

Partnership visit to Kenya, Tanzania & Uganda 1 – 11 June 2013

Aims of my partnership visits were to strengthen relationships with Partner Churches of the Methodist Church Britain by:

- Meeting with the new Presiding Bishop of Methodist Church Kenya – Bishop Ntombura to know his mission priorities and strategy for the church and MC Southern Sudan as its mission station
- Meeting with the Synod Bishop of MC Tanzania – Bishop Leonard and visit few church leaders. Understand the mission challenges and opportunities of the district of MC Kenya as it seeks to become a national church
- Meeting with the Synod Superintendent of MC Uganda – Revd Amooti to discuss MC Uganda mission activities with Bishop Ntombura



Bishop Ntombura of MCK and Bishop Leopold of MCT



Children at Burgudi Methodist Church, Tanzania



Church built by MCT Irish Methodist friends

1st June 2013
Arrived Kenya.

At Mwaza, Tanzania

Bishop Ntombura and I flew to Mwaza airport in Tanzania and were met by Tanzania's Synod Bishop – Leopold Ndaki. We seized the opportunity to view a very promising property to serve as MC Tanzania's Connexional Office as well as Church location in this town. The property has great prospects.

Later in the day we travelled to Magu, about forty miles away to meet with Methodist Church members. Two ministers were recently ordained at Burgudi Methodist Church- Revd Leah and Revd Emma who both manage four circuits between them. There are several evangelists from the 46 congregations in Tanzania needing further training as well as organising lay preachers training to assist the overstretched ministers before training more Methodist ministers.

There is Revd Paul and the Bishop Leopold both manages a circuit each in North Western Tanzania. Methodist Church Tanzania synod is a new national church supported by MC Kenya and now has partnership with Methodist Church Britain.

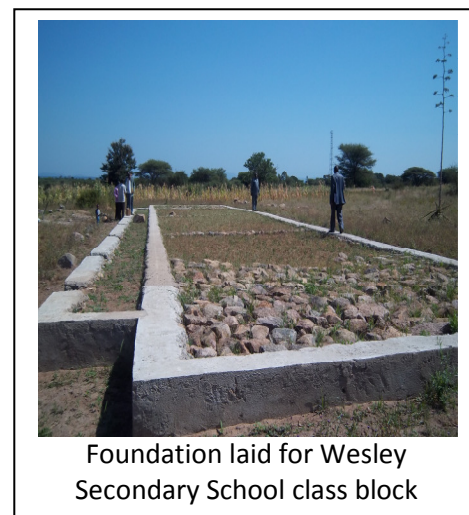
MC Tanzania at Magu, Tanzania

The church has a dispensary, a primary school, church building with a manse on site. They were built with funds from Irish Methodists and the dispensary serves the whole community in the delivery of primary health care. The primary school recently completed two blocks of class rooms for primary six pupils by support from Irish friends and well wishers. I had the privilege to meet with the youths and leaders of Kanisa Methodist Church.

3rd June 2013

We visited the District office to meet with government officials as the Methodist church and local government work in partnership to provide education for the locals. The District officer commented about the high illiteracy rate in region and lack of infrastructure for education. The Methodist church seeks to build its first secondary school in the area to serve the community. The government plans to provide good teachers and support workers and it is most grateful for its plans. There is currently high teenage pregnancy since there are no recreational facilities and few employment opportunities.

On arrival at the proposed school site, Bishop Ntombura laid the foundation brick, community and government officials attended and thanked God for this brilliant vision to have a Wesley Secondary School in its communities. The children and youth displayed wonderful choreography and sang to God. It was touching to see many youths on site because there was no secondary school to attend.



Challenges

- Salaries for MC Tanzania ministers are paid by MC Kenya because most of the Methodist churches are in the rural areas and the socio-economic status of members are quite low. It wishes to start an income generating project in Mwanza with the assistant of partners.
- The new national church hopes to equip its Connexional office with basic equipment for internal and external communications.
- MC Kenya would consider assisting MC Tanzania with ministerial training at Kenya Methodist University as well as Kenya Methodist ministers coming over to mentor Tanzania Methodist ministers. MCB would consider offering assistance with the capacity building by evangelists and lay preachers under group training SALT scheme.

Opportunities

- With MC Tanzania now a partner of MCB, it should be able to promote its mission priorities by having its strategies in place. MC Tanzania has already purchased the land and constructed the foundation of the first three classes – a great contribution from this new synod.

- The youths to assist in planting around the church perimeter to prevent encroachment on church land as well as provide safe area for church kids to play.
- The Tanzanian Methodists to become responsible for its mission affairs as well as seek ways of grow to be self sufficient

MC Kenya mission strategies

Following the induction of the new Presiding Bishop of MC Kenya, Bishop Ntombura Mwaine discussed the mission priorities with me and thanked me for the ongoing partnership between the British and Kenya Methodists in spite of no annual grant from MCB this Connexional year – first time since its autonomy in 1967.

I had the opportunity to meet with the Connexional team officers – most of which are young, enthused and experts in their fields. The new Mission Director aims to increase church membership across the nation to strengthen the voice of Kenya Methodists in influencing their political and community leaders on various issues. This should also increase church growth and promote mission within and outside Kenya.

Bishop Ntombura has set up a new Mission Council to promote mission among different categories. Members are made up of professionals in their fields to ensure the focus of the Church in upholding the Word of God as well as using great business and administrative models to empower church members to be ambassadors for Christ and support mission within and without Kenya.

City churches buddy with village churches to support and up-skill church workers. This should spread the responsibility and participation in mission activities e.g. starting projects to support mission.

MC Sudan as a mission station of MC Kenya

MC Kenya is currently sponsoring a Sudanese minister in training and has asked MC Britain to offer support to MC Sudan. The minister in training approached MC Kenya for help and following the independence of South Sudan, the minister wishes to operate as a district. There is a Methodist Church congregation however financial support for office administration and communication would make it better accountable with partners. The annual grant would be administered under the supervision of MC Kenya. The MCK director of missions travels at least once annual to encourage and meet members in Sudan. MCB has offered financial assistance in the past.



Community leader thanking the Church for the first Secondary school in the locality



Youths dancing and worshipping God by the proposed school



MCT ministers with Bishop Ntombura

Meeting with MC Uganda staff in Kampala

Bishop Ntombura and I met with MC Uganda Connexional team made up of Revd Amooti – the District Superintendent, the Finance Officer, two development officers and Prof Waiswa – a consultant for the church. The focus is to improve food security among members as well as their communities by providing high quality grains for farmers and teaching new farming techniques to improve both quality and quantity. Hence Uganda Methodists church members enjoy improved economic status and hopefully support church mission activities. The Church development unit currently works with the Food and Agriculture Organisation to reach farmers in the society.

Joseph a member of the Development team is also a part-time lecturer and asked if some unused Methodist buildings could become a resource centre e.g. conduct training for lay preacher and evangelists and other short term courses. Eventually it could potentially become a satellite campus for the Kenya Methodist University (KEMU) in Uganda. Bishop Ntombura was impressed by the suggestion and has invited Rev Amooti to Kenya to share this vision with KEMU Board members in Nairobi.

Mrs Jane Magambi was also present as the women's representative and requested for assistance to renovate the run-down women's centre so women could acquire various skills to improve their socio-economic positions. Bishop Ntombura promised to link Jane up with Methodist Guest House personnel to train women for the hospitality sector which could be a source of income for both the church and Uganda women.



MC Uganda Development staff



MC Uganda ministers



AACC young Theologians' choir

Meeting with MC Uganda ministers

We later met with the five MC Uganda ministers and their most important concern was lack of ministers for the expanding church. There are six circuits, 46 congregations and four ministers. There are also five Methodist schools though buildings are dilapidated with challenges to paying teachers school fees, hence the need for ways to generate income for the church and individuals. Also there is no Methodist seminary in Uganda and the ministers asked if KEMU could offer specialist training with the support of MCB to have a succession plan for the ministerial team. They were very appreciative of the financial support from MCB and mentioned that help with lay preacher training and evangelists would ease the preaching burdens on Uganda ministers.

All African Conference of Churches celebrates 50 years 3 – 9 June 2013

The theme of the conference was *"God of life, lead Africa to Peace, Justice and Dignity"*. The first AACC assembly took place in Kampala 50 years ago and ecumenism in Africa it is still ongoing. Past presidents, church leaders and partners celebrated the 10th General Assembly/ Silver jubilee at Munyoyo Commonwealth Resort in Kampala, Uganda with African youths and women actively participating. It was a good opportunity to network with African partners and friends.