

Message 8. Last week in East Africa. Dec 9-14

Greetings from New Hampshire.

On the 7th of December, Agneta and I went to Ivona, Kenya to interview Sammy Sore, who was very active in leadership of the Youth Camps held when there was only one yearly meeting for all of East Africa, as well as one of the ones who worked at FTC's predecessor (Friends Bible Institute) and Co-founder of the TEE program. On the 8th I went to Agneta's to pack up my bags and help do a stack of mending clothes, then on 9th returned with Agneta to Elizabeth's.

Elizabeth showed me what a turmeric plant looks like that grows in her garden.



Sammy at his home with Agneta who interviewed him.



Elizabeth demonstrating the turmeric plant showing the ginger-like rhizome from which the bright yellow spice is obtained.

On Friday the 10th, Agneta and I travelled by Easy Coach bus to Nairobi and found our way to the home of Professor Moni and Roselyn Wekesa whom we had known for over 50 years. We sang Christmas carols in Luhya language.

Saturday the 11th, we went to Friends international Centre (Ngong Rd) new Quaker Resource Center. We had fun talking with Neccy Kikaya for most of the day before returning to Wekesa's. Since Neccy runs a program of giving small grants to women, she was very interested in hearing about our work in Busoga, Uganda, as well as the women's projects in Tanzania. We also shared about the new Africa Quaker Archives project.

Sunday, we had planned to take the local bus and a tuktuk to Shauri Moyo, but were advised as two women to use an Uber taxi instead, as the increase in population and crime rate of the large city has increased. When I was first in Nairobi in early 1970's, I could walk all over the city without concern, but the more than doubling of the population and the increase of youths with no source of money, has changed things.

We visited Shauri Moyo Friends church, where Abraham Ngoya is pastor. We had worked with his wife, Pamela a lot in Tanzania over the years. We had a brief worship service and then talked with the leaders while the children and adults were finishing practicing their Christmas songs.



Shauri Moyo -some of the children and leaders. A choir competing at Ofafa Maringa Church

Then we all moved to Ofafa Maringa for the Monthly Meeting. I had expected a long business session, but instead the USFW women invited all the local pastors to line up in the aisle and dance in a singing procession to the front, where they were given a present and thanked for their service. (In Kenya, people who work in large cities traditionally return to their villages, their place of roots, to spend the Christmas holidays with their relatives. This was followed by choir competitions singing Christmas carols. From each village church came Sunday school choirs, teenage choirs, women's choirs, and Quakermen choirs. They each sang a Christmas carol, tried to say in unison the story of Christ's birth from memory, and the youth also competed in dancing and acting out the meaning of the songs, including Feliz Navidad! It took the whole day, all ages singing. What a joy to experience this, as the candlelight carol sing at my home meeting in New Hampshire has had to be cancelled for the second year in a row due to Covid. (How sad that my home town has 60 cases of Covid out of a population of 6000, due to those who oppose wearing masks, or getting vaccinated)

We also went to visit the former bursar and choirmaster at Namirama Girls Friends HS, with whom we had worked 40 years ago, Joseph Kitagwa. He excitedly invited us to visit his home in Riuru, on the edge of Nairobi. Then Judith Nandikove came to take us to her home bordering the Nairobi Airport.



Quaker Resource enter with Neccy Kikaya

Meeting with Joseph Kitagwa and his wife.

On Sunday, the team of Kenyan women pastors who I sent to Tanzania USFW Conference returned home. They had a very successful gathering held in Mwanza, in northwest Tanzania. One highlight was the workshop Judith and Joyce taught the women how to make reusable sanitary pads from scraps of cloth. They cut and sewed by hand with eagerness. When they had completed one, they were given the pads made by North Carolina USFW and some from Nairobi Ym women. You can see their joy in the following photos. They also taught how to make homemade liquid soap, which was then put into empty plastic water bottles to take home and teach others. Instead of just handing out gifts, we find that teaching them how to make their own and then receiving their gift helps cut down begging attitude some Africans have towards the more wealthy Kenyans and overseas visitors.



Joyce demonstrating



Women eagerly cutting and sewing



Kenya team-Joyce, Melab, Pamela, Judith, Pauline.



Joyfully holding up their completed projects

On my last day, I got a PCR Covid test at Swiss Labs, near Nyayo Stadium, where they gave me the results within three hours, at only 5000/- (\$50) instead of the 7500/- charged in Western Province. It turned out that it was also Judith's birthday, so we bought some cake and ice cream to celebrate and Joyce Machaha and Edna Bondi and sister Mildred (both named after historic Friends missionaries), came to see me off. We had a wonderful time of prayer and fellowship before escorting me to the airport. In the airport, I repacked my bags due to the different policies of sister airlines (to avoid an additional \$75 charge. Slept on my way to Europe.

The Christmas lights in Amsterdam that encourage Christmas shopping, seemed so artificial after the heartfelt joy and light I had experienced among people in East Africa. Now I am safely back in my home in the woods of New Hampshire.

Thank you all for your support, prayer, and messages during this year's travels.

I am so grateful to you all.

For those of you in North America, do feel free to invite me to speak to your local meeting about the ongoing ministry in East Africa. I can be reached at quakerbonnet@gmail.com or 603-478-5650 or via What's app at 254-718-417-776 . Marian