

Message 2. Kimilili-Kitale-Nakuru-Nairobi-Butere. 12 Nov. to 22 Nov. 2023

Kenyans have such a gift of hospitality. I went to Kimilili to visit my namesake, Marian Malenge in Kimilili. She had graduated several years ago with a masters in nutrition, but not gotten a job. She is now employed as a dietician at the hospital run by ICFEM, an interdenominational organization started by the late Ann Lipson. I had last visited there just before Ann Lipson had died, and was welcomed warmly by Ruth and Solomon Nubie, the Quaker directors.

Then I travelled north to Kitale, where I visited Samson and Edith Wekesa at their farm in Sirende. Isaiah Bikokwa came over and we all had a wonderful time, sharing stories of our different ministry experiences. Samson is the Chair of the Missions of FUM and Isaiah was the one who started all the work in Samburu. They had never met, though they live in the same town, as Samson had been in Nairobi while Isaiah was in Samburu. They had a great time learning more about each other.

The next night I went to the home of Evelyn Mukonambi, who had missed the workshop, and shared with her what we had covered. She took me through fog to the bus station the next morning on her way to work. I then travelled down to Malava and spent the rest of the day repacking, ready to go to Nakuru and Nairobi.

On Saturday the 18th I was welcomed warmly by Pangani Friends to be the main speaker at their Thanksgiving event. It began on Saturday evening with a worship service. Their members were all very tired, as they had all been to a graduation of one of their members, and to a wedding of another. So instead of preaching, I shared a short message based on the familiar Thanksgiving hymn, "We gather together."

On Sunday, the youth began singing and praying with joy until all were gathered. I gave more of a teaching than a preaching on how to be thankful, how to show gratitude to the Creator of all. Then it changed into a time when they bring in some of their produce (including live chickens, bags of harvested foods, as well as monetary offerings) with thanks to God. They all brought forward donations several times; once as members of each family in the church, once as members of a small local cell groups, and once as members of their age groups. Guests visiting from other meetings were one group. The local prayer groups had been given names like Jericho and Macedonia. The children danced with joy to one boy playing the drum.

A highlight of the service were the clever teenagers, who acted out a typical TV news program with anchors and a deaf interpreter. They had stationed individuals, who spoke on microphones outside the church windows and would report, "Yes, I am standing here in front of Macedonia Church. We send you greetings, and we are happy to hear about your Thanksgiving event. We have sent a group to bring offerings for the Thanksgiving celebration. Let me hand you back to the anchor newsman" They also reminded us all to give more support to the youth and their teachers!



Older youth dancing in various formations

One of the reporters in the drama

Immediately after the service, Pamela Ngoya escorted me to Nairobi, to Dunholm Friends Church where I met with several of the women who missed the workshop. Joyce Machaha took me to supper in her home in Siyokamau (S. Nairobi) and to sleep the night at Judith Nandikove's Quaker Guest House. To my surprise, Jim Fussell from Baltimore was there, so we spent several hours sharing about the history of Kenyan Friends, as he will be guest teaching at FTC about the history of Quakers in England, America, and Kenya. The next day I spent catching up on correspondence and transcribed the oral interview we had done last year with Isaiah Bikokwa, the Kenyan who had started the work in Samburu.

Yesterday, I traveled in the pouring El Niño rain (that has caused wide spread flooding) by Easy coach bus to Kakamega. Due to the rain, the baboons were seen along the road, but the usual zebras were staying under shelter of the trees away from the highway.

I was collected in Kakamega by Miriam Were and her husband, Humphrey. They were very excited to have a visitor in their home. Increasingly, I find that the older people who have retired from work in Nairobi, who travel less, and who stay in their homes back in the village, especially welcome visitors to both learn of news of what is happening these days elsewhere, as well as to share stories of the past. Can those who help us with the oral interviews of the earlier generation of leaders here discover there are some elders who have led very interesting lives, done pioneer work, and have lived lives that can be good role models for all? Miriam is working hard on getting her autobiography published locally within the next few months. As the first woman in Africa to be trained as a medical doctor, who has received honorary degrees all over the world, her story of how her upbringing in the rural Quaker village of Lirhanda helped cause her to be the most famous Kenyan Quaker these days, should appeal to many who want to read stories of hope, courage, and good news during these days of such violence and mistrust.



Miriam Were and Humphrey Were sitting outside on their verandah admiring their peaceful environment. Humphrey, retired from Kenya Ministry of Agriculture, keeps healthy as he grows organic food at their farm.

Thanks so much for your messages and support.
Marian