

Message 10- Dec. 10-18,2025. Kenya and Uganda

On the 10th, Agneta and I met Mildred Bandi and Jane, both from Malava YM, in Busia and crossed the border into Uganda. Mildred and I went to Bugiri to see the Friends church and school that we had heard was built there, while Agneta and Jane went direct to Kimidi.

Mildred and I found an enormous new church building, but the school that supposedly was 3 years old with 300 students attending was the worst I had ever seen in East Africa. The money for these structures was raised by a young man originally from Kimidi who had earlier after being given a phone so he could communicate as the Uganda representative on QREC Africa to share about his work with Sunday schools. Instead, he conned money via the internet, saying he had an orphanage for AIDS orphans but used it to buy a car, build his house, and buy a business. (This is a practice I have found with several men in all three countries. Feel free to check with those of us on the ground before sending large donations to any individual men in East Africa to make sure your donation is being used as intended.)



Church building in Bugiri



Primary School in Bugiri called Top Care School!

Later, Agneta and I went one morning to visit the pastor of the church, an immigrant from Chebuyusi, Kenya, who has lived in Uganda since the 1960s. He gave us a very helpful history of Uganda Yearly Meeting, different than we had ever heard. How valuable it is to learn the history from several sources to understand better the local culture of Friends in a region.

Friends from Kimidi had requested that they be the hosts for the annual USFW Women's Conference. When we arrived, all we found were many hungry children and several older men, not the warm welcome that Ugandan women usually give to any visitors. The leaders of Uganda women from Mbale region and Kampala region and Rachel and Eric from other meetings in the area did a noble job of taking over the organizing of food, serving, etc.

The two trained women pastors, Juliet Namono and Rose Wamboka, did an excellent job in teaching on the theme of "The beauty of a woman" (1 Peter 3:4-5), stressing the value of the soul of a woman, not the outward appearance. They stressed the importance of frequent prayer, of living nonviolently, giving examples of a number of the courageous women role models in the Bible. In the evenings, there was music and much singing and dancing by both the women and the children of the village. One interesting discussion was about the headscarves. One pastor shared how Quakers have evolved and changed over the years, from the plain bonnets 300 years ago in Britain and North America to the white headscarves with logos on them adopted by Kenyan women. I had to leave the conference before they had come to a decision of what they felt as young women of Uganda was appropriate head coverings. Centrine, the secretary of Uganda USFW, sold some of the headscarves sent by Kenyans at a slightly cheaper price and they raised enough to enable one woman to attend, so I agreed to match their work to enable two to go together. In their epistle, I understand they cleaned up the compound of all litter, leaving the school as clean as it had been found.



Rose preaching



Pastor Juliet teaching
Note teen at keyboard listening.



Pastor Rachel, Jane, and Agneta at sign.
Can you find the misspelling on the sign?



Centrine

The blouse of the interpreter from Kampala Region travelled back to Agneta's and the next morning, her son Edgar drove me to the Kisumu Airport. When I arrived in Nairobi, I took an Uber to the closest mall, where I met David Were, son of Miriam Were, to talk about how to get Miriam's autobiography published. (Miriam was the first woman in Africa to be trained as a medical doctor, who introduced community health and preventative medicine that has been copied by many countries, and who has received many honorary degrees and awards and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize a year ago.) She has written a 300-page book that publishers in Kenya are hesitant to publish because they assume that Africans, who pass on their history orally, are unlikely to buy enough copies, so we are looking into self-publishing.

I then flew via Europe to Boston safely, but once we landed, the airlines misplaced a large container of luggage, causing around twenty of us to delay 1.5 hours and miss connections. I arrived home around 9:30 p.m. and promptly warmed up with hot tea and a hot shower and went to bed rather than send messages to say I had arrived safely. I apologize to several of you who were worried something had happened to me.

Thank you to all who supported me on this journey and many thanks to all the Kenyans, Ugandans, and Tanzanians who hosted or accompanied me. There is so much we can learn from each other.

In gratitude,



Marian

Back of blouse of women from Semuto Friends Meeting has Women of Significance written on the back!