

Partnership visit to Methodist Church Uganda (MCU) from 9th – 15th January 2017

- Aims – To meet with church leaders a year after becoming a Synod of Methodist Church Kenya
To enquire about new church structure and systems put in place
To meet with MCU National in Mission appointee – Betty Nairuba (ex-SALT student)
To discuss various partnership issues between MC Britain & Ireland with MC Uganda



Methodist Church Uganda church leaders with Helen at Jinja

Helen Woodall – the chairperson of the Connexional Grants Committee and I arrived at Entebbe late at night even though we both had an early start. We encountered few challenges with my luggage at the airport, however it was great to finally get into bed after midnight. By 9.30am we were picked up from Entebbe and driven to Jinja where the MCU church leaders were waiting for us at the church office.

Bishop Muruiki – the Synod Bishop welcomed us and we had a working lunch with church leaders. Following introductions around the table, each shared a personal or corporate highlight of 2016 and aspirations for 2017. There were fifteen of us – church ministers,

church stewards, evangelists, the church treasurer, the church staff, the women fellowship leader and both of us. The theme running through the sharing was *gratitude to God* for sustenance as a new synod since January 2016. They were grateful for their new leadership, new church structure in place, leadership training conducted, transparency, collective decision making and the fact that all ministers have been posted to new stations to mention a few. Their aspirations for 2017 was the implementation of their 5 year strategic plan with the hope of becoming self-sustaining. They thanked MC Britain & Ireland for the reinstatement of financial support following years of challenges. We all prayed together believing we shall be doers of God's words and not hearers only. There were few questions asked however further clarification was postponed to next day's meeting with MCU office staff. Afterwards we mingled with the leaders ending the meeting with a good buzz within the team.

Meeting at MC Uganda headquarters, Jinja

The next day, we had a meeting at the office. Bishop Muruiki, Betty, Helen and I were in attendance and several subjects were discussed. Below is a summary of our meeting:-

- MC Kenya offered training and personnel support to MCU in 2016-17
- MCK supported the **synod induction event** held at Jinja on 10 January 2016 and all MCK bishops and hundreds of members attended
- MCK supported MCU visitors during the 2016-17 Connexional year by providing transport and accommodation in Nairobi before traveling to Jinja
- MCK paid all MCU ministers only one month's stipend in May 2016 to help the ministers
- MCK paid Bishop Muruiki's house rent and stipend in 2016
- MCK and MCU members helped raise fund for vehicle to alleviate problems with travels to rural stations in Uganda
- MCK helped MCU with some urgent operational costs in 2016



MCU office built by MC Ireland

However MCU still owed lots of debts and utility bills incurred over three years i.e. 2013 – 2016. These are being tackled by the newly disbursed 2016-17 annual grant (in tranches) which MCU was very grateful for.

MC Uganda ministers

- When Bishop Muruiki started as the synod bishop, he reported that the ministers were not as busy because there were pastors also leading in each of the 41 MCU congregations.
- There was a reshuffle and all ministers were relocated to new stations and new superintendents appointed
- Small fund for renovating and furnishing manses for new ministers was released after getting the 2016-17 annual grant
- Plan to rent accommodation at new stations was being considered
- All ministers received refresher courses and each minister's performance is to be appraised
- Churches were to send assessment to the Connexional office
- Circuits were to pay 50% of the ministers' stipends and the balance would come from the headquarters
- Over time, transportation challenges for ministers and evangelists would require attention
- Election was held at every congregation, circuit and synod to implement the new Synod structure
- There is a total of six ministers currently serving in MC Uganda
- Few MCU ministers were unhappy with the new changes and resigned
 - 1 Rev Moses Dhikange resigned and joined the UMC (He was formerly Anglican)
 - 2 Robert Ssegonga left MCU and started his own ministry –NEED
 - 3 Rev William Mukwana was advised to retire at the age of 76



A new manse being renovated at Buyende, Uganda

2016-17 Scholarship programmes for MC Uganda

- MCB approved a special SALT grant for the ministerial training of five MC Uganda student. There are five student ministers studying at Kenya Methodist University (KeMU). This is a succession plan to support church growth and replace ministers.
- Also agreed was a grant for the group training of 120 members for basic church training particularly in rural areas where the literacy rate is low. Training would assist Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, women fellowship leaders, local preachers etc. Specialist trainers would be sourced locally or from Kenya to ensure cultural sensitivity and strengthen church participation at the grass root level.



The defunct orphanage could become a training centre for lettings?



Women empowerment centre could be regenerated

Visits to MC Uganda rural churches and mission programmes

Helen and I travelled with the Bishop Muruiki and Betty to the Women's Empowerment building at the centre of a rural community near Bugembe (see picture above). The building was run down but well placed to offer vocational training as well as have a crèche if possible to generate income for the women and assist in running their programmes in the community. We later visited a defunct orphanage located in Iganga, just less than an hour's drive

from Jinja. The building could be renovated and rented out to generate income or use for residential short courses. Unfortunately there is no electricity and water supply however that could be solved by solar power to attract NGO staff seeking accommodation in the area. Therefore in an attempt to become self-sustaining in the near future, MCU requested help with few income generating ideas which I have signposted below for other partners to participate.

- Revamp women empowerment's centre – MWiB?
- Support youth entrepreneurial programmes – WCR?
- Refurbish orphanage building into a training centre – MC Ireland?
- Develop agriculture programmes with All WE Can?

We later went to Bugembe church, recently renovated by church members and the kindergarten updated for new intakes sometime in 2017. The newly formed school board management is seeking a skilled teacher to manage the school for Methodist Church Uganda. The run down manse behind the church is being updated for the new minister to provide presence on the premises as well as enable the minister to meet the community dwellers when he resumes office. I am hoping newly assigned MCB mission partners could be of help at the kindergarten.

MC Britain & Ireland mission partners

A couple has been assigned on mission service with MC Uganda in 2017-18. The aim is to offer a mission partner to assist with circuit ministry as well as offer stability at the Synod. While the other mission partner offer personnel support with office administration and Methodist crèche & primary school is another possibility. This engagement process has now begun.



Kamuli rural primary school, Uganda

We travelled to Mpumede Methodist Church with Bishop Muruiki and Betty to stop encroachers from building on part of the church land. There was a football field besides the church building for recreation by community children. However unscrupulous people wished to take advantage of this landed area for personal gain. The church has prioritised the need to have an asset register and obtain title deeds as soon as it could afford payment. We later visit the school premises built by MC Ireland. The children were on holidays however the high school entrance result came out that day. The expectation of the school headmaster was very high because it was a government aided school with very good academic reputation in the local government area.

We visited a rural church in Kamuli with a rural school attached about two hours' drive from Jinja. Rev David, the Synod Secretary drove us in his vehicle along with Betty and Helen. A recent block of three classes made of mudbricks was erected to supplement the thatched roof school for the young ones. The villagers were very appreciative of God's provision and plans for the pastor's wedding was to start the next day. We met the pastor and few church leaders –most school teachers. Unfortunately the manse caught fire but it was being renovated by MCU Synod office for the incoming probationer, hopefully by the end of January 2017. The church building was kindly erected by MC Ireland in 1999. All-We-Can plans to have a farmers' demonstration plot behind the church to promote vegetable farming and a source of water supply due to lack of water.

We travelled few miles to Buyende, another rural dwelling with a Methodist Church. It was good to meet with Moses who I met few years back when I visited the borehole erected by MRDF in 2011. The water supply erected on church ground was still in use by the community and the church manse was being renovated too for the new minister. Along the way was miles of dried maize crops due to failed rain. The church was still in use for services with an open Sunday school structure beside it. The church lay chairperson, treasurer, few members were present as we sat under the tree. The community spirit was good and tangible.



Burnt manse in need of renovation for new MCU minister

On Sunday morning, it was a good opportunity to attend a church service, often a highlight of my partnership visits and this did not disappoint. Betty, Helen and I travelled in a hired vehicle to Kilindaire – a village about 60 km from Jinja. Prior to the service, we saw the Methodist School on rented land close to the church. Due to high population of kids in the community, there was a high demand for early education therefore a temporary classroom structure for 300 pupils was what the church could afford. The modest school fees paid by the pupils pays the teachers' salaries. The parents in turn erected a small toilet for the pupils as a donation and in appreciation for the hard work and services by the pastor.



A rural school for the community

The church minister, Rev Margaret was recently posted to the circuit and she joined us at the service. The morning service started with prayers, then a short worship session followed by a 15 minute exhortation by the youths. The text was based on Ezekiel 37:1-11 and the preacher encouraged us to believe God for what seems impossible because God assured Ezekiel that the *dry bones would live again* when the Spirit of God breathe on them. Afterwards we had a great worship session. By this time, the church was filled with children, youths and the elderly and the youths led an energetic praise and worship that was full of adoration. The Spirit

of God was present and we burst in prayers and thanksgiving. Rev Margaret later preached on Genesis 11: 1-10 that focused on the ability to build the Tower of babel because the people had the same purpose, determination and language. God declared, nothing would be impossible to them if He did not change their language. Helen and I had the opportunity to bring greetings and more especially, Helen sang a hymn beautifully afterwards. This was much appreciated by the congregation!

We were fed and left for the airport which was about four hours' journey to Entebbe. I hope Helen had a good experience of African expressive and elaborate worship.

It was a fruitful visit.



Vibrant Sunday worship at Kilindaire Methodist Church, Uganda

Psalm 47 ^{1-2, 5-6}: *Oh clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!
For the Lord Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth.
God has gone up with a shout, The Lord with the sound of a trumpet.
Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!*

Thank you

*Dr Bunmi Olayisade
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