This story about a woman, whose name no one knows, held an amazing number of things we each shared with each other. Robert also encouraged the women who had not trained to come join the college.

In the afternoon each one shared how they started, how they were called into their different ministries. We had planned to share ways of raising support for each other, but found that the video that had been taken at the USFW Kenya Conference last month had gotten lost, so instead we practiced another song in Luhya. Soon we were all dancing around the table singing with gusto as well as acting out the meaning of the song. We then all enjoyed joining the first ever African/Latin&South America Women Ministers Gathering via zoom. Many had never seen zoom on a computer, which was projected onto the wall. (Most had only used small smartphones). Pamela gave the beginning prayer, Agneta gave the short testimony/sermon on behalf of Kenyan women and we all sang our song. Then women from Latin America and Bolivia sang "How great thou art" in the Amara language using native instruments, and a young Bolivia pastor shared on behalf of South/Central American women. We were muted when not leading a part of the program, so others did not hear the Kenyans saying Amen, and Asante (thanks). However, when at the end we were to unmute and say goodbye in our various languages, the Kenyans burst into a Swahili song of farewell. We were thankful that during Covid, it opened a way for us to learn how to share with each other across many miles without travelling at great expense the long distances between us. We were all so joyful, we did not sleep until almost midnight! I have a video made of us singing, but don't know how to condense it to accompany this message. We all are so grateful for Robin and Karen, staff of FWCC of the Section of the Americas, for hosting the gathering on zoom, and for the people from USA, including a number from New England who helped in the English/ Spanish translation.

After one day of rest, washing, and repacking, Agneta and I travelled toward Uganda to attend their Yearly Meeting sessions. On the way, we visited Rose Mulinde, USFW pastor of West Yearly Meeting. We enjoyed singing Sunday school songs with her grandchildren. She was a trained teacher who has gone back to FTC to get a second bachelors in Theology. Since we were already in Busia, we were first in line to get the Covid test to enter Uganda.



Rose and her grandson



Bottle brush in bloom in her yard.



UYM Main speaker and lively translator

In Uganda, the women usually have a conference in December, the youth in January, and the men(YM session) in August. This year they gathered in Mbale with 1 day led by youth, one day led by women, and one day led by women. The youth loved LOUD preaching and song and small group discussions. The women had a lot of joyful song, and prayers. The men held one session on stewardship. Apollo Wopicho taught on Environmental Climate change issues and the importance of taking care of our natural resources rather than abusing them.

John Muhanji joined us and was surprised to learn how much the yearly meeting has grown and improved since the late Eileen Malova and I began working with the women. One highlight of the gathering was the four men and one woman with child from a Burundian refugee camp on the Tanzanian/Uganda border who have formed the newest meeting of Uganda YM. When they sang in their own language, we all joined in singing and soon everyone was dancing with joy, even the older men! The video I have was shared via Whats Ap, but I don't know how to compress it to share on this message.



Praying for the Burundians Clerk and Gen Sec. as Burundians leave (Clerk on left, Gen Sec. is holding the child)

Agneta and I also met with the board to get them to take on the work of developing a medical facility of some sort in Nangoma, Busoga where Friends own 100 acres of land. Uganda Friends finally got legally recognized as a church (all churches were illegal during the Idi Amin time and have had to prove they are substantial churches and not fly by night groups that take money from people). We arranged for several board members to join a workshop in Busoga in two weeks to prepare a five-year plan as to what kind of medical project will be started, how it will be self-sustainable, and staffed. We expect to do mostly preventative medicine/first aid with the young nurse we helped train while we work with government officials and others to develop the project in an area where the nearest dispensary or clinic is at least ½ an hour's ride on a motorcycle to reach (unless there is too much mud or dust on the poorly maintained road (path)). The men of other areas spoke strongly to the men of Busoga to be more responsible and willing to help others rather than beg or expect others to do all for them.

We left on Sunday morning and travelled to Busia. Here we visited one of the many meetings that James Wakhata had started. It was in a rented room in one village outside the city and mostly young people, and children. I wondered how many of the very young pregnant women present were ones who got pregnant during Covid when they were not able to go to school. They are called Friends Revival Ministries and the pastor calls himself Bishop (not a Quaker term). They wanted us to stay, asked for money for various projects, but we told them to feed the food to the hungry children and women instead of us, as we needed to get back to Kenya and crossing the border can take a long time due to differing Covid restrictions of each country. We arrived home safely last night. Thanks to you all for your prayers and support. Today I return to Kaimosi for the Africa Quaker Archives Workshop. Marian



Left: Stella (nurse) and Rachel(woman leader)of Busoga

Right: Singing choir at Busia, Uganda

